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METAPHOR AND HYPERBOLE OFFER LUXURY AND COMFORT:
FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN HIGH-END HOTEL WEBSITES

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PhD

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

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Metaphor and hyperbole offer luxury and comfort: Figurative language in high-
end hotel websites

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINALITY

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Abstract

The thesis investigates the use and effectiveness of metaphor and hyperbole on proprietary five-star luxury hotel websites in Singapore and Hong Kong. Previous research across different fields has yielded a substantial body of empirical evidence regarding the use of metaphor in various types of discourse, ranging from psychotherapy and politics to education and business communication. However, limited research exists on the relationship between metaphor and more segmented economic industries, such as the luxury sector. In addition, while most studies on figurative language concentrate on metaphor, other rhetorical devices, particularly hyperbole, have received less attention, despite their prevalence in real-world discourse. Therefore, the present research aims to fill these caveats by describing linguistic realizations, usage patterns, and discursive functions of metaphor and hyperbole, and by testing for their persuasive effects on purchase intention in promotional tourism discourse.

To accomplish this, two corpora of luxury hotel websites from Singapore and Hong Kong are built, comprising a total of approximately 186,000 words. The research begins by exploring how facilities and amenities in luxury hotels are portrayed through the use of various metaphors derived from different source domains that align with the distinctive features of the advertised products or services, with the aim of captivating potential consumers. Following this, the inquiry inspects the employment of hyperboles, specifically analysing the distribution of different categories of intensified language in promotional discourse and their ability to engender positive dispositions towards the advertised products or services. The thesis further discusses the phenomenon of metaphorical hyperbole, taking a cognitive linguistic perspective, and proposes cognitive models that classify metaphorical hyperboles into two categories according to their approaches to synthesizing metaphorical and hyperbolic readings. Finally, a 2 (metaphor: present/absent) \times 2 (hyperbole: present/absent) experiment with between-subjects design is conducted, which is based on the results of the preceding corpus analysis, to explore the extent to which figurative devices have impacts on recipients and their underlying working mechanisms.

The findings of the research reveal that the strategic use of metaphor and hyperbole contributes to the creation of a fantasy-like image for high-end hotels and effectively conveys core values such as prestige, aesthetics, and high-quality within the contemporary luxury industry. Furthermore, the differences observed regarding the deployment of figurative language between Singapore and Hong Kong reflect different tourism positioning strategies, as a result

of the particularities of the two regions as former British colonies and how they are capitalised on for the transformation during the post-colonial period. Moreover, the results of the experimental research do not indicate the direct effects of figurative language on recipients' willingness to book a hotel room. Instead, they demonstrate the indirect effects of metaphors on affective text perception, which subsequently positively influences consumers' purchase intention, demonstrating the subtle working mechanism of figurative language.

I conclude the thesis by synthesising key findings and emphasising the theoretical, methodological, and practical contributions. The limitations of the study are acknowledged, and potential directions for future research that can address these limitations are presented.

Publications arising from the thesis

- Chen, J. Z., Ahrens, K., & Tay, D. (2024). 'Luxurious' metaphors in luxury hotel websites in Singapore and Hong Kong: A mixed-methods study. *Applied Corpus Linguistics*, 4(2), 100090-. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acorp.2024.100090>
- Chen, J. Z., & Ahrens, K. (2024, May 10-11). *Continuum or separation? A theoretical account of metaphorical hyperboles* [Paper presentation]. International Symposium on Language Sciences (ISLS): Interdisciplinary Research and the Legacy of Yuen Ren Chao, Hong Kong, China.
- Chen, J. Z., & Ahrens, K. (2024, March 16-19). *Behind the dramatic backdrop: A study of metaphoric hyperboles on luxury hotel websites* [Paper presentation]. The 2024 conference of the American Association for Applied Linguistics (AAAL), Houston, the United States.
- Chen, J. Z., & Ahrens, K. (2022, June 22-25). *The effectiveness of metaphor and hyperbole in hotel advertisements: An experimental research* [Paper presentation]. The 17th International Conference on Language and Social Psychology (ICLASP17), Hong Kong, China.
- Chen, J. Z., & Ahrens, K. (2022, September 22-25). *"It is a prestigious sanctuary": A corpus-based study of metaphor and hyperbole in luxury hotel websites* [Paper presentation]. The 15th Researching and Applying Metaphor Conference (RaAM), Bialystok, Poland.
- Chen, J. Z. (2021, June 18-19). *Figurative language and persuasion: The effectiveness of metaphor and hyperbole in hotel advertisements* [Paper presentation]. The Postgraduate Research Symposium on Linguistics, Language, and Speech (PRSLLS), The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong, China.

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1. Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Opening Remarks: Persuasive Language in Hotel Websites

The primary functions of hotel websites are to provide information and persuade potential customers to make reservations. Consequently, the language employed on these websites is typically descriptive and evaluative in nature. While images and videos play a significant role in hotel websites for visual appeal, the written text remains essential and has its place in conveying detailed information and creating a unique brand voice. For example, on the website of Four Seasons Hong Kong (<https://www.fourseasons.com/hongkong/>) (Figure 1.1), visitors are immediately greeted with an impactful description of the hotel, which features an attractive array of figurative expressions.



Figure 1.1 Screenshot of the homepage of Four Seasons Hotel Hong Kong (Four Seasons Hotel Hong Kong, 2023)

- (1) An urban *powerhouse encapsulating* Hong Kong's irresistible *energy*, our landmark home is the preferred address for guests who want to stay *in the middle of it all*.

In the above advertising statement (example (1)), Four Seasons Hotel Hong Kong positions itself as a “powerhouse” that “encapsulates” the vibrant “energy” of Hong Kong, making it an irresistibly attractive destination. Then, the hotel highlights its convenient location, where

guests can stay “in the middle of it all,” surrounded by the city’s bustling attractions and activities. The expressions inside the parentheses extracted from the hotel website are figurative, using either a metaphor that deviates from the original meaning (e.g., *powerhouse*) or a hyperbole that intensifies the intended meaning (e.g., *irresistible* and *all*). In Sections 1.3 and 1.4 of the current chapter, I will use linguistic examples to further elaborate the concepts of metaphor and hyperbole, as well as illustrate the distinctions between these two figurative devices.

Hotel websites are typically expected to provide factual information to prospective customers, such as rates, available rooms, booking methods, and other essential details. However, the content on the hotel website is also highly persuasive in nature. This persuasive aspect is particularly evident due to the prevalence of figurative language deployed in the promotional discourse of luxury hotels, as I have shown above (Figure 1.1). Given the persuasive nature and frequent use of figurative expressions on hotel websites, the main objective of this thesis is to investigate the use of metaphor and hyperbole on luxury hotel websites in two important luxury markets in Asia, namely Singapore and Hong Kong, exploring how figurative language is employed to communicate luxury values and to explore the effectiveness of these figurative devices in shaping recipients’ perceptions and intentions.

This chapter reviews the key issues and concepts that form the foundation of this study. The discussions broadly revolve around the two main research objectives: first, the utilisation of figurative language, specifically metaphor and hyperbole, in the context of tourism discourse, and second, the persuasive functions of figurative language. While these two objectives involve distinct research paradigms, with the former employing a corpus-based text analysis approach and the latter using a survey-embedded experiment, I will also illustrate the interconnectedness between the two objectives – the findings obtained from the corpus-based analysis serve as the theoretical groundwork for the subsequent experimental investigation. In this current chapter, the introduction of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) (Section 1.3.1) serves as the departure point for the entire literature review, which is followed by the synthesis and evaluation of methodologies and key findings from previous literature on metaphor in the field of tourism advertising (Section 1.3). In summarising previous studies on hyperbole, it is found that, compared with metaphor, the literature on hyperbole is relatively scarce at present. I have selected a definition of hyperbole from existing research that aligns with the objectives of this thesis (Section 1.4) and outlined the specific steps of methods deployed within the research

framework. I have also provided justifications for using the defined criteria to identify instances of hyperbole. Subsequently, mixed results from previous studies on the persuasive effects of hyperbole are presented (Section 1.5 and Section 1.6), underscoring the need for further study of hyperbole as an independent rhetorical device. Equally important, this first chapter emphasises the socio-cultural situatedness of figurative language usage, which is achieved by summarising the previous cross-cultural comparative analysis of figurative language in tourism discourse (Section 1.7). This chapter concludes with an introduction to the overall structure of the thesis to provide an overview of the remaining sections/chapters of the thesis (Section 1.8).

1.2 Scope and Objectives of Study

Cognitive linguists have consistently stressed the indispensability of metaphor to both language and cognition (e.g., Lakoff & Johnson, 1998/2003). Therefore, it becomes vital for metaphor theories to be anchored in metaphors' observable manifestation across various fields of human communication activities, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of metaphors' fundamental influence in shaping human thought and language usage.

The manifestation of metaphor has been extensively explored in various contexts, including literature (e.g., Semino & Steen, 2008), political discourse (e.g., Ahrens, 2019), health communication (e.g., Tay, 2013), musicology (e.g., Spitzer, 2004), advertising (e.g., Jaworska, 2017), and others. Such studies embraced both theoretical and practical contributions. On the one hand, they have been instrumental in revealing the intricate relationship between figurative language and contexts, showing how situated contexts influence the profile of metaphors and how metaphor helps to achieve distinct discursive functions in communication. On the other hand, diverse genres and discourses are also valuable sources that can develop, support, improve, or even revise the theoretical propositions put forth by the contemporary cognitivist paradigm of metaphor (Tay, 2013). However, despite the tourism industry's prominence as one of the most important sectors in modern society, promotional tourism discourse has not received as much attention compared to other forms of discourse. Research on metaphor in tourism discourse has primarily focused on general segments, neglecting more nuanced tourism sub-segments, like luxury or budget tourism. Additionally, the scope of study tends to be limited to a selected number of metaphors (e.g., Dann, 1996; Jaworska, 2017; Mattiello, 2012).

Secondly, Jaworska (2017) observed that metaphors in tourism discourse frequently co-occur with hyperboles, thus enhancing the persuasive effect of the text. Nevertheless, in the study of figurative language, hyperbole often takes a backseat to metaphor in importance, with most studies centring on metaphor rather than hyperbole. Furthermore, Vereza (2016) introduced the concept of “metaphoric hyperbole,” which involves the combination of metaphorical and hyperbolic elements within a single lexical unit. Research on the manifestations of metaphoric hyperbole, however, lacks empirical evidence from different types of genres or contexts, which could provide support for how metaphoric hyperboles are used in real-world communication, as each genre or discourse is featured with distinct characteristics and conventions.

Therefore, further exploration into the patterns and variations of metaphor and hyperbole in specific types of discourse is needed to gain a deeper understanding of their frequency and discursive functions, so as to contribute to a more holistic analysis of figurative language use in various communicative contexts. Moreover, while the phenomenon of metaphorical hyperbole has been recognised in previous research (i.e., Vereza, 2016), conducting in-depth analysis to investigate its manifestation and use in specific communicative contexts is important. This will provide us with a more comprehensive understanding of the similarities and differences, as well as the underlying framework, of the two figurative devices.

In this vein, the main goal of the current research is to offer empirical evidence on the utilisation and effectiveness of metaphor and hyperbole in promotional tourism discourse, specifically through the analysis of luxury hotel websites in Singapore and Hong Kong. The research conceives of hotel websites as a distinct promotional genre, acknowledging their twofold purpose of conveying factual information about the hotel and persuading customers to make a purchase. In this study, the focus will be given to proprietary five-star luxury hotel websites because luxury hotels represent the highest hospitality standard in the industry and always receive higher scores in website evaluations compared to mid-priced hotels (Law & Chung, 2003), indicating that their websites are usually well-designed and thus, can be the role model for other hotels to emulate. The persuasive intent of hotel websites can be achieved through a variety of communication strategies, including language, imagery, and videos. While there is a growing emphasis on multimodal elements in travel promotion (e.g., Cheng & Suen, 2014; Turra, 2020), the written texts of hotel websites still play an essential role in influencing customers’ purchasing decisions because they can create an imagined world for potential consumers and thus persuade them to visit. The focus on the written text in this thesis entails

analysing how metaphorical expressions and hyperbolic expressions are instantiated in the context of hotel websites and how they contribute to the construction of luxury values. This serves as the first primary aim of this thesis. Its secondary aim is to reveal whether and how figurative language, in line with previous textual analysis-based research, has an influence on recipients' purchase decisions, as well as the underlying mechanisms involved in recipients' response to figurative language. The two research objectives are listed in the following:

- (a) **Explore the utilisation of figurative language in the context of promotional discourse**
- (b) **Inspect the effectiveness of figurative language in the context of promotional discourse**

Research objective (1) corresponds to Chapter 4 to Chapter 6 of the thesis and objective (2) corresponds to Chapter 7. These two research objectives will be further elaborated upon in Chapter 2 (Section 2.2.1). At this juncture, it should perhaps be noted that the mixed-methods orientation of the study is particularly evident in the first research objective, which combines text-analytic approaches and data-analytic methods to probe the manifestation and usage patterns of figurative language in discourse. Then, the findings from the content analysis simultaneously form the basis for examining how figurative language provide mechanisms in and through which advertising can potentially influence addressees. The underlying mechanisms are defined as two paths, namely cognitive text perception and affective text perception. The former indicates the cognitive processes involved in comprehending the textual information (Hartman, 2012), whereas the latter means the emotions and feelings evoked by the text. The hypotheses postulated will be tested through a survey-embedded experiment.

The research aims to make theoretical contributions to figurative language studies by systematically identifying the patterns of metaphorical language usage in tourism discourse within the Asia Pacific context. It also seeks to offer a theoretical account of the working mechanisms of different types of metaphorical hyperboles. Additionally, the study hopes to make a methodological contribution by refining the procedure of hyperbole identification. In addition to these linguistic and methodological objectives, the research will also provide practical insights and recommendations for advertisers in the luxury hospitality industry.

1.3 Figurative Language: Metaphor

1.3.1 Metaphor and Cross-domain Mappings

Traditionally, figurative language is viewed as an intentional deviation from the plain and ordinary mode of speaking by adding a rhetorical flourish to texts or speeches (Genung, 1893; Gamson & Lasch, 1983). Among others, metaphor – a pervasive language phenomenon across different genres and discourse – stands out as one of the most discussed types of figurative language (e.g., Charteris-Black, 2004; Deignan, et al., 2013; Gibbs, 2016; Semino, 2008).

Contemporary approaches to metaphor focus less on highlighting the “rhetorical” and “ornamentation” properties of metaphors and instead treat them as constitutive of human thought that involves conceptualising one thing in terms of another. For instance, Conceptual Metaphor Theory (henceforth CMT), a dominant paradigm in metaphor research, suggests that metaphor is systematic sets of cross-domain mappings through which information from a “source domain” is mapped onto a “target domain” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2003; Kövecses, 2002; Goatly, 2007; Semino, 2008). For example:

- (2) His theory lacks a solid *foundation*.
- (3) We need a better *framework* for our ideas.

Sentences (2) and (3) imply a conceptual metaphor, IDEAS ARE BUILDINGS, where BUILDINGS is the source domain, and IDEAS is the target domain. CMT suggests that when comprehending an expression such as “*a better framework for our ideas*,” the underlying conceptual metaphor (IDEAS ARE BUILDINGS) will be activated, which elicits a set of correspondences between “foundation” and “basic part of the theory,” between “framework” and “a set of principles,” between “build something” and “the development of an idea,” and so on (Ahrens, 2010). Insofar as the human conceptual system is fundamentally metaphorical, metaphor is deemed to be the realisation of the kinds of concepts held in thought, reflecting how we think about particular subjects (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2003; Sperber & Wilson, 1995).

1.3.2 Metaphor Identification Procedure

The initial step in analyzing metaphors involves having a robust and systematic metaphor identification approach. The Pragglejaz Group has developed the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) (Pragglejaz Group, 2007), which is a reliable tool for linguistic metaphor

analysis. This procedure is then refined and expanded into Metaphor Identification Procedure VU University Amsterdam (MIPVU) (Steen et al., 2010), which provides more explicit instructions concerning the analysing unit and consulted reference resources. MIPVU has been widely applied in various research contexts. For example, with MIPVU, the Metaphor in Discourse project conducted at VU Amsterdam has contributed extensive quantitative data on metaphor usage in various communicative research settings in English, including news, academic discourse, fiction, and conversation (Krennmayr & Steen, 2017). The MIPVU has also been adopted for Dutch and other languages, such as Danish, Norwegian, Swedish (e.g., Nacey et al., 2019), and Chinese (Pan & Chen, 2022). By adhering to the provided guidelines as listed in Table 1.1, the MIPVU allows for systematic, comprehensive, and replicable identification of metaphor in discourse. The reliability tests conducted on the procedure have also confirmed its consistency and accuracy in identifying metaphors (see Steen et al., 2010).

Table 1.1 Metaphor Identification Procedure VU University Amsterdam (MIPVU) (Steen et al., 2010)

Step	Explanation
Step 1	Find metaphor-related words (MRWs) by examining the text on a word-by-word basis.
Step 2	When a word is used indirectly and that use may potentially be explained by some form of cross-domain mapping from a more basic meaning of that word, mark the word as metaphorically used (MRW).
Step 3	When a word is used directly and its use may potentially be explained by some form of cross-domain mapping to a more basic referent or topic in the text, mark the word as direct metaphor (MRW, direct).
Step 4	When words are used for the purpose of lexico-grammatical substitution, such as third person personal pronouns, or when ellipsis occurs where words may be seen as missing, as in some forms of co-ordination, and when a direct or indirect meaning is conveyed by those substitutions or ellipses that may potentially be explained by some form of cross-domain mapping from a more basic meaning, referent, or topic, insert a code for implicit metaphor (MRW, implicit).
Step 5	When a word functions as a signal that a cross-domain mapping may be at play, mark it as a metaphor flag (MFlag).
Step 6	When a word is a new-formation coined by the author, examine the distinct words that are its independent parts according to steps 2 through 5.

1.3.3 Metaphor and Advertising

Research in different fields has generated a plethora of empirical evidence demonstrating the pervasiveness of metaphor in various types of discourse, ranging from psychotherapy (Tay, 2013, 2018) to politics (Charteris-Black, 2004; Ahrens, 2019), and from education (Darian, 2000; Littlemore, 2001) to legal discourse (Cotterill, 1998; Chiu & Chiang, 2011), which collectively demonstrated the power of metaphor to convey meaning in different communication scenarios and cognitions.

Since metaphor invites recipients to think about a relatively abstract idea in terms of something more concrete, it is often applied to introduce a new and complex concept as a way to make the concept more intuitive and less complex for people to understand. For example, in examining the discourse of government-funded anti-piracy campaigns, Mirghani (2011) found that copyright infringement is framed as terrorism and military-related activities. Based on this metaphor, it can be seen that “copyright” corresponds to “the people” and “their welfare,” which is “protected by law.” Preventing piracy is represented as “fighting the enemy,” requiring joint efforts of the government and the public. Comparing piracy to terrorism makes legal concepts, which are relatively abstract, easier for ordinary people to understand. Similarly, in the field of advertising, metaphor is regarded as an important communication tool, having the potential to increase the persuasiveness of advertising messages because it is able to visualise the abstract benefits of products that are difficult for consumers to understand (e.g., Burgers et al., 2015), or mitigate the strangeness and unfamiliarity of the travel destination located far away (e.g., Dann, 1996).

Metaphor has also been shown to be persuasive because it can make texts more attractive and appealing, compared to literal expressions. In tourism advertising, Mattiello (2012) found that metaphor creates a perception that tourism destinations are a surreal imagined world through metaphorical expressions like “the Maldives is truly a piece of *paradise*” or “a garland of *pearls* on the Indian Ocean.” In looking at the introductory texts of travel destinations on tourism websites, Jaworska (2017) summarised different metaphors, including A TROPICAL ISLAND IS A PARADISE, A TOURIST DESTINATION IS A SLEEPY BODY, and ELEMENTS OF LANDSCAPE ARE JEWELS, that are used to describe tropical travel destinations. Source domains, such as PARADISE and JEWELS, which are relatively creative and salient, serve as an attention-grabbing device, drawing on customers’ multisensory experiences and imaginations, but also infusing the advertised product with positive images. The favourable semantic meaning of these source

domains transforms tropical destinations into picturesque, unspoilt, and happy places so as to pique consumers' interest in exploring new destinations.

Several research studies have examined metaphors in online tourism advertising, including tourist texts on the Internet (Mattiello, 2012), hotel introductory texts (Cheng & Suen, 2014), and tourism magazines (Katrandjiev, 2016). Nevertheless, these studies solely explored a limited number of metaphors and did not offer systematic descriptions of metaphor types and frequencies. It is particularly important to consider promotional tourism discourse as a specific genre and to investigate the patterns of metaphor usage in it, especially their manifestation and occurrence because the types and functions of metaphors can vary depending on the specific context (Thibodeau & Boroditsky, 2011). Taking into account the distinctiveness of the luxury travel industry and its core values of prestige, high-quality and exclusivity (Hudders et al., 2013), this study aims to uncover how luxury is conveyed through the use of metaphor by systematically exploring the characteristics of metaphors, such as conceptual mapping and frequency, on luxury hotel websites. The first research question proposed in the current project is:

RQ1: What types of metaphor are used on luxury hotel websites, and what are their functions?

1.3.4 The Experimental Study of Metaphor in Advertising

While metaphor is widely seen as an effective tool in advertising messages, much of the evidence supporting its efficacy is derived from the corpus approach, which relies on the researcher's own interpretation. This reliance on subjective interpretation raises a pertinent concern regarding the extent to which the claimed effectiveness of metaphor in textual analysis is substantiated by experimental evidence. To address this concern, linguistic analysis has increasingly adopted experimentation as a way of complementing traditional discourse-analytical methods, leading to a growing body of empirical work in the field (e.g., Hart, 2018; Fuoli & Hart, 2018; Subtirelu & Gopavaram, 2016).

Through experimental techniques, linguists seek additional empirical evidence for complementary support of their theoretical claims and hypotheses by recourse to how people respond when exposed to figurative language (Boeynaems et al., 2017). If metaphorical

expressions, as Burgers et al. (2016) pointed out, are effective in transferring conceptual content, there should be observable effects congruent with the specific types of metaphor used. Further, Thibodeau and Boroditsky (2011) have remarked on the complexity of the effects of metaphor on recipients' attitudes and intentions, suggesting that the impact of metaphors may not always be straightforward as we initially assumed.

Researchers in the field of marketing communication are therefore interested in understanding how and under what conditions metaphorical language operates. In this vein, by conducting experimental research, valuable insights can be gained into the effectiveness of metaphor as a persuasive tool in advertising and inform advertising strategies and practices, enabling marketers to capitalise on the full potential of metaphor in crafting effective advertisements. In such a research paradigm, researchers typically conduct executed experiments manipulating the intervention (the factor of interest) as the independent variable and measuring the behaviour of participants as the dependent variable to assess the effectiveness of the intervention on recipients. Specifically, researchers can manipulate various characteristics of metaphors to test how these features affect individuals' evaluations of the advertisement itself and their willingness to buy the advertised product (e.g., Ang & Lim, 2006; Burgers et al., 2015; Van Stee et al., 2018; Wu et al., 2017).

Previous research has yielded mixed findings regarding the persuasive impact of metaphor, as presented in Table 1.2. Various models of advertising effectiveness have proposed that metaphor is an important persuasion tool capable of influencing consumers' behavioural intentions (Vreese, 2005) and that the persuasive effects of metaphor may be mediated by recipients' perceptions of the advertisement texts (Kim et al., 2012). On the one hand, metaphor, as a creative rhetorical figure, has the ability to stimulate consumers' imagination and evoke a sense of enjoyment, thus contributing to the emotional impact of the advertisement. For instance, Kronrod and Danziger (2013) demonstrated a positive relationship between emotional arousal and figurativeness, suggesting that metaphors can evoke stronger emotional responses in consumers compared to literal statements. Similarly, Phillips and McQuarrie (2009) revealed that metaphors can positively alter a consumer's attitudes as metaphors are highly artful and deviate from the expectations of recipients.

On the other hand, comprehending metaphorical expressions require recipients to accurately understand the correspondence between the source and target domains with the assistance of the contextual information provided. The successful resolution of the "puzzle" between the

source and target domains can enhance the cognitive impact of advertisements, which contributes persuasive power of advertising messages (e.g., Ang & Lim, 2006; Kronrod et al., 2021). Burgers et al. (2015) extended this conclusion by arguing that the use of conventional metaphor in print advertisements has a similar effect to novel metaphors, which is deemed as common and familiar compared to novel metaphors; conventional metaphors can also change a recipient's perspective and increase purchase intentions by reducing perceived complexity and by increasing the perceived creativity of the advertisements.

Table 1.2 Summary of recent research on the effectiveness of metaphor in advertising

Authors	Language Types	Manipulation checks and Dependent Variables	Major findings
Ang & Lim (2006)	Metaphor & Literal language	Brand Personality Perceptions; Attitude Toward the Ad; Attitude Toward the Brand Purchase Intention	Brands using metaphors were generally perceived to be more sophisticated and exciting than brands using literal words and pictures. A metaphoric headline led to a more favourable Ad attitude, Brand attitude, and greater purchase intention.
Burgers et al. (2015)	Metaphor & Irony & Literal language	Comprehension of the tagline; Perceived complexity; Creativity of the advertisement; Ad appreciation; brand attitude; Purchase intention of the participants	Conventional metaphor decreases perceived ad complexity and increases perceived creativity and ad appreciation, which in turn positively impacts brand attitude and purchase intention.
Van Stee et al. (2018)	Metaphor & Literal language	Cognitive processing; Attitudes; Behavioural intentions;	Metaphorical and literal messages led to similar levels of cognitive processing and literal messages had greater effects on attitudes and behavioural intentions.
Kim, Baek & Choi (2012)	Metaphor & Literal language	Cognitive elaborations; Affective elaborations; Ad perception; Ad credibility; Attitude toward the advertiser; Attitude toward the ad; Attitude toward advertising in general; Metaphoricity of Headlines; Message Equivalence of Headlines;	Both cognitive and affective elaborations were elicited more from metaphoric ads than literal ads.
Kronrod & Danziger (2013)	Figurative language & Literal language	Product Attitudes; Typicality; Figurativeness	Figurative language in consumer-generated content is worthwhile in conveying a hedonic experience, while it may decrease effectiveness when conveying a utilitarian experience.
Choi, Liu & Mattila (2019)	Figurative language & Literal language	Service encounter evaluation; Perceived credibility; Figurativeness	People evaluated the service encounter more favourably when the human service agent used literal (vs figurative) language.

Wu et al. (2017)	Figurative language & Literal language	Attitude; Reservation intention; Language typicality; Scenario realism	When a review was posted by a low expertise reviewer, using figurative language (vs literal language) had negative impacts on attitudes towards the product and reservation intention.
Kronrod et al. (2021)	Figurative language & Literal language	Attitude; Enjoyment; Ease of pronunciation; Suitability	The findings showed a preference for low-calorie menu options when they were named figuratively.
Akhtar et al. (2019)	Figurative language & Literal language	Figurative meanings; Reviews rating; Purchase intentions	Figurative meanings have a significant negative influence on the ratings of online reviews.

While some studies suggested that metaphors can be highly persuasive, others presented mixed or inconclusive results. For example, Van Stee et al. (2018) 's examination of metaphor in condom promotion messages indicated that metaphorical and literal expressions lead to similar levels of cognitive processing (positive, negative, and neutral thoughts related to the message), and literal messages have greater effects on attitudes and behavioural intentions of condom use compared to figurative language. Similarly, through examining the effects of literal versus figurative language on consumer perceptions of service encounters, Choi et al. (2019) found that participants evaluate the service encounter more favourably when the human service agent (vs. robot vs. kiosk) uses literal (vs. figurative) language.

The divergent findings observed in studies examining the relationship between metaphor and attitude suggest that there may be multiple factors at play that require further investigation (Ahrens, 2010). The effectiveness of metaphor might be contingent on the expertise level of the target audiences (Wu et al., 2017), metaphor format (Mohanty & Ratneshwar, 2015; Huang, 2020), product type (Kronrod & Danziger, 2013), and context in which the metaphor is used (Van Stee et al., 2018). For instance, in Byun and Jang (2015), the destination type is found to work as a moderator between consumers' attitudes and advertising language, with affective language eliciting more positive attitudes toward hedonic destinations that are perceived to be fun and sensorial (e.g., Venice), whereas cognitive language elicits more positive attitudes for utilitarian destinations (e.g., Berlin) that are considered to be functional, sensible, and useful. In Byun and Jang (2015), affective language is defined as figurative expressions that describe feelings or emotional states, and cognitive language refers to literal expressions that talk about attributes of products. Building on prior literature related to metaphor and advertising (e.g., Byun & Jang, 2015; Burgers et al., 2015), we expect a preference for metaphorical language in luxury hotel advertisements over literal expression. Therefore, the second research question is as follows:

RQ2: How does metaphor on luxury hotel websites affect consumers' perceptions and purchase intentions?

1.4 Figurative Language: Hyperbole

1.4.1 Terminology

Hyperbole is one of many figures of speech discussed in the framework of rhetoric since ancient Greece, and with it comes to the proliferation of different terminologies for hyperbole by different studies, such as *hyperbole*, *overstatement*, *exaggeration* or *Extreme case formulation* (ECF), all of which refer to essentially the same thing. It is clearly beyond the scope of this thesis to make a comparison and pin down an “optimal” term of hyperbole, while it is worth paying special attention and unifying the terminology, at least in the use of this study, to prevent confusion and chaos of the analysis and results. Taking a cue from Claridge’s (2011) comments on the abovementioned three terms, the thesis takes *hyperbole* as *terminus technicus* of the research object for three reasons. The first reason is that *hyperbole* is usually included in rhetorical dictionaries as a legitimated and formal term, while others (e.g., *overstatement* or *exaggeration*) are more non-technical and informal, often for colloquial use.

Secondly, Gibbs (1994) distinguished between *overstatement*, which tends to be unconscious or unintentional, and *hyperbole*, which he sees as a deliberate exaggeration. However, it is worth considering that text producers may not always be fully aware of the intentionality behind every utterance, which in some ways blurs the boundary between deliberateness and non-deliberateness. Also, the explicit intention of this study is not to probe the specific mechanics of deliberate hyperbole or non-deliberate hyperbole, but represents an interest in discerning how semantic intensification, both intentional and not intentional in Gibbs’ sense, is involved in persuasion, and the effectiveness of such expressions in persuasion.

Thirdly, *extreme case formulation*, as I will elucidate in Section 1.4.3.2, is considered a sub-category of hyperbole (Pomerantz, 1986) that stands at the extreme end of the scale, including expressions like *absolute*, *perfect*, *complete*, etc. It is therefore not applied to represent top-level category hyperbole that may involve different types of linguistic realisations.

In summary, while *hyperbole*, *overstatement*, and *exaggeration* are sometimes used interchangeably in different studies, the thesis will stick to *hyperbole* to refer to the linguistic phenomena with which this study is concerned. I will seek to provide a definition of, and characterization of, hyperbole in the following.

1.4.2 Defining Hyperbole

For many years, much of the emphasis on hyperbole has been placed on how to define and classify this figure, which may explain the reason for the absence of a uniform definition (e.g., Carston & Wearing, 2015; Claridge, 2011; McCarthy & Carter, 2004; Norrick, 2004; Smith, 1657). In this thesis, the definition of hyperbole I would like to subscribe to is as follows: **Hyperbole is an expression that is more extreme than justified given its ontological referent** (Burgers et al., 2016, p. 166). This definition implies three key features of hyperbole, *qua* exaggeration, gradability and an ontological referent, and provides a sound basis for the instructions that I will follow when identifying hyperbolic expressions in the data for this thesis. Sentence (3) is provided as an illustration of the first characteristic:

(1) It seems like *hundreds of years* since I last saw you.

Hyperbole is essentially about exceeding enlargement or inflation, which clashes with what is factually accurate or precise (e.g., Cano Mora, 2011; Haverkate, 1990), as illustrated in sentence (3). In this instance, claiming that hundreds of years have passed since two people last met deviates from the typical human life cycle of no more than a hundred years, making the expression “*hundreds of years*” a potential hyperbolic statement.

Drawing on the Gricean approach, Haverkate (1990) distinguished an act of lying and hyperbole by referring to a lie as a false statement made with deliberate intent to deceive, while hyperbole as a “description of the world in terms of disproportionate dimensions” (Haverkate, 1990, p. 103). In other words, while hyperbole may involve departures from the conventional order and meaning, this does not mean that hyperbole is tantamount to an act of lying, despite the shared characteristics with lying in their departure from strict literal truth (Cano Mora, 2011; Haverkate, 1990).

The level of exaggeration is another important concept of hyperbole, referring to the extent to which a statement or utterance exceeds the normal or expected boundaries of reality. The level of exaggeration in hyperbole can vary, and it often depends on the semantic contradiction between the propositional meaning and the intended meaning of the utterance. This can be observed in example (3) by extending the time span from *hundreds of years* to *thousands of years*, *millions of years*, or even *billions of years* along a numerical scale, ranging from extremely long to extremely short, representing a quantitative expansion that magnifies the information (Burgers et al., 2016). It is worth noting that hyperbole, as suggested by Smith

(1657) and Fontanier (1830/1968), can also manifest itself in two antithetical directions. On the one hand, it can involve a progressive exaggeration of the objective fact, known as *auxesis*, as demonstrated in example (3). On the other hand, it can entail an excessive understatement, referred to as *meiosis*, as illustrated in example (4).¹ This twofold nature of hyperbole, including both amplification and diminishment, is commonly referred to as hyperboles of quality.

(2) It seems like *a second* since I last saw you.

In example (3), we stand at the upper end of the scale when talking about an extended period of time (enlarge reality). Conversely, example (4) occupies the lower end of the scale, emphasising the brief duration of time (diminish reality). Cano Mora's (2011) corpus analysis of the BNC texts offered additional insights, suggesting that approximately 81 per cent of hyperbole usage belongs to *auxesis*, which amplifies reality. This finding may explain the prevalent focus on upscale hyperbole (*auxesis*) in rhetoric studies.

Furthermore, Burgers et al.'s (2016) definition of hyperbole highlights the importance of considering the specific object of reference of the hyperbolic expression. This suggests the paramount role of context and real-world knowledge in accurately identifying and interpreting cases of hyperbole. For example, the expression *a second* in example (4), which refers to a period of separation, may not necessarily be considered hyperbolic unless it is understood in relation to an appropriate context. It is theoretically possible for the two speakers to separate one second and reunite again the next. The utterance should be taken literally if it is the case. If the speaker, however, intends to emphasise the swift passage of time or the enduring memory of another person despite a long period of separation, the utterance is likely to be interpreted as hyperbolic.

In summary, Burgers et al.'s (2016) definition captures the gist of hyperbole and will serve as a guiding framework for identifying hyperboles in the thesis. According to their definition, hyperbole is treated as a figure that possesses three distinguishing characteristics setting it apart from other types of figures: (1) **hyperbole is an exaggeration**, (2) **hyperbole is gradable**, and (3) **there should be a specific object referred to by the hyperbolic expression**. In the

¹ Example (4) can be either hyperbolic or literal in different contexts. We currently assume that the speakers, who may not have seen each other for many years, compress the long period of separation to "*a second*" to emphasise the camaraderie between them. The importance of context in hyperbole interpretation will be discussed later in this section and in Section 1.4.3.

upcoming sections, I will discuss the process of identifying metaphors in texts by referring to the three characteristics mentioned.

1.4.3 Hyperbole Identification

1.4.3.1 Difficulties in Hyperbole Identification

One of the challenges in hyperbole research lies in the difficulty of unequivocally discerning whether an expression is exaggerated or not. First of all, as alluded to above, hyperbole is highly sensitive to context – both linguistic and extralinguistic contexts, which in turn, introduces a degree of ambiguity to the interpretation of hyperbolic statements. Regarding the extralinguistic context, it refers to the physical situation in which the utterance is made and its referent. For instance, whether the expression “*every*” is considered hyperbolic depends on the specific context and the object it modifies within the text, although the expression is generally located at the upper end of the semantic scale <none, few, some, many, every>. It can be seen as a factual statement in the case of “high-speed WIFI in *every* room” because every room in the hotel is indeed covered by wireless network. However, it appears to be used in an overly positive and generalised manner in the expression “with warmth permeating *every* corner,” as it is difficult for us to verify this statement.

Secondly, it is not always the case that recipients are given comprehensive and precise knowledge of the ontological referent of the expression that can be used to refer to the actual state of affairs. For example, general world knowledge may not be sufficient to help researchers detect whether the claim of “Singapore’s *biggest* curved LED Wall” is factual unless researchers can measure all of Singapore’s curved LED walls. In addition, individual preferences and interpretations also play roles when understanding hyperbole. An utterance may be perceived as hyperbolic by the text producer, but not by the listener, due to differences in subjective interpretations.

Given that the ontological referents of expressions in discourse are sometimes vague and ambiguous, and contextual information may not always be sufficient to verify the authenticity of hyperbolic statements, it is unsurprising that there is no stringent threshold or cut-off point that distinguishes between hyperbole and non-hyperbolic interpretations. Instead, there is a transitional zone with many instances that fall into the area of ambiguity, which *per se* may be a very interesting phenomenon within linguistics.

1.4.3.2 Identifying Hyperbole in Conversations

In recent years, there has been a growing subscription of the dialogic view of communication to the field of figurative language theories, emphasising the interactive and collaborative nature of figurative language, particularly metaphor and irony, and regarding them as the productions by different interlocutors (Cano Mora, 2011). The interactive nature of figurative language has been elaborated in Tay (2013). Using discourse analysis, the research demonstrated the consistency and variability of metaphor usage in psychotherapeutic texts by uncovering how metaphors are jointly created by the therapist and patient, and gradually shift in therapeutic changes to facilitate meaning conjunction and mutual understanding over the course of therapy sessions (Tay, 2013).

The joint activity view of discourse and language has had a significant impact on the study of hyperbole, leading to increased attention being paid to language use in interactional contexts. As a result, early instruments for identifying hyperbole have primarily centred on how it is produced and used in naturally occurring everyday conversations. The rich contextual resources generated through collaborative interactions among interlocutors can serve as reliable indicators for identifying hyperbolic expressions in discourse. Based on the joint activity paradigm of figuration, McCarthy and Carter (2004, pp.162-163) proposed eight criteria as an instrument for identifying and labelling hyperbole, which has been widely applied in various studies (e.g., Abbas, 2019; Cano Mora, 2011). According to McCarthy and Carter (2004), to be interpreted as a hyperbole, an expression should meet at least three of the following eight criteria:

- Disjunction with context
- Shifts in footing
- Counterfactuality not perceived as a lie
- Impossible worlds
- Listener take-up
- Extreme case formulations and intensification
- Syntactic support
- Relevant interpretability

The following dialogue (5) serves as an example to demonstrate the application of the instrument for identifying hyperbole. The dialogue involves a woman expressing her concern about skin problems with the impossible expression “*millions of crow’s feet*”:

(3) <\$Women> Do I? *I’m getting so many millions of crow’s feet around my eyes. I think it’s the ozone layer cracking up* and it’s making my skin get really wrinkled.

<\$ Others> [Laugh]

In this dialogue, the utterance is plausibly counterfactual as the number of crow’s feet is amplified in a humorous manner. The feedback from the listeners, such as laughter and assenting back-channel signals, further supports the interpretation of the expression as hyperbolic. In this case, the listeners’ response to laughter suggests that they perceive the expression as exaggerated and not to be taken literally, showing the collaborative nature of figurative language.

While McCarthy and Carter’s instrument provides a useful framework for identifying hyperbole (e.g., Abbas, 2019; Cano Mora, 2011), its application may require additional context-specific considerations and sensitivity to the nuances of the interaction, because the presence of “listener take-up” and “counterfactuality not perceived as a lie” are considered important clues in identifying hyperbolic expressions. In practice, the written texts could be the passage that is produced by a single person. In the case of written texts where immediate recipient responses are not available, identifying hyperbole becomes more challenging. The absence of direct feedback from listeners, such as laughter or assenting back-channel signals, somewhat reduces the applicability of the instruction.

Next, the eight features of hyperbole proposed by McCarthy and Carter (2004) are not clearly defined and demarcated, and there can be an overlap between some of these features. For instance, the criterion “impossible worlds” is defined as imaginary worlds that the speaker and the listener have jointly constructed through impossible, exaggerated events. The description of these impossible events can be achieved through different linguistic or paralinguistic features, such as “extreme case formulations”, intonations, or even facial expressions. The main reason for the overlap and confusion in the demarcation of these criteria lies in the fact that McCarthy and Carter (2004) did not unify the operational levels of hyperbole identification, with some being syntactic, some being pragmatic or discursive, and some being even

multimodal. It is not clear whether syntactic requirements take precedence over pragmatic or discourse-level considerations, or vice versa.

Moreover, as further remarked by Peña-Cervel and Ruiz de Mendoza (2017), the identification instrument (i.e., McCarthy & Carter, 2004) remains problematic as it lacks clear explanations or justifications for why at least three of the eight criteria should be met to consider an expression as hyperbolic, as opposed to a different number or combination of criteria.

In summary, although McCarthy and Carter's (2004) approach is inspiring as it systematically lists a number of situations in which utterances can be classified as hyperbole, researchers should be cautious and considerate of the relative weight and interplay of different criteria when actually applying the instrument.

1.4.3.3 HIP: A Manual for Identifying Hyperbole-related Words

Adhering to Burgers et al.'s (2016) definition of hyperbole, as we mentioned in Section 1.4.2, the thesis adopted Hyperbole Identification Procedure (henceforth HIP) to discern potential hyperbolic expressions in the corpus. This is due to the following reasons. In the first place, the key features of HIP render it particularly suitable for studying hyperbole in a systematic fashion, where researchers are allowed to comprehensively detect all potential instances of hyperbole in a given text with prudent guidance (c.f. McCarthy & Carter, 2004). In the second place, reliability examinations conducted by Burgers et al. (2016) showed a substantial level of agreement achieved by two raters in coding hyperbole using HIP, indicating the effectiveness of the approach.

In this chapter, I will present a detailed explanation of the operational steps outlined in the HIP as described by Burgers et al. (2016, pp. 167-168) in Table 1.3. However, I will make slight adaptations to better align the procedure with the specific requirements of this thesis. In Table 2.3 (Section 2.2.4), I will provide a thorough explanation of how each step has been adjusted to suit the analytic framework of this study.

Table 1.3 Hyperbole Identification Procedure (Burgers et al., 2016)

Step	Explanation
Step 1	Read the entire text
Step 2	Apply the VIP to every clause in the text to code for the presence of irony
Step 3	Apply the MIPVU procedure to every lexical unit in the text to code for the presence of metaphors
Step 4	<p>Look at the first lexical unit in the text. If the unit is marked as metaphorical (i.e., metaphor-related word, MRW), consider the metaphoricity of the unit when coding.</p> <p>If the unit is marked as ironic, code the unit <i>as if</i> it contained the intended rather than the propositional evaluation. In other words, the lexical unit is replaced during coding by the intended ironic meaning. If the unit is neither metaphorical nor ironic, code the unit as is.</p>
Step 5	<p>Consider whether the lexical unit or its replacement warrants constructing a scale involving either a quality or a quantity. If so, construct a scale running from the lowest to the highest value possible of the particular quantity or quality of the lexical unit or its replacement, and place the lexical unit or its replacement on the scale. If not, code as non-hyperbolic and continue with the next lexical unit.</p>
Step 6	<p>Determine the ontological referent of the lexical unit or its replacement by staying as close to the text as possible. In case the text is underdetermined about the ontological referent, use the dictionary or Wikipedia to acquire additional information. Place the bandwidth of acceptable values of the ontological referent onto the scale.</p>
Step 7	<p>Is the lexical unit or its replacement more extreme than justified given its ontological referent? This is the case when the lexical unit or its replacement lies outside of the bandwidth of acceptable values of the ontological referent towards one or the other end of the scale.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If yes, the utterance is hyperbolic. • If not, the utterance is non-hyperbolic. • When in doubt, leave it in and mark the utterance as WIDLII (When In Doubt Leave It In), and reconsider after completion of coding.
Step 8	Look at the next lexical unit

1.4.5 Hyperbole and Persuasion

The persuasion function of hyperbole has primarily been emphasised in political discourse as some researchers suggested that exaggerated expression, in providing a means for focusing

attention on specific aspects of reality, brings about awareness of values and norms associated with those aspects in an emotionally charged way, in line with the potential of hyperbole to elicit emotions and frame reality. This takes place most palpably when politicians want to legitimise and promote certain social policies to the public. Pomerantz (1986), for instance, analysed *extreme case formulations* (i.e., hyperbole) in conversation activities such as complaining, accusing, justifying, and defending; he mentioned that hyperbole can be used as a language strategy to legitimise the speaker's claim. Speakers resort to using hyperbole when they anticipate or expect their co-interlocutors to undermine their claims and when they are in adversarial positions. In this way, speakers can portray the complainable situation as worthy of complaint.

Using hyperbole, politicians may influence people's attitudes and viewpoints (e.g., fear and worry) by defending behaviour that listeners would normally condemn, or by devaluing some state of affairs or situations that most people would be contented, but can still be improved (e.g., Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2003; Snoeck Henkemans, 2013; Kalkhoven, 2015). For example, during the 1990s, Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) were hyperbolically referred to as "*Frankenfood*," conveying an extremely negative connotation (Hellsten, 2003). Drawing on the well-known Frankenstein story from the 19th century, this hyperbolic framing served to caution against perceived unethical practices in the sciences, particularly regarding unnatural tampering with life. Opponents of GMOs utilised this hyperbolic expression to emphasise the perceived unethicality and potential harm of GMOs. As a reasoning device, hyperbole has the ability to influence consumers' emotions (i.e., arousing a sense of fear and worry), and shape their attitudes by narrowing the scope of discussion (i.e., focusing on the degree of harm of GMOs rather than debating whether GMOs are good or bad) (Burgers et al., 2016).

In advertising, advertisers and publicists frequently use exaggerated and fantastical claims to boost sales. In this context, advertising words should be vivid, conspicuous, and impressive, with high readability, in order to build up their products and services in the minds of consumers. Hyperbole is, no doubt, a vivid, striking and forceful way of expression. Using a corpus-based approach, Kaltenbacher (2006) compared the patterns of hyperbole in tourist websites in Austria, Utah, and Scotland. Predominant semantic associations between positive upgrading phrases (e.g., *the most beautiful, finest, best, etc.*) and proper nouns of natural-cultural attractions and sports are observed, suggesting that, in tourism websites, hyperbole is

strategically deployed to boast about the quality of various travel destinations. This study also focused on the peculiarities of hyperbole use across cultures and found that Scottish tourism websites exhibit a tendency to employ hyperbole to a greater extent compared to websites from Austria and Utah. Similarly, Cacchiani (2007) stated that promotional genres like book blurbs are a rich source of intensifying devices. These devices, characterised by their novelty and creativity, are important in appealing to potential readers and making the book more attractive. In addition, Cacchiani's conclusions were similar to those of Jaworska (2017), who also observed that in promotional discourse, hyperbole tends to combine together with other devices, for instance, metaphorical expressions, in order to creatively express strong intensification. In Section 1.5 of the current chapter, the combined effect of hyperbole and metaphor will be further illustrated.

While other figurative devices, such as metaphor (e.g., Charteris-Black, 2011; Burgers & Ahrens, 2020), irony (e.g., Tsakona, 2011; Musolff, 2017), and humour (e.g., Everts, 2003; Tsakona, 2009), have been extensively examined in tourism advertising, the occurrence and discursive role of hyperbole in this genre have been comparatively overlooked. Moreover, the existing research on hyperbole in the context of advertising, particularly in tourism, has predominantly focused on using ECF (e.g., Kaltenbacher, 2006). These studies used a top-down approach, relying on pre-existing lists of hyperbolic keywords to identify potential instances of hyperbole (e.g., Cano Mora, 2003; McCarthy & Carter, 2004; Claridge, 2011), and assisted by computer software to generate concordance lines of these keywords, allowing researchers to analyse their occurrence and patterns in the corpus (e.g., Kaltenbacher, 2006).

Nevertheless, the top-down approach has its own shortcoming, as it potentially overlooks other expressions that do not appear in the list but may also convey hyperbolic meaning. To address this gap in the previous literature, the current study employs a bottom-up approach to investigate the use of hyperbole in hotel advertising. By employing a more comprehensive analysis, this research aims to uncover and explore a wider range of hyperbolic expressions beyond the predefined keyword lists.

Secondly, although hyperbole has gained renewed interest in rhetoric research in recent years, the majority of studies have focused on its use in everyday conversation and have developed identification procedures and taxonomy frameworks based on interactive contexts. Given the scarcity of research on hyperbole in luxury hotel websites and the limitations of previous identification procedures designed for conversational data (Camiciottoli, 2012), there is a need

for further investigation into hyperbolic expressions in non-interactive contexts. Recall that the first objective of this thesis is to explore the use of figurative devices in tourism advertising discourse. Using a corpus technique and HIP, the current project aims to contribute to the existing body of literature on hyperbole by systematically exploring the categories of hyperbole in luxury hotel websites. Therefore, the third research question that will be answered in the current research project is:

RQ3: What types of hyperbole are used on luxury hotel websites, and what are their frequencies?

1.4.6 The Experimental Study of Hyperbole in Advertising

Empirical research on the effects of hyperbole, both in visual and verbal forms, has been relatively limited in advertising discourse, compared with metaphor (i.e., Huang, 2020; Stern & Callister, 2020). Past research has consistently demonstrated the superiority of hyperbole over literal expressions across different contexts through the use of an experimental approach and has provided diverse explanatory accounts, as summarised in Table 1.4. For instance, through comparing participants' responses to hyperbolic victim statements and non-hyperbolic victim statements, Desai et al. (2021) found that participants exposed to hyperbolic victim statements tend to rate testimonies as more believable and impacted, especially among non-specialist participants. In advertising, figurative language has been shown to have a significant influence on consumers' attitudes and behavioural intentions towards a product. Callister and Stern (2007) suggested that hyperbolic advertisements generate higher levels of ad liking compared to non-hyperbolic advertisements. Kronrod and Danziger (2013) investigated whether figurative language in consumer reviews will lead to more favourable attitudes and purchase intentions. In their study, the figurative stimuli used consisted of the following:

The rooms are bigger than those in a palace!

The view blows your mind away!

The service is like on a king's reception!

The food: Yummy...

Bottom line, Paradise disguised as a hotel room!

Following the studies conducted by Kronrod & Danziger (2013), Wu et al. (2017) and Choi et al. (2019) replicated the experiments using similar stimuli and discursive contexts. While these studies have been illuminating in understanding the effectiveness of hyperbole, upon closer examination, it becomes apparent that the stimuli contain various forms of figurative language, not limited to hyperbole. Specifically, the figurative texts used in these studies incorporate not only metaphorical expressions such as “*paradise*” but also hyperboles like “*mind-blowing*” at the same time.

Therefore, while previous investigations are insightful with respect to figurative framing devices in general, I would argue that their findings may offer limited insight into the purpose of the current study which is dedicated to explore the effectiveness of metaphor and hyperbole individually. This limitation stems from the lack of strict distinctions between different types of figurative devices. Psycholinguistic research has shown that processing metaphor and hyperbole may require distinct cognitive mechanisms (Deamer, 2013), indicating that there might be different persuasion effects between metaphor and hyperbole. For the purpose of testing the effects of hyperbole, creating stimuli that contain only one type of figurative device (i.e., metaphor or hyperbole) are necessary.

Table 1.4 Summary of recent research on the effectiveness of hyperbole

Authors	Language Types	Manipulation checks and Dependent Variables	Major findings
Desai et al. (2021)	Hyperbolic language & Literal language	Belief; Sympathy; Victim-impact; Likability	In Experiment 1 (specialist participants), hyperbole in victim statements had an overall negative effect. In Experiment 2 (non-specialist participants), hyperbole had a positive effect.
Boeynaems et al. (2021)	Metaphor, Hyperbole & Literal language	Policy attitude; Evaluation of the politician; Likelihood to vote for the politician; Perceived message intensity; Emotions; Perceived novelty; Perceived aptness	Overall, voters perceived figuratively framed populist statements as more intense and emotive than nonfigurative statements. By contrast, right-wing populist voters were not persuaded by rhetorical variations in anti-immigration statements.
Kronrod & Danziger (2013)	Figurative language & Literal language	Product Attitudes; Typicality; Figurativeness	Figurative language in consumer-generated content is worthwhile in conveying a hedonic experience, while it may decrease effectiveness when conveying a utilitarian experience.
Wu et al. (2017)	Figurative language & Literal language	Attitude; Reservation intention; Language typicality; Scenario realism	When a review is posted by a low expertise reviewer, consumers show lower reservation intentions if the review is written in figurative language (vs literal language).
Choi, Liu & Mattila (2019)	Figurative language & Literal language	Service encounter evaluation; Perceived credibility; Figurativeness	People evaluated the service encounter more favourably when the human service agent used literal (vs figurative) language.
Huang (2020)	Visual hyperbole, Non-hyperbolic visual & Verbal hyperbole	Incongruity; Perceived humour; Attitude toward the ad; Product belief strength; The level of exaggeration; Playfulness; Subjective comprehension; Purchase decision involvement	Visual hyperbole is more effective than literal visual and verb hyperbole regarding perceived incongruity, perceived humour, ad attitude and product belief strength.
Stern & Callister (2020)	Hyperbole & Puffery	Advertisement liking; Product-name recall; Product quality; Deception; Advertiser intent to persuade, inform, and entertain; Purchase intention	Hyperbole advertisements yield the highest ad liking, perceived general product quality, and buying intention, along with the highest ratings of perceived deception, in contrast to puffery and control advertisement.

However, not all previous studies have suggested that hyperboles have positive persuasive effects. Boeynaems et al. (2021) conducted a study that investigated the effectiveness of figurative framing devices in right-wing anti-immigrant statements. Through a series of experiments, the researchers found that the use of metaphorical frames and hyperbolic frames can enhance perceived intensification and emotion. However, they also observed a potential boomerang effect, whereby these figurative devices could lead to a shift in opinion away from the intended positions advocated in political messages. As a result, the authors concluded that the use of metaphors and hyperbole, specifically in the context of anti-immigrants, may contribute to the widening gap between voters and further polarization within society.

In addition, contradictory to Kronrod & Danziger (2013), Wu et al. (2017) found that figurative language does not offer significant advantages in terms of persuasive power. Consumers even exhibit less favourable attitudes and lower reservation intention after reading a figurative (versus literal) review posted by a low-expertise reviewer. Results from Wu et al. (2017) also suggested that when researchers look at whether certain language phenomena influence recipients' perceptions and purchase attitudes, it is important to consider the specific communicative context and the recipient's demographics such as age, gender, income, and even existing consumption habits, which may also affect the results.

To recapitulate, to address the limited focus on hyperbole in previous studies, the present research aims to investigate the effectiveness of hyperbole specifically in the context of luxury hotel advertising. After having critically reviewed the existing empirical literature, I will present a fourth research question that will be addressed in the current research project, which is directly relevant to the second research objective.

RQ4: How does hyperbole on luxury hotel websites affect consumers' perceptions and purchase intentions?

1.5 Combined Effect of Metaphor and Hyperbole

Hyperbole has traditionally been categorised with metaphors, especially by researchers in Relevance Theory (RT), who claimed that "they (metaphor and hyperbole) were both loose

forms of language use and required the addressee to form an ad hoc concept which was broader in its denotation than the lexically encoded meaning” (Carston & Wearing, 2015, p. 86). Recent research has challenged this view by suggesting that metaphor and hyperbole are discrete categories of language use that can occur independently of each other, even though they both relate to the process of lexical broadening and narrowing, and can appear without the support of other tropes. The distinction between metaphor and hyperbole is further supported by a series of online reading time experiments, where a significant difference in reading times between metaphorical and hyperbolic sentences suggests the presence of distinct comprehension mechanisms underlying each device (e.g., Deamer, 2013).

According to Carston and Wearing (2015), metaphor differs from hyperbole in that the former primarily gives a description of its referent, which moves attention away from the referent’s basic meaning. Hyperbole, in contrast, is mainly evaluative and only draws attention to the basic meaning of the referent. In the interpretation of hyperbolic expressions, the shift of meaning occurs only on the quantitative scale. For instance, the phrase “millions of” in example (6) can be used to express admiration for the considerable number of prizes she has won, even without specifying the exact number of awards.

(4) She has won *millions of* awards.

Imagine a geometric scale that represents values from “one” to “a million,” the idiomatic expression “millions of,” a fictitious number that is unattainable in reality, clearly falls towards the extreme end of the scale, as it purposefully inflates the intended meaning of the utterance. In this context, through using “millions of” to describe the number of awards, there is a deliberate upward intensification that highlights the impressive nature of the achievement.

(5) Her anger radiated like *a nuclear explosion* (Carston & Wearing, 2015).

The phrase “*a nuclear explosion*” in sentence (7) is used by the addresser to describe the degree of anger. The expression exhibits characteristics of hyperbole because the literal meaning is taken to an extreme point on a scale (i.e., her anger may lead to serious consequences, it is not meant to be interpreted literally as causing destruction on the scale of a nuclear explosion). Concurrently, the expression involves a shift in meaning, wherein one’s emotional status is compared to the magnitude of a nuclear explosion, indicating the expression is metaphorical. In this case, the expression *a nuclear explosion* is both metaphorical and hyperbolic, suggesting the heightened emotional intensity being conveyed.

While many studies have tended to examine the influence of metaphor and hyperbole as separate phenomena, the two figures can co-occur in natural language use, giving rise to what is known as metaphorical hyperbole (Mattiello, 2012). Such cases abound in various political discourses (i.e., *a tsunami of immigrants; a cancer on the Earth*) because “combinatory figurative frames have framing effects that go beyond the impact of each of the individual figures” (Burgers et al., 2016, p.420). When these two rhetorical devices are employed simultaneously, it is very difficult to challenge the statement because it contains two rhetorical operations at the same time, making it difficult to refute the author with an alternative expression (Burgers et al., 2016).

Interestingly, to the best of my knowledge, there is an absence of research that directly compares metaphor and hyperbole or inspects the different persuasive effects of using these devices in isolation versus in combination within advertising discourse; these gaps in the research need to be addressed. In examining the effects of a list of figurative devices in real advertisement headlines, Mothersbaugh et al. (2002) suggested that when figures leverage unique mechanisms, such as schemes and tropes, their combination leads to incremental processing gains. However, when figures leverage redundant mechanisms, such as multiple tropes, their combination does not yield any additional processing benefits.

However, the figurative devices tested by Mothersbaugh (2002) only include rhyme, antithesis, rhetorical questions, and puns. Even though Mothersbaugh’s study showed differences in persuasive effects among these four figurative devices, I would argue that it is inadequate to generate the findings reported in that study to other figurative devices (i.e., metaphor and hyperbole) because different devices involve different persuasive abilities and working mechanisms. Furthermore, Mothersbaugh (2002) tested hyperbole in advertisement headlines and sub-headlines. In a real-world scenario, when a customer processes an advertisement text, different textual components in the advertisement may not be memorised equally and therefore play a different role in the reader’s comprehension process. The process of reading a sentence and a passage involves distinct comprehension mechanisms, which require the evaluation of meaning in terms of context and real-world knowledge (Hagoort et al., 2004; Jackendoff, 2002). Therefore, the fact that sentences and passages have different influences on reading comprehension suggests that researchers should consider the format of stimuli when conducting experiments.

Given the limited research on the combined use of multiple figurative devices, there remain gaps in our understanding of the utilisation and effectiveness of figurative devices when used in combination in advertising. This thesis aims to fill these gaps by investigating the use of metaphorical hyperboles in promotional tourism discourse and examining whether the use of different figurative devices in combination influences the extent of persuasion effects. In terms of the examination of the combined effect of metaphor and hyperbole, the thesis will conduct a direct comparison of the effectiveness among four conditions: literal language, metaphor only, hyperbole only, and the combined use of metaphor and hyperbole. In light of this, the following research questions are proposed:

RQ5: What types of metaphorical hyperboles are used on luxury hotel websites, and what are their functions?

RQ6: Will the combined use of metaphor and hyperbole be more effective than the isolated use of figurative devices on luxury hotel websites?

1.6 Figurative Language and Text Perceptions

Previous studies on rhetoric have argued that rhetorical information could boost cognitive text perception, a type of content-related thought, more than literal messages (Mothersbaugh et al., 2002). Metaphor deviates from the conventional use of language, and the rich interpretations and implicatures caused by such deviation require the recipient to put more thought into comprehending them (Gibbs, 1994; Hoeken et al., 2009). More cognitive efforts may be required to understand complex figurative information compared to simple figurative expressions or literal expressions. Therefore, metaphors can provide a fresh perspective and generate cognitive connections that decrease the perceived complexity of the advertisement. In this study, I will propose hypotheses predicting the difference in cognitive text perception induced by metaphorically framed advertisement and non-metaphorical advertisement:

H1: In advertising, metaphors positively impact affective text perception compared with literal expressions, which, in turn, increase purchase intention.

On the other hand, scholars have also argued that figurative framing can increase affect text perception, a content-based feeling. After successfully solving the “incongruity” between the propositional meaning and the intended meaning of figurative messages, recipients will reward a sense of pleasure and are more likely to think the text is exciting and interesting (e.g., Claridge, 2010; Harris, 2009). In the context of luxury consumption, consumers are largely driven by hedonic motives, seeking emotional gratification and indulgence through the consumption of luxury brands (Seo & Buchanan-Oliver, 2019). Considering the close relationship between emotional perceptions and figurative language, it is plausible to postulate that figurative language that frames the product in particularly favourable ways (i.e., emphasising the product’s hedonic features) could potentially influence how consumers perceive the product and “nudge” them to purchase the luxury hotel services. In this vein, I would expect a positive relationship between figuratively framed advertisements and affective text perception:

H2a: The advertisement that is framed figuratively will increase affective text perception than the advertisement that is framed literally.

H2b: In advertising, hyperboles positively impact affective text perception compared with literal expressions, which, in turn, increase purchase intention.

In addition, previous studies have shown that text perception can be regarded as a causal mediator in the process of advertising persuasion, which can positively influence the purchase intention of recipients (Petty et al., 1981; MacKenzie et al., 1986). As such, building on the literature review, it is postulated:

H3: Cognitive and affective text perception elicited by figurative language (metaphor and hyperbole) will positively influence purchase intention.

1.7 Cross-cultural Analysis

In Section 1.4.5, the work of Kaltenbacher (2006) was briefly discussed, in which he conducted a comparative analysis of hyperbole patterns in tourist websites from various countries. The findings of the analysis revealed that the texts from American websites support the stereotype of American being more personal and emotional compared to other cultures. This is evident

through the overrepresentation of elements of historical significance and a higher frequency of superlatives in American texts.

The cross-cultural variations in the use of figurative language have been emphasised in many studies. Jaworska (2017), for instance, identified the correlation between the distance of destinations and the frequency of metaphorical expressions on tourism websites. It is observed that the further away a destination is, the higher the occurrence of metaphorical expressions. In addition, the study indicated that the British corpus exhibits a prevalence of metaphors related to the domains of BODY and PHYSICAL MOVEMENT, while the Europe corpus and the Asia-Pacific corpus tend to employ more metaphors related to NATURAL PRECIOUS ELEMENTS, RELIGION, and BODY.

The analysis of comparable corpora from a cross-cultural perspective can help provide valuable insights into the cultural differences and preferences that influence advertising practices to appeal to specific target audiences in different regions. However, the majority of these studies have centred around Inner Circle English varieties (as proposed by Kachru, 1992; Kachru et al., 1985) and European languages (e.g., Agorni, 2016; Fuster-Márquez, 2014, 2017; Suau-Jiménez, 2019). By expanding the inspection of figurative language to include luxury hotel websites in two major Asian cities, this research will enrich not only our understanding of the unique social-cultural contexts found in Singapore and Hong Kong but also the growing body of literature that highlights the diversity and variability of figurative language usage across different cultures.

1.8 Outline of Thesis

I will now outline the overall structure of this thesis. In this chapter (**Chapter 1**), the aim was to provide an introduction to the subject of the study and list the research questions that guide the inquiry, through comprehensively reviewing the key issues and concepts that form the foundations of the study. The discussion centred around the theoretical underpinnings of the research inquiry, specifically regarding the manifestation and utilisation of metaphor and hyperbole in tourism advertising, as well as the empirical evidence concerning the persuasive impact of metaphor and hyperbole in real-world discourse. The illustration of these two

research paradigms revealed their complementary nature, highlighting how they could collectively contribute to achieving the two research objectives of the study.

This investigative approach will be given more definition in **Chapter 2**, which elaborates on the overall analytic framework used in this study. Firstly, the process of corpus building is delineated in-depth, outlining the criteria and procedures used to search, gather and organize relevant data for analysis. Subsequently, methods for identifying instances of metaphor and hyperbole within the collected corpus are presented. Finally, the conceptual model utilised in the experimental study is introduced, providing a framework for examining the persuasive impact of metaphor and hyperbole in promotional tourism discourse.

Chapter 3 situates the study within its broader discursive and social contexts by discussing branding strategies in the contemporary luxury hospitality industry and argues for the importance of investigating the deployment of figurative language in luxury branding. Specifically, I will commence by introducing the trend of experiential marketing and the promotion of luxury values in the luxury travel industry, including notions of exclusivity, aesthetics, and high-quality, which can be constructed, embodied, and communicated through the use of figurative language. I will then explain that exploring figurative language in specific situated contexts contributes to the refinement and advancement of figurative theory, enhancing our understanding of the intricate nature and functions of figurative language.

Detailed discourse analysis takes place in **Chapter 4** to **Chapter 7**. **Chapter 4** of the study reports on a corpus-based study that examines the characteristics of metaphors found on luxury hotels' proprietary websites in Singapore and Hong Kong and looks at how these hotels and their amenities are positively delineated through the use of metaphorical language. The Metaphor Identification Procedure VU University Amsterdam (MIPVU), developed by Steen et al. (2010), is employed to identify metaphorical expressions within the textual data, and Source Domain Verification Procedure (Ahrens & Jiang, 2020) is used to ascertain the source domain of each metaphorical expression. The analysis is conducted using a mixed-method approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Chapter 5, following a similar approach as in **Chapter 4**, reports on a corpus-based study that examines the characteristics of the hyperbolic language in the corpora and their functions in depicting a luxurious image of hotels. In this study, hyperbolic expressions are identified using the HIP (Hyperbole Identification Procedure, Burgers et al., 2016) and subsequently classified

according to their grammatical categories. The analysis of hyperbolic language in this chapter involves both qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

In **Chapter 6**, the analysis predominantly focuses on the phenomenon of metaphorical hyperbole from a cognitive linguistic perspective. It introduces cognitive models that classify metaphorical hyperboles into two distinct categories, each with its own mode of integrating metaphorical and hyperbolic elements. Linguistic evidence, derived from a corpus analysis, will also be presented to substantiate and support the proposed models.

The findings from **Chapter 4** and **Chapter 5** are used for creating stimuli and formulating hypotheses regarding the effectiveness of figurative devices, which are subsequently tested and validated through an experiment conducted in **Chapter 7**. In **Chapter 7**, an experiment with a 2 (metaphor: present, absent) x 2 (hyperbole: present, absent) between-subjects design is used to explore the extent to which metaphorical language, hyperbolic language, and their combination influence recipients' cognitive text perception, affective text perception, and purchase intention. During the experiment, participants are presented with a fictitious luxury hotel advertisement that contains either figurative expressions or literal language, and then asked to provide their evaluations of the advertisements, as well as indicate their intention to make a reservation. Participants for the experiment are recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk, and the experiment is conducted online.

Chapter 8 concludes the thesis with an overall summary of the study, including a concise review of the earlier major findings, the theoretical and practical implications derived from the findings, potential avenues for further investigation, and constraints or challenges encountered during the research process.

1.9 Summary and Chapter Conclusion

This chapter illustrated existing research gaps by conducting a comprehensive review of the literature. From the literature review, two primary research objectives were proposed, and subsequently, six main research questions were formulated based on these objectives. Finally, we provided brief summaries of each chapter of the thesis.

Given the nature of hotel websites as a promotional genre, it is plausible to expect the presence of metaphorical and hyperbolic language. However, the research on promotional tourism advertising that specifically focuses on metaphor and hyperbole remains still limited and has not been thoroughly explored. Also, existing experimental studies examining the persuasive impact of figurative language have yielded mixed results regarding the effectiveness of metaphor and hyperbole on the perceptions and behaviours of recipients, suggesting that the influence of figurative language may vary based on industry, product type, social context, and other factors. Moreover, cross-cultural comparative studies in this field have revealed variations in the use of figurative language, indicating the influence of cultural and linguistic differences on the utilisation of figurative language in real-world communication.

