REPRESENTATIONS OF MEDITERRANEAN TOURISM IN ITALIAN AND ENGLISH TRAVEL BLOGS: A COMPARATIVE ECOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

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Abstract: The language used in travel and tourism blogs represents a relevant yet underexplored area of ecolinguistic research, as it offers insights into how individuals construct online identities (van Nuenen 2016, 2021) and represent environmental sustainability (Paganoni 2024). From an ecolinguistic perspective (Fill and Penz 2018; Stibbe 2015), and drawing on eco-translation – understood as an approach to linguistic and cultural mediation in relation to ecology and cultural sustainability (Cronin 2017; Hu 2020) – this study examines two mini-corpora of Italian and English travel blogs discussing tourism in Sicily as a Mediterranean destination (Ponton and Raimo 2024). Using a corpus-based methodology combined with *Content Analysis* (Stemler 2001; Braun and Clarke 2021) and *Critical Discourse Analysis* (Fairclough 2010), the research compares recurrent thematic patterns and discursive strategies across the two languages. The analysis reveals both convergences and divergences in English and Italian conceptualisations of environmental topics (Kefala 2021), showing that sustainability-related meanings are largely subordinated to aestheticised and consumable representations of place. In particular, beaches, food, and iconic landmarks are foregrounded, while biodiversity, conservation, and ecological responsibility remain marginal or absent. The findings underscore the need for greater critical awareness of tourism discourse and its role in shaping environmental attitudes (Ponton 2023), while highlighting the contribution of ecolinguistic and eco-translation approaches to fostering more responsible tourism practices.

Keywords: ecolinguistics studies; eco-translation studies; critical discourse analysis; content analysis; Mediterranean tourism; travel blogs.

1. Introduction: Language, Tourism and Sustainability[1]

Travel and the literature associated with it have a long history, from classical accounts such as Herodotus to medieval narratives including Marco Polo. In the English-speaking world, however, the Grand Tour of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries marked a decisive moment in the emergence of modern tourism. Early travellers often viewed the Mediterranean through a Eurocentric lens, celebrating its classical past while overlooking contemporary cultures (Abulafia 2005; Horden and Purcell 2006). Over time, the narrative of Mediterranean tourism has evolved, combining historical heritage, cultural diversity, and natural landscapes. This shift, from the Grand Tour to contemporary digital media, reflects broader changes in how Mediterranean tourism is perceived and documented.

Traditional tourist literature frequently portrays destinations superficially, emphasising iconic landmarks and commercialised experiences rather than sustained engagement with local environments and cultures. Such representations tend to promote mass tourism practices that privilege visitor numbers and economic profit over ecological preservation and cultural integrity (Milano *et al*. 2019; Fletcher *et al.* 2017). Mass tourism has therefore been widely criticised for intensive resource consumption, pollution, and habitat disruption (Hall and Page 2014), and for generating social pressures associated with overtourism (Koens *et al.* 2018). At the same time, the growing demand for "authentic" experiences often results in cultural commodification, complicating relationships between tourists and host communities.

Cohen (1988) conceptualises authenticity as negotiable and contingent on tourists' expectations, distinguishing between different types of travellers, including those seeking "existential" or "experiential" engagement. He introduces the notion of "emergent authenticity" whereby cultural products initially created for tourists may gradually acquire genuine status. Disneyland offers a well-known example: despite being deliberately designed as a commercial attraction, it has come to be perceived by many visitors as an authentic cultural experience and is now embedded in American popular culture (Reisinger and Steiner 2006; Bauer-Krösbacher 2019). In such cases, commodification does not necessarily erase cultural meaning but can generate new forms of significance. Nevertheless, the pursuit of authenticity may paradoxically undermine the cultural and environmental resources it seeks to protect (Cohen 1988). Given the contested nature of contemporary tourism and its association with environmental degradation, including habitat loss, pollution, and littering, tourism discourse can productively be examined from an ecolinguistic perspective.

Within this framework, travel blogs appear to offer a potentially more nuanced and environmentally aware representation of destinations. Their focus on personal experience, local culture, and lesser-known places suggests an ability to promote more sustainable tourism practices (Mkono 2016). However, this study investigates the extent to which such potential is realised, acknowledging that many blogs continue to reproduce conventional tourist narratives depending on audience and communicative goals.

From an ecolinguistic (Stibbe 2015; Fill and Penz 2018) and eco-translation perspective (Cronin 2017; Dasca and Cerarols 2024; Hu 2020), travel blogs can be understood as sites of environmental mediation. They shape representations of landscapes, cultures, and sustainability through discursive and translational strategies aligned with tourist expectations. While some blogs reinforce consumerist and aestheticised framings of nature and culture, others display recurring textual patterns – particularly in Italian and English blogs – in areas such as food descriptions and place recommendations. These patterns point to forms of implicit linguistic mediation that raise questions about how sustainability discourse circulates within tourism communication, either reproducing dominant narratives or enabling alternative framings that foreground ecological awareness and local agency.

1.1. Digital Tourism Narratives

Today, narratives of Mediterranean tourism are shaped by digital media and social platforms such as travel blogs, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok. These platforms provide immediate and personalised accounts of travel experiences, often foregrounding lesser-known destinations. Travel bloggers and social media influencers play a key role in shaping contemporary tourism narratives, combining personal anecdotes with practical advice that reflect the preferences and behaviours of modern tourists (Yoo *et al.* 2017). According to Leung *et al.* (2015), such forms of tourism also facilitate self-exploration, as travellers engage in reflective practices, including documenting their experiences through travel diaries. Desforges (2000) similarly highlights the relationship between tourism and self-identity, while Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier argue that recording travel experiences contributes to constructing "a picture of lived identities" (2008: 309). More recently, live-streaming tools have expanded the immediacy of travel documentation, enabling real-time sharing. Social media thus influences travel before, during, and after the trip, shaping anticipation and the re-experiencing of past journeys (Leung *et al.* 2015; Yoo *et al.* 2017).

Within this landscape, travel blogs play a key role in framing contemporary tourism and shaping tourist perceptions and expectations. Thurlow and Jaworski (2011) observe that tourism discourse frequently commodifies local cultures and landscapes, aligning them with global consumer trends. Cohen and Cohen (2019) further argue that such commodification privileges surface-level engagement over deeper cultural understanding, transforming complex identities into consumable experiences. By analysing English and Italian travel blogs, this study explores how Mediterranean tourism is represented, particularly in terms of negotiating authenticity and commodification (Mkono 2016; Urry 2002). This

comparative perspective enables an examination of how local cultures are discursively reframed for global audiences.

Beyond commercialised narratives, travel blogs may enable alternative representations that foreground cultural engagement and ecological awareness. In this context, authenticity is not an inherent quality but a contested discursive construct shaped by tourists' expectations (MacCannell 1976). Attempts to counter consumeristic framings often emphasise connections with local cultures, historical contexts, and natural environments, promoting more reciprocal relationships with host communities and a reflective understanding of place. However, many blogs struggle to sustain this approach and rely on clichéd or formulaic language that prioritises marketable experiences. Expressions such as "an enchanted village" or "a triumph of colours and scents" are evocative but interchangeable, applicable to multiple destinations and thus diluting local specificity (Mkono 2016; Urry 2002). In this sense, appeals to authenticity function less as descriptive claims than as strategic resources within tourism discourse, often mobilised to offset overt consumerism. Moving beyond surface-level portrayals therefore requires deeper engagement with cultural, ecological, and social dimensions, including contextualisation, local narratives, and attention to conservation and sustainability (Butcher 2003; Cohen and Cohen 2019). Such practices may foster more responsible tourism.

