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## Wellness Centres on *Costa Crociere* Cruises: Body, Space, and Representation from an Anthropological and Linguistic perspective

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### Centres de bien-être dans les croisières *Costa Crociere* : Corps, Espace et Représentation du point de vue anthropologique et linguistique

#### Résumé

La majorité des services touristiques est liée aux soins du corps. En effet, l'industrie touristique propose des opportunités différenciées pour vivre des vacances où le corps est l'intérêt principal de l'expérience. Ces formes de tourisme impliquent des services spécifiques qui montrent un univers particulier de représentation et des langages appropriés. Dans ce contexte, le tourisme de croisière est un cas intéressant à analyser, car une partie de ses services assigne un rôle central au corps qui, à bord, organise et il est organisé selon des temps et des espaces déterminés. Les croisières fournissent des espaces pour le bien-être des passagers tels que les piscines, les gymnases, les spas et les centres esthétiques. L'analyse proposée dans cette recherche est fondée, d'une part, sur un terrain anthropologique accompli dans une croisière *Costa Crociere*, en mer Méditerranée. Pendant la croisière, il y a plusieurs manières d'utilisation d'un espace déterminé comme le bateau. Cet usage reflète aussi une conception particulière du corps qui est construit grâce à l'interaction des différents systèmes de représentation. Ainsi, le bateau peut devenir un espace pour l'agrégation et la séparation sociales. D'autre part, cette étude prend en compte plusieurs publicités textuelles du site web Costa où la compagnie présente au futur passager des services spécifiques pour le corps. Cette recherche les analyse en ayant recours aussi bien à des approches sémiotiques que linguistiques. De ce point de vue, *Costa Crociere* crée une « synthèse » des espaces du bien-être par les textes et les images et, de cette manière, la compagnie préfigure le comportement des passagers pendant la croisière. En particulier, l'analyse développera une approche afin de mettre au jour les choix linguistiques et les éléments paratextuels sélectionnés pour concevoir la publicité des croisières.

**Mots-clés :** corps, texte, tourisme, représentation, linguistique cognitive, anthropologie du tourisme

## Abstract

Many tourist services are connected to the care of the body. The tourist industry proposes different vacation opportunities where the body is the main focus of the experience. This kind of tourism implies specific services that show a particular universe of representation and particular languages. In this context, cruise tourism is an interesting case to analyze because a part of its services gives a central role to the body which, on-board, organizes and is organized within dedicated spaces and times. Cruise ships provide spaces for the wellness of the passengers such as swimming pools, gyms, spas or beauty centres. The analysis proposed in this work is based, on one hand, on a recent anthropological fieldwork on a *Costa Crociere* cruise in the Mediterranean Sea. On cruises people use a limited space, the ship, in different ways. This use also reflects a particular conception of the body, built through an interaction of different systems of representation. So, the ship can become a space for social aggregation or separation. On the other hand, this study considers different textual advertisements from the Costa Web site where the company presents specific services for the body to future passengers<sup>1</sup>. This paper analyzes them using a joint approach: both semiotic and linguistic. Through texts and pictures *Costa Crociere* creates a “synthesis” of the wellness spaces which prefigures the behaviour of the passengers on the cruise. More particularly, in order to analyze advertisements, a cognitive linguistics approach is suitable to show the authors’ linguistic choices and the paratextual elements used to promote the cruise<sup>2</sup>.

**Keywords:** Body, Text, Tourism, Representation, Cognitive linguistics, Anthropology of Tourism

## Introduction

Although cruise tourism represents 2% of the global tourism industry, it is a niche that in the last 10 years has been increasing all over the world. From 2000 to 2010 the number of passengers has almost doubled. According to the European Cruise Council, in 2010 alone, nearly 19 million people in the world took a cruise, compared to 2000 when this number was nearly 9,7 million (Report ECC, 2011). This represents an increase of just over 9 million people.