Considering the research gaps mentioned above, there is a need for a more holistic investigation into the manifestation and effectiveness of metaphor and hyperbole in the context of promotional tourism discourse. To address these gaps, the current thesis proposes two research objectives accordingly. The following chapter will shed light on the precise analytic framework through which the investigation of the utilisation and effectiveness of metaphor and hyperbole is conducted. The research framework is based on two main approaches: corpus analysis and a survey-embedded experiment, which correspond to the two research objectives, respectively.

2. Chapter 2 Analytic Framework

2.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter sets forth the methodology and materials used in this study. It first revisits the two research objectives outlined in Chapter 1 and further specifies and relates them to the analytic tools employed through the presentation of six research questions. The first research objective aims to describe the manifestation of figurative language in luxury hotel websites in Singapore and Hong Kong, which will be addressed through a corpus-based methodology, anchoring its analysis on empirical data rather than relying on introspective or subjective assessments. In this vein, the chapter will offer a detailed introduction of the corpus that will be subjected to close textual analysis in this study, including a description of the data collection process, the coding schemes for figurative language identification, and the subsequent interpretation procedures. The analysis deploys a combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques to facilitate a comprehensive investigation. Thus, the tools and software for the statistical analysis will also be summarised. The first part of the study can be characterised as a synchronic perspective, focusing on the actual language usage at a particular time rather than diachronic changes in the language system.

The second research objective complements and extends the first inquiry by testing the effectiveness of figurative language in discourse. To accomplish this, participants will be recruited online and exposed to different versions of luxury hotel advertisements that feature either figurative language or literal language. By observing recipients' responses to these advertisements, potential causal relationships between the use of figurative language and recipients' perceptions can be discerned. In this chapter, we will also explain the experimental protocol used in this thesis, including the experimental design, the instrument employed, the experimental procedure, and the subsequent approaches to data analysis.

Before we get into the details of the analytic framework, it is important to point out that while there is no agreed-upon classification of hotel websites as a distinct genre, recent studies that specifically examine Internet communication platforms have recognised the independent status of hotel websites as a form of cyber-genre. Building upon this argument, the current thesis will adopt the view that hotel websites, as a type of promotional genre, embrace the dual functions of providing factual information and engaging in persuasive communication (e.g., Stepins,

2022; Suen, 2009). The main features of luxury hotel websites will be illustrated in the next chapter (Chapter 3).

2.2 Analytic Framework

2.2.1 Research Overall Design

Below are the two primary objectives that this thesis seeks to accomplish, each accompanied and further explained by three research questions in the hope of making a more robust connection between the main objectives and the analytical tools deployed in this study. The first research objective seeks to evaluate the utilisation of figurative language in the context of promotional discourse, while the second objective focuses on the effectiveness of metaphor and hyperbole in promotional discourse. The two research objectives and six research questions, which were previously discussed in the literature review in Chapter 1 (Section 1.3 to Section 1.5), are summarised as follows:

Objective 1: Explore the utilisation of figurative language in the context of promotional discourse.

- What types of metaphor are used on luxury hotel websites, and what are their functions?
- What types of hyperbole are used on luxury hotel websites, and what are their functions?
- What types of metaphorical hyperboles are used on luxury hotel websites, and what functions?

Objective 2: Inspect the effectiveness of figurative language in promotional discourse.

- How does metaphor on luxury hotel websites affect consumers' perceptions and purchase intentions?
- How does hyperbole on luxury hotel websites affect consumers' perceptions and purchase intentions?

- Will the combined use of metaphor and hyperbole be more effective than the isolated use of figurative device on luxury hotel websites?

In order to achieve these two objectives, the current research project used *a mixed-methods exploratory sequential design* (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). This design involved an initial phase of text-based exploration, where both qualitative and quantitative data were collected before conducting the experiment, with the aim of planning measures and specifying instruments to develop and enhance the experiment (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Therefore, the thesis started with a content analysis of figurative language in two corpora made up of texts introducing hotel facilities in Singapore and Hong Kong.

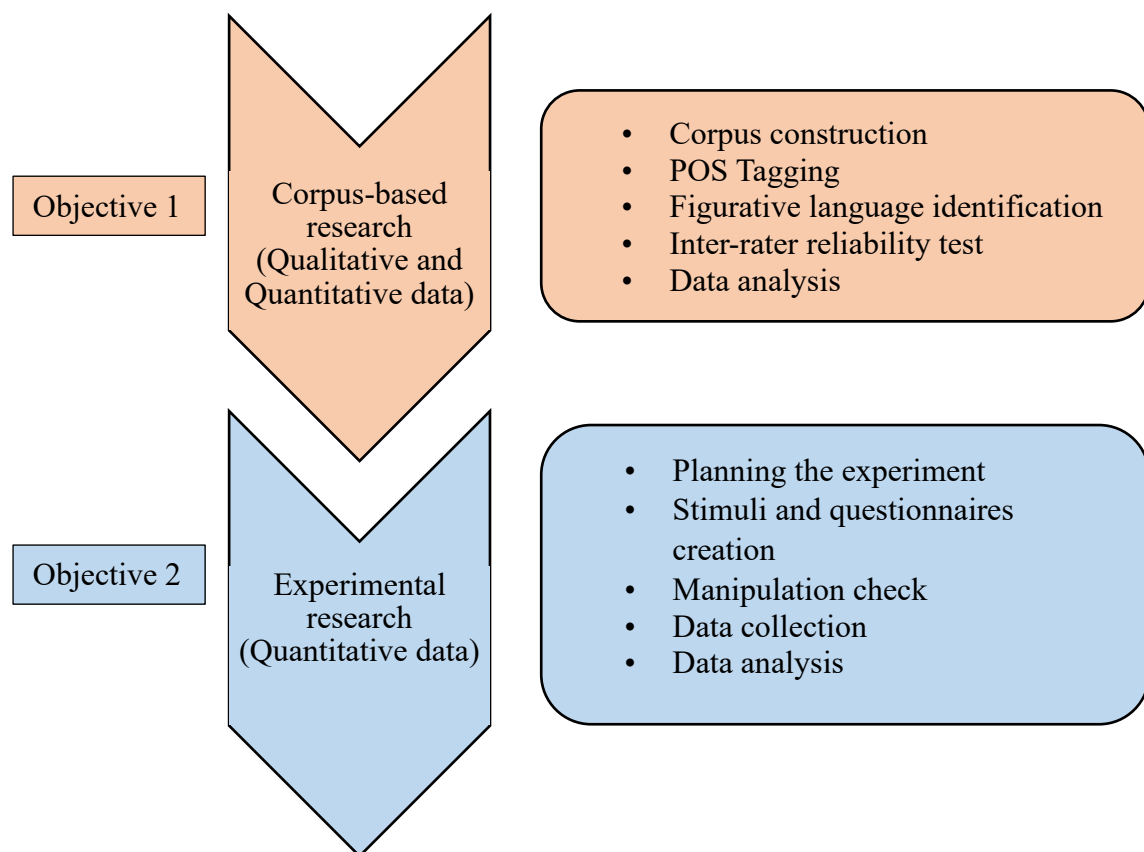


Figure 2.1 The overall structure of the current research

The first research objective of the study is to describe the promotional characteristics of luxury hotel websites, with a specific emphasis on how various hotel services can be marketed and luxury values are communicated through figurative language that is amenable to close

discourse analysis. Given the multitude of figurative devices available, the current thesis specifically centres on two commonly used figurative devices that are highly relevant to promotional purposes: metaphor and hyperbole.

Metaphor and hyperbole can be expressed both visually and verbally. Despite the fact that multimodal elements are prevalent in promotional settings, including luxury hotel websites (e.g., Cheng & Suen, 2014; Turra, 2020), the written content of a hotel's website plays an essential role in influencing customers' purchasing decisions, as it creates a favourable image for the hotel and thus attract customers to visit. Regrettably, this aspect has often been overlooked in previous research within the field. In this thesis, the focus was directed towards the verbal mode, examining how linguistic metaphors and hyperboles, along with their respective source domains (for metaphors) and grammatical categories (for hyperbole), were manifested in luxury hotel websites.

Qualitative and quantitative methods were used for data analysis. For the quantitative analysis of the collected data, a statistical technique known as the Log-linear model was exploited to generate an overall metaphor/hyperbole usage profile in the corpus to probe the associations between various contextual parameters, including promotional language, different hotel facilities, and regions of luxury hotels. Then, qualitative discourse analysis was used to interpret the features and functions of figurative language in the corpus, providing a deeper understanding of how metaphor and hyperbole contribute to shaping the meaning of luxury in the promotional discourse of luxury hotel websites.

The second research objective lends a critical edge to this thesis by seeking empirical evidence to substantiate the hypotheses and findings derived from the previous corpus analysis regarding the functions of figurative devices. Experimental research, in a (semi) controlled environment, tests the effects of the independent variable(s) on the dependent variable(s) to support or refute a hypothesis of the causal relationship between the intervention and the outcome. In the present research context, the investigation of the effectiveness of figurative language involved a comparison of the persuasive impact of figurative hotel advertisements and literal hotel advertisements. Our hypotheses posited that figurative language can improve recipients' cognitive text perception and affective text perception, thus influencing their inclination to book hotel rooms. The metaphorical and hyperbolic expressions identified through corpus analysis were used as stimuli in the experiment in order to increase the ecological validity of the study.

Overall, the examination of the utilisation and effectiveness of figurative language in this research included the descriptions of the characteristics of metaphor and hyperbole, the interpretation of their persuasive functions, and their connections to luxury meanings in the luxury industry, as well as their correlations with consumers' perceptions and purchase intentions. Analytically, the two research objectives worked in concert, presupposing a trajectory that moved from hypothesis generation to hypothesis testing. This analytical sequence allowed for the integration of inductive and deductive reasoning, which greatly contributed to methodological rigour and a comprehensive understanding of the data. To illustrate the overall framework and the flow of analysis, Figure 2.1 provides a visualisation of the structure of the research project. The following sections will describe in detail the implementation of each step.

2.2.2 Corpus Analysis

2.2.2.1 Corpus Approach in Language Studies

In the field of language sciences, a corpus is defined as a collection of written texts or transcribed speech used as a dataset for linguistic analysis and description. Corpora can be constructed for diverse purposes, tailored to specific research objectives and data analysis requirements, which also affect the nature of each corpus, as well as its design and size (Kennedy, 2014).

One of the advantages of using a corpus in linguistic analysis is its capacity to provide sufficient contextual information concerning specific linguistic features. By searching for a particular phonological, lexical, grammatical, pragmatic, or discursive element, within a vast collection of texts, researchers can inspect its occurrence, distribution, collocations, and even track changes over time. In their study, Chang and Hsieh (2018) investigated the most frequent lexical bundle “*ka li kong*” (to-you-say) (KLL) in a corpus of Taiwanese Hokkien conversations. This corpus, characterised by its regional specificity, provided the researchers with a valuable source of data to investigate the discourse-pragmatic function of the KLL cluster, such as how conversations are managed by the interlocutors through the expression.

Comparative corpus analysis allows researchers to explore both the similarities and differences in language usage within a parallel corpus or across different corpora. For example, Wang (2021) has indicated that the English-Chinese parallel corpus, which contains aligned texts in both English and Chinese, is a helpful resource for translation practice and translation studies

because it enables scholars to identify translation equivalents and examine translation patterns and strategies. Similarly, Skorczynska's (2012) comparison of *vertical* metaphor variation between general business management discourse and project management discourse revealed that metaphorical expressions related to the source domains of BUILDING, JOURNEY and NAUTICAL ACTIVITIES are more common in specialised management discourse, although they are also present in both types of discourse.

Corpus-based methods have also proven to be a valuable tool for tourism-related communication research from various perspectives. For example, in Mocini (2009), a corpus of travel brochures introducing different destinations was constructed. Employing semiotic analysis, the study explored the underlying linguistic mechanisms used for tourism promotion in these brochures. Additionally, Stepins (2022) compiled three comparable corpora of regional promotional tourism websites from England, Germany, and Spain to identify similarities and differences in metaphor usage across the three languages. The study showed that the three corpora share similarities in terms of the types of metaphors deployed and their distribution throughout the texts. However, variations were observed regarding the frequency of metaphor, the preferred figurative expressions, and the main functions of metaphors in the discourse.

Considering the extensive applications and benefits of using corpus in linguistic research, this thesis followed a similar approach to previous studies by building a specialised corpus consisting of luxury hotel websites from Singapore and Hong Kong. The subsequent sections will detail the process of building the corpus, conducting Part-of-Speech (POS) tagging, identifying figurative language, and undertaking data analysis.

2.2.2.2 Corpus Construction

As depicted in Figure 2.1, the initial phase of this research was a corpus-based analysis, involving four key steps. The first step was corpus building, in which English texts introducing hotel facilities were manually retrieved from hotels' official websites and saved as Word files. The resulting corpus consisted of 31 five-star luxury hotels from Hong Kong and 31 five-star luxury hotels from Singapore, encompassing approximately 186,000 words. Then, all the texts underwent a meticulous manual annotation process to identify and label all instances of metaphorical expressions and hyperbolic expressions in a bottom-up manner. To achieve this, the study employed the Metaphor Identification Procedure VU University Amsterdam

(MIPVU, Steen et al., 2010) for metaphor identification and the Hyperbole Identification Procedure (HIP, Burgers et al., 2016) for hyperbole identification.

For quantitative analysis, statistical tools such as log-linear regression models were used to gauge overall patterns and associations pertaining to the usage of figurative language in the two corpora (the Singapore corpus and the Hong Kong corpus). This statistical approach helped to uncover how various contextual parameters, such as the type of hotel facilities or geographic locations, interacted and influenced the occurrence of figurative language in promotional tourism discourse. Finally, a qualitative discourse approach was deployed to unravel and interpret the associations between figurative language, different hotel facilities and geographic locations, thereby inspecting how these figurative devices contribute to the construction of luxury meanings in luxury tourism discourse.

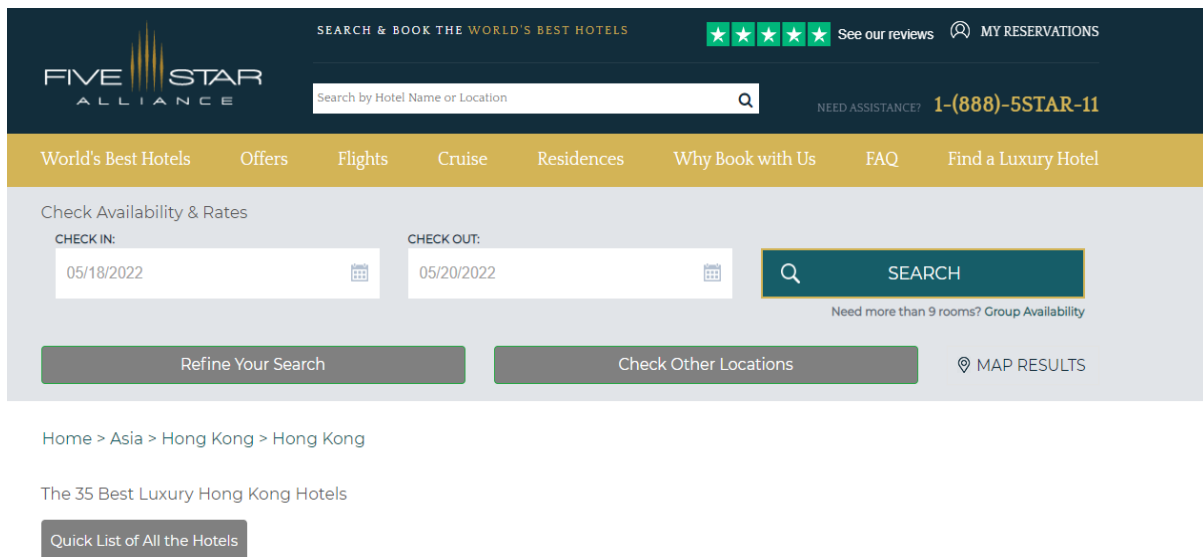


Figure 2.2 The website of Five Star Alliance (Five Star Alliance, 2022)²

To collect research data, it is necessary to determine and compile a list of luxury hotels in Singapore and Hong Kong. As there is no internationally unified rating system for determining luxury hotels (Suen, 2018), a methodology similar to that of Suen (2018) was adopted. The *Five Star Alliance*, a platform that provides comprehensive information on luxury hotels, was consulted for the information about luxury hotels. Figure 2.2 is a screenshot of the home page

² <https://www.fivestaralliance.com/>

of *Five Star Alliance*. Keywords “Hong Kong” and “Singapore” were entered into the search box on the *Five Star Alliance* website to retrieve a list of luxury hotels located in the abovementioned two regions. As a result, the *Five Star Alliance* search yielded a total of 34 luxury hotels from Singapore and 35 luxury hotels from Hong Kong.

Once the list of luxury hotels in Singapore and Hong Kong was generated, the next step was to conduct a search for the official website of each hotel. This was achieved by using the Google Search engine. As this study is interested in the English language, only the English version of the website was checked and retained for further analysis. During the checking process, it was found that three hotels from the Singapore list were deemed unsuitable for inclusion and were subsequently excluded from the study. For example, Klapsons the Boutique Hotel was excluded due to its permanent closure. The other two hotels, Angsana Resort Bintan and Banyan Tree Bintan, are situated on Bintan Island, which is administratively part of Indonesia rather than Singapore. These two hotels were therefore not considered relevant for the purposes of this study.

On the Hong Kong list, it was discovered that four hotels were either currently or permanently closed and therefore were left off the final list. These hotels were Hotel LKF by Rhombus, InterContinental Hong Kong, Le Meridien Cyberport, and The Excelsior, Hong Kong. Consequently, a total of 31 luxury hotels in Singapore and 31 hotels in Hong Kong were selected to compile the corpus for analysis. Data collection for the corpus took place at a specific point in time, specifically in May 2022, making the corpus synchronic and capturing the epitome of luxury hotel websites during this time period (Kennedy, 2014).

However, it is important to note that there have been changes in the luxury hotel name list since the time of data collection. Specifically, as of the writing of this thesis in April 2023, Regent Singapore has undergone a rebranding and is now operating as the Conrad Orchard Singapore, under the Hilton Group. Given that the data collection and analysis for this study were completed prior to the rebranding, the thesis has made the decision to retain the data related to Regent Singapore and not include data from the Conrad Orchard Singapore Hotel to ensure continuity and coherence in the analysis, although the rebranding has resulted in a change in the list of five-star hotels.

These 62 hotel websites were thoroughly explored, with the extraction of all language content related to introducing hotel facilities. The process of data collection was relatively

straightforward, which mainly involved copying the text from the websites and pasting it into plain Word files on the computer. Special attention was given to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the extracted content. Precautions were taken during the copying and pasting process to avoid, to the best extent possible, any omissions or alterations to the original texts. In addition, caution was taken to ensure that the order of content in the corpus was consistent with that of the original website.

Table 2.1 Descriptive statistics for each of the sub-corpora

Corpus	No. of texts	Types	Tokens
SG	31	7,927	104,531
HK	31	6,797	80,700
Overall	62	10,364	185,231

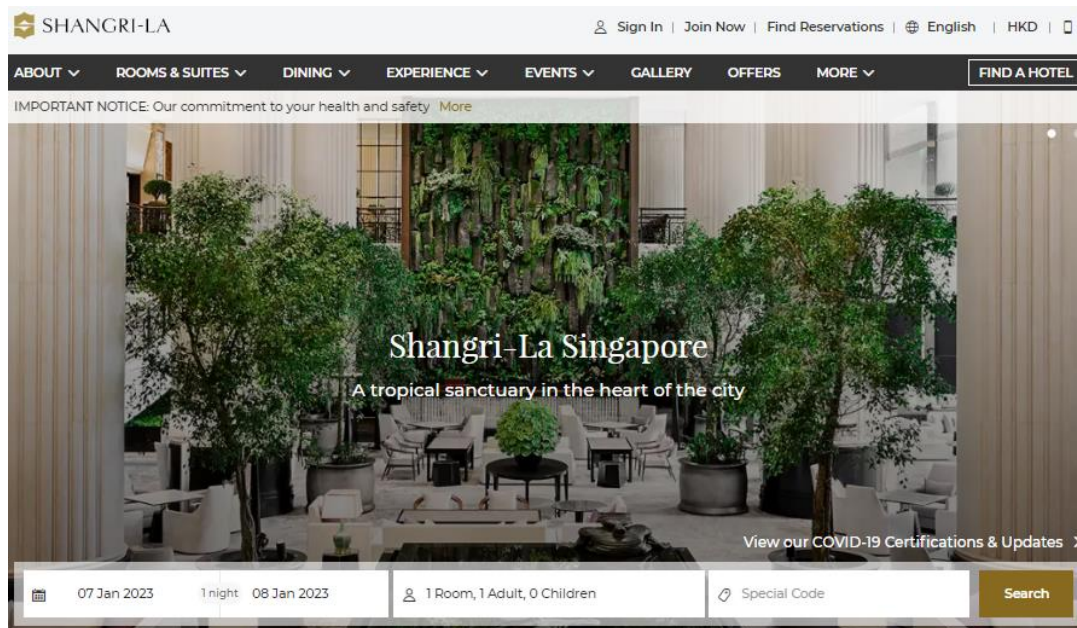
The corpus used in this study was divided into two sub-corpora based on the geographical locations of the hotels. The first sub-corpus, referred to as the SG corpus, consisted of 104,531 words, while the second sub-corpus, known as the HK corpus, comprised around 80,700 words. Each text in the corpus was saved in both .txt and .doc formats to ensure accessibility and compatibility for analysis purposes. Table 2.1 presents descriptive statistics for each of the sub-corpora, providing an overview of the corpus size and relevant metrics. For a detailed summary of the hotels included in the corpus, please refer to Table 2.2. Table 2.2 provides information such as the location, name, and the official website for each hotel, offering an overview of the hotels covered in the study.

Table 2.2 Corpus profile

SG corpus		HK corpus	
Hotel name	Website	Hotel name	Website
Andaz Singapore	https://www.hyatt.com/en-US/hotel/singapore/andaz-singapore/sinaz	Conrad Hong Kong	https://www.hilton.com/en/hotels/hkgghcci-conrad-hong-kong/
Capella Singapore	https://www.capellahotels.com/en/capella-singapore	Cordis Hong Kong at Langham Place	https://www.cordishotels.com/en/hong-kong/
Conrad Centennial Singapore	https://www.hilton.com/en/hotels/sincici-conrad-centennial-singapore/	Dorsett Wanchai	https://www.wanchai.dorsetthotels.com/
Fairmont Singapore	https://www.fairmont-singapore.com/	East Hong Kong	https://www.easthotels.com/en/hongkong/
Four Seasons Singapore	https://www.fourseasons.com/singapore/	Eaton Hotel Hong Kong	https://www.eatonworkshop.com/hotel/hong-kong/offers
Grand Hyatt Singapore	https://www.hyatt.com/en-US/hotel/singapore/grand-hyatt-singapore/sinrs	Four Seasons Hotel Hong Kong	https://www.fourseasons.com/hongkong/
Hotel Fort Canning	https://hfcSingapore.com/	Grand Hyatt Hong Kong	https://www.hyatt.com/en-US/hotel/china/grand-hyatt-hong-kong/hkggh
Hotel Jen Tanglin	https://www.shangri-la.com/en/hotels/jen/singapore/tanglin/	Harbour Grand Hong Kong	https://www.harbourgrand.com/hongkong/en/
Hotel Vagabond	https://www.hotelvagabondsingapore.com/	Harbour Grand Kowloon	https://www.harbourgrand.com/kowloon/en/
InterContinental Singapore	https://singapore.intercontinental.com/	Harbour Plaza Metropolis	https://www.harbour-plaza.com/metropolis/en/
Mandarin Oriental Singapore	https://www.mandarinoriental.com/singapore/marina-bay/luxury-hotel	Hotel ICON Hong Kong	https://www.hotel-icon.com/
Marina Bay Sands Singapore	https://www.marinabaysands.com/	Hotel Jen Hong Kong	https://www.shangri-la.com/en/hotels/jen
Naumi Hotel Singapore	https://naumihotels.com/singapore/	Hullett House Hotel	http://hullett-house.hongkonghotelsandrates.com/en/
Pan Pacific Singapore	https://www.panpacific.com/en/hotels-and-resorts/pp-marina.html	InterContinental Grand Stanford Hong Kong	https://www.ihg.com/intercontinental/hotels/us/en/reservation
Parkroyal Collection Marina Bay	https://www.panpacific.com/en/hotels-and-resorts/pr-collection-marina-bay.html	Island Shangri-La Hong Kong	https://www.shangri-la.com/en/hongkong/islandshangrila/
Raffles Hotel Singapore	https://www.affles.com/singapore/	JW Marriott Hotel Hong Kong	https://www.marriott.com/en-us/hotels/hkgdt-jw-marriott-hotel-hong-kong/overview/
Ritz Carlton Millenia Singapore	https://www.ritzcarlton.com/en/hotels/singapore	Kowloon Shangri-La	https://www.shangri-la.com/en/hongkong/kowloonshangrila/
Royal Plaza On Scotts	https://www.royalplaza.com.sg/	Lan Kwai Fong Hotel	https://www.dcollection.com/en/lan-kwai-fong-hotel-kau-u-fong/index.html
Shangri-La Hotel Singapore	https://www.shangri-la.com/en/singapore/shangrila/	Langham Hong Kong	https://www.langhamhotels.com/en/the-langham/hong-kong/
Singapore Marriott Hotel	https://www.marriott.com/en-us/hotels/sindt-singapore-marriott-tang-plaza-hotel/overview/	Mandarin Oriental Hong Kong	https://www.mandarinoriental.com/hong-kong/victoria-harbour/luxury-hotel
Sofitel Singapore Sentosa	https://www.sofitel-singapore-sentosa.com/	New World Millennium	https://newworldmillenniumhotel.com/en/
Sofitel So Singapore	https://www.so-singapore.com/	Park Lane Hotel Hong Kong	https://www.parklane.com.hk/

St Regis Singapore	https://www.marriott.com/en-us/hotels/sinxr-the-st-regis-singapore/overview/	Ritz Carlton Hong Kong	https://www.ritzcarlton.com/en/hotels/china/hong-kong
Swissotel Merchant Court	https://www.swissotel.com/hotels/singapore-merchant-court/	Royal Plaza Hotel	https://www.royalplaza.com.hk/en/
The Capitol Hotel Kempinski	https://www.kempinski.com/en/singapore/the-capitol-singapore/	The Landmark Mandarin Oriental	https://www.mandarinoriental.com/hong-kong/the-landmark/luxury-hotel
The Fullerton Bay Hotel	https://www.fullertonhotels.com/fullerton-bay-hotel-singapore	The Luxe Manor	https://www.theluxemanor.com/
The Fullerton Hotel Singapore	https://www.fullertonhotels.com/fullerton-hotel-singapore	The Mira Hong Kong	https://www.themirahotel.com/hong-kong/en/offers/
The PARKROYAL on Pickering	https://www.panpacific.com/en/hotels-and-resorts/pr-collection-pickering.html	The Murray, Hong Kong	https://www.nicolohotels.com/en/hotels/hongkong/central/the_murray/index.html
The Regent Singapore	https://www.ihg.com/regent/hotels/us/en/singapore/sinrg/hoteldetail	The Peninsula Hong Kong	https://www.peninsula.com/en/hong-kong/5-star-luxury-hotel-kowloon
The Stamford Singapore	https://www.swissotel.com/hotels/singapore-stamford/	The Upper House	https://www.thehousecollective.com/en/the-upper-house/
W Singapore Sentosa Cove	https://www.marriott.com/en-us/hotels/sinwh-w-singapore-sentosa-cove/overview/	W Hong Kong	https://www.marriott.com/en-us/hotels/hkgwh-w-hong-kong/overview/

2.2.2.3 Scope of Hotel Websites



About

Nestled within 15 acres of tropical landscaped gardens, guests are warmly embraced by the hotel's distinct service and smiles. Escape to the only hotel sanctuary in the city with lush, open gardens, unparalleled culinary experiences and family facilities, topped with luxurious pampering and 3 distinct wings to suit every indulgence.

- Dedicated indoor and outdoor family facilities
- 3 distinctive wings and 11 diverse dining concepts
- Shangri-La Cares: Our commitment to your well-being in our care

[Learn More](#)

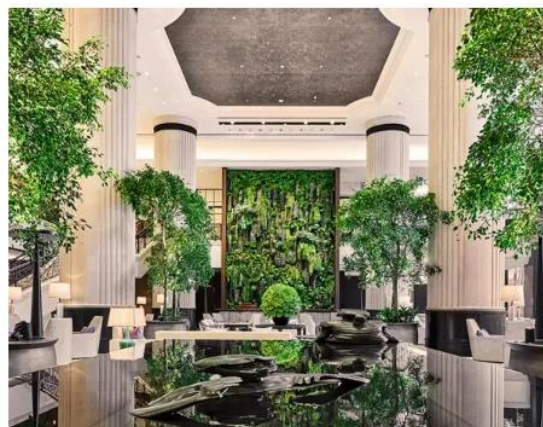


Figure 2.3 The homepage of Shangri-La Hotel Singapore³

Defining the scope of a sample hotel website can be a challenging task due to the complicated design components and interconnected nature of the website. Hotel websites typically consist of multiple webpages and incorporate a variety of non-textual elements such as hyperlinks, images, animations, video, and audio content. These complexities inevitably affect the data collection process, which may explain why previous linguistic studies of luxury hotel websites have primarily focused on analysing their home pages (e.g., Suen, 2018; Qian et al., 2021). To

³ <https://www.shangri-la.com/singapore/shangrila/about/>

provide a more holistic exploration of the communication strategies employed in five-star luxury hotel websites, the current research took a step further by collecting content from the entire website, rather than just the homepage. Figure 2.3, which is the screenshot of the homepage of Shangri-La Hotel, is an example of the complex design typical of such websites. It showcases various components of the webpage, including visual and textual elements. Its navigation bar also allows visitors to easily navigate through different sections of the website and access specific information they are interested in, including accommodation, dining options, conference services, photo gallery, and more.

In contemporary times, although accommodations remain the fundamental and essential offering of every hotel, some establishments, especially luxury hotels, have surpassed this basic provision and provided supplementary amenities such as conference equipment, fitness facilities, restaurants, and lounges, so as to distinguish themselves vis-à-vis competitors and meet the diverse needs and preferences of customers (Kucukusta, 2017; Zafiropoulos & Vrana, 2006). For instance, in cities like Hong Kong and Singapore, renowned destinations for large-scale conferences and events, luxury hotels in these places have recognised the importance of catering to business travellers as a substantial customer segment. To cater to this market, certain hotels have strategically promoted their banquet and conference facilities, targeting specific sub-segments within the business travel market (Knutson, 1988). Additionally, spa facilities offered by luxury hotels have been found to have a significant positive impact on the overall guest experience, leading to more favourable reviews and ratings from customers (Soifer et al., 2020). Taking into consideration distinct facilities presented on the hotel's website, we have adopted the categorisation proposed by Leung et al. (2016) and further divided the descriptive content on the website into several sections, including **Hotel description**, **Guest room**, **Dining facility**, **Meeting facility**, and **Recreation facility**. These sections also correspond to the descriptive referent of each figurative expression identified in our analysis.

The hotel description section provides an overview of the hotel, usually including its history, location, transportation options, promotional information, or other unique selling points. This section usually sets the stage for introducing the hotel and giving customers a positive first impression of the hotel. The guest room refers to the section that introduces the various accommodations available in the hotel, such as room size, decor, furniture, technological features, etc. In the dining facility section, visitors can find information about the catering services offered by the hotel, such as restaurant hours, menus, and speciality dishes. The

meeting facility section showcases the hotel's event spaces, in which guests can host weddings, seminars, and conferences of different sizes. Detailed descriptions of the hotel's spa service, fitness equipment, swimming pool, and other leisure amenities available to guests could be found in the recreation facility section.

2.2.2.4 Two Issues in Corpus Construction

During the data collection process, all textual content on the websites was manually copied and saved to create the corpus for the thesis. Ensuring that ethical considerations of data collection are taken seriously and that the coding of the ontological referent of figurative expressions is carefully managed are prerequisites for maintaining the integrity of the research. To ensure the reliability and validity of the analysis, two methodological issues were addressed, as explained below.

The first and foremost issue given careful attention was research ethics pertaining to the collection and use of online data from commercial websites, which remains a controversial and sensitive topic, and has received limited attention in previous research on electronic contexts. Following the guidelines set forth by Allen et al. (2006), which stated that “manual, non-automated access of information on publicly available web pages should be acceptable without special permissions or actions” (Allen et al., 2006, p. 607), this thesis did not further seek informed consent from individual hotels herein because it collected publicly available information manually for academic purposes, without using automated data collection agents. The study also ensured that no personally identifiable information or sensitive data was collected or disclosed during the data collection process.

With regard to the issue of repetitive content, we argue that the repeated elements of a hotel website should be considered as a deliberate design strategy aimed at capturing the attention of potential customers (Lam, 2021). In our data analysis, we identified and reused all instances of figurative language, as their inclusion in the corpus was essential to conduct an in-depth analysis of the linguistic features and communication strategies deployed in luxury hotel websites.

The second issue related to the coding of the ontological referent of figurative expressions. During the data collection phase, the issue of content reuse or duplication within hotel websites emerged as a concern, which became particularly relevant when using quantitative approaches to examine the association between figurative language and various hotel amenities. For

example, it was observed that the descriptions of hotel rooms might be mentioned in multiple sections of the website, such as the dedicated “Guest room” section and as well as other sections like the “Hotel description.” This practice is often employed in luxury hotel websites to emphasise the importance of the information and leave a stronger impression on potential guests. Such content repetition led to ambiguity when determining the referent of the figurative language. For instance, hotels may incorporate information from their gastronomic services when describing conference facilities, as large conferences often include provisions for food and beverage options. As a result, it is not surprising to come across expressions introducing dining services like “award-winning pastry theatre” in the section dedicated to meeting facilities.

In response to the issue of multiple referents in figurative language, we decided that the identification of the referent for figurative expressions should be associated with the specific section of the website from which the expressions were extracted, rather than the immediate discourse context in which the expressions appeared. This was because, as illustrated in the example mentioned above, the expression “award-winning pastry theatre” ultimately describes the food service offered during a conference, as indicated by its placement in the “Meeting facility” section of the website.

2.2.2.5 POS Tagging

The corpus was then processed using *BFSU Stanford POS Tagger* (Xu & Jia, 2011), which is a Graphical User Interface (GUI) version of the *Stanford POS Tagger* (Manning et al., 2014; Toutanova & Manning, 2007) to assign a part of speech (POS) to each lexical unit in the corpus as part of the annotation procedure. This step is necessary because the basic protocol of the metaphor identification procedure (i.e., MIPVU) involves establishing cross-domain mappings through meaning comparisons (Steen et al., 2010). However, a single word may have multiple meanings, and in technical terms, we refer to this phenomenon as polysemy. For example, the contextual meaning of the verbal “park” (as in “park your car”) would not be compared to its basic meaning as the nominal “park,” as the two lexical share different grammatical properties (Steen et al. 2010). When analysing and comparing the meanings of words, the specific grammatical category of each lexical unit should be taken into account, and POS tagging is very conducive in this regard.

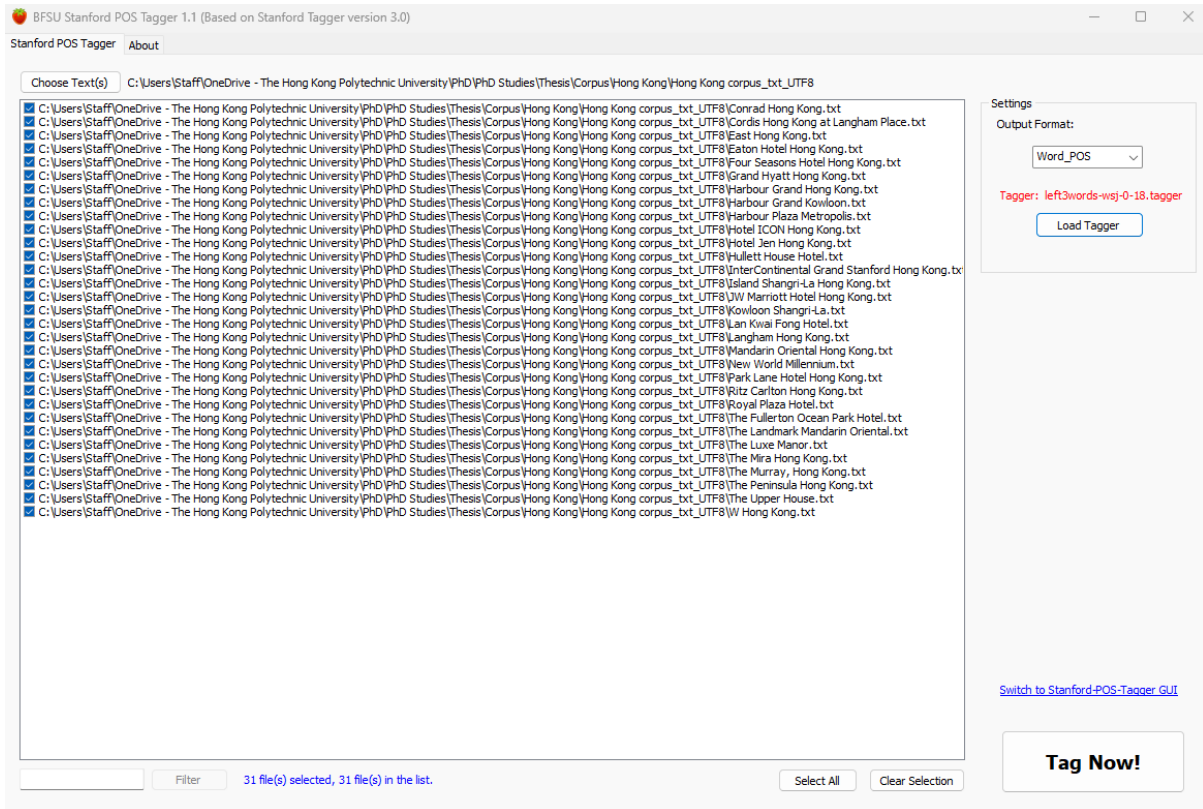


Figure 2.4 Screenshot of POS Tagging in BFSU Stanford POS Tagger

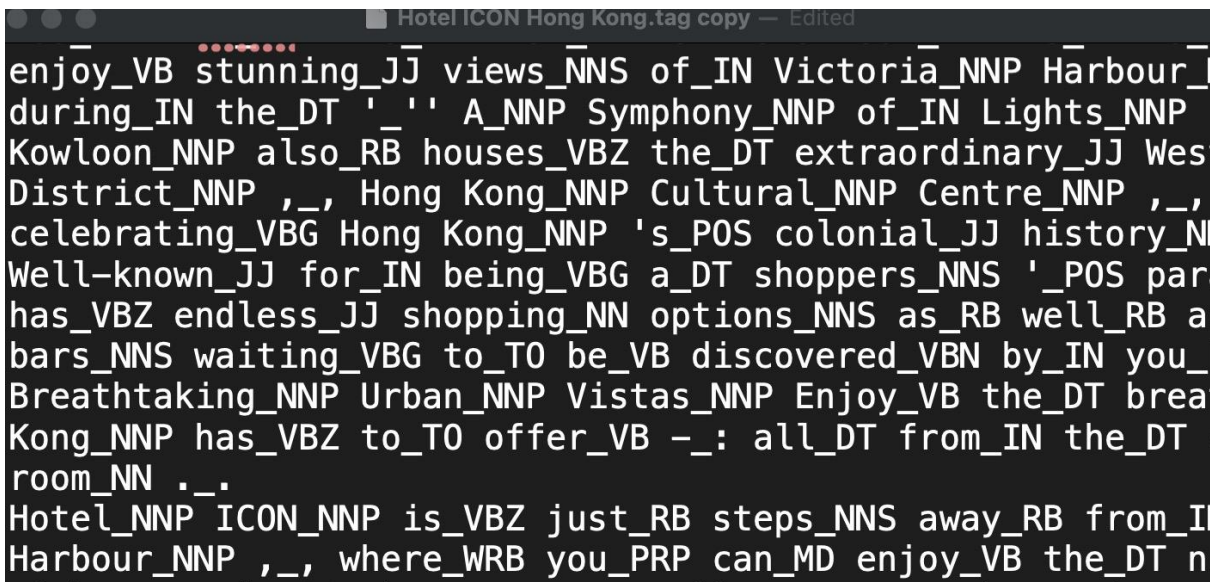


Figure 2.5 A sample result of POS tagging

Secondly, the reason for encoding the part of speech for each lexical unit in metaphor analysis differs somewhat from that in hyperbole analysis. In the context of metaphor analysis, POS tagging is used to facilitate a comparison between the dictionary meaning and the contextual meaning of a word within the same grammatical category so as to identify the metaphoricity of an expression. In hyperbole analysis, POS tagging serves the purpose of not only comparing the intensity of dictionary meaning and contextual meaning of lexical units but also assessing the incidence of hyperboles within their respective word classes.

During the tagging process, we followed the suggestion of the *Stanford POS Tagger* developers and used the “english-left3words-distsim.tagger” model, whose tagging accuracy reached 96.97 per cent (The Stanford NLP Group, n.d.). Among the various natural language analysis toolkits available, *Stanford POS Tagger* is recognised as one of the most commonly utilised (Manning et al., 2014). To streamline the process and eliminate the need for manually copying and pasting text passages into the processing box, we deployed the *BFSU Stanford POS Tagger*, which offers a user-friendly interface. Figure 2.4 is a screenshot of the *BFSU Stanford POS Tagger*'s interface. Upon uploading the files, the toolkit automatically assigned part-of-speech information to each lexical unit and generated the output text in one of three different formats: word_POS, word/POS, or XML. The resulting files were then saved in the same directory as the source texts. Figure 2.5 is a sample of the part-of-speech tagging processing results generated by *BFSU Stanford POS Tagger*.

2.2.3 Metaphor Identification Procedure

Once the POS tagging process was completed, the annotated files were imported into the MAXQDA software (<https://www.maxqda.com/>) for data coding. MAXQDA is a powerful software application designed for qualitative data analysis, known for its user-friendly interface and advanced features (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2019). Using MAXQDA, I can select segments in the corpus and drag them to specific labels corresponding to their source domains in an efficient and organised manner. Figure 2.6 illustrates the interface of MAXQDA, with the upper left side displaying the files for each hotel in the corpus. Moving down to the left side, the code system area presents the category system for codes (i.e., source domains of metaphors), along with the corresponding number of occurrences of each source domain in the corpus. The file that needs to be coded is visible on the right side of the interface.

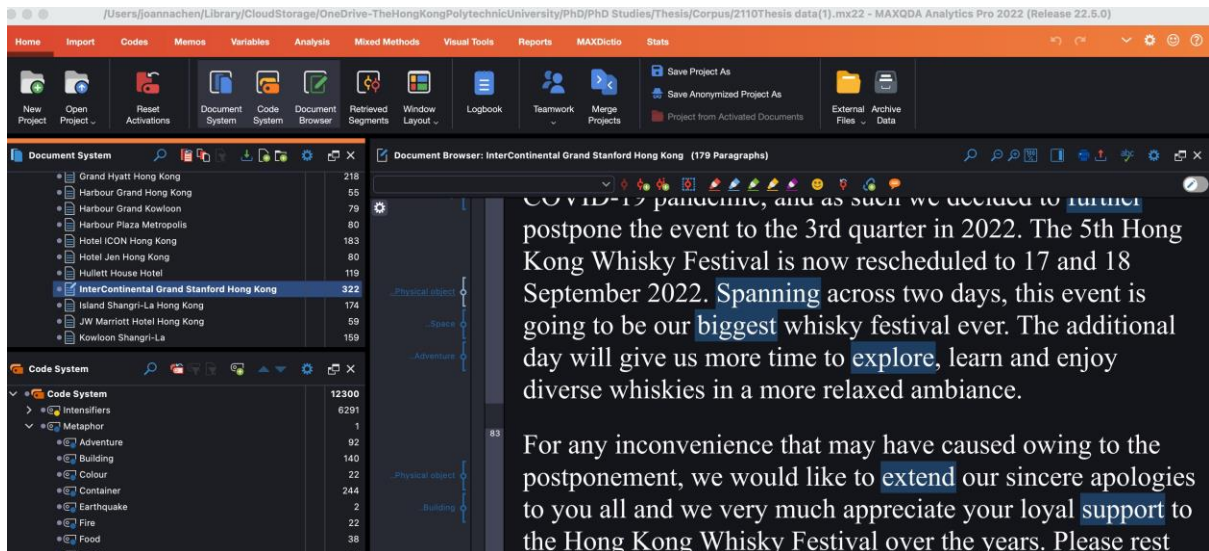


Figure 2.6 Screenshot of conducting metaphor identification in MAXQDA

Following Krennmayr (2013), a bottom-up approach was employed to comprehensively capture metaphor usage patterns by manually identifying all metaphorical instances in the corpus. The procedure of metaphor identification was guided by MIPVU (Metaphor Identification Procedure VU University Amsterdam) (Steen et al. 2010), which determined metaphorical expressions at the level of individual word tokens, with proper names and phrasal verbs marked as single segments (Pragglejaz Group, 2007; Steen et al. 2010).

Metaphorical meanings were assigned based on the comparison between the contextual meaning of the lexical unit and its basic meaning as defined in the online version of the Macmillan English Dictionary.⁴ Supplementary resources such as the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English⁵ and Oxford English Dictionary⁶ were consulted when needed. In addition, we utilised WordNet⁷ (Fellbaum, 1998) and SUMO⁸ (Niles & Pease, 2001) as additional resources to consult the word senses. Below is an example of metaphor identification procedure:

⁴ <http://www.macmillandictionary.com>

⁵ <http://www.ldoceonline.com/>

⁶ <http://www.oed.com/>

⁷ <http://wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn>

⁸ <http://www.adampease.org/OP/>

(1) ... and a sleep *temple* is infused with elements embodying the rich culture of Hong Kong. (Four Seasons Hotel Hong Kong)

The basic meaning of the expression “*temple*” relates to a religious site intended for worship. However, in the given context (example (1)), the word is used metaphorically to describe a place where people can rest peacefully and forget their worries, without any religious connotation. The contrast between the basic meaning and the contextual meaning indicates the metaphoricity of the expression. Arguably, according to CMT, the target domain relates to a relatively abstract concept, and the source domain is associated with a concrete or more readily understood experience (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2003). In this example, although the target domain HOTEL is a tangible, concrete physical object, it is more “unfamiliar” (Semino, 2008) or even unknown to potential customers than the meaning of TEMPLE. The lexical item “*temple*” therefore can be considered as a source domain.

At the same time, the source domain verification procedure, proposed by Ahrens and Jiang (2020), was utilised to ascertain the source domain of a metaphorical expression, which traditionally relied on “more-or-less explicit common sensical intuitions” of metaphor scholars (Stefanowitsch, 2006). The verification procedure consulted WordNet (Fellbaum, 1998) and SUMO (Niles & Pease, 2001) to obtain semantic and ontological information about the word. These resources provided accountable and verifiable evidence to support the association of the expression with a specific source domain. In Figure 2.7, the example of “*temple*” is utilised to demonstrate how the verification procedure is applied in practice.

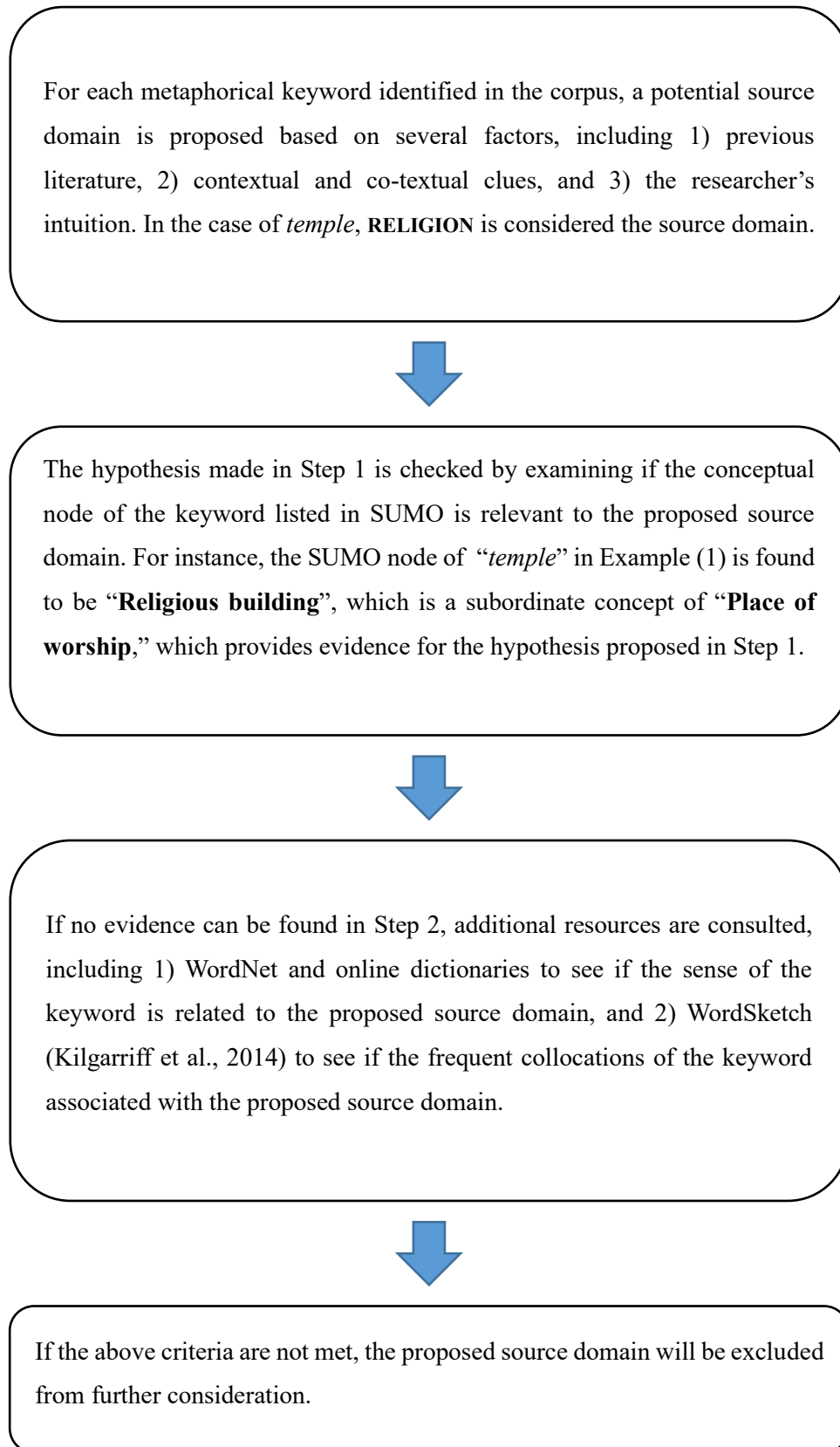


Figure 2.7 Source domain identification procedures with an example

2.2.4 Hyperbole Identification Procedure

Table 2.3 Hyperbole Identification Procedure (adapted version)

Original steps	Explanations	Revised steps	Explanations (The steps taken in this thesis)
Step 1	Read the entire text	<u>Step 1</u>	Read the entire text
Step 2	Apply the VIP (Verbal Irony Procedure) to every clause in the text to code for the presence of irony		This step will be omitted in the current thesis as it falls outside the scope of the study, which does not include an analysis of irony.
Step 3	Apply the MIPVU procedure to every lexical unit in the text to code for the presence of metaphors		This step will be omitted because the identification and analysis of metaphor have been carried out independently in the previous stage.
Step 4	Replace the propositional evaluation of the lexical unit with its intended meaning, if the lexical unit is marked as metaphorical/ironic .	<u>Step 2</u>	Step 4 will be revised as “Replace the propositional evaluation of the lexical unit with its intended meaning, if the lexical unit is marked as metaphorical .”
Step 5	Consider whether the lexical unit or its replacement warrants constructing a scale involving either a quality or a quantity.	<u>Step 3</u>	Consider whether the lexical unit or its replacement warrants constructing a scale involving either a quality or a quantity.
Step 6	Determine the ontological referent of the lexical unit or its replacement by staying as close to the text as possible	<u>Step 4</u>	Determine the ontological referent of the lexical unit or its replacement by staying as close to the text as possible
Step 7	Is the lexical unit or its replacement more extreme than justified given its ontological referent?	<u>Step 5</u>	Is the lexical unit or its replacement more extreme than justified given its ontological referent?
Step 8	Look at the next lexical unit	<u>Step 6</u>	Look at the next lexical unit

Adhering to Burgers et al.'s definition of hyperbole, the thesis adopted HIP (Hyperbole Identification Procedure, Burgers et al., 2016) to discern potential hyperbolic expressions in the corpus. In the first place, the key features of HIP render it particularly suitable for studying hyperbole in a systematic fashion, where researchers are allowed to comprehensively detect all potential instances of hyperbole in a given text with prudent guidance (c.f. McCarthy & Carter, 2004). In the second place, reliability examinations from Burgers et al. (2016) showed that two raters enjoy a substantial agreement in coding hyperbole using HIP, indicating the effectiveness and credibility of the approach.

Based on the three aforementioned features of hyperbole discussed in Section 1.4.2 (i.e., exaggeration, gradability, and an ontological referent), Burgers et al. (2016) remarked that two premises should be satisfied for an expression to be classified as hyperbolic. First, the target lexical unit should have a gradable property that warrants constructing a scale; and second, the propositional meaning inhabits the extreme point of the scale, which is constructed through the literal meaning of the target unit.

There are two points worth mentioning regarding the application of HIP in identifying hyperbole in my thesis. For one, while HIP provides illuminating guidance for identifying hyperbole, it does not offer a specific way for determining the propositional meaning of the expression, compared to other approaches like MIP/MIPVU, which are more self-contained and have well-developed identification protocols. In other words, it is not clear how such a semantic scale can be constructed that enables the determination of the position of the ontological referent of an expression and facilitates the comparison with its intended meaning. For another thing, incorporating procedures from MIPVU and VIP (Verbal Irony Procedure, Burgers et al., 2011), HIP is a versatile approach that allows analysts to look not only for hyperbole but also other figurative language devices such as irony and metaphor in texts concomitantly. Considering that the major objective of this thesis centred on the inspection of metaphor and hyperbole in English tourism advertising, the analysis of metaphors has already been addressed in Chapter 4, and the presence of irony in the corpus is expected to be sporadic. In the interest of research efficiency, it is not within the scope of this stage to extensively identify irony and metaphor alongside hyperbole. Therefore, in our analysis, steps 2 and 3 of the original version of HIP were removed, as shown in Table 2.3.

For these two reasons, despite its pronounced merits as a powerful tool to identify hyperbolic expressions, several adjustments should be made to make HIP better applicable to this

particular research. This chapter briefly introduced the HIP manual (and the revised version with the removal of the verbal irony identification procedure), shown in Table 2.3, outlining its key features and major components (in Burgers et al., 2016, pp.167-168). In Chapter 5, we will further elaborate on the modifications made to the HIP, with a particular focus on providing detailed descriptions of the deployment of reference tools.

2.2.5 Inter-rater Reliability (IRR) Tests

Another concern of this thesis is related to the validity and reliability of language analysis, namely to what extent a consistent result can be obtained by using the above instruments in metaphor/hyperbole identification. It is thus the aim and obligation of the current research to conduct ongoing monitoring to ensure that the data presented in the thesis are derived from rigorous analysis rather than arbitrary assumptions, and that similar identification results can be produced by different people on different occasions, assuming that the instruments are reliable.

Previous literature suggested multiple reliability coefficients to measure the agreement among raters, including Cohen's Kappa, Fleiss's Kappa, and Krippendorff's Alpha (Krippendorff, 2011; Steen et al., 2010). Three reliability tests of binary decisions between the hyperbolic and the non-hyperbolic using Cohen's Kappa were conducted by Burgers et al. (2016) to quantify the extent of coders' agreement on the status of the lexical unit. Following Burgers et al. (2016), the same analytic tool, namely Cohen's Kappa, has been deployed to examine the reliability of metaphor and hyperbole identifications in this study. The results of these reliability tests will be reported in the respective analysis chapters.

Prior to reporting the IRR results, it is essential to clarify an evaluation issue with respect to the unit of analysis. In our dataset, there exist multi-word expressions, such as phrasal verbs, proper nouns, and idioms, which may also exhibit metaphorical or hyperbolic characteristics. Nevertheless, the number of such multi-word expressions was relatively small compared to single-word metaphors or hyperboles. Given that we have established clear and systematic criteria for defining multi-word expressions, and an experienced linguist has overseen the identification process, the demarcation of units of analysis was not included in the reliability check.

2.2.6 Experimental Research

The second research objective of the thesis is to explore the effectiveness of figurative language in promotional discourse. To achieve this, an experiment with 2 (metaphor: present, absent) x 2 (hyperbole: present, absent) between-subjects design was applied to evaluate the impact of different types of figurative devices (metaphor and hyperbole) on consumers' perceptions of the advertisement and their intention to make hotel reservations. This design resulted in four experimental conditions: (1) metaphor only condition (**M condition**), (2) hyperbole only condition (**H condition**), (3) the combination of metaphor and hyperbole condition (**MH condition**), and (4) the control condition (**Con condition**). Text perceptions included two levels, namely cognitive text perception and affective text perception. In addition to examining the direct effect of metaphor and hyperbole on hotel reservation intention, the study also attempted to examine the potential mediating role of text perceptions in the relationship between figurative language and hotel reservation intention. By measuring participants' responses to different versions of advertisements, the study aimed to establish a correlation between the use of figurative language and the subsequent alterations in opinions towards the hotel (Gibbs & Steen, 1999). Figure 2.8 depicts the conceptual model of the experimental research.

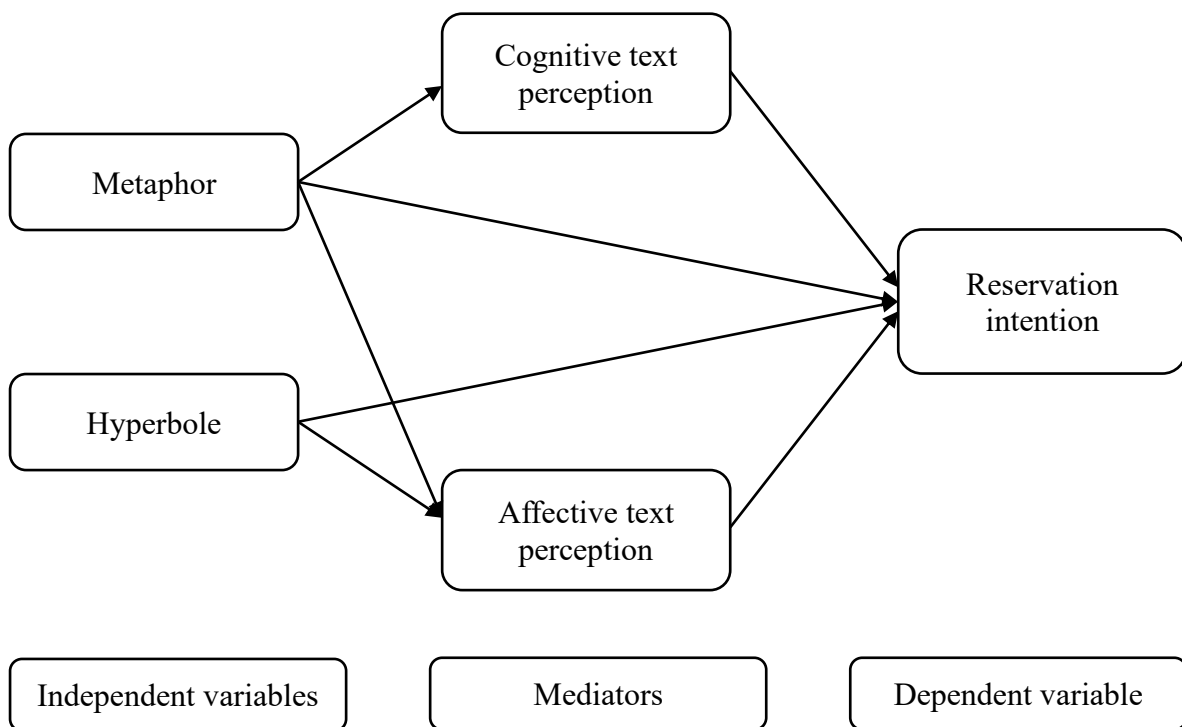


Figure 2.8 The conceptual model of experimental research in this thesis

2.2.6.1 Stimuli and Questionnaires Creation

The experimental study adopted a 2 (metaphor: present, absent) x 2 (hyperbole: present, absent) between-subjects design. Participants in the four conditions (M, H, MH, and Con conditions) were presented with an advertisement for a fictitious five-star hotel named *Camellia Hotel*, which introduced the hotel from the perspectives of location, rooms, catering, and recreational facilities. A fictitious name was used to prevent the judgement of a real-world brand or city from affecting participants' responses in the experiment. All the figurative expressions used in this thesis were exclusively sourced from the corpus analysis of luxury hotel websites conducted in the previous stage.

The advertisement in each condition was around 130 words long, consisting of five separate sentences. For figurative conditions (M, H, and MH), each sentence contained at least one figurative expression (metaphor, hyperbole, and both). The restriction was made with regard to other types of figurative devices as much as possible. Moreover, the stimulus materials were controlled for length and syntactic structure, with the sole variation across the four conditions being the presence of figurative expressions. Two native English speakers with linguistic backgrounds have accessed the equivalence of meaning across the different versions of the advertisements. Table 2.4 presents a sample of a manipulated sentence across the four experimental conditions. An overview of the stimuli can be found in Appendix A.

Table 2.4 Figurative manipulations in the study

Metaphor	Hyperbole	Conditions	Sentence
Yes	Yes	MH	The rooftop bar Awan is an <i>irresistible oasis</i> .
	No	M	The rooftop bar Awan is a <i>pleasant oasis</i> .
No	Yes	H	The rooftop bar Awan is an <i>irresistible destination</i> .
	No	Con	The rooftop bar Awan is a <i>pleasant destination</i> .

2.2.6.2 Procedures

The experimental study moved through two stages. The first stage involved a pre-test to verify the manipulative validity of the stimulus materials. Specifically, a manipulation check was conducted to confirm the following: (1) whether the metaphorically framed advertisement was perceived as more metaphorical than the literal advertisement, (2) whether the hyperbolically

framed advertisement was perceived as more exaggerated than the literal advertisement, and (3) whether the language materials deployed did not differ in other important aspects. Prior to the main body of the questionnaire, participants were first informed that the study involved investigating language and human perception. They were then presented with an informed consent form (IRB reference number HSEARS20210208002 of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, see Appendix B).

After agreeing to participate in the experiment, participants were instructed to read five sentences of the advertisement, one at a time, and evaluate the sentence on a scale of 1 to 7. Following the previous literature (e.g., Cardillo et al., 2010, 2017; Tay, 2020), I checked whether these stimulus materials were perceived differently in the dimensions of *metaphoricity* (MET), and *extremity* (EXT) but were equal in the dimensions of *novelty* (NOV), *naturalness* (NAT), *appropriateness* (APP), *understandability* (UND), and *imageability* (IMA). Detailed information on the measurement of the seven variables can be found in Appendix C, which presents the steps, process, and results of the pretest. Upon completing the survey questions, participants were asked to provide demographic information, such as gender, age range, educational background, and native language. Each questionnaire took approximately one minute to complete. Participants who successfully complete the survey will be compensated through the MTurk system. Appendix C also contains a sample question.

In the main study, I tested our hypotheses using a survey-embedded experiment in which participants were exposed to a luxury hotel advertisement that was framed with either figurative expression or nonfigurative expression. After the informed consent process, participants were asked to read the advertisement and subsequently answer questions about their opinions towards the advertisement and the hotel. After completing the demographic questions, participants were thanked for their participation and provided with a completion code to claim their reward. Details regarding the measurement of dependent variables related to perceived text perceptions and reservation intention will be further elaborated upon in Chapter 7 of the current thesis.

2.2.6.3 Participants

The experiments were conducted on Amazon's Mechanical Turk (Mturk), an online crowdsourcing platform with more than 100,000 registered workers (i.e., participants)

available by 2018 (Difallah et al., 2018).⁹ There were two main advantages of using Mturk for data collection. Firstly, compared with the professional survey providers, Mturk allowed for obtaining of large-scale data at a relatively lower cost. Second, retrospective studies of Mturk indicated that the population on the platform was more diverse than typical convenience samples. Furthermore, participants on Mturk exhibited responses to experimental stimuli that were consistent with those obtained through traditional face-to-face methods. This suggests that the quality of data collected from Mturk workers was as reliable as that obtained through traditional survey approaches. (Berinsky et al., 2012; Kennedy et al., 2020). The questionnaires used for the experiments were created using SurveyMonkey¹⁰. Survey links from SurveyMonkey were attached and posted within the Mturk tasks, allowing participants to easily access and complete the surveys on the SurveyMonkey platform through the provided link.

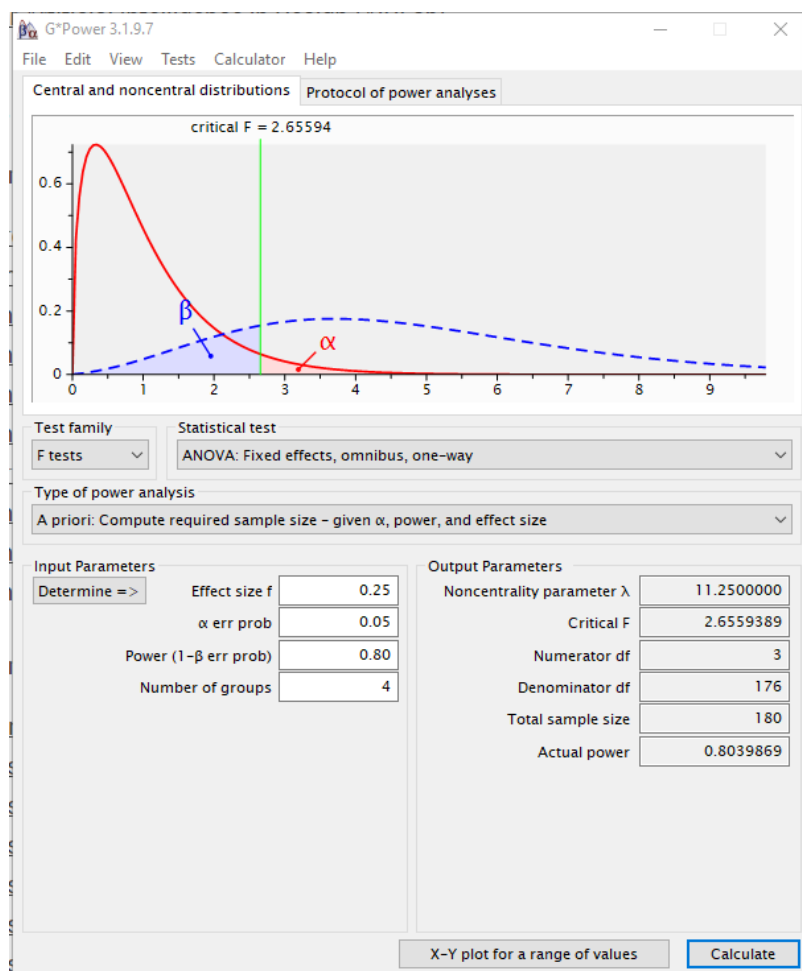


Figure 2.9 The results of the G*Power analysis

⁹ <https://www.mturk.com/>

¹⁰ <https://www.surveymonkey.com/>

The calculations, conducted using G*Power 3.1 (Faul et al., 2009), indicated that for the current survey design, which employed a between-subject design, a minimum sample size of 180 participants is necessary to detect a medium effect size ($f = .50$) with an alpha level of .05 and a power of 0.80 (Cohen, 1988; Boeynaems et al., 2021).

For the manipulation checks, a total of 1260 participants were needed, as each of the seven variables would be assessed using a separate questionnaire. The results of the G*Power analysis for the manipulation check can be seen in Figure 2.9. Chapter 7 will provide detailed information about the execution of the experimental study.