The analysis draws on a corpus of Italian and English travel blog posts on Mediterranean tourism (Ponton and Raimo 2024) and adopts an ecolinguistic approach to compare recurring discursive patterns across the two languages (Fill and Penz 2018; Stibbe 2015). Particular attention is paid to convergences and divergences in the framing of environmental themes, including place, nature, and sustainability (Kefala 2021).

2. Traditional Tourist Literature and Ecological Impact

Traditional tourist literature has long played a central role in shaping tourists' perceptions and behaviours. It typically emphasises iconic landmarks, scenic beauty, and cultural highlights, while downplaying the social and ecological complexities of destinations. Shepherd (2002) argues that the commodification of nature and culture in tourism obscures cultural costs and reduces value to marketable symbols. More recently, Liodakis (2023) has shown how value appropriation processes in tourism exacerbate ecological degradation and social inequalities, confirming that these issues are central to understanding tourism narratives.

Tourist literature has evolved considerably over time. Following the often elitist accounts of explorers and Grand Tour travellers, the nineteenth century saw the emergence of systematic guidebooks. John Murray's *Handbooks for Travellers* and Karl Baedeker's series provided practical information, maps, and cultural notes, making travel more accessible and structured. These publications laid the groundwork for commercialised, mass-market tourist literature (MacCannell 1976). Early travel narratives often fostered nuanced cultural and historical understanding (Bloch and Adams 2022), but with the expansion of

mass tourism, representations became increasingly streamlined, prioritising attractive, easily consumable experiences (Urry 2002).

This shift towards mass tourism is closely tied to the commodification of natural and cultural assets, often resulting in superficial engagement, where consumption outweighs appreciation or understanding (Greenwood 1982). The commodification of nature carries significant ecological consequences (Gössling and Hall 2006). Tourist infrastructure, including hotels, resorts, and recreational facilities, frequently contributes to habitat destruction, pollution, and resource depletion (Hall 2010).

Well-known destinations such as Venice and Barcelona have experienced intense tourism pressure, leading to environmental degradation and social strain (Milano *et al.* 2019). Similar dynamics affect cities like Dubrovnik, Santorini, and Amsterdam, where overcrowding, rising living costs, and the commercialisation of public space are increasingly evident (Koens *et al.* 2018). These cases illustrate the tension between tourism-driven economic benefits and the preservation of cultural heritage and environmental integrity. Traditional tourist literature continues to promote these destinations while often overlooking such challenges, thereby reinforcing unsustainable tourism practices.

Critiques of traditional tourist literature and mass tourism have prompted calls for more sustainable approaches. Ecolinguistics examines how language and discourse shape human–environment relations and promotes narratives that foster ecological awareness and respect (Fill and Penz 2018; Stibbe 2015). By foregrounding the interconnectedness of social and natural systems, ecolinguistic perspectives encourage a shift away from exploitative models towards more ethical forms of tourism.

Within this context, travel blogs function as a contemporary form of tourist literature that can support this shift. They offer more personalised and reflective accounts of travel, highlight lesser-known destinations, and promote sustainable practices (Mkono 2016). From MacCannell's perspective, these voices express a reconfigured form of "authenticity".

3. Methodology

This study is grounded in an ecolinguistic perspective (Stibbe 2012, 2014; Fill and Penz 2018), which provides the overarching framework for analysing how language shapes perceptions of nature, culture, and sustainability. Within this framework, the study draws on eco-translation (Cronin 2017; Hu 2020; Dasca and Cerarols 2024) to examine how environmental discourse is mediated across linguistic and cultural contexts. These perspectives are operationalised through a discourse-analytical approach (Fairclough 2001, 2010).

The analysis combines two complementary methodologies: content analysis (CA) and critical discourse analysis (CDA). CA identifies recurrent themes and patterns through systematic coding (Jaspal 2020), while CDA contextualises these findings by examining ideological structures and power relations embedded in the texts. CA is supported by corpus-based techniques applied at the initial stage of analysis to identify frequency patterns, salient lexical items,

and systematic absences (Baker 2009) across the two mini-corpora (Nagano 2014). For instance, frequency lists reveal the prominence of coastal terms such as *beach, sea, mare,* and *spiaggia,* alongside the near absence of biodiversity-related vocabulary, which informs subsequent qualitative coding and critical interpretation.

Insights from ecolinguistics (Ponton 2023) further inform the analysis by linking linguistic patterns to environmental attitudes and sustainability-oriented discourses (Fill 2001; Fill and Mühlhäusler 2001; Fill and Penz 2018; Stibbe 2012, 2015). In the context of the Anthropocene (Ponton and Sokół 2022), this perspective provides a framework for examining how tourism discourse may reinforce or challenge ecological awareness.

Eco-translation plays a central role in the analysis by framing cross-linguistic comparison as a process of meaning negotiation rather than literal translation (Cronin 2017; Hu 2020). Although the dataset consists of seven Italian and seven English travel blogs with no direct intertextual relations, eco-translation is operationalised by comparing how environmental themes are framed in the two languages. This involves analysing lexical choices, metaphors, and rhetorical strategies that recontextualise sustainability discourse in culturally specific ways (Zhao and Geng 2024). By tracing convergences and divergences across the English and Italian corpora, the study highlights how tourism discourse can reproduce dominant sustainability narratives or introduce alternative framings.

Through CDA, the analysis uncovers the ideological dimensions underlying representations of environmental and cultural values, examining how tourism language may support or undermine sustainable practices. This examination operates at multiple levels: lexically, through descriptive choices and metaphor use; discursively, through narrative constructions of nature and local culture; and ideologically, through the power relations embedded in tourism discourse.

The two mini-corpora were compiled through Google searches conducted between 2022 and 2023 using queries such as "Visitare la Sicilia" (Visit Sicily) and "blog viaggio in Sicilia" (blog visit Sicily) (see *Appendix*). Fourteen blogs were selected – seven in English and seven in Italian – enabling a systematic cross-linguistic comparison of how Sicily is represented and how ecological meanings are negotiated across languages.

3.1. Content Analysis

The methodological framework follows Roberts (1989), treating the clause as the primary unit of analysis. CA began with close reading of the blog texts to identify recurring themes (e.g., fauna, flora, natural reserves, places to visit, local history, indigenous culture, food, prices, personal reflections, accommodation). This preliminary stage informed a coding scheme grounded in the data (Krippendorff 2019; Stemler 2001).

Themes were organised into a flexible coding scheme (Braun and Clarke 2021) and refined as analysis progressed. Each blog was coded systematically to assess the frequency and prominence of categories, ensuring an empirically grounded basis for interpretation.

The analytical categories identified in this study are summarised in Table 1 ("Categorie ed esempi per analizzare i blog di viaggio") in Ponton and Raimo (2024). The flexibility of the coding process allowed for a detailed and nuanced segmentation of the texts, providing a view of how tourism is represented in both Italian and English blogs.

3.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

In addition to CA, CDA was employed, as outlined at the beginning of Section 3, to deepen the analysis of how language in travel blogs constructs representations of Sicilian tourism, nature, and local culture. While CA offers a systematic method for identifying and quantifying recurring themes and patterns, CDA enables a more nuanced examination of the ideological structures, power relations, and socio-cultural narratives embedded in the texts. The integration of these approaches allows for a comprehensive analysis of both surface-level content and deeper discursive strategies shaping tourism representations.

CDA seeks to uncover structures of power and ideology through detailed discourse analysis (Guillén-Nieto 2023). In this study, we adopt an interdisciplinary approach that draws on sociology, political science, and discourse analysis to examine discourse at three interconnected levels: macro (broader societal contexts), meso (institutional and organisational settings), and micro (specific linguistic interactions) (Guillén-Nieto 2023). This framework illustrates how ideology and power are reproduced through discourse.

Table 1 presents the step-by-step application of CDA to the analysis of travel blogs. It is organised around the three analytical levels – micro, meso, and macro – and builds on established CDA models (Bloor and Bloor 2013; Penz and Fill 2022; Fairclough 2001), highlighting how each level addresses distinct linguistic, social, and ideological dimensions.