Actually, this industry proposes not only many routes worldwide<sup>3</sup> but also many different types of cruise-vacations based on a thematic entertainment, itineraries or services according to seasons and areas. Cruise tourism suggests different opportunities to vacation where the body is the main interest and one of the central focuses of experience for the passengers. Indeed, onboard there are many facilities such as wellness treatments, swimming pools, gyms, thermal baths or aesthetic centres that offer exclusive services to the passengers. In other terms, they are all services conceived *for* the body or where the body has a central role. In this sense, the case of cruises is an interesting field to investigate how the representation of

the body and its use are formalized in a specific tourism context. Actually, they imply a process of “symbolization”.

By using anthropological and linguistic approaches, this paper aims to show some dynamics related to the representation of the body and the construction of space. In order to understand this process we will analyze firstly some texts contained in the official website of Costa Crociere, one of the most important cruise companies in Italy, with a worldwide scope. Through texts and pictures, Costa Crociere creates a “synthesis” of the wellness spaces and prefigures the behaviour of the passengers.

This paper will also refer to recent anthropological fieldwork completed onboard a Costa cruise in the Mediterranean Sea.

### **1. A linguistic analysis of the textual advertisement of the Costa Crociere web site**

According to the cognitive linguistics, “space” often is as a source domain for metaphoric understandings of other parts of the conceptual system (Lakoff, 1987) and the linguistic categorization of space is a domain that is based on a system of ontological categories which defines the relation of a body in a space. According to Rohrer,

“The experiences of the body-in-the-world also shape the embodied mind. But the experiential worlds with which we interact are more than simply physical; we are born into social and cultural milieus which transcend our individual bodies in time. Tools are an excellent example of the elements of our physical world that come to us already shaped by socio-cultural forces which predate each individual’s body, if not the human body in general—for there has certainly been a long process of cultural refinement in the design of hand tools. Like tools, language is another part of the socio-cultural milieu within which we exist” (Rohrer, 2006: 5).

An interesting case involving the spatial construction and the body location is the wellness centre: a space where the hypothetical visitor can run into a system to redefine himself/herself. In other words, in the suspension of the habitual conditions of existence, a body restores itself and reflects itself on a positive universe of representation built through some concepts like “relax”, “elegance”, “uniqueness”, “exclusivity” and “beauty”. Firstly, we try to understand this conceptual system through the linguistic analysis of «Le crociere del benessere», a wellness-centre brochure contained in the Costa Crociere web site magazine in the Italian language. Secondly, some linguistic hypothesis concerning, in particular, the “perception space-body” will be shown in the anthropological part of this article referring to the field on the Costa Cruises.

The analysis of the linguistic devices creating the tourist brochure tries to answer to some theoretical issues:

- the body/space interaction is built through a narrative structure permeating the wellness guide;
- the “fidelization” of the Costa Cruises users through different viewpoints based on activity/passivity, subjectivation/desubjectivation, euphoria/dysphoria;
- the communication between authors and users through a form of codes translation;
- the guide builds the symbolic body’s representation through a rituality of “sacred”;
- the guide founds a virtual visit of the Cruise’s spaces where the mental imagery plays the role of reconstruct the world interaction of the user.

First we will specifically pay attention on the narrative net, on the paratext (i.e. titles, subtitles), on the deictic tools like “pronouns”, “verbs” under investigation by the Jakobson’s functions of the language (referential, expressive, conative, poetic, phatic, metalingual). Secondly, we’ll attempt to analyse the two kinds of communication modalities “Me/Him, Me/Me” in the sense of Lotmanian approach. We’ll analyse the semantic net of the text and we’ll close analysing in Greimas’ and Floch’ perspectives the symbolic path of regeneration proposed to a future user of a wellness center in Costa Cruises. In this guide, the body/space interaction is situated in the language through a deictic device that narrates the phenomenological network that will appear to future passengers of the cruise. A narrative structure permeates the wellness guide and gives some interesting reading keys. Indeed, the guide shows the inseparability between action, space and some fundamental characteristics of the passenger, building the «dramatis personae». In this way, the guide generates a *Gestalt* founded by the interaction of these three aspects which, far from being arbitrary, reflect some psychological processes ruling the passenger’s behaviour (Bruner J., 2003: 49-50). From this point of view, the authors of the guide arouse the passenger’s interaction with the ship through the language because, in this way, it is possible to foresee some future actions.