2.2.7 Software for Statistical Analysis

The current thesis employed various statistical software tools for data analytics, selected based on their suitability for different analysis techniques and their ability to accommodate the specific requirements of the data analysis process. The utilised software tools included Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS),¹¹ Jamovie,¹² R,¹³ and online statistics calculators for Chi-square¹⁴ and Log Likelihood.¹⁵ Table 2.5 provides a summary of the statistical tools used in each chapter, along with the corresponding software utilised for data analysis and calculations.

In Chapters 4 and 5, the reliability of figurative identification was evaluated through Cohen's Kappa using an online Chi-square calculator. Then, a log-likelihood test was employed to investigate the presence of significant differences in the frequency of metaphors used between the SG corpus and the HK corpus. SPSS was also exploited to perform log-linear analysis and Chi-Square test of independence to uncover potential associations between figurative language, hotel facilities, and geographical locations. Although Chapter 4 did not intend to employ MCA (Multiple Correspondence Analysis) as a statistical tool for data analysis, it could be a valuable method to visually represent the outcomes of the log-linear model when implemented in RStudio. In Chapter 6, Python was employed for data visualisation. Jamovi provided a robust and user-friendly package for conducting the calculation of the Kruskal-Wallis test and one-

¹¹ <https://www.ibm.com/products/spss-statistics>

¹² <https://www.jamovi.org/>

¹³ <https://www.r-project.org/>

¹⁴ Online Kappa Calculator: <http://justusrandolph.net/kappa/>

¹⁵ Online Log-Likelihood: <https://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/llwizard.html>

way ANOVA, which were deployed in Chapter 7 of this study. Moreover, I used Hayes PROCESS Macro model 4 with SPSS for the purpose of conducting mediation analysis.

Table 2.5 An overview of the statistical tools used in this thesis

Chapters	Aims	Statistical tools	Software
Chapter 4	Inter-rater reliability	Cohen's Kappa	Online Cohen's Kappa calculator
	Examine the relationship between several nominal data	Log-Linear Analysis	IBM SPSS Statistics version 25
	Check the association between two nominal data	Chi-Square Test of Independence	IBM SPSS Statistics version 25
	Compare word frequency between two corpora	Log-likelihood	Online Log-likelihood and effect size calculator
	Visualize the results of the log-linear analysis in a two-dimensional Euclidean space	Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA)	RStudio 2022.12.0+353
Chapter 5	Data visualisation		RStudio 2022.12.0+353
	Interrater reliability	Cohen's Kappa	Online Cohen's Kappa calculator
	Compare word frequency between two corpora	Log-likelihood	Online Log-likelihood and effect size calculator
	Examine the relationship between several nominal data	Log-Linear Analysis	IBM SPSS Statistics version 25
	Check the association between two nominal data	Chi-Square Test of Independence	IBM SPSS Statistics version 25
Chapter 6	Data visualisation		RStudio 2022.12.0+353
	Data visualisation		Python 3.9
Chapter 7	Compare the means of more than two groups (a non-parametric method)	The Kruskal-Wallis Test	Jamovi 2.3.25.0
	Compare the means of more than two groups	One-way ANOVA	Jamovi 2.3.25.0
	Mediation analysis	Hayes Process Macro (Model 4)	IBM SPSS Statistics version 25

2.3 Summary

This chapter has elucidated the analytical framework and has introduced the descriptive parameters and tools used in the qualitative discourse analysis, quantitative analysis, and experimental study, which are essential components of the research. Specifically, the quantitative data analysis focused on the utilisation of figurative language in the context of promotional discourse, aiming to examine the association between instantiations of figurative language, hotel facilities, and geographical locations in luxury hotel websites in Singapore and Hong Kong. Subsequent qualitative discourse analysis interpreted the manifestation of figurative language motivated and shaped by various contextual factors, and probed how luxury values were reflected in these relationships. The study also inspected the effectiveness of figurative language in luxury hotel advertising by using a survey-embedded experiment to verify the hypotheses formulated in the preceding corpus-based analysis.

As a whole, the academic inquiry undertaken in this study conceives of the figurative language as a contextually situated and socio-culturally instantiated enactment of discourse; such is the analytic and conceptual paradigm that forms the lynchpin for the analysis proper, which begins in the following chapter.

3. Chapter 3 Promotional Tourism Discourse

3.1 Chapter Introduction

As the modern luxury tourism industry embraces the shift from traditional marketing to emerging experiential marketing, both academic researchers and practitioners have recognised the need for frameworks and strategies, grounded in a marketing perspective, that can guide the sustainable development of experiential brands to ensure a favourable competitive advantage in the marketplace. Petkus (2002) introduced six communication strategies aimed at positioning offerings in a more experiential manner, including promoting the incorporation of “handmade” elements and multidimensional sensory experience. For example, in 2013, the *New York Times* featured an article highlighting the latest brand campaign and marketing concept of the upscale hotel brand Rosewood. The focus of this marketing concept was to cultivate “a sense of place” by emphasising immersive experiences for guests rather than solely relying on expensive possessions. This approach, referred to as the “living canvas” approach, aimed to cater to affluent travellers who seek creative, artistic encounters, as well as a sense of uniqueness, as asserted by branding experts at Rosewood. The brand campaign also alluded to an emerging trend in luxury consumption, characterised by a shift away from the traditional pattern of conspicuous consumption and towards a more individualistic form of consumption fueled by evolving needs and longing for experiential encounters.

Smith (2003) emphasises the importance of communication channels by proposing a six-step brand management process that includes creating an effective platform for clearly articulating brand-positioning statements. In the travel and tourism industries, an organisation or brand’s website serves as a major platform for directly communicating information about the industry and its products to customers (Barreda et al., 2016). Figures 3.1 and 3.2 are screenshots of the homepages of hotel Fairmont Singapore and hotel Ibis Styles Singapore on Macpherson. The homepages are equipped with a navigation bar that guides users through a variety of information. For example, users can check the location of the hotel, the range of services, and the reviews of other customers.

Fairmont and Ibis are two different hotel brands under the Accor hospitality group. While they are quite similar regarding website design, Fairmont focuses on providing upscale and luxurious accommodations, while Ibis emphasises affordability and practicality for a broader

spectrum of travelers. It is worth mentioning that the website of Fairmont Singapore has been included in the corpus of this thesis, as the hotel is positioned as a high-end establishment.

The market positioning and brand identity of the two hotels are also likely to be reflected in the introductions on their respective homepages. As observed in the screenshots below, the introduction on Fairmont’s homepage employs rich, poetic, and rhetorical expressions such as “gleaming,” “a beacon of luxury” and “awe-inspiring,” guaranteeing sensory enjoyment of the hotels’ food and beverage offerings, allowing travellers to anticipate hedonic attachment and make informed purchasing decisions prior to experiencing the hotels’ services first-hand (see Figure 3.1). Such language, despite in an exaggerated manner, intends to create positive perceptions and reinforce the hotel’s high-end market positioning that can ultimately convert recipients into actual consumers. Conversely, Ibis’s introduction adopts a more straightforward and factual tone, aligning with its budget-friendly positioning (see Figure 3.2).

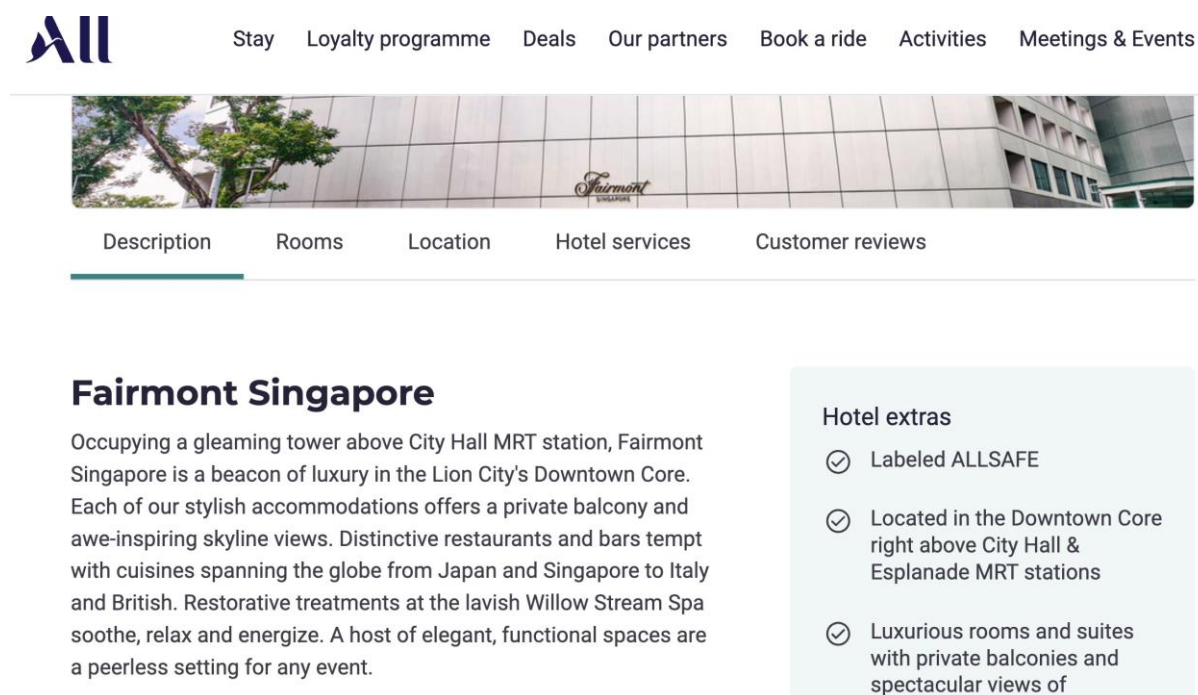


Figure 3.1 The official website of the Fairmont Singapore (luxury hotel) (Fairmont Singapore, 2023)¹⁶

¹⁶ <https://all.accor.com/hotel/A5G8/index.en.shtml>

ibis Styles Singapore On Macpherson

Design economy hotel, open to creative minds

ibis Styles Singapore on MacPherson is strategically located at 401 Macpherson Rd. Ideal hotel for business or leisure travellers. It features single, queen, twin, triple, family and interconnecting room types. The hotel is complemented with an outdoor swimming pool & modern gym. Easy access to MRT train stations nearby. 20mins drive from Changi Airport. In house restaurant & bar by the pool side (in-room dining available). Self-use laundry facility 24/7.

Hotel extras

- ✔ Stylish, colourful, and sleek cruise ship like exterior
- ✔ 298 rooms with signature-design furniture
- ✔ 25m freeform pool, which complements the restaurant and bar
- ✔ A modern gym that overlooks the pool and MacPherson Rd

Figure 3.2 The official website of the Ibis Styles Singapore on Macpherson (budget hotel) (Ibis Styles Singapore on Macpherson, 2023)¹⁷

Previous studies have demonstrated how marketers employed innovative strategies to effectively convey the experiential value of their offerings and build a strong brand image that distinguished organisations in an ever more competitive market landscape. Against this backdrop, the current research attempts to, beyond mere observation, investigate how luxury value is formulated and communicated in contemporary experiential marketing through specific language features and patterns. What the following sections attempt to achieve in this chapter, then, is to situate the topic of study in its proper sociocultural and discursive context – that is, the context of luxury tourism in Hong Kong and Singapore – by extending the discussion already started earlier in Section 1.7, which talked about the importance of cross-cultural comparative analysis. An elucidation of this context will make clear the motivations in which the impetus to investigate the language employed on the websites of five-star hotels in Hong Kong and Singapore.

In addition to presenting the socio-cultural context of Singapore and Hong Kong, I will also illustrate the prominent role of English, the focal point of this study, in the respective social

¹⁷ <https://all.accor.com/hotel/9411/index.en.shtml>

systems of the two regions, by providing an overview of the linguistic background and policies of Singapore and Hong Kong.

3.2 Tourism Industry and Discourse

3.2.1 Tourism in the Post-COVID era: The imperative of enhanced tourism communication

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Hong Kong's hotel industry has recorded steady growth as the number of tourists from around the world continued to grow. Inbound tourism accounted for approximately 3.5 per cent of Hong Kong's gross domestic product in the years before 2019 (Statista, n.d.). In terms of hotel market segmentation, the mid and upper mid-scale hotel segment dominated the market, with approximately 79 per cent of total registered hotels belonging to that category, followed by approximately 18 per cent of luxury hotels (Mordor Intelligence, n.d.).

Although the tourism and hospitality industries faced unprecedented challenges because of the COVID-19 pandemic, as of the time of writing, most COVID-19 restrictions on international travellers have been lifted in many parts of the world, including Hong Kong and Singapore. This relaxation of restrictions was largely due to decreasing infection and mortality rates associated with the latest variants of the virus. In light of this situation, the global tourism industry is steadily rising (Figure 3.3) and actively seeking avenues to revive and strengthen its development. As an example, Hong Kong initiated its "Hello Hong Kong" campaign in March 2023 which involved various initiatives such as the distribution of 700,000 complimentary air tickets, celebrity endorsements, and the organisation of over 250 large-scale events and international exhibitions, in order to entice overseas tourists to visit the city. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), international arrivals have reached 80 per cent of pre-pandemic levels in the first quarter of 2023 globally (UNWTO, 2023). While it may appear that many things have returned to their previous state, the reality is that significant changes have unfolded over the past three years. The challenges faced by the tourism industry throughout the Covid-19 pandemic have also provided an opportune moment to re-evaluate and develop more sustainable approaches to tourism promotion.



Figure 3.3 Visitor arrival statistics

Tourism communication plays an important role in driving the growth of the tourism industry and converting prospective customers into actual users, involving a series of strategies, such as celebrity endorsement, personal selling, direct marketing, sponsorship, public relations, and advertising (McCartney et al, 2008). Of all the strategies mentioned, advertising stands out as the most important one, which is also the research target of this study, due to its extensive reach and larger scale compared to other tourism communication strategies (Sulaiman & Wilson, 2019).

On the one hand, the goal of tourism advertising is to shape the perceptions, beliefs, and ideas of potential tourists, so as to fulfil tourists' socio-psychological needs (Sulaiman & Wilson, 2019). To enhance the possibility of generating the desired responses, tourism advertisements should be carefully crafted to brand and present the qualities of the destination in a manner that resonates with the expectations of consumers. On the other hand, tourism marketing can be seen as a means of "selling dreams" or "stimulating imagination" (Pritchard & Morgan, 2000, p. 10), as tourists usually base their decisions to go on vacations on the symbolic meanings that are created and reinforced through advertising and media channels. In this vein, the relationship between tourism advertising and its audience can be characterised as bi-directional. Audiences actively engage with the promotional messages, and their feedback and responses can, in turn, influence the development of future advertising strategies.

3.2.2 *Tourism Promotion and Language*

Language serves as the most common tool for constructing and selling “dreams” in advertising. In tourism communication, verbal language can provide practical information on the attractions and experiences that visitors should look for before their trip begins. It acts as a medium for information delivery, guiding visitors on what to see, visit, and participate in during the trip (Urry & Larsen, 2011). For example, Graham Dann’s monography, titled *The Language of Tourism: A Sociolinguistic Perspective* (1996) has been recognised as a pioneering and important theoretical work on the language deployed in tourism promotion. The research used a combination of semiotic analysis and content analysis to explore in depth the characteristics and arts of tourism promotion language. Expanding on Dann’s research, Cappelli in his book *Sun, Sea, Sex and the Unspoilt Countryside* (2006) further examined the linguistic features of tourism English across various genres, such as advertisements, travel brochures, and guidebooks, discussing the different language mechanisms employed by advertisers to strategically brand destinations and persuade potential clients to visit.

In contrast to Dann’s (1996) focus on semiology, where verbal language played a secondary role, Cappelli’s book (2006) took a different approach by giving primary attention to linguistic features and introducing the notion of tourism English as a category of specialised language. In more recent work, Lam (2021) adopted a combined approach of discourse analysis and corpus analysis to examine the online place branding strategies utilised in Hong Kong, specifically analysing the linguistic patterns, discursive strategies, and dominant discourses present on both the *Brand Hong Kong* website and the *TripAdvisor* travel forums. All of the aforementioned studies have indicated the inherent complexity of the language employed in tourism discourse, rendering it difficult to provide a concise summary owing to the distinct attributes that set it apart from communication in other contexts. The language in tourism discourse therefore calls for a more holistic investigation, and in the following discussion, several commonly used communication strategies in promotional tourism discourse will be elaborated upon in detail.

Sulaiman and Wilson (2019) have provided a summary of the frequent verbal linguistic techniques deployed in promotional tourism discourse to establish and promote favourable connections between products and recipients, ultimately facilitating persuasion. These techniques include ego-targeting, comparing, poetic devices, and language euphoria.

Ego-targeting refers to the communication strategy in which the audience is directly addressed. By addressing the recipient directly and acknowledging their presence, this technique aims to create a sense of being singled out from the crowd, thus making the recipient feel special or privileged (Cappelli, 2006, p.64). Singling out the individual from the crowd can help to establish a personal connection and enhance the recipient's engagement with the advertisement.

Creating contrast is another frequently employed strategy to reinforce the image of the destination being advertised (Oakes & Minca, 2004). In tourism communication, tourism advertisements are expected to highlight the contrast between "here" (home place) and "there" (travel destination) as tourists seek an escape from the rational strictures in other original locations and people. The branding of commodified "here" typically relies on themes of heterogeneity, fantasies, the allure of "unfamiliarity" and "luxury," as well as references to "sacrality" and "beauty," which can be discursively achieved through the use of metaphors and similes (Mănescu, 2020).

Poetic devices include **metaphorical expressions**, among other techniques, which can be used to craft a captivating narrative that entices and persuades individuals to visit the advertised destination.

Finally, language euphoria is another prevalent feature in tourism communication, wherein adjectives and emphatic expressions are abundantly employed to convey a heightened sense of positivity. Specifically, advertisers may often resort to **superlatives** and **intensified statements** to marketise the exceptional qualities of the product/service, igniting recipients' desire to explore and enjoy it (Blanco Gómez, 2012; Dann, 1996).

While tourism English has been gradually gaining attention, the research on the linguistic characteristics of hotel website, as a distinct discourse genre, is relatively rare. Hotel websites represent an emerging form of communication that differs from traditional written discourse, and they serve as powerful mediums for interaction and promotion (Suen, 2010). Here, we discuss the value of linguistic research on hotel websites.

3.2.3 Hotel Websites as a Promotional Discourse

Nowadays, the vast majority, almost 90 per cent, of room reservations in the hospitality industry are conducted through the Internet (Statista, n.d.), with third-party agencies like Booking.com, TripAdvisor, and Agoda playing an important role in facilitating these

reservations. However, in the luxury hotel sector, approximately 65.4 per cent of online bookings are generated directly through the official websites of the hotels *per se*, such as Marriott's official website, www.marriott.com (Li et al., 2015).

On the one hand, the emergence of the contemporary tourism consumption planning process has brought significant changes to the competitive landscape of the accommodation industry. The hospitality industry, renowned for its customer-centric approach and reliance on information, is well-positioned to leverage the potential and resources offered by the Internet. Consumers now utilise the hotel's website as it allows them to communicate directly with the hotel, access information, and the convenience of making reservations regardless of geographic or time constraints. In order to remain relevant and competitive, the hospitality industry should therefore adapt to the digital age and effectively harness online resources (Li et al., 2015; Shuai and Wu, 2011).

On the other hand, hotel managers have widely recognised the Internet as a powerful marketing tool, facilitating the dissemination of information, communication, and online transactions between suppliers and consumers (Chiappa, 2013; Law et al., 2010; Ting et al., 2013). The advantages offered by the Internet are manifold, including cost reduction, increased revenue, market research and potential development, and increased customer retention (Chiou et al., 2010; Taylor & Strutton, 2010). The hotel industry will stand to benefit significantly from these advantages, making the Internet an indispensable asset for the whole industry. Given the importance of online reservations and effective digital marketing strategies for the hospitality industry, it becomes critical and valuable for hotels to invest in quality website development.

In the context of travel promotion, despite the current focus on visual semiotics and images (e.g., Cheng & Suen, 2014; Turra, 2020), it is important to acknowledge that language continues to play a crucial role in providing a detailed description of the advertised product. The inspection of written texts on hotel websites has been approached from different perspectives, resulting in a significant focus on the content in the online promotional discourse and a heightened awareness of the business communication style employed by hotels. For instance, the COMETVAL group of the University of Valencia (Spain) conducted analyses of various linguistic features present in hotel websites in Spanish, English, and French. These features included four-word phrase frames (Fuster-Màrquez & Pennock-Speck, 2015), conditional constructions (Gregori-Signes & Fuster-Màrquez, 2018), translation quality (Pierini, 2007), and hedging (Suau-Jiménez & Piqué-Noguera, 2017). Au Yeung and Law

(2006) have proposed a set of criteria for evaluating the quality of hotel websites, emphasising the importance of grammatical accuracy within such platforms. These criteria encompass the use of language, the website layout and graphics, the structure for presenting information, the navigation and interface for users, as well as the general information. In the study conducted by Au Yeung and Law (2006), the linguistic aspect specifically pertained to the quality of the headline on each webpage and the presence of spelling and grammar errors. Additionally, the study pointed out that a high-quality hotel website should possess basic attributes, such as usability, functionality, currency, and the provision of accurate and comprehensive information.

While a hotel website may offer factual and comprehensive information, the way this information is conveyed can vary significantly in terms of appeal and persuasive influence. Hotel managers have the opportunity to shape the ideas they communicate through the website, avoiding oversimplification and even crafting messages that have varying degrees of persuasive impact on potential customers. Since the luxury hotel industry is closely associated with hedonic values, it's not surprising that the use of figurative language may be the preferred choice for its persuasive and promotional efforts. For instance, Suen (2018) used corpus-based techniques to examine the linguistic characteristics of Chinese luxury hotel websites through the lens of appraisal theory. The study revealed that these websites frequently employed figurative language, such as metaphor and hyperbole, as a strategic approach to present products and services in a positive manner and create an alluring, fantasy-like image of the hotel. Because the "positive modulation" of advertising messages is so common and already tacit, consumers will not perceive the practice as deliberate deception (Edo Marzá, 2011).

The language employed on hotel websites has also been examined using various behavioural research methodologies. For example, by surveying tourists in mainland China, the United States, and Hong Kong, Qi et al. (2017) discovered that "text understandability" emerged as a critical factor for users when evaluating website quality. This implies that the informational content presented on hotel websites should be characterised by clarity, lack of ambiguity, and ease of comprehension for consumers. Meanwhile, the choice of language style in tourism advertising is also contingent upon the concept of "perceived fit," which is determined by the compatibility between the language style and the specific products or services being promoted (Byun & Jang, 2015).

In a survey-based experimental study, Byun and Jang (2015) indicated that the language used in advertisements can be dichotomised as either affective or cognitive, based on the features of

terms, phrases, and expressions that were used in the advertisements. Affective language pertains to figurative expressions that evoke emotions, such as phrases like “the view blows your mind away,” whereas cognitive language entails the use of literal expressions that emphasise rational aspects of information, as exemplified by phrases like “the view is excellent.” Through the application of experimental techniques, the authors demonstrated that when a hedonic destination, such as Venice, was advertised with affective language (in contrast to cognitive language), participants tended to show stronger intentions to visit, even when the two types of language conveyed similar meanings. In general, previous studies have provided valuable empirical evidence of the interconnectedness between figurative language and the promotional effectiveness of tourism discourse.

3.3 Luxury Hospitality and Language

3.3.1 Branding Luxury Values in Tourism

The word “luxury” originates from the Latin word “luxus,” which means “grow askew, excess” (Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2008/2021). In the classical view, “luxury” was considered a moral threat that is ignoble and inimical to virtue, with almost no positive connotations (Aristotle, 1944; Berry, 2021). With the industrial revolution, the connotation of the superfluous, which was not motivated by economic and utilitarian usage, started to solidify. This notion has become more subtle and sophisticated with the advent and development of mass consumption and the civilisation of leisure. The masses began to embrace the superfluous, recognising it as more than just debauchery. “Luxury” has gradually extended beyond the scope of business, and in some way, can also signify the improvement of the quality of life (Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2008/2021).

In a more contemporary definition, luxury products refer to “high quality, expensive and non-essential products and services that appear to be rare, exclusive, prestigious, authentic and offer high levels of symbolic and emotional/hedonic values through customer experiences” (Tynan et al., 2010, p.1158). The pure luxury services industry is experiencing rapid growth in modern society, where the concept of luxury has evolved towards experiential and intangible features (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012), and these shifts in consumer behaviours have also led to a novel

interpretation and perception of luxury. “New luxury,” as described by Silverstein and Fiske (2003), refers to “products and services that possess higher levels of quality, taste, and aspiration than other goods in the category but are not so expensive as to be out of reach.” This trend is particularly evident in the travel industry, where intangible and experiential elements have become crucial for meeting the expectations of discerning customers. As a result, luxury hotels are no longer solely focused on providing physical materials or economic value; they have expanded their business to include intangible offerings. Nowadays, as remarked by Bakker (2005), luxury hotel usually prioritises the integration of various components and concepts centred around experience and authenticity, with an emphasis on providing guests with memorable experiences (Popescu & Olteanu, 2014).

Previous studies have explored factors that drive consumers to buy luxury products, including functional value and hedonic value (Vickers & Renand, 2003; Smith & Colgate, 2007; Yang & Mattila, 2016). Functional value refers to “the ability to perform functions in the everyday life of consumers” (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001, p.85), reflecting the extent to which products have desired characteristics, such as design, technology, materials, and craftsmanship (Monkhouse et al., 2012). Hedonic value refers to emotional benefits, such as indulgence and sensory pleasure. In the field of luxury marketing, there is a distinct segment of affluent clients who possess substantial financial resources and are willing to pay considerable sums for travel experiences. These individuals are motivated by a desire to stand out among their social circle and allocate their money towards indulgence, relaxation, and luxurious amenities. Hedonic value therefore holds particular importance in luxury hospitality services because the customers of high-end hotels “enjoy the luxury, feel boosted and love the superior services provided to them” (Deb & Lomo-David, 2020, p.616). Consumers of luxury tourism may expect excitement and intrinsic enjoyment from hotel stays to compensate for their high lodging prices (Wiedmann et al., 2007, 2009). Hedonic value is therefore regarded as a crucial factor in driving consumers’ intention to purchase luxury goods.

In a recent survey, Hudders et al. (2013) identified three main facets that consumers perceive in luxury branding, namely **high quality**, **aesthetics**, and **exclusivity**. Traditionally, consumers have relied on the price of a product as a heuristic or psychological shortcut to gauge its quality. This higher price can be attributed to the use of premium raw materials or meticulous craftsmanship (Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2008/2021). Therefore, the notion of excellent quality

primarily revolves around whether the product exceeds similar products in durability, craftsmanship, refinement and other similar attributes

The meticulous efforts invested by craftsmen in creating luxury products often lead to sophisticated and elegant designs that establish a strong connection between the luxury industry and aesthetics, showcasing the refined tastes of the upper class (Heine et al., 2011). In this case, the luxury industry also embodies the attributes associated with aesthetics, such as elegance, sophistication, creativity, and innovation.

Thirdly, luxury products tend to be more expensive because their specialised manufacturing and sophisticated design lead to increased costs, rendering them accessible and owned only by a limited number of individuals. This perceived exclusivity is, therefore, widely considered to be a direct criterion for evaluating the luxuriousness of a product (Heine, 2012).

Figure 3.4 lists the three facets of luxury meaning. In the next section (Section 3.3.2), we will continue discussing the relationship between luxury meaning and language. Furthermore, in the analysis of figurative language in this thesis (Chapters 4 to 6), we will demonstrate how these three values can be constructed through the use of metaphor and hyperbole.

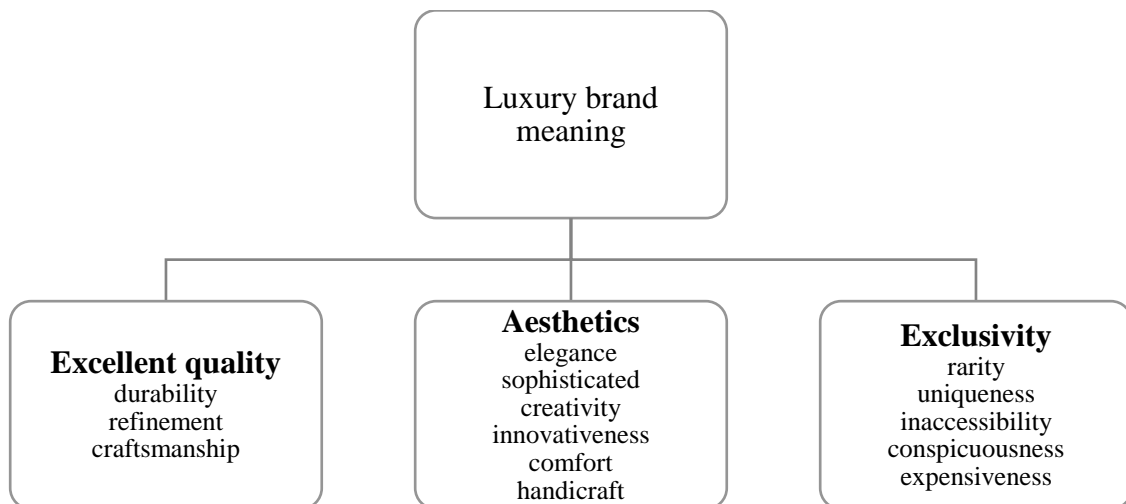


Figure 3.4 Luxury brand meaning (Hudders et al., 2013)

3.3.2 Branding Luxury Values Using Language

In recent years, the growing interest of research and academic scholars in luxury brand management has led to a large number of studies pertaining to exploring the diverse marketing strategies capitalised by luxury companies to shape the meaning of luxury brands and enhance the hedonic value of their products and services (e.g., Keller, 2017; Piramanayagam & Seal, 2022). As an example, linking a brand or product to a remarkable historical event can evoke shared memories among individuals, fostering a sense of history and heritage. When multiple potent associations are combined, the brand can successfully craft a distinctive narrative that deeply resonates with consumers' intrinsic desires and aspirations, thereby enhancing the brand's uniqueness (Holt, 2004). This can be accomplished through the skillful utilisation of storytelling techniques that incorporate legendary elements. The advertising statement "Fairmont Singapore is a beacon of luxury in the Lion City's Downtown Core" found on the Fairmont Singapore website (Figure 3.1) serves as a clear example of the luxury hotel's emphasis on the value of exclusivity by highlighting its rich cultural heritage. The expression indicates the hotel's leading position in the industry and the exceptional enjoyment it offers its guests.

The Fairmont advertisement also demonstrates the dynamic relationship between luxury values and language. In fact, due to the intangible nature of the hotel experience, "hedonism" or hedonistic perception can be effectively constructed through, and heavily dependent on, the use of language, allowing customers to imagine/anticipate the pleasure they will experience during their stay.

Although there is a lack of direct or explicit exploration of linguistic devices in constructing the meaning of luxury, particularly figurative language, several studies have started to investigate luxury's conceptualisation through the lens of language. These studies have made contributions by placing textual messages as a central focus of the investigation into the marketing communication of luxury brands, thus warranting their inclusion in the literature review of this research project. For example, Hansen and Wänke (2011), in their study on consumers' language use when discussing luxury commodities, revealed that luxury products prompt consumers to use more abstract language. This phenomenon is attributed to the strong association of luxury products with abstract representations, distinguishing them from necessities or ordinary goods. Similarly, Gurzki et al. (2019) proposed that luxury brands deploy richer rhetorical devices, particularly complex rhetoric, compared to premium and

mass-market brands, which can potentially foster aesthetic immersion and actively engaging consumers in the fictional world, or “dream,” created by the brand. Thus, figurative language, such as metaphor and hyperbole, is often associated with notions of prestige and excellence. When it comes to advertising luxury products, consumers may find a hyperbolic framed advertisement more captivating and luxurious than a literal one because hyperboles amplify the extremity of a concept and, consequently, enhance the qualities being promoted. Similarly, metaphorical expressions can adorn an advertisement with fanciful elements, for instance *elements of the landscape are jewels* (Jaworska, 2017), while simultaneously imbuing hotels with positive characteristics.

Overall, the aforementioned studies demonstrated the various roles and functions of language, each with distinct characteristics, in the communication of the luxury industry. However, despite the increasing acknowledgement of the importance of written text in luxury industry communication, research specifically focusing on the utilisation of figurative devices to frame luxury values within the sphere of tourism discourse remains largely overlooked. Considering the close relationship between hedonic values and figurative language, investigating the use of metaphor and hyperbole in luxury tourism discourse will not only provide us with a deeper understanding of the manifestations and variations of metaphor and hyperbole, but also increase our knowledge of the communication strategies of the luxury industry.

3.4 A Tale of Two Cities: Singapore and Hong Kong

In this project, the scope of data sources was restricted to five-star luxury hotels located in Hong Kong and Singapore, both of which are highly developed cities in Asia. Being regarded as the most open and dynamic economies in the Asia-Pacific region, Singapore and Hong Kong have consistently competed to establish themselves as Asia’s leading tourist destinations (Henderson, 2002; Wong & Kwan, 2001). These two regions share many similarities in their ability to attract international travellers, including picturesque harbours views, well-developed tourism infrastructure, diverse shopping options, and rich cultural heritage attractions (Yeung et al., 2004). Hence, a kind of comparative analysis will be exploited to explore the branding of luxury values in the context of these two cities. In the forthcoming section, a brief description of the development, similarities, and differences of the tourism industry in the two selected

locations will be provided. Furthermore, the rationales behind choosing these particular regions as the main focus of the research will be elucidated, with a particular emphasis on their cultural and language planning dimensions.

3.4.1 The Tourism Industry in Singapore and Hong Kong

Both Singapore and Hong Kong are known as MICE hubs, which stands for destinations for meetings, incentive travel, conventions, and exhibitions. As an important financial centre, tourism is one of the important sources of income for both places (Samtani, 2017). The two regions possess significant strategic geographic advantages, serving as entrepôts to Southeast Asia and as crossroads linking Oceania and Europe. This geographical location then brings with them a similar level of economic development and social contexts where a colonial legacy contributes to language and cultural diversity, as well as a relatively stable and prosperous political system (Todd et al., 2015; Yeung et al., 2004). Singapore and Hong Kong therefore have long been seen as principal rivals to become Asia's premier tourist destinations, and the two governments have invested a great deal of manpower and material, albeit to varying degrees, to promote their tourism industries and persuade travellers to stay longer (Henderson, 2002; Wong & Kwan, 2001).

Singapore's integration into Malaysia in 1963 marked the end of British colonial rule over the island after a span of 144 years. However, owing to unresolved political, economic, and racial tensions, it opted for a formal separation from Malaysia in 1965, subsequently establishing itself as an independent and sovereign nation, known today as the Republic of Singapore. Notably, Singapore's population comprises predominantly ethnic Chinese, while Malays, Indians, and other minority groups collectively account for 25.7 per cent of the resident population (Department of Statistics Singapore, 2020). Over the past four decades, the city-state of Singapore has been committed to promoting its tourism industry through a narrative of nationalism, unity, and multiracialism. This commitment is especially evident in its multi-ethnic cultural spaces, such as Chinatown, Little India, and Kampong Glam, which attract a significant number of international tourists annually.

Visitors to Singapore primarily come from nearby countries, such as Indonesia and China, followed by Australia, India, and Malaysia, with the UK and the US also remaining important sources of tourists. Overnight visitors reached 1.30 million in the fourth quarter of 2022, an increase of 8,140.5 percent from the same period the previous year, following the implementation of simplified COVID-19 measures on August 29, 2022. Tourists mainly come

for holiday and general business purposes, with the length of stay averaging four days. As the world continues to steadily recover from the pandemic, the Singapore tourism board is working to organize a variety of large-scale events such as the Singapore Grand Prix and WTT Singapore Smash to expand its influence internationally in terms of the tourism industry (Henderson, 2010). Regarding the hotel landscape, there were 431 licensed hotels with over 83,000 room stock where the average occupancy rate was 86 per cent (Singapore Tourism Board, n.d.).

In contrast to Singapore, which achieved full self-government through a more conventional process, Hong Kong transitioned from British colonial rule overnight in 1997 and needed to reposition itself as part of the People's Republic of China. Despite this transition, it maintains separate governing and economic systems as a special administrative region under the principle of "one country, two systems." As a crucial hub for global business and a renowned tourist destination, Hong Kong ranks third in terms of gross global connectivity, surpassing cities like Tokyo and Paris (Forrest et al., 2004).

The number of inbound tourists in Hong Kong reached 113,763 in November 2022, up 1,098.5 per cent year on year, after compulsory quarantine regulations on arrival were lifted in September. As the impact of COVID-19 diminishes, Hong Kong anticipates a resurgence in international tourism by hosting a robust lineup of events and activities, such as Hong Kong WinterFest, RISE 2024, and New Year Countdown Celebrations ("\$100m Tourism Push as Borders Reopen", 2022). According to the Hong Kong Tourism Board, there are 319 formally registered hotels in Hong Kong with 89,205 rooms available. The average hotel room occupancy rate was 66 per cent (PartnerNet, 2022).

3.4.2 The Comparative Analysis of Singapore and Hong Kong

Several researchers have undertaken inspections into the convergence and divergence of Hong Kong and Singapore as competitive tourism destinations. Their studies reveal that both locations synergistically combine traditional heritage with a modern ambience to strategically promote a complex and contemporary image that embodies the essence of both Eastern and Western cultures (Henderson, 2002; Horng & Tsai, 2012; Todd, 2015).

During the decolonisation period of the 1960s, marked by the end of British colonial rule, Hong Kong's cosmopolitan identity began to take shape (Choy, 2007). This period gave rise to a distinct and increasingly robust sense of Hongkongese identity, which diverged significantly

from both Mainland Chinese and British identities (Zhang et al., 2022). Hong Kong's persistent and pervasive discourse of upholding capitalist prosperity reflects Hong Kong's unwavering commitment to maintaining its cosmopolitan identity within the global capitalist system (Darwin, 1999). This distinctive political and cultural landscape permeates many aspects of life, particularly in tourism, where it has fostered the development of the "Asia's World City" branding strategy as a means to entice international tourists (Zhang et al., 2022).

However, Singapore's developmental trajectory initially centred around the establishment of post-war infrastructure, preceding the more recent wave of Westernisation in its society. However, as time progressed, the focus expanded beyond mere material aspirations, and the importance of establishing shared values, such as multiculturalism, which gradually gained recognition among the population (Henderson, 2002). Due to its diverse population, Singapore attaches great importance to cultural diversity, as evidenced by metaphorical expressions like "melting pot" and "unique flavours" found in its official travel guides. These expressions reflect Singapore's vision of embracing multiculturalism (Henderson, 2002). In terms of tourism resources, the city-state offers a plethora of dining options from different ethnic groups, reflecting its rich culture and ethnic diversity (Horng & Tsai, 2011).

Secondly, from a linguistic standpoint, the focus language of this research is English, and both Singapore English and Hong Kong English fall under the same category of English variety known as "outer circle" varieties. According to Kachru's concentric-circles model (Kachru, 1985), English could be divided into "the inner circle", "the outer circle", and "the expanding circle," each representing "distinct types of speech fellowships of English, phases of the spread of the language, and particular characteristics of the uses of the language and of its acquisition and linguistic innovations" (p. 122). The Inner Circle encompasses regions like the United Kingdom, the United States, and New Zealand, where English is spoken as a native language. The Outer Circle includes regions where English is used as a second language in multilingual settings, such as Malaysia, Singapore, and Hong Kong, which have historical ties to British colonization. Lastly, the Expanding Circle refers to regions where English is used as a foreign language for international communication, such as mainland China or Japan. The use of English in these regions is typically influenced by norm-dependent factors (Tajeddin & Pakzadian, 2020).

According to Kachru's classification, both Hong Kong English and Singapore English fall under the category of "outer circle" variety. This classification is based on the historical

background of these regions as former British colonies and the continued use of English in various institutional contexts, including law courts, universities, and government, even after the handover in 1997 in the case of Hong Kong (Hundt, 2006; Sung, 2015, Wolf & Polzenhagen, 2009).¹⁸

Considering the similar and different characteristics of both destinations, a comparative study of hotel websites can highlight the distinct industry image of each region and provide valuable insights and potential contributions to the lodging sector.

3.5 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the main motivations for using luxury hotel websites as a context for the examination of figurative language from the following key dimensions: the major branding strategies in contemporary tourism, the emergence of hotel websites as a distinct discourse genre, the inherent value embedded in the contemporary luxury industry and its relationship with language, and the similarities and differences between Singapore and Hong Kong as major tourist cities in Asia.

Since the use of figurative language is “multifaceted” (Cameron & Maslen, 2010; Qiu, 2024), driven and influenced by a range of contextual factors—including the characteristics of reference objects and sociocultural contexts—the following sections of this thesis (Chapter 4, Chapter 5, and Chapter 6), will discuss, in turn, how various factors (such as product categories and sociocultural contexts) shape the manifestation, distribution, and function of metaphor and

¹⁸ Since 1966, Singapore has implemented a bilingual education policy. According to this policy, English, one of the four official languages, is taught as a “First Language” and serves as the primary medium of instruction in schools. The remaining three official languages, namely Chinese, Malay, and Tamil, which correspond to the mother tongue languages (MTLs) of the major ethnic groups, are taught as a “Second Language” in educational institutions (Cheng, 2015). The official working language in Singapore is English (Bokhorst-Heng, 1998). Since 1995, the Hong Kong Government has implemented the “biliterate (Chinese and English) and trilingual (Cantonese, Putonghua and English)” language education policy aiming at nurturing students’ English and Chinese language proficiency (Cheng, 2015). Most of Hong Kong’s universities are officially English-medium (Bolton, 2011).

hyperbole in discourse. These chapters will also explain how these figurative devices provide an alternative lens for understanding and interpreting the meanings and values of modern luxury.

4. Chapter 4 “Luxurious” Metaphors: The Use of Figurative Language in Luxury Hotel Websites¹⁹

4.1 Chapter Introduction

While advertising communication in the luxury industry has emphasised the important role of symbolic rhetoric in attracting potential consumers, there is a relative scarcity of studies that have explored linguistic metaphors in specific situated contexts, such as the luxury hospitality sector. This chapter is a study of how luxury hotel websites in Singapore and Hong Kong exploit metaphors from various source domains to depict their services and facilities as desirable “dreams” that customers aspire to experience.

In this chapter, I will first draw attention to the function of luxury advertising in the luxury industry and illustrate its essence and characteristics from a macro perspective, particularly its contribution to constructing luxury values and moulding the industry’s overall structure. Using the theoretical framework of Hudders et al. (2013), I will then introduce the three core symbolic constituencies in luxury brand communication: perceived high quality, exclusivity, and aesthetics. These elements work synergistically to shape consumer perceptions and elevate the brand above mass-market alternatives. These three values are closely related to the theme of luxury tourism, a distinct sub-sector within the broader luxury industry, where people seek to escape everyday mediocrity in search of their idealised selves. I suggest that the cross-domain mappings of metaphors can be beneficial in explaining the complex qualities of luxury products, thereby enhancing the cognitive processing of advertisements. Meanwhile, metaphors in advertising may infuse sensory richness into communication, which, in turn, contributes to the affective elaboration of advertisements. Both cognitive elaboration and affective elaboration are positively correlated with the persuasive effect of advertising (Byun & Jang, 2015).

In the second half of this chapter, I will turn to data analysis, employing both quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine the relationship between the source domain of metaphorical expressions and two other contextual parameters: the hotel facility to which the metaphor refers

¹⁹ An earlier version of this chapter was published as a journal article:

Chen, J. Z., Ahrens, K., & Tay, D. (2024). ‘Luxurious’ metaphors in luxury hotel websites in Singapore and Hong Kong: A mixed-methods study. *Applied Corpus Linguistics*, 4(2), 100090-. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acorp.2024.100090>

and the region where the hotel is located. Next, I will focus on how the diverse amenities offered by luxury hotels are strategically described through various metaphors that align with their unique attributes. These metaphors convey luxury values and ultimately achieve the goal of persuasion. Socio-cultural influences on language use will also be considered, given the similarities and differences in the positioning of Singapore and Hong Kong as tourist destinations.

4.2 Metaphor in Advertising

4.2.1 Communication of the Luxury Industry

Luxury consumption, once confined to a privileged few seeking authenticities (of feelings), is now expanding its appeal to other segments of customers, driven by the pursuit of novel sensations and experiences, conspicuous displays of wealth, and the search for emotional gratification (Castarede, 2006; Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2008/2011). Against the background of the flourishing global luxury market, a large number of studies have been dedicated to examining the behaviours and opinions of luxury consumers, investigating diverse factors that influence their needs and inclinations towards conspicuous luxury consumption, with the aim to develop more effective marketing strategies within this market segment.

Factors motivating consumers to make purchases can be categorised into two main types: cognitive or rational value, and hedonic or emotional value. Cognitive constructs in consumer behaviours are related to consumers' pre-existing knowledge or beliefs that consumers possess about a product prior to making a purchase decision. Conversely, emotional elements are associated with the emotional value that consumers derive from using the product, such as feelings of joy, excitement, or satisfaction (Kumar et al., 2009; Schultz & Jain, 2018). In luxury consumption, researchers have identified a strong emotional connection between luxury products and consumers' emotions (i.e., Hung et al., 2011; Shukla & Purani, 2012). Luxury brands that integrate art, creativity, and craftsmanship into their products evoke favourable emotions among consumers who see luxury consumption as a means to express their desired identities. By owning and using luxury items, consumers can project an image or lifestyle that

reflects their personal values, ambitions, dreams, and aspirations, as well as their perceived social status within contemporary consumer culture (Koronaki et al., 2018).

Hence, it is equally important to examine the luxury industry from the perspective of marketing practitioners. Through analysing their deployment of various marketing strategies to optimise investment efficiency and maximize sales, we can gauge a more holistic understanding of the overall operations in the luxury industry (Schultz & Jain, 2018).

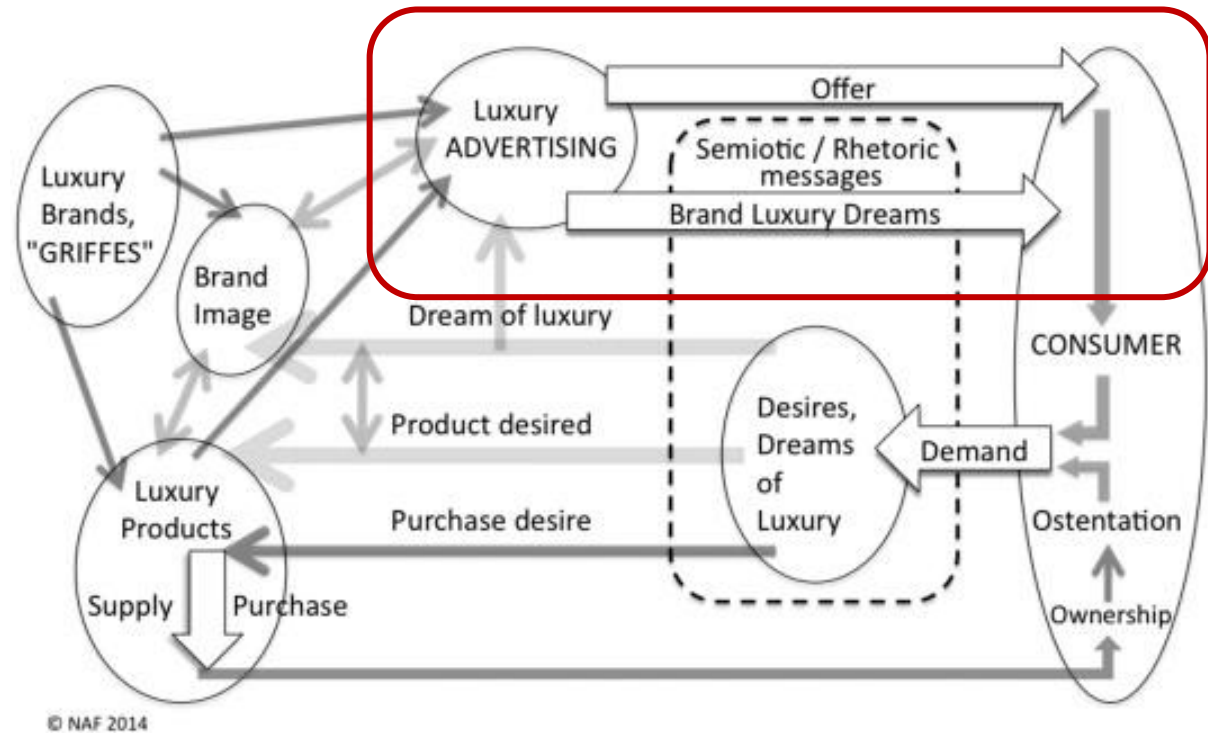


Figure 4.1 Model of relationships between luxury brands and consumers (Anido Freire, 2014)

Figure 4.1 illustrates the interactions between luxury consumptions and consumers, as well as the potential mechanism underlying the interactions (Anido Freire, 2014). Brands and their products, along with their communication efforts such as advertising and branding, are positioned on the left side of the graph, while consumers are located on the right side. As shown in the red circle of the figure, luxury advertising attempts to evoke people’s desires and dreams towards luxury products, employing highly captivating approaches that harness the combined power of ideal imagery, positive semantics and persuasive rhetoric. Importantly, the desire for luxury is not ephemeral; even after customers have temporarily fulfilled their aspirations and obtained luxury products, they will continue to seek self-esteem and “ostentation,” thus leading

to a two-way, reciprocal relationship between luxury products and customers. In this vein, Figure 4.1 presents two distinct paths of luxury consumption. The upper part of the figure represents the initiatory path, which corresponds to the first purchase of a luxury product, whereas the lower part of the figure refers to the confirmatory path, depicting the subsequent repurchasing of luxury goods or the development of brand loyalty towards luxury brands.

Anido Freire's (2014) study mainly focused on the initial path of luxury consumption (the area inside the red line in Figure 4.1) and offered valuable insights into how luxury values were constructed through the use of symbolic images and rhetoric in luxury advertisements. For example, the study found that the use of a visual metaphor in Hermès advertising, where a young woman was depicted as a butterfly with her wings symbolically replaced by a Hermès silk square, conveyed notions of beauty and positions the brand as exquisite and sophisticated. This study is consistent with the conclusions of Gurzki et al. (2019), which argued that luxury brands used rhetorical devices, especially complex rhetorical devices, more frequently than mass brands. However, there are two aspects worth pointing out about the purpose and method of Anido Freire (2014). On the one hand, the study predominantly relied on qualitative analysis and based its findings on a limited selection of two pieces of advertisements as its data. On the other hand, the study centered around the utilisation of visual imagery and discussed the strategic use of pictorial metaphors and hyperboles to accentuate the artistic attributes of the products, although the author also acknowledged the importance of written language in advertising communication.

Drawing upon Anido Freire's (2014) theoretical framework of luxury communication (Figure 4.1) and the practice of analysing the construction of luxury value through semiotic analysis, the current chapter attempts to broaden our understanding of communication strategies employed in the luxury industry by exploring the role of written language. In spite of the current inclination towards highlighting the multimodal components in promotional genres (e.g., Cheng & Suen, 2014; Turra, 2020), such as visuals and audio, written texts in advertisements continue to play an essential role in influencing customers' behaviours, with its ability to create an imagined world for potential consumers, ultimately motivating them to engage in purchases (e.g., Cheng & Suen, 2014; Turra, 2020).

4.2.2 Tourism and Luxury Values

When considering the specific luxury context of this study, which focuses on the lodging industry, it becomes apparent that one of its primary appeals to customers is the opportunity for hedonic escapism. The tourist experience involves two spaces, from “here” (home place) to “there” (travel destination). The representation of “place” holds an important role in tourism discourse as it serves as the epistemological apparatus through which tourists perceive and interpret the distinction between their present location (“here”) and the desired destination they aspire to visit (“there”). This is of particular significance because the fundamental motivation for individuals to engage in travel and tourism activities is the desire to escape the “suffocating” constraints of social performance (Doorne & Ateljevic, 2005). As noted by Rush and Urry (1994), for example, potential visitors may be drawn to tourist attractions where surrounded by place-myths or representations, which are sustained and fuelled visually and textually through various cultural materials, such as travel guides, souvenirs, photography, postcards and official travel websites. On the one hand, the image of a travel destination is shaped by a particular disposition that allows tourists to easily recognize and identify it. For instance, the Taj Mahal, influenced by the notion of Eastern mystery, is characterised by narrative conventions that evoke a sense of being “dreamlike”, “sublime”, “surreal”, and “ethereal.” Such positioning elements have become one of the key selling points for attracting tourists to the Taj Mahal nowadays. On the other hand, as tourists seek to escape the rational constraints imposed by their own surroundings and interactions with others, the branding of commodified “there” typically relies on the themes of heterogeneity, suggestions of fantasy experience, the “unfamiliarity” and “luxury,” the “sacrality” and “beauty,” which further stimulates “the desire for acquisition and movement” among tourists (Appadurai, 1990). In this regard, the most effective way to differentiate a destination in the market is by emphasising and enhancing its unique characteristics.

Both the luxury and tourism industries strive to position themselves as providers of exceptional experiences and products that cater to the dreams and preferences of specific target markets so as to set themselves apart from the mass market or the “home” place. Therefore, the two fields seem to share a common goal in their communication efforts, aiming to establish a high-quality, sophisticated, and unique image (Hudders et al., 2013). Despite acknowledging that “there is no single definition of luxury” (Kapferer, 2010, p. 43), researchers have identified several key qualities critical to shaping the perception of luxury. These qualities—such as aesthetics,

exclusivity, and high quality—offer valuable insights into the components of consumers' luxury (travel) experiences.

The first value associated with luxury hotel experiences is aesthetics. In luxury hotels, customers are particularly attracted to the beauty of the physical environment (Kirillova & Lehto, 2015; Wong et al., 2023). The consumption of visually exquisite designs tends to evoke positive feelings such as joy, comfort, pleasure, and enjoyment (Norman, 2004). Moreover, the artistic enlightenments in the luxury industry serve as a distinguishing characteristic that differentiates them from the mass market, appealing to the elite clientele. Hence, luxury hotels prioritize creating a sense of opulence and glamour by highlighting the aesthetic appeal of their various facilities, including architecture, design, interiors, furniture, lighting, and more (Alfakhri et al., 2018).

The luxury tourism industry is often characterised by exclusivity, and it is typically accessible only to a limited and privileged group of travellers who are situated within their own social circle, thus justifying the price premium associated with luxury travel experiences (Thirumaran et al., 2021). As an example, Hilton hotels provide executive lounges exclusively for Hilton Diamond members. By restricting access to certain facilities or services, luxury brands are able to create a sense of exclusivity and desirability, which add to the allure of the brand and help maintain a high level of aspirational value for the product or service (Riot et al., 2013). Nowadays, the internet has become an ideal platform for luxury companies to achieve their goals by presenting information and engaging with both existing and potential guests in a highly effective manner, while maintaining exclusivity through premium pricing and selective distribution (Hennigs et al., 2012).

Last but not least, the quality value of luxury goods pertains to the fundamental performance and essential functionality provided by the product, including aspects such as superior craftsmanship, durability, and reliability (Wiedmann et al., 2009). Similarly, in the hotel industry, the quality value pertains to the extent to which hotels' services meet or surpass customer expectations. Luxury consumers who prioritize excellent quality are often willing to pay a higher price for luxury products based on the belief that there is a positive correlation between price and product quality (Ye et al., 2014). For many luxury travellers, the exceptional quality of hotel services is a significant determinant of their luxury travel behaviours. Luxury guests believe that the provision of meticulous and attentive service, stringent hygiene

standards, use of high-quality materials, and a friendly environment justify the premium price associated with luxury hotels.

In summary, in the current chapter, the analysis of luxury tourism discourse specifically involves investigating the instantiation of linguistic metaphors and their source domains in luxury hotel websites, which serve as a vital platform for luxury hotels to conduct their business operations. Additionally, the chapter investigates the preference for metaphors with distinct characteristics when portraying various amenities and services in the context of promotional tourism discourses. It also explores how the use of metaphors contributes to the construction of luxury value in luxury consumption. Since the investigation of metaphors serves as a starting point in this study, the following section will expound upon the rationale behind this selection.

4.2.3 Metaphor and Advertising Elaborations

Since metaphor invites recipients to think about a relatively abstract idea in terms of something more concrete, it is often used to introduce a difficult, unfamiliar concept, making the concept more intuitive, familiar and easy for the audience to understand (Semino, 2008). Previous studies have demonstrated from various perspectives that processes stimulating cognitive elaboration and simplifying complexity can significantly influence how issues are perceived. Ng and Koller (2013), for example, suggested that in corporate discourse, metaphor became an important tool for business institutions to reach differentiation vis-à-vis a sea of competitors in the marketplace, in influencing how the audience perceives the institution, in line with the ability of metaphor to organise thinking and construct reality (Ng & Koller, 2013). Animate and anthropomorphic metaphors, such as BRANDS ARE LIVING ORGANISMS or BRANDS ARE PEOPLE, have been shown as effective strategies for business organisations to fashion themselves and express brand “personalities” of growth, flexibility, dynamism, and connectivity (Koller, 2009). These metaphors imbue the organisation with favourable attributes, in the way of using the audience’s innate understanding of human characteristics, allowing them better connect and identify with the abstraction of the organisation. Moreover, psycholinguistic studies, including one conducted by Burger et al. (2015), have provided empirical evidence for the influence of metaphors on cognitive elaboration and their effectiveness in advertising. The study showed that metaphors make abstract notions more tangible, thereby reducing the perceived complexity of the advertisement, and allowing marketers to effectively communicate the abstract benefits of products to consumers. As a

result, consumers tend to have more positive evaluations of the advertisement, as they find it easier to understand and connect with the intended message.

In addition to cognitive elaboration, which involves content-related thoughts during information processing (Rossell et al., 2002), there is another form of elaboration equally important in advertising communication: affective elaboration. According to Kim et al. (2012), affective elaboration refers to the emotional involvement and engagement triggered by information. Its importance in enhancing the persuasive effect of information should not be overlooked as well. To elaborate further, the comprehension of metaphors involves two different domains (from source domains to target domains), resulting in a process that can be particularly rewarding for recipients when decoding “puzzles,” especially those aesthetic texts saturated with metaphors. This rewarding experience, characterised by the resolution in comprehending metaphors, can be referred to as “the pleasure of the text” in the field of semiotics (Barthes, 1985). Indeed, interpreting metaphorical meaning in literal falsehoods and attempting to find similarities between two seemingly unrelated concepts in a metaphorical expression may create a sense of tension or incongruity, resulting in negative evaluations. Pleasure can emerge, however, when the tension is solved, which increases positive evaluations of the advertisement (McQuarrie & Mick 1992; Sopory & Dillard 2002).

To sum up, advertisements use metaphors to describe products that correspond the characteristics of the product they are trying to promote. The use of metaphor in advertising can enhance the persuasive effect of promotional communication by stimulating cognitive or emotional elaborations (Sopory, 2005; Toncar & Munch, 2001).

4.2.4 Metaphor and Contextual Factors

Metaphors in tourism discourse serve various purposes and are influenced by different contextual parameters, including the specific referent being described, the intended function of the text, the socio-cultural environment, and other relevant factors (Qiu & Tay, 2022; Tay, 2012).

In this study, the focus is given to the proprietary websites of five-star luxury hotels in Hong Kong and Singapore. Attention is focused on luxury hotels in corpus analysis due to their reputation for delivering the highest level of hospitality in the industry. Luxury hotels consistently receive high scores in website evaluations (Law & Chung, 2003), suggesting that their websites are typically well-designed and can therefore serve as role models for other hotels to emulate.

Secondly, I will restrict the scope of the data source to hotels located in Hong Kong and Singapore because the target language of the current study is English. As we discussed in Section 3.4.2, both Hong Kong English and Singapore English belong to the “outer circle” variety according to Kachru’s classification. Discussing the use of metaphor in a non-Western context can offer a valuable opportunity to broaden our understanding of metaphor as a universal cognitive and communicative phenomenon. Socio-culturally, although Singapore and Hong Kong have many similarities in terms of geographical location, level of economic development, and cultural background, each city indeed has its unique cultural heritage, travel attractions and social dynamics influenced by their respective histories, political system, and city branding strategies. In this vein, it is plausible to expect conceptual metaphors and their metaphorical linguistic expressions to vary across the two socio-cultures (Kövecses, 2004, 2005).

In Jaworska’s (2017) study, the findings indicated a statistically significant increase in the use of metaphorical expressions when portraying tourist destinations that are geographically distant from home culture. To be more specific, whereas the Home-Corpus relied more on conventional metaphors from the domain of BODY, more novel metaphors such as RELIGION, NATURAL SUBSTANCE, COLOR and TASTE were observed in the Europe-Corpus and Faraway-Corpus corpora. The correlation between cultural distance and the use of metaphors suggested the influence of culture on language use.

While metaphor theories have increasingly turned their attention to the application of metaphorical expressions in more detailed, situated contexts (e.g., Jaworska, 2017; Skorczynska & Ahrens, 2015; Tay, 2021), there remains a paucity of literature specifically focusing on promotional tourism discourse. Therefore, the current chapter aims fill this gap by investigating the ways in which different contextual parameters, including metaphorical referents and geographical locations, shape the usage of metaphor in promotional tourism discourse. Moreover, considering the different tourism branding strategies of the two destinations, a comparative study of the hotel websites of Hong Kong and Singapore can not only yield a deeper understanding of how socio-cultural factors mold the characteristics of metaphors employed herein from a linguistic perspective, but also present the unique industry images of the two places, potentially contributing to the development of effective marketing strategies in the lodging industry. Therefore, the questions that will be addressed in this chapter are:

- (1) What types of metaphors occur on luxury hotel websites in Singapore and Hong Kong, and to what extent?
- (2) What are the (potential) associations among metaphor use, hotel facility, and region in luxury hotel websites?
- (3) What do these associations reveal about the luxury values on luxury hotel websites?

4.3 Methodology

4.3.1 Materials and Method

This chapter is grounded in the analysis of two corpora comprising luxury hotel websites located in Singapore and Hong Kong. The methodology used throughout the study is displayed in Figure 4.2. The two corpora contained textual information extracted from 62 websites, amounting to 104,531 words (the SG corpus) and 80,700 words (the HK corpus), respectively. Metaphorical items were identified using the MIPVU guidelines (Steen et al., 2010), which attributed metaphoricity by comparing the intended meaning of the item with its basic meaning as defined in reference sources such as *The Macmillan English Dictionary*, *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* and *Oxford English Dictionary*.

- (1) Retreat to our luxurious abode and *unwind* with your other half. (Hotel Fort Canning, Singapore).

For instance, the basic definition of the lexical item *unwind* in example (1) refers to “to become straighter or looser after being wrapped around something else, or to make something do this,” which contrasts with its contextual meaning in the sentence “to begin to relax.” Therefore, the expression *unwind* is considered metaphorical. In our analysis, all metaphorical expressions were manually identified through a bottom-up approach, aiming to capture all potential metaphorical expressions comprehensively.

Given that the metaphor identification procedure involved comparing lexical meanings, prior to the identification procedure, we employed *The BFSU Stanford POS Tagger* to assign the part of speech for each lexical unit. This step ensured that the comparison of meanings was conducted within the respective word class.

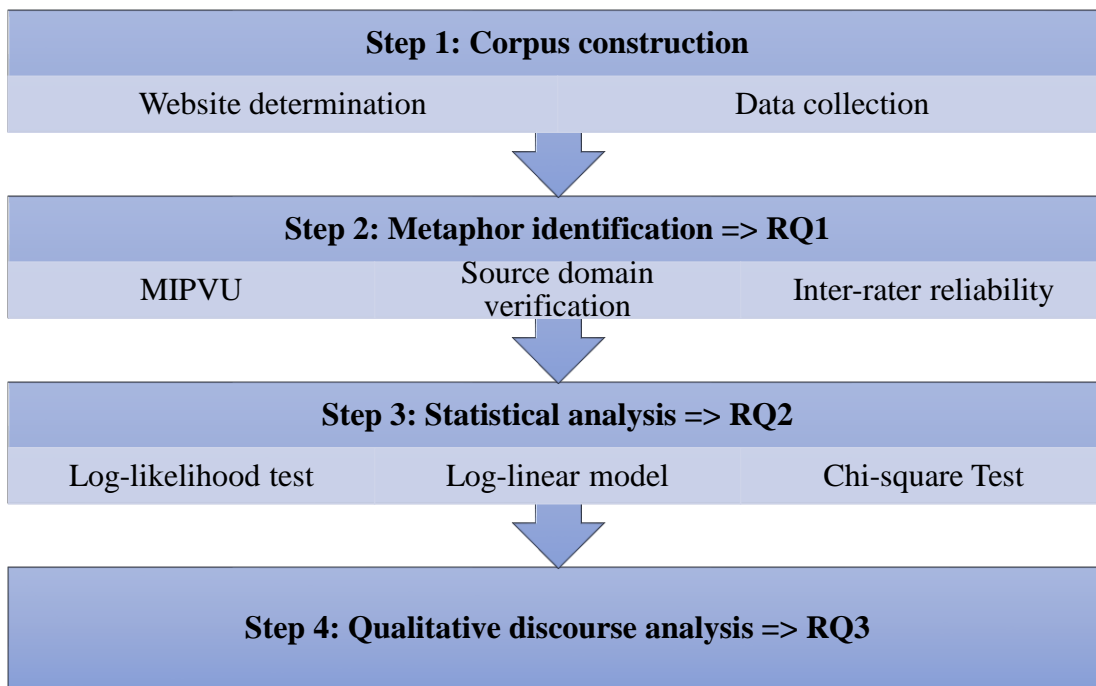


Figure 4.2 The methodology of metaphor identification used in this chapter

After identifying all potential metaphorical expressions, we followed the source domain verification procedure proposed by Ahrens and Jiang (2020) to verify the source domain corresponding to each metaphorical expression. This procedure utilised reference resources such as WordNet (Fellbaum, 1998) and SUMO (Suggested Upper Merged Ontology) (Niles & Pease, 2001), which provide reliable and verifiable semantic and ontological information for each lexical unit. To illustrate, in the case of the expression *unwind* in Example (1), the SUMO node suggests “Detaching” as its corresponding SUMO mapping, which is further labelled as “Any process of movement” in SUMO. We thus ascertained that the source domain of *unwind* is MOTION. Figure 4.3 shows evidence for labelling the expression *unwind* as a MOTION metaphor. The procedures for metaphor identification and source domain verification have been thoroughly listed and illustrated in Section 1.3.2 and Section 2.2.3, respectively.

SUMO Search Tool

This tool relates English terms to concepts from the [SUMO](#) ontology by means of mappings to [WordNet](#) synsets.

English Word: Verb

Verb Synset: 201522276

- SUMO Mappings: [Motion](#) (subsuming mapping)

Words: roll, twine, wind, wrap

Gloss: arrange or or coil around; "roll your hair around your finger"; "Twine the thread around the spool"; "She wrapped her arms around the child"

hypernym [201850315](#) - displace, move

derivationally related [103150232](#) - crimper, curler, hair_curler, roller

derivationally related [107441619](#) - axial_motion, axial_rotation, roll

also see [200435688](#) - roll_up, wrap_up

also see [200435688](#) - roll_up, wrap_up

derivationally related [104586421](#) - winder

derivationally related [110781984](#) - winder

antonym [201523654](#) - unroll, unwind, wind_off

hyponym [201522878](#) - spool

hyponym [201523105](#) - reel

hyponym [201523270](#) - ball

hyponym [201523401](#) - clew, clue

hyponym [201523986](#) - coil, curl, loop

Figure 4.3 Screenshot of the ontological information of the lexical unit *unwind* in SUMO

The methods used in this chapter for metaphor identification and source domain verification were rigorous and thorough. The metaphor identification procedure involved a systematic series of steps to identify metaphorical expressions and determine their source domains, including tasks from determining word boundaries, comparing lexical meanings, and assigning appropriate source domains, all of which adhered to established and meticulous protocols. While the methodology may be intricate and time-consuming, it greatly improved the validity and robustness of the identification results, which previously heavily relied on “more-or-less explicit common sensical intuitions” of metaphor scholars (Stefanowitsch, 2006), particularly beneficial for cases requiring deeper analysis beyond surface-level observations. Next, I will report the results of the inter-rater reliability assessment for metaphor identification.

4.3.2 Inter-rater Reliability

In order to assess the reliability of the metaphor identification process, the MIPVU instructions were given to a second rater, who holds a PhD in Linguistics and is experienced in using MIPVU. This rater independently coded six files that were randomly selected from the pool of hotel websites. Cohen’s Kappa coefficient was calculated to measure inter-rater consistency in determining the metaphoricality of each lexical unit.