Table 1. Analytical Framework and Key Questions

Level of Analysis	Description	Guiding Questions	Examples
Micro	Linguistic features such as lexical choices, syntax, and metaphor, revealing evaluative meanings and underlying worldviews (Bloor and Bloor 2013).	*What specific terms are chosen?* *How do syntax and lexical choices shape the reader's perception?*	"Flamingos, herons, and storks" (use of specific names to construct an exotic and natural image).
Meso	Representation of tourism practices and institutional contexts, including the commodification of local culture and tourist–community relations (Penz and Fill 2022).	*Who is the target audience?* *How are local communities represented?*	"The Etna Summer Sunset Experience costs 54 EUR in summer" (tourism portrayed as a consumable product).
Macro	Ideological framing of tourism, where discourse reproduces broader capitalist, colonial, and	*How does the discourse contribute to the perpetuation of broader ideologies?*	"In Messina, huge groups of men carry heavy wooden statues" (cultural

	global power structures (Fairclough 2001).	*What cultural or economic values are being reinforced?*	representations linked to local identity and religion).

In this study, we follow, as seen in Table 1, the theoretical orientation proposed by Penz and Fill (2022), which conceives CDA as an interdisciplinary approach to text analysis.

4. Data

The English blogs (Fig. 1) total 29,668 tokens and present varied perspectives on travel in Sicily, often blending personal narrative with marketing-oriented promotion.

English Blogs		Italian Blogs	
N.	Name	N.	Name
1	Adventurous Kate	1	Mi prendo e mi porto via
2	Untold Morsels	2	Sono in vacanza da una vita
3	Eccentric Englishman	3	Sarà perché viaggio
4	Along Dusty Roads	4	Le chicche di viaggio
5	The Curious Sparrow	5	Cartoline a colazione
6	Two for the World	6	PieTrolley
7	Helen in Between	7	My Trolley Blog

Figure 1. English and Italian blogs analysed

In practice, they operate as professional forms of travel writing in which branding – and often self-branding – functions as a central promotional strategy. For instance, Kate from *Adventurous Kate* focuses on language learning for cultural immersion, though her advice seems aimed at enhancing tourists' enjoyment rather than fostering a deep understanding of Sicilian culture. Similarly, Katy Clarke's *Untold Morsels* promotes "agritourism" but lacks a deeper exploration of the local traditions, reflecting a broader trend where travel is often presented through surface-level engagement. Indeed, in different ways most of the bloggers commodify the Sicilian experience. Rob, the *Eccentric Englishman*, uses irony to depict Catania's fish market as a sensory spectacle, something above all 'to be seen' (Urry 2002) instead of highlighting aspects of cultural significance. *Along Dusty Roads* promotes eco-friendly travel but focuses primarily on activities like kayaking, potentially reducing the experience to a scenic adventure. *The Curious Sparrow* emphasises consumption through practical advice on local foods, and again risks commercialising the cultural experience. *Two for the World* encourages responsible tourism in activities like hiking on Mount Etna, but like *Along Dusty Roads,* this focus on the outdoor activity aspect neglects the aspect of encounter with features of the place itself. Finally, *Helen in Between* centres on personal narratives of cultural and culinary

discovery but often remains focused on personal enjoyment rather than meaningful cultural exchange.

The Italian blogs (Fig. 1) comprise a total of 18,964 tokens. They often emphasise aspects of local culture, yet these representations are frequently reductive or commodified, privileging easily marketable images over more complex or situated understandings. For example, Elisa and Luca from *Mi prendo e mi porto via* describe their engagement with Catania's Piazza del Duomo, but as in some English blogs, the narrative risks reducing the experience to a merely visual spectacle. Rosy Cantarino of *Sono in vacanza da una vita* describes the Vendicari Wildlife Reserve with a familiar cliché from the lexicon of traditional tourism as an 'oasis of tranquility' but downplays the ecological importance of the reserve. Eleonora Ongaro offers a cultural narrative of Ortigia, but her depiction of baroque churches and historic palaces is picturesque rather than historically focused. Claudia Marchionni in *Le chicche di viaggio,* in another tired cliché, presents Erice as an 'enchanted village'. Sarah from *Cartoline a colazione* highlights the sensory experiences at Ortigia's market, focusing on colours and scents, framing food above all as a tourist attraction. Pietro from *PieTrolley* stands out by promoting adventure tourism and responsible travel, aligning his discourse with the eco-friendly practices described in the English blogs. Finally, Sabrina Campanella in *My Trolley Blog* presents agritourism as both an environmental and economic advantage, yet this portrayal still relies on an idealised vision of "traditional" agriculture, aligning with a niche form of sustainability marketing rather than critically examining agritourism's actual impact.

Many of these narratives thus tend to commodify the travel experience. Despite being individual travellers rather than businesses, these bloggers often adopt marketing language and presentation techniques. As blogs gain popularity, bloggers frequently partner with brands and promote products or services, leading readers to question the credibility of the information provided (Snee 2013; Duffy 2015; Hookway and Snee 2017). Furthermore, travel blogs often blend personal experiences with subtle product recommendations, making it difficult to distinguish between genuine advice and commercial intent (Månsson 2011; Mkono 2016). This practice, while it may enhance the blogger's connection with readers, also supports their business models by attracting sponsors and increasing revenue opportunities (Butow and Bollwitt 2012).

5. Analysis

5.1 Mediterranean Tourism Theme

The analysis of the two mini-corpora of travel blogs on Sicily – one in English (comprising 29,531 total words and 4,138 unique forms) and the other in Italian (18,964 total words and 4,105 unique forms) – reveals both distinct thematic emphases and significant omissions. A close reading of the texts shows that nature, gastronomy, and local culture – key aspects of tourism discourse (Pan *et*

al. 2007) – are either marginally represented or framed in superficial, commodified terms.

At the lexical level, specific references to ecological sustainability and authentic culinary traditions are scarce, often replaced by generic descriptors (e.g., "beautiful beaches" rather than references to distinct ecosystems). Discursively, these omissions reflect a preference for aestheticised, marketable narratives that cater to the tourist gaze rather than engaging with local realities.

One of the most prominent issues identified is the reduction of nature to coastal elements. In both mini-corpora, nature is consistently presented through the lens of beaches and the sea. For example, in the English mini corpus, words like "Sicily" (352 occurrences), "island" (81), "beach" (32), and "sea" (22) reflect a strong focus on coastal tourism, while in the Italian corpus, "mare" (sea) (64 occurrences) and "spiaggia" (beach) (36) suggest a similar preoccupation with seaside landscapes. While these terms underscore Sicily's attractiveness as a coastal destination, they also indicate a notable omission of other crucial ecological aspects, such as native flora, fauna, or the region's biodiversity.
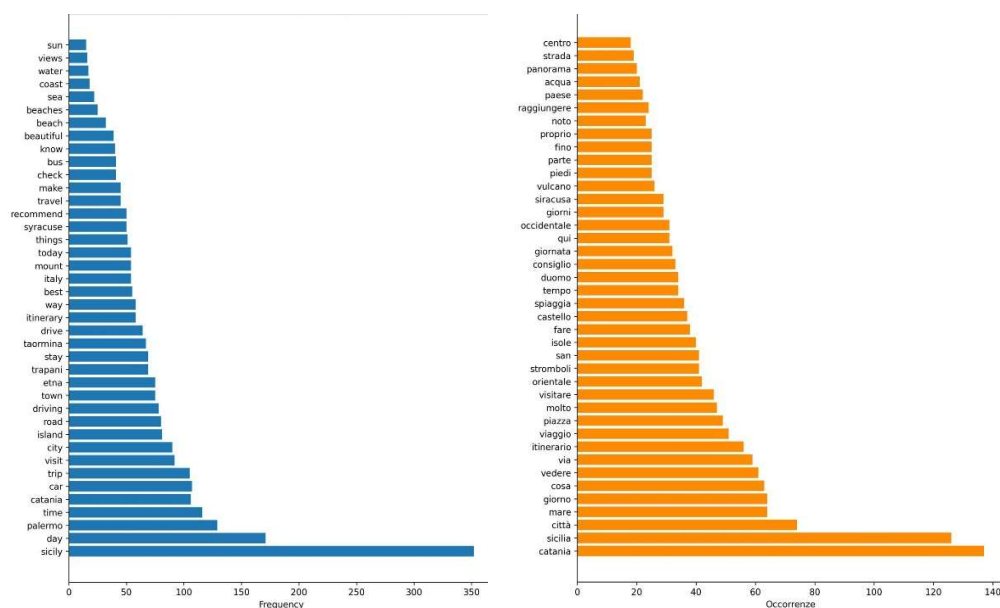
Figure 2. Top forty words in the English and Italian mini-corpora

For instance, the blog *Along Dusty Roads* highlights the coastal beauty of the Zingaro Nature Reserve, describing it as a "version of paradise" with "rugged grey and black cliffs and crags" and "endless views of the turquoise water coves which form the faint outline of Sicily's beginnings".

Although this description foregrounds the visual appeal of the reserve, it exemplifies the tourist gaze by commodifying landscape as spectacle while ignoring its ecological significance. The absence of references to biodiversity or conservation efforts illustrates how such blogs rarely provide a genuine alternative to consumptive portrayals of place (Urry 2002).

The blogs that mention beaches like "Baia dei Conigli" in Lampedusa or "Cala Rossa" in Favignana focus on the beauty of locations without addressing

ecological significance. Similarly, *Adventurous Kate* emphasises the beauty and convenience of beach destinations, such as Avola, where "the nicest stretch of sand" was found, and Aci Trezza, where "rocky beaches and beach clubs" dominate the landscape. These descriptions focus on the enjoyment of the experience but neglect the broader environmental context of these areas. This focus on the aesthetics of beach tourism, without attention to ecological elements, highlights the tendency of many blogs to reduce nature to a scenic backdrop.

The absence of terms related to nature reserves or endemic species suggests that nature is framed as a visual spectacle than as a subject for ecological conservation or interest. For example, even when *Along Dusty Roads* mentions activities in the Zingaro Nature Reserve, such as "a day at Lo Zingaro can be as active as you wish or simply a rustic way to get to the first beautiful coves", the emphasis remains on the physical activity or the scenery, rather than on the ecological richness or conservation efforts within the reserve. This limited focus on coastal features restricts the reader's understanding of Sicily's broader environment. By concentrating on beaches and coastal scenery, these blogs miss an opportunity to engage readers with the island's rich environmental diversity. The emphasis on visual and immediate experiences reinforces a tourism model that values consumption over conservation, perpetuating a superficial understanding of Sicily's natural heritage.

A similar pattern emerges in gastronomy. Food appears frequently in both corpora: "food" occurs 39 times in English, and "cibo", "piatto", "food", and "mangiare" occur 27 times in Italian. The discourse highlights iconic Sicilian dishes but omits reference to sustainable agriculture or organic production. This omission is significant, as it reduces Sicilian cuisine to a consumable experience detached from the agricultural traditions that could enrich its cultural and ecological narrative. In an era where there is attention to organic products and healthy food, travel blogs make no reference to these topics, and it is a surprise that the only mention of zero-kilometre products (locally sourced goods) appears in Italian *My Trolley Blog* and pertains to soaps rather than food. Instead, the focus on markets like Catania or Palermo highlights the freshness of produce and fish without reflecting on whether these products are sourced sustainably. For example, in *The Curious Sparrow*, the author praises Palermo as a "city for food lovers" and invites readers to explore its vibrant markets, such as the "Mercato del Capo" (Cape Market), offering authentic Sicilian 'street food' like arancini, cannoli, crocchè, and panelle.

The treatment of local culture and history follows a similar pattern. Terms such as "temples" (35 occurrences in English corpus) and "piazza" (49 in Italian corpus) indicate that historical landmarks are frequently mentioned, yet typically framed as itinerary items rather than cultural experiences. Sites such as "Castello Ursino" and the Valley of the Temples are often referenced briefly, with little attention to their historical significance. This approach reduces Sicily's layered cultural heritage to a checklist of attractions, flattening its complexity into a touristic landscape.

Finally, the overall tourism model portrayed in these blogs appears far from sustainable. Although terms such as "natural" (11 occurrences in the English

blogs) and "natura" (7 in the Italian blogs) recur frequently, they remain largely disconnected from any discussion of ecological conservation or sustainability. In both corpora, "natural" and "natura" are used primarily to denote scenic beauty and authenticity, reinforcing an idealised vision of nature as a backdrop for tourist experiences. In the English texts, expressions such as "Sicily is where natural beauty meets humanity" and "The diversity of Sicily's coastline is a large part of its natural charm" (*Untold Morsels*) foreground visual and experiential appeal without addressing environmental concerns. Similarly, Italian examples such as "Isole selvagge in cui la natura regna sovrana" (*Sono in vacanza da una vita*, "Sicilia sud orientale") and "Acque cristalline, natura incontaminata" (My Trolley Blog, "Catania") depict nature as pristine and untouched, yet without reference to tourism's ecological impact.

Notably, neither "natural" nor "natura" collocate with sustainability-related terms such as "conservation", "protection", or "ecological", confirming a discourse centred on aesthetic appreciation rather than environmental responsibility.

Illustrative examples are provided in Fig. 3 and Fig. 4.
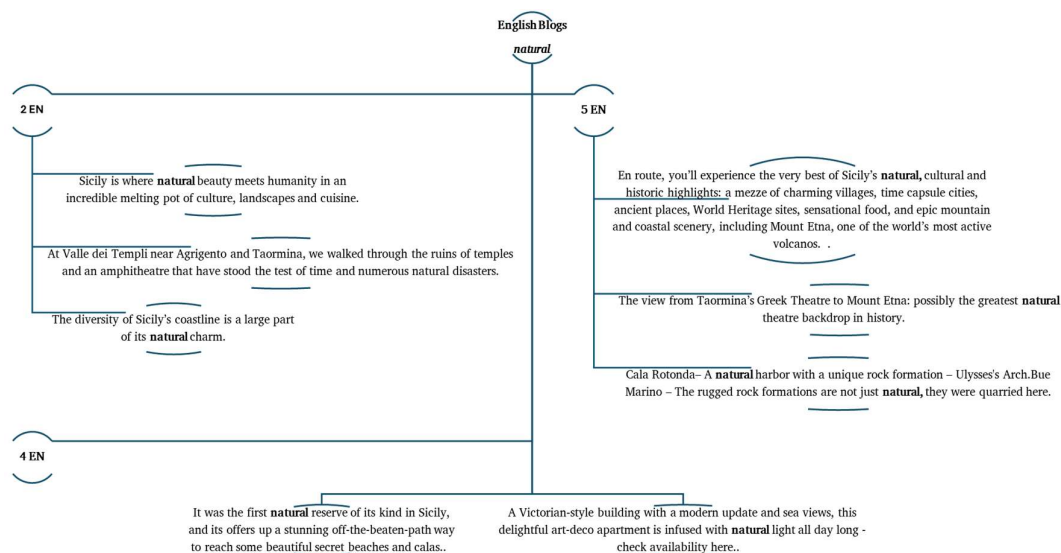
Figure 3. Some Examples of 'Natural' in English Travel Blogs

Italian Blogs
natura

1 IT

Contenuto: Acque cristalline, **natura** incontaminata, piccoli paesini dove la vita scorre lenta, rocce, sabbia, natura e mare che toglie il respiro..