	A	B	Total
A	896	36	932
B	129	15160	15289
Total	1025	15196	16221

Number of observed agreements: 16056 (98.98% of the observations)

Number of agreements expected by chance: 14381.8 (88.66% of the observations)

Kappa= 0.910

SE of kappa = 0.007

95% confidence interval: From 0.897 to 0.924

Figure 4.4 Results of the reliability test for metaphor identification

A “strong” value of Kappa was reached (Cohen’s kappa=0.910), indicating a good degree of inter-rater agreement (McHugh, 2012). After thorough discussion, it was identified that the main source of disagreement between the two raters primarily revolved around the interpretation of the conventional metaphors from the source domain LIVING ORGANISM such as “provide”, “offer” and “heart.” To illustrate, in the sentence “Shangri-La Circle *offers* you our exclusive Member Rate,” the hotel is conceptualised as a person, with the capacity to act. Hence, we classified “offer” under the source domain LIVING ORGANISM, despite its commonplace usage in everyday language. After multiple rounds of discussion, all the cases in question were resolved (Cameron & Maslen, 2010). The overall strong consensus achieved in the initial phase provided a solid groundwork for the ensuing qualitative analysis.

4.3.3 Major Sources Domains of Metaphor

Table 4.1 lists the results of metaphor identification, including metaphor source domain, language instance, corresponding raw frequency in the respective corpus (the HK corpus and SG corpus), and normalisation ratio (per 100 words). Overall, a total of 6,990 metaphorical keywords were identified, including a range of 27 types of source domains. Out of the 6,990 metaphorical keywords observed, 3,679 were from the Singapore corpus and 3,331 were from the Hong Kong corpus.

It should be noted that some scholars, such as Cameron (1999, 2003), Cameron & Deignan (2003), Low (1988), and Skorczynska & Deignan (2006) have labelled the “source domain” as the “vehicle” and the “target domain” as the “topic.” The interchangeability of these terms (the vehicle or source; the topic or target) has been observed in certain studies, such as those conducted by Littlemore et al. (2018) and Campbell & Katz (2006). Also, some researchers suggested the differences between “topic/vehicle” and Conceptual Metaphor Theory’s “target/source” by indicating the former refers to specific metaphor tokens, while the latter generalizes related topics/vehicles as “conceptual domains” (e.g., Richards, I. A, 1936; Tay, 2017a, p. 98). In the current thesis, we have adhered to the convention of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980/2003) by utilizing the terms “source” and “target.” Also, we followed Ahrens and Jiang (2020), Kövecses and Szilvia Csabi (2014), and Zeng & Ahrens (2023), using “metaphorical keywords” to denote specific metaphor tokens.

The five most common source domains observed in the corpus included LIVING ORGANISM, PHYSICAL OBJECT, SPACE, ARTIFACT and MOTION. Also, metaphorical expressions from source domains MACHINE, JOURNEY, FORTUNE, PLACE, and PERCEPTUAL ATTRIBUTE exhibited a relatively high frequency in the corpus, followed by source domains BUILDING, CONTAINER, RELIGION, ADVENTURE, MAGIC, WATER, TEMPERATURE and NATURAL PHENOMENA. It should be noted that PERCEPTUAL ATTRIBUTE refers to a group of synesthetic metaphors that describes one sensory modality in terms of another (Strik Lievers, 2015). For instance, the expression “*luscious* landscaped grounds” deploys a gustatory notion to describe the visual elements of the scenery, in order to express the sensory pleasure brought by the captivating visual experience. In our analysis, linguistic expressions pertaining to cross-modal transfers were grouped together as synesthetic metaphors (Zhao et al., 2018), with PERCEPTUAL ATTRIBUTE labelled as their source domain.

Table 4.1 List of source domains, examples of keywords, keyword tokens, and normalised ratios for the SG corpus and the HK corpus

	Source domain	Example of metaphorical keywords	SG	NR	HK	NR	Total	NR
				(Per 100 words)		(Per 100 words)		(Per 100 words)
1	LIVING ORGANISM	offers (349), overlooking (180), vibrant (141), refreshing (93), heart (83), lively (74), lush (30)	808	0.773	823	1.02	1631	0.881
2	PHYSICAL OBJECT	package(s) (196), seamless (53), soothing (38), flexibility (31), transform (18), soft (16), blend (9), fusion (8)	478	0.457	356	0.441	834	0.450
3	SPACE	high (97), wide (70), extensive (67), top (43), deep (21), heights (16)	266	0.254	293	0.363	559	0.302
4	ARTIFACT	backdrop (65), scene (27), art (19), dramatic (17), show (10), stage (6)	240	0.23	260	0.322	500	0.270
5	MOTION	retreat (102), unwind (96), escape (81), escapade (14)	238	0.228	177	0.219	415	0.224
6	MACHINE	energy (46), upgrade (29), recharge (25), launches (22), driven (19), power (8), electrifying (8)	190	0.182	150	0.186	340	0.184
7	JOURNEY	journey (117), embark (42), guide (14), step (13), milestone (8)	168	0.161	145	0.18	313	0.169
8	FORTUNE	rich (73), benefits (42), reward(s) (25), wealth (12)	179	0.171	108	0.134	287	0.155
9	PLACE	home (121), oasis (66), jungle (14), playground (6)	123	0.118	133	0.165	256	0.138
10	PERCEPTUAL ATTRIBUTE	touch(es) (85), tones (23), sweet (20), accents (19), tastefully (16)	131	0.125	121	0.15	252	0.136
11	BUILDING	enhance(s)(d) (81), level (s) (55), support (34)	123	0.118	108	0.134	231	0.125
12	CONTAINER	full (62), fully (46), filled (36)	94	0.090	94	0.116	188	0.101
13	RELIGION	sanctuary (76), haven (37), paradise (24), heaven (9)	104	0.099	79	0.098	183	0.099
14	ADVENTURE	explore (65), adventure(s)(51), venture (7)	84	0.080	73	0.090	157	0.085
15	MAGIC	enchanted (21), magical (19), magic (12), wanderlust (7)	51	0.049	96	0.119	147	0.079
16	WATER	exude(s) (27), immerse (26), infused (11)	89	0.085	47	0.058	136	0.073
17	TEMPERATURE	warm (45), chill (14), calm (11), cool (9)	73	0.070	55	0.068	128	0.069
18	NATURAL PHENOMENA	highlight(s) (23), dazzling (12), dazzle (7), glow (10)	62	0.059	46	0.057	108	0.058
Total (18 types of source domains): 6,665 tokens								
19-27	WAR, FORCE, MONARCH, JEWELLERY, FOOD, ASTRONOMICAL BODY, MEDICINE, MUSIC, idioms Others (9 types of source domain): 325 tokens							

In addition, certain source domains, such as WAR, FORCE, MONARCH, and JEWELLERY, exhibited relatively low frequencies in the corpus compared to other source domains, with less than 100 occurrences. These domains were observed only in particular sections and social contexts, resulting in zero entries in the cross-tabulation table. This posed challenges and limitations for the subsequent quantitative analysis, as the sparsity of data in cells may lead to problematic and biased statistical findings (Rietveld & Van Hout, 1993). In order to make the number of source domain categories feasible for log-linear regression analysis while retaining as comprehensive data as possible, the current research decided to focus on the most prevalent and relevant source domains, including only the 18 most frequent source domains (characterised by frequencies greater than 100 in the combined corpus) in the statistical analysis (Zeng, Tay & Ahrens, 2020). As displayed in Table 4.1, the metaphorical instances included in the subsequent statistical analysis (6,665 cases) account for 95.35 per cent of the total number of metaphorical instances identified in the corpus.

To test whether the Singapore corpus and the Hong Kong corpus have preference regarding the frequency of metaphor usage, a log-likelihood test (Rayson, 2016; Rayson & Garside, 2000) was conducted, using an online Log-likelihood and effect size calculator.²⁰ The results revealed a significant difference in the usage of metaphors between the Singapore and Hong Kong corpora (LL = 44.24, LR = -0.23, $p < .001$).²¹ Figure 4.5 presents the interface of the log-likelihood test, displaying the results of the analysis. This result suggests that the variations in metaphorical usage in the Hong Kong and Singapore corpora are not random, but rather systematic features of the texts contained in each corpus.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that metaphorical expressions from the other nine categories should be overlooked in the shaping of luxury value in promotional tourism discourse. Instead, the inclusion of less common source domains is of great importance as they offer a valuable and intriguing lens for analysing the persuasive nature of advertising communication, particularly with regard to cultural implications. These metaphorical expressions will be

²⁰ <https://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/llwizard.html>

²¹ Rayson (2016) suggested that if the log-likelihood value is 3.84 or higher, the p -value will be significant at < 0.05 , if the log-likelihood value is 6.63 or higher, the p -value will be at < 0.01 , and if the log-likelihood value is 10.83 or higher, the p -value will be at < 0.001 .

discussed in our subsequent qualitative analysis to ensure a thorough and holistic examination of the topic.

Log-likelihood calculator results

Key:
 O1 is observed frequency in Corpus 1
 O2 is observed frequency in Corpus 2
 %1 and %2 values show relative frequencies in the texts.
 + indicates overuse in O1 relative to O2,
 - indicates underuse in O1 relative to O2

Item	O1	%1	O2	%2	LL	%DIFF	Bayes	ELL	RRisk	LogRatio	OddsRatio
Word	3164	3.92	3501	3.35 +	41.09	17.06	28.96	0.00003	1.17	0.23	1.18

Figure 4.5 Results of Log-likelihood test for metaphor usage between the Singapore corpus and the Hong Kong corpus

4.3.4 Website Section and Region

The current research aims to explore the persuasive characteristics of promotional discourse in the tourism domain, paying attention to the construction of luxury values through patterns of figurative language in luxury hotel websites. In our analysis, each metaphorical expression is coded for three variables: its source domain, the section of the website in which it appears (i.e., the hotel facility it refers to), and the region (Hong Kong or Singapore).



Figure 4.6 List of website sections and region

The variable “website section” refers to the specific facility to which the metaphorical expression refers, which is greatly related to the part of the website where the metaphor appears. Since the contemporary hotel experience involves not only the consumption of its accommodation, but also the range of services, facilities, and products offered by the hotel (as discussed in Section 2.2.2), there is a potential for the implementation of diverse figurative language and communication strategies to depict and promote various hotel facilities. Figure 4.6 lists the number of metaphorical expressions (based on 6,665 instances used for quantitative analysis) used by different hotel facilities in our corpus, including hotel descriptions, guest rooms, dining facilities, meeting facilities, and recreational facilities.

Regarding the variable “region”, the corpus for the current study consisted of hotel websites from Singapore and Hong Kong. Therefore, the “region” of each metaphor was self-evidence. Figure 4.5 also shows the number of metaphors in each sub-corpus (the HK corpus and the SG corpus).

	A	B	C	N	O	P	Q	R
1	N	Concordance	Set	Source Domain	Section	Region	File	Date
7	17	coffeemaker, TV, WiFi. Relax in this modern guest room overlooking Victoria Harbor. The room has twin beds, WiFi access	OVERLOOKING /ING ORGANISM		Guest room	HK	Conrad Hong Kong.txt	022/Nov/09 00:00
10	25	10% AAA/CAA Members, Save up to 10% Make Your Stay Even Sweeter Unlock your dream trip and get closer to your dream vac	SWEETER	Perceptual Attrib	Hotel description	HK	Conrad Hong Kong.txt	022/Nov/09 00:00
14	34	and dessert display are also available to complement the vibrant kitchen setting. GARDEN CAFE Situated on the Lower Lobby	VIBRANT /ING ORGANISM		DINING FACILITY	HK	Conrad Hong Kong.txt	022/Nov/09 00:00
31	78	ary for you. SUPERIOR ROOM Come home to your own private retreat. With our signature Dream Bed and bath, it's the perfect	RETREAT	MOTION	Guest room	HK	long Kong at Langham Place.txt	022/Nov/09 00:00
37	90	The perfect place in Hong Kong for a small family to call home on a holiday, complete with snacks the children will love	HOME	PLACE	Guest room	HK	long Kong at Langham Place.txt	022/Nov/09 00:00

Figure 4.7 Screenshot of the Excel spreadsheet for metaphor identification and variable coding

Figure 4.7 is a screenshot of a working Excel spreadsheet for metaphor identification and variable coding. Each row corresponds to a metaphorical expression alongside its concordance, and each column separately provides information about the relevant hotel facilities, region, and hotel name.

It is worth mentioning that previous studies have focused on exploring cross-domain mappings of metaphorical expressions, especially examining the motivations and processes behind the mapping mechanisms between source and target domains (c.f. Ahrens, 2010). In the study of promotional discourse, uncovering mapping mechanisms behind conceptual metaphors is undoubtedly a very good entry point and topic. However, because this chapter adopts a bottom-up approach to identifying metaphors, the classification of target domains of metaphorical expressions becomes especially challenging due to their diverse and dynamic nature. For instance, the lexical item *treasures* in the phrases “a generous selection of floral *treasures*,” “culinary *treasures*,” and “*treasured* moments” correspond to the three target domains of flowers, food, and time, respectively. Despite this, these expressions were all found in the section describing the restaurant layout and services on the hotel website, showcasing the classical elegance of the hotel’s dining experience.

Furthermore, consider that the objective of this chapter is not to explore the working mechanisms of individual conceptual metaphor but to investigate how a combination of different metaphors collectively contributes to and effectively communicates the concept of luxury in promotional discourse, we decided not to include the TARGET DOMAIN of each metaphor in the analysis. Instead, the broader notion of hotel facilities was selected as the referent for the expressions under inspection.

4.3.5 Statistical Tool: Log-linear Model

Following the previous research (Qiu & Tay, 2022; Tay, 2017b, Zeng et al., 2021), this study used log-linear regression model analysis to uncover the multiple factors affecting the metaphor pattern in tourism discourse. The log-linear regression model analysis is an extension of the Chi-square test, and is used to explore association patterns between several categorical variables (Agresti, 2019). The saturated model is written for the purpose of illustration as a three-variable model that includes source domain (X), website section (Y), and region (Z):

$$\log(\mu_{ijk}) = \lambda + \lambda_i^X + \lambda_j^Y + \lambda_k^Z + \lambda_{ij}^{XY} + \lambda_{ik}^{XZ} + \lambda_{jk}^{YZ} + \lambda_{ijk}^{XYZ}$$

The saturated model contains the maximum number of “effect” terms (e.g., the “main” effect of the variable source domain λ_i^X) and association/interaction between variables (e.g., λ_{ijk}^{XYZ} indicates the three-way interaction between source domain, website section, and region).

The first step of log-linear regression analysis is to select an optimal model which best fits the observed data. This could be done through a process of “Backward elimination process”, which successively deletes non-significant associations/interactions, starting off with the saturated model. The “effect” term will be retained in the model if the χ^2 value of the more “economy” model passes the critical level, otherwise, it will be left out (Rietveld & Van Hout, 1993; Tay, 2017b, 2020).

It should also be noted that the log-linear model is generally referred to as a hierarchical model, which means that if there are higher-order effects in the model,²² those higher-order effects incorporate the associated lower-order effects at the same time. For example, the presence of the effect “ λ_{ij}^{XY} ” indicates not only the presence of a two-way association between X and Y but also the inclusion of the individual effect of X and Y (Agresti, 2019). Next, I will report the results of the log-linear regression and conduct a qualitative analysis of metaphor patterns to interpret and elaborate on these results.

4.4 Results and Discussion

Although the log-likelihood test revealed divergences in the usage of metaphors between the two regions, it did not offer a thorough explanation of how these distinctions were specifically manifested, especially in terms of patterns involving metaphors uniquely associated with a specific region. To gauge a more extensive profile of metaphor usage in promotional tourism discourse, building upon the previous descriptive analysis in this chapter, a log-linear analysis was employed to examine the associations among metaphor, the referent of the metaphor (website section), and the region. Also, a qualitative analysis with language examples will be presented to further account and illustrate the findings derived from the log-linear analysis.

²² Higher-order interactions refer to the interactions among several variables (Elliott, 1988).

4.4.1 Results of Log-linear Analysis

Table 4.2 Backward Elimination Statistics

Step		Effects	Chi-Square	df	Sig.	Number of Iterations
0	Generating Class	SD*SEC*REG	.000	0	.	
	Deleted Effect	SD*SEC* REG	101.108	68	.006	4
1	Generating Class	SD*SEC* REG	.000	0	.	

The three-way log-linear analysis produced a final model that retained all effects. The likelihood ratio of this model was $\chi^2(0) = 0, p = 1$, indicating that the highest-order interaction (source domain \times website section \times region) was significant, $\chi^2(68) = 101.108, p = .006$, as suggested in Table 4.2. Moving forward, the following sections will focus on the statistical findings drawn from the log-linear analysis, accompanied by pertinent linguistic examples. The discussion will delve into the relationship between metaphors and different contextual parameters, in particular exploring the impact of hotel website sections and regions on motivation and modelling of specific metaphorical patterns. By examining these potential usage structures, we can better understand how the specific metaphors are strategically used to depict and market luxury hotels, and to promote the idea of luxury in the context of luxury tourism.

The Association Between Source Domains and Regions

The eventual log-linear model contained a three-way association (source domain \times website section \times region). To break down this main effect, a Chi-square Test of Independence test on the source domain and region was first carried out to compare the frequencies of 18 types of metaphor in the two corpora. Crosstabulation for the source domain and region variables association is presented in Table 4.3, with relevant statistics reported, including observed frequency, expected frequency (in brackets), adjusted residuals, chi-square results, and Cramer's V coefficients. An adjusted residual is the error between the expected frequency and the observed frequency. If the value is more (less) than 1.96 (2.0 is used by convention), then the number of frequencies in that cell is significantly larger (smaller) than would be expected, with a significance level of .05 (Field, 2013). In Table 4.3, adjusted residual values that are

greater than 2.0 are highlighted in red, and values less than 2.0 are highlighted in green. Different levels of significance (* $p < .05$ vs. ** $p < .01$) are represented by asterisks.

The calculation of the expected frequency of a variable category takes into account the frequencies of other categories based on the column and row subtotals, as explained in Gilbert (1993). Therefore, it is essential to point out that even a category with a relatively high observed frequency might occur less frequently than expected, while a category with a particularly low observed frequency could occur more frequently than by chance. In this vein, adjusted residuals should be understood as how (in)frequent the association is in the statistical sense, rather than its (un)prevalence in the corpus.

As can be seen from Table 4.3, there was a significant association between the types of source domain and region, $\chi^2(17) = 73.759, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .105$. The analysis revealed that hotel websites from Singapore appeared to have a greater propensity for using the FORTUNE ($p < .01$), PHYSICAL OBJECT ($p < .01$), WATER ($p < .01$) and MOTION ($p < .05$) metaphors to describe and promote their facilities, while for websites from Hong Kong, they were MAGIC ($p < .01$), ARTIFACT ($p < .05$), LIVING ORGANISM ($p < .05$) and SPACE ($p < .05$) metaphors. The associations of the other source domain and region were not statistically significant, suggesting that the observed frequency of these metaphors did not deviate significantly from their expected frequency.

Table 4.3 Cross-tabulation for source domain and region

			HK	SG	Total	Statistics	
SD	1	ADVENTURE	Count	73 (74.5)	84 (82.5)	157	$\chi^2 (17) = 73.759, p < .000$ Cramer's $V = .105$
		ADVENTURE	Adj. Residual	-2	.2		
	2	ARTIFACT	Count	260 (237.4)	240 (262.6)	500	
		ARTIFACT	Adj. Residual	2.1*	-2.1*		
	3	BUILDING	Count	108 (109.7)	123 (121.3)	231	
		BUILDING	Adj. Residual	-.2	.2		
	4	CONTAINER	Count	94 (89.2)	94 (98.8)	188	
		CONTAINER	Adj. Residual	.7	-.7		
	5	FORTUNE	Count	108 (136.2)	179 (150.8)	287	
		FORTUNE	Adj. Residual	-3.4**	3.4**		
	6	JOURNEY	Count	145 (148.6)	168 (164.4)	313	
		JOURNEY	Adj. Residual	-.4	.4		
	7	LIVING ORGANISM	Count	823 (774.3)	808 (856.7)	1631	
		LIVING ORGANISM	Adj. Residual	2.8*	-2.8*		
	8	MACHINE	Count	150 (161.4)	190 (178.6)	340	
		MACHINE	Adj. Residual	1.1	-1.1		
	9	MAGIC	Count	96 (69.8)	51 (77.2)	147	
		MAGIC	Adj. Residual	4.4**	-4.4**		
	10	MOTION	Count	177 (197.0)	238 (218.0)	415	
		MOTION	Adj. Residual	-2.0*	2.0*		
	11	NATURAL PHENOMENA	Count	46 (51.3)	62 (56.7)	108	
		NATURAL PHENOMENA	Adj. Residual	-1.0	1.0		
	12	PERCEPTUAL ATTRIBUTE	Count	121 (119.6)	131 (132.4)	252	
		PERCEPTUAL ATTRIBUTE	Adj. Residual	.2	-.2		
	13	PHYSICAL OBJECT	Count	356 (395.9)	478 (438.1)	834	
		PHYSICAL OBJECT	Adj. Residual	-3.0**	3.0**		
	14	PLACE	Count	133 (121.5)	123 (134.5)	256	
		PLACE	Adj. Residual	1.5	-1.5		
	15	RELIGION	Count	79 (86.9)	104 (96.1)	183	
		RELIGION	Adj. Residual	-1.2	1.2		
	16	SPACE	Count	293 (265.4)	266 (293.6)	559	
		SPACE	Adj. Residual	2.4*	-2.4*		
	17	TEMPERATURE	Count	55 (60.8)	73 (67.2)	128	
		TEMPERATURE	Adj. Residual	-1.0	1.0		
	18	WATER	Count	47 (64.6)	89 (71.4)	136	
		WATER	Adj. Residual	-3.0**	3.0**		
Total			Count	3164	3501	6665	

Note. * Significant at $p < .05$ level, ** significant at $p < .01$ level

The Association Between Source Domains and Sections

Then, the Chi-square Test of Independence was performed to examine the association between source domain and section. Results indicated a statistically significant association between source domain and section, $\chi^2(68)=949.855, p = .000$, Cramer's $V=.189$, implying that the use of metaphors depended on the type of amenities and facilities. Table 4.4 is the cross-tabulation for this association.

Before discussing the results of the quantitative analysis, it is worth noting that in Table 4.3, an adjusted residual exceeding ± 1.96 (± 2.0 conventionally) indicated a significantly larger or smaller number of cases observed in that cell than what was expected. According to Agresti (2007, p. 38), for contingency tables with few cells, a threshold of adjusted residual above 2 is considered significant, while for tables with many cells, the value should be raised to 3. In the study by Landis et al. (2013), an alpha level was set at .05/15 or .003, corresponding to a critical value of ± 2.96 (or approximately ± 3) for the contingency table with 15 cells. Given that Figure 4.4 contained more cells, occurrences significantly greater than expected ($+3.0$) were highlighted in red, and frequencies significantly lower than expected (-3.0) were highlighted in green. Our discussion will also mainly pay attention to the source domains with the highest residuals under each section, as they contributed greater to the Chi-square value (Delucchi, 1993; Sharpe, 2015).

Table 4.4 Cross-tabulation for source domain and section

			Hotel description	Guest room	Dining facility	Meeting facility	Recreation facility	Total		
SOURCE DOMAIN	1	ADVENTURE	Count	67 (28.4)	28 (39.3)	31 (35.8)	5 (30.2)	26 (23.4)	157	$\chi^2 (68) = 949.855, p = .000$ Cramer's $V = .189$
			Adj. Residual	8.1**	-2.1	-9	-5.2**	.6		
	2	ARTIFACT	Count	50 (90.3)	90 (125.1)	199 (114.0)	119 (96.2)	42 (74.5)	500	
			Adj. Residual	-4.9**	-3.8**	9.4**	2.7	-4.2**		
	3	BUILDING	Count	53 (41.7)	27 (57.8)	25 (52.6)	76 (44.4)	50 (34.3)	231	
			Adj. Residual	2.0	-4.8**	-4.4**	5.4**	2.9		
	4	CONTAINER	Count	25 (34.0)	45 (47.0)	28 (42.8)	52 (36.2)	38 (28.0)	188	
			Adj. Residual	-1.7	-.3	-2.6	3.0**	2.1		
	5	FORTUNE	Count	92 (51.8)	56 (71.8)	60 (65.4)	38 (55.2)	41 (42.8)	287	
			Adj. Residual	6.3**	-2.2**	-8	-2.6	-.3		
	6	JOURNEY	Count	54 (56.5)	18 (78.3)	90 (71.3)	69 (60.2)	82 (46.6)	313	
			Adj. Residual	-.4	-8.1**	2.6	1.3	5.8**		
	7	LIVING ORGANISM	Count	275 (294.6)	547 (407.9)	373 (371.7)	270 (313.7)	166 (243.0)	1631	
			Adj. Residual	-1.5	9.1**	-.1	-3.2**	-6.2**		
	8	MACHINE	Count	68 (61.4)	69 (85.0)	64 (77.5)	58 (65.4)	81 (50.7)	340	
			Adj. Residual	1.0	-2.1	-1.8	-1.0	-1.6		
	9	MAGIC	Count	28 (26.6)	28 (36.8)	17 (33.5)	59 (28.3)	15 (21.9)	147	
			Adj. Residual	.3	-1.7	-3.3**	6.5**	-1.6		
10	MOTION	Count	96 (75.0)	141 (103.8)	56 (94.6)	21 (79.8)	101 (61.8)	415		
		Adj. Residual	2.8	4.4**	-4.7**	-7.6**	5.6**			
11	NATURAL PHENOMENA	Count	13 (19.5)	19 (27.0)	40 (24.6)	20 (20.8)	16 (16.1)	108		
		Adj. Residual	-1.6	-1.8	3.6**	-.2	.0			
12	PERCEPTUAL ATTRIBUTE	Count	31 (45.5)	107 (63.0)	51 (57.4)	47 (48.5)	16 (37.5)	252		
		Adj. Residual	-2.4	6.5**	-1.0	-.2	-3.9**			
13		Count	149 (150.7)	141 (208.6)	157 (190.1)	274 (160.4)	113 (124.3)	834		

		PHYSICAL OBJECT	Adj. Residual	-0.2	-5.8**	-2.9	10.7**	-1.2	
14	PLACE	Count		51 (46.2)	95 (64.0)	50 (58.3)	28 (49.2)	32 (38.1)	256
		Adj. Residual		.8	4.6**	-1.3	-3.4**	-1.1	
15	RELIGION	Count		42 (33.1)	65 (45.8)	18 (41.7)	17 (35.2)	41 (27.3)	183
		Adj. Residual		1.7	3.3**	-4.2**	-3.5**	2.9	
16	SPACE	Count		75 (101.0)	110 (139.8)	191 (127.4)	95 (107.5)	88 (83.3)	559
		Adj. Residual		-3.0**	-3.0**	6.7**	-1.4	.6	
17	TEMPERATURE	Count		14 (23.1)	47 (32.0)	28 (29.2)	16 (24.6)	23 (19.1)	128
		Adj. Residual		-2.1	3.1**	-.2	-2.0	1.0	
18	WATER	Count		21 (24.6)	34 (34.0)	41 (31.0)	18 (26.2)	22 (20.3)	136
		Adj. Residual		-.8	.0	2.1	-1.8	.4	
Total			Count	1204	1667	1519	1282	993	6665

Note. ** significant at $p < .01$ level

According to Table 4.4, there were significantly more ADVENTURE and FORTUNE metaphors in the section of the hotel description. The section of the Guest room was found with significantly more LIVING ORGANISM, MOTION, PERCEPTUAL ATTRIBUTE, PLACE, RELIGION and TEMPERATURE metaphors. ARTIFACT, NATURAL PHENOMENA and SPACE metaphors were significantly more likely to be used in the hotel website section introducing catering services. When describing meeting facilities, luxury hotels tended to use significantly more BUILDING, CONTAINER, MAGIC, and PHYSICAL OBJECT metaphors. Finally, leisure facilities were significantly more likely to be described by using JOURNEY and MOTION metaphors. For all these associations, the deviations between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies were statistically significant at the level of 0.01.

The Interaction Between Source Domains, Sections and Regions

Finally, in order to gain a deeper insight into how luxury hotel websites in different regions capitalise on metaphors to portray their varied amenities and services, the Chi-square Test of Independence on the source domain and section variables were carried out separately for the SG corpus and the HK corpus. The results indicated significant associations between source domain and section in the two regions, $\chi^2(68) = 949.855, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .211$ for the SG corpus, Cramer's $V = .189$, and $\chi^2(68) = 432.219, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .187$ for the HK corpus. The analysis revealed that the factor region contributed to the various metaphor usage profiles in different hotel website sections. The cross-tabulation of source domain and section, with the region as the layer variable, is provided in Appendix D for saving space.

According to the crosstabulation of variables source domains, sections and regions, we have found that Singapore and Hong Kong have both similarities and differences in the depiction of different hotel facilities. For example, in addition to LIVING ORGANISM and PERCEPTUAL ATTRIBUTE metaphors, Singapore hotels preferred RELIGION and RELIGION metaphors when describing and marketing hotel rooms, while luxury hotels in Hong Kong significantly used PLACE metaphors more often. In the HK corpus, meeting facilities were significantly more likely to be depicted by CONTAINER metaphors. When introducing recreational facilities, the SG corpus was significantly more likely to use MACHINE metaphors, whereas the HK corpus was prone to use JOURNEY metaphors. For these associations, a critical value of ± 2.96 (± 3 in convention) was set because of the relatively large number of cells.

To better interpret the results, Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) was utilised to generate a factor plot that visually displayed in a two-dimensional Euclidean space the associations between categories of variables (Greenacre & Blasius, 2006; Jalayer et al., 2018).²³ Similar to log-linear analysis, I performed the MCA analysis using three variables (source domain × website section × region) to describe the profile of metaphors in my corpus, reflecting a total of 25 categories (18 from source domains, 5 from website section and 2 from region). As per Greenacre and Blasius (2006), the MCA plot is interpreted based on the relative positions of the categories and their distribution in the graph. The categories clustered on the same side of the origin are positively correlated with each other, while the categories positioned on opposite sides of the origin are negatively correlated. The distance between category variables and the origin measures the degree of association, with the further the categories are from the origin, the more discriminating they are. Figure 4.8 displays the distributions of variables at the level of categories generated by SPSS.

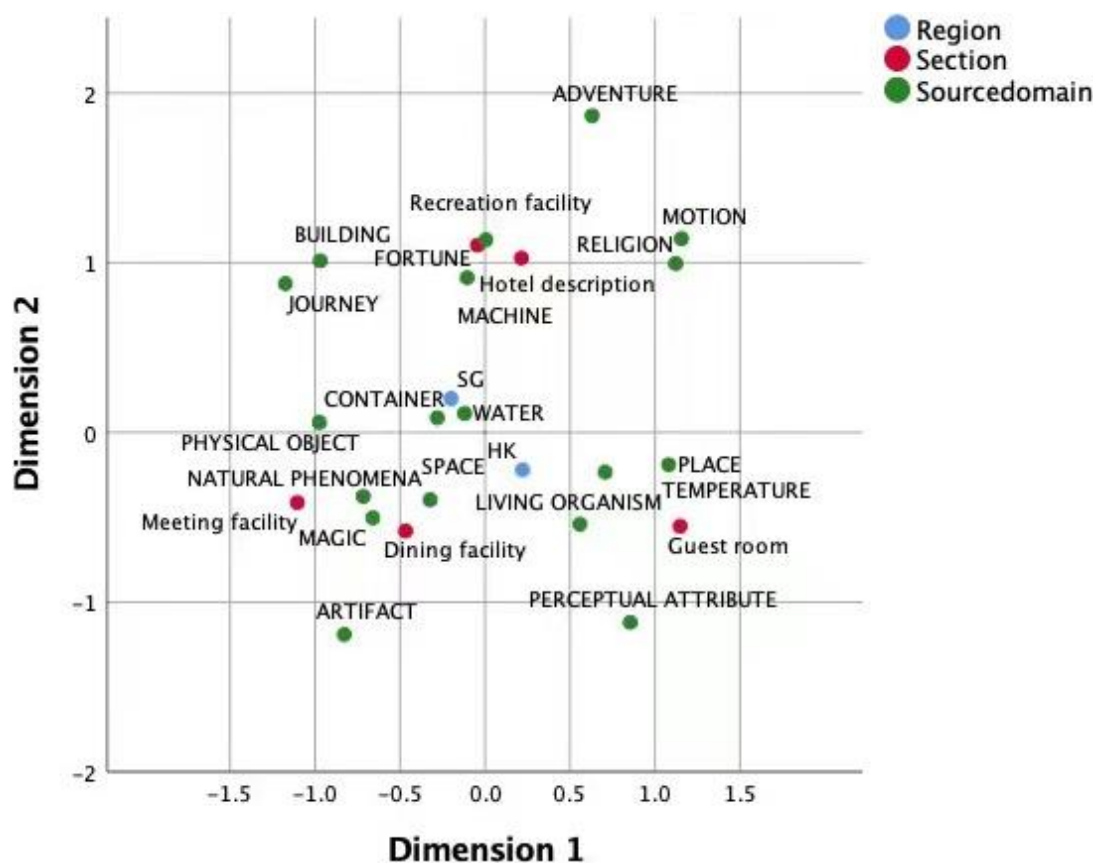


Figure 4.5 The MCA plot of associations between variable categories

²³ In the current thesis, the MCA fact plot is employed solely for the purpose of data visualization.

The results of the MCA analysis (shown in Figure 4.8) indicated that the first dimension (Dim.1) accounted for 41.7 per cent of the total inertia, and the second dimension (Dim.2) accounted for 40.4 per cent of the total inertia, yielding total inertia of 82.1 per cent. According to Figure 4.8, it was observed that (i) the HK corpus and SG corpus (represented by blue dots) were situated in distinct quadrants of the plot and were roughly equidistant from the origin, indicating a noticeable distinction in their metaphor usage patterns, (ii) various source domains (green dots) were dispersed in different quadrants, and specific source domains, particularly the ADVENTURE source domain, contributed more to the overall variance, and (iii) the five categories of the website section (red dots in Figure 4.8) were also positioned in distinct quadrants (i.e., the referent for its respective metaphorical expression), and so on. Upon closer inspection of each category label and its distance, it became apparent that, for instance, PERCEPTUAL ATTRIBUTE and Guest room were positioned farthest along Dim. 1, while ADVENTURE and Hotel description were situated furthest away along Dim. 2, suggesting that these variable categories exhibited particularly strong associations with each other.

It is important to clarify that in the present chapter, however, the MCA was not deployed for statistical purposes, but rather served as a visual supplementary to enhance the understanding of the data in a more intuitive manner. The results presented in the crosstabulations (Table 4.3, Table 4.4, and Appendix D) were consistent with the MCA plot (Figure 4.8), which suggested distinct metaphor usage profiles in the two corpora. The use of complementary data visualisation tools, in this case the MCA factor plot, can be beneficial for readers who may find it challenging to intuitively grasp the information presented in these number-heavy tables.

4.4.2 Discussion

In this section, we will present linguistic examples to illustrate the bi-variate associations between source domains and regions, between source domains and hotel facilities, as well as the three-way interaction between source domains, hotel facilities and regions reported in the previous section (Section 4.4.2).

The Association Between Source Domains and Regions

As we mentioned earlier in Section 4.4.2 (Table 4.3), luxury hotel websites from Singapore demonstrated a higher tendency to use the FORTUNE, MOTION, PHYSICAL OBJECT, and WATER

metaphors in describing and promoting their facilities, and websites from Hong Kong predominantly employed the ARTIFACT, LIVING ORGANISM, MAGIC, and SPACE metaphors for the same purpose. To present the results more clearly, I have listed the source domains that are prominent in the two corpora (based on Table 4.3) in Table 4.5. Examples (2) to (8) will illustrate the source domain-region association with linguistic examples.

Table 4.5 Summary of source domains that are prominent in each corpus

Region	Source domains
SG corpus	WATER, FORTUNE, MOTION, and PHYSICAL OBJECT
HK corpus	ARTIFACT, LIVING ORGANISM, MAGIC, and SPACE

Given the unique culture and ethnic diversity that serve as selling points for Singapore’s tourism industry, it is expected that culture-related expressions would frequently appear in our corpus (Horng & Tsai, 2012). In example (2), the linguistic expression *immerse* exemplifies a conceptual metaphor CULTURE IS LIQUID, wherein the abstract concept of “culture” is compared to the concrete concept of “liquid” to convey the promise that guests can fully experience and engage with the traditional culture of classical elegance in Singapore (or the hotel). The sense of tradition is further highlighted when the sentence incorporates the FORTUNE metaphor, comparing the host city, or the hotel that is part of it, to a *treasure trove* abundant with hidden valuable treasures.

- (2) *Immerse* yourself in a *treasure trove* of Singapore’s heritage with a stay in the National Monument. (The Fullerton Hotel Singapore)
- (3) ... combining the restaurant’s rich culinary *heritage* with his expertise of traditional Chinese cooking (InterContinental Singapore)
- (4) When the *reward* is a stay at Four Seasons, your guests know they can expect stylish accommodations, innovative cuisine and access to the wonders that fill our unique City in a Garden. (Four Seasons Singapore)

In examples (3) and (4), amenities, services, products, and experiences, that are part of, or provided by the hotel are described variously by linguistic expressions that tap into the

FORTUNE metaphors, portraying them as heritage or possessing significant monetary value. When customers indulge in the luxury hotel's services and experiences, they become the beneficiaries of wealth and fortune, where they find the experience in the hotel to be a *reward*. Luxury consumers often anticipate high quality in luxury items to justify their high prices. To cater to the psychological and practical needs of customers, luxury hotel websites represent the hotel's quality in terms of monetary resources, leveraging the FORTUNE metaphors to convey the idea of opulence and extravagance associated with luxury.

Metaphorical expressions related to the source domains MOTION and PHYSICAL OBJECT are usually used in an unobtrusive manner; however, this does not negate their functions in marketing luxury hotels and cultivating luxury values. Examples (5) and (6) show the use of MOTION metaphors in the SG corpus. These instances portray the hotel as an idyllic, safe place -- in contrast to its host city -- that protects tourists from stress and day-to-day concerns caused by the city. Staying at the hotel, especially enjoying its SPA services, is a *retreat* or *escape* from the hustle and bustle of urban life. The use of these metaphorical expressions reflects the marketing strategies of distinguishing between "here" and "there" (Dann, 1996), as well as between "dream" and "reality" in the tourism and luxury industries.

(5) From the bustling shopping malls to the grind of a busy work schedule, find time to *retreat* to Willow Stream Spa and discover the rest and relaxation you are looking. (Swissotel Merchant Court, Singapore)

(6) *Escape* the hustle of city life with an idyllic *escapade* exclusively curated for occasions of any kind. (Sofitel Singapore Sentosa)

In contrast to the SG corpus, the MAGIC metaphor, which refers to the concept of supernatural powers, and the ARTIFACT metaphor, which involves the idea of artistic aesthetic value, are found to be significantly more frequent in the HK corpus. These two categories of metaphors not only infuse artistry and poetry into the discourse but also capture the dynamic and alluring nature of Hong Kong as a cosmopolitan city.

(7) Enjoy a *spellbinding* stay in a *mesmerising* world of *magic* when you check in. (The Fullerton Ocean Park Hotel, Hong Kong)

(8) To know that we played a part in *orchestrating* their big day is an amazing feeling. (Four Seasons Hotel Hong Kong)

In Example (7), the hotel is metaphorically portrayed as a luxurious wonderland possessing an alluring superpower. This framing strategy aligns with the broader practices observed in the luxury industry (as shown in Figure 4.1), wherein luxury brands strive to construct an ideal world that allows an escape from the ordinary. The use of “spellbinding”, “mesmerising”, and “magic” also suggests the excellent quality of the hotel service, which can exceed people’s expectations. The source domain ARTIFACT includes metaphorical expressions such as “orchestrating” (example (18)) and “show.” In musical contexts, “orchestrating” denotes a specific genre that uses the coordination and collaboration of multiple instruments and musicians, rather than relying on individual solo performances. The expression on the one hand emphasises the aesthetic appeal and craftsmanship of the hotel service by drawing a parallel with the grand auditory enjoyment of a symphony. On the other hand, it promises a sense of affinity and connection between the hotel and its customers. Just as an orchestra requires unity and cohesion among musicians, the hotel aims to meet the diverse needs of its customers and create a friendly and harmonious environment.

The variations in metaphorical preferences across different source domains in the two corpora seem to be indicative of the distinct tourism positioning strategies adopted by the two destinations. The use of FORTUNE and WATER metaphors in the context of Singapore’s luxury hotel website reflects the city-state’s cultural emphasis on its unique multi-ethnic and East-meet-West heritages. Conversely, the use of metaphors from the source domains MAGIC and ARTIFACT in the context of Hong Kong aligns with its branding as a dynamic and attractive global metropolis.

The Association Between Source Domains and Sections

Table 4.6 Summary of source domains that are prominent in each website section

Sections	Source domains
Hotel description	ADVENTURE, FORTUNE
Guest room	LIVING ORGANISM, MOTION, PERCEPTUAL ATTRIBUTE, PLACE, RELIGION, TEMPERATURE
Dining facility	NATURAL PHENOMENA, SPACE
Meeting facility	BUILDING, CONTAINER, MAGIC, PHYSICAL OBJECT
Recreation facility	JOURNEY, MOTION

Table 4.6 summarises the respective common source domains when introducing and promoting various hotel facilities based on Table 4.4. Example (9) to Example (18) illustrate the linguistic manifestations of these source domains in the corpus.

Hotel description

The hotel description section contains written texts from each hotel's homepage, which provides potential customers with an overall introduction to the hotel. Since the homepage offers guests the first impression of the hotel, it is generally regarded as the most important element with respect to promotional effect (Cheng, 2016). Our analysis reflects that, among other source domains, the ADVENTURE metaphor and FORTUNE metaphor are used significantly more frequently than expected by chance. Since we have discussed how hotel websites capitalize on the FORTUNE metaphor to underscore the cultural value of Singapore and imply the exceptional quality of their hotel services to justify their premium pricing in Examples (2) to (4), I will shift the focus to analysing how hotels discursively enact an image of high-value through ADVENTURE metaphor.

(9) Discover a world of *adventures* in the dynamic city of Singapore... (Swissotel Merchant Court, Singapore)

In fact, the need to escape the “suffocating” constraints of social performance is one of the essential motivations for engaging in travel and tourism (Doorne & Ateljevic, 2005). The travel experience involves a transition from the home space of “here” to the desired destination of “there.” In tourism discourse, the representations of “place” are therefore of particular importance where the framing of commodified “there” typically relies on the theme of heterogeneity, suggestions of fantasy experience, the “unfamiliarity,” while the representation of “here” (home) is often depicted as familiar, homogenous, and associated with the mundane. The theme of heterogeneity and homogeneity is reflected in the introduction section of websites, which present the destination city as a new city worth exploring (Example (9)), thereby stimulating the interest of potential consumers to visit.

Guest room

In our data, the metaphorisation of the hotel room as a human is prevalent in the Guest room section. In these cases, the metaphorical use of such items is usually highly conventionalised. For instance, the animation or anthropomorphisation of hotel guest rooms is mainly achieved

through process verbs such as *offer*, *provide*, and *invite*, among which the word *offer* is the most popular, as shown in Examples (10). Hotel guest rooms are represented as actively engaging in the interaction with the customer, much of which is expressed as involving giving something to the prospective customers. In lieu of directly claiming that customers can access various room services and facilities, hotel websites tend to portray the hotel (or part of it) as the “doer” or a “hospitable host” (Example 11) of the services, in order to cultivate hotel-customer affinity, in the process rendering the hotel guest room ability of human. Moreover, the hotel guest room can offer its customers both tangible and intangible things; while the former usually refers to the physical facilities and equipment within the room, the latter refers to the specific style and atmosphere that the room embraces.

(10) The marble bathrooms *offer* you standing shower with luxurious Byredo amenities *provided* for your enjoyment. (InterContinental Grand Stanford Hong Kong)

(11) A delightful palate of *warm* hues and ornate gold furnishings *invite* you to a multitude of luxurious touches. (Sofitel Singapore Sentosa)

In addition to the LIVING ORGANISM metaphor, the synesthetic metaphor (PERCEPTUAL ATTRIBUTE) is found to be productive in hotel websites introducing accommodation facilities. Synesthesia is a type of metaphor that describes one sense by using words that normally describe another, such as “warm hues” in Example (11) and “luxurious touches” in Example (12). Recent research concerned with advertising has demonstrated that these cross-sensory metaphors tend to be more persuasive compared to their literal counterparts (Nelson & Hitchon, 1999). This heightened persuasiveness can be attributed to the activation of emotion-related areas in the brain, which enhances the impact of the messages by eliciting emotional responses (Citron & Goldberg, 2014).

Dining facility

In tourism and hospitality, gastronomy has been an increasingly important segment. There is a growing propensity for many high-end hotel chains to develop their own catering speciality or co-brand with other restaurants in order to solve the difficulties related to traditional hotel dining operations, and seek to increase points of distribution and customer traffic at the same time (Boone, 1997; Mulcahy, 2019). In the data, it turns out that a fair number of PERFORMANCE metaphors, such as “*dramatic*”, “*theatre*”, and “*backdrop*”, are used in the

Dining section of the hotel website, suggesting exclusivity, quality and aesthetics of the hotel dining experience.

The following example (12) illustrates that the dessert counter of a hotel restaurant is seen as a theatre, and the dining experience that guests obtain is the musical performance provided by the hotel. Also, using the modifier “*award-winning*” to describe dessert stations implies a sense of luxury through discourse on quality and exclusivity. Example (13) illustrates that gastronomic services in the hotel are a source of multisensory pleasure and enjoyment. The activity of cooking is threaded into the idea of performance, which implies that the chef not only serves food to the customers but also exhibits superior skills and artistic beauty. What’s more, in this example, the idea of luxury is marketed using the element of opulence, which links with abundant food selections from the globe.

(12) Indoors, the award-winning pastry *theatre* provides for the perfect *finale*.
(Mandarin Oriental Singapore)

(13) The open kitchen *theatre* serves international delights ranging from oyster and lobster, to carvery of succulent roast and foie gras. (Park Lane Hotel Hong Kong)

Meeting facility

Metaphorical expressions from the source domain PHYSICAL OBJECT were used significantly more frequently than expected in the section describing meeting facilities and wedding services on hotel websites. While metaphorical instances that compare the hotels and their services as a physical entity are often coded in an unobtrusive manner, a closer examination reveals that they contribute to delivering the promise of personalised and quality service that customers can expect. Examples (14) and (15) illustrate the introduction of a wedding ceremony as meticulously “crafted” by the hotel staff, emphasising the seamless service and conveying a sense of exclusivity and craftsmanship (Beverland, 2006). The idea of opulence is projected by metaphorical expressions such as “*package*” in Example (16), suggesting the hotel is able to offer a range of event proposals and selections.

(14) Our event team has one mandate -- to *craft* the perfect occasion to your exact specifications, taking care of every detail from coffee breaks to lunch and dinner menus. (The Capitol Hotel Kempinski, Singapore)

(15) ... is well-primed to help you *craft* and execute your important event, in a hassle-free and *seamless* manner. (Parkroyal Collection Marina Bay, Singapore)

(16) Enjoy a host of exclusive activities for your staycation *package*! Whether it is cooking, painting or working out... (Park Lane Hotel Hong Kong)

Recreation facility

In the section introducing hotel recreation facilities, like SPA service, fitness centre or swimming pool, the JOURNEY metaphor and MOTION metaphor occur with the highest adjusted residuals. The prevalence of movement-related metaphors in the section of recreation facility may be because of the inherent connection between these recreational activities and transformative processes. Physical therapy, spa treatments, and fitness regimens can be metaphorically compared to journeys or physical movements that facilitate the transition from a dangerous place (a state of mental tension) to a safe place (a state of physical and mental relaxation). By utilising metaphors, including conventional ones, the attributes of entertainment services and products can be vividly illustrated due to metaphors' ability to map concrete notions to abstract notions.

(17) *Journey* with us on your distinctive event experience and our dedicated sales team will support you through a seamless process from planning to implementation. (Fairmont Singapore)

(18) A perfect Spa-cation to *escape* from the hustle and bustle. (Hotel Jen Tanglin, Singapore)

By referring to the corpus, it is observed that luxury hotels frequently employ metaphors that compare entertainment activities to travel experiences that involve the accompany and assistance of hotel staff. Such metaphorical expressions can create a sense of affinity between the customers and the hotel, implying the exceptional level of service provided by the hotel. Moreover, as Example (18) shows, the purpose of the metaphorical journey is to enable individuals to “escape” from the tedious and monotonous aspects of everyday life and embark on a “luxury” experience towards an ideal destination.

The Relationship Between Source Domain, Section and Regions

Table 4.7 Source domains that are prominent in each corpus and section

	Hotel description	Guest room	Dining facility	Meeting facility	Recreation facility
SG	ADVENTURE, FORTUNE	LIVING ORGANISM, MOTION , PERCEPTUAL ATTRIBUTE, RELIGION	ARTIFACT, SPACE	BUILDING, MAGIC, PHYSICAL OBJECT	MACHINE , MOTION
HK	ADVENTURE, FORTUNE	LIVING ORGANISM, PERCEPTUAL ATTRIBUTE, PLACE	ARTIFACT, SPACE	BUILDING, CONTAINER , MAGIC, PHYSICAL OBJECT	JOURNEY , MOTION

Previous Chi-square test analysing source domain and section association (Table 4.4) suggested that metaphorical expressions pertaining to source domains RELIGION and PLACE were found to be more prominent in the section of Guest room. We further discovered that luxury hotels in Hong Kong tended to exploit PLACE metaphors to portray their accommodations, while RELIGION metaphors were preferred in the SG corpus.

Our sample data indicate that luxury hotel guest rooms are portrayed as sacred spaces through the RELIGION metaphors, exemplified by the use of expressions like “*paradise*” and “*haven*” in Example (19). These metaphors evoke feelings related to serenity and happiness, showing the exceptional comfort and tranquillity guests can experience during their stay (Jaworska, 2017).

- (19) Touches of nature, from the leaf motifs above the bed to orchid carpeting on the hardwood floor, bring the garden *paradise* indoor to your *haven*. (Sofitel Singapore Sentosa)

In these expressions (i.e., *paradise* or *haven*), the emphasis on the aesthetic qualities of the hotel accommodations takes precedence over religious attributes. As suggested by Jaworska (2017), the mythological association of tropical islands as “paradise” has been deeply ingrained in the popular imagination for centuries and has played a profound role in shaping the tourism industry of many tropical and formerly colonised islands as the “mystical East” (Deckard, 2010). The prevalence of RELIGION metaphors in the SG corpus demonstrates that despite the rapid urbanisation and modernisation of the city-state, ideas of the exotic East and colonial heritage remain entrenched in Singapore’s tourism discourse (Henderson, 2002). Moreover, in Example (19), the hotel’s description of its guest room decoration highlights the importance of Singapore’s unique culture, as orchids are a culturally-mediated representation of the nation’s identity.

(20) It is a luxurious *home* away from home for the admired executives and inspiring adventurers. (Park Lane Hotel Hong Kong)

(21) Escape to privacy and *seclusion* in a 38-square-metre room... (Grand Hyatt Hong Kong)

By contrast, in the HK corpus, we observed that hotel rooms are metaphorically compared as distinct locations on their websites, with notable examples including “home” (Example (20)) or “seclusion” (Example (21)). The metaphorical use of “home” conveys a sense of inclusion and familiarity, suggesting that the hotel room can be a comforting and welcoming alternative reality separate from the mundane aspects of guests’ daily lives. Similarly, the metaphorical expression “seclusion” in Example (21) highlights the hotel’s emphasis on exclusivity and privacy, implying that the hotel room offers a tranquil and intimate retreat for guests, enabling them to escape the crowds and indulge in a serene and secluded experience.

Furthermore, the analysis of the meeting section in the SG corpus reveals an intriguing finding that the meeting facility section exhibits a notably higher usage of CONTAINER metaphors compared to other sections. A closer examination of the linguistic examples indicates that this disproportional use of CONTAINER metaphors can be attributed to the presence of metaphorical hyperboles, such as the use of “full(ly),” which are employed to describe the extensive range of services offered by the hotels. However, a comprehensive discussion on metaphorical hyperboles will be presented in Chapter 6 of the thesis. Therefore, the focus in the current

section will shift towards examining the use of MACHINE metaphors in the recreation section of luxury hotel websites.

(22) *Recharge* with this *powerful* massage designed to alleviate tension and stress. (Ritz Carlton Millenia Singapore)

In the previous section, we have discussed the portrayal of entertainment at luxury hotels in the HK corpus, which is compared to a physical journey (JOURNEY metaphor) accompanied by attentive staff, thus fostering a sense of affinity with guests. Conversely, in the SG corpus, we have found that recreational facilities are more likely to be metaphorically conceptualised as machines that require power to function. The indispensable component of this machinery is fuel, which often helps to generate power and movement. When the experience of travelling is described as potentially draining due to being away from home and dealing with changing schedules, the leisure facilities, particularly the SPA treatments, are seen as a source of power that has the capacity to “recharge” or “reboot” guests to their original state, as illustrated in Example (22). Comparing the quality of a hotel’s service to the efficiency of a machine implies the luxury hotel’s commitment to delivering high-quality experiences for its guests.

4.5 Summary

This chapter investigated the types of metaphors that occurred in different situations in promotional tourism discourse and how the use of figurative language contributed to the construction and communication of luxury values.

Recall the three research questions presented in Section 4.2: The first question focused on investigating the types of metaphors that occurred on luxury hotel websites in Singapore and Hong Kong, as well as their frequency. To answer research question 1, we collected the written texts of luxury hotel websites in Singapore and Hong Kong and identified the use of metaphorical expressions using MIPVU and Source Domain Verification Procedure in a bottom-up fashion. The investigation yielded 6,990 metaphorical cases from 27 types of source domains. LIVING ORGANISM was found to be the most frequent metaphor in our corpus, followed by expressions from the source domains PHYSICAL OBJECT and SPACE. Metaphors of

ARTIFACT and MOTION were also common in promotional tourism discourse, which had over 400 linguistic examples in our corpus.

To answer research questions 2 and 3, which aimed to probe the (potential) associations among the usage of metaphors, hotel facility, and region, as well as how those associations contributed to the delivery of luxury values, a corpus-based data analytic approach (log-linear regression model) was firstly adopted to inspect the unstructured and underexplored metaphor usage patterns in a corpus of luxury hotel websites from Hong Kong and Singapore (the top 18 most common source domains). The subsequent textual analytic component of the study focused on the significant associations between the variables and instantiations of metaphor. The significant associations of the current chapter could be summarised in Figure 4.9.

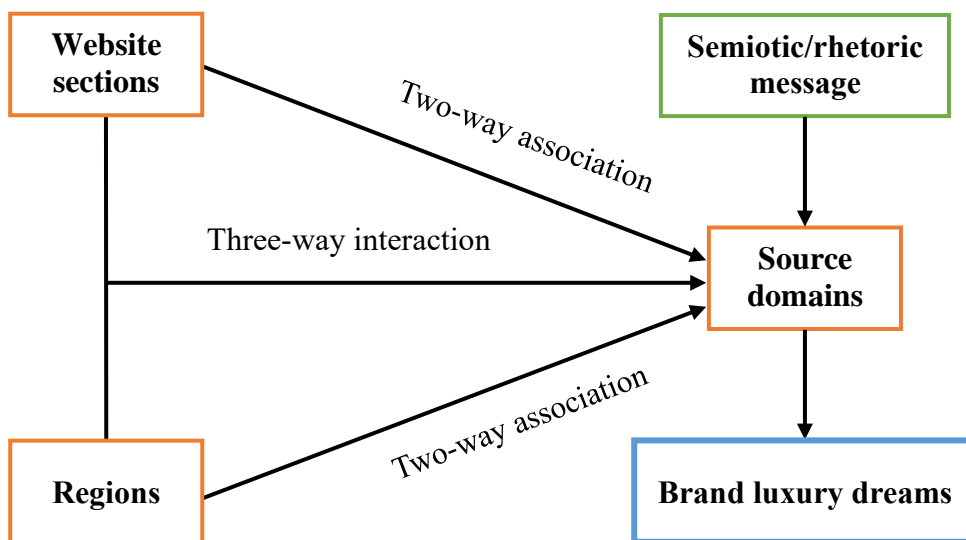


Figure 4.6 Summary of the findings

In our analyses, we first examined whether Singapore and Hong Kong have different preferences in metaphor usage. The results showed that luxury hotel websites in Singapore and Hong Kong were characterised by distinct metaphor patterns, as illustrated in Figure 4.9. Particularly, the SG corpus was significantly more likely to use source domains of WATER, FORTUNE, MOTION, and PHYSICAL OBJECT, whereas the HK corpus leaned more towards the source domains such as ARTIFACT, LIVING ORGANISM, MAGIC, and SPACE.

Secondly, a significant association was observed between source domain and website section variables. Specifically, the hotel description section was more likely to adopt the ADVENTURE metaphor and FORTUNE metaphor. By associating the hotel experience with adventures, the hotel description suggests that staying at the hotel (or its host city) entails venturing into unknown new possibilities. The FORTUNE metaphors evoke a sense of exclusivity, such as “local *heritage* hawker dishes,” appealing to those who seek to align themselves with a refined and affluent lifestyle. Similar to the work by Jaworska (2017), the LIVING ORGANISM and PERCEPTUAL ATTRIBUTE metaphors were more prominent in the guest room section. Metaphors from these source domains create multi-sensory fusions, thus enhancing the emotional connection with potential guests. The ARTIFACT metaphors include expressions such as “palate masterpiece”, “culinary theatres”, and “poetic dishes,” conveying a sense of craftsmanship and aesthetic pleasure. With these metaphors, luxury hotels go beyond simply having restaurants and instead leverage their food service to the level of art performances. Metaphors of PHYSICAL OBJECT, JOURNEY, and MOTION domains, although often utilised in a relatively conventional manner, help to effectively communicate the function and efficacy of products and services, especially when describing abstract qualities of hotel meeting facilities and recreational facilities (Burgers et al., 2016).

Thirdly, the results unveiled a significant three-way interaction, indicating that source domain and section association was sensitive to the region variable. When introducing the hotel guest room amenities, the SG corpus used significantly more RELIGION metaphors such as “*paradise*,” “*sanctuary*,” and “*heaven*.” Such expressions not only reflect heightened luxury but also suggest the colonial tourist narratives in geopolitical myths about destinations in Singapore (Chang et al., 2004). In contrast, the luxury hotels in Hong Kong, instead of emphasising colonial heritage, tended to portray their hotel rooms as distinct concealed spaces, such as a “home” away from the “urban jungle,” implying that the hotel presents some “home-related” features that can provide guests with a sense of belonging.

As summarised in Figure 4.9, viewed through a linguistic lens, the variation of metaphor usage in promotional discourse provides further evidence regarding the multifaceted properties of metaphors (Moser, 2000, Qiu, 2024) that metaphors are context-sensitive and social-culturally adapted. The metaphorical usage patterns identified by quantitative data analysis techniques also enrich our knowledge of the current marketing strategies of dream branding employed by luxury tourism in different regions, as well as different products and services.

4.6 Chapter Conclusion

Previous research has pointed out the role of semiotics and rhetorical messages in advertising communication, particularly in shaping positive attributes of products or services through cross-domain mappings (e.g., Anido Freire, 2014; Forceville & Urios-Aparisi, 2009; Pérez Sobrin, 2017). This chapter broadens its scope to include the use of linguistic metaphors in the context of the luxury tourism industry, focusing on the diverse applications of metaphor owing to varying contextual parameters. Our results indicate that the strategic use of metaphors such as MAGIC, ARTIFACT and PERCEPTUAL ATTRIBUTE in luxury hotel advertisements serves to create a powerful multi-sensory enjoyment and increases the affective elaboration of the advertising message, especially for those hedonic services, such as high-end restaurants. Conventional metaphors such as MOTION and JOURNEY can effectively explain the functionalities of products, particularly when introducing hotel therapeutic services, and therefore contribute to achieving persuasive effects by enhancing cognitive elaboration in advertising. The divergent use of metaphors in the two corpora not only highlights linguistic variations but also indicates the different branding strategies of Singapore and Hong Kong as tourism destinations, with the former emphasising more on the rich cultural heritage and multi-ethnic diversity that the city-state offers, and the latter prioritising creating a sense of familiarity and respite from the fast-paced city life.

The contributions of the study are two-fold. First of all, methodologically, the use of the mixed-method approach demonstrates the independence and complementarity of different research paradigms. The research generates a synthesised picture, with quantitative support, regarding how metaphors from various source domains work collectively to create a luxury image of hotels, showcasing the potency of the data analytic approach in detecting the manifestation of metaphors arising from systematic interactions among different contextual factors in the corpus. Capitalising on the MCA plot to complement the numerical outcomes of the log-linear regression model visually enhances the clarity of the statistical analysis results. The subsequent discourse analysis, based on the preceding quantitative analysis, is conducive to interpreting and understanding the dynamic and contextually situated properties of metaphors in discourse.

Secondly, while there has been research on the use of metaphors in promotional discourse, the discursive dynamics that contribute to the variability of metaphor patterns are often overlooked, such as the nature of the products being promoted and the specific region under consideration. In the contemporary luxury hospitality industry, hotels are more than just places for tourists to

stay in a traditional sense, but have transformed into a destination in itself, selling an ideal experience and dreams to guests. Therefore, this chapter holds the potential to provide references for luxury travel practitioners who seek to effectively apply and manage figurative language in their promotional materials for branding hotels in the Asia Pacific region.

Limitations include the scope of the hotels examined. Extending the analysis to other contextual factors, such as hotel chain brands, as well as conducting a comparative study of luxury and budget hotels, can glean a more comprehensive understanding of tourism discourse because different brands of hotels may have different market positioning. For example, as illustrated in Figures 3.1 and 3.2 (Section 3.1), both Fairmont Singapore and Ibis Styles Singapore on Macpherson are affiliated with the Accor Group, yet they exhibit distinctive market positioning. Similarly, their official website descriptions manifest dissimilar language styles, with Fairmont Singapore's portrayal tending to deploy more figurative and hyperbolic expressions, in contrast to the strategies adopted by Ibis. Given the frequent association of luxury values with figurative language, an interesting avenue for investigation would be a systematic exploration of whether, how, and to what degree figurative language is employed in the depiction of budget hotels.

5. Chapter 5 Hyperboles We Stay By: The Language of Exaggeration in Luxury Hotel Websites

5.1 Chapter Introduction

Over the last two decades, there has been a resurgence of interest in figurative language in the field of linguistics, with much of the focus directed towards the cognitive processes involved in the production and comprehension of specific types of figurative devices, such as metaphor and irony (Hsiao & Su, 2010). This can be reflected in the substantial body of research that delves into the production or comprehension of metaphor and irony across a variety of discourse genres (e.g., Colston & Gibbs, 2002; Gibbs, 2000a, 2012; Katz & Pexman, 1997; Whalen et al., 2009). In accordance with this perspective, thus far in Chapter 5 I have analysed the variability of metaphor in the portrayal and marketisation of luxury hotel amenities, paying special attention to how different source domains were deployed to valorise the values of high-quality, aesthetics, and prestige that were highly sought after in the luxury hospitality industry.

From the perspective of a researcher and hotel website user, however, there is another type of intriguing rhetorical device, namely hyperbole, that is also commonly observed in promotional tourism discourse, embracing purposes of evaluation and affection in a way that exaggerates reality. By analysing travel websites in Western countries, for example, Kaltenbacher (2006) remarks that superlatives play a crucial role in advertising, as advertisers often utilise them to boast of products or services. Also, Link and Kreuz's (2005) empirical study of non-literal language in human communication suggests that metaphor is the type most frequently used in talking about emotions, closely followed by hyperbole and simile, with an approximate frequency of 0.5 instances per 100 words. While the study conducted by Link and Kreuz (2005) does not specifically focus on promotional discourse, it still offers valuable insight as it provides direct evidence of the prevalence of hyperbole, both in spoken and written form, in real-world contexts.

Nevertheless, despite its relatively high frequency of occurrence in authentic communication (Cano Mora, 2003), hyperbole has been overlooked by the research on figurative language compared to other figurative devices such as metaphor or irony. The lack of interest towards hyperbole in figurative studies can be attributed to several reasons, with two main factors being

the continuum view of metaphor and hyperbole (Sperber & Wilson, 2008) and the absence of a reliable procedure for identifying hyperbole. However, both issues can largely be ameliorated with the recent introduction of the Hyperbolic Identification Procedure (HIP, Burgers et al., 2016; Burgers et al., 2018), which lends operational and systematic instruction for detecting hyperbolic expressions in discourse.

The current chapter, situated within the genre-based research paradigm, seeks to scrutinise the utilisation of hyperbole in promotional discourse related to tourism, with a specific focus on exploring issues regarding the occurrence of hyperbole in promoting hotel facilities. This also aligns with the first research objective of this thesis, which is to explore the utilisation of figurative language in the context of promotional discourse.

In summary, in this chapter, my research focus shifts from metaphor to examining the actual patterns of hyperbole usage employing a corpus-driven analysis of frequency, category, and referent of hyperboles in luxury hotel websites in Singapore and Hong Kong. I commence the chapter by reviewing prior research on the classification and application of hyperbole in various authentic discourses. Although the usage of hyperbole may be influenced by discursive factors with regard to the genre, purpose, and manner of communication, possessing the flexibility to be formulated differently in different contexts, an overview of the development of hyperbole research will provide us with a deeper understanding of the rhetorical device, especially with regard to its nature and working mechanism.

Next, I will briefly reiterate the characteristics and meanings of the luxury industry, which have been discussed in detail in Section 3.3, in order to establish a clear connection between the research object and the research setting. This will lead to the formulation of three sub-research questions regarding the distribution and function of hyperbole. Subsequent to this, the methodology section will provide an explanation of the corresponding methods employed to address these sub-research questions. Finally, I will present the findings and discuss the theoretical and practical contributions of the chapter.

5.2 Hyperbole in Discourse

5.2.1 Simple and Complex Hyperbole: Hyperbole as a Separate, Independent Figurative Device

The lack of attention given to hyperbole can possibly be attributed to the continuum view of metaphor and hyperbole, which treats both tropes as a continuum rather than two discrete categories of linguistic expression, as exemplified by early work of some researchers in Relevance Theory (RT) (e.g., Sperber & Wilson, 1985, 2008). Recent studies, however, have challenged the continuum hypothesis by pointing out the difference between metaphor and hyperbole, although they acknowledge the similarity of the two tropes that “they (metaphor and hyperbole) were both loose forms of language use and required the addressee to form an *ad hoc* concept which was broader in its denotation than the lexically encoded meaning” (Carston & Wearing, 2015, p. 86). Metaphor differs from hyperbole in that the former primarily gives a description of its referent, which moves attention away from the referent’s basic meaning, while the latter is mainly evaluative and only draws attention to the basic meaning of the referent. For hyperbolic expression, the shift of meaning occurs only on the quantitative linguistic scale in the interpretation of hyperbolic expressions (Carston & Wearing, 2015). This is in consonance with Deamer’s (2013) results of a series of online reading time experiments, in which a significant difference between the reading times of metaphorical sentences and hyperbolic sentences was found, indicating the potential differences in the comprehension mechanisms underlying the two tropes (e.g., Deamer, 2013).

Another possible factor contributing to the perception of metaphor and hyperbole as part of a continuum (e.g., Sperber & Wilson, 2008) is the frequent co-occurrence of these two tropes in the form of metaphorical hyperbole, resulting in an overlapping that makes the two linguistic phenomena appear indistinguishable (Kreuz, 1996). To illustrate this, I now present in the following an example of a simple hyperbole, and an example of a complex hyperbole (metaphorical hyperbole), in which hyperbole and metaphor occur simultaneously.

- (1) It seems like *hundreds of years* since I last saw you.
- (2) The Mathematics *Bible*: The Definitive Guide to the Last 4,000 Years of Theories

Hundreds of years in example (1), a purely hyperbolic expression, is used to refer to the time of separation and express the joy of meeting again after a long absence. The expression is

confirmed to be hyperbolic because of the upwards exaggeration through the purposeful inflation of the intended meaning of the utterance, which is completely manifested through its semantic construction. Example (2) is an instance of a complex hyperbole. A religious metaphor THE SUBJECT GUIDE IS A BIBLE can be observed as the aforementioned textual material is not a bona fide Bible. In addition to its metaphorical usage, the term *Bible* can also be viewed as an example of hyperbole due to its authoritative connotation, implying that the book is the ultimate guide to mathematical knowledge. Compared to the expression *hundreds of years*, *Bible* in example (2) is more context-dependent and requires the audience to use logic and common sense to deduce its hyperbolic interpretation (Peña-Cervel & Ruiz de Mendoza, 2017). In this vein, hyperbole can be classified into two types based on its composition: simple hyperbole, where its hyperbolic reading occurs alone, and complex hyperbole, where hyperbole occurs concurrently with other types of figurative devices. Considering the unique nature of the co-occurrence of metaphor and hyperbole, along with the limited existing literature on this phenomenon, an elaborated examination of metaphorical hyperbole will be presented in the forthcoming chapter (Chapter 6). For the time being, we will concentrate on hyperbole as a broad category of figurative devices and discuss its manifestations and functions in promotional discourse.

5.2.2 Different Types of Hyperbole

Previous studies (e.g., Cano Mora, 2011; Fontanier, 1830/1968; Norrick, 2004) identify different types of hyperbole based on various parameters, including auxesis (exaggeration) or meiosis (understatement), quantitative or qualitative dimensions, and grammatical fields. The twofold nature of hyperbole, amplifying and diminishing, is emphasised by Smith (1657) and Fontanier (1830/1968), who suggested that hyperbole can be a form of exaggeration or overstatement that either maximises (auxesis) or minimises (meiosis) the real state of the referent. For instance, when talking about time, “I waited *ten years* to get this coffee!” is regarded as *auxesis* and “I just waited for *a second* to get this coffee!” is identified as *meiosis*. According to Cano Mora (2011), in real-world conversations, 81 per cent of hyperbole use belongs to auxesis, which explains why downscale hyperbole (meiosis) is often neglected in rhetoric studies.

In her works (2003, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2014), Cano Mora developed a semasiological taxonomy of hyperbole, categorizing it into two main fields: the evaluative realm and the

quantitative realm. The evaluative realm includes hyperboles that help to express speakers' feelings and emotions, either positive or negative, towards the object being described (e.g., *she was the most wonderful person*), while quantitative hyperboles are those that amplify or lessen a quantity or magnitude to the end-point of the scale (e.g., for the *10001th* time I'm telling you). The two types of hyperbolic items will then be divided into three semantic categories: positive, negative evaluation, and impact/singularity for the evaluative component, and purity, quantity/measure, and magnitude for the quantitative realm, of each contains different semantic subfields. Positive evaluation, for example, conveys the speaker's approval, admiration, or praise, and comprises three semantic subfields: idea of life and heaven, idea of perfection and magnificence, and idea of splendour and beauty (Cano Mora, 2009, 2011). It should be noted that the author also pointed out the issues existing in this classification framework as the overlapping of semantic features that can be found from these hyperbolic expressions. For instance, in the sentence "For the 10001st time I'm telling you that it looks fine," there is a certain move from the field of quantification to the field of evaluation, with a certain degree of negative connotation. Taking into consideration the shared features from both realms, the author suggests that the classification of hyperbolic expressions should be based on the predominance of one dimension rather than absoluteness (Cano Mora, 2011).

Hyperbole is also described in terms of extreme case formulations (ECF) in earlier figurative language studies (e.g., McCarthy & Carter, 2004; Norrick, 2004; Pomerantz, 1986), referring to the expression that is found at the extreme point of linguistic scale, such as *every*, *none*, *perfectly*, etc., which are usually relatively obvious and easy to recognise. However, it is possible for the value of hyperbolic load to fall elsewhere on the linguistic scale – above or below the origin (intended meaning), but not to an extreme degree, provided that the contrast between propositional meaning and the intended meaning is sufficiently "significant" (Claridge, 2011). In this case, Norrick (2004) distinguished between two types of hyperbole based on their degree of exaggeration: overstatement and extreme case formulation. The former generally refers to any statement that involves either semantic amplification or attenuation, while the latter is reserved for those expressions that lie at the farthest end of a given scale of reality. The difference between overstatement and extreme case formulation can be seen from the following examples (in Norrick, 2004):

- (3) The line's *a mile long*.
- (4) This line will *never* end.

A mile long in sentence (3) is used by the addresser to describe the length of the queue: There are a lot of people in line; although the line is not a mile long, it is not a short line. In this case, the word *a mile long* exaggerates the actual length and ranks higher than the intended meaning on the semantic scale of the length of the queue, though it is not formulated in an extreme fashion. The expression *never* in sentence (4), however, is semantically extreme, even without considering its context. With a sense of absolute and extremity, it expresses a long waiting time, ranks on the end-point of the scale, and therefore is an ECF.

Linguistic research has provided empirical evidence for the distinct grammatical characteristics and pragmatic functions of ECFs, in comparison to non-extreme cases. For example, Norrick (2004) has argued, based on an analysis of the spoken English corpora, that ECFs are more closely associated with proverbs belonging to its apodictic characteristic (e.g., *a watched pot never boils*), whereas non-extreme hyperboles are inclined to be related to proverbial phrases and idioms (e.g., *as fast as lightning*). In a study of various conversational activities, Pomerantz (1986) revealed from a pragmatic perspective that speakers are more inclined to use ECFs during confrontational situations to legitimise their claims and argue for the correctness or, (or wrongness), of a particular practice.

It is important to note that, however, as Edwards (2000) demonstrated, ECFs indeed do not adhere to any single logical formula or grammatical features. They span various grammatical categories, such as adjectives and adverbs (*exclusive, perfectly*), superlatives (*the best*), all-quantifiers (*all, every*), nouns (*pinnacle*), and verbs (*revived*). According to Spitzbardt (1963), hyperbolic adjectives (29%), hyperbolic adverbs (14%), and nouns (14%) are the most recurrent word classes (Cano Mora, 2011). In his study, Edwards (2000) offered descriptive insights into the utilisation of ECFs in genuine conversations, shedding light on the contextual function of hyperbole and how listeners react to such language devices. Crawford Camiciottoli (2012) further interrogated the distribution and functions of ECFs across different grammatical categories in a corpus of business and economics lectures, providing empirical support for Edwards's findings (2000). These findings were consistent with those reported by Burgers et al. (2018), who found that in the context of the Dutch news genre, linguistic categories such as adjectives, adverbs, and pronouns were the primary vehicles for expressing exaggeration.

Following this direction (e.g., Burgers et al., 2018; Crawford Camiciottoli, 2012; Edwards, 2000), this chapter aims to extend the inquiry by examining hyperbolic expressions across various grammatical categories in the distinct genre of promotional tourism discourse.

Considering that promotional discourse is a rich resource for hyperbole and that different generic characteristics may influence language usage patterns, this analysis seeks to capture the variations and similarities in hyperbole usage in real-world communication. Exploring what types of hyperboles are used, how they are exploited, and why they are deployed in a different context can generate a deeper, or alternative, theoretical understanding of hyperbole. In the next section, we will elaborate on the contextual features of promotional tourism discourse that may facilitate, mould, or impose constraints upon the employment of hyperbole.

5.2.3 Hotel Websites as a Promotional Discourse

On its own, the hotel website offers a business not only an effective platform to cater to interested customers' informational needs but also an important channel to promote its products and services to attract prospective guests to make a reservation or use its facilities. On the one hand, the impression of providing "reality" can be attributed to factual information on the hotel website, such as hotel locations, check-in and check-out times, and the range and prices of service – often a presentation of maps, numbers, tables and other various formats. On the other hand, due to the intangible nature of online sales, consumers may be uncertain about the hotel experience prior to actually utilising the service. The information on the website is, therefore, allowed to be presented in a variety of more or less strategically appealing ways, thereby increasing the persuasive effect of the factual information delivered by the hotelier to varying degrees (Edo-Marzá, 2011). In a way, despite its strong informational intention, the hotel website can be regarded as a quintessential promotional genre and thought of as having branding and intensifying promotional functions.

Regarding the mode of communication, advertising messages on websites can be presented both verbally and visually. In the previous research on tourism website evaluation, the role of visual semiotic features of hotel websites has been emphasised (e.g., Cheng & Suen, 2014; Turra, 2020) because of the efficiency of images displayed on websites in conveying large amounts of information (Zimbardo, 1992), and their emotive force that can easily evoke feelings of pleasure (Bufquin et al., 2020). However, when it comes to attracting visitors through a website, the reality is that verbal modality is still indispensable in improving advertising effectiveness, as the written text of a hotel website is often more specific and able to provide a comprehensive description of the advertised product.

5.2.4 *Hyperboles in Promotional Discourse*

As a figurative device, hyperbole can serve persuasive purposes, ranging from emphasising objective characteristics to expressing subjective attitudes, and as such it can reveal much of the addresser's stance and attitude towards the textual content. Consequently, hyperbole is commonly employed in persuasive discourse to capture the recipient's attention and convince them that the topic being discussed is compelling and the information being presented is valuable and deserving of their attention. For example, using a corpus approach, Cacchiani (2007) demonstrated that evaluative language such as implicit superlatives and intensifiers were key to promotional book blurbs. Kaltenbacher (2006) conducted a cross-cultural analysis of the use of superlatives in tourism websites, specifically focusing on Austria, Utah, and Scotland. The study yielded two significant findings. Firstly, superlatives were found to be frequently deployed to engender favourable dispositions to travel destinations on tourism websites in the three regions. Secondly, the research highlighted the influence of culture on the use of exaggerated expressions, with Scotland demonstrating a greater propensity for hyperboles compared to the other two cultures.

Based on our experience as users of luxury hotel websites, it is reasonable to speculate that the use of hyperbole, owing to its powerful persuasive potential, has become a prominent feature of promotional travel discourse. Such language is often employed to engage and persuade potential customers, creating a sense of high class that effectively "sells the extraordinary" (Edo Marzá, 2011). The delineation of "extraordinariness" is usually based on well-elaborated descriptions and positive evaluations of the attributes and characteristics of the product, occasionally in an overwhelming fashion, so as to capture the attention of potential customers and persuade them to make a purchase decision, as some rather "overloaded" samples of real text from luxury hotel websites seems to indicate:

"ONLY THE *HIGHEST* QUALITY: The *largest*, *smallest* rooms in Amsterdam". And we are quite proud of that. Our premium rooms are the *most* spacious in the city. (The Amstel Hotel Amsterdam)

While providing the information is still an important function for luxury hotel websites, it is done so with the intent of engendering favourable audience dispositions towards the hotels. At first glance, the hotel advertisement above appears to contain a logical contradiction, as it states that the hotel room is both the "biggest" and the "smallest". Recipients of luxury hotel websites

are often familiar with the promotional genre and understand that exaggerated expressions are common. Therefore, when reading such claims, they typically do not interpret the language as deliberately deceptive but rather as a communication strategy aimed at capturing attention. Many potential customers may even expect the use of hyperboles in advertising and view it as an integral part of the genre, although advertisements inherently tend to avoid mentioning any weaknesses or shortcomings of the product and focus solely on the positive aspects.

Despite the importance and ubiquity of hyperbole, the research on this rhetorical device remains limited, as elaborated earlier in this chapter. The second objective aims to address the gaps in previous research on the use of figurative language on hotel websites by examining how luxury hotels use exaggerated expressions to construct compelling images of aesthetics, exclusivity, and high quality. To begin the exploration, we frame the following research questions that guide this chapter:

- (1) What types of hyperbole occur on luxury hotel websites in Singapore and Hong Kong, and to what extent?
- (2) What are the functions of hyperboles in the context of luxury hotel websites?

In summary, this chapter is driven by two sub-research questions, both of which revolve around the intimate relationship between hyperbole and promotional discourse. The first sub-question is to investigate the patterns and configurations of various types of hyperbole in real-world data, with the goal of gaining a more holistic insight into the context-situated qualities of hyperbole. This will be achieved through a statistical overview of the different types of hyperbole in our corpus.

The second sub-question of this chapter is to uncover the role of hyperbole in enacting luxury values such as aesthetics, prestige, and excellent quality (Hudders et al., 2013). This will be accomplished through exploring the relationship between descriptive language and diverse hotel facilities, given that contemporary luxury hotels adopt flexible business models and offer a wide range of amenities to cater to the varied preferences of their clientele. These research questions are addressed by examining the patterns of hyperbole in two corpora that consist of luxury hotel websites from Singapore (the SG corpus) and Hong Kong (the HK corpus). Prior to presenting the results of the corpus analysis, the next section will elucidate the steps involved in hyperbole identification with the assistance of the HIP and outlines the quantitative data

analysis method employed to examine the profile of different categories of hyperbole and their relationship with hotel facilities.

5.3 Methodology

5.3.1 Preparation of Database

Most hyperbole studies restricted their analysis to specific types of hyperbole and usually used an *a priori* selection of items to search for hyperboles in the corpus. Researchers either pulled lists of hyperbolic expressions from previous studies or identified all hyperbole words from a small sample first, then looked for further evidence in a larger corpus (e.g., Crawford Camiciottoli, 2012; Kaltenbacher, 2007). This top-down approach in a way reduces the chaos stemming from the diversity of hyperbole forms, because researchers can focus solely on the linguistic phenomenon they are interested in, even if its shortcomings may also be palpable. Relying on a predetermined list to identify hyperbole may result in the inadvertent exclusion of relatively rare, yet noteworthy, linguistic examples, given the absence of an exhaustive and all-encompassing compilation of hyperbolic expressions. To ensure the comprehensive capture of all potential hyperbolic phenomena in our corpus so as to gauge the holistic picture of figurative language in discourse, this study adopted a bottom-up method to manually detect all individual lexical items in our corpus under the guidance of HIP.

After data collection and POS tagging were completed, the annotated files were then imported into the software MAXQDA for data coding (refer to Section 2.2.2.5 for the steps of POS Tagging). In Chapter 4, our corpus comprises written texts from all luxury hotels located in Singapore and Hong Kong, operated by various market types, including both domestic and international establishments. The domestic type refers to hotels that primarily focus on either Singapore or Hong Kong, while the international type refers to hotels that mainly target the international market and have chains in both Singapore and Hong Kong. Previous studies suggest that regional luxury hotel websites and international luxury hotels differ in terms of website performance, implying the influence of market types on hotel website design (Qi et al., 2017). Therefore, in this chapter, to mitigate the potential impact of market type, such as domestic versus international, we limited its scope of luxury hotels to only international hotel

chains that operate in both Hong Kong and Singapore. The data from domestic hotels (those that operate exclusively in their home regions) was excluded from the corpus. Consequently, a total of 38 luxury hotels from nine brands in the two regions were retained for analysis, including 15 hotels from Hong Kong and 23 from Singapore. The corpus comprised 117,132 lexical items, whose overview is presented in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 An overview of the hotel list in the chapter

Brands	Hong Kong hotels	Singapore hotels
Hilton Worldwide	Conrad Hong Kong	Conrad Centennial Singapore
Four Seasons Hotels & Resorts	Four Seasons Hotel Hong Kong	Four Seasons Singapore
Hyatt	Grand Hyatt Hong Kong	Andaz Singapore Grand Hyatt Singapore
Shangri-La	Hotel Jen Hong Kong Island Shangri-La Hong Kong Kowloon Shangri-La	Hotel Jen Tanglin Shangri-La Hotel Singapore
IHG	InterContinental Grand Stanford Hong Kong	InterContinental Singapore The Regent Singapore
Marriott	JW Marriott Hotel Hong Kong Ritz Carlton Hong Kong The Mira Hong Kong W Hong Kong	Hotel Vagabond Ritz Carlton Millenia Singapore Singapore Marriott Tang Plaza Hotel St Regis Singapore W Singapore Sentosa Cove
Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group	Mandarin Oriental Hong Kong The Landmark Mandarin Oriental	Mandarin Oriental Singapore
Accor	Park Lane Hotel Hong Kong	Fairmont Singapore Raffles Hotel Singapore Sofitel Singapore Sentosa Sofitel So Singapore Swissotel Merchant Court The Stamford Singapore
Preferred Hotels & Resorts	The Fullerton Ocean Park Hotel	Royal Plaza on Scotts The Fullerton Bay Hotel The Fullerton Hotel Singapore
Total	15	23
Word count	47451	69681

5.3.2 Hyperbole Identification and Classification

Based on the HIP instructions, a distinction was made between lexical units that have no relation to exaggeration, and lexical units that are hyperbolic. However, it should be noted that after performing a round of annotation to determine whether lexical units in the corpus were hyperbolic, I also conducted post-hoc troubleshooting to discuss and solve the problems I encountered in the automatic tagging and annotation process, with special attention on the following issues: the categorisation of grammatical property of hyperboles, parsing of a compound noun or idiom with many words, and reference materials for hyperbole identification. I will now address each of these issues and present the corresponding solutions.

5.3.2.1 POS Tagging and Hyperbole Classification

Table 5.2 Main categories of hyperbolic items in this chapter

Grammatical labels used in this thesis	The Penn Treebank Tag	Descriptions	Examples
Adjectives and Adverbs	JJ; JJR; RB;	Adjective; Adjective, comparative;	<i>exquisite;</i>
Superlatives	RBR	Adverb; Adverb, comparative	<i>utterly</i>
	JJS; RBS	Adjective, superlative; Adverb, superlative	<i>freshest;</i> <i>most</i>
Nouns	NN; NNP;	Noun, singular or mass; Proper	<i>paradise;</i>
	NNPS; NNS	Noun, singular; Proper Noun, plural; Noun, plural	<i>elixir</i>
Verbs	VB; VBD;	Verb, base form; Verb, past tense;	<i>dazzle;</i>
	VBG; VBN;	Verb, gerund or present participle;	<i>perfected</i>
	VBP; VBZ	Verb, past participle; Verb, non-3rd person singular present; Verb, 3rd person singular present	
Quantifiers	DT; PDT; NN;	Determiner; Predeterminer; Noun;	<i>all;</i>
Idioms	JJ; RB	Adjective; Adverb	<i>whenever</i> <i>blow your mind</i>
Modal auxiliary	MD	Modal	<i>must</i>

The first issue concerns to the grammatical labels produced by POS tagging and hyperbole classification. The Stanford POS Tagging used in this thesis is built on the Penn Treebank tagset, which classifies and divides parts of speech in a very detailed fashion (c.f. Santorini, 1990). For example, verbs that have no suffixes have been added to them are labelled as “VV” (verb, base form) to distinguish them from other types of verbs (e.g., “VVD” (verb, past tense)) (see

Figure 5.2, The Penn Treebank Tag). While such a practice is undoubtedly conducive to syntactic or semantic study of the comparison of different types of verbs in discourse, it is not the main purpose of this chapter. In line with the approaches of Edward (2000) and Crawford Camiciottoli (2012), the classification of hyperbole in this study was not only based on the part of speech of lexical items but also on their degree of exaggeration. For example, the category of quantifiers includes overgeneralised expressions that span different grammatical categories, including indefinite pronouns (e.g., *nothing*) and adverbs (e.g., *never*).

In order to make quantitative analysis feasible and preserve the original POS tagging information as much as possible, several modifications were made to reduce word class categories to six main categories, including merging several subcategories into one main category (e.g., The verbs category (VB) contains all the different forms of verbs, such as past tense (VBD), present participle (VBG), past participle (VBN), and etc.), removing categories where no hyperbole was found, and adding the category of *quantifier*. Table 5.2 presents the revised grammatical labels used in the present analysis based on the Penn Treebank tagset.

5.3.2.2 *Compounds and Idioms*

The second issue has to do with the results of automated parsing of compound nouns or idiomatic expressions with multiple words. A hyphenated compound word is usually formed by hyphenating two or more words together, as in the expression “the *world-class* equipment.” However, some hotels in our data occasionally mistakenly wrote the word as two separate parts, which became “the world class equipment.” Thus, POS tagging labelled “world” and “class” as “NN” (noun) respectively, rather than labelling “world-class” as a whole as “JJ” (adjective). In our current analysis, a hyphenated compound word listed in the dictionary was treated as one word, even if its components were written as two parts separately in our data. We manually checked the results of the automated parsing following British spelling conventions and with reference to the *Macmillan English Dictionary* to mitigate potential confusion. For those novel compound words that have not yet entered the dictionary, such as “ultra-comfortable”, we also treated them as a single lexical unit and remained consistent throughout the coding process.

Secondly, to enable the comparison of frequencies in larger data sets, HIP, like MIPVU, is conceived to examine texts on a word-by-word basis based on the information from the part-of-speech tags. Steen et al. (2010) have provided meticulous elucidation on the treatment of lexical boundaries, where the term *lexical unit* refers to a single word, with the exceptions of

phrasal verbs, compounds, and some *proper names*, which are treated as a cohesive integrity (Steen et al., 2010, pp. 27–32). Their individual parts, therefore, do not call on further analysis for potential hyperbolic meaning. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that a specific concern in my data is the presence of idiomatic expressions, for which the original MIP or MIPVU do not offer a comprehensive solution to address. Idioms are expressions whose meaning is different from the meaning of their individual words, which are semantically inseparable units with various degrees of decomposability, and therefore, present a special case for hyperbole analysis.

Research on idiom processing is far from uncontroversial, with discussions centering on two different approaches, namely the non-compositional approach (e.g., Chomsky, 1980; Katz, 1973) and the compositional approach (e.g., Gibbs & O'Brien, 1990; Gibbs et al., 1989). Consider, for instance, the literal meaning of the expression *pigs might fly* has no semantic association with its idiomatic meaning “something is completely impossible.” Conversely, in certain cases of idiomatic expressions such as “keep an eye on,” the literal meaning may shed light on its figurative meaning in some way (Steen et al., 2010). While it is beyond the purview of this study to provide a review of prior studies on idiom processing models, it is crucial to explicate the unit of analysis for idioms in this thesis, whether as a discrete unit or a stretch of text consisting of severable parts, before presenting the identification outcomes to prevent any potential methodological limitations.

As a complement to MIPVU, later, in their book, Steen et al. (2010) recommended coding each component of an idiom as a single unit during the process of identifying metaphors. However, although this practice is advantageous for studying the metaphorical relation between the literal and figurative meanings of individual elements, it is important to acknowledge that the practice comes at the expense of the figurative meanings as a whole because the metaphoricity of the individual part is discussed within the figurative expression *per se*. With that in mind, following the non-compositional view of idiomaticity, this thesis has decided to treat each idiom as a “long word”, that is, the meaning of idioms was not seen as a superposition of the meanings of their individual components, but went beyond what is literally stated (Titone & Connine, 1999, p.1656). The dictionary definition of the idiom was recorded and compared with its ontological referent.

Thirdly, some idioms exhibit significant syntactic flexibility, allowing for varying degrees of syntactic transformation while still preserving their idiomatic interpretation in practical usage

(Fraser, 1970). For instance, the idiom “at your fingertips” which means “available to use immediately,” demonstrated syntactic flexibility in my data, as it was observed in both plural form (“at their fingertips”) and singular form (“at your fingertip”), without shifting or losing its original figurative meaning. In this case, we tended to think of “at your fingertip/s” as one type of hyperbolic expression, irrespective of its syntactic forms. Moreover, hyperbolic idioms were comparatively infrequent in my corpus, constituting only 0.32 per cent of all hyperbolic expressions identified. Therefore, the various in word counts of idioms were unlikely to significantly affect any subsequent statistical analyses.

5.3.2.3 Constructing a Scale with Linguistic Evidence from Dictionaries

According to the instructions of HIP, the criteria for the identification of hyperbolic language use is to establish a semantical scale of the lexical unit, and then check whether the lexical unit is more extreme than justified given its ontological referent (Burgers et al., 2016). In this process, it is vital to provide an explicit protocol for how the scale can be constructed and under what circumstances that expression would be considered extreme, which is also the third methodological challenge that needs to be addressed in this chapter.

In order to determine whether or not the lexical unit can construct a scale related to either quality or quantity, it is necessary to have reference tools such as lexicographical works that can provide linguistic evidence about word definitions and meanings. Following MIP and MIPVU, this step was done by deploying the electronic version of the *Macmillan English Dictionary* as a main reference resource, supplemented by the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* and the *Oxford English Dictionary*, which are all corpus-based materials. For the establishment of the intensity scale between the literal meaning and the propositional meaning of the lexical unit, researchers need to check the dictionary meaning of the expression and subsequently determine whether the value of propositional meaning is exceedingly high for auxesis or exceedingly low for meiosis on that scale. In this thesis, we set up criteria for the following three situations in which lexical units were considered extreme (see Peña-Cervel and Ruiz de Mendoza, 2022, pp. 192-193):

1. **The dictionary sense of the expression involving incommensurately scaled-up gradable concepts** (e.g., absolute/absolutely, total/totally, extreme/extremely, entire/entirely, complete/completely, always, forever, never).

2. **The dictionary sense of the expression involves universal quantifiers** (e.g., all, every, no), **and pronouns** (e.g., everything, everyone, everybody, everywhere, nothing, nobody, anything).
3. **Superlative degree** (e.g., easiest, best, most ADJECTIVE_{sup}, and ADVERB_{sup})

The example of “*exceptional* venue” serves as an illustration in this regard. Initially, the meaning of the term was consulted using the *Macmillan English Dictionary*, which defined “exceptional” as “extremely good or impressive in a way that is unusual.” The definition contained the word “extremely”, suggesting a great degree of beauty and pleasure, thus rendering “exceptional” as a hyperbolic expression. It is worth noting that different dictionaries may have slightly different definitions of words. For example, the expression “magnificent” refers to “very impressive and beautiful, good, or skilful” in the *Macmillan English Dictionary*, without indicating an extreme connotation. However, the *Oxford English Dictionary* defined it as “extremely beautiful, elaborate, or impressive,” implying a more intense representation. Building on the insights of Claridge (2010), this study attempted to achieve a balance of being over-inclusive, with a tendency to include units in marginal cases while taking context and co-text into account. Therefore, if any of the three reference dictionaries mentioned above provided linguistic evidence that the expression resided at the extreme point of the scale, which was not consistent with the intended meaning of the expression, we included this potential hyperbolic word in the analysis.

5.3.2.4 HIP for This Thesis: Inter-rater Reliability (IRR) results

Similar to the reliability analysis of metaphor, 10 per cent of data ($N=6$) was randomly selected by using the RANDBETWEEN function in Excel. First, each text in the corpus was assigned a random number from 1-100. These texts were then re-ordered in descending order according to the number assigned. The six texts with the highest values were selected for reliability analysis. The text that has been used for the inter-rater reliability analysis of metaphor identification was excluded and replaced by the next text in the list. The materials selected are listed as follows:

Table 5.3 Summary of the materials for hyperbole identification inter-rater reliability analysis

File Numbers	Hotels	Locations	Word count
1	Parkroyal Collection Marina Bay	SG	3,996
2	JW Marriott Hotel Hong Kong	HK	1,088
3	Mandarin Oriental Hong Kong	HK	5,586
4	Singapore Marriott Tang Plaza Hotel	SG	2,000
5	Grand Hyatt Hong Kong	HK	3,923
6	The Upper House	HK	3,019
Total			19,612

The test took place in April and May 2023. Two raters (the first rater: the author; the second author: a postgraduate student in Linguistics and Translation) were instructed to annotate the data pursuant to the coding protocol, i.e., HIP, independently. This means that the reliability test checked the consensus of the two analysts prior to any discussion. Both analysts were trained beforehand and both were given a full explanation of the protocol to ensure they were confident using HIP.

The two raters worked on clean Word files of selected texts, highlighting the lexical unit in the Word file if it was perceived to be hyperbolic. This slightly differed from the main identification process, which relied on dedicated software called MAXQDA. MAXQDA is a powerful coding toolkit that enables analysts to assign various labels to a lexical unit. Following previous studies (Burgers et al., 2018; Nacey et al., 2019; Reijnierse et al., 2019), a test statistic called Cohen's Kappa (Cohen, 1960) was used to measure the extent of agreement of identification decisions by two analysts.

Table 5.4 Reliability of the selected text by two independent analysts

File Numbers	Rater 1 Yes	Rater 2 Yes	Disagreement Between Rater 1 and Rater 2	Cohen's Kappa
1	101	93	18	Cohen's $k = .921$
2	22	24	2	
3	186	177	25	
4	82	83	5	
5	92	91	15	
6	67	63	18	

Before presenting the Inter-Rater Reliability (IRR) results, it is important to clarify assessment concerns with respect to the unit of analysis. Specifically, it should be noted that certain multi-word expressions found in our corpus, such as phrasal verbs, proper nouns, and idioms, might also be identified as hyperbolic instances. Due to their relatively low frequency when compared to single-word hyperboles, these expressions were excluded from the IRR assessment and subsequent quantitative data analysis. Overall, the reliability tests showed that the HIP procedure produced an “almost perfect” reliability result for the selected data (Landis & Koch, 1977), as displayed in Table 5.4.

Kappa calculator

	Positive	Negative	
Positive	<input type="text" value="499"/>	<input type="text" value="51"/>	<input type="text" value="550"/>
Negative	<input type="text" value="32"/>	<input type="text" value="19030"/>	<input type="text" value="19062"/>
	<input type="text" value="531"/>	<input type="text" value="19081"/>	<input type="text" value="19612"/>

Cohen's kappa index: SE:

PABAK: BI: PI:

Figure 5.1 Results of the reliability test for hyperbole identification

5.4 Results and Discussions

5.4.1 The General Patterns of Hyperbole in Luxury Hotel Websites

Of all 117,132 lexical units in my corpus (47,451 for the HK corpus and 69,681 for the SG corpus), 3,654 were related to hyperbole, implying that around 3.12 per cent of lexical units in

the corpus contained a hyperbolic reading. The frequency and normalised frequency of hyperbole for each category in the two corpora are presented in Table 5.5 and visualised in Figure 5.2.

Table 5.5 Number of hyperbolic lexical units in the two corpora, per category

	HK corpus (47,451)		SG corpus (69,681)		Total (117,132)	
	Frequency	NF (per 100 words)	Frequency	NF (per 100 words)	Frequency	NF (per 100 words)
Adjectives and adverbs	952	2.01	1233	1.77	2185	1.87
Quantifier	246	0.52	311	0.45	557	0.48
Superlatives	170	0.36	250	0.36	420	0.36
Nouns	178	0.38	219	0.31	397	0.34
Verbs	33	0.07	45	0.06	78	0.07
Idiom	7	0.01	9	0.01	16	0.01
Modal auxiliary	0	0.00	1	0.00	1	0.00
Total	1586	3.34	2068	2.97	3654	3.12

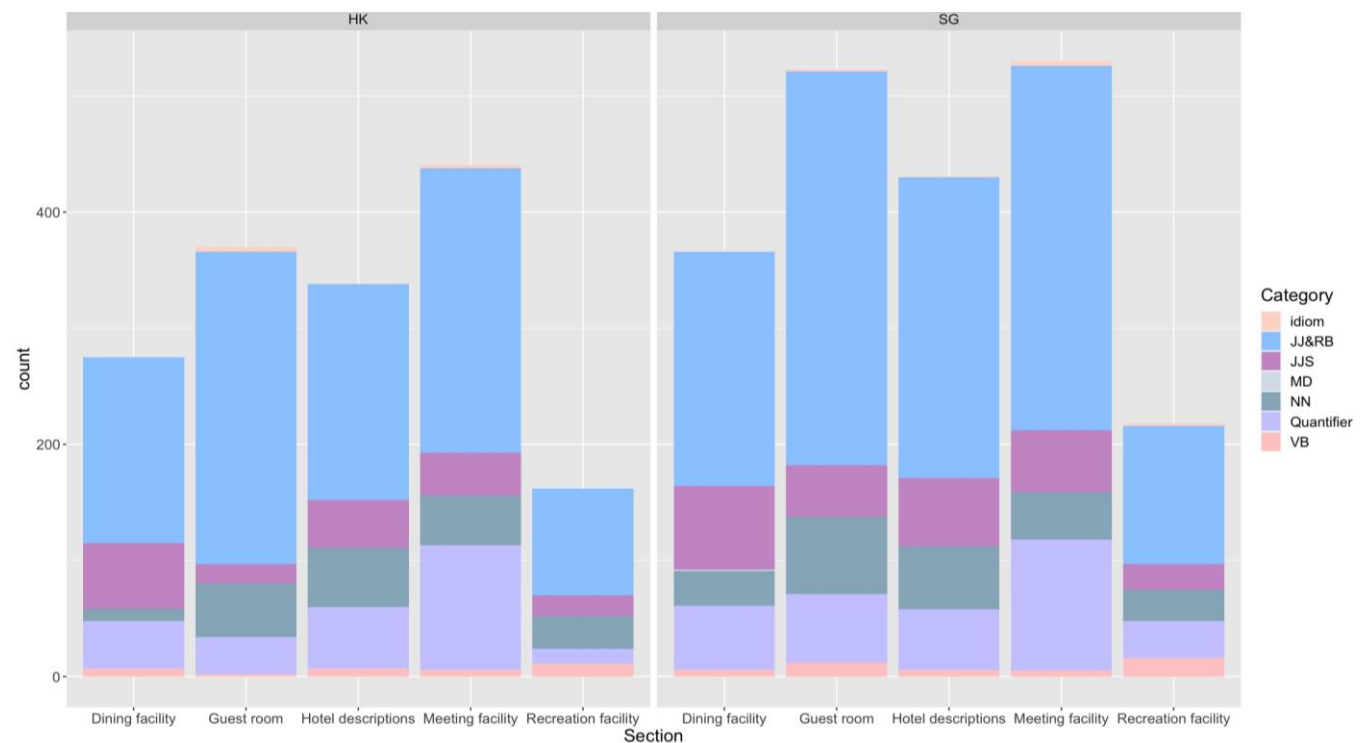


Figure 5.2 Overview of hyperbolic lexical units in the two corpora, per category

The findings from the corpus analysis were consistent with Spitzbardt's observation (1963, p. 278) that hyperbolic language was predominantly manifested through "nouns, adjectives, adverbs." As is evident from Table 5.5 and Figure 5.2, the use of hyperbolic adjectives and adverbs is a crucial feature of promotional discourse, with more than half of the expressions associated with hyperbole in the examined data taking these forms (2.01 per 100 words for the HK corpus and 1.77 for the SG corpus). Other significant groups of hyperbole-related items included quantifiers (0.48 per 100 words), superlatives (0.36 per 100 words), and nouns (0.35 per 100 words), followed by verbs and idioms, which constituted a smaller proportion (0.07 and 0.01 per 100 words, respectively).

In regard to regional disparities, the results indicated that luxury hotels located in Hong Kong exhibited a slightly higher frequency of hyperbole usage on their websites, with an average of 3.34 occurrences per 100 words, as opposed to luxury hotels in Singapore, which registered an average of 2.97 occurrences per 100 words (refer to Table 5.5). Similar to the procedure of the metaphor analysis conducted in Chapter 4, we then implemented the log-likelihood test (Rayson, 2016) to compare the use of hyperbole between the two corpora. The results showed statistically significant differences in the deployment of hyperbole between luxury hotels in Hong Kong and those in Singapore, as indicated by the p -values of the log-likelihood test (LL = 12.61, LR = 0.17, $p < 0.001$).²⁴

The next section will provide a detailed exposition of each category of hyperbole identified in the corpus, highlighting their salient characteristics in promotional discourse, as well as their respective functions in branding the luxury values of aesthetics, prestige, and high quality.

5.4.2 Adjectives and Adverbs

The table (Table 5.6) presented in the following demonstrates an overwhelming presence of hyperbolic adjectives and adverbs in the corpus. The ten most frequently used adjectives and adverbs in luxury hotel websites, as shown in Table 5.6, consisted of a collection of evaluative terms such as *perfect*, *exclusive*, *luxurious*, *exquisite*, *legendary*, *ideal*, and *state-of-the-art*, as

²⁴ Rayson (2016) suggested that if the log-likelihood value is 3.84 or higher, the p -value will be significant at < 0.05 , if the log-likelihood value is 6.63 or higher, the p -value will be at < 0.01 , and if the log-likelihood value is 10.83 or higher, the p -value will be at < 0.001 .

well as adjectives denoting magnitude, such as *extensive* and *ultimate*. Moreover, the lexical unit *unforgettable* that conveyed a strong sense of impact also held a prominent position. These items collectively comprised around 26.14 per cent of the entire category. The type/token ratio for the category of adjectives and adverbs was 0.10, with 211 types (2185 tokens) of hyperbolic adjectives and adverbs identified in the corpus.

Referring back to the corpus, the actual utilisation of these evaluative terms in luxury hotel websites is mainly positive. From the perspective of discourse analysis, positive evaluations that express approval, admiration, and praise (Cano Mora, 2013) are crucial in promotional tourism as they can enhance the perceived value of destination and service information and contribute to creating the perception of a “must-visit” destination among potential tourists. Given this context, it is unsurprising that luxury hotels employ a range of positive evaluatives in their online websites to capture the attention of prospective guests and strategically promote the luxury values associated with their products.

Table 5.6 The ten most frequent adjectives and adverbs in the corpus

Lexical unit	Frequency	Percentage (N=3654)
perfect	178	4.87%
exclusive	166	4.54%
luxurious	144	3.94%
exquisite	92	2.52%
legendary	85	2.33%
ideal	83	2.27%
state-of-the-art	63	1.72%
extensive	56	1.53%
unforgettable	47	1.29%
ultimate	41	1.12%

Examples (5), (6), and (7) demonstrate the positive use of hyperbolic adjectives and adverbs in our corpus, as well as their persuasive effects by enhancing the readability, vividness, and artistry of advertisements.

(5) Offering city skyline views, our elegant Panoramic Room features a *luxurious* ensuite bathroom and a spacious executive workspace (Pan Pacific Singapore).

(6) Our Health Club features *state-of-the-art* equipment, free weights, and yoga classes (Langham Hong Kong).

(7) Be *perfectly* located in the heart of Singapore... (Swissotel Merchant Court).

Luxurious in example (5) delivers an ideal of splendour and brilliance, highlighting the beauty of the hotel room views and amenities. *State-of-the-art* in example (6) suggests that the hotel provides the most advanced fitness equipment for guests, and example (7) describes the convenient location of a hotel, which is easy for guests to travel around. These hyperbolic adjectives and adverbs are often paired with hotel attributes using a pattern “adjective/adverb + hotel amenities”, which dramatise the product benefits and functions to attract potential customers and increase sales.

5.4.3 Quantifiers

Table 5.7 The ten most frequent quantifiers in the corpus

Lexical unit	Frequency	Percentage (N=3654)
all	186	5.09%
every	124	3.39%
any	50	1.37%
everything	33	0.90%
all-day	29	0.79%
no	28	0.77%
never	17	0.47%
whatever	17	0.47%
everyone	12	0.33%
ever	10	0.27%

Quantifiers are lexical units that are universal generalisations, including expressions such as *all*, *every*, and *never*. Basically, quantifiers can be further divided into two groups according to the state of existence of the relationship they refer to. The first type represents an idea of universality and non-exceptionality, such as *all*, *every*, *any*, *everything*, etc., and the second type represents an idea of non-existence or nullity, such as *no*, *never*, and *nothing* (Cano Mora, 2009).

In our corpus, the category of quantifiers ranks as the second most prevalent form of hyperbole, following the category of adjectives and adverbs, with a total of 557 instances. Table 5.7 lists the ten most frequently used quantifiers, revealing that affirmations like *all* and *every* are more frequent than negations like *no* or *never* in terms of occurrences.

Before presenting the qualitative analysis of this category of hyperbole, it is important to emphasise and reiterate that while these expressions may appear absolute in terms of possibility, not all “quantifiers” necessarily convey exaggerated tendencies. Whether an expression is hyperbolic or not should be determined by evaluating the context and the referent it pertains to. For instance, in the case of example (8), the word “no” should be interpreted literally, indicating that there will be no additional fees or charges on top of the pricing of the restaurant menu. Consequently, this lexical unit was not considered hyperbolic and was not included in our dataset for analysis.

(8) ... enjoy buffet meals at the all-day dining venues at **no** additional charge (Hotel Jen Hong Kong)²⁵

Conversely, in example (9), the expression “*all*” represents a hyperbole as it emphasises the all-encompassing and considerate service offered by the hotel, which can meet the diverse needs of the guests without exception.

(9) Our guest rooms accommodate *all* the needs of today’s frequent flyers (Swissotel Merchant Court, Singapore).

(10) Our hotel dining options deliver the things you love in a way you’ve *never* imagined possible (W Hong Kong).

The exceptional qualities of a hotel are also reflected in the ability to exceed the expectations of the customer, as shown in example (10), who is promised to be pleasantly surprised by the variety of options, ambience or quality of the food and beverage service from the hotel restaurant. The use of *never* in this claim signals a sense of absoluteness that leaves no room for any other possibility, thereby implying that the hotel is vastly superior to its competitors and establishing its image of prestige.

The exaggerated quantifiers in the above examples intensify the intended meaning of the utterances by infinitely expanding or narrowing the scope of their referent. These quantifiers may potentially be seen as misleading or deliberately deceptive, as it is practically impossible for a hotel to fulfill every single customer desire (as in Example (9), for instance). The propositional meaning of the sentence could be more precise or could be substituted with less extreme expressions, such as “most needs” in the case of Example (9), that are both

²⁵ Example (8) is NOT a hyperbolic use.

grammatically and pragmatically appropriate. However, in advertising, figurative expressions (i.e., hyperbole) are so pervasive that they have become unobtrusive. Thus, “*all the needs*” might be accepted as hyperbole, rather than a falsehood, as long as the degree of difference between the expression (e.g., *all the needs*) and reality (e.g., the range of services provided by the hotel) remains “smallish and reconcilable” (Claridge, 2018, p. 375).

5.4.4 Superlatives

In luxury consumption, differentiating a brand from its vis-a-vis competitors is key to brand success (Aaker, 2004). Example (10) employs negation to emphasise the probability of a favourable customer experience, thus enhancing the hotel’s privileged identity. However, in marketing materials, a similar effect can be achieved through the utilisation of superlative forms, which serve to differentiate the hotel from its competitors by implying its superiority through implicit comparisons.

Table 5.8 The ten most frequent superlatives in the corpus

Lexical unit	Frequency	Percentage (N=3654)
most	128	3.50%
best	109	2.98%
finest	54	1.48%
latest	22	0.60%
freshest	20	0.55%
largest	18	0.49%
highest	10	0.27%
greatest	6	0.16%
closest	5	0.14%
hottest	5	0.14%

In our corpus, the category of superlatives consisted of adjectives and adverbs that were used in the most extreme way (Hsiao & Su, 2010). Table 5.8 lists the top 10 superlatives ranked by frequency in our corpus. Consistent with the findings of Kaltenbacher’s (2006) study, the superlative “*most*” was the most frequently used in our corpus, often employed in conjunction with other evaluative adjectives to form periphrastic superlatives like “*most beautiful*,” “*most spectacular*,” and “*most effective*.”

- (11) Often referred to as Hong Kong's *most* beautiful dining space... (Mandarin Oriental Hong Kong)
- (12) An award-winning bar concept hailing from London, featuring *the finest* artisanal cocktails and Bourbon creations (Langham Hong Kong).
- (13) Indulge in *the best* staycation in Singapore with COLLECTION Club privileges... (The PARKROYAL on Pickering).

Example (11) uses the superlative *finest* to emphasise the outstanding quality and aesthetic beauty of the food served in the hotel. The superlative *best* in example (12) reflects the hotel's self-positioning as the best choice for a staycation. In luxury hotel advertising, the inclusion of superlative terms in statements adds to its hyperbolic potential because it implies a status of triumph that is difficult to prove, given the implicit competition with other hotels in the market. Nevertheless, as demonstrated in example (12), the assertion that the hotel serves the finest cocktails can be subjective and unsupported, as there are few appropriate standards or evidence to substantiate such a claim (Pollach, 2005). It is still debatable whether the frequent use of superlatives in promotional discourse aimed at tourists, such as "*the freshest ingredients*" or "*finest art*", is motivated by a tendency to exaggerate and boast, a confidence in their offerings, or simply an advertising strategy.

5.4.5 Nouns

In our corpus, hyperbolic nouns were a relatively infrequent category compared to other categories such as adjectives and adverbs, or quantifiers. Nonetheless, they remained one of the grammatical categories that yielded hyperbolic expressions. A total of 397 instances of nominal exaggerations were identified, with 178 originating from the HK corpus and 219 from the SG corpus (refer to Table 5.5).

The ten most popular common nouns in our data included lexical items with positive connotations such as *luxury*, *bliss*, *excellence*, *paradise*, and *grandeur*, quantitatives *infinity* and *lifetime*, and *magic* and *dream(s)*, which contained a sense of speciality, accounting for 75.82 per cent of all hyperbolic nouns. The type/token ratio of the category reaches 0.14, which was slightly higher than that of adjectives and adverbs.

Table 5.9 The ten most frequent hyperbolic nouns in the corpus

Lexical unit	Frequency	Percentage (N=3654)
luxury	145	3.97%
dream	28	0.77%
bliss	23	0.63%
excellence	18	0.49%
infinity	17	0.47%
lifetime	17	0.47%
grandeur	16	0.44%
dreams	13	0.36%
paradise	13	0.36%
magic	11	0.30%

One of the primary missions of luxury brands is to create and promote a vision of a desirable lifestyle to consumers, positioning luxury as the dream they wish to attain. This marketing strategy enables luxury companies to distinguish themselves from mass-market peers (Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2015). The tourism industry, on the other hand, creates and sells the idea of the perfect destination by providing a unique and sensory experience of the heterogeneity (as discussed in Chapter 3), allowing guests to escape their daily limitations and annoyances, and immerse into the world of dreams and adventures through these well-crafted experiences. In other words, tourism advertisements often aim to mystify and idealise the destination, using references to heavenly or paradisiacal experiences to create a sense of escapism and adventure for the guests. While these advertisements may rely on clichés and stereotypes, they serve to highlight the allure of the destination and the dream of a perfect getaway (Schellhorn & Perkins, 2010). As such, the concept of an earthly paradise and the desire for a dreamlike experience remain central to the promotional discourse of the tourism industry, especially for destinations located in tropical areas:

- (14) Unlock your *dream* trip and get closer to your *dream* vacation when you buy Hilton Honors Points (Conrad Hong Kong).
- (15) Situated on the 42nd floor, the Star Room is your island *paradise* in the sky (Cordis Hong Kong at Langham Place).
- (16) Raffles Singapore provides the *perfect* setting to set the stage for creating memories to last a *lifetime* (Raffles Hotel Singapore).

Items from the quantitative field (see Section 5.2.2 for a discussion of quantitative or qualitative dimensions), such as *infinity* and *lifetime*, which are typically associated with the magnitude and quantity of phenomena (Hood, 2010), also feature in the top ten of our data. For example, in case (16), a strong promotional intention is expressed through the use of the quantification *lifetime* to reinforce the impression of the hotel Raffles, thereby emphasising the high quality of its offerings.

5.4.6 Verbs

Our findings aligned with the results of Burgers et al. (2018), which showed that nouns, verbs, and prepositions were used less frequently than expected based on their general distribution. In our study, while we did observe some intriguing instances of hyperbolic verbs, their occurrences were relatively limited compared to other categories previously mentioned (78 cases in both corpora). Therefore, we have listed only four lexical units that occurred more than five times in our corpus, as shown in Table 5.10.

Table 5.10 The ten most frequent hyperbolic verbs in the corpus

Lexical unit	Frequency	Percentage (N=3654)
luxuriate	15	0.41%
maximize	7	0.19%
dazzle	6	0.16%
revitalize	6	0.16%

Upon a closer qualitative inspection of the collocation of hyperbolic verbs in context, it becomes apparent that these verbs are often associated with the customer *per se* or the customer's experience, with customers being recipients of the action and the hotel serving as the agent of the doer. This is instantiated by the following examples, in which the hotel takes on an agentive role in facilitating the sensory pleasure and enjoyment of tourists through high-end and impressive amenities and services:

- (17) Our *spacious* Deluxe Rooms exude sheer sophistication and elegance, designed to *effortlessly luxuriate* the senses (Fairmont Singapore).
- (18) Private Rooms by Amber, SOMM, MO Bar, PDT, Sushi Shikon & Kappo Rin offer dining to *dazzle* you (The landmark Mandarin Oriental, Hong Kong).

5.4.7 An Interim Discussion

To date, we have inspected different categories of hyperbole and their corresponding frequencies. Hyperbole can take on a diverse array of lexico-grammatical forms (Cano Mora, 2009). Previous research on promotional discourse has identified and discussed hyperbolic expressions belonging to specific lexical-grammatical categories, such as superlatives (Kaltenbacher, 2006), with a focus on their functions in discourse. Building upon this inquiry, the current study explored hyperbole across a wide range of lexico-grammatical categories in the context of promotional tourism discourse.

To address research question one regarding the types and presentation of hyperbole in promotional discourse, we used a bottom-up approach to identify all instances of hyperbolic expressions across various grammatical categories in a corpus of luxury hotel websites. The analysis produced a total of 3,654 expressions associated with hyperbole. Among these, adjectives and adverbs emerged as the most prevalent category for conveying hyperbole, comprising 2,185 occurrences. In our corpus, frequent hyperbolic adjectives and adverbs included terms such as “*perfect*,” “*exclusive*,” “*luxurious*,” and others. Quantifiers like “*all*,” “*everything*,” and “*any*” constituted the second most frequent category. Superlatives were identified as the third largest group, with 420 instances, including expressions like “*most*,” “*best*,” and “*finest*.” Nouns followed with 397 instances, including expressions like “*luxury*,” “*dream*,” and “*bliss*.” The category of verbs trailed with 78 cases.

Methodological, taking luxury hotel websites as a point of departure, the preceding analysis discussed the challenges associated with systematically identifying hyperboles in discourse. This included the establishment of criteria to differentiate between intended and propositional meanings of utterances during the identification process, as well as the linguistic reference materials employed. In order to solve these issues, we proposed three situations where the gap between intended meaning and propositional meaning was considered extreme, and clarify the language materials that can be used to consult propositional meaning (Burgers et al., 2016; Peña-Cervel & Ruiz de Mendoza, 2022). These refinements aimed to improve the precision and validity of the existing method for hyperbole identification.

The foregoing analysis has deepened our understanding of the distribution of hyperbole in real-world promotional discourse. Nonetheless, as discussed in Chapter 4, hotel websites usually contain descriptions of diverse facilities, each with its unique contextual features that may

influence language patterns it deployed. In the next section, we will further explore the motivation for employing hyperbole of different grammatical categories by investigating the relationship between the frequency of hyperbole and various contextual features through the application of a quantitative technique known as the log-linear regression model. Applying this data analytic approach can help us understand how these hyperbolic phenomena are interconnected with specific discourse contexts and the situations under which they occur, thereby revealing a more precise patterns of hyperbole usage in promotional discourse.

5.4.7 The Association Between Hyperbole Type, Facility and Region

The second query in this chapter pertains to the function of these hyperboles in discourse, which will be expounded upon in the following sections, even though certain aspects of this issue have already been broached in the analysis of the diverse hyperbole categories in the first part of the chapter.

The corpus analysed in this study consisted of luxury hotels located in Hong Kong and Singapore, which share several commonalities in terms of their culture, geography, and economy, but also have fundamental differences (refer to Section 3.4). Therefore, it is worthwhile to investigate the potential influence of the socio-cultural context on language usage. Also, hotel websites serve as platforms for showcasing an array of hotel facilities, often employing diverse marketing strategies accordingly, as discussed in Section 2.2.2. Building on the methodology employed in the previous chapter (Chapter 4) for metaphor analysis, which unveiled association between metaphor, region, and hotel facility, this chapter also examined the patterns of hyperbole usage as associations between key contextual variables, specifically the region and the referent of the hyperbolic expression. By doing so, this study can provide more concrete evidence regarding the contextual-situatedness of hyperbole, as well as insights into how luxury hotels strategically employ hyperbole to construct values of high quality, aesthetics, and prestige.

A log-linear analysis with backward selection and hyperbole category, region and website section as predictors was conducted to determine whether and how hyperbolic expressions varied across hotel websites in different regions, and in their portrayal of different facilities. The “region” variable in this study consisted of two levels: Singapore and Hong Kong, representing the two geographical areas where the hotels under analysis were located. The referents to which the expressions referred were categorised into five main groups based on the

section of the hotel website where the expression was found and the service it described. Thus, the “section” variable contained five levels: hotel description, guest room, dining facility, meeting facility, and recreation facility. Additionally, since hyperbolic idioms and modal auxiliaries were rare in our corpus, with only 16 and 1 instances, respectively, we decided not to include these two categories of hyperbole in our subsequent quantitative statistical analysis (Zeng et al., 2020). As a result, the variable “hyperbole category” had five levels, each of which has been discussed in detail in the previous section (Section 2.2.2). Table 5.11 is the three-way contingency table showing the cross-classified frequencies of 3637 hyperbole included in the analysis under the three variables. Expected frequencies, percentages, and subtotals are omitted to save space.

Table 5.11 Three-way contingency table

		Hotel overall description	Guest room description	Dining facility description	Meeting facility description	Recreation facility description
Hong Kong	Adj. and adv.	186	269	160	245	92
	Quantifier	53	32	41	107	13
	Superlatives	41	17	57	37	18
	Nouns	51	46	10	43	28
	Verbs	7	2	7	6	11
Singapore	Adj. and adv.	259	339	202	314	119
	All-quantifier	52	59	55	113	32
	Superlatives	59	44	72	53	22
	Nouns	54	67	30	41	27
	Verbs	6	12	6	5	16

Table 5.12 Partial associations of the three variables

Effect	df	Partial Associations		
		Partial Chi-Square	Sig.	Number of Iterations
CAT*SEC	16	191.659	<.001***	2
CAT*REG	4	2.100	.717	2
SEC*REG	4	3.588	.465	2
CAT	4	3218.743	.000***	2
SEC	4	319.569	<.001***	2
REG	1	63.269	<.001***	2

Note. *** significant at $p < 0.001$ level.

The results of backward elimination statistics suggested that the saturated (complete) model should be analysed ($\chi^2(16) = 31.057, p = .013$). As show in Figure 5.12, the results of partial associations revealed significant correlations between the hyperbole category and the website section (hotel facility). However, there were no significant associations between the hyperbole category and the region, nor between the website section and the region. These findings served as the foundation for our subsequent step of decomposition analysis. We then performed separate Chi-square analyses to examine the associations between the hyperbole category and the website section (hotel facility), as well as the associations between the hyperbole category and the website section (hotel facility) across levels of the region.

5.4.8 The Association Between Hyperbole Category and Section

We first examined the cross-tabulation of the hyperbole category and the hotel website section in Table 5.12. A moderate association between the hyperbole category and advertisements of hotel amenities was observed ($\chi^2(16, N = 3637) = 212.848, p < 0.001, \text{Cramer's } V = 0.121$), suggesting distinct hotel facilities have preferences for the use of various types of hyperbole to intensify the favourable attributes of their services and products (Akoglu, 2018).

Table 5.13 Cross-tabulation of hyperbole CATEGORY and SECTION

CAT * SEC Crosstabulation								
			Section (SEC)					
			Hotel description	Guest room	Dining facility	Meeting facility	Recreation facility	
Category (CAT)	quantifier	Count	105 (117.6)	91 (135.8)	96 (98.0)	220 (147.6)	45 (57.9)	
		Adj. Residual	-1.4	-4.8	-.2	7.5	-1.9	
	JJ&RB	Count	445 (461.4)	608(532.9)	362 (384.5)	559 (579.1)	211 (227.1)	
		Adj. Residual	-1.4	5.9	-2.0	-1.5	-1.8	
	JJS	Count	100 (88.7)	61 (102.4)	129 (73.9)	90 (111.3)	40 (43.7)	
		Adj. Residual	1.4	-5.0	7.5	-2.5	-.6	
	NN	Count	105 (83.8)	113 (96.8)	40 (69.9)	84 (105.2)	55 (41.3)	
		Adj. Residual	2.8	2.0	-4.2	-2.6	2.4	
	VB	Count	13 (16.5)	14 (19.0)	13 (13.7)	11 (20.7)	27 (8.1)	
		Adj. Residual	-1.0	-1.3	-.2	-2.5	7.1	
	Total		Count	768	887	640	964	378
	Statistics		$\chi^2(16, N = 3637) = 212.848, p < 0.001, \text{Cramer's } V = 0.121$					

To further explore the different preferences for hyperbole usage, we conducted a Chi-square analysis comparing the expected and observed frequencies in each cell. The expected frequency represents the value we would predict theoretically, whereas the observed frequency is the actual number of instances in our data. The extent of the difference between expected and observed frequencies signifies the contribution of a categorical variable to the overall relationship between the two variables, and this is quantified by adjusted residuals. A positive adjusted residual value exceeding +2.0 (highlighted in red) indicates that the category has occurred significantly more often than would be expected by chance ($p < 0.05$). Conversely, a negative adjusted residual value lower than -2.0 (highlighted in green) indicates that the category has occurred significantly less often than would be expected by chance ($p < 0.05$).

As shown in Table 5.13, in general, the descriptions of hotel overview, guest room, and recreation facilities were characterised by a higher frequency of hyperbolic nouns than expected. Hyperbolic adjectives and adverbs were also preferred when positively portraying hotel rooms and their amenities. Similarly, superlatives were more commonly employed when describing hotel dining facility, while meeting facility relied more on quantifiers. Interestingly, the introduction of recreation facility often involved a greater frequency of hyperbolic verbs than what was theoretically anticipated across the general distribution.

According to Kaltenbacher (2016), superlatives express claims in the most extreme way, serving to accentuate a specific quality by comparing it to others of its kind and hinting at a sense of superiority. By utilising superlatives in advertising language, hotel descriptions can create a favourable impression of their services by emphasising outstanding qualities that surpass those of their competitors. If such comparisons are made to the catering service of hotels, superlatives can be used to refer to the superior quality of ingredients (as shown in Example (19)), which is a critical aspect of food service, although these comparisons or claims may not always hold up under scrutiny. In Example (19), empirically testing the claim that a hotel's catering service offers "the finest" quality ingredients is a challenging task that requires a set of well-defined criteria for what constitutes the "finest," as well as a comprehensive measurement of all ingredients in the world. Given the difficulty of defining and measuring such criteria, it is unlikely that a conclusive empirical test can be conducted to verify the claim.

- (19) Dolce Vita features the *freshest* of produce and the *finest* seasonal ingredients, which are translated into delicious daily creations (Mandarin Oriental Singapore).
- (20) Our experienced staff is on hand to anticipate your *every* need and ensure that *everything* runs smoothly (Hotel Jen Hong Kong).
- (21) We place a careful emphasis on our guests feeling locally connected whilst encouraging relaxation, restoring one’s personal energies resulting in feeling *revived* (The Stamford Singapore).

Similarly, quantifiers related to scope and range, like *every* and *everything* , are more likely to appear in the section of a luxury hotel website describing its conference facilities. Such hyperboles convey a sense of non-exceptionality and are therefore primarily used to emphasise the breadth and depth of provision, which in the context of this study refer to the services provided for conferences and wedding ceremonies, the inclusiveness of the clients served, and the meticulous attention to detail, as shown in Example (20).

The use of hyperbolic verbs is more prominent in the presentation of the hotel recreation facility, which involves a range of physical activities and processes of body recovery, such as fitness equipment, massages, facials, body wraps, and aromatherapy. The hyperbolic verb *revived* deployed in example (21) describes the efficiency and high quality of the locally distinctive service in a boastful and exaggerated manner, suggesting that the service can transform the client’s state from near-death to resurrection, whereby emphasising the transformative power of the spa service and its ability to provide a rejuvenating experience for guests. It is worth noting that the hyperbolic reading in Example (21) is further reinforced through the strategic use of multiple rhetorical devices. The language describing the therapeutic effects of the hotel spa progresses from “relaxation” to “restore” and finally to “revive”, accompanied by alliteration as a rhetorical device.

5.4.9 The Association Between Hyperbole Category and Section Across Levels of Region

Since the eventual best model of log-linear analysis comprised three-way associations between hyperbole category, hotel websites section, and regions, we then added region as a layer variable for the Chi-square test. The relationship between the hyperbole category and hotel facility varies further based on the region, as demonstrated by the inclusion of the region as a

contingency variable in the three-way effects. Table 5.14 outlines a cross-tabulation of the hyperbole category and hotel website section across the levels of region, along with the relevant statistical reports.

Table 5.14 indicates that the relationship between the hyperbole category and hotel website sections exhibits a stronger association in Hong Kong (Cramer's V = 0.150) as compared to Singapore (Cramer's V = 0.108), implying a discernible divergent rhetorical style in the employment of promotional tourism language across the two regions.

Table 5.14 Cross-tabulation of hyperbole CATEGORY and SECTION at levels of REGION

REG		CAT * SEC * REG Crosstabulation						
		Hotel description	Guest room	Dining facility	Meeting facility	Recreation facility		
Hong Kong	quanti.	Count	53 (52.7)	32 (57.0)	41 (42.8)	107 (68.2)	13 (25.2)	
		Adj. Residual	.1	-4.1	-.3	6.0	-2.8	
	JJ&RB	Count	186 (203.8)	269 (220.7)	160 (165.8)	245 (264.1)	92 (97.7)	
		Adj. Residual	-2.2	5.9	-.8	-2.2	-1.0	
	JJS	Count	41 (36.4)	17 (39.4)	57 (29.6)	37 (47.2)	18 (17.4)	
		Adj. Residual	.9	-4.3	5.9	-1.8	.1	
	NN	Count	51 (38.1)	46 (41.3)	10 (31.0)	43 (49.4)	28 (18.3)	
		Adj. Residual	2.5	.9	-4.4	-1.1	2.6	
	VB	Count	7 (7.1)	2 (7.6)	7 (5.7)	6 (9.2)	11 (3.4)	
		Adj. Residual	.0	-2.4	.6	-1.2	4.4	
	Total	Count	275	366	338	438	162	
	Statistics	$\chi^2(16, N = 1579) = 141.744, p < 0.001, \text{Cramer's } V = 0.150$						
	Singapore	quanti.	Count	52 (65.0)	59 (78.7)	55 (55.2)	113 (79.5)	32 (32.6)
			Adj. Residual	-2.0	-2.8	.0	4.7	-.1
JJ&RB		Count	259 (257.6)	339 (312.1)	202 (218.7)	314 (315.1)	119 (129.4)	
		Adj. Residual	.2	2.8	-2.0	-.1	-1.5	
JJS		Count	59 (52.2)	44 (63.3)	72 (44.3)	53 (63.9)	22 (26.2)	
		Adj. Residual	1.1	-3.0	4.9	-1.7	-.9	
NN		Count	54 (45.8)	67 (55.4)	30 (38.8)	41 (56.0)	27 (23.0)	
		Adj. Residual	1.4	1.9	-1.7	-2.5	.9	
VB		Count	6 (9.4)	12 (11.4)	6 (8.0)	5 (11.5)	16 (4.7)	
		Adj. Residual	-1.3	.2	-.8	-2.2	5.5	
Total		Count	430	521	365	526	216	
Statistics		$\chi^2(16, N = 2058) = 95.636, p < 0.001, \text{Cramer's } V = 0.108$						

Further scrutiny of the distribution of hyperbole categories revealed that the variation in hyperbole categories appeared to be primarily attributable to the higher occurrence of hyperbolic nouns in the sections related to hotel description and recreation facility in the Hong Kong corpus. In these two sections, more hyperbolic expressions were observed than would be expected, which was not the case in the Singapore corpus.

Returning to our corpus, Example (12) shows the use of hyperbole nouns in the HK corpus. In Example (22), the hotel spa experience is elevated to a level of ultimate enjoyment that is even compared to a spiritual encounter with the divine, as the hyperbole noun expression *bliss* suggested.

(22) Enjoy two hours of *bliss* that includes a 90-minute full body massage and a 30-minute express facial for two (Mandarin Oriental Hong Kong).

(23) With *breath-taking* views over Victoria Harbour and Hong Kong's *magical* skyline, the 34 sqm large guestrooms provide a *dramatic* backdrop for guests looking for a memorable experience of quintessential Hong Kong (InterContinental Grand Stanford Hong Kong).

In addition, while both corpora exhibited a propensity to use hyperbolic adjectives/adverbs when presenting guest room facilities, this inclination was more conspicuous in the Hong Kong corpus, as evidenced by cells with greater residual values compared to those in the Singapore corpus (+5.9 vs. +2.8) (Agresti, 2007). Example (23) offers an illustration of the continuous use of multiple hyperbolic adjectives in the positive portrayal of city/hotel views in the Hong Kong corpus, which conveys the grandeur of the view from the hotel, thereby emphasising the hotel's ideal location and fostering its image of superiority.

In summary, through the use of a log-linear model, this chapter has examined how different contextual factors influence the usage of hyperbolic expressions in promotional tourism discourse. The quantitative analysis results suggest that advertisers employ various types of hyperbole to intensify the meaning of their sentences in distinct ways when describing and promoting their products and services. Particularly, hyperbolic adjectives/adverbs are closely associated with the hotel guest room section, while superlatives are frequently used to emphasise the exceptional quality of hotel catering services. Quantifiers are employed to

showcase the extensive range of hotel conference services, and hyperbolic nouns and verbs contribute to the construction of effectiveness and comfort of hotel recreational facilities.

Meanwhile, the websites of luxury hotels in Singapore and Hong Kong exhibit certain stylistic differences. The Hong Kong corpus, in particular, demonstrates a preference for using hyperbolic nouns and adjectives to describe their services when compared to the Singapore corpus.

5.5 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the utilisation of hyperbole in luxury hotel websites in Hong Kong and Singapore, with a particular focus on its patterns in discourse and its contribution to the creation of luxury values, including high-quality, aesthetics, and prestige. Following Edward (2000) and Crawford Camiciottoli (2012), the first half of the chapter presented an overview of the frequency and distribution of seven categories of hyperbolic expressions, as well as the most common ways in which each category is realised. Consistent with Cano Mora's (2011) observation, we found that adjectives and adverbs are the most recurrent strategies in the creation of hyperbole, followed by the category of quantifier. Superlative degree and nominal hyperbole also feature in our data, with occurrences of 420 and 397, respectively. Although to a less extent, hyperbole also makes use of word classes such as verbs and modal auxiliary. In addition, although the idiomatic structure has always been a focus of hyperbole research (e.g., Hsiao & Su, 2010), it appeared only sporadically in our corpus.

I subsequently proceed to explore the association between hyperbole categories and hotel facilities, where the task was to explore how hyperbolic language functions in portraying various luxury hotel amenities, in line with Hudders et al.'s (2013) framework on luxury meanings. In this part, I took a quantitative-oriented approach, supplemented by a qualitative interpretation of language examples to articulate a more holistic picture of hyperbole usage patterns in promotional tourism discourse. We have seen how different types of hyperbole could contribute to luxury values of high-quality, aesthetics, and prestige through various means, such as positive evaluation, implicit comparison, all-inclusive descriptions, and so on, showing that hospitality practitioners market their services by emphasising different features

of their products. Finally, the observed cross-regional variation in the association between hyperbole categories and hotel facilities implied that Hong Kong and Singapore have distinct preferences in employing intensified language to promote various amenities. This finding indicated stylistic differences and potential cultural differences in the use of figurative devices in promotional tourism discourse (Edelman, 1989).

6. Chapter 6 Primary but Complex: A Study of Metaphoric Hyperboles on Luxury Hotel Websites

6.1 Chapter Introduction

Up to this point, I have been analysing figurative devices deployed to brand and promote hotels to attract potential customers on their official websites, paying particular attention to metaphor and hyperbole. Chapter 3 dealt with the characteristics of metaphorical items in luxury hotel websites, and Chapter 4 highlighted the use of hyperbolic expressions.

These findings covered considerable ground in documenting figurative devices as a feature of promotional discourse. However, they did not pay attention to the co-occurrence of different figurative devices. As previously observed in Chapter 4, simple hyperbole such as “*all*,” “*every*,” and “*any*” is the major type of hyperbolic expression in my corpus, accounting for about 83.89 per cent of the total occurrences (4,771 items). The rest of the data were compound in nature, with most of them involving interactions with metaphors, such as “*dazzle*” and “*paradise*.”

Although some scholars have pointed out the prevalence of metaphorical hyperbole in texts and the need for further empirical investigation of metaphorical hyperbole in real-world discourse (e.g., Cano Mora, 2013; Kreuz et al., 1996), research on metaphorical hyperbole is still in its infancy. In the fields of rhetorical studies and communication, most of the attention has been devoted solely to metaphor. One of the most direct pieces of evidence lies in the disproportional number of metaphor research that systematically investigated metaphors through the lenses of cognition, discourse analysis, behavioural science, and other related fields. However, the number of studies specifically related to hyperbole is relatively small. Moreover, Burger et al. (2018) examined the grammatical categories of metaphor and hyperbole and discovered that 0.6 percent of metaphors in Dutch news were also hyperbolic, while 12.0 percent of hyperboles in Dutch news were also metaphors, revealing the close relationship between metaphor and hyperbole.