Un paesaggio unico , tra **natura**, mare venti e *dammusi*, gli edifici caratteristici dell'isola.

2 IT

Alicudi e Filicudi ad esempio sono più per chi ama stare a contatto con la **natura**, Salina è la patria dello Slow food.

Infine c' è Lipari l'isola più grande che a mio parere è il giusto compromesso per chi è amante della **natura**, che desidera una vacanza al mare, con maggiori servizi e locali per uscire la sera.

4 IT

Isole selvagge in cui la **natura** regna sovrana con pochissime abitazioni, calette con acque cristalline, grotte suggestive.
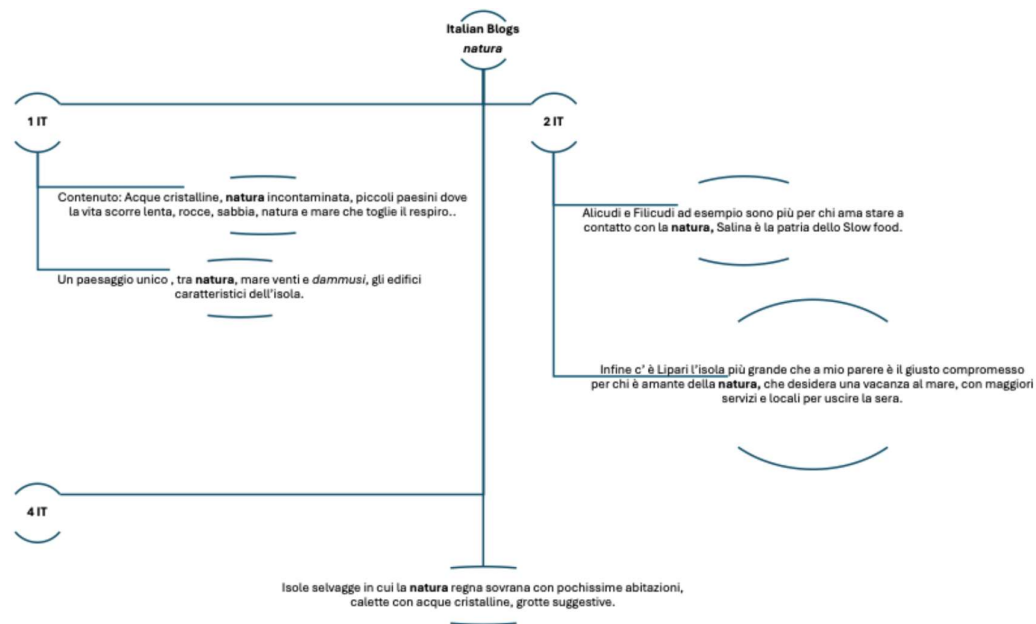
Figure 4. Some Examples of 'Natura' in Italian Travel Blogs

The focus remains on immediate enjoyment, with little attention to the environmental or social impacts of mass tourism. This limited engagement with sustainability downplays Sicily's ecological dimension, framing the island primarily as a site of short-term consumption rather than as a region whose preservation matters for future generations. For instance, several blogs describe Catania's fish market as "bursting with life" or liken it to the chaos of "Italian traffic", reducing the scene to a sensory spectacle while overlooking broader ecological or social concerns (*Eccentric Englishman*). Similarly, *Mi prendo e mi porto via* offers a vivid portrayal in which "le urla dei pescatori alla ricerca di nuovi clienti si mischiano ai colori della loro mercanzia creando un vero caleidoscopio di emozioni". In both cases, the emphasis on energy and vibrancy produces a clichéd version of a supposedly 'authentic' Italian experience.

In conclusion, the qualitative analysis of the English blogs reveals a strong focus on easily consumable aspects of tourism, such as coastal landscapes, food, and iconic landmarks, while deeper ecological and cultural dimensions remain marginal. The thematic categories identified, including "Natural Elements" and "Local History", reflect this tendency. Nature is largely reduced to coastal imagery, as in references to "Baia dei Conigli" and "Cala Rossa", whereas Sicily's biodiversity is mostly overlooked. Gastronomy is similarly celebrated for its immediate appeal, without meaningful links to local agricultural practices that could support sustainability. Cultural landmarks, such as the Valley of the Temples and "Castello Ursino", are framed as tourist stops rather than as integral components of Sicily's cultural heritage. Overall, this tourism discourse lacks sustainability, privileging superficial enjoyment over consideration of ecological and social impacts (Ponton and Raimo 2024).

5.2 English Blog Analysis

This section presents an analysis of English-language travel blogs on Sicily, drawing on a three-level discourse model – *micro, meso*, and *macro* – to examine how representations of travel, culture, and the environment are shaped linguistically, institutionally, and ideologically.

At the *micro level*, we focus on the specific lexical choices, syntactic structures, and figurative language used in the blogs. Bloor and Bloor (2013) assert that micro-level analysis allows us to see how language encodes deeper values and ideologies. Let us consider the following sentence from *Adventurous Kate*:

> We did the Etna Summer Sunset Experience excursion from Etna Experience, and it was a wonderful way to see the volcano up close and hike a small part of it, finishing with wine and snacks at a beautiful sunset spot. 54 euro ($60) in summer, 44 euro ($49) in other seasons.

An interesting aspect of the language used in English travel blogs is the widespread use of modal verbs such as "should" and "must", which convey a sense of obligation or necessity. In the blog *Along Dusty Roads*, expressions like "You must visit the Valley of the Temples" represent prescriptive language that positions the author as an authority, an expert giving imperative advice to the reader. Fairclough (2001, 2010) highlighted how the use of modal verbs in tourism discourse establishes power relations between the author and the reader, turning the journey into a sequence of obligatory stops rather than an exploratory, personal experience. This type of language contributes to creating a narrative where the travel experience is standardised and pre-packaged.

Shifting to the *meso level*, this analysis examines the institutional and organisational contexts in which the blogs operate and how they represent interactions between tourists and local communities. As Penz and Fill (2022) note, tourism discourse frequently commodifies local experiences, framing them as products for tourist consumption. This process is evident in the sentence reported in the previous quote, where the natural beauty of Mount Etna, a UNESCO World Heritage site, is presented as a purchasable experience. Here, the volcano is transformed into a consumable product, mediated through organised tourism infrastructures such as guided tours and scheduled sunset visits. By embedding prices in discourse, nature itself becomes commodified (Young and Markham 2020), encouraging tourists to conceptualise traditional values such as sightseeing, relaxation, and the enjoyment of nature as marketable products rather than lived experiences.

At the *macro level*, the analysis turns to the broader ideological structures reproduced through these blog narratives.

As Fairclough (2001) argues, discourse functions as a social practice that reproduces dominant ideologies. In travel blogs about Sicily, narratives often align with capitalist and colonialist logics, framing the island as an exotic and consumable locale. Expressions such as "everything looks and tastes like sunshine" (*Adventurous Kate*) exemplify this tendency, invoking a romanticised and idealised vision of Sicily centred on sensory pleasure. The term "sunshine"

draws on advertising discourse, reducing Sicily's culture and environment to a simplified, marketable image. This metaphor caters to tourists seeking a curated and pleasant experience rather than deeper engagement with the destination's ecological or social dimensions.

One blog describes small Sicilian towns as places "where time stands still", a familiar cliché that perpetuates an image of Sicily as an exotic locale detached from the modern, industrialised world (*Two for the World*).

Similarly, the description of the island's most popular destinations – "In Eastern Sicily, that means sticking to the Aeolian Islands, Taormina, Mount Etna, Siracusa, and the Baroque cities" (*Along Dusty Roads*) – suggests a checklist approach to tourism, focused on ticking off iconic locations rather than engaging with lesser-known aspects of the region. This 'tick-the-box' mentality reflects a capitalist view of tourism as a reductive form of consumption. Such descriptions reinforce global tourism practices that prioritise easily commodified destinations, contributing to a homogenised experience of place in which distinctive cultural and natural features are flattened to fit pre-established tourist expectations.

Moreover, the portrayal of Sicily – geographically part of the West – as "untouched" and "wild" echoes colonialist narratives of the exotic and the primitive, in which destinations are framed as mysterious, timeless, and awaiting discovery by Western tourists. This logic is reflected in the exoticisation of the natural environment through expressions such as "gargoyle-like rocks" and "overgrown plants" (*Along Dusty Roads*), which construct Sicily's rugged landscapes as spaces to be explored and mastered. A similar framing appears in *Along Dusty Roads*, which describes visits to "rugged, wild beaches in national parks to the west of Agrigento", portraying these areas as remote and demanding exploration: "We liked them a lot, but don't recommend that you tag them onto today just for the sake of it". Such narratives reinforce power imbalances between the Western traveller and the local environment, positioning nature and culture as commodities to be consumed rather than respected or preserved.

5.3 Italian Blog Analysis

At the *micro level*, Italian travel blogs frequently use evocative and sensory descriptions, such as "acque cristalline" (*crystal-clear waters*) and "paesaggi mozzafiato" (*breathtaking landscapes*), which present Sicily as a place of unparalleled natural beauty. A particularly notable example is the sentence below, from *Mi prendo e mi porto via*.

> Pantelleria vi stupirà per la quantità di sfumature di blu che il mare riesce a mostrare (Pantelleria will amaze you with the variety of shades of blue that the sea reveals).

Here, terms like "stupirà" (*will amaze*) and "sfumature di blu" (*shades of blue)* construct an idyllic and almost mythical image of the Sicilian landscape. This kind of language creates a sense of wonder and invites readers to experience the island visually and sensorially, aligning with Bloor and Bloor's (2013) analysis

that such lexical choices reflect underlying ideologies which position nature as an object of visual consumption for tourists.

Moreover, Italian blogs frequently employ metaphors that exalt the natural beauty of the location. Describing Sicily's islands as the "pearl of the Mediterranean" (*My Trolley Blog,* "Catania"; *My Trolley Blog,* "Sicilia"; *Mi prendo e mi porto via,* "Cosa vedere"*; Mi prendo e mi porto via,* "Guida"), for instance, frames them as rare and valuable treasures, positioning nature as an object of desire for tourists. This aestheticised language encourages a perception of the landscape as a spectacle to be admired, reinforcing the idea of the Mediterranean as a constructed paradise for tourism rather than as a space embedded in everyday Sicilian life and culture.

A comparison with English blogs shows a shared reliance on vivid imagery and metaphor, though with clear differences in tone and focus. English blogs typically emphasise Sicily's rugged and "wild" character, drawing on dynamic and zoomorphic metaphors to depict a landscape shaped by untamed natural forces. Expressions such as "gargoyle-like rocks" (*Along Dusty Roads*) animate geological formations by likening them to mythical creatures, reinforcing ideas of mystery and adventure. Similarly, phrases like "rugged, wild beaches" (*Along Dusty Roads*) and "dramatic, untamed terrains carved by fire and sea" frame Sicily as unpredictable and suited to exploration.

Italian blogs, by contrast, tend to present nature as a space of aesthetic contemplation, privileging serenity over adventure. Descriptions such as "Pantelleria vi stupirà per la quantità di sfumature di blu che il mare riesce a mostrare" (*My Trolley Blog,* "Catania") foreground visual harmony, while personifications like "isole selvagge in cui la natura regna sovrana" (*Sono in vacanza da una vita,* "Sicilia sud orientale") and portrayals such as "La Riserva dello Zingaro è un'oasi di pace" (*My Trolley Blog,* "Sicilia") construct an idyllic and tranquil landscape. Despite these differences, both corpora contribute to a commodified representation of Sicily shaped by the tourist gaze.

Table 2. Micro-level Analysis Summary

TOPIC	ITALIAN EXAMPLES	ENGLISH EXAMPLES
Natural Elements	"Pantelleria vi stupirà per la quantità di sfumature di blu che il mare riesce a mostrare" (Blog1, IT)	"Sicily had a wildness in the way gargoyle-like rocks rise out of the sea" (Blog1, EN)
Nature Reserves	"La Riserva dello Zingaro è un'oasi di pace dove passare qualche ora in totale relax" (Blog2, IT)	"We visited some rugged, wild beaches in national parks to the west of Agrigento" (Blog1, EN)
Food	"Arancini – palline di riso ripiene di carne o formaggio, uno snack perfetto a qualsiasi ora del giorno" (Blog2, IT)	"Arancini – Rice balls stuffed with anything from meat sauce to cheese and vegetables. The perfect snack food for any time of day (yes, I once had one for breakfast)" (Blog1, EN)
Local Culture	"La Piscarìa di Catania è un vero caleidoscopio di emozioni, con le urla dei pescatori e i colori del pesce" (Blog2, IT)	"The Fish Market in Catania is bursting with life, like Italian traffic – busy, loud, and chaotic" (Blog3, EN)

At the *meso level*, both Italian and English blogs reveal processes of commodification in the representation of local communities and Sicilian culture, albeit through different narrative strategies. In the Italian blog *Mi prendo e mi porto via*, frequent references to local traditions and everyday life appear, such as the description of Catania's "Piscarìa" as a "vero caleidoscopio di emozioni" (a true kaleidoscope of emotions). This sensory portrayal places local life at the centre of the tourist narrative, inviting readers to engage with Sicilian culture. Nevertheless, even here the experience is framed for tourist consumption, transforming the fish market into an exotic attraction rather than presenting it as part of ordinary local life. As Penz and Fill (2022) observe, tourism discourse often commercialises local culture, turning it into a spectacle shaped by the tourist gaze.

English blogs display a comparable tendency, though with a different emphasis. While Italian blogs privilege cultural immersion, English blogs more often foreground interaction with nature and adventure. Experiences such as the "Etna Summer Sunset Experience" (*Along Dusty Roads*) are framed as pre-packaged activities that prioritise landscape over cultural engagement. This contrast reflects distinct narrative strategies: Italian blogs market immersion, whereas English blogs promote nature and adventure. Despite these differences, both corpora centre on the commodification of Sicily, with local traditions and landscapes repurposed for tourist consumption.

Table 3. Meso-level Analysis Summary

TOPIC	ITALIAN EXAMPLES	ENGLISH EXAMPLES
Natural Elements	"La Tonnara di Vendicari è famosa per i suoi servizi fotografici, soprattutto al tramonto" (Blog2, IT)	"You must visit the Valley of the Temples" (Blog1, EN).
Nature Reserves	"La Riserva dello Zingaro è un'oasi di pace dove passare qualche ora in totale relax" (Blog2, IT)	"We visited the rugged, wild beaches in national parks west of Agrigento" (Blog1, EN).
Food	"L'agriturismo offre un'esperienza autentica di vita rurale siciliana" (Blog3, IT)	"Etna Summer Sunset Experience... finishing with wine and snacks at a beautiful sunset spot" (Blog1, EN).
Local Culture	"Il mercato del pesce di Catania è un caleidoscopio di colori e emozioni" (Blog2, IT)	"Everything in Sicily looks and tastes like sunshine" (Blog1, EN).