In this chapter, I will conduct an exploratory study on metaphorical hyperboles in luxury hotel websites and further explore the interaction between metaphor and hyperbole, focusing particularly on two dimensions: what kind of cognitive mechanism underlies metaphorical hyperboles, and what are the reasons or motivations for using metaphorical hyperboles in

luxury hotel advertising? I shall start by reviewing the two recent studies that converge on account of the cognition aspects involved in understanding the metaphorical and hyperbolic forces of an expression. Specifically, drawing on conceptual blending theory, Brdar-Szabó and Brdar (2005) suggested that the concept of scale, which forms the foundation of hyperbole, constitutes a part of the emergent structure in the blended space resulting from the conceptual mappings of multiple source domains. Moreover, Vereza (2016) argued that the cognitive structure of metaphorical hyperbole could be addressed by Prototype Theory (Mervis & Rosch, 1981; Rosch, 1978, 1983), where a prototype represents the utmost degree of intensity of the quality to be expressed; understanding the meaning of a metaphorical hyperbole involves the conceptual mappings from the source domain (a prototype candidate) to the target domain.

Both of these studies are theoretically intriguing because they have offered valuable insights into the cognitive claims of metaphorical hyperboles that the degree scale arises from the integration of several source domains. I would argue, however, that there are some metaphorical hyperboles whose sense of scale is inherently entailed in their semantic meanings and therefore do not require additional source domains, or prototypes, to understand their hyperbolic reading. An example of this type of scale is <highest, average, lowest>, where hyperbolic forms are anchored in their linguistic structures (Claridge, 2011).

In contrast, for another category of metaphorical hyperboles, a pragmatic scale may be formed by the dint of extralinguistic information to help the recipient comprehend the linguistic item. For example, the scale <De Pijp, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, Europe> is not merely grounded on “linguistic knowledge” (Leech, 1981) but also on the language user’s encyclopedic knowledge of administrative divisions. The conceptual mappings of such hyperbolic items become relatively complex due to the fusion of concepts involving multiple domains. Correspondingly, their expressions are usually more novel compared to those of the first type of metaphorical hyperboles.

Having introduced and elaborated these two metaphorical hyperbole models, I will proceed in the second half of the chapter to investigate the frequency and patterns of metaphorical hyperbole in luxury hotel websites, according to their source domains, in order to provide empirical evidence to substantiate the proposed models of metaphorical hyperboles. Using MIPVU and HIP, a total of 894 instances of hyperbolic expressions co-occurring with metaphors were identified, constituting 15.27 per cent of all hyperbolic instances. This finding

is generally close to Cano Mora's (2013) observations, which found a higher frequency of hyperbole-metaphor combinations compared to other types of combinations. In her analysis of the BNC spoken corpus, approximately 17.40 per cent of hyperbole was metaphorical, while the combination of hyperbole and other rhetorical devices, such as irony or litotes, was relatively less common and took up a negligible proportion (Cano Mora, 2013, p. 59).

After touching up the occurrence of different types of metaphorical hyperbole, I turn to the main functions of these linguistic items, drawing from Hudders's (2013) framework on luxury values, and provide examples elaborating how ideas of excellent quality, aesthetics, and prestige are constructed through the utilise of metaphorical intensified language.

This chapter concurrently has both linguistic and practical contributions. The linguistic contribution lies in a more holistic summary of the two cognitive models of metaphorical hyperboles. Unlike the limited existing studies on metaphorical hyperbole, which primarily emphasise that metaphorical hyperbole is the outcome of conceptual blending of the notion SCALE and a prototype (i.e., meaning is the result of conceptual mappings of multiple source domains), this study, supported by empirical evidence from the data, reveals an additional aspect. It is observed that metaphorical hyperbole can also be achieved through one basic source domain linked to our embodied and perceptual experiences. Consequently, the inclusion of a prototype is no longer an essential prerequisite for constructing or comprehending metaphorical hyperbole. I will also provide the relative frequency and patterns regarding the two types of hyperbole metaphors in the setting of luxury hotel advertising. The implication of linguistic inspection carries over to the practical contribution, as it shows how metaphorical hyperbole can take an active role in generating perceptions of high quality, aesthetics, and superiority, providing valuable references for luxury industry professionals when formulating their advertising messages.

6.2 Cognitive Account of Metaphorical Hyperboles: Previous Studies

6.2.1 Hyperboles and The Concept of SCALE

In the relatively rare study of hyperbole, several researchers have attempted to delve into the cognitive mechanisms underlying the hyperbolic phenomenon. While researchers have offered

different theoretical models from different lenses, it is now clear that most, if not all, theories assumed that all hyperbolic expressions are based on the notion of SCALE, although these scales may be presented in divergent forms (Claridge, 2011). In particular, Brdar-Szabó and Brdar (2005) argued that the Scalar Model of Polarity (Israel, 1996, 1998, 2001), which was originally designed for polarity sensitive items, could be applied to accommodate and classify different hyperbolic expressions according to their semantic valences and functions, as shown in Figure 6.1.

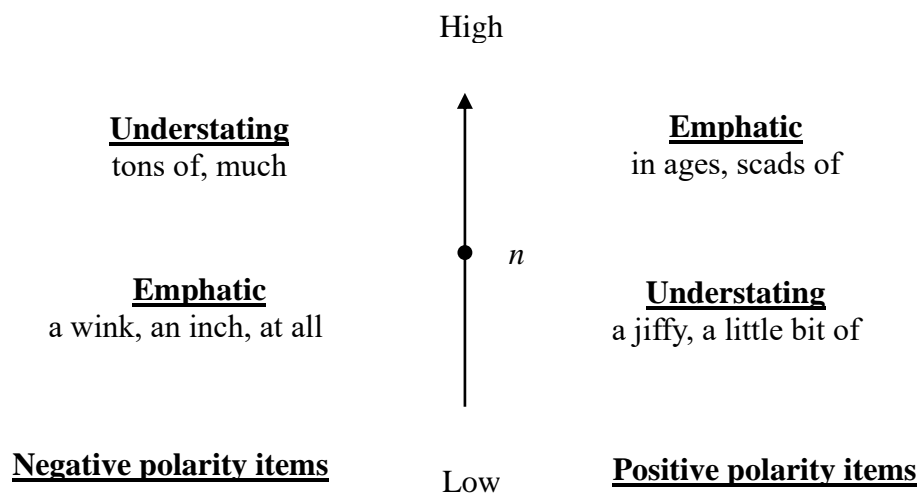


Figure 6.1 The Scalar Model of Polarity (Israel, 1996)

Polarity items refer to a class of scalar operators whose lexical meaning is constructed in the context of a sequence of alternative sets and understood in the framework of information provided by the broader scalar model (Israel, 1996). In Israel’s design, the polarity sensitive items are arranged in different quadrants of the model according to the semantic positivity of the utterance and whether the item plays an emphatic or attenuated role.

Using terminology from traditional hyperbole studies to explain these four types of polarity terms, items from understating PPIs and emphatic NPIs may be seen as specific forms of *auxesis* that intentionally amplify the real state of affairs, whereas emphatic PPIs and understating NPIs may be seen as *meiosis* that downscales gradability of the situation. Whether an expression can be regarded as an *auxesis* or *meiosis* depends not only on the value of its meaning, which is either above or below the normal point on the scale, but also on the semantic valence of the utterance.

Most hyperbolic expressions seem to be relatively compatible with the scalar model. It is important to bear in mind, however, that the primary application of the scalar model is to ordered sets of lexical items, not just hyperbole, which occupies only a tiny area of the model's Y-axis far from the origin. Polarity items are not exactly equivalent to hyperbolic expressions. For instance, the expression "*a little bit*" in the sentence "I have made a little bit of a contribution" can be seen as an understating PPI, positioned closer to the origin in Figure 6.1. While this item alters the sentence's intensity, it is not classified as a hyperbole. An expression is considered hyperbolic only when there is a sharp linguistic contrast between the values of the literal meaning and the proposition meaning of the utterance. Otherwise, the exaggeration force will be too weak to be registered (Claridge, 2011). In this respect, the model seems to include a much more comprehensive range of words that, while somewhat amplifying or decreasing entrenched meanings, are still too weak to count as hyperbole (i.e., *a little bit*).

Also, some special cases with hyperbolic effects are missing from the scalar model if we use it to classify hyperboles. Hyperbole associated with the extremes of scale is usually the most obvious and frequent, and they are more likely to be included in the model without controversy. However, there is a group of expressions whose SCALE features are not immediately evident from their language structure alone, yet they still serve to amplify or weaken the intended meaning of the utterance because hyperboles can be creatively realized through various linguistic forms. This type of expression requires recipients to draw on contextual cues to understand their meanings, so it is difficult for us to locate the corresponding position on a scale based solely on its semantic meaning. Israel has recognised this point in his study (2001) by claiming that many nouns and adjectives are usually considered poor candidates, compared with numbers, for the scalar model of polarity because "their meanings do not saliently contrast with an ordered set of alternatives" (Israel, 2001, p. 310). To illustrate, the Chinese neologism 天花板(該產品是行業的天花板, Translate: The product is the *ceiling* of the industry), which means the highest standard of the industry, is plausibly essentially non-gradable, non-scalar: no matter the size of the product is big or small, the price of the product is high or low, it cannot be reflected in the degrees of the *ceiling*. And so with the attributive adjective *magical* (It is a *magical* place to get married). The expression is seemingly non-gradable because whether or

not the place has magic or that magic can cause an object to levitate or remove a person's memory, it cannot make the place more, or less *magical* (Taylor, 1995).²⁶

Based on the two issues discussed above with regard to the targets of the scalar model, it can be seen that although the model is a clever hypothetical taxonomy that provides some insight into understanding the different types of hyperbolic expressions (e.g., *auxesis* or *meiosis*), it still does not explicitly explain the cognitive structure of hyperbolic language, especially metaphorical hyperbole, that is, how is the scale of meaning constructed in the recipient's understanding of language. Moreover, the examples of metaphorical hyperbole provided (i.e., *ceiling* and *magical*) may present challenges in determining their hyperbolic nature, particularly in the absence of contextual information. This suggests a more complex and nuanced cognitive mechanism underlying the degree scale of these items, which warrants further examination due to their apparently non-gradable nature.

Therefore, we conclude that the scalar model may be unable to suffice as a framework to account for the working mechanism of hyperboles. Adjustments to this model are necessary to develop a theoretically complete framework, or alternatively, we should explore other models that can more accurately explain the cognitive structure of hyperbolic expressions.

6.2.2 Metaphorical Hyperboles and Blending Theory (BT)

In fact, taking the notion of SCALE as the premise of metaphorical hyperbole, some linguists have demonstrated attempts to explain the cognitive mechanism of metaphorical hyperbole with different theories from the perspective of cognitive linguistics.

²⁶ Adjectives can be categorised into two subcategories based on two criteria: (1) whether the adjective can have both a “comparative” and a “superlative” form, and (2) whether the adjective can be intensified by an adverb (e.g., *very*). For instance, “good” falls under the gradable adjective category as it can take a comparative form (*better*) and a superlative form (*best*), and it can also be modified by an adverb (e.g., *very good*) (Jackson, 2002). The adjective “magical” itself is considered non-gradable because it does not inherently possess the property of degree, unless it is modified by an adverb (e.g., *very magical*).

For instance, Brdar-Szabó and Brdar (2005) have argued that, for metaphorical hyperboles, gradability is the outcome of a synergistic fusion, or an integrated network, of multiple mental spaces. As a pivotal component of conceptual blending theory (BT), mental space is regarded as a small knowledge packet involved in the construction of meaning (Fauconnier & Turner, 1996, 1998, 2002), which is similar to the domain in conceptual metaphor theory to some extent. Although BT is close akin to CMT in terms of configuration in general, there are some fundamental differences between the two theories, particularly their views on the construal of conceptual relationships, the paths that modulate cognitive projections, divergent emphasis on the metaphoric conceptualisation, and so on (Grady et al., 1999).

In the theoretical framework of BT, various linguistic and conceptual phenomena are seen as the product of the synergy of temporary representation structures that relate to general knowledge of particular domains known as mental spaces. CMT generally involves conceptual mapping between two domains, i.e., from source domain to target domain, whereas BT makes use of an integrated network which minimally requires four spaces. These spaces include two “input spaces”, which can be understood as the source domain and target domain in the terminology of CMT, a “generic space”, in which the materials from what the two input mental spaces have in common are stored, and a “blended space” where abstractions from the two input spaces are selectively projected and emergent understanding arises (Tay, 2010).

Unlike CMT, which focuses on well-established, stable cross-domain mappings, BT’s emphasis lies in its ability to blend different mental spaces, and from which yields new, novel inferences. In the case of metaphorical hyperbole *ceiling* (in the case of “The product is the *ceiling* of the industry”), the emergent property (i.e., The product is up to the highest standards in the industry) represented in the “blended space” is the result of the correspondence between the two input spaces (i.e., input space one: GOOD, QUALITY; input space two: UP, BUILDING) (see Figure 6.2). The gradability of the expression *ceiling*, according to Brdar-Szabó and Brdar’s (2005) conjecture, is either part of the emergent structure in the blended space, which comes from the juxtaposition of the elements in the two input spaces, or part of the input space two that already contains some information about extremity (i.e., the ceiling is usually the highest structure inside a building). In this way, for metaphorical hyperboles, non-gradable items are converted to gradable ones in a sense, giving rise to the notion of SCALE thereby.

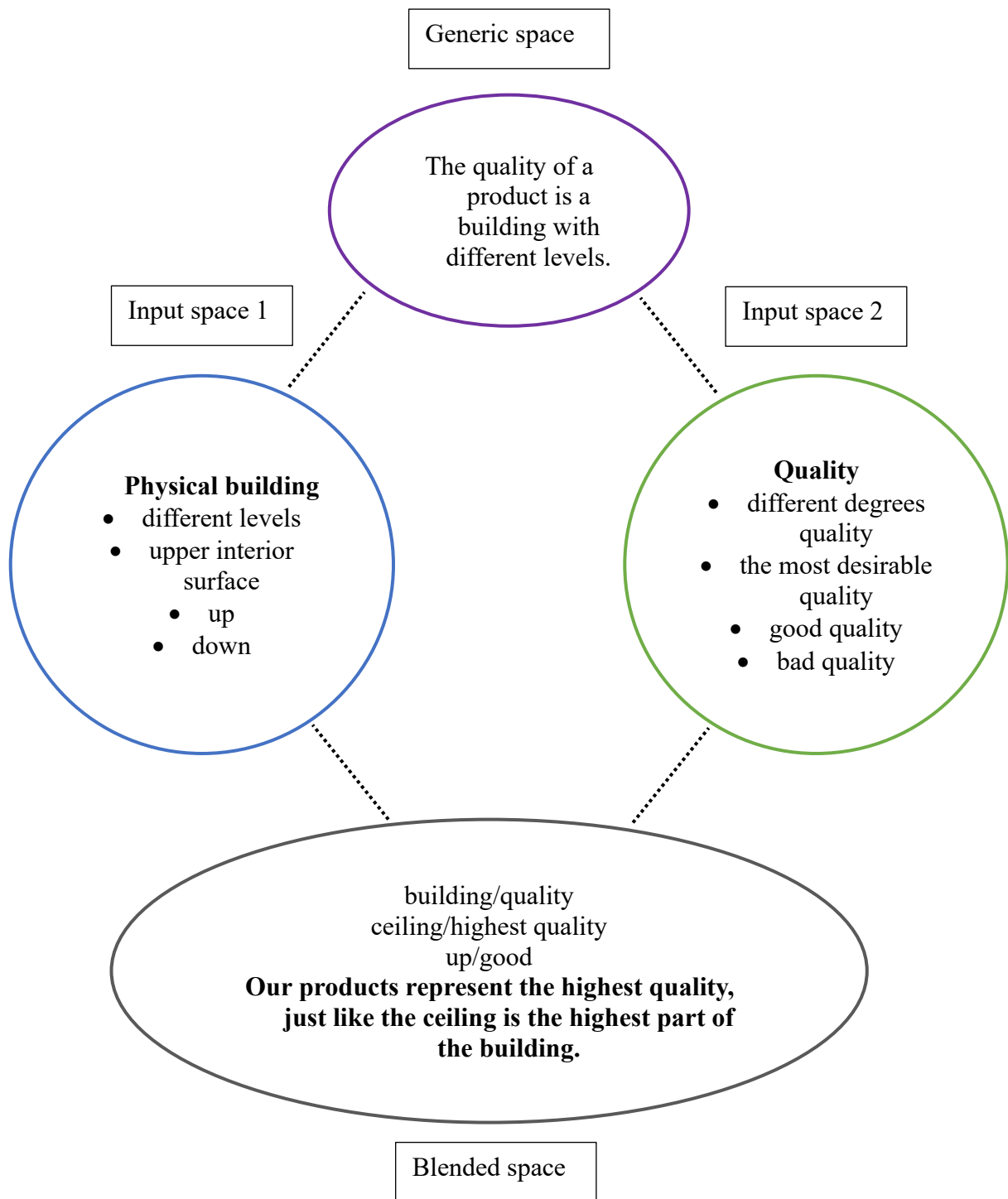


Figure 6.2 Blend “quality” and “building”

Nevertheless, although BT has a valuable impact on cognitive linguistics and is beneficial in explaining various complex or creative combinations of concepts (Kövecses, 2010), further empirical evidence is necessary to substantiate the proposed representation of conceptual

networks. Some scholars have noted that the conceptual blending process is uneconomical and can be elucidated in a less grandiose manner of “correlation and contrast” among input spaces. For instance, the intended meaning of the expression “The product is the *ceiling* of the industry” can be understood by recognising the similarity between the physical structure of a building and the abstract concept of quality (Mendoza & Cervel, 2005). Experimentally confirming the existence of “generic space” and “blended space” is in fact difficult due to the metaphorical nature inherent in these conceptual constructs (Ritchie, 2004). Therefore, some scholars regarded BT as possessing a descriptive quality that allowed for a wide range of interpretations, rather than meeting the predictive precision typical of a rigorous scientific cognitive model (c.f. Gibbs, 2000b, 2001; Broccias, 2004). In Brdar-Szabó and Brdar’s (2005) attempt to explain the cognitive mechanism of metaphorical exaggeration with BT, the authors also encountered challenges in definitively deciding whether the degree scale of the expression resided within the blended space or the input space. This ambiguity, to some degree, diminished the reliability of the assumption. Responding to these concerns, BT researchers justified the theory by introducing a set of “governing” or “optimality principles” that specified and imposed constraints on the blending process and the likely amount of emergent structure derived from the process (Fauconnier, 2005). They have also offered experimental evidence to support blending (Coulson & Van Petten, 2002; Teuscher et al., 2008; Yang et al., 2013).

Due to the limited depth of empirical evidence for BT, and its manifold four-space design does not essentially help to explain the principle of SCALE in more depth, the present thesis did not employ the framework of BT to analyse the cognitive mechanism of metaphorical hyperboles. However, we believe that BT’s view on the integration of multiple mental spaces still aids in understanding the expensive structure of hyperbolic expressions, especially in its assistance in interpreting the “non-gradable” hyperboles.

6.2.3 Metaphorical Hyperboles and Prototype Theory (PT)

Rosch (1978, 1983) developed Prototype Theory (PT), which played a critical role in the establishment of a coordinated theory in cognitive science and psychology (Amphaeris et al., 2022). The idea of a prototype, or “best example”, appears to be based on the frequency and family resemblance, which refers to the members of a category who best exhibit the characteristics of that category. The central member of the given category that can best represent the category is known as a **prototype**. In contrast, other members of the category, or

what we call peripheral items, tend to show different degrees of similarity with the prototype. For example, *apple* can be considered a possible prototype of common fruits, and *tomato* is a possible peripheral item; *ceiling*, an example of metaphorical hyperbole we mentioned in the previous section, is a possible prototype of an entity located high up.

In her recent study, Vereza (2016) suggested that hyperbole appears to be cognitively achievable by utilising a prototypical item in a category that has the same attribute as the evaluation the utterance intends to convey. The expression *river* (cry me a river), for example, combines a notion of SCALE, which conveys an exaggerated intensity of emotion on the spectrum of evaluation, and a prototype *river*, which represents a “large quantity of flowing water.” In this context, the literal meaning of the expression *river* is replaced by its metaphorical meaning, indicating “to weep profusely or excessively,” because people don’t cry water but tears; at the same time, the expression is hyperbolic because the use of rivers highlights a large number of flowing tears (liquid). In comparison to other members of the WATER family such as *ocean*, *lake*, or *stream*, the term *river* is a more appropriate choice for this context due to its effectiveness in highlighting similarities with tears, as both are abundant and fluid.

It is worth noting, nevertheless, different from the traditional sense of “category” in PT which usually indicates a group of similar entities (c.f. Rosch, 1978), the “category” in Vereza (2016) is defined as specific attributes or characteristics that are expected to be exaggerated/diminished by the speaker, consisting of all the graded values (members) of attributes, just like the expression *devastated* is a member of the category SAD.

In addition, since constructing a scale revolving around the prototype requires knowledge of real-world facts, the influence of socio-cultural context should not be neglected when producing or interpreting hyperbole with prototypical cases (Wierzbicka, 1992). As Lakoff (1987) remarked, specific cognitive mechanisms may be culturally governed because the properties of human conceptual categories hinge in part upon the physical environment of the person making the classification and are also the results of imaginative processes. Taking the example of *ceiling*, in English, it usually refers to a barrier for marginalised people, while in Chinese, it refers to a superior quality that other products cannot overcome. The divergence in the meaning of the word *ceiling* in the two socio-cultural landscapes suggests that scholars may

risk failing to find appropriate paths of conceptual mappings without fully investigating semantics in the correct context.

In conclusion, according to the existing theories of metaphorical hyperbole, the basis of metaphorical hyperbole rests on the idea of graded degree, which emerges from the blending of different concepts (or the combination of a SCALE concept and a prototype, as proposed by Vereza (2016)). The corresponding extralinguistic knowledge should be judiciously applied to guide the process of understanding metaphorical hyperbole, considering the potential interplay between cognition, discourse context, and cultural context, as noted in the field of language ontology.

6.3 Two Different Types of Hyperbolic Metaphors: A New Insight

The two theories (BT and PT) mentioned above help to explain the cognitive structure of metaphorical hyperbole, especially when discussing the formation of the SCALE concept for non-gradable linguistic items, which usually have an intricate conceptual structure consisting of more than two domains, as well as commonplace knowledge such as prototypes (Rosch, 1978) or cultural models (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). However, as Grady et al. (2005) and Lakoff and Johnson (1999) proposed with regard to the concept of primary metaphor, which results from sensory-motor experiences in the physical world, the graded scale of metaphorical hyperbole can also be constructed through more basic domains that “shared by all humans independently of geographical or cultural origins” (Lachaud, 2013, p. 15). For instance, the metaphor behind the hyperbolic expression “We meet the *highest* hygiene standards” can be seen as a primary metaphor because upwards movement is universal to human beings of most, if not all, cultures.

Therefore, in this section, we will introduce two distinct categories of metaphorical hyperbole, both of which are grounded on the concept of SCALE but whose cognitive structures are configured differently due to the distinct representational systems of metaphors that produce the SCALE of the lexical meaning. Specifically, the first type of metaphorical hyperbole is relatively basic and mainly relies on our procedural/sensorimotor experience to build the sense of graded degree, while the second type of metaphorical hyperbole has a more complex

cognitive structure, requiring the recruitment of additional encyclopedic knowledge in addition to bodily experience in the process of meaning comprehension. The first research question that this study aims to address is:

1. What is (are) the cognitive working mechanisms /structures involved in metaphorical hyperboles?

Subsequently in this chapter, I will expound upon the cognitive structures of two types of metaphorical hyperboles: namely **primary metaphorical hyperboles** and **complex metaphorical hyperboles**, respectively. This elaboration will be accompanied by instances from real-world linguistic materials to illustrate how different cross-domain mappings (as well as extralinguistic knowledge) can be harnessed to form the notion of SCALE and intensify the intended meaning of the utterance.

6.3.1 Type One: The Complex Metaphorical Hyperbole

In the travel industry, advertisers often compare the destination or hotel to a religiously ideal place to emphasise the quality of service and the role of tourism as a break from daily hassles. In advertising messages, this can be reflected through the expressions like “heaven” or “paradise”.

- (1) This is *heaven* for guests to enjoy a complex and extraordinary experience under relaxing vibes (Royal Plaza Hotel, Hong Kong).

The proper noun *heaven* in example (1) refers to, in biblical context, the abode of the righteous dead. Like other nouns denoting locations, such as *gas station*, *playground* or *paradise*, it does not seem easy at first glance to form a semantic scale based solely on its linguistic structure and to occupy a specific value within that scale. However, a pragmatic scale containing an ordered set of phases can be activated if we use socio-cultural beliefs from the real world, in this context, some knowledge of metaphysical models, so that the expression could be converted from not gradable to gradable (Claridge, 2011). To illustrate, in eschatological mythology, the abodes of the afterlife are described as a vertical structure, with *heaven* in interstellar space, where the righteous resident, and *hell* located underground, where wicked and damned souls are punished (Grof, 2013) (see Figure 6.3).

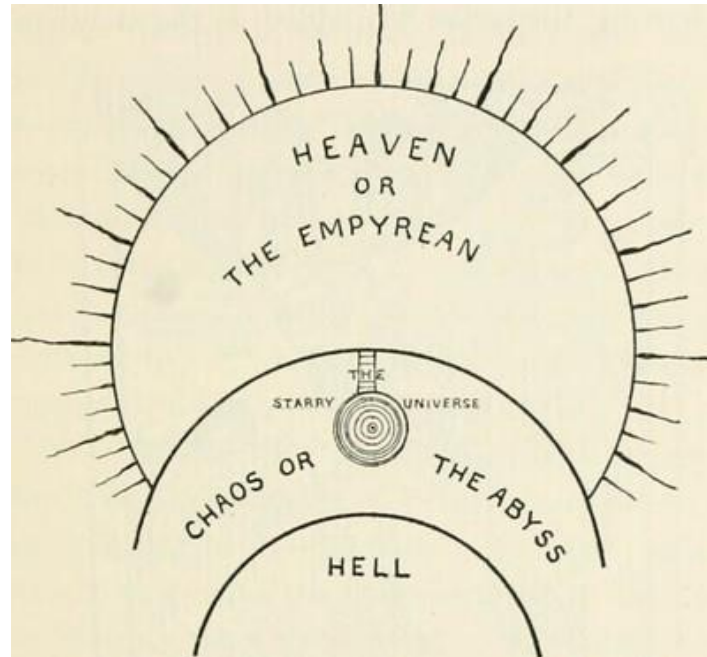


Figure 6.3 Structure of Heaven and Hell (Literary Analysis of Dante’s Inferno, n.d.)²⁷

This vertical contrast in religious beliefs corresponds to more concrete metaphorical pairs in relation to our perceptual experience: GOOD IS UP, and BAD IS DOWN (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2013), which further evolves into an understanding that higher places are prosperous and lower places are impoverished in the spectrum of our language community. To borrow the term “complex metaphor”, which refers to the expression that is “built out of primary metaphors plus forms of commonplace knowledge: cultural models, folk theories, or simply knowledge or beliefs that are widely accepted in a culture” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, p. 60), the first type of metaphorical hyperbole is called “**complex metaphorical hyperbole**” accordingly.

The cognitive structure of complex metaphorical hyperbole can be more intuitively illustrated in Figure 6.4. As depicted in Figure 6.4, when we incorporate cultural understanding (i.e., knowledge of religion) into the embodied experience (i.e., our daily experience of SPACE), a graded scale in a spatial sense (i.e., <hell, earth, heaven>) is manifested for the English expression of *heaven*, at least from the angle of pragmatics.

²⁷ <https://study.com/academy/lesson/symbolism-of-the-three-beasts-in-dantes-inferno.html>

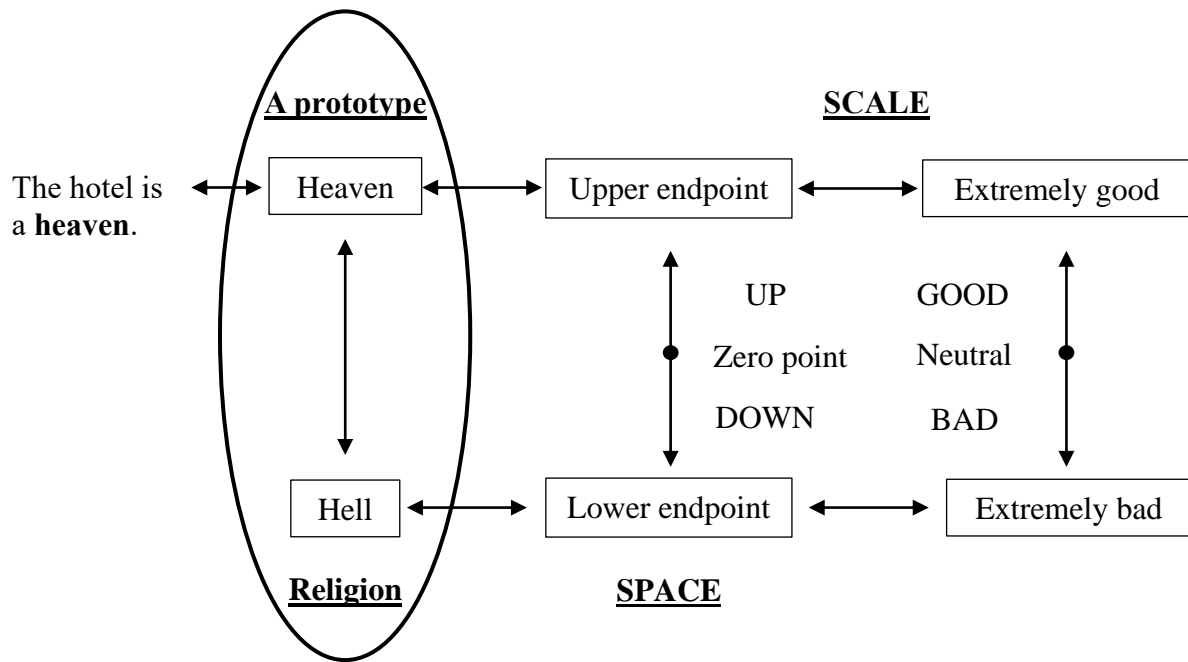


Figure 6.4 The cognitive mechanism underlying the complex metaphorical hyperbole *heaven*

From a sociocultural perspective, *heaven* is widely regarded in many religions (e.g., Judaism, Christianity, and Buddhism) as a place associated with the arrival of virtuous souls, with ultimate beauty and tranquillity, and has long had positive associations. Therefore, hotel advertisers have adopted it as a prototype that can best represent the place of perfection and bliss, placing a similar evaluation on the hotel and its amenities with the intention of exaggeration.

6.3.2 Type Two: The Primary Metaphorical Hyperbole

Unlike complex metaphorical hyperboles, which integrate extralinguistic realities from the physical world to form a graded scale, there exists another category of hyperbolic expressions that, while also demonstrating metaphorical interpretation, do not require additional encyclopedia knowledge and cultural models during the process of meaning comprehension, because the expressions *per se* contain scalar elements within their linguistic structure.

- (2) Maintaining the *highest* hygiene standards to safeguard the health and wellbeing...
(Raffles Singapore)

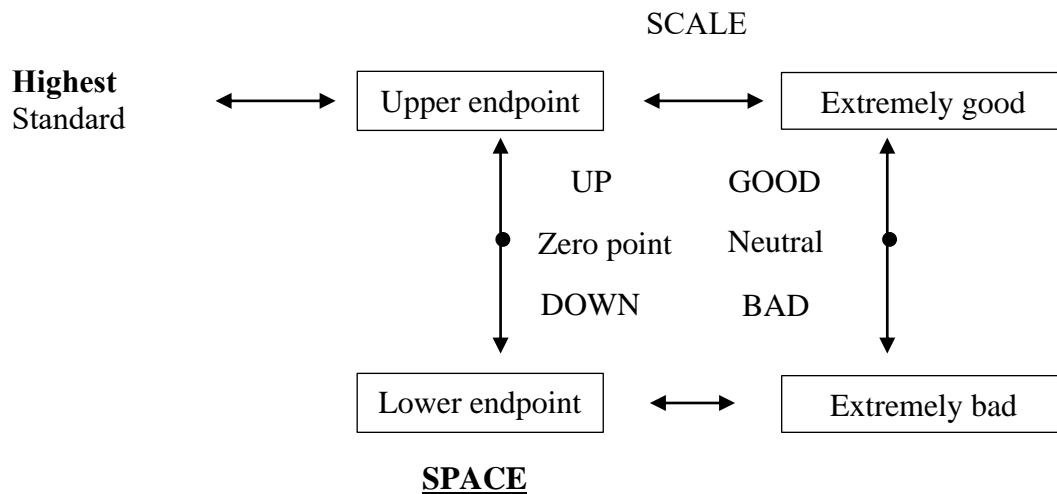


Figure 6.5 The cognitive mechanism underlying the primary metaphorical hyperbole *highest*

For example, as a superlative, the expression *highest* in example (2) embraces a sense of extremity, located at the extreme positive end of the scale <lowest, low, average, high, highest>. At the same time, it implies a conventional conceptual metaphor related to our bodily perception GOOD IS UP. In this case, the standard of action or product is conceptualised as height, which, provided that the value of height is positive, represents good quality.

It should be pointed out that some scholars have also emphasised the prominent role of cultural structure and subjective experience in shaping the experiential grounding of conceptual metaphors (e.g., Gibbs, 1999; Kövecses, 1995), believed that embodiment includes both sensorimotor and socio-cultural aspects (Johnson 1987, 1997). Ibarretxe-Antuñano (2002, 2013), for instance, illustrated this by conducting a cross-cultural study of the conceptual metaphor MIND-AS-BODY in English, Basque and Spanish. The results showed that some metaphorical mappings that conceptualise inner sensation into physical perception exist in only one of the three languages (e.g., KNOWING IS TASTING is exclusive to Spanish), which suggested a filter function of culture in selected aspects of the sensorimotor experience and paths of metaphorical mappings (Yu, 2009). Therefore, the cultural background is also needed to account for the structure of the primary metaphorical hyperbole, which is mainly bodily based. The difference between the primary metaphorical hyperbole and complex metaphorical hyperbole, nevertheless, is that in the primary metaphorical hyperbole “*highest* hygiene

standards,” the degree scale is performed according to its own semantic meaning rather than a more specific culturally relevant concept (e.g., the Christian view of the Resurrection) as *highest* is a universal phenomenon (rather than culturally restricted) of human experience, while in the case of complex metaphorical hyperbole, the recipient may need to seek help from additional encyclopedia knowledge to pragmatically form a scale for hyperbolic items which may not inherently scalable.

The envisaged cognitive structure for the **primary metaphorical hyperbole** *highest* is visualised in Figure 6.5. While both figures (Figure 6.4 and Figure 6.5) imply conventional metaphors of GOOD IS UP and BAD IS DOWN, in contrast to Figure 6.4, which illustrates the underlying mechanism of complex metaphorical hyperbole, Figure 6.5 does not draw on socio-cultural knowledge of religion for a precise understanding of the intended meaning of the metaphorical item. In this expression, the maximal value contained in the expression (i.e., *highest*) refers to the exceedingly strict requirements and excellent performance of the hotel in light of its hygiene measures.

6.3.3 An Interim Discussion

We have put forth two cognitive models designed to categorise different types of metaphorical hyperbole, both of which can establish a scale through the extension of word meanings. The first model (the primary metaphorical hyperbole model) is constructed using the inherent semantic meaning of the words themselves, while the second model (the complex metaphorical hyperbole model) requires the incorporation of supplementary encyclopedic knowledge.

However, so far, these two models are mainly deduced from the author’s observation and speculation, rather than being inferred from large amounts of data. The empirical inadequacy could be rectified by systematically investigating the occurrence and manifestation of metaphorical hyperbole in a more extensive collection of authentic language materials (McEnery et al., 2006). By collecting data from real-world contexts, we can further describe patterns and trends in specific language use, so as to capture the dynamic and complex nature of language, while also examining the validity of existing linguistic models. Given that the two types of metaphorical hyperboles are characterised by the notion of SCALE generated through cross-domain mappings, it becomes intriguing and valuable to explore how these two types of metaphorical hyperboles are distributed in real-world discourse. Investigating which particular cross-domain mappings can facilitate the notion of SCALE adds further significance to the study.

In addition, since our corpus analysis focuses on a specific communication context, particularly luxury hotel websites, this chapter will also discuss the potential role of figurative language in promotional tourism discourse, which stands as one of the practical implications of this research.

Based on the discussions above, the second and third research questions that will be addressed in this chapter are:

2. What are the source domains of metaphorical hyperboles in luxury hotel websites, and their frequency?
3. What are the potential functions of metaphorical hyperboles in the context of luxury hotel websites?

6.4 Two Different Types of Metaphorical hyperbole: A Corpus-based Discourse Analysis

6.4.1 The Analytic Procedure

In the earlier part of this chapter, we proposed two different structures of metaphorical hyperboles. Both types of metaphorical hyperbole were visually presented using cognitive models and illustrated by linguistic examples drawn from promotional discourse in the hospitality industry. To further substantiate, refine, and extend our hypothesis regarding the two models, a corpus approach is useful for inspecting the relative frequencies of metaphorical hyperbole use, and the type and semantic features of cross-domain mappings, which can then enable a more holistic understanding of metaphorical hyperboles and authentic linguistic characteristics. Therefore, the second intention of the present chapter is to provide empirical evidence for the two types of metaphorical hyperbole, which are currently short of research, through a corpus-based approach including investigating their relative frequency in the corpus, the variety of source domains that generate metaphorical reading, and the potential discourse function of constructing a positive image of the service/product in luxury hotel websites.

We possessed a readily available corpus suitable for investigation. The creation, management, and specific details regarding the corpus have been fully discussed in Section 2.2.2.2. Regarding the identification of metaphorical hyperbole, Chapter 4 has previously identified all

metaphorical expressions and their source domains in the corpus through the deployment of MIPVU (Steen et al., 2010) and the source domain verification procedure (Ahrens & Jiang, 2020). Similarly, Chapter 5 has identified instances related to hyperbole using HIP (Burgers et al., 2016). As a result, the procedure of identification will not be reiterated in this chapter. Data that overlapped between Chapters 4 and 5 were considered likely to embrace both metaphorical and hyperbolic readings, thereby making them metaphorical hyperboles and suitable for inclusion in the analysis presented in this chapter.

After the metaphoricity and hyperbolicity of a linguistic item have been confirmed, each item was carefully scrutinised to determine which type of metaphorical hyperbole it belongs to, through manually checking the number of source domains involved in constructing its scale of meaning. This process is illustrated in Figure 6.6. For instance, the synthesised metaphor *heaven* and the primary conceptual metaphor *highest* in examples (1) and (2) both imply the notion of “the highest location.” However, the expression *heaven* has an additional representation related to religion, involving extralinguistic knowledge. If the graded scale is the result of a single domain, the expression is considered to be a primary metaphorical hyperbole, whereas if the scale is the product of the blend of two or more domains, the expression will be labelled as a complex metaphorical hyperbole.

Finally, for the complex metaphorical expression that is “formed by conceptual blending” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, 46), we further consulted *the Macmillan English Dictionary* and *SUMO* to ascertain the prototype of the expression. This is because, for nominal items, the prototype attached to the expression should be quite obvious, such as in the case of *heaven*. Nevertheless, for linguistic items falling into other grammatical categories, such as adjectives and adverbs, which happen to be the two most frequent grammatical categories of metaphorical hyperbole in our corpus, it becomes imperative to identify an appropriate ontology that can best summarise the defining characteristics of these language items for proper labeling. For instance, the expression *legendary* in “legendary service” is an adjective that is derived from, and closely related to, the noun “legend” according to SUMO. We therefore consider that the noun “legend” is the prototype of the metaphorical hyperbole *legendary*.

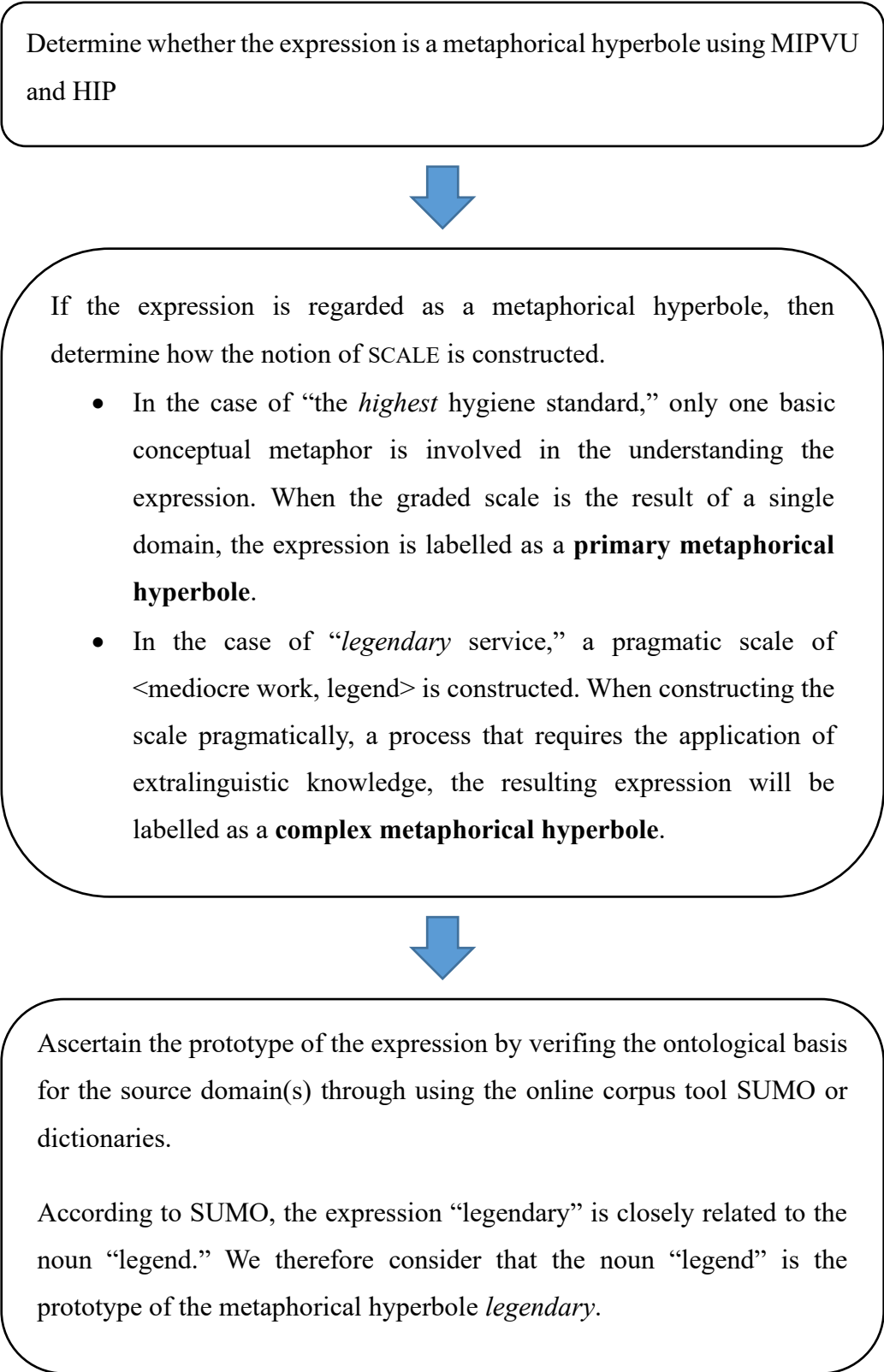


Figure 6.6 The procedure of determining the type of metaphorical hyperbole

Overall, we identified 894 lexical units in our corpus that exhibited both metaphorical and hyperbolic readings. From the perspective of metaphor, this indicated that 13 per cent (i.e., 894 out of 6,990) of the metaphors in the corpus also possessed a hyperbolic feature. From the hyperbole standpoint, this observation suggested that 15 per cent (i.e., 894 out of 5,960) of the hyperboles in the corpus were also metaphorical. Among the 894 instances of metaphorical hyperboles, 424 were classified as primary metaphorical hyperboles, while 470 were complex metaphorical hyperboles. In the following sections, we will discuss the distribution, semantic features of cross-domain mappings, and potential discursive functions of these 894 metaphorical hyperboles in detail.

6.4.2 Results: The Primary Metaphorical Hyperbole

The analysis yielded a total of 424 primary metaphorical hyperboles from four distinct source domains that are intimately connected to our physical experiences and sensations in Langacker's (1987) sense, namely SPACE, CONTAINER, OBJECT and TEMPERATURE, accounting for 47.43% of the total metaphorical hyperboles. Scales are presented in very diverse ways contingent on the category of source domains and the different internal structures a source domain contains. For example, in our corpus, the SPACE domain consists of three distinct sub-structures that correspond to our different everyday perceptions of direction: UP-DOWN, FAR-NEAR and FRONT-BACK, thus bringing with it three graded scales associated with horizontal, vertical, and proximity, respectively.

Figure 6.7 shows the frequency of metaphorical hyperbole in each source domain and its sub-structures. In the figure, sub-structures belonging to the same domain are grouped in the same colour.

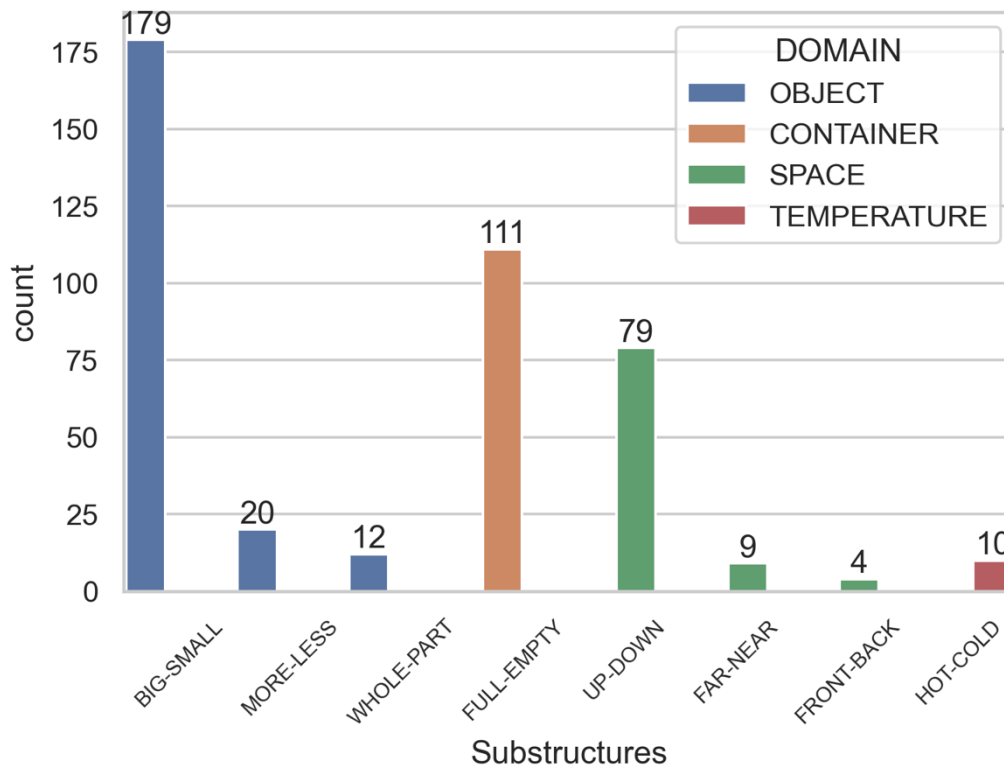


Figure 6.7 Frequency of primary metaphorical hyperbole

6.4.2.1 OBJECT as Source Domain

In the advertising of luxury hotels, the intensity or degree of evaluation of products or services is usually conceptualised as the quantity, size or shape of a particular entity, thereby becoming the basis for the formation of a physical scale. Concepts that describe the physical properties of objects are categorised as the OBJECT domain, producing a total of 211 metaphorical hyperboles in our corpus. Compared to other structures in this domain, we have found that luxury hotels often highlight the diversity of their services and products through expressions that represent spatial scope and volume (BIG-SMALL structure), such as *extensive* and *largest*:

- (3) An *extensive* a la carte menu featuring authentic Cantonese favourites... (Conrad Hong Kong)
- (4) ...with one of Asia's *largest* collection of American whiskeys... (Marina Bay Sands Singapore)

Interestingly, in example (4), a language device *one of* appears before the hyperbolic item *largest*, which seems to attenuate the exaggerated effect of expression to some extent intuitively. This so-called *hyperbole mitigator* (Ovejas-Ramírez, 2021) essentially puts a bumper on an advertiser’s claim to avoid the risk of making false promises since “*largest* collection” is an unverifiable statement. Meanwhile, the utterance still conveys a sense of extremity due to its grammatical form of superlative. We, therefore, argue that the expression *largest* still retains its exaggerated reading, despite its co-existence with a mitigator in the utterance.

(5) ...into a *whole* new world of Chinese dining... (Parkroyal Collection Marina Bay)

(6) ...and quality mattress and bedding to ensure your *maximum* comfort (Lan Kwai Fong Hotel)

The concept of scale can also be constructed by associating it with two similar structures, namely completeness (PART-WHOLE) and quantity (MORE-LESS) of things. The experiential basis for the former is that PART and WHOLE are a set of antonyms, where PART means quantitative rarity and is therefore located at the negative end of the scale, while WHOLE means quantitative prosperity and is located at the positive end of the scale. In the advertising of luxury hotels, the semantic feature “complete/more” is used to bolster the uniqueness of the hotel experience in language, indexing a sense of a high degree of distinction between the service experience the hotel will provide and daily life, as reflected in examples (5) and (6).

6.4.2.2 SPACE as Source Domain

There is an inventory of hyperbolic expressions similar to orientational metaphors in Lakoff and Johnson’s sense (1980/2013) that fundamentally involve different oriented physical spaces and is also one of the most common items that make up the first kind of metaphorical hyperbole. The domain SPACE usually pertains to the alignment of the axes of the scale. Imposing a particular orientation on physical space allows us to locate evaluations, such as qualities or attributes of a product or service, to certain vertical or horizontal axes, thus making abstract concepts concrete.

In the analysis of the corpus, a total of 92 instances of such items are identified in our corpus, including such orientation-related concept pairs as UP-DOWN, FAR-NEAR and FRONT-BACK (Clausner & Croft, 1999), among which the UP-DOWN structure represents the vertical direction serves as the typical example of the SPACE domain group, reflected in its frequency of occurrence. The use of the UP-DOWN structure in these examples is often extended to the

conventional conceptual metaphor GOOD IS UP, and thus is employed by advertisers to praise their services and products.

(7) ...is committed to the *highest* levels of hygiene (The Peninsula Hong Kong)

(8) One of the world's *top* female chefs with three Michelin stars...(Raffles Hotel Singapore)

In the repertoire of our language community, UP is culturally associated with positive values or qualities, such as achievement, success, and progress, while DOWN often represents negative attributes, such as failure, defeat, and regression. Therefore, it is fairly common for marketers of luxury hotels to design an image of excellence for their hotels by centring advertising message around the "highest point", which reflects the hotel's unsurpassed standard (example (7)), exceptional expertise (example (9)) and prestigious status, thereby attracting potential guests. In fact, instances from the UP-DOWN structure constitute the majority of the cases in the domain SPACE, where the hotel and its offerings are located at the top of the space with few exceptions (e.g., *deepest*), reflecting the pervasiveness and availability of conventional spatial metaphorical hyperboles in promotional discourse.

A variant of the metaphor GOOD IS UP is the metaphor MORE IS FAR, in which the graded scale is also based on our physical experiences with spatial movement. For example, the number of miles is positively correlated with the distance we travel. Similar to the function of the UP-DOWN structure, the FAR-NEAR structure can also be applied to describe the good qualities of the hotel, i.e., the farther the distance, the higher the degree, until the end:

(9) ...for the *utmost* in pampering and relaxation (Sofitel So Singapore)

Physical direction can be described not only in terms of verticality, but also with regard to forward and backward spatial movements, as implied in the metaphor pairs IMPORTANT IS FRONT and LESS IMPORTANT IS BACK (Horiguchi, 1987). In this case, what we mean by scale could be a physical arrangement that starts at a distance and gradually approaches <far, middle, front>, increasing in turn with the importance to which they refer. The FAR-NEAR structure may enjoy a physical grounding that, often in a group where the person or object in front is more typical and visible to peers in other locations, and therefore more likely to be considered important.

(10) Mandarin Oriental, Singapore is one of the world's *foremost* luxury hotels. It is the only hotel in the city that has been awarded Five Star status... (Mandarin Oriental, Singapore)

Foremost, which literally means precedence in spatial position, has an inherent hyperbolic power as a superlative adjective. The expression suggests a metaphorical implication that the hotel Mandarin Oriental (Singapore) is leading in the global competitive endeavour according to example (10), with the hotel being self-portrayed as the pioneer in the pursuit of excellence (Five Star status). Although the FAR-NEAR structure is not salient in our corpus due to its relatively infrequent occurrences (4 examples), it still should not be ignored from analysis because of its unique way of constructing scale compared with other structures.

6.4.2.3 CONTAINER as Source Domain

CONTAINER is another basic source domain that is relevant to our sensorimotor experience (Johnson, 1987), where the concept of SCALE can be easily detected. As we pour liquid into a container, the mass of the water increases, and the water level rises until it fills the entire container. In our corpus, the CONTAINER metaphor mainly comes from the situation where “container in its fullest state”, such as hyperbolic expressions *full* or *fully*, which can strengthen the force of the state of affairs or evaluations, depending on the intended meaning of the utterance.

(11) From a versatile range of 34 *fully-equipped* rooms & ballrooms... (Swissotel Merchant Court)

(12) The spacious living room is *full* of fun and savvy technology (W Hong Kong).

Examples (12) and (13) represent the main uses of the CONTAINER metaphor, where the hotel room is thought of as a container filled with the facilities that guests need, leaving the container without any gaps. The variety and adequacy of the facilities and services offered by the hotel are hyperbolically and metaphorically pointed out by the highest end of the scale, namely “the container at its fullest”.

6.4.2.4 TEMPERATURE as Source Domain

Although the domain TEMPERATURE appears relatively less frequently in the corpus (only ten instances), we still include it in our analysis because, unlike the abovementioned three source domains, which construct scales based on the magnitude and spatial orientation, the domain

TEMPERATURE is related to human beings' somatic sensations, profiling concepts such as heat, warm and cold along a one-dimensional scale.

(13) MO Bar is one of Hong Kong's *hottest* dining and drinking spots (The Landmark Mandarin Oriental, Hong Kong)

When an object is metaphorically “hot,” it conveys the idea that the object generates a lot of interest and excitement and is therefore considered to be “burning” in terms of significance. Example (13) is such an illustration that demonstrates the association between TEMPERATURE and social affection. In terms of its practical application, in our corpus, we have found that all hyperbolic expressions from the domain TEMPERATURE are combined with superlatives, such as *hottest* and *warmest*, making the scalar sense and its hyperbolic load evident and unquestionable.

6.4.3 Results: The Complex Metaphorical Hyperbole

So far, we have discussed the cognitive structure of primary metaphorical hyperbole, suggesting that the graded scale of their hyperbole interpretation is based primarily on the “basic domains” (Langacker, 1987) associated with our sensorimotor experience, and cannot be further reduced to any other sub-domain (Barcelona, 2003; Taylor, 1995). In our corpus, the basic domains that constitute the primary metaphorical hyperbole include three-dimensional SPACE, OBJECT, CONTAINER and TEMPERATURE.

In many cases, however, it seems that the meaning of items can only be characterised against specific cultural norms or practices, as they are cognitively a combination of multiple metaphors as well as cultural knowledge, for that reason, tend to be more intricate and novel. For example, the metaphorical expression “The store served as the *nucleus* for what is now a vibrant Chinatown” might not be fully understood without reference to encyclopedic information about eukaryotic cell structure, in which the *nucleus* is the central part of a cell and contains the genetic material (DNA) that controls the cell's function. In this context, the centrality of the store is highlighted—it is possible that the store is geographically located right in the centre of Chinatown, but this is hard to prove, and we are inclined to think that what the advertiser wants to exaggerate is the store's reputation and popularity. With botanical knowledge, it is possible to observe the “CENTRAL-PERIPHERAL” scale structure of “CENTER

IS IMPORTANT/ PERIPHERY IS NOT IMPORTANT”, and the “*nucleus*” as the centre of physical “body parts” is opportunistically employed as a typical representation of “important things”.

Complex metaphorical hyperbole is the product of blended domains that are constructed flexibly and creatively (Grady, 2005), and seems well suited to the advertising message of luxury branding, which is most often linked to features such as aesthetics, exclusivity, excellent quality, premium price, scarcity, and uniqueness (Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2008/2021; Kapferer, 1998; Nueno & Quelch, 1998). However, this does not mean that all luxury brands need to meet all of these criteria, and even meeting all of these criteria is not enough to classify a brand as luxury. Based on a survey of consumers’ perceptions of luxury brand attributes, Hudders (2013) proposed a framework enclosing major facets of luxury brand meaning, namely, premium quality, aesthetics and exclusivity. Recall that the third research objective of this chapter is to investigate the promotional function of metaphorical hyperboles in luxury hotel websites.

In the sections that follow, I will not only explore the very use of and preference for particular metaphorical hyperboles in the setting of luxury hospitality but also inspect the specific luxury meanings that hyperbolic metaphor may accomplish in the context of luxury hotel advertising through qualitatively interpreting the linguistic item in its surrounding co-text.

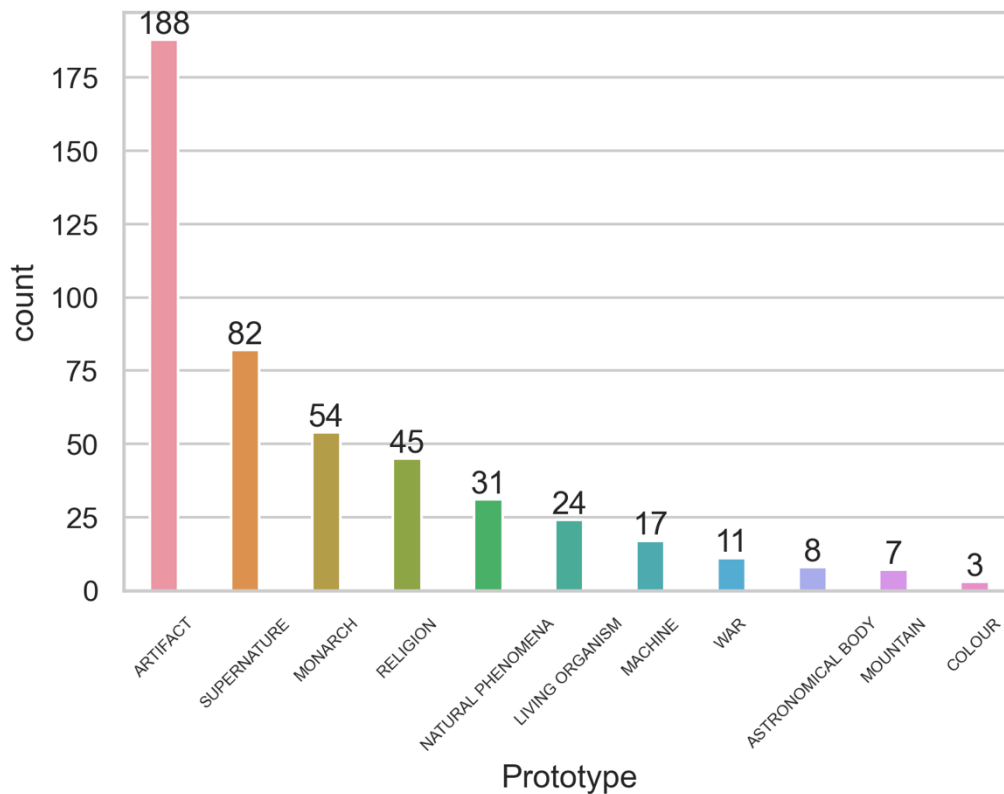


Figure 6.8 Frequency of complex metaphorical hyperbole

The identification process produced 470 instances of complex metaphorical hyperboles comprising source domains from 11 categories. According to Figure 6.8, elements associated with ARTIFACT and SUPERNATURE were the most commonly used as the prototype for exaggeration, accounting for 57.45 per cent of the total data. The domain ARTIFACT refers to products made by writers or craftsmen with aesthetic and historical value, including literary works and some physical devices. The source domains MONARCH and RELIGION were also fertile grounds for the production of complex metaphorical hyperbole in our corpus, including 54 and 45 cases, respectively. The domain MONARCH contains elements related to royalty and nobility, while the domain RELIGION encompasses notions derived from belief systems, both of which have a long history of shaping our lifestyles and aesthetics. Then came the domains NATURAL PHENOMENA, LIVING ORGANISM, MACHINE and WAR, which all had more than ten occurrences in the corpus. Metaphorical hyperboles from source domains ASTRONOMICAL BODY, MOUNTAIN, and COLOUR, while all interesting, appeared sporadically on luxury hotel websites.

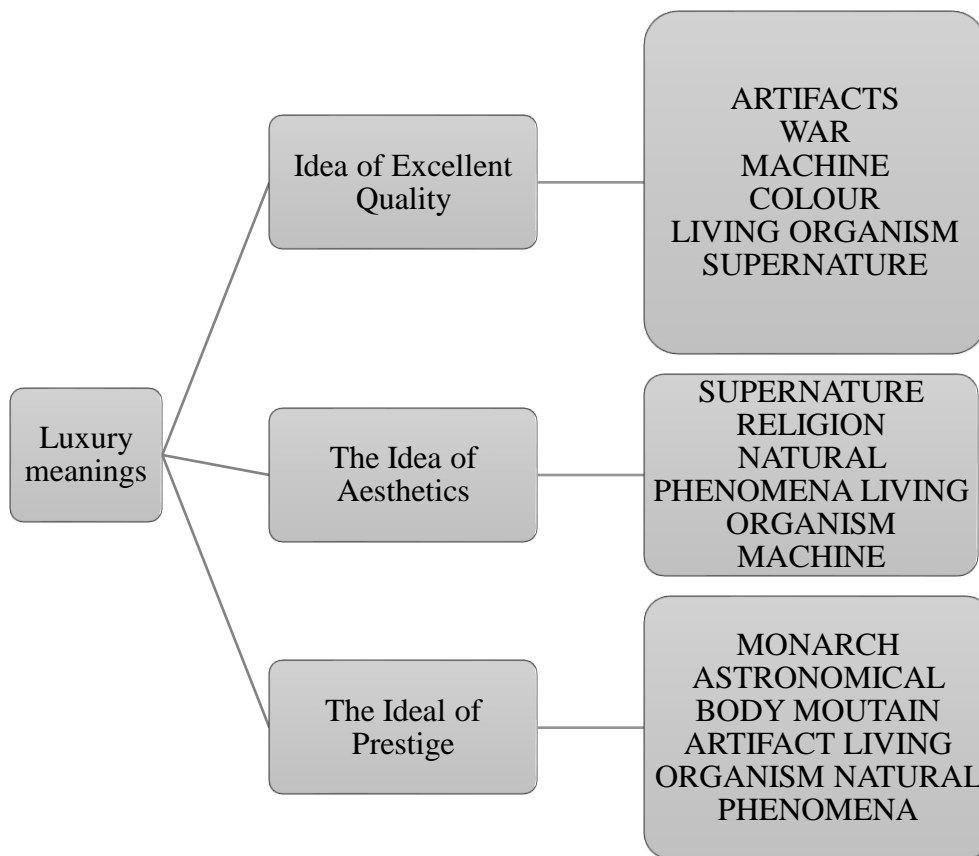


Figure 6.9 The luxury meaning carried by metaphorical hyperboles

6.4.3.1 The Idea of Excellent Quality

Table 6.1 Hyperbolic metaphors and their linguistic examples that carry the “idea of quality”

Source domain	Token
ARTIFACTS	spectacular (67), legendary (57), dramatic (17), epitome (13), picture-perfect (6), fairy-tale (6), restoration (3), masterpiece (3), dramatically (2), epic (2), spectacularly (2), mythical (2), legend (1), spectacle (1)
WAR	unbeatable (6), invincible (2), irresistible (2), fierce (1)
MACHINE	renewed (3), regenerative (2), generating (1)
COLOUR	purest (3)
LIVING ORGANISM	reviving (1), revives (1), revive (1)
SUPERNATURE	elixir (1)

A luxury brand is supposed to project an image of high-quality performance for its services or products that can meet or even exceed customer expectations in order to justify its premium price (Keller, 2009). In luxury hotel advertising, verbal representations of “excellent service quality” often point to fictional stories or narrative (e.g., *spectacular*, *legend*, *drama*, *fairy-tale*, *myth*) that has been passed down through generations and remembered by the masses. For instance, the use of *legendary* in examples (14) and (15) can help to build a sense of credibility with consumers by emphasising the hotel’s long history, which has stood the test of time on the one hand. On the other hand, in a more contemporary sense, the expression denotes a person or thing that is admired or respected for its exceptional qualities or achievements and thus brings a sense of craftsmanship. The expressions “*legendary* hospitality” and “*legendary* service” embody the prototype “legend” that implies a pragmatic scale from “mundane” to “legend” in terms of the product/service quality. At the same time, these expressions are considered hyperbolic because even if hotels do provide excellent service, it is unlikely to be written into a myth of legend that the word is intended to imply.

(14) Marco Polo Suite with The Peninsula’s *legendary* service and style... (The Peninsula Hong Kong)

(15) ... this is where the *legendary* Asian hospitality of Shangri-La began (Shangri-La Hotel Singapore).

Where the WAR metaphor is employed, and the “victory” aspect is emphasised, a sense of preeminence also results. In pointing out that the hotel offers packages that are *invincible*, example (16) suggests that the choice offered by the hotel is so comprehensive that no one else can match it. Similarly, what is boasted by example (17) is the convenient location of the hotel compared to its vis-à-vis, arising from *unbeatable*’s semantic definition that something is hard to defeat.

(16) The *invincible* staycation package... (Harbour Grand Hong Kong)

(17) We offer an *unbeatable* location overlooking Victoria Harbour... (Mandarin Oriental Hong Kong)

The pragmatic scale of WAR metaphors—from defeat to draw to victory—is patently clear. Victory, which occupies the positive end of the scale, is used to represent excellence since a war/contest is usually won only by the most capable.

In addition, while it may not always be necessary for them to emphasise efficiency as much as their budget counterparts, luxury hotels may still promise efficient services or products to ensure a quality experience for their guests. As reflected in our corpus, the notion of efficiency can also be realised through the domains MACHINE, LIVING ORGANISM and SUPERNATURE, which are predominantly used to describe recreational facilities, such as hotel spas and fitness equipment, which in recent years are considered an expected component of luxury hotels especially (Heyes & Lashley, 2017).

(18) while others are designed for specific results including *renewed* energy, lifestyle and pampering signature experiences (The Capitol Hotel Kempinski, Singapore)

(19) ... and the Oatmeal and Honey cookies with warm milk is an *elixir* for sweet dreams (Four Seasons Hotel Hong Kong)

Revive is a verb that means to restore to life or consciousness; an *elixir* is a magical substance that is believed to be able to provide eternal life to the person who drinks it. While some food or spa treatments may provide benefits such as relaxation and stress relief, it is unlikely that any single treatment could be accurately described as an *elixir* that can cure all ailments, bring back the dead and provide eternal youth or life. On the other hand, as the terms *revive* and *elixir* imply senses of restoration and urgency, which can be appealing to people who are looking for quick and effective solutions to their health problems, they have become popular and typical communicative strategies for marketers and advertisers looking to promote the effectiveness of their products, thereby promote their business.