At the macro level, the Italian blogs perpetuate ideologies linked to cultural and natural tourism, presenting Sicily as a timeless place largely untouched by modernity. Expressions such as *"Qui il tempo si è letteralmente fermato"* (here time seems to have literally stopped, *Sono in vacanza da una vita*, "Sicilia sud orientale") reinforce this atemporal framing. This representation aligns with Fairclough's (2001, 2010) account of tourism discourse as reproducing colonialist ideologies that construct destinations as exotic and detached from modernity. A clear indication of this framing emerges in the treatment of infrastructural issues, illustrated by the example below from *Sono in vacanza da una vita*, "Sicilia sud orientale".

> Quando organizzi gli spostamenti da una tappa all'altra del tuo itinerario non affidarti solo a Google Map [sic]: chiedi anche alle persone del posto quale strade [sic] è più scorrevole e nelle condizioni migliori. Potrebbe capitare, come a me, di percorrere km e km di strade con grosse buche sull'asfalto perché sulla mappa sembravano le più brevi! (When planning your journey from one stage to another on your route, don't just rely on Google Maps: also ask locals which roads are smoother and in better condition. It may happen to you, as it did to me, that you must drive miles and miles of roads with big potholes in the asphalt because on the map they seemed the shortest!)

Sicily is frequently portrayed as lacking modern infrastructure, reinforcing an image of the island as detached from modernity. On the one hand, bloggers encourage interaction with local culture, yet suggestions to "ask locals" presuppose unlikely language competences in rural areas. On the other, advice to avoid potholed country roads denies tourists an encounter with contemporary Sicily as experienced by residents. English blogs reproduce a similar framing, often depicting Sicily as "wild" and untouched, though with greater emphasis on challenge and exploration. In both corpora, this discourse commodifies nature and culture, transforming Sicily into a consumable product and obscuring its social complexity in favour of an idealised escape from modernity.

Table 4. Macro-level Analysis Summary

TOPIC	ITALIAN EXAMPLES	ENGLISH EXAMPLES
Natural Elements	"Pantelleria vi stupirà per le sfumature di blu" (Blog1, IT)	"Sicily had a wildness... in the way gargoyle-like rocks rise out of the sea" (Blog1, EN).
Nature Reserves	"Qui il tempo sembra essersi fermato, un luogo fuori dal tempo e dallo spazio" (Blog4, IT)	"We liked the rugged beaches... but don't recommend visiting just for the sake of it" (Blog1, EN).
Food	"La cucina siciliana è un mix perfetto di sapori mediterranei" (Blog3, IT)	"Sicilian food is all about freshness, sunshine, and flavors" (Blog1, EN).
Local Culture	"Qui la vita scorre lenta, come una volta" (Blog4, IT)	"Sicilian towns are places where time stands still" (Blog1, EN).

A significant issue in both Italian and English blogs is the limited representation of Sicily's Mediterranean culture. Rather than everyday life, the blogs construct a curated image shaped by tourist expectations. Nature is framed as spectacle and traditional culture as a consumable experience, obscuring social realities. Instead of conveying Sicily's lived identity, these narratives reinforce a constructed image aligned with global tourism agendas, raising critical questions about tourism's role in shaping cultural identities.

6. Conclusion

The analysis shows that contemporary travel blogs largely frame Sicily through an aestheticised, touristic lens, foregrounding landscapes, food, and architecture while marginalising sustainability and biodiversity (Ponton and Raimo 2024). In platformised blog environments, such framings face limited dialogic correction: bloggers increasingly "maintain control of the communicative space", while users respond mainly by "thanking and agreeing", constraining knowledge co-construction (Paganoni 2024: 64). As a result, consumer-oriented representations are not only widespread but also structurally reinforced.

Across the corpus, environmental awareness remains secondary to leisure-focused narratives, and conservation sites are framed mainly through visual and sensorial appeal. Italian blogs, for instance, repeatedly aestheticise the Vendicari Wildlife Reserve as an *oasi di pace,* a "hidden paradise" for sunbathing on "untouched beaches", and "the surreal beauty of the ancient tonnara at sunset, perfect for photography", rarely acknowledging Vendicari's role as a migratory-bird habitat or the conservation rationale underpinning its protected status. The gap is also visible cross-linguistically: in the seven English blogs Vendicari is absent, while only Zingaro appears (*Helen in Between* and *Untold Morsels*), again primarily as scenic pleasure. Table 5 summarises these tendencies by contrasting touristic framing with the scarcity of explicit sustainability discourse.

Table 5. *Touristic Framing and Sustainability Awareness in English and Italian blogs*

BLOGS	TOURISTIC FRAMING	SUSTAINABILITY AWARENESS
Untold Morsels	At Valle dei Templi near Agrigento and Taormina, we walked through the ruins of temples and an amphitheatre that have stood the test of time and numerous natural disasters.	The diversity of Sicily's coastline is a large part of its natural charm. From the white stone formations of the Scala dei Turchi near Agrigento to the rocky shoreline near Taormina and beaches of the south coast, whatever your coastal preference you will find it in Sicily.
Eccentric Englishman	The favourite of my things to see in Catania was the Fish Market (Google Map link). Running from Monday to Saturday, it was bursting with life which is more that can be said for its wares! The sheer volume and noise of this place is great.	-
Along Dusty Roads	The Valley of the Temples is best visited on a western Sicily road trip, but can be visited on a two-week eastern Sicily route.	Lo Zingaro Nature Reserve is a version of paradise; rugged grey and black cliffs and crags, a tinderbox of sprawling and tumbling greens, and endless views of the turquoise water coves which form the faint outline of Sicily's beginnings.

Mi Prendo e Mi Porto Via	Arriviamo ad Aci Trezza, il celebre borgo di pescatori […] e dopo una breve passeggiata decidiamo di infilarci in uno dei suoi numerosi ristoranti di pesce.	-
Sono in Vacanza da una Vita	A pochi chilometri da Noto Marina potete visitare la deliziosa Riserva Faunistica di Vendicari, un'oasi di pace dove passare qualche ora in totale relax. […] Potete rilassarvi sulla lunga spiaggia di sabbia fine oppure potete visitare la scenografica antica Tonnara di Vendicari, qui non è strano incontrare dei fotografi con delle modelle	La vegetazione è molto fitta ma una volta raggiunto il mare il colpo d'occhio è impressionante. […] Lungo il percorso si incontrano dei capanni dai quali potete ammirare: fenicotteri, aironi e anche cicogne.

A critical exploration within ecolinguistics and eco-translation frames travel blogs as sites of environmental mediation, where Sicily's landscapes, cultural heritage, and sustainability are discursively reframed for different audiences (Ponton and Raimo 2024). As Table 5 suggests, these framings rarely foreground biodiversity, habitat protection, or conservation rationales, even when reserves are explicitly mentioned.

From an eco-translation perspective, this regularity can be read as cross-linguistic mediation through which ready-made descriptive templates circulate and stabilise dominant tourism scripts. Diamanti argues that "to rethink the essential value of the use of language in relation to the natural environment is needed" (Diamanti 2022: A185), and our data show how environmental meanings are repeatedly subordinated to recognisable, market-friendly wording. The corpus displays striking convergences in formulaic description, especially in food discourse: "Arancini – palline di riso ripiene di carne o formaggio, uno snack perfetto a qualsiasi ora del giorno" (*My Trolley Blog,* "Sicilia") closely matches "Arancini – Rice balls stuffed with anything from meat sauce to cheese and vegetables. The perfect snack food for any time of day (yes, I once had one for breakfast)" (*Along Dusty Roads*). These parallels point to implicit mediation that standardises cultural – and potentially ecological – meanings for tourist consumption, privileging recognisability over locally grounded, sustainability-oriented representation. Also, they may be regarded as an example of what House (1981) called "covert translation", a translation designed to perform the same communicative function in the target culture and to be read as if it were not a translation at all.

Nonetheless, a small number of travel blogs show potential for counter-discourse by introducing eco-conscious perspectives, such as agritourism or slow travel. However, these instances remain isolated and rarely challenge dominant narratives, as sustainability is often framed within a marketable and commodified vision of "green" tourism rather than a transformative alternative.