6.4.3.2 The Idea of Aesthetics

Table 6.2 Hyperbolic metaphors and their linguistic examples that carry the “idea of aesthetics”

Source domain	Token
SUPERNATURE	enchanting (21), magical (19), magic (12), enchanted (6), miracle (5), enthralling (3), marvelous (3), spellbinding (3), surreal (3), bewitching (1), charismatic (1), marvellous (1), miraculous (1), surrealism (1), surreally (1)
RELIGION	paradise (23), haven (8), divine (6), heaven (4), cathedral (1), heavenly (1)
NATURAL PHENOMENA	dazzling (12), dazzle (7), brilliant (4), brilliantly (2), dazzlingly (1)
LIVING ORGANISM	seductive (6), liveliest (4), sexiest (1)
MACHINE	electrifying (8)

The products of the luxury industry are usually not only satisfied with just meeting the requirements of quality but also aim to provide an exceptional hedonic experience to cater to the sensory pleasure of customers (Dubois et al., 2001). This can be achieved in luxury hotel advertising by including messages containing hyperboles from various source domains, in particular the source domain SUPERNATURE, which involves the use of supernatural forces such as spells, rituals, or incantation to produce desired results, with major keywords including *enchanted*, *magic*, *miracle*, *spellbinding* and etc. in our corpus.

(20) Our wedding designers can accent the depth of your love with luxurious surroundings that will leave the *magic* to live on forever! (The Mira Hong Kong)

(21) Always been *enchanted* by Fairy Tales and their gleaming, *magical* surroundings? (Swissotel Merchant Court)

In example (20), the hotel staff is portrayed as a magical being who can create an ideal imaginary world and perfect hotel experience that guests will never forget. Likewise, example (21) emphasises the beauty of the hotel environment, where guests will be mesmerised and allured. It is common practice in luxury advertising to equate charisma to magic because both items imply transcendent forces that can transform guests into different realms of the consumption experience (Dion & Arnould, 2011).

The elements from the source domain RELIGION are also shown to be preferred and have become prototypes when it comes to conveying the aesthetic value of the hotel, as religion and spirituality have long had an impact on what humans consider artistically beautiful (Gallup & Bezilla, 1992).

(22) This trendy urban *paradise* suite is appointed with every thoughtful element imaginable (W Hong Kong).

In our data, metaphorical keywords of the domain RELIGION are mainly from the religious system's vision of the land of bliss, where full of happiness, peace and perfection. For example, *paradise* (example 22) often conjures up images of harmonious pastoral landscapes, lush tropical jungles and clear rivers, all of which are of perfect beauty. When a guest room is portrayed as *paradise*, it suggests the otherworldly aesthetic of the room.

The sensory beauty of luxury hotels can also be highlighted through the source domains NATURAL PHENOMENA and MACHINE, which compare guests' emotions to light (e.g., *dazzling*) and electricity (e.g., *electrifying*), respectively, indirectly accentuating the hotel's impressiveness, despite such examples appear only occasionally in our dataset.

6.4.3.3 The Ideal of Prestige

Table 6.3 Hyperbolic metaphors and their linguistic examples that carry the “idea of prestige”

Source domain	Token
MONARCH	palatial (14), queen(s) (9), king(s) (7), crowning (4), regal (4), royale (4), royalty (4), royal (3), imperial (2), princess (2), prince (1)
ASTRONOMICAL BODY	stellar (6), star (2)
MOUNTAIN	pinnacle (7)
ARTIFACT	centrepiece (5)
LIVING ORGANISM	vital (1), peerless (1), nucleus (1)
NATURAL PHENOMENA	epicentre (1)

In addition to high quality and aesthetic value, creating an image of prestige is also crucial in the luxury industry to differentiate it from other luxury brands in a crowded market, which helps brands achieve sustained commercial success (Geerts & Masset, 2022; Hudders, 2013). Similarly, in tourism, travel is often promoted as an escape from everyday routine, immersing in luxury and indulgence. These extravagances carry a sense of superiority, as it signals that the individuals engaged in luxury tourism have achieved a level of status and wealth that allows them to gain access to this experience.

The sense of prestige would be perspicuous when elements from the source domain MONARCH are used, which typically are associated with high status, especially in the feudal system, where the royal family is at the top of the social hierarchy due to the amount of power and wealth it held, as opposed to the peasant class. The metaphorical keywords in the MONARCH domain are usually the different entities in/used by the royal family, such as buildings, members of the royal family, and wealth and jewels. In example (23), the Marina Bay Sands Singapore (MBS) and its rooms are depicted as a luxurious, palace-like place, as signalled by keywords *royalty* and *imperial*. Example (24) compares the customer to members of the royal family, suggesting a commitment that the customer will be treated with the utmost respect and attention to detail.

(23) Live like royalty in your *palatial* Sands Suite... (Marina Bay Sands Singapore)

(24) Pamper yourself and your little ones with a relaxing massage together or spoil your little *prince* and *princess*... (The Mira Hong Kong)

It is true that many luxury hotels are converted from heritage buildings such as former official mansions or palaces. For MBS, its modern architecture is a far cry from the traditional royal style, although it is famous for its three handsome curved towers. Even so, associating the hotel with royalty undoubtedly can tap into consumers' desire to actively participate in a lifestyle normally only enjoyed by those of the highest social stratum (Otnes & Maclaran, 2018).

Prestige is sometimes built by emphasising the centrality of a hotel, as we discussed above with the "CENTRAL-PERIPHERAL" scale structure. When it comes to "The Murray is designed to be the *epicentre* of social events in the city" (Example 25), the concept of the center is opportunistically represented by the seismological term *epicentre* (NATURAL PHENOMENA). An image of paramount importance is constructed by emphasising that Murray Hotel is the first choice for hosting influential social events in Hong Kong as a way of brand differentiation in the luxury hotel landscape. In example (26), instead, this function is fulfilled by the entity *centrepiece* from the source domain ARTIFACT.

(25) The Murray is designed to be the *epicentre* of social events in the city (The Murray, Hong Kong).

(26) ... the Tower Wing has become the stunning new *centrepiece* of Shangri-La Singapore (Shangri-La Hotel Singapore).

Again, these two examples are considered complex metaphorical hyperboles because understanding their hidden "CENTRAL-PERIPHERAL" scale structure relies on both our embodied experience and real-world encyclopedic knowledge.

6.5 Chapter Conclusion

Unlike Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, which examined a single category of figurative device (metaphor or hyperbole) respectively, this chapter made an in-depth analysis of the

phenomenon of metaphorical hyperbole, particularly undertook in their underlying structures and discursive functions in the construction of luxury values in promotional tourism discourse.

The first research question focuses on articulating the underlying cognitive mechanisms of metaphorical hyperbole. SCALE is the fundamental underpinning of all hyperbolic items, enabling us to determine whether the propositional meaning of the unit is significantly exaggerated in comparison to the intended meaning. In the case of metaphorical hyperbole, the construction of SCALE is dependent on the cross-domain mappings of metaphor, as metaphorical hyperbole contains both hyperbolic and metaphorical readings. By dissecting their working mechanisms that produce the notion of SCALE, this chapter observes two different categories of metaphorical hyperboles: the primary metaphorical hyperbole and the complex metaphorical hyperbole. For the primary metaphorical hyperbole, the graded scale is formed on the ground of potentially universal source domains related to sensorimotor and perceptual experiences, such as the expression “*highest* standard.” On the contrary, for the complex metaphorical hyperbole, cultural beliefs and knowledge are required to accurately understand the meaning of the figure in addition to the basic source domain. This is evident in expressions like “a travel *paradise*.”

The second and third research questions deal with the frequencies and functions of metaphorical hyperbole on luxury hotel websites. In particular, we are interested in understanding how the notion of SCALE can be actualised through cross-domain mappings, the ways in which it is realised linguistically, and its frequency of occurrence within real-world discourse. Similar to the claims made by Cano Mora (2013) regarding the frequent co-occurrence of metaphor and hyperbole, our analysis discerns a total of 894 instances of metaphorical hyperboles, accounting for 15 per cent of the overall number of hyperboles identified, thereby providing empirical evidence for previous studies.

A total of 424 primary hyperbolic metaphors have been identified within the corpus, mainly manifested through four basic source domains SPACE, CONTAINER, OBJECT and TEMPERATURE. By presenting a collection of authentic language examples, I have demonstrated how these source domains act as heuristic resources for forming diverse linguistic scales and, in their capacity to emphasise the extremes of these scales, exaggerate and intensify the meaning of utterances.

In terms of complex metaphorical hyperboles, a total of 470 instances from 11 source domains are observed in the corpus. The most common source domains for realising complex metaphorical hyperbole are ARTIFACT, SUPERNATURE, MONARCH, RELIGION, and NATURAL PHENOMENA. In comparison to primary metaphorical hyperbole, which relies on basic metaphor to establish a scale, complex metaphorical hyperbole is relatively novel. This is because, in addition to the basic source domain, recipients must draw upon extralinguistic knowledge to comprehend it fully. Based on Hudders's (2013) framework on luxury brand meaning, I then show how the message of luxury hotel advertising seeks to convey a sense of high quality, aesthetics, and prestige through the juxtaposition of complex metaphorical hyperbole so as to engender favourable dispositions towards themselves.

On a theoretical level, this chapter offers some complementation to the existing body of literature on metaphorical hyperbole by introducing cognitive models that more effectively capture metaphorical hyperboles with different underlying structures (Brdar-Szabó and Brdar, 2005; Vereza, 2016), as well as a guide to distinguishing between the two types of metaphorical hyperbole. A "decomposition interpretation" (Yu, 2008) of the structure of metaphorical hyperbole, which separates the more embodied/basic components from the more culture-bound elements, can provide deeper insights into the processes of formation, comprehension, and transmission of hyperbole.

From a practical perspective, the findings generated from this chapter are anticipated to be used as a reference for advertisers in enhancing the design and production of more impactful advertisements.

7. Chapter 7 The Effectiveness of Metaphor and Hyperbole in Luxury Hotel Websites

7.1 Chapter Introduction

In Chapter 4 of the current thesis, we have conducted an investigation into the use of metaphorical language in luxury hotel websites using a corpus approach. Our analysis showed that the use of metaphorical language in promotional discourse can enhance the persuasive effects of the message, primarily due to two factors. First, metaphor has the potential to evoke positive emotions in recipients through the addition of rhetorical flourishment. By exploiting metaphorical expressions, the message becomes more attractive and elicits favourable emotional responses. Secondly, the ability of metaphor to facilitate conceptual content transfer allows for a more intuitive elaboration of the quality of a product or service (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2003). Our results suggested that using concrete representations, metaphorical language can enhance the recipients' understanding and evaluation of the offering.

In Chapter 5, the thesis delved into another rhetorical device, namely hyperbole, and examined the frequency and characteristics of different categories of hyperbolic expressions in promotional discourse. We suggested that in the luxury industry, hyperbole contributes to the persuasive appeal of advertising messages by “quantitatively” or “qualitatively” amplifying the perceived benefits of products or services (Burgers et al., 2016, p. 164).

Furthermore, our investigation extended to the analysis of the configuration of “metaphorical hyperbole,” a phenomenon in which both metaphor and hyperbole, as distinct figurative devices, are used simultaneously. This inspection took place in Chapter 6, with the objective of elucidating the underlying cognitive mechanism of metaphorical hyperboles, and how they effectively contribute to the construction of values associated with prestige, high quality, and aesthetics within the luxury industry.

While the preceding chapters of the thesis have provided empirical evidence and insightful analyses regarding the utilisation and function of metaphor and hyperbole in real-world discourse, it should be noted that these analyses primarily rested upon theoretical accounts and discourse analysis. In fact, researchers investigating the effects of figurative expressions have further proposed an additional key objective of current rhetoric research (e.g., Hart, 2018;

Thibodeau & Boroditsky, 2011). Beyond merely examining the persuasiveness of figurative language, it is crucial to uncover the underlying mechanisms or cognitive processes through which figurative language establishes its persuasive effect. In this case, it is necessary to supplement the findings of discourse analysis with experimental studies that inspect audience responses to figurative language to determine the specific conditions under which metaphor and hyperbole effectively operate. In doing so, the studies can further contribute to the development, refinement, or potential refutation of existing theoretical frameworks regarding figurative language.

Taking into account these considerations and the results of discourse analyses presented in Chapters 4 to 6, the aim of this chapter, which is also the second research objective of the current thesis, is to test the impact of two distinct figurative devices, namely metaphor and hyperbole, as employed in luxury hotel websites, on consumers' perceptions and purchase intentions. This investigation will be carried out through the implementation of a survey-embedded experiment. The findings of this study align with the conclusions drawn from the discourse analyses in the preceding chapters, confirming that the utilisation of metaphors in luxury hotel websites can increase recipients' emotional text perception. Similar to prior behavioural research (e.g., Heslop et al., 2004, 2008; Maher & Carter, 2011), this increased affective text perception exerts stronger immediate effects on recipients compared to cognitive text perception, motivating recipients to proceed with making reservations at the hotel.

7.2 Theoretical Framework for Experimental Research

As discussed in Chapter 4 (Figure 4.1), in advertising communication, message elaboration is one of the factors that influence how advertising information is processed by individuals, serving as the initial resource of information processing and involves both affective and cognitive elaborations (Kim et al., 2012). According to McQuarrie and Mick (1999), elaboration refers to “the extent to which a reader engages a text or the amount of interpretation occasioned by a text or the number of inferences drawn” (p. 39). Previous research has revealed that the level of cognitive elaboration that consumers engage in while processing a message influences attitude formation (e.g., Petty & Cacioppo, 1979). Batra and Ray (1986) further

remarked that when consumers have increased affective elaboration, they are more emotionally engaged with the message, which can lead to stronger and more enduring attitudes.

Therefore, in this chapter, we will employ an experimental approach to investigate how the utilisation of metaphor and hyperbole in advertising can enhance different text perceptions, which in turn contribute to increased persuasive effects. In the subsequent sections, I will provide a summary of the existing literature that explores the relationship between figurative language, text perceptions, and persuasion. Furthermore, on the basis of previous literature, I will present the theoretical model to be tested in the experiment in this chapter.

7.2.1 Metaphor and Cognitive Text Perception

Metaphors have the ability to simplify issues by creating conceptual mappings between source domain and target domain, allowing individuals to understand abstract or complex ideas in terms of something more tangible or familiar. When metaphor is employed in communication, it can influence cognitive text perception, which refers to a type of content-related thought, compared to literal messages (Mothersbaugh et al., 2002). This is particularly evident in political discourse, which often relies on various metaphors to frame issues in a particular light and convey the intended meanings effectively (e.g., Charteris-Black, 2004; Gibbs, 1992). For instance, the study conducted by Neagu (2013) on the metaphors used by Barack Obama and John McCain during the 2008 US presidential debate suggested a strategic use of metaphors to frame the financial crisis. By comparing the financial crisis to a disease or a natural disaster using conceptual metaphors such *THE CRISIS IS A DISEASE* and *THE CRISIS IS A CALAMITY*, the speakers aimed to help the audience understand the severity and urgency of the situation, as well as the need for immediate action, which ultimately foster alignment with the proposed policy measures (Hartman, 2012).

Drawing from this understanding of metaphors, it is reasonable to put forth a hypothesis regarding cognitive text perception in advertising. The hypothesis posits that there will be observable differences in cognitive text perception between metaphorical advertisements and non-metaphorical advertisements due to the capacity of metaphors to effectively simplify complex product qualities through discourse, making them more comprehensible and intuitive for consumers:

H1: In advertising, metaphors positively impact cognitive text perception compared with literal expressions, which, in turn, increase purchase intention.

7.2.2 Metaphor, Hyperbole and Affective Text Perception

Affective text perception refers to the emotional or affective feelings that are evoked by the content of texts. Upon successfully resolving the “incongruity” between the propositional meaning and the intended meaning of metaphorical messages, recipients are likely to reward a sense of pleasure and perceive the text as exciting and interesting (e.g., Citron & Goldberg, 2014; Gibbs et al., 2002; Harris, 2009), which further contributes to the persuasiveness of the text. For instance, Semino (2021) pointed out that the FIRE metaphor, with its vivid and rich imagery, was commonly employed in describing the COVID-19 pandemic. Examples included comparing the spread of the coronavirus to an “uncontrolled fire spread,” while the efforts to contain and prevent the virus were compared to “firefighters battling flames.” The strategic use of the FIRE metaphor was intended to accentuate the catastrophic consequences of the pandemic and empathy towards the frontline health workers, thereby eliciting stronger emotional responses in the recipients.

Empirical evidence has also lent support for the effects of metaphors on affective perception. In political communication, Ahrens et al. (2022) have found that the use of metaphors increased individuals’ agreement with proposed policies and their overall evaluations of those policies, via the perceived novelty of the message and affective text perception. In advertising of luxury tourism, metaphors can be exploited to marketise destinations and enhance potential consumers’ desire to travel, by evoking their sensory and emotional engagement. In this vein, it is reasonable to expect a positive association between metaphorical language and affective text perception:

H2a: In advertising, metaphors positively impact affective text perception compared with literal expressions, which, in turn, increase purchase intention.

While the investigation of hyperbole as a rhetorical device in discourse may be less extensive than that of metaphor, evidence from advertising suggested that hyperbole, particularly when presented in a visual mode, can emphasise the superiority, uniqueness, or high-quality of the products or services (e.g., Huang, 2020). Incorporating hyperbolic expressions in advertising can enhance affective text perception, making the messages more attractive and persuasive to

the audience, compared with their literal counterparts. For example, by interrogating the impact of figurative language in right-wing anti-immigration statements on voters, Boeynaems et al. (2021) have shown that hyperboles can amplify the intensity of anti-immigration messages and contribute to their emotive power. Following Boeynaems et al. (2021), we propose that hyperbole in advertisements can enhance readers' affective perception of the information presented. By positively exaggerating the characteristics of products or services, these messages have the potential to evoke stronger emotional responses and contribute to a more positive text perception, compared with their literal counterparts. The hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H2b: In advertising, hyperboles positively impact affective text perception compared with literal expressions, which, in turn, increase purchase intention.

So far, we have examined the separate use of metaphor and hyperbole to understand their effects on perception and persuasion in communication. However, the effectiveness of combinatory figurative language, particularly in advertising communication, has received relatively limited attention, and the existing research has provided mixed results. While some studies have shown that combining metaphor and hyperbole in a text can have a synergistic effect and enhance persuasion (e.g., Burgers et al., 2016), other studies have found no significant difference and may even be counterproductive (e.g., Boeynaems et al., 2021; Mothersbaugh et al., 2002). In the current thesis, following Burgers et al. (2016), we further hypothesise that the combinatory of metaphor and hyperbole in a text at the same time can result in an incremental processing effect on text perceptions that is more powerful and persuasive compared to their separate use. The combined use of metaphor and hyperbole creates a more intricate and layered persuasive message, making it resistant to refutation, thus potentially increasing its persuasiveness (Burgers et al., 2016). To uncover the underlying mechanisms and identify the boundary conditions under which metaphor or hyperbole is more likely to be effective or counterproductive in persuasive communication, we formulate the following hypothesis:

H3: The combined use of metaphor and hyperbole in advertisements is more persuasive than either metaphorical or hyperbolic advertisements, which in turn is more persuasive than non-figurative advertisements.

Building upon the above discussion, we posit that metaphor can enhance the persuasiveness of advertising by increasing recipients' affective and cognitive text perceptions. Likewise, hyperbole can increase the persuasive power of advertising by imbuing the text with heightened affection. Moreover, the combined use of metaphor and hyperbole is likely to yield greater persuasive effectiveness than either employed alone. Figure 2.8 in Section 2.2.6 has delineated the conceptual model grounded in these hypotheses, explaining the relationships between figurative expressions, text perceptions (affective and cognitive), and consumer purchase intention.

7.3 Methodology

This chapter examines the effectiveness of figurative language in advertising. To achieve this, an experiment with a 2 (metaphor: present, absent) x 2 (hyperbole: present, absent) between-subjects design was conducted to investigate the direct and indirect effects (via cognitive text perception and affective text perception) of figurative language on purchase intention.

The study moved through two stages. The first stage involved a pre-test for ensuring the validity of the stimulus materials. The main purpose of this pre-test was to verify the consistency between participants' perceptions and the researcher's intentions regarding the metaphors and hyperbole used in luxury hotel advertisements. In the second stage of the study, we tested our hypotheses using a survey-embedded experiment in which participants were exposed to a luxury hotel advertisement that was framed with either figurative expression or nonfigurative expression. The experiments were carried out on an online crowdsourcing platform called Amazon's Mechanical Turk (Mturk)²⁸ and the questionnaires used for the experiments were designed on SurveyMonkey.²⁹ In the following sections, I will explain the experimental design, stimulus materials, participants, and experimental procedures and steps associated with the pre-test and the main test.

²⁸ Mturk, <https://www.mturk.com/>

²⁹ <https://www.surveymonkey.com/>

7.3.1 Stimulus Materials

The current experimental research has four conditions, namely (1) metaphor only condition (**M** condition), (2) hyperbole only condition (**H** condition), (3) the combination of metaphor and hyperbole condition (**MH** condition), and (4) the control condition (**Con** condition).

Each condition presented participants with an advertisement for a fictitious five-star hotel named *Camellia Hotel*, providing information about various aspects of the hotel, including its location, room accommodations, catering services, recreational facilities, and meeting facilities. To increase the authenticity and external validity of the study, all figurative expressions deployed in the experiments were sourced from the corpus analyses of luxury hotel websites. The corpus, its composition, analysis method, and analysis results were extensively discussed in Chapters 4, Chapter 5, and Chapter 6 of the thesis. In each experimental condition, the advertisement comprised approximately 130 words, divided into five distinct sentences labelled as S1, S2, S3, S4, and S5. In the figurative conditions (M, H, and MH), each sentence contained at least one figurative expression, whether it be metaphor, hyperbole, or both, with the exception of sentence 5 (S5). Care was taken to minimise the inclusion of other forms of figurative language whenever possible.

For a sample set of manipulated sentences across the four experimental conditions, please refer to Table 2.4 (Section 2.2.6.1). An overview of the stimuli (revised version after the pre-test) is accessible in Appendix A.

7.3.2 Pre-test to Ensure Validity of Stimulus Materials

Prior to the main study, a pre-test was conducted to assess several key aspects of the stimulus materials used in the experiment. The objectives of the pre-test were threefold: (1) to confirm that the metaphorical framed advertisement was perceived as more metaphorical than the literal advertisement, (2) to confirm that the hyperbolic framed advertisement was perceived as more exaggerated than the literal advertisement, and (3) to ensure that the language materials deployed in the figurative advertisement and non-figurative advertisement did not differ in other important aspects. Following the methodology suggested by Cardillo et al. (2010, 2017) and Tay (2020), we checked whether these stimulus materials were perceived differently in the dimensions of metaphoricity (**MET**), extremity (**EXT**) but were equal in the dimensions of

novelty (**NOV**), naturalness (**NAT**), appropriateness (**APP**), understandability (**UND**), and imageability (**IMA**).

In the between-subjects design, participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions: the **Metaphor** condition (M), the **Hyperbole** condition (H), the combination of **Metaphor** and **Hyperbole** condition (MH), or the **Control** condition (Con). For each condition (M, H, MH and Con), seven self-administered questionnaires were created for the pre-test to measure whether the advertisements reflected metaphor (*Metaphoricity*) and hyperbole (*Extremity*), as well as whether the advertisements were perceived similarly in terms of *naturalness*, *appropriateness*, *understandability*, *imageability* and *novelty* (Cardillo, 2010, 2016; Diaz et al., 2011; Tay, 2020). Therefore, the pre-test involved a total of 28 questionnaires (four experimental conditions and seven variables). All items were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 to 7 (e.g., 1 = not metaphorical at all; 7 = very metaphorical).³⁰

A total of 1,512 participants initially participated in the study, with 54 participants assigned to each questionnaire. The collected responses were scrutinised for completion, attention check, participants' IP addresses, native language, and educational background. After eliminating incomplete or unqualified responses, a final sample of 1,260 participants (45 for each questionnaire) was retained, representing 83.3 per cent of the total recruited participants. Demographic variables were analysed using analysis of variance (ANOVAs), which indicated no significant differences ($p > .05$) across the different questionnaires. Among the participants, 56 per cent ($N = 709$) were male. The median age group of the participants was 35-44 years old. Additionally, 73.4 per cent ($N = 925$) of the participants had completed at least a college education.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with post-hoc Tukey HSD tests was performed to determine whether there were statistically significant differences in the seven dimensions (MET, EXT, NOV, NAT, APP, UND, and IMA) of the stimulus materials across the four experimental conditions. The results of the pre-test indicated that overall, the manipulation of

³⁰ To ensure the authenticity of the stimulus as a “real luxury hotel ad” and the ecological validity of the experiment, participants were asked to rate the *naturalness*, *appropriateness*, *understandability*, *imageability* and *novelty* of the advertisement without being informed about its design, purpose, or character. Therefore, participants were not provided with information about what constitutes a novel metaphor.

the metaphorical advertisement (M and MH conditions) was successful. However, it appeared that the manipulation of the hyperbolic advertisements (both H and MH conditions) did not yield the intended effect and required further revision. Specifically, slight adjustments were needed for sentence 3 (S3) and sentence 4 (S4) in the hyperbole condition (H). It was found that S4 of the H condition was perceived as similar to that of the M condition in terms of metaphoricity. One possible reason could be the presence of the idiomatic expression “in the blink of an eye” in S4 of the hyperbolic advertisement, which might have been mistakenly thought of as a metaphor by participants. It is important to note that previous experimental research has shown that the processing mechanism of idiomatic expressions differs from that of literal expressions (Caillies & Butcher, 2007). To restrict types of figurative devices to merely metaphor and hyperbole in my stimuli and rule out the possibility that the existence of idiom, as a confounding variable, influences recipients’ perceptions of the advertisement, I replaced “in the blink of an eye” with another hyperbolic expression that conveys the similar meaning. Moreover, we adapted the hyperbolic advertisements to enhance their level of exaggeration, taking into account the suggestions from native English speakers by adding extra hyperbolic elements to increase the perceived intensity of the advertisements. Subsequently, we suggested these refined advertisements as suitable for the main experimental phase.

For the report on the pre-test, including details about its participants, procedures, measures of dependent variables, descriptive findings, statistical results, and discussions, please refer to Appendix C.

7.3.3 Main Experiment

7.3.3.1 Procedures and Measures

In order to test the hypotheses, in the main experiment, questionnaires were designed to measure participants’ cognitive text perception, affective text perception, and luxury hotel reservation intention. The main experiment employed similar platforms to the pre-test, using the SurveyMonkey platform for questionnaire administration and Amazon’s Mechanical Turk for participant recruitment. The ethics approval was obtained prior to running the study (refer to Appendix B).

The survey questionnaire in the main experiment comprised three parts. The initial part provided a brief introduction to the study and obtained participants’ informed consent.

Following that, participants were instructed to imagine planning a three-day holiday trip with a partner or friend and looking for a luxury hotel within their budget for accommodation. They were then presented with an advertisement in one of the four experimental conditions (based on the revised stimulus materials from the pre-test). Unlike the pre-test, the advertisement in the main experiment was displayed as a passage instead of sentence by sentence.

After reading the advertisement, participants were instructed to identify three keywords from the text and proceeded to answer questions related to their perceptions and behavioural intentions. The inclusion criteria for participants in the study required them to provide all three keywords from the text, with only minor typos allowed, as a means to verify that they had carefully read the advertisement. During the screening process, it was observed that some participants provided keywords that were not related to the stimuli presented or listed long sentences from the stimuli instead of three distinct keywords. Participants who did not meet this criterion, although still receiving payment, were excluded from the data analysis. The third part of the questionnaire consisted of questions regarding participants' demographic information, including gender, education, income, age range, and native language.

After providing demographic information, participants were debriefed and received a completion code that allowed them to collect rewards for participating in the study.

The main experiment employed well-established scales from the relevant studies to measure all variables, anchoring on a seven-point Likert-scale (1 = "Strongly disagree", 7 = "Strong agree").

Participants' behavioural intention towards the hotel was assessed by Akhtar et al. (2020) with the necessary modifications for the current study: "*After viewing this advertisement, I am willing to make a reservation at Camellia Hotel.*"

Recipients' perceptions towards the advertisement were measured in two dimensions: *Cognitive text perception* and *Affective text perception*, following the approach of Sundar (1999) and Boeynaems et al. (2017). *Cognitive text perception* was assessed using items related to the advertisement's (1) accurate, (2) believable, (3) comprehensive, (4) clear, (5) coherent, (6) concise, and (7) well-written (Cronbach $\alpha = .840$). *Affective text perception* was operationalised by asking participants to indicate whether they found the advertisement to be (1) enjoyable, (2) interesting, (3) boring (reverse coded), (4) lively, and (5) pleasing (Cronbach $\alpha = .632$).

7.3.3.2 Participants

A total of 441 participants from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk took part in this experiment and received a payment of US\$1.0 for their participation. After excluding responses that did not meet the qualification criteria, a final sample size of 231 participants was used for the analysis. The distribution of participants across the experimental conditions was as follows: Metaphor condition ($n = 59$), Hyperbole condition ($n = 59$), MH condition ($n = 61$), and Control condition ($n = 52$). The characteristics of the participants in each condition are presented in Table 7.2.

Table 7.1 Sample profile

	Frequency ($N = 231$)	Percentage
Gender		
Male	149	64.5%
Female	82	35.5%
Age		
21 to 31 years	91	39.4%
32 to 41 years	84	36.4%
42 to 51 years	31	13.4%
52 to 61 years	18	7.8%
Over 61 years	7	3.0%
Education		
Did not attend high school	0	0
Some high school	0	0
Graduated from high school	0	0
Some college	35	15.2%
Graduated from college	113	48.9%
Some graduate school	15	6.5%
Completed graduate school with a Master’s degree	65	28.1%
Completed graduate school with a Doctorate degree	3	1.3%
Income		
≤US\$30,000	35	15.2%
US\$30,001–US\$60,000	90	39.0%
US\$60,001–US\$90,000	70	30.3%
US\$90,001–US\$120,000	27	11.7%
≥US\$120,001	9	3.9%

Among the 231 valid samples, 64.5% ($n = 149$) were male, while 35.5% ($n = 82$) were female. The average age of the participants was 36.9 years, ranging from 21 to 69 years. The majority of respondents (84.8%) reported having completed college or attained a higher level of

education. When asked about their total household income last year, the highest proportion of participants reported falling within the range of US\$30,001 to US\$60,000 (39.0%), followed by the range of US\$60,001–US\$90,000 (30.3%).

7.4 Results

I tested the hypotheses regarding the effects of metaphor and hyperbole on consumers' intention to make reservations at the hotel. Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 7.3, offering a snapshot of the data.

Table 7.2 Overall descriptive results

Experiment ($N = 441$)	Metaphor		No metaphor	
	No hyperbole	Hyperbole	No hyperbole	Hyperbole
Purchase intention	5.97 (0.718)	6.11 (0.608)	5.88 (0.732)	5.78 (0.767)
Cognitive text perception	5.78 (0.823)	5.67 (0.664)	5.49 (0.702)	5.59 (0.745)
Affective text perception	5.63 (0.801)	5.48 (0.673)	5.19 (0.801)	5.33 (0.833)

A two-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted, with metaphor and hyperbole as independent variables and purchase intention as a dependent variable, to test for the direct effects of metaphor and hyperbole on reservation intention. The analysis revealed a significant main effect of metaphor on purchase intention, $F(1,227) = 4.99$, $p = .022$, $\eta^2_p = .022$, as suggested in Table 7.3. However, hyperbole did not have a statistically significant effect on consumers' reservation ($p = .82$) and there was not a statistically significant interaction between the effects of metaphor and hyperbole, $F(1,227) = 1.85$, $p = .18$, $\eta^2_p = .01$.

Direct effects on reservation intention

Table 7.3 Results of 2 (metaphor: present, absent) x 2 (hyperbole: present, absent) analyses of variance with the purchase intention, cognitive text perception, and affective text perception as dependent variables

IV	DV	<i>df</i> 1	<i>df</i> 2	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2_p
Metaphor	Purchase intention	1	227	4.99	0.026*	0.02
	Cog. text perception	1	227	3.52	0.06	0.02
	Aff. text perception	1	227	8.32	0.004**	0.04
Hyperbole	Purchase intention	1	227	0.05	0.82	0.00
	Cog. text perception	1	227	0.00	0.96	0.00
	Aff. text perception	1	227	0.01	0.93	0.00
Metaphor x Hyperbole	Purchase intention	1	227	1.85	0.18	0.01
	Cog. text perception	1	227	1.10	0.30	0.01
	Aff. text perception	1	227	1.93	0.17	0.01

Note. *Significant at $p < .05$ level, ** significant at $p < .01$ level

Text perceptions as mediators

H1 and *H2* posited that metaphor and hyperbole positively influence customers' purchase intention, via affective text perception and/or cognitive text perception. For mediation to be possible, the independent variable has to have a direct impact on the potential mediator (Hayes, 2009).³¹ Therefore, we tested for the impact of metaphor and hyperbole on cognitive text perception and affective text perception. A two-way ANOVA with metaphor and hyperbole as independent variables and cognitive text perception as a dependent variable showed no direct or interaction effects of metaphor and hyperbole on cognitive text perception (see Table 7.3).

³¹ In the classic causal steps approach to mediation analysis (Baron & Kenny, 1986; MacKinnon et al., 2004), the total effect of *X* on *Y* (path *c*) is considered a prerequisite for conducting mediation analysis. However, the contemporary consensus among statisticians suggests that the total effect (path *c*) should not be a decisive criterion for testing mediation (Hayes, 2009; Shrout & Bolger, 2002). It is valid to infer that *M* mediates the relationship between *X* and *Y* even if the total effect (path *c*) does not reach significance. Further information regarding mediation analysis using SPSS can be found in Hayes (2009, 2018a, 2018b), and Hayes and Preacher (2014).

The analysis unveiled that the advertisements containing metaphorical language significantly improved affective text perception compared to the advertisement with non-metaphorical expressions, as indicated by a statistically significant result $F(1,227) = 8.36, p = .004, \eta^2_p = .04$. However, hyperbole was found have no significant effect on affective text perception ($p = .93$), and there was no statistically significant interaction observed between the effects of metaphor and hyperbole, $F(1,227) = 1.93, p = .17, \eta^2_p = .01$.

These results indicated that the metaphorically framed advertisement was perceived as more emotive and affective compared to nonmetaphorical statements, aligning with our expectations. However, contrary to our hypothesis, we did not observe any effects of hyperbole on consumers' emotional and cognitive perceptions.

Mediation analysis

Table 7.4 Correlation Matrix

	Cognitive text perception	Affective text perception	Purchase Intention
Cognitive text perception	—		
Affective text perception	0.686 ^{***}	—	
Purchase Intention	0.464 ^{***}	0.506^{***}	—

Note. *Significant at $p < .05$ level, **significant at $p < .01$ level, ***significant at $p < 0.001$ level.

To answer our research questions, which asked how the two dimensions of text perception are related to purchase intention, to begin, we initiated an examination of the correlations between cognitive text perception, affective text perception, and purchase intention (refer to Table 7.4 for the results of correlation analyses). The results indicated a positive correlation between affective text perception and purchase intention. To further explore possible causal relations between the type of figurative language, text perception (affective), and purchase intention, we conducted mediation analyses.

To investigate whether consumers' reservation intention towards a luxury hotel was indirectly influenced through the mediation of affective text perception, the Process macro v3.0 (Hayes, 2018a; Model 4, 5,000 bootstrap samples) was conducted in SPSS, which allows for mediation analysis with multiple categorical independent variables. Since hyperbole did not have a significant impact on cognitive text perception and affective text perception, the mediation model was not estimated for hyperbole. For detailed statistical results, please refer to Table 7.5.

Table 7.5 Partially standardised indirect effects of figurative language on purchase intention via affective text perception

Experiment ($N = 441$)					
IV	Mediator	DV	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	95% CI
M	Affective text perception	Purchase intention	0.1749	0.0808	[.0394, .3519]*
H			0.0534	0.063	[-.0762, .1819]
MH			0.1137	0.0673	[-.0022, 2600]

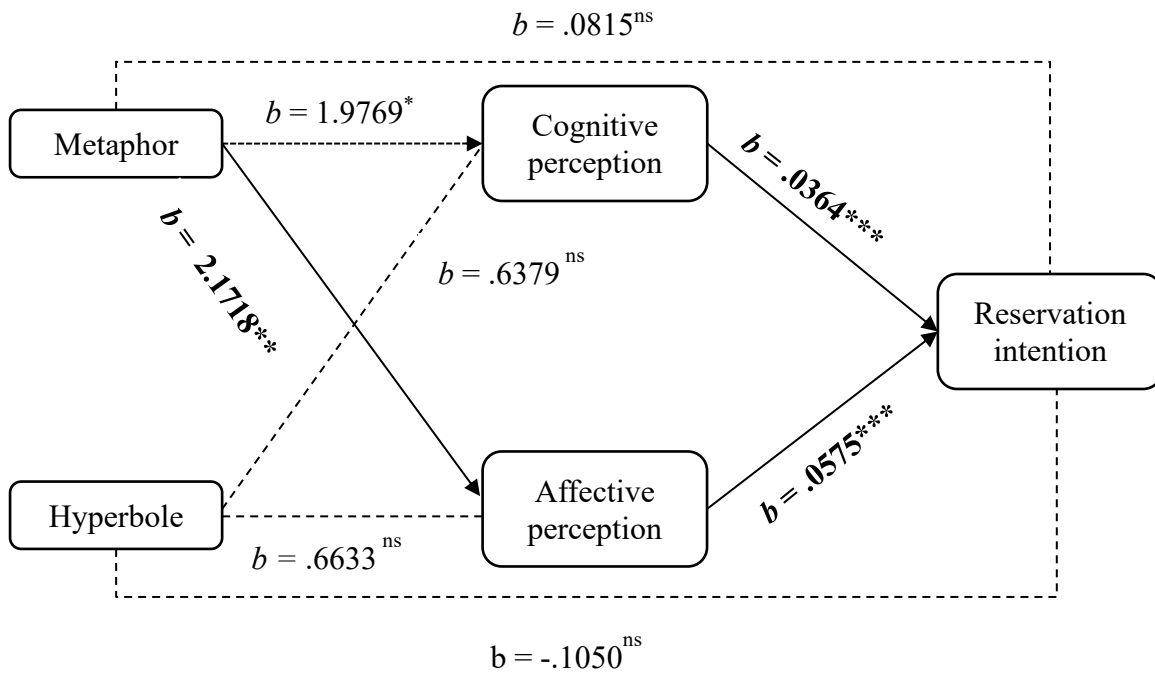
Note. *b* indicates the value of the unstandardised indirect effect, and *SE* indicates the standard error estimate.

*significant at $p < .05$ level (95% confidence interval does not include zero).

The mediation analyses conducted suggested that though metaphor cannot directly predict consumers' reservation intention for a luxury hotel ($b = 0.0815$, $SE = 0.1345$, 95% CI [-.1836, 0.3466]), by introducing affective text perception as a mediator, we estimated a significant indirect effect for reservation intention ($b = 0.063$, $SE = 0.081$, 95% CI [.0394, .3519]), as shown in Table 7.5. In essence, the results indicated an indirect impact of metaphors on purchase intentions. Metaphorical advertisements were perceived as more emotionally engaging than non-metaphorical advertisements, which in turn, elevated the likelihood of recipients opting to make a reservation at the hotel. However, no interactions between metaphor and hyperbole were found. Contrary to our expectations, we found no indirect effects of metaphor on reservation intention via cognitive text perception,³² although results showed a

³² While the direct effect between the predictor variable "metaphor" and the outcome variable "cognitive text perception" was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), the p value of the model summary (with "figurative language" as the predictor and "cognitive text perception" as the

positive association between cognitive text perception and purchase intention. Figure 7.1 illustrates all the relationships between the variables examined in the study.



Note. * significant at $p < .05$ level, ** significant at $p < .01$ level; *** $p < 0.001$ level. For the mediation analyses, the non-figurative language served as a baseline.

Figure 7.1 Indirect effects of figurative language on reservation intention, mediated by cognitive text perception and affective text perception

7.5 Summary and Discussion

The objective of this chapter is to investigate the effectiveness of figurative language, as well as the underlying mechanisms of the persuasiveness of luxury hotel advertisements among potential customers using an experimental technique. We investigated whether the use of

outcome variable) was not significant ($p = .212$). Therefore, we did not conclude that metaphorical language has a significant impact on cognitive text perception.

metaphor, hyperbole, and their combination can enhance the appeal of advertisement messages and consequently increase consumers' intention to make a purchase. Our findings suggested that the presence of metaphorical expressions in advertising indirectly increases the likelihood of individuals making a hotel reservation, via cognitive text perception. The following section provides a discussion of the results of this chapter.

We hypothesise that the employment of metaphorical expression will lead to higher levels of both cognitive text perception and affective text perception among recipients. This, in turn, is expected to result in an increase in purchase intention, as indicated by *H1* and *H2a*, respectively, respectively. However, *H1* was not supported, as the presence or absence of metaphors in advertisements did not have a significant influence on recipients' cognitive understanding of the text. One potential explanation for the absence of the effects of metaphors on cognitive text perception could be the relative simplicity or lack of complexity of the advertisement language used. Despite participants being presented with a fictitious five-star luxury hotel that they are not familiar with, their cognitive text perceptions remain consistently high across all four experimental conditions (mean > 5.64 on a scale of 1 to 7, refer to Appendix C). This suggests that participants are able to fully comprehend the information presented in the advertisement without relying on metaphors. According to the Metaphor Processing Termination Hypothesis (Robins & Mayer, 2000), metaphors are most effective in shaping an individual's perception of a problem when they are essential for understanding. Hotel advertisements are relatively straightforward and do not demand readers to invest additional cognitive efforts. Therefore, these metaphors may not significantly mediate readers' attitudes towards the advertisements. In this case, conducting future studies that expose participants to more complex products or services (i.e., different types of products) could provide further insights into this dimension and potentially yield different results.

Through the correlation analysis, we found positive associations between cognitive perception and purchase intention, as well as between affective perception and purchase intention. The subsequent mediation analysis revealed the indirect effects of metaphors on the persuasiveness of advertisements, via affective text perception. Metaphorical advertisements were found to be more enjoyable, interesting, and pleasing compared to non-metaphorical advertisements, which, in turn, positively influenced consumers' attitudes towards the luxury hotel. Therefore, hypothesis *H2a*, which postulated a positive relationship between metaphor and purchase intention via affective text perception, was fully supported. This finding also aligns with

previous experimental research emphasising the persuasive effects of metaphorical language in advertising (e.g., Byun & Jang, 2015; Burgers et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2012; McQuarrie & Phillips, 2005). Particularly in advertisements for luxury travel products that emphasise hedonism, the prominence of affective text perception tends to surpass that of cognitive text perception (c.f. Byun & Jang, 2015).

The experimental results did not provide support for *H2b*, which postulated that hyperbolic advertisements would lead to more positive affective text perception compared to non-hyperbolic advertisements. Moreover, it was expected that enhanced affective text perception will subsequently amplify consumers' intention to make a reservation. Nevertheless, the findings did not offer empirical backing for this hypothesis. In this regard, in line with previous literature (e.g., Stern & Callister, 2020), our results supported the conclusion that the intensity of the message, specifically through exaggerated expressions, did not significantly influence consumers' purchase intentions.

This lack of impact of hyperbolic expressions on buying intentions may potentially be attributed to the prevalence of intensified statements in luxury advertising, which perceptually have become functionally inert, especially in the luxury industry (Stern & Callister, 2020). Consumers may have become accustomed to such intensified language, perceiving it as commonplace and innocuous in their processing of advertisement messages. Repeated exposure to intense and emotionally charged advertising language in real-world advertisements can lead to desensitisation of the stimulus, resulting in a loss of its intensity and emotional potency (Tryon, 2005, Boeynaems, 2021). While the current study attempts to inspect the causal relationship between hyperbolic language and purchase intention in luxury tourism advertising, future research could expand on this inquiry by conducting cross-sectoral investigations and examining whether adding hyperbolic language to advertising for budget hotels is more or less appealing to potential customers. We can better understand the persuasion mechanism of hyperbole by taking into account various scenarios in which hyperbole is used and its applicability in different industry contexts.

In contrast to our initial expectations (*H3*), the combined use of metaphor and hyperbole in advertisements did not prove to be the most persuasive approach when compared to the separate use of metaphor and hyperbole, as well as literal expressions. *H3*, therefore, was not supported. This finding is consistent with the conclusions from Mothersbaugh et al. (2002) and

Burgers et al. (2015), both of which suggested that stacking different types of figurative devices has a limited impact on the overall persuasiveness of advertisements, in comparison to advertisements that deploy only a single type of figurative device. Mothersbaugh et al. (2002), indicated that combining figurative devices that leverage redundant mechanisms does not lead to an incremental enhancement of advertisement processing. Since metaphor and hyperbole both involve incongruity in semantic aspects, their combination might not confer additional persuasive effects beyond what each individual figure can achieve separately. Similarly, our study showed that the combination of two types of figurative devices did not yield additional message processing compared to advertisements with only one type of figurative device.

7.6 Chapter Conclusion

The focal point of this chapter is in line with the second research objective of this thesis, as outlined in Section 2.2.1, aiming to investigate the effectiveness of figurative language in promotional discourse. To achieve this, the chapter attempts to construct an effective advertising persuasion model based on the hypotheses that figurative devices can positively influence recipients' cognitive text perception and affective text perception, which in turn, facilitate recipients' purchase decisions.

The inquiry is addressed using an experimental technique. Drawing from the discourse analyses conducted in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, four different versions of fictional luxury hotel advertisements are created, which contain metaphors, hyperboles, the combination of metaphors and hyperboles, and literal expressions, respectively. These varied versions are then presented to the study participants for rating and evaluation. Participants are recruited online. After reading the advertisement, participants are asked to provide their attitudes towards the advertisement and their inclination to make a reservation.

The experimental findings indicate that the incorporation of metaphorical expressions in advertisements renders the text more interesting and enjoyable, thereby boosting the recipients' affective text perception of the content. The intensified emotional engagement then increases the likelihood of recipients considering a hotel reservation. In contrast to metaphor, hyperbole plays a more subtle and limited role in advertising persuasion. Moreover, the results suggest

that in the context of tourism advertising, which is often associated with hedonic consumption, affective text perception is found to be more effective than cognitive text perception (e.g., Duman and Mattila, 2005; Drolet et al., 2007).

Based on these findings, this study makes theoretical and practical contributions in several aspects. First, the study offers empirical evidence regarding the persuasive effectiveness of figurative language, especially metaphor, in luxury tourism advertising. Through cross-domain mappings that positively delineate the product, metaphors have the ability to imbue the text with enjoyment and delight, thereby achieving the effect of persuasion. Secondly, the study suggests the importance of paying attention to “micro-executional aspects” of advertising (Burgers et al., 2015, p. 528). Especially when exploring the persuasive influence of rhetoric, thoroughly inspecting its operational mechanisms can not only improve the efficiency of advertising, but also contribute to the advancement, refinement, and enhancement of existing theories regarding figurative language. Finally, although metaphors have been found to be particularly effective in advertising, it is important not to generalise the persuasive power of metaphor to other figurative devices, which is implicitly assumed in the previous literature (e.g., McQuarrie & Mick 1996; van Enschoot et al., 2010), as different figurative devices may exhibit distinct levels, ways, and types of effects.

However, the model would do better if we can consider other contextual factors that may mediate the persuasive power. Such research endeavours would provide the impetus for the theoretical and analytical refinement of my future exploration through developing a more complex picture of how figurative language influences recipients. For example, investigating whether perceived novelty acts as a mediator in the impact of figuratively framed advertisements would be a valuable research direction. Previous research has suggested different working paths underlying the persuasiveness of *conventional* metaphors and *novel* metaphors (e.g., Ahrens et al., 2022; Burgers et al., 2016). Novel metaphors are persuasive primarily by presenting the reader with a “puzzle”. After successfully solving the ‘puzzle’ between source domain and target domain, recipients would gain a sense of pleasure and are more likely to purchase the advertised product (e.g., McQuarrie & Mick, 2003, 2009; Mothersbaugh, 2002). In contrast, conventional metaphors are a means to enhance the concreteness of the advertisement and facilitate persuasion as they can make abstract product attributes more explicit. In the context of luxury tourism advertisements, consumers may have certain expectations regarding the level of novelty in the expressions used. Moderately novel

expressions can bring a sense of pleasure and enjoyment, which can enhance the persuasive effects of the advertisements. Exploring the impact of the degree of novelty on persuasion effects would be an intriguing avenue for future research.

Secondly, in previous experimental research on metaphor and persuasion, it has been observed that many stimuli employed extended metaphors (e.g., *beast* or *disease* metaphor, Thibodeau & Boroditsky, 2011, 2013) or repeated a conceptual metaphor (e.g., Mohnke et al., 2022) throughout the entire text. These extended metaphors typically derive from the same conceptual metaphor (Robins & Mayer, 2000), thereby maintaining a consistent and coherent semantic association. In the current study, participants were exposed to hotel advertisements that incorporated metaphorical expressions from various source domains, such as *oasis*, *music*, and *body*. It is possible that using metaphors from different source domains may not have generated a significant number of semantic associations between target domain and source domain (Whaley, 1991; Van Stee et al., 2018), making it more challenging for participants to form a cohesive understanding of the intended message. Therefore, the less favourable cognitive perception of participants may be caused by the lack of clear semantic associations between the different source domains used in metaphorical expressions and the attributes or qualities of the hotel. In future studies, researchers may consider using metaphors from a single or closely related conceptual domain to enhance the semantic associations and provide a more coherent investigation of the persuasive impact of metaphors in advertising.

To conclude, this chapter demonstrates that the use of metaphorical language in advertisements has an indirect positive effect on individuals' willingness to book luxury hotels. This effect is mediated by the emotional perception of texts triggered by metaphors. In line with previous studies by Mothersbaugh et al. (2002) and Boeynaems et al. (2021), the present findings indicate that the combined use of metaphor and hyperbole does not result in additional effects on information processing and persuasion. Finally, our analysis does not imply that using hyperbole in luxury hotel websites lacks persuasive effects. Instead, it highlights the need for a cross-sectoral comparative analysis to examine the potential impact of hyperbole in different contexts, such as budget hotel advertisements. By comparing the persuasive effects of hyperbole in different contexts, we can gain a more holistic understanding of its effectiveness and determine whether it is more appealing to potential customers in specific conditions.

8. Chapter 8 Thesis Conclusion

8.1 Chapter Introduction

The concluding chapter of this thesis serves as a summary and reflection on the key findings that have emerged from the research in relation to the two research objectives. It synthesises the main contributions and innovations of the study, thereby highlighting the significance of the research in the field. In addition, the chapter acknowledges the limitations and constraints of the current research process. By identifying potential avenues for future research, the chapter encourages further investigation to build upon the findings and expand our understanding of the manifestation, utilisation, and effectiveness of figurative language in promotional tourism discourse.

8.2 Summary of Key Findings and Contributions

The shifting view of figurative language as an essential feature of language has sparked a thriving field of research in cognitive linguistics, fostering theoretical discussions and empirical investigations that shed light on the intricate ways in which language, cognition, and context are intertwined.

Promotional discourse has long been seen as a rich source of authentic language data for investigating figuration in communication. Advertising, in particular, is known for its extensive use of rhetorical devices to attract audiences, influence perceptions, and persuade consumers. However, existing research on figurative language in the context of promotional discourse has been relatively limited in scope, often examining a restricted subset of linguistic or conceptual metaphors. The lack of large-scale quantitative investigations in this domain has impeded our knowledge of the overall frequency and distribution of metaphors in advertising. In addition, previous studies have mainly focused on metaphor and neglected other common rhetorical devices, such as hyperbole. Without a systematic and transparent approach to identifying and analysing the diverse figurative language used, our understanding of the specific functions and effects of rhetoric, as well as the discourse genre remains constrained.

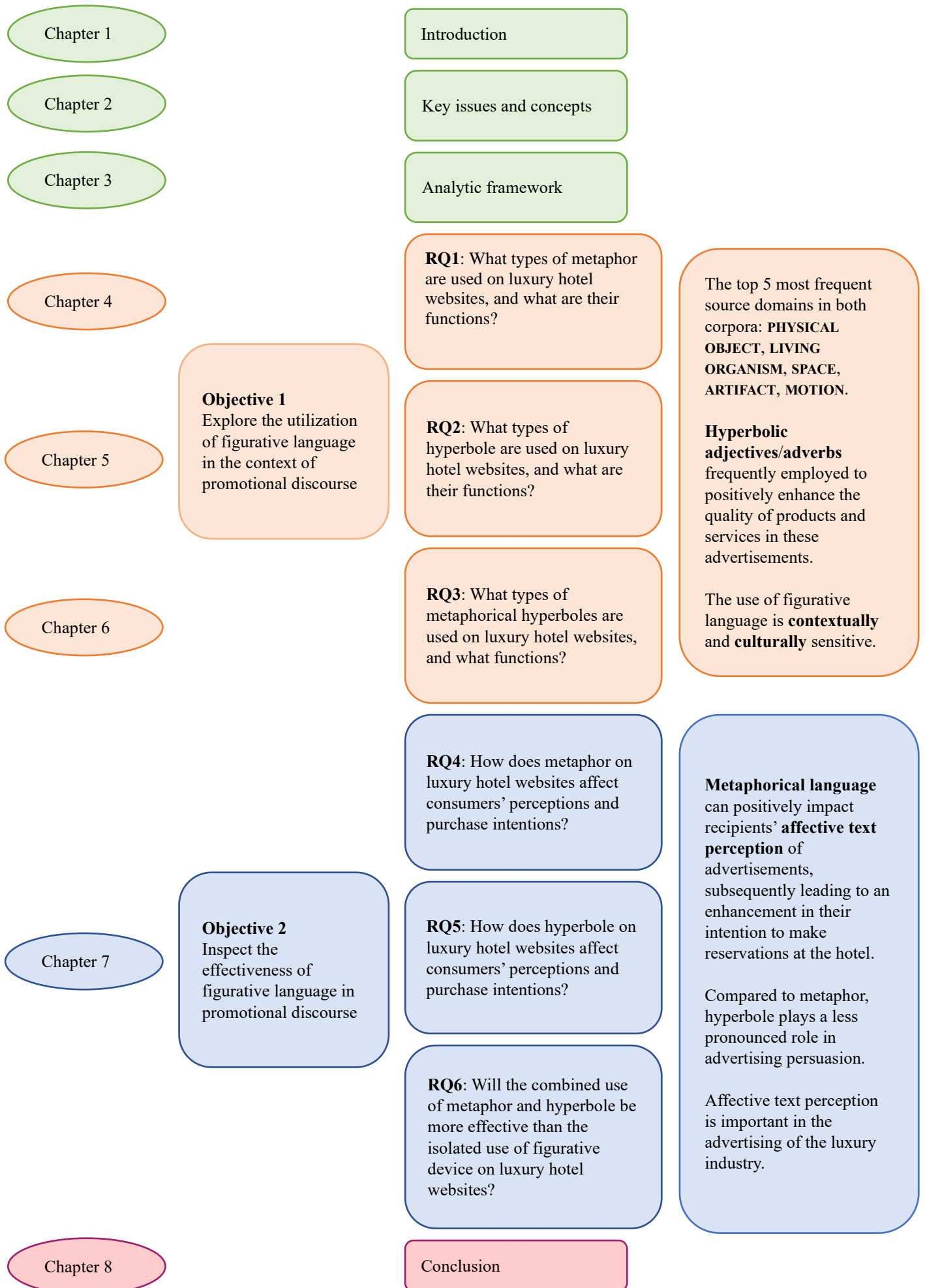


Figure 8.1 Overall structure of the thesis

The thesis aims to address the aforementioned gaps and shortcomings in the existing literature on figurative language in promotional discourse. A corpus of approximately 186,000 natural language words containing the written text of luxury hotel websites located in Singapore and Hong Kong was built and annotated to identify metaphorical and hyperbolic expressions, using existing methods such as MIPVU (Steen et al., 2010) and HIP (Burgers et al., 2016). Throughout the annotation process, the method for hyperbole identification was refined and enhanced by specifying the criteria for meaning comparison and reference materials, leading to a more detailed protocol for identifying hyperbole in discourse. The application of this protocol to promotional discourse has proven to be both effective and reliable.

The data analyses centred around two main research objectives: 1) **to investigate the utilisation of figurative language within the context of luxury hotel websites**, and 2) **to examine the persuasive effects of figurative language in the communication of the luxury hotel industry**. The first research objective has led to the formulation of three research questions, which were addressed in Chapter 4, Chapter 5, and Chapter 6 respectively. The second objective, along with its three associated research questions, was discussed in Chapter 7. The overall structure of the entire thesis is displayed in Figure 8.1. In the following sections, I will provide a summary of the findings and implications pertaining to these two research objectives.

8.2.1 Research Objective 1

The first research objective of the current thesis, along with the three main research questions derived from it, aims to understand the manifestation, distribution, and function of figurative language, especially metaphor and hyperbole, in promotional discourse:

Chapter 4: What types of metaphors are used on luxury hotel websites, and what are their functions?

Chapter 5: What types of hyperboles are used on luxury hotel websites, and what are their functions?

Chapter 6: What types of metaphorical hyperboles are used on luxury hotel websites, and what are their functions?

Findings of Chapter 4

In Chapter 4, our attention is directed towards inspecting how metaphorical expressions are deployed by luxury hotels to discursively construct their luxury image and attract potential guests. To provide a meaningful analysis of metaphor use in promotional discourse, we systematically code the source domain and referent of each metaphorical expression (which hotel facility the expression refers to). This coding process allows us to compare the frequency of metaphors, identify the types and forms of metaphors used, and analyse their functions within the discourse.

The analysis was approached through a two-fold methodology. The study first employed a quantitative data analytic method to gauge the unstructured and underexplored patterns of metaphor usage in the corpus, especially examining the relationships between source domain, hotel facilities, and hotel locations. Following the quantitative analysis, a textual analytic method is used to interpret the significant associations between the variables and instances of metaphor identified in the analysed texts.

Summarising, the analysis observed a total of 6,990 metaphorical keywords, including a diverse range of 27 source domains. Among others, the five most productive source domains in the corpus are LIVING ORGANISM, PHYSICAL OBJECT, SPACE, ARTIFACT and MOTION. These results are different from Jaworska (2017), which identified BODY, NATURAL PRECIOUS ELEMENT, COLOR, TASTE and RELIGION as the most commonly used metaphors in tourism discourse.

The picture is more complex and multidimensional, however, as the log-linear regression model revealed significant associations between source domains, hotel facilities, and regions, implying that the choice of metaphorical expressions is not arbitrary but is influenced by specific factors related to the hotel's offerings and the cultural background of the target audience. The analysis indicated that our corpus is more likely to use the ADVENTURE metaphor and FORTUNE metaphor in the hotel description section, which offers a general portrayal of the tourist destination and the hotel. These findings are consistent with Manca (2018), which also observed the frequent use of concepts such as DISCOVERY AND ADVENTURE and VALUE AND PRECIOUSNESS in tourism websites to reinforce a compelling picture of a tropical adventure.

We found that the guest room section of the hotel websites introducing the furniture and decoration in the guest rooms prominently features LIVING ORGANISM metaphors and PERCEPTUAL ATTRIBUTE metaphors. These metaphors connect to the multisensory experiences related to the five senses, providing potential guests with a vivid and immersive description of the guest room environment so as to invoke feelings of comfort, luxury, and sensory pleasure. The ARTIFACT metaphors, which emphasise the artistic beauty and craftsmanship of the products or services, are more commonly used in the description of hotel catering services. These metaphors serve to accentuate the visual and gustatory appeal of the food, as well as the creativity of the dining environment.

Also, luxury hotel websites tend to use more conventional metaphors, such as PHYSICAL OBJECT, JOURNEY and MOTION metaphors, when describing meeting facilities and leisure facilities. For example, a conference could be seen as an event consisting of different stages, much like a journey. In this metaphorical narrative, the hotel staff play the role of tour guides, accompanying and assisting the guests throughout the conference process. In this way, the hotel highlights not only the organizational aspect of a conference but also its commitment to providing attentive and hospitable service.

Moreover, the corpus analysis conducted in this study unravelled distinct preferences for different metaphors in the SG and HK corpora, which can be explained through the cultural and linguistic variations between Singapore and Hong Kong. Specifically, the SG corpus shows a prevalence of RELIGION metaphors, exemplified by the expressions such as “*paradise*,” “*sanctuary*,” and “*heaven*,” which highlight the aspects of the mystical East and cultural heritage associated with the destination, in line with the city-state’s current tourism positioning. On the other hand, the luxury hotels in Hong Kong deploy a different strategy to cope with the unfamiliarity of the travel destination. For example, comparing the hotel rooms to a comfortable “home” away from home (i.e., PLACE metaphors) creates a welcoming atmosphere for guests visiting Hong Kong, showing the inclusiveness of Hong Kong as an international city.

In summary, using a mixed-method approach, we have unveiled the presentation and function of metaphors in promotional discourse and demonstrated how various contextual factors shape the usage of metaphors in discourse. The results of Chapter 4 suggest that hotel marketers strategically select different metaphors to convey the unique benefits and experiences

associated with the hotel offerings based on the specific characteristics of the product or service they aim to promote. At the same time, these source domains facilitate the communication of values of aesthetic qualities, high quality standards, and uniqueness that are associated with the notion of luxury, crafting an evocative atmosphere that captivates recipients and heightens their engagement.

Findings of Chapter 5

In Chapter 5, our focus turned to the examination of another common figurative device in promotional tourist texts, namely hyperbole. In this study, we limited the scope of data to international luxury hotels located in Hong Kong and Singapore. The data included 15 hotels from Hong Kong and 23 from Singapore, consisting of 117,132 lexical tokens. HIP was deployed to distinguish between hyperbolic and non-hyperbolic expressions. Each hyperbolic expression was then coded based on its grammatical category and referent (i.e., which hotel facility the expression refers to).

We began by analysing the frequency of hyperbole within different grammatical categories and identifying the most prevalent instances of hyperbole of each category. The findings of the study revealed that hyperbolic expressions accounted for 3.12 per cent of the corpus, which was higher than the 1.0 per cent identified in the genre of news (Burgers et al., 2018), indicating the influence of different genres on the use of hyperbole.

Consistent with previous studies (e.g., Cano Mora, 2011; Crawford Camiciottoli, 2012; Mattiello, 2018), the current corpus analysis demonstrated that hyperbole can be expressed through various linguistic forms, including adjectives and adverbs, verbs, nouns, etc. Evaluative adjectives such as “*perfect*,” “*exclusive*,” and “*exquisite*” are the most frequent keywords in this category observed in our corpus, as they can engender positive attributes in the marketed product (Mattiello, 2018). The second category of the most common hyperboles in our corpus consists of quantifiers, such as “*all*,” “*every*,” or “*any*,” which were often used to discursively boost the range of services offered by hotels. These hyperbolic quantifiers accounted for 0.48 per cent of the corpus. Hyperbole can also be achieved in the form of implicit comparison, often expressed through the use of superlatives, including “*most*,” “*best*,” and “*finest*.” The purpose of employing these expressions is to implicitly compare the hotel’s advantages with those of its peers, thereby differentiating it from its competitors. Beyond these

three categories, hyperbolic expressions can also manifest as verbs, modal auxiliaries, and idioms.

The log-linear regression analysis was then exploited to examine the association between hyperbole categories, hotel facilities, and geographical locations in order to explore whether and how the use of intensified expressions are influenced by different contextual factors. The findings of our study indicated that hyperbolic adjectives and adverbs are commonly used to positively depict hotel rooms and their decorations. When introducing food services, the use of superlatives is prevalent to highlight the exceptional quality of the food and the overall dining experience, although the validity of these comparisons may be challenging to substantiate objectively, as the perception of taste and experiences can be subjective and vary among individuals.

Hyperbolic quantifiers are also commonly used to introduce hotel meeting facilities or wedding services. When presenting meeting facilities, hotel websites are expected to provide objective and factual information to prospective guests, such as the capacity of the conference hall or the specifications of the audio-visual equipment. Overusing subjective evaluative adjectives, in this case, may diminish the informative nature of the advertisement, potentially reducing its persuasiveness. In addition, in the section dedicated to recreational facilities, the hotels usually highlight their leisure amenities such as spas and facial treatments, which are designed to help guests rejuvenate and replenish their energy. The transition from a state of exhaustion to a state of energy can be seen as a transformative process. Through using hyperbolic verbs in the description of this process, service's magnitude and impact can be intensified, thus providing a persuasive argument for potential customers to choose the services offered.

The analysis of our corpus also revealed regional variations in the usage of hyperbolic expressions. The HK corpus exhibits a higher frequency of hyperbolic nouns in the sections of hotel description and recreation facility, compared to the SG corpus. These hyperbolic nouns play an important role in achieving a sense of language euphoria, as they create an atmosphere of heightened emotions and excitement among the readers, such as the expression “enjoy two hours of *bliss*.”

In conclusion, Chapter 5 indicates that the frequency of hyperbole in advertising is relatively high compared to other genres. Secondly, promotional tourism discourse extensively employs extreme adjectives, adverbs, and quantifiers to positively exaggerate the attributes, quality, and

scope of products and services. Moreover, the use of hyperbole is contextually situated, influenced by both the object of reference and the socio-cultural background of the discourse. Meanwhile, this chapter holds a significant methodological contribution by refining and specifying the existing procedures for identifying hyperbole.

Findings of Chapter 6

In our analysis, we made a distinction between non-metaphorical hyperbole and metaphorical hyperbole. Non-metaphorical hyperbole refers to intensified expressions that are not metaphorical in nature, such as “*the best material.*” On the other hand, metaphorical hyperbole represents a linguistic phenomenon that combines both metaphorical and hyperbolic readings, such as the expression “shopping *Mecca.*” In our corpus, we have identified a total of 894 instances of metaphorical hyperboles, accounting for 15.72 per cent of the total number of hyperboles. Comparing our results to the study by Burgers et al. (2018), which analysed the use of rhetorical devices in Dutch news discourse, we observed a slightly higher percentage of metaphorical hyperboles in the promotional genre. This suggests that the use of metaphorical hyperbole may be more prevalent in the context of luxury hotel promotion compared to news articles.

We then proposed models that further classified metaphorical hyperboles into two categories: **primary metaphorical hyperbole** and **complex metaphorical hyperbole**. The notion of SCALE is the basis for all kinds of hyperbole as we identify hyperbole by comparing the intended meaning of a lexical unit with its propositional meaning. For primary metaphorical hyperbole, its linguistic scale is constructed based on universal source domains that are related to sensorimotor and perceptual experiences. For example, the expression *highest standard* is considered a metaphorical hyperbole because it implies a conventional conceptual metaphor that relates to our bodily perception of GOOD IS UP, which renders it metaphorical. Meanwhile, the expression embraces a sense of extremity, positioning it at the extremely positive end of the scale from “lowest” to “highest,” thus making it hyperbolic. In this category, the interpretation of hyperbolic meaning is grounded on basic human experiences that are widely understood. A total of 424 instances of primary metaphorical hyperboles were identified in the corpus, which can be grouped into four basic source domains: SPACE, CONTAINER, OBJECT, and TEMPERATURE.

In contrast to primary metaphorical hyperbole, complex metaphorical hyperbole relies on cultural beliefs and knowledge for a comprehensive understanding of the intended meaning. In these cases, hyperbolic expression incorporates metaphorical element and requires cultural and contextual familiarity to grasp the full extent of the semantic intensification. For example, in the case of a metaphorical hyperbole “a *paradise* for holidays,” recipients should have some understanding of the corresponding religious knowledge that associates paradise with a state of extremely good. Without the knowledge of the underlying religious association, the metaphorical hyperbole loses its intended impact and may be perceived merely as a generic claim. A total of 470 complex metaphorical hyperboles from 11 source domains were observed in our corpus, including ARTIFACTS, MACHINE, LIVING ORGANISM, SUPERNATURE, etc. In Sections 3.1 and 3.2, two conceptual models are presented to visually illustrate the underlying mechanisms of the two categories of metaphorical hyperboles.

In the second part of Chapter 6, the thesis presented illustrative examples that demonstrated how different source domains can be used to construct gradable scales and contribute to the communication of luxury values such as high quality, aesthetics, and prestige, which are considered crucial for shaping the perceptions of luxury among consumers (Hudders, 2013). Hyperbolic expressions related to source domains ARTIFACTS, WAR, MACHINE, COLOUR, LIVING ORGANISM, SUPERNATURE highlight the exceptional quality and craftsmanship of hotel services from various aspects. The expression “*legendary* hospitality” exemplifies the use of an ARTIFACTS metaphor that expresses the excellent quality of hotel service. The value of aesthetics can be delivered through the use of SUPERNATURE, RELIGION, NATURAL PHENOMENA, LIVING ORGANISM, and MACHINE metaphors. For instance, the expression “always been *enchanted* by Fairy Tales” illustrates how the source domain SUPERNATURE can be used to emphasise the beauty and allure of the hotel environment. Finally, source domains such as MONARCH, ASTRONOMICAL BODY, MOUNTAIN, ARTIFACT, LIVING ORGANISM, and NATURAL PHENOMENA play a significant role in constructing the sense of exclusivity.