While some blogs gesture towards alternative forms of tourism, such as staying in "agriturismo" (farm-based accommodation), these instances remain isolated and insufficient to counter the dominant trend of superficial tourism

narratives that prioritise convenience over sustainability. Nature is frequently idealised, reinforcing a consumerist perspective that frames landscapes as aesthetic objects for visual enjoyment rather than as ecologically and culturally complex environments. In this context, Cohen's (1988) notion of "emergent authenticity" is particularly relevant, as the search for authenticity often leads to further commodification. A more consistent commitment to sustainable tourism practices could enable a reconfiguration of Sicily's representation, shifting it from a touristic spectacle to a living, dynamic environment.

A key issue in these blogs is the frequent reliance on generic descriptors applicable to almost any Mediterranean destination. This produces a homogenised portrayal in which Sicily's specificity is obscured by attractive but superficial and often clichéd language (MacCannell 1976; Urry 2002). As a result, the island is absorbed into a broader Mediterranean narrative. This tendency is partly linked to bloggers' efforts to reach wider audiences and generate revenue through advertising, sponsored content, or affiliate marketing. By prioritising popular attractions and activities, blogs cater to tourists seeking practical guidance and inspiration. While this strategy may increase visibility and engagement, it simultaneously undermines the authenticity and distinctiveness of the representations offered.

The demand for "authentic" experiences further complicates this trend, as it accelerates the commodification of culture, making it harder for tourists to engage meaningfully with the local environment and traditions (Cohen and Cohen 2019). As previously noted, Sicily is frequently reduced to a generic Mediterranean destination, its unique cultural and historical identity (van Nuenen 2016, 2021) diluted by comparisons to more frequently visited locations such as Spain, Greece, or Morocco. This homogenization, as argued by Gössling and Hall (2006), transforms the island's rich cultural heritage into a consumable product, stripping it of its specificity. The rich layers of history and cultural tradition that make Sicily distinct are often overshadowed by narratives that prioritise good weather, beaches, and "good food" – features commonly associated with traditional narratives of Mediterranean tourism, disconnected from their authentic local context. This commodification aligns with Cohen's (1988) critique of tourism, which reduces cultural identity to an interchangeable product, detached from the authentic life of the place.

Sustainable tourism emphasises the preservation of natural and cultural resources and encourages meaningful engagement with local traditions and communities (Budeanu *et al.* 2016. Travel blogs could support this aim by foregrounding local histories such as Sicily's *tonnara* (traditional tuna fishing), yet they rarely do so, favouring conventional attractions. In this sense, Cohen's (1988) concept of "emergent authenticity" points to the possibility that cultural products, even when commodified, may acquire new significance over time, enabling forms of engagement that extend beyond mere consumption.

Blogs could also remind readers of prominent Sicilian writers such as Pirandello, Verga, and Sciascia, rather than focusing exclusively on mass tourism associated with the *Montalbano* series (Asero and Ponton 2019, 2021). While *Montalbano* undoubtedly represents an important element of

contemporary Sicilian identity, deeper and more complex cultural narratives are frequently elided in tourism discourse.

More nuanced representations of Sicily's cultural and historical heritage would allow travel blogs to move beyond simplified portrayals of place and contribute to forms of tourism that are both culturally informed and environmentally aware. Such representations may foster a deeper understanding of the destination and promote greater sensitivity towards the preservation of natural and cultural resources. As Butler (1999) and Weaver (2012) note, sustainability in tourism concerns not only environmental impact but also the quality of tourists' engagement with local culture and history.

A reorientation of tourism narratives towards these dimensions could counter reductive, consumption-driven representations of Sicily. By foregrounding more authentic and ecologically aware practices, blogs may contribute to responsible tourism that values both environmental sustainability and Sicily's cultural specificity. This shift is crucial for preserving locally grounded, ecologically responsible representations of the Mediterranean and for fostering more sustainable interactions between travellers and the places they visit.

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APPENDIX[2]

English Mini-Corpus:

- *Along Dusty Roads*, "Our Perfect Sicily Road Trip Itinerary: Two Weeks of Joy": https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=Our+Perfect+Sicily+Road+Trip+Itinerary%3A+Two+Weeks+of+Joy&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8.
- *Two for the World*, "Sicily Road Trip: Plan The Ultimate 14-Day Sicily Itinerary": https://www.twofortheworld.com/sicily-road-trip/.
- *Helen in Between*, "Quick Travel Guide to Sicily": https://heleneinbetween.com/2019/04/quick-travel-guide-to-sicily.html.
- *The Curious Sparrow*, "10 Days in Sicily: The Ultimate First-Time Itinerary": https://curioussparrowtravel.com/10-days-in-sicily-the-ultimate-first-time-itinerary/.
- *Adventurous Kate*, "The Joys And Challenges Of Traveling In Sicily": https://www.adventurouskate.com/the-joys-and-challenges-of-traveling-in-sicily/.
- *Untold Morsels*, "10 Stunning Things to Do in Sicily": https://www.untoldmorsels.com/things-to-do-in-sicily/.
- *Eccentric Englishman*, "Things to See in Catania": https://eccentricenglishman.com.
- *Eccentric Englishman*, "Visit to Mount Etna": https://eccentricenglishman.com.

Italian Mini-Corpus:

- *My Trolley Blog*, "Catania: sei cose da fare in un giorno": https://www.mytrolleyblog.com/dove/un-giorno-a-catania-sei-cose-da-fare/.
- *My Trolley Blog*, "Sicilia cosa vedere tra Catania e Siracusa: 5 ottimi motivi per andarci (tutto l'anno)": https://www.mytrolleyblog.com/da-non-perdere/sicilia-cosa-vedere-catania-siracusa/.
- *Sono in vacanza da una vita*, "Lipari: metti una vacanza nelle isole Eolie in Sicilia": https://www.sonoinvacanzadaunavita.it/lipari-metti-una-vacanza-nelle-isole-eolie-in-sicilia/.
- *Sono in vacanza da una vita*, "Sicilia sud orientale – il mio itinerario e i miei consigli di viaggio": https://www.sonoinvacanzadaunavita.it/sicilia-sud-orientale-il-mio-itinerario-e-i-miei-consigli-di-viaggio/.
- *Mi prendo e mi porto via*, "Cosa vedere a Catania: i posti imperdibili della città ai piedi dell'Etna": https://www.miprendoemiportovia.it/cosa-vedere-a-catania-sicilia/.
- *Mi prendo e mi porto via*, "Guida alle isole siciliane da non perdere": https://www.miprendoemiportovia.it/category/destinations/italia/sicilia/.
- *Le chicche di viaggio*, "Itinerario Sicilia occidentale: 15 destinazioni imperdibili!": https://lechicchediviaggio.it/itinerario-sicilia-occidentale/.
- *Sarà perché viaggio*, "Cosa vedere a Catania (e dintorni) in 3 giorni": https://www.eleonoraongaro.it/catania-cosa-vedere/.

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[2] All blogs visited 29/09/2025.

- *Sarà perché viaggio*, "Cosa vedere a Stromboli in 2 giorni: itinerario (con mappa)": https://www.eleonoraongaro.it/cosa-vedere-a-stromboli/.
- *PieTrolley*, "Itinerario a piedi per visitare Catania in un giorno": https://www.pietrolley.com/visitare-catania-in-un-giorno-itinerario/.
- *PieTrolley*, "Sicilia sud orientale in 6 giorni": https://www.pietrolley.com/sicilia-sud-orientale-sei-giorni/.
- *Cartoline a colazione*, "Itinerario di 10 giorni in Sicilia orientale: mare, attrazioni, cibo e alloggi": https://www.cartolineacolazione.com/category/viaggi-italia/sicilia/.