In summary, Chapter 6 interrogated the theoretical dimensions of metaphorical hyperbole by deconstructing the varied ways in which the linguistic scale of a hyperbolic expression can be constructed through cross-domain mappings. It categorised metaphorical hyperbole into two distinct forms based on these differences, namely primary metaphorical hyperbole and complex metaphorical hyperbole. Moving from the theoretical account of linguistic phenomena to the description concerns of promotional discourse, we further explored the distribution and

function of metaphorical hyperbole in luxury hotel websites, thereby furnishing empirical substantiation for the proposed models that outlined the underlying mechanisms of metaphorical hyperboles.

8.2.2 Research Objective 2

The second research objective of this thesis was to empirically assess the persuasive effectiveness and mechanisms of figurative language using an experimental method. To achieve this, the thesis formulated the following three research questions:

- How does metaphor on luxury hotel websites affect consumers' perceptions and purchase intentions?
- How does hyperbole on luxury hotel websites affect consumers' perceptions and purchase intentions?
- Will the combined use of metaphor and hyperbole be more effective than the isolated use of figurative device on luxury hotel websites?

Building upon these three questions and the existing literature, we proposed the following hypotheses that were tested in Chapter 7:

- *H1: In advertising, metaphors positively impact cognitive text perception compared with literal expressions, which, in turn, increase purchase intention.*
- *H2a: In advertising, metaphors positively impact affective text perception compared with literal expressions, which, in turn, increase purchase intention.*
- *H2b: In advertising, hyperboles positively impact affective text perception compared with literal expressions, which, in turn, increase purchase intention.*
- *H3: The combined use of metaphor and hyperbole in advertisements is more persuasive than either metaphorical or hyperbolic advertisements, which in turn is more persuasive than non-figurative advertisements.*

Findings of Chapter 7

In Chapter 7, the second research objective of the thesis was addressed, which was to investigate the persuasive effects of figurative language in the context of luxury hotel advertising. This objective was examined through the implementation of an experiment with an embedded survey. The main goal of this experiment was to explore the potential influence

of figurative language on recipients' text perceptions and to investigate whether these text perceptions mediated the relationship between advertising messages and purchase intention.

Participants were recruited from the online platform Amazon's Mechanical Turk and randomly assigned to one of the four experimental conditions: metaphor, hyperbole, the combination of metaphor and hyperbole, and literal expression. They were asked to read a fictitious luxury hotel advertisement and subsequently provide their opinions regarding the advertisement and their intention to make a reservation at the hotel.

Before the main experiment, manipulation checks were conducted to ensure the validity and effectiveness of the stimuli used. Specifically, we verified whether the intended manipulations of metaphorical language and hyperbolic language in the advertisements have been successfully implemented. Additionally, we assessed whether participants perceive the four experimental conditions (metaphor, hyperbole, combination of metaphor and hyperbole, and literal expression) similarly in terms of novelty, naturalness, appropriateness, understandability, and imageability.

Following the manipulation checks, the main study then measured participants' affective text perception, cognitive text perception, and their likelihood of making a reservation at the hotel. The results of the two-way ANOVA indicated that metaphorical expression has a significant effect on participants' purchase intention. This suggested that the use of metaphorical language in the advertisements influenced participants' inclination to make a reservation at the hotel. The subsequent mediation analysis further revealed an indirect effect of figurative language on purchase intention, which was mediated by the affective perception of texts that was triggered by metaphors, rather than cognitive text perception. Therefore, *H1* was not supported and *H2a* was fully supported.

The persuasive impact of hyperboles was less evident in luxury hotel advertising when compared to metaphors, as *H2b* was not supported, possibly due to several reasons. One of the reasons is that the pervasiveness of hyperboles in luxury hotel advertising might have led to their diminished persuasive effect. Therefore, we propose that future research could include cross-sectoral analyses to compare the influence of hyperboles in different types of hotel advertisements (e.g., luxury and budget hotels).

Moreover, the combination of metaphor and hyperbole did not yield a more potent persuasive effect in comparison to the separate use of metaphor and hyperbole. This result is in line with the findings of Burgers et al. (2015), who also found that the combination of metaphor and irony did not lead to a stronger effect. *H3* was not supported by the data.

8.2.3 Theoretical Implications

Recall that the two primary objectives of this thesis are to investigate the utilisation and effectiveness of figurative language in promotional discourse. There exists not only an inherent interest in examining different discourse contexts as a complementary approach to decontextualised investigations of figurative devices, but the promotional and culturally sensitive characters of hotel websites also render them a valuable resource for figurative language, further highlighting the benefits of analysing figurative language in these discourses. Therefore, the theoretical implications of the thesis are discussed from linguistic and marketing perspectives.

The linguistic contribution is threefold. Firstly, Chapters 4, 5, and 6 systematically examine the manifestation, pattern, and function of metaphor and hyperbole in promotional discourse, respectively. These chapters have expounded upon the contextually situated characteristics of figurative language, particularly focusing on how different contextual factors such as product categories and social-cultural backgrounds motivate, shape, and constrain distinct usage of figurative language, adding our current knowledge of metaphor variation (Kövecses, 2015).

Chapter 6 of this thesis additionally lends support to the hypothesis that metaphor and hyperbole are different categories of figurative devices, even though they are frequently used in conjunction as “metaphorical hyperbole.” There has long been a discussion about whether metaphor and hyperbole should be considered as part of a continuum (Sperber & Wilson, 2008) or as two distinct categories (e.g., Carston & Wearing, 2015). Recent corpus-based studies have challenged the continuum view of metaphor and hyperbole, suggesting instead that they are two separate discrete phenomena (e.g., Burgers et al., 2018). **This thesis contributes to the existing literature by expanding upon the separation hypothesis of metaphor and hyperbole and proposing two types of metaphorical hyperboles.** In the case of primary metaphorical hyperbole, recipients rely on basic source domains related to sensorimotor and perceptual experiences to grasp its hyperbolic interpretations. In contrast, complex metaphorical hyperbole incorporates socio-cultural knowledge beyond basic sensorimotor and

perceptual experiences for a comprehensive understanding of its intended meaning. To fully understand its hyperbolic meaning, a pragmatic scale needs to be constructed. The distinction between primary and complex metaphorical hyperbole enhances our understanding of the nature and different working mechanisms underlying metaphor and hyperbole in discourse.

In addition, the thesis makes theoretical contributions to the field of figurative language by providing empirical evidence for the use of metaphor and hyperbole in the Outer Circle English contexts of Singapore and Hong Kong, offering an Asia-Pacific lens. Previous analysis of figurative language has primarily focused on Inner Circle English, overlooking the exploration of non-Anglo-Saxon and European contexts. **This study addresses this gap by examining the use of metaphors and hyperboles in an Asia-Pacific cultural context, shedding light on the universality or cultural specificity of figurative language expressions.** Further, from the macro perspective of language as a means of communication, the findings regarding the interaction between figurative language and specific regions suggest that the verbal techniques employed in tourist communication should not be seen as universally applicable across different cultures. Instead, it is essential to identify the specific features that are more commonly and frequently used by a particular culture. This understanding can serve as a foundation for developing a model that strategically facilitates the creation of successful cross-cultural tourist communication.

Lastly, the present study has contributed to the theoretical understanding of luxury branding and tourism by integrating cognitive linguistics and corpus linguistics methodologies, providing an alternative lens for examining promotional tourism discourse. Previous studies have emphasised the significance of visual semiotics in luxury brand promotion, recognising the power of visual figurative devices in conveying luxury and prestige (Anido Freire, 2014). However, there has been a relative scarcity of research focused specifically on the role of verbal rhetoric in advertising communication in the luxury industry. The theoretical implication of this research lies in the recognition of the importance of verbal rhetoric as a powerful tool in luxury branding. Through the in-depth analysis of linguistic instantiations and frequency of figurative devices in the discourse of the luxury hospitality industry, the research fills the gap in the current mainstream luxury branding research, which has often overlooked this dimension.

In Chapters 4 and 5, by combining these linguistic approaches with insights from tourism and luxury branding, the study has explored how various forms of verbal figurative language,

particularly metaphor and hyperbole, that can strategically be deployed to evoke values of prestige, high-quality, and exclusivity in the presentation of luxury products and services. For instance, the use of ADVENTURE metaphors in hotel descriptions reflects a common promotional practice in the tourism industry, which aims to highlight the heterogeneity of tourist destinations and tourists' home places, thereby captivating the attention and interest of potential tourists. In addition to accommodation, luxury hotels now offer a range of additional services and amenities to cater to the diverse needs and preferences of their customers. Different types and categories of figurative language can be leveraged to amplify specific attributes of hotel services and products depending on their specific semantic features, evoking vivid imagery and emotional responses in consumers. The thesis goes beyond a mere examination of luxury hotels and their facilities. By comparing luxury hotels in both Singapore and Hong Kong, the research takes into account the contextual and socio-cultural factors that influence the use of metaphor and hyperbole in shaping luxury values, showing context-awareness in the marketing and branding efforts of the luxury hotel industry.

8.2.4 Methodological Implications

This thesis holds several methodological innovations. Firstly, the thesis offers a methodological contribution to figurative research by refining the existing method of hyperbole identification. **While previous literature, such as Burgers et al. (2016), has provided an operational definition of hyperbole and outlined procedures for identifying hyperbolic expressions in texts, this thesis builds on this to expand on one of the key aspects, namely the step involved in constructing semantic scales to determine the degree of intensification in hyperbolic expressions.**

During the process of hyperbole identification, when the value of a lexical unit's propositional meaning is significantly higher (in the case of auxesis) or lower (in the case of meiosis) than its intended meaning, it can be considered a hyperbole (see Step 5 in Table 8.1). In this thesis, we provide further clarification on the identification of hyperbole by specifying three specific situations where the contrast between the propositional meaning and the intended meaning is considered "extreme" (Burgers et al., 2016). These situations involve: 1) **The dictionary sense of the expression involving incommensurately scaled-up gradable concepts**; 2) **The dictionary sense of the expression involves universal quantifiers and pronouns**; and 3) **The dictionary sense of the expression involves superlative degree** (Peña-Cervel & Ruiz de

Mendoza, 2022). By incorporating lexicographical resources, the thesis enhances the accuracy and reliability of identifying hyperbole in authentic discourse.

Table 8.1 Hyperbole identification procedure with more explanations

	Steps	Explanations
Step 1	Read the entire text	
Step 2	Replace the propositional evaluation of the lexical unit with its intended meaning, if the lexical unit is marked as metaphorical.	
Step 3	Consider whether the lexical unit or its replacement warrants constructing a scale involving either a quality or a quantity.	
Step 4	Determine the ontological referent of the lexical unit or its replacement by staying as close to the text as possible	
Step 5	Is the lexical unit or its replacement more extreme than justified given its ontological referent?	<p>The lexical unit is considered more extreme than justified given its ontological referent when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The dictionary sense of the expression involving incommensurately scaled-up gradable concepts; or • The dictionary sense of the expression involves universal quantifiers and pronouns; or • The dictionary sense of the expression involves superlative degree.
Step 6	Look at the next lexical unit	

In the analysis of hyperbole in Chapter 5 of this thesis, the reliability test between the two raters using this procedure obtained an “almost perfect” result, which indicated a strong consensus

between the two raters in identifying hyperbolic expressions using the refined method, and also showed the reliability of this improved method.

Secondly, while previous research has provided valuable qualitative analysis of the use of metaphor or hyperbole in promotional discourse, the thesis shows that the mixed-method approach combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches is a sharp tool for systematically detecting the structure and pattern of figurative language usage in discourse. In Chapters 4 and 5, the use of a multifactorial analysis, specifically the log-linear regression model, Chi-Square test of independence, and MCA, allows for an inspection of the overall patterns of metaphor or hyperbole across different contextual and social parameters. In our analyses, these statistical techniques explore the potential combined effects of multiple factors on the usage of figurative languages, such as hotel amenities and regions, revealing a more expansive exploration of the multifaceted influences on figurative language use. The quantitative analysis provides an exploratory overview of the profiles of figurative language in discourse, which sets the stage for further interpretation and contextualisation through qualitative analysis. **A mixed-method approach that combines both quantitative and qualitative analyses is therefore highly valuable in corpus-based metaphor analysis, as it allows researchers to gain large-scale trends and delve deeper into the dynamics and variations of figurative language.**

Thirdly, while many studies have focused on the identification and analysis of metaphor or hyperbole in various contexts, they often stop at the level of describing and interpreting the presence of these linguistic instances. The present research project goes beyond mere description and interpretation by adopting a mixed-methods exploratory sequential design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) to empirically test the effectiveness of figurative frames in the context of luxury hotel websites in Singapore and Hong Kong. This thesis is structured into two parts, corresponding to two research objectives. In the first part of the content analysis, quantitative and qualitative methods are adopted. The findings derived from the content analysis then serve as a foundation for hypotheses development regarding the effectiveness of figurative language. These hypotheses, built upon the instances and patterns of figurative language detected in the corpora, are subsequently tested in the second part of the research through a survey-embedded experiment that assesses the influence of figurative language on relevant outcome variables, such as participants' perceptions and behavioural intentions. The experiment helps to establish a causal relationship between the intervention (i.e., the use of

figurative language) and the outcomes. In the broader structure of our study, the findings of the content analysis inform the formulation of hypotheses, and the subsequent experiment allows for the empirical testing of these hypotheses. **The mixed-methods exploratory sequential design supplies a more thorough exploration of the utilisation and effectiveness of figurative language in the context of promotional tourism discourse.** The combination of content analysis and experimental technique in this thesis improves the systematicness, depth, and practical significance of the research.

8.2.5 Practical Applications

In addition to theoretical and methodological contributions, this thesis also offers practical applications. The four studies carried out in this thesis have focused on investigating the use of figurative language in luxury hotel websites located in two major cities in the Asia Pacific region. This geographical area is of great interest due to its significant growth potential and the relative scarcity of research conducted in this specific context (Lam, 2021). The research adopts a mixed-methods approach, which involves systematically identifying and analysing metaphor and hyperbole in luxury hotel websites and investigating recipients' responses to figurative language. Through this approach, the thesis provides empirical evidence that sheds light on the practical application and effectiveness of figurative language in the context of promotional discourse. Now, I will discuss the practical contributions of this thesis.

Prior studies have explored language features of luxury hotel websites (c.f. Qian & Law, 2021; Suen, 2018). However, this study diverges in its emphasis, as it gathers not only the introductory section of the hotel website but collects all textual information from the entire website in a systematic manner. Therefore, this thesis presents the practical contributions of building a corpus for hotel websites and a dedicated database for figurative language. Also, through capturing all language related to metaphorical and hyperbolic expressions, a genre profile of figurative language for promotional tourism discourse is created. This practice provides a higher level of validity than previous research, ensuring the robustness and reliability of the findings. The practical contribution of this research in exploring the variation of figurative devices is distinctive due to its employment of a transparent method for identifying metaphors and hyperboles, and the inclusion of all types of figurative units, irrespective of their specific categories.

Secondly, the findings of this thesis also contribute to our understanding of the communication strategies employed by marketing practitioners in promoting different hotel facilities. The identification of frequently occurring metaphors or hyperboles and their distribution across various hotel websites sheds light on the linguistic techniques used to create a positive disposition towards the advertised products or services. These strategies are influenced by the diverging abstract, physical, and experiential similarities between the figurative language and its referent, as well as social-cultural parameters. For example, the prevalence of metaphors related to the source domain PERFORMANCE in promoting hotel dining facilities highlights the emphasis on the artistic and aesthetic aspects of food presentation and culinary experiences. On the one hand, despite their expressive nature, these figurative languages are easily comprehensible to the target audience due to their widespread usage and reliance on familiar concepts expressed in standardised language. On the other hand, these findings suggest that the use of figurative language varies depending on the specific communicative functions. This research, therefore, provides practical insights for marketing practitioners in the luxury hotel industry when creating websites in the future.

Finally, this research goes beyond corpus and discourse analysis by incorporating an experimental component to investigate the impact of figurative language on participants' text perceptions and purchase intention. The findings reveal that affective text perception is particularly relevant to luxury consumption, and the use of metaphorical expressions can positively influence potential consumers' willingness to make a reservation at the hotel, via increased affective text perception. These results have practical implications for marketers, suggesting that when creating luxury hotel advertisements, the text should be appropriately enhanced to evoke a sense of fun and artistic appeal.

8.3 Limitations and Future Research

This thesis has produced insightful results with significant implications, as discussed in the previous chapters, but there are also limitations which may be addressed in future research. By doing so, we can continue to deepen our understanding of figurative language in the context of luxury tourism branding and contribute to the advancement of this field of study.



Figure 8.2 PERFORMANCE metaphor in visual mode (Mandarin Oriental Tokyo, 2020)³³

One limitation of this linguistic study, which uses a corpus-based discourse-analytic approach, is its focus solely on the verbal mode of communication. As a result, other modes of communication, such as images or videos, have not been thoroughly examined. Luxury hotel websites often employ a range of multimodal materials, and a more comprehensive understanding can be gained by investigating the interaction among these different modalities. For instance, Figure 8.2 presents a visual representation of a PERFORMANCE metaphor, depicting a chef juggling a four-ball fountain. The image shows that the link between the PERFORMANCE metaphor and the dining facility is not limited to verbal expressions alone but is also evident in visual representations. Future analysis could delve into how figurative meaning is expressed across different modes of communication in promotional tourism discourse.

The second limitation pertains to the statistical analysis conducted in this study. As discussed in Chapter 4, in order to conduct a log-linear regression analysis, we include 95.35 per cent of the total number of metaphorical instances identified in the corpus. While we aim to include as much of the corpus as possible, there may still be a small portion that is not included, potentially omitting some interesting examples that are worth further investigation. For instance, Jaworska

³³ <https://www.mandarinoriental.com/en/tokyo/nihonbashi/dine>

(2017) conducted an analysis of JEWELLERY metaphors in tourism texts. In our study, we also come across some jewellery-related expressions on luxury hotel websites. However, due to their limited occurrence, we are unable to include them in statistical calculations and conduct a detailed analysis of these expressions. In future research, it is valuable to explore how these few but interesting figurative expressions contribute to the construction of luxury values in luxury hotel websites.

The third limitation is related to the need for a more refined model in figurative language and the communication of the luxury industry. In this thesis, we examined the impact of figurative language on recipients' attitudes and intentions while also controlling for the perceived novelty of stimuli. Previous research has suggested that conventional metaphors and novel metaphors operate through different persuasive mechanisms (e.g., Burgers et al., 2016). Novel metaphors are persuasive by presenting the reader with a "puzzle" that, once solved, elicits a sense of pleasure and increases the likelihood of purchasing the advertised product (McQuarrie & Mick, 2003, 2009; Mothersbaugh, 2002). On the other hand, conventional metaphors enhance the concreteness of advertisements and facilitate persuasion by making abstract product attributes more explicit. In the context of luxury product advertisements, consumers may expect moderately novel expressions that provide a sense of pleasure and enjoyment. It would be intriguing to further explore whether the degree of novelty affects persuasion effects and, if so, whether there is an optimal level of novelty beyond which the effect plateaus or even reverses.

Finally, supplementing interviews as a methodological approach in future research can provide valuable insights into the understanding of individuals regarding the use of figurative language in luxury hotel advertisements. On the one hand, by conducting interviews with marketing practitioners in the hospitality industry or copywriters, researchers can further probe the motivations underlying the use of specific figurative language in luxury hotel websites. This may include understanding how practitioners perceive the effectiveness of different types of figurative language, their decision-making processes in selecting and using figurative language strategies, and their understanding of consumers' responses towards these language choices. On the other hand, interviews with participants can help researchers explore the rationale behind participants' ratings in survey questions related to figurative language. By engaging participants in in-depth discussions, researchers have the opportunity to inspect participants' experiences in comprehending figurative language, their emotional and cognitive responses to

different figurative expressions, and their perceptions of the effectiveness of these language techniques in conveying luxury values.

8.4 Closing Comments

As the current thesis has demonstrated, the use and impact of metaphor and hyperbole extend beyond their linguistic properties and are related to the broader contextual factors that shape their meaning and effectiveness. An analysis of figurative language as the situated import, while affording important insight into the detailed means of their linguistic realisation, becomes more plausible when considering also their co-textual, cultural, and communicative parameters. This holds true for all settings, particularly in the context of promotional tourism discourse, as ethnocentricity poses a constant risk in tourism marketing activities due to the international and multicultural nature of their addressees. However, with the increasing diversity of guest needs, accommodation providers are actively exploring ways to offer amenities that cater to these various requirements. This is driven by the findings that hotel amenities play a crucial role in enhancing hotel competitiveness by providing a convenient pathway to meet guest expectations. In this regard, the thesis, focusing on luxury hotels in the Asia-Pacific region, adds to the collective endeavour of understanding figurative language and the contextual factors that shape its usage. Therefore, this academic investigation is not and should not be conducted in isolation but is situated within the larger research landscape that aims to shed light on the multifaceted issues involved, examine rhetoric devices using different methods, and approach them through different entry points.

Finally, I would like to indicate that the importance of language as the main tool of communication is self-evident. By specifically focusing on the luxury industry, this study acquires a heightened level of significance in shedding light on the effectiveness of metaphorical language in luxury hotel advertisements, via affective text perception. In recent decades, the luxury sector has experienced continuous growth, with luxury brands and products often setting the standards and acting as models within their industries. The innovations introduced by luxury brands frequently serve as inspiration for companies operating in mass markets, thereby exerting a significant influence on societal trends at a broader level. Given

this context, a key challenge for the luxury industry lies in effectively promoting sustainable thinking and behaviour, with the aim of attaining commercial sustainability alongside financial and market success. This sustainability is essential not only for job creation, tax revenue, and contribution to GDP, but also for promoting philanthropy within the industry (Kunz et al., 2020). Therefore, it is advocated that continuous research efforts be directed towards the luxury industry, given its influential role across diverse sectors, in order to ensure its enduring development and growth. Fundamental to achieving commercial sustainability is the implementation of effective organisational communication strategies that can attract a larger consumer base. Although this research project has its inherent limitations, it is hoped that, together with other scholarly endeavours sharing a similar objective, it will contribute significantly to the ongoing exploration of critical sustainability issues within the business domain. Through collective reflection and concerted action in response to these challenges, all stakeholders stand to benefit and foster a more promising future.

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Appendix

Appendix A Stimulus Materials

Condition	Stimulus materials
Metaphor Condition	<p>A Relaxing <u>Sanctuary</u> for the Body and Soul</p> <p>Camellia Hotel is situated in the <u>heart</u> of the city with great restaurants and shopping nearby. We have 527 rooms and suites each featuring a 42-inch HDTV, free Wi-Fi, an espresso machine, and a sitting area.</p> <p>The award-winning restaurant Bulan uses <u>a repertoire of</u> ingredients from a nearby farm. The open kitchen provides a <u>stage</u> for our chef to create <u>a symphony of</u> dining options for you.</p> <p>The rooftop bar Awan is <u>a pleasing oasis</u> where you can enjoy fine cocktails, beers, and spirits.</p> <p>Better still, after a busy day of travelling, <u>recharge yourself</u> at the Camellia Spa. The spa is designed for your <u>renewal</u>, with a selection of treatments from around the world.</p> <p>At Hotel Camellia, we pay attention to the details to let you comfortably relax and enjoy your stay.</p>
Hyperbole Condition	<p>An <u>Impeccable</u> Venue for the Body and Soul</p> <p>Camellia Hotel is situated in the centre of the city with <u>the best</u> restaurants and shopping at <u>just steps away</u>. We have 527 rooms and suites each featuring a 42-inch HDTV, free Wi-Fi, an espresso machine, and a sitting area.</p> <p>Our award-winning restaurant Bulan uses a collection of ingredients from a nearby farm. The open kitchen provides a space for our chef to create a variety of dining options that <u>you will never forget</u>.</p> <p>The rooftop bar Awan is an <u>irresistible</u> setting where you can enjoy fine cocktails, beers, and spirits.</p> <p>Better still, after a busy day of travelling, refresh yourself at the Camellia Spa. The spa is designed for your <u>absolute</u> relaxation, with a selection of treatments from around the world.</p> <p>At Hotel Camellia, we pay attention to <u>every</u> detail to let you <u>completely</u> relax and enjoy your stay.</p>

<p>Metaphor and Hyperbole</p>	<p>An <u>Impeccable Sanctuary</u> for the Body and Soul</p> <p>Camellia Hotel is situated in the <u>heart</u> of the city with <u>the best</u> restaurants and shopping <u>just steps away</u>. We have 527 rooms and suites each featuring a 42-inch HDTV, free Wi-Fi, an espresso machine, and a sitting area.</p> <p>The award-winning restaurant Bulan uses <u>a repertoire of</u> ingredients from a nearby farm. The open kitchen provides a <u>stage</u> for our chef to create <u>a symphony of</u> dining options for you that <u>you will never forget</u>.</p> <p>The rooftop bar Awan is <u>an irresistible oasis</u> where you can enjoy fine cocktails, beers, and spirits.</p> <p>Better still, after a busy day of travelling, <u>recharge yourself</u> at the Camellia Spa. The spa is designed for your <u>absolute renewal</u>, with a selection of treatments from around the world.</p> <p>At Hotel Camellia, we pay attention to <u>every</u> detail to let you <u>completely</u> relax and enjoy your stay.</p>
<p>Control Condition</p>	<p><u>A Relaxing Venue for the Body and Soul</u></p> <p>Camellia Hotel is situated in the centre of the city with great restaurants and shopping nearby. We have 527 rooms and suites each featuring a 42-inch HDTV, free Wi-Fi, an espresso machine, and a sitting area.</p> <p>Our award-winning restaurant Bulan uses a collection of ingredients from a nearby farm. The open kitchen provides a space for our chef to create a variety of dining options for you.</p> <p>The rooftop bar Awan is a pleasing setting where you can enjoy fine cocktails, beers, and spirits.</p> <p>Better still, after a busy day of travelling, refresh yourself at the Camellia Spa. The spa is designed for your relaxation, with a selection of treatments from around the world.</p> <p>At Hotel Camellia, we pay attention to the details to let you comfortably relax and enjoy your stay.</p>

Appendix B Ethics Approval



To Ahrens Kathleen Virginia (Department of English)
From Cummings Louise, Chair, Faculty Research Committee
Email louise.cummings@ Date 23-Feb-2021

Application for Ethical Review for Teaching/Research Involving Human Subjects

I write to inform you that approval has been given to your application for human subjects ethics review of the following project for a period from 01-Mar-2021 to 31-Aug-2023:

Project Title: The Effectiveness of Figurative Framing: Metaphor and Hyperbole in Luxury Hotel Web Pages
Department: Department of English
Principal Investigator: Ahrens Kathleen Virginia
Project Start Date: 01-Mar-2021
Project type: Human subjects (non-clinical)
Reference Number: HSEARS20210208002

You will be held responsible for the ethical approval granted for the project and the ethical conduct of the personnel involved in the project. In case the Co-PI, if any, has also obtained ethical approval for the project, the Co-PI will also assume the responsibility in respect of the ethical approval (in relation to the areas of expertise of respective Co-PI in accordance with the stipulations given by the approving authority).

You are responsible for informing the PolyU Institutional Review Board in advance of any changes in the proposal or procedures which may affect the validity of this ethical approval.

Cummings Louise

Chair

Faculty Research Committee (on behalf of PolyU Institutional Review Board)

Appendix C Pre-test Report

1. Overall pre-test design

The pre-test was conducted (1) to confirm that the metaphorical framed advertisement was perceived as more **metaphorical** than the literal advertisement, (2) to confirm that the **hyperbolic** framed advertisement was perceived as more exaggerated than the literal advertisement, and (3) to ensure that the language materials deployed in the figurative advertisement and non-figurative advertisement **did not differ in other important aspects**.

In the between-subjects design, participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions: the **Metaphor** condition (M), the **Hyperbole** condition (H), the **Combination of Metaphor and Hyperbole** condition (MH), or the **Control** condition (Con). For each of these four conditions (M, H, MH, Con), I used seven independent sub-questionnaires to measure the seven dimensions of the advertisement (*metaphoricity, extremity, naturalness, appropriateness, imageability, understandability*), resulting in a total of 28 questionnaires.

The choice of a between-subjects design with independent sub-questionnaires in this study was because of several factors. For one thing, a between-subjects design could decrease carryover effects or learning biases as participants were not exposed to different levels of the same independent variables (Galesic & Bosnjak, 2009). For another, previous research using Mturk suggested that designing shorter studies on Mturk, lasting no more than five minutes, can help mitigate participant fatigue, thereby improving data quality (Hamby & Taylor, 2016). Based on these two considerations, while a within-subjects design could have been an alternative, as it requires fewer participants and allows for better control of extraneous participant variables, the focus on the quality and reliability of data collected from Mturk participants led to the selection of a short questionnaire with a between-subjects design.

2. Participants

Participants for the study were recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk. Calculations with G*Power 3.1 (Faul et al., 2009) showed that to find a medium effect ($d = .50$) with an alpha level set at .05 and a power of 0.80 (Cohen, 1988; Boeynaems et al., 2021) with this survey design (between-subject design), the test would need at least 45 participants for one variable in one condition, and a total of 1260 participants (seven variables multiple four conditions) for the whole manipulation check.

3. Procedure

The questionnaires used for the experiments were designed on SurveyMonkey. The link to the questionnaire from SurveyMonkey was posted on Mechanical Turk. In this way, after accessing the Mturk task, participants were automatically directed to the questionnaire designed on SurveyMonkey.

After agreeing to participate in the experiment and providing informed consent, participants were instructed to read five sentences of the advertisement, one at a time, and evaluate the sentence on a scale of 1 to 7. Participants viewed each sentence and question as long as they wanted before clicking to the next page. It should be noted that, for two reasons, in the pre-test, participants were presented with individual sentences rather than figurative phrases or paragraphs. Firstly, the understanding and interpretation of metaphorical (hyperbolic) meaning often rely on specific contextual cues (Cano Mora, 2011). To capture the comprehensive understanding of these expressions, the questionnaire was set up in such a way that participants were presented with sentences from the advertisement in a randomised order. Secondly, in the event that the results of the pre-test did not match expectations, the breakdown of each stimulus into separate sentences allowed for targeted optimisation of individual sentences, rather than requiring revisions to the entire passage.

Upon completing the survey questions, participants were asked to provide demographic information, including gender, age range, educational background, and native language. Each questionnaire took approximately one minute to complete. Participants who successfully completed the survey were compensated HK\$3 (US\$0.4) for their participation, which was higher than the basic minimum rate of \$9.50 per hour (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023). To prevent duplicate entries, participants who had taken part in the test were blocked from accessing subsequent batches using the *Manage* function of Mturk. This meant that in the current study, each Mturk ID could only answer one questionnaire.

To ensure the quality and eligibility of participants, specific inclusion criteria were implemented. Participants had to have at least a 95 per cent approval rate on Human Intelligence Tasks (HITs). The 95 per cent approval rate indicated that participants had successfully completed 95 per cent of their previous tasks. I also expected participants to have English as their first language and have attended at least some high school so that they would be able to have a basic level of literacy for engaging with and an adequate understanding of the

language used in the experimental materials and questionnaires. In addition, I required participants to live in the United States currently.

4. Measures

For each condition (M, H, MH, and Con), seven self-administered questionnaires were created for the pre-test to measure whether the advertisements reflected metaphor (*Metaphoricity*) and hyperbole (*Extremity*), as well as whether the advertisements were perceived similarly in terms of *naturalness*, *appropriateness*, *understandability*, *imageability* and *novelty* (Cardillo, 2010, 2016; Diaz et al., 2011; Tay, 2020). Therefore, the pre-test involved a total of 28 questionnaires. All items were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 to 7 (e.g., 1 = not metaphorical at all; 7 = very metaphorical). I have also included a sample question in Figure C.1.

Metaphoricity was assessed as an indicator of the presence of metaphor. It was tapped by asking participants “*How metaphorical these sentences are?*” on a seven-point scale (Ang & Lim, 2006).

Extremity. To confirm whether the hyperbolic advertising language was successfully manipulated as intended, participants were asked to indicate the degree to which they view the sentences as exaggerated “*How exaggerated these sentences are?*” on a seven-point scale (Boeynaems et al., 2021).

Novelty was tapped by asking participants to answer “*How novel these sentences are?*” on a seven-point scale. Novelty was controlled as a factor because the persuasive mechanism of novel figurative language may differ from that of conventional figurative language (Burgers et al., 2015; Ahrens et al., 2022). Evidence from neurolinguistic research has also indicated that novel stimuli elicit greater activation compared to familiar stimuli in certain brain regions, such as the left posterior middle temporal gyrus and left parahippocampal/inferior temporal gyrus, suggesting that the degree of novelty influences text comprehension (Diaz et al., 2011).

Naturalness refers to the normality of an utterance. While it is not commonly directly measured in many experimental linguistic studies, research has demonstrated that naturalness can impact sentence processing time and neural activation (Cardillo, 2010). In the current research, naturalness was measured by asking participants to rate “*How natural-sounding these sentences are in daily communication?*” on a seven-point scale.

Appropriateness. According to Hartung et al. (2020), an appropriate narrative context enhances the processing of figurative language. In this research, the appropriateness of the sentences was measured by asking participants to rate “*How appropriate these sentences are for a hotel advertisement?*” on a seven-point scale.

Understandability was tapped by asking participants to rate “*How easy these sentences are to understand?*” using a seven-point scale, ranging from one to seven (Tay, 2020; Wu et al., 2017).

Imageability refers to the ability of words or sentences to evoke mental imagery based on sensory experiences (Paivio et al., 1968; Westbury et al., 2013). Following Cardillo (2010), the study measured sentential imageability by asking participants to rate “*How easily do these sentences create visual pictures in your mind?*” on a seven-point scale.

The rooftop bar Awan is a pleasant destination, where you can enjoy fine cocktails and beers.

How exaggerated is the bolded sentence above?

1 - Not at all exaggerated 2 3 4 5 6 7 - Very exaggerated

Prev Next

Figure C. 1 A sample question from the questionnaire

5. Results

After the participants’ responses were collected from SurveyMonkey, the data was processed and organized into an Excel workbook that consisted of 28 worksheets, each corresponding to one of the four experimental conditions and one of the seven rating tasks. Each worksheet contained a separate line for one participant, corresponding their ratings of the stimuli. This structured data was then stored for later statistical analysis. The table below provides descriptive statistics for the pre-test, showing the average scores and standard deviations of the seven dependent variables for each sentence in the stimulus. The statistical analysis for the descriptive statistics was performed using Jamovi.

Table C. 1 Mean scores (and standard deviations) of seven dependent variables

		<i>S1</i>	<i>S2</i>	<i>S3</i>	<i>S4</i>	<i>S5</i>
		Measures				
M	1 MET (<i>n</i> = 45)	5.36 (1.26)	4.96 (1.46)	4.73 (1.67)	4.67 (1.60)	3.24 (2.33)
	2 EXT (<i>n</i> = 45)	4.64 (1.33)	5.04 (1.09)	4.02 (1.82)	4.40 (1.67)	3.49 (2.18)
	3 NAT (<i>n</i> = 45)	5.07 (1.48)	5.09 (1.53)	5.69 (1.06)	5.22 (1.40)	5.93 (1.19)
	4 APP (<i>n</i> = 45)	5.91 (1.16)	5.44 (1.63)	5.53 (1.41)	5.56 (1.50)	6.07 (1.03)
	5 IMA (<i>n</i> = 45)	5.02 (1.27)	4.47 (1.65)	5.20 (1.32)	4.73 (1.53)	3.80 (2.13)
	6 UND (<i>n</i> = 45)	5.73 (1.07)	5.51 (1.14)	5.89 (1.09)	5.51 (1.58)	6.42 (0.84)
	7 NOV (<i>n</i> = 45)	4.78 (1.35)	5.02 (1.25)	4.40 (1.71)	4.04 (1.61)	3.33 (2.02)
		Measures				
H	1 MET (<i>n</i> = 45)	3.62 (2.00)	3.53 (1.84)	3.98 (2.20)	4.60 (1.74)	3.76 (2.38)
	2 EXT (<i>n</i> = 45)	4.51 (1.48)	4.22 (1.59)	3.56 (1.60)	4.89 (1.61)	3.31 (1.73)
	3 NAT (<i>n</i> = 45)	5.33 (1.43)	5.24 (1.15)	5.47 (1.25)	4.71 (1.46)	5.89 (1.13)
	4 APP (<i>n</i> = 45)	6.13 (0.99)	5.56 (1.18)	5.76 (1.43)	5.89 (1.37)	6.16 (1.13)
	5 IMA (<i>n</i> = 45)	5.04 (1.40)	4.67 (1.67)	5.27 (1.30)	4.78 (1.43)	4.07 (2.07)
	6 UND (<i>n</i> = 45)	5.98 (1.08)	5.58 (1.27)	5.93 (1.16)	5.22 (1.20)	6.38 (0.94)
	7 NOV (<i>n</i> = 45)	4.24 (1.72)	4.73 (1.59)	4.02 (1.66)	4.84 (1.49)	3.33 (1.93)
		Measures				
MH	1 MET (<i>n</i> = 45)	5.11 (1.48)	5.09 (1.49)	4.89 (1.51)	4.98 (1.63)	3.91 (2.43)
	2 EXT (<i>n</i> = 45)	5.07 (1.42)	5.07 (1.54)	4.42 (1.63)	4.22 (1.76)	3.93 (1.96)
	3 NAT (<i>n</i> = 45)	5.16 (1.31)	4.40 (1.59)	5.31 (1.26)	4.60 (1.66)	6.00 (1.26)
	4 APP (<i>n</i> = 45)	6.09 (0.97)	5.78 (1.41)	6.11 (1.15)	5.93 (1.45)	6.49 (0.76)
	5 IMA (<i>n</i> = 45)	4.82 (1.23)	4.40 (1.54)	4.89 (1.19)	4.31 (1.36)	3.84 (1.80)
	6 UND (<i>n</i> = 45)	6.13 (1.06)	5.56 (1.36)	6.09 (1.04)	5.51 (1.31)	6.51 (0.79)
	7 NOV (<i>n</i> = 45)	4.84 (1.38)	5.09 (1.64)	4.87 (1.41)	4.98 (1.50)	4.09 (2.16)
		Measures				
Con	1 MET (<i>n</i> = 45)	2.89 (1.97)	2.84 (2.12)	2.51 (1.98)	3.47 (2.08)	2.67 (1.92)
	2 EXT (<i>n</i> = 45)	3.33 (1.60)	3.73 (1.75)	2.96 (1.81)	4.31 (1.46)	3.00 (1.83)
	3 NAT (<i>n</i> = 45)	5.27 (1.40)	5.78 (1.22)	5.40 (1.34)	5.00 (1.57)	5.89 (1.28)
	4 APP (<i>n</i> = 45)	6.27 (1.01)	5.80 (1.46)	5.89 (1.35)	6.13 (1.06)	6.13 (1.01)
	5 IMA (<i>n</i> = 45)	4.73 (1.63)	4.49 (1.59)	5.18 (1.25)	4.93 (1.36)	4.02 (1.89)
	6 UND (<i>n</i> = 45)	5.71 (1.20)	5.82 (1.03)	6.22 (1.04)	5.67 (1.33)	6.47 (0.87)
	7 NOV (<i>n</i> = 45)	4.04 (1.91)	4.33 (1.72)	4.07 (1.80)	4.11 (1.86)	3.89(1.99)

Statistical Results

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with post-hoc Tukey HSD tests was performed to determine whether there were statistically significant differences in the seven dimensions of the sentences across the four experimental conditions. With a sample size of 45 participants for each questionnaire, the assumption of normality can be reasonably approximated, allowing for the use of parametric tests, despite the non-normal distribution of the data in the four conditions (as indicated by the Shapiro-Wilk test, $p < .001$). The one-way ANOVA test was set up with

the type of figurative devices (metaphor or hyperbole) as the independent variables and perceived *metaphoricity*, *extremity*, *naturalness*, *appropriateness*, *imageability*, *understandability*, and *novelty* as the dependent variables.

Firstly, to test whether I have successfully manipulated the metaphorical advertisements (M and MH conditions) as intended, an analysis was conducted on sentences 1, 2, 3, and 4, separately. Sentence 5 (S5) was excluded as it did not contain any metaphorical expressions. The means and 95% confidence intervals of the ratings for perceived *metaphoricity* were plotted using R Studio, as shown in Figure C.2.

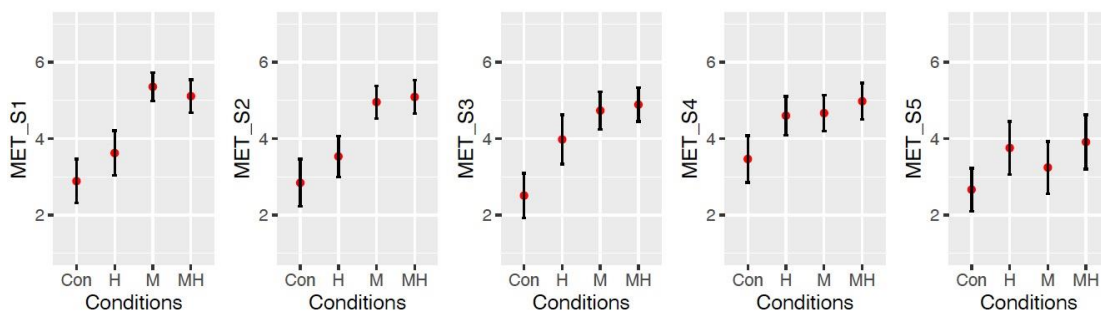


Figure C. 2 The mean of metaphoricity (MET) for each sentence in the four conditions (M, H, MH and Control)

As expected, the results of the one-way ANOVA revealed a significant influence of the figurative device on perceived metaphoricity ($F_{S1}(3, 96.1) = 21.7516, p < .001$; $F_{S2}(3, 96.9) = 16.5315, p < .001$, $F_{S3}(3, 96.9) = 15.45, p < .001$; $F_{S4}(3, 97.4) = 5.0988, p < .003$). Tukey's HSD Test for multiple comparisons found that S1 and S2 in the advertisements containing metaphorical expressions (both M condition and MH condition) were perceived to be significantly more metaphorical than those in the hyperbole condition and the control condition.³⁴ Also, there was no significant difference in perceived metaphoricity between the M and the MH conditions for S1 and S2 ($p_{S1:M-MH} = .91$; $p_{S2:M-MH} = .98$). Similarly, there was

³⁴ **Metaphor (M) condition:** $M_{S1} = 5.36, SD_{S1} = 1.26$; $M_{S2} = 4.96, SD_{S2} = 1.46$; **Metaphor and hyperbole (MH) condition:** $M_{S1} = 5.11, SD_{S1} = 1.48$; $M_{S2} = 5.09, SD_{S2} = 1.49$; **Hyperbole (H) condition:** $M_{S1} = 3.62, SD_{S1} = 2.00$; $M_{S2} = 3.53, SD_{S2} = 1.84$; **Control (Con) condition:** $M_{S1} = 2.89, SD_{S1} = 1.97$; $M_{S2} = 2.84, SD_{S2} = 2.12$; **p value:** $p_{S1:M-H} < .001, p_{S1:M-Con} < .001, p_{S1:MH-H} = .003, p_{S1:MH-Con} < .001$; $p_{S2:M-H} = .002, p_{S2:M-Con} < .001, p_{S2:MH-H} < .001, p_{S2:MH-Con} < .001$

no significant difference in perceived metaphoricity between the H and Control conditions for sentences 1 and 2 ($p_{S1:H-Con} = .18$; $p_{S2:H-Con} = .25$).

S3 and S4 in the M condition and the MH condition were evaluated significantly higher in terms of metaphoricity compared to the Control condition³⁵. However, the analysis showed that participants rated S4 in the M condition similarly to the H condition, suggesting that they perceived the hyperbolic advertisement as being “metaphorical” ($p_{S4:M-H} = 0.998$).

Based on the overall results, it can be concluded that the manipulation of the metaphorical advertisements was successful, although some minor modifications were needed based on the findings. For example, it was observed that S4 in the hyperbolic advertisement (i.e., H condition) was perceived as similar to that in the metaphorical advertisements (i.e., M condition and MH condition) in terms of metaphoricity. I argued that this similarity might be due to participants mistaking the idiomatic expression “*in the blink of an eye*” in the hyperbolic advertisement for a metaphorical expression. In order to address this, the idiomatic expression was removed from the final version of the stimuli.

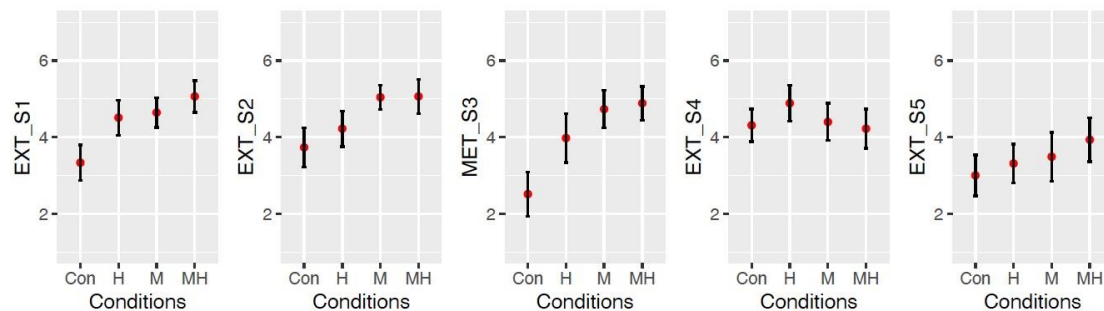


Figure C. 3 The mean of extremity (EXT) for each sentence in the four conditions (M, H, MH and Control)

Next, the one-way ANOVA test was used to confirm whether the hyperbolic advertising language (H and MH conditions) was successfully manipulated as intended. The overall results (as shown in Figure C.3) revealed that the existence of hyperbolic expressions significantly

³⁵ **M condition:** $M_{S3} = 4.73$, $SD_{S3} = 1.67$; $M_{S4} = 4.67$, $SD_{S4} = 1.60$; **MH condition:** $M_{S3} = 4.89$, $SD_{S3} = 1.51$; $M_{S4} = 4.98$, $SD_{S4} = 1.63$; **H condition:** $M_{S3} = 3.98$, $SD_{S3} = 2.20$; $M_{S4} = 4.60$, $SD_{S4} = 1.74$; **Control (Con) condition:** $M_{S3} = 2.51$, $SD_{S3} = 1.98$; $M_{S4} = 3.47$, $SD_{S4} = 2.08$; **p value:** $p_{S3:M-Con} < .001$, $p_{S3:MH-Con} < .001$; $p_{S4:M-Con} = .008$, $p_{S4:MH-Con} < .001$

influenced perceived extremity, especially for S1 ($F_{S1}(3, 97.5) = 10.3738, p < .001$), S2 ($F_{S2}(3, 96) = 8.1399, p < .001$), and S3 ($F_{S3}(3, 97.6) = 5.9181, p < .001$).

Tukey's HSD Test indicated that sentence 1 (S1) of the M condition ($M_{S1} = 4.65, SD_{S1} = 1.34$), the H condition ($M_{S1} = 4.51, SD_{S1} = 1.58$) and the MH condition ($M_{S1} = 5.07, SD_{S1} = 1.42$) were perceived to be significantly more exaggerated than that of the Control (Con) condition ($M_{S1} = 3.33, SD_{S1} = 1.60$).³⁶ However, the rating of the M condition was higher than the H condition in terms of perceived extremity, suggesting that the metaphorical expression was perceived to be more exaggerated than the hyperbolic expression.

This echoed Boeynaems et al. (2021)'s manipulation results that metaphorical language was perceived as more intense than both literal language and hyperbolic language. Similarly, sentence 2 (S2) of the M condition was perceived to be significantly more exaggerated than S2 of the H condition ($M_{S2} = 5.04, SD_{S2} = 1.09$ vs. $M_{S2} = 4.22, SD_{S2} = 1.59, W = -4.023, p = .02$). As for S4, though the H condition was rated as more exaggerated than the M condition, the difference between the two conditions was not statistically significant ($p_{S4:M-H} = .486$). What's more, S4 of the M condition was evaluated higher than S4 of the HM condition in terms of perceived extremity, revealing a phenomenon that the metaphorical statement was perceived to be more exaggerated than the statement contained both metaphorical expressions and hyperbolic expressions.³⁷

From what has been reported so far, it could be concluded that the manipulation of hyperbolic advertisements should be further improved. More hyperbolic elements, in this case, should be added in order to increase the perceived language extremity of sentences, especially in the advertisements of the H and MH conditions.

I then examined whether the stimulus materials of the four conditions differ in terms of *naturalness, appropriateness, understandability, imageability* and *novelty* -- the properties that would affect the processing of figurative language but were not of interest in the current research.

³⁶ **p value:** $p_{S1:M-Con} < .001, p_{S1:H-Con} = .001, p_{S1:MH-Con} < .001$

³⁷ **M condition:** $M_{S4} = 4.40, SD_{S4} = 1.67$; **H condition:** $M_{S4} = 4.89, SD_{S4} = 1.61$; **MH condition:** $M_{S4} = 4.22, SD_{S4} = 1.76$; **Control (Con) Condition:** $M_{S4} = 4.31, SD_{S4} = 1.46$

Statistical analysis showed that, for S1, S3, S4, and S5, there was no significant difference in perceived naturalness among the four conditions. For S2, however, the existence of complex figurative devices (the coexistence of metaphorical and hyperbolic expressions) in the MH condition significantly decreased the perceived naturalness compared with literal expression (i.e., S2 of the Control condition) ($F_{S1}(3, 97) = 7.1442, p < .001$).³⁸ This may be due to the “inauthenticity” of the text brought about by the complex figurative expressions. In creating the stimuli for these four conditions, an effort was made to ensure that the meaning of an advertisement in one condition was similar to that of the other three conditions, differing only in the type of figurative language used. This possibly led to forced figurative expressions that were considered unnatural by participants because they did not reflect the way people typically speak in daily communication (Hart, 2018). After consulting with three English native speakers on the grammatical and pragmatical acceptability of S2, and given the sentence did not stand out in other aspects, the sentence was retained in the further main study, as there was always a trade-off between the rigorous controlling of variables and external, ecological validity.

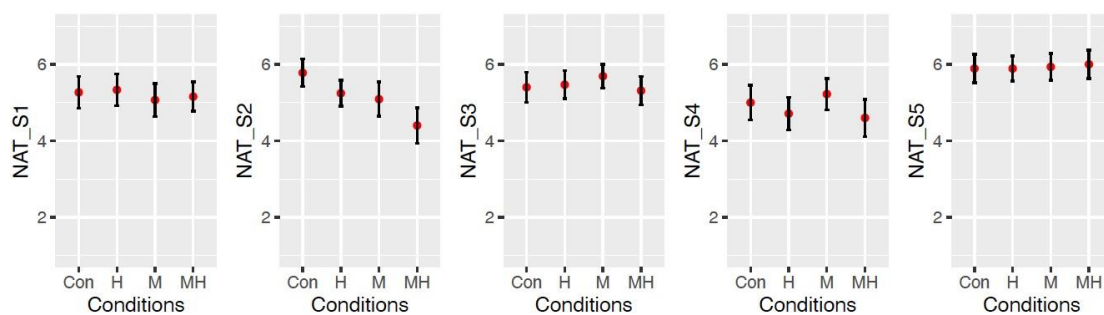


Figure C. 4 The mean of naturalness (NAT) for each sentence in the four conditions (M, H, MH and Control)

For dimensions of appropriateness, imageability, understandability and novelty (Figure C.5, C.6, C.7, and C.8), there was no statistically significant difference among the four conditions (M, H, MH, and **Control** condition). The average scores of the five sentences in the four groups were all higher than 5.50 ($M_M = 5.70, M_H = 5.90, M_{MH} = 6.08, M_{Con} = 6.04$) in terms of appropriateness, implying that participants found language materials presented were suitable for hotel advertising. Stimulus materials were also regarded as easy to understand as the

³⁸ **M condition:** $M_{S2} = 5.09, SD_{S4} = 1.53$; **H condition:** $M_{S2} = 5.24, SD_{S4} = 1.15$; **MH condition:** $M_{S2} = 4.40, SD_{S4} = 1.59$; **Control (Con) Condition:** $M_{S2} = 5.78, SD_{S4} = 1.22$

average scores of the item understandability were all greater than 5.80 ($M_M = 5.81$, $M_H = 5.82$, $M_{MH} = 5.96$, $M_{Con} = 5.98$).

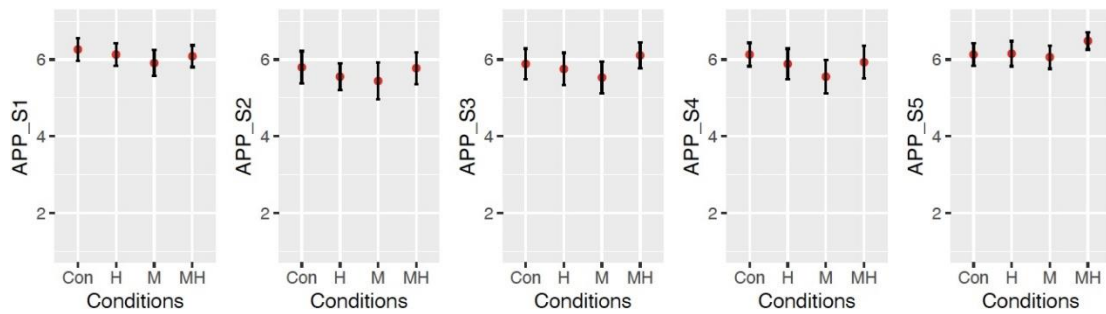


Figure C. 5 The mean of appropriateness (APP) for each sentence in the four conditions (M, H, MH and Control)

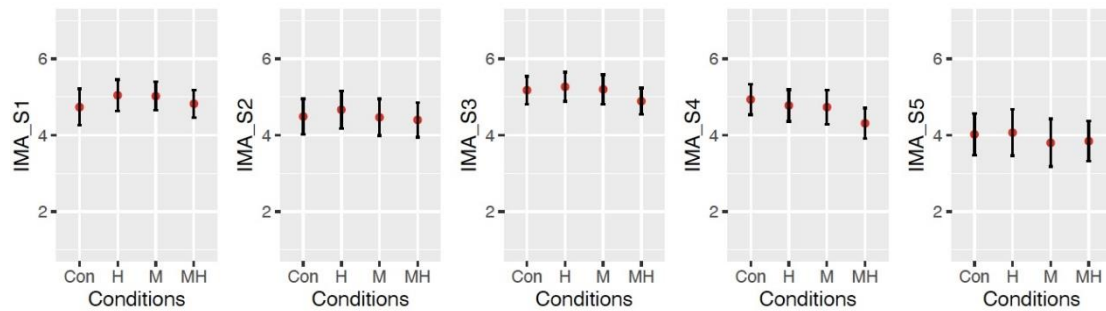


Figure C. 6 The mean of imageability (IMA) for each sentence in the four conditions (M, H, MH and Control)

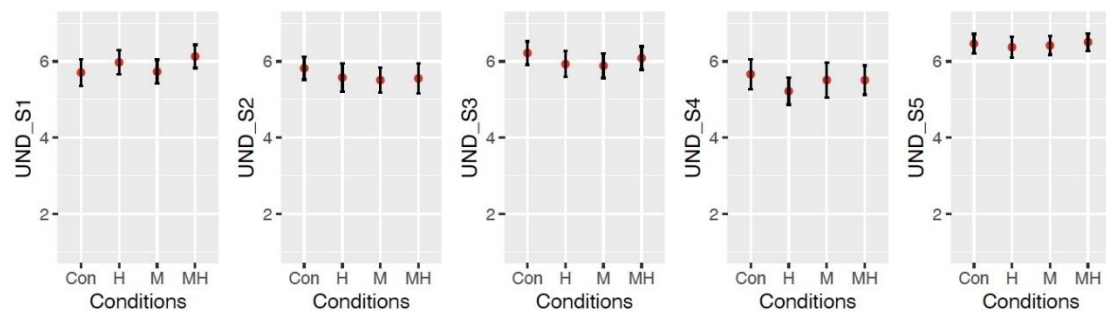


Figure C. 7 The mean of understandability (UND) for each sentence in the four conditions (M, H, MH and Control)

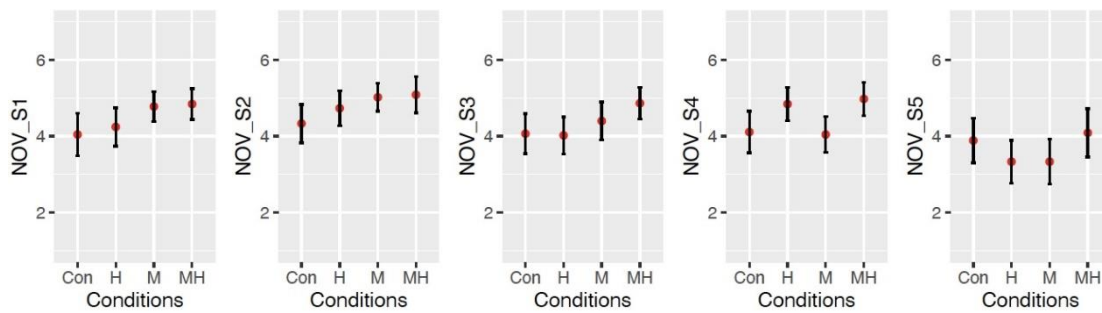


Figure C. 8 The mean of novelty (NOV) for each sentence in the four conditions (M, H, MH and Control)

Moreover, participants considered the materials as moderately novel (the mean of the five sentences in the four conditions were all greater than 3.33 on novelty) and could evoke mental images easily (the means of the five sentences in the four conditions were all greater than 3.80 on imageability).

Based on the results, it can be concluded that the stimulus materials were generally well-controlled for sentential characteristics that could potentially influence text processing. However, it was found that the metaphorical advertisement and the hyperbolic advertisement did not differ significantly in terms of perceived language extremity. This suggests that further modification of the stimuli may be necessary to enhance the perceived exaggeration in the hyperbolic advertisement.

6. Summary

In the pre-test, I checked the language materials by recruiting participants from Amazon's Mechanical Turk and asking them to rate the stimulus materials from seven dimensions: *metaphoricity*, *extremity*, *naturalness*, *appropriateness*, *imageability*, *understandability*, and *novelty*. The results of the manipulation checks confirmed that the stimulus materials of the four experimental conditions created in this study (1) have effectively been manipulated regarding the *metaphoricity*, and (2) are perceived similarly in other nuisance respects that may trigger additional hypotheses.

Appendix D SD * SEC * REG Crosstabulation

REG		SEC					Total	
		Dinning facility	Guest room	Hotel description	Meeting facility	Recreation facility		
HK	ADVENTURE	Count	12 (14.6)	20.5	27 (12.5)	4 (13.6)	14 (11.7)	73
		Adj. Residual	-0.8	-1.2	4.6	-2.9	0.7	
	ARTIFACT	Count	95 (52.1)	51 (73.1)	21 (44.5)	65 (48.6)	28 (41.7)	260
		Adj. Residual	6.9	-3.2	-4	2.7	-2.4	
	BUILDING	Count	10 (21.6)	17 (30.4)	19 (18.5)	34 (20.2)	28 (17.3)	108
		Adj. Residual	-2.8	-2.9	0.1	3.5	2.9	
	CONTAINER	Count	12 (18.8)	23 (26.4)	10 (16.1)	29 (17.6)	20 (15.1)	94
		Adj. Residual	-1.8	-0.8	-1.7	3.1	1.4	
	FORTUNE	Count	16 (21.6)	27 (30.4)	35 (18.5)	16 (20.2)	14 (17.3)	108
		Adj. Residual	-1.4	-0.7	4.3	-1	-0.9	
	JOURNEY	Count	36 (29.1)	7 (40.8)	29 (24.8)	27 (27.1)	46 (23.2)	145
		Adj. Residual	1.5	-6.4	0.9	0	5.3	
	LIVING ORGANISM	Count	168 (164.9)	304 (231.5)	133 (141.0)	122 (153.7)	96 (131.9)	823
		Adj. Residual	0.3	6.5	-0.9	-3.3	-4	
	MACHINE	Count	26 (30.1)	35 (42.2)	38 (25.7)	29 (28.0)	22 (24.0)	150
		Adj. Residual	-0.8	-1.3	2.7	0.2	-0.5	
	MAGIC	Count	9 (19.2)	20 (27.0)	19 (16.4)	34 (17.9)	14 (15.4)	96
		Adj. Residual	-2.7	-1.6	0.7	4.3	-0.4	

$\chi^2(68) = 432.219, p < .001,$
Cramer's $V = .187$

		MOTION	Count	21 (35.5)	58 (49.8)	39 (30.3)	12 (33.1)	47 (28.4)	177
			Adj. Residual	-2.8	1.4	1.8	-4.2	3.9	
		NATURAL PHENOMENA	Count	15 (9.2)	10 (12.9)	2 (7.9)	10 (8.6)	9 (7.4)	46
			Adj. Residual	2.1	-1	-2.3	0.5	0.7	
		PERCEPTUAL ATTRIBUTE	Count	22 (24.2)	54 (34.0)	12 (20.7)	22 (22.6)	11 (19.4)	121
			Adj. Residual	-0.5	4.1	-2.1	-0.1	-2.1	
		PHYSICAL OBJECT	Count	54 (71.3)	83 (100.1)	61 (61.0)	107 (66.5)	51 (57.0)	356
			Adj. Residual	-2.4	-2.1	0	5.8	-0.9	
		PLACE	Count	24 (26.7)	56 (37.4)	26 (22.8)	8 (24.8)	19 (21.3)	133
			Adj. Residual	-0.6	3.7	0.8	-3.8	-0.6	
		RELIGION	Count	8 (15.8)	20 (22.2)	21 (13.5)	8 (14.8)	22 (12.7)	79
			Adj. Residual	-2.2	-0.6	2.3	-2	2.9	
		SPACE	Count	84 (58.7)	76 (82.4)	35 (50.2)	49 (54.7)	49 (47.0)	293
			Adj. Residual	3.9	-0.9	-2.5	-0.9	0.3	
		TEMPERATURE	Count	9 (11.0)	21 (15.5)	7 (9.4)	10 (10.3)	8 (8.8)	55
			Adj. Residual	-0.7	1.7	-0.9	-0.1	-0.3	
		WATER	Count	13 (9.4)	12 (13.2)	8 (8.1)	5 (8.8)	9 (7.5)	47
			Adj. Residual	1.3	-0.4	0	-1.4	0.6	
	Total		Count	634	890	542	591	507	3164
SG	SD	ADVENTURE	Count	19 (21.2)	12 (18.6)	40 (15.9)	1 (16.6)	12 (11.7)	84
			Adj. Residual	-0.6	-1.8	6.8	-4.3	0.1	

$\chi^2 (68) = 949.855, p$

ARTIFACT	Count	104 (60.7)	39 (53.3)	29 (45.4)	54 (47.4)	14 (33.3)	240
	Adj. Residual	6.7	-2.3	-2.8	1.1	-3.7	
BUILDING	Count	15 (31.1)	10 (27.3)	34 (23.3)	42 (24.3)	22 (17.1)	123
	Adj. Residual	-3.4	-3.8	2.5	4.1	1.3	
CONTAINER	Count	16 (23.8)	22 (20.9)	15 (17.8)	23 (18.6)	18 (13.0)	94
	Adj. Residual	-1.9	0.3	-0.7	1.2	1.5	
FORTUNE	Count	44 (45.2)	29 (39.7)	57 (33.8)	22 (35.3)	27 (24.8)	179
	Adj. Residual	-0.2	-2	4.5	-2.6	0.5	
JOURNEY	Count	54 (42.5)	11 (37.3)	25 (31.8)	42 (33.2)	36 (23.3)	168
	Adj. Residual	2.1	-5	-1.4	1.8	2.9	
LIVING ORGANISM	Count	205 (204.3)	243 (179.3)	142 (152.8)	148 (159.5)	70 (112.2)	808
	Adj. Residual	0.1	6.1	-1.1	-1.2	-4.9	
MACHINE	Count	38 (48.0)	34 (42.2)	30 (35.9)	29 (37.5)	59 (26.4)	190
	Adj. Residual	-1.7	-1.5	-1.1	-1.6	7	
MAGIC	Count	8 (12.9)	8 (11.3)	9 (9.6)	25 (10.1)	1 (7.1)	51
	Adj. Residual	-1.6	-1.1	-0.2	5.3	-2.5	
MOTION	Count	35 (60.2)	83 (52.8)	57 (45.0)	9 (47.0)	54 (33.0)	238
	Adj. Residual	-3.9	4.9	2.1	-6.4	4.1	
NATURAL PHENOMENA	Count	25 (15.7)	9 (13.8)	11 (11.7)	10 (12.2)	7 (8.6)	62
	Adj. Residual	2.8	-1.5	-0.2	-0.7	-0.6	
PERCEPTUAL ATTRIBUTE	Count	29 (33.1)	53 (29.1)	19 (24.8)	25 (25.9)	5 (18.2)	131

<.001,
Cramer's
V = .211

	Adj. Residual	-0.8	5.1	-1.3	-0.2	-3.4	
PHYSICAL OBJECT	Count	103 (120.8)	58 (106.1)	88 (90.4)	167 (94.3)	62 (66.4)	478
	Adj. Residual	-2	-5.7	-0.3	9	-0.6	

Appendix E R/Python Codes for the Figures in the Thesis

- R code for **Figure 4.5**

```
library(readr)
data<- read_csv("~/Desktop/Metaphordata.csv")
View(data)
library(ggplot2)
ggplot(data, aes(x=Region, fill = Section)) +
  geom_bar() +
  ggtitle("Hotel facility (Website section)") +
  geom_text(stat='count', aes(label=..count..), size = 3, position = position_stack(vjust =
0.5),colour = "black") + scale_fill_manual(values = c("#FFDAD1",
"#FFEDDA", "#CAB3C1", "#D7E2EA", "#96B3C2"))
```

- R code for **Figure 5.2**

```
library(readr)
library(RColorBrewer)
library(ggplot2)
data<- read_csv("~/Desktop/Hyperboledata.csv")
View(data)

ggplot(data) +
  geom_bar(aes(x = Section, fill = Category)) +
  facet_wrap(~ Region) +
  scale_fill_manual(values = c("#FFDAD1",
"#99CCFF", "#CC99CC", "#D7E2EA", "#96B3C2", "#CCCCFF", '#FFCCCC')) +
  theme(text = element_text(size =15))
```

- Python code for **Figure 6.7**

```
import matplotlib.pyplot as plt
import seaborn as sns

df = pd.read_csv(' Type one MH_Finalresults.csv ')
sns.set_theme(style="whitegrid")
domain_types = df['DOMAIN'].unique()
#plotting the graph
category_order = ['BIG-SMALL',
'MORE-LESS',
'WHOLE-PART',
'FULL-EMPTY',
'UP-DOWN',
'FAR-NEAR',
'FRONT-BACK',
'HOT-COLD']
```

```

ax = sns.countplot(x='Substructures', hue = "DOMAIN", order=category_order, data=df)
plt.xticks(rotation=45, fontsize=8)

for container in ax.containers:
    ax.bar_label(container)
def change_width(ax, new_value) :
    for patch in ax.patches :
        current_width = patch.get_width()
        diff = current_width - new_value

        patch.set_width(new_value)
        patch.set_x(patch.get_x() + diff * .5)

change_width(ax, .35)

plt.savefig('Type1.png', dpi=300, bbox_inches='tight')
plt.show()

```

- Python code for **Figure 6.8**

```

import seaborn as sns
df=pd.read_csv("Type two MH_Finalresults.csv")

ax = sns.countplot(x='Prototype', data=df, order = df['Prototype'].value_counts().index)
plt.xticks(rotation=45)
plt.xticks(size=6)

for container in ax.containers:
    ax.bar_label(container)
def change_width(ax, new_value) :
    for patch in ax.patches :
        current_width = patch.get_width()
        diff = current_width - new_value

        patch.set_width(new_value)
        patch.set_x(patch.get_x() + diff * .5)

change_width(ax, .35)

plt.savefig('Type2.png', dpi=300, bbox_inches='tight')
plt.show()

```