This kind of interaction appears already in the *paratext* (Genette, 1989: 4) of the guide where the titles and the subtitles become «stipulation acts» (Goodman, 1988: 12) between readers and authors. Titles as «Prima volta con Costa; First time with Costa» and «Prima di partire; Before travelling» give some advice to the inexperienced passenger and they seem to influence him/her emotionally because they implicitly determine a temporal condition where a «before» and an «after» confirm the forthcoming change of the passenger.

This symbolic change is anticipated by a linguistic dynamic that stresses some onomasiologies (such as «Offerte; Gifts», «Regali&Desideri; Presents&Desires» and «Servizi e Trattamenti; Services and Treatments») aimed to «spoil» the passenger through a gift's dynamic. In the same way, the authors create a pact with the reader when they suggest different possibilities of meeting and knowledge like in «Seguici su Facebook, Twitter, You tube; Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, You Tube», «Contattaci; Contact us» and «Registrati; Sign up». Moreover, the action of the future passenger is situated in different places that describe the entire cruise and the places involved in the cruises' tourism, for example, «Destinazioni; Destinations», «Escursioni; Excursions», «Navi; Ships» and «Cabine e Suite; Cabins and Suites».

The strategies involved in the creation of the tourist text let us understand that the authors help the future passengers to master the deictic switches. In this perspective, passengers can catch the events' flow and know the situation where they will act assuming the authors' point of view and not adopting an egocentric schema (Bruner J., 2003: 84). At the same time, the authors avoid creating a psychological state that exasperates the message's efficacy and, in this perspective, the text enables the reader to share the construction of the tourist space. This could be the reason why the text uses the «Italian second singular personal pronoun» that gives oneness to the reader and lets the «ego targeting technique» emerge (Williamson, 1983).

Further, the public spaces used to describe our own experience on a cruise give the reader the possibility to prefigure the potential tourist condition. In this case, the guide shows a shared knowledge of wellness because it will give a value to the cruise representation that stresses a trustworthy and objective nature despite the fact that the cruise is built on the basis of symbolic paths that are connected to individual impressions, sensations and emotions.

This construction of the tourist text can be interestingly analyzed following a lotmanian approach (Lotman, 2001). Indeed, this text shows two different modalities of communication: «Me/Him» and «Me/Me». Firstly, it is possible to analyze the communicative act between author and reader as a translation (Lotman, 1980) where information is transferred to another person through a stable code. This phenomenon can be observed in the normative and informative properties of the text (Jakobson, 1972: 181) that explain some instructions about wellness treatments, prices, travels, and cruise ship spaces. It is also the case of the exhortations of the author addressed to the reader that underlies the textual conative function (*Ibidem*). This is evident in the sentences as «Scopri il piacere di una vacanza relax; Discover the pleasure of a relax holiday», «Nelle navi Costa, soprattutto in

quelle di ultima generazione, ti attendono moderni e preziosi Centri Benessere; In the Costa's ship, in particular in those of latest generation, modern and precious Wellness Centers wait for you» or «Una crociera Samsara è un'esperienza unica che risveglierà tutti i tuoi sensi; A Samsara Cruise is a unique experience that will wake all your senses».

The aesthetic impact of the «obligated invitation» is also perceived in the rhetoric question «Hai già prenotato la tua crociera Costa?; Have you yet reserved your Costa Cruise?» or in «a bordo di ogni nave Costa puoi; onboard to every ship Costa, you can» where the obligation of the modal verb (Todorov, 1977) gives access to a particular form of power.

As we can observe, the communication «Me/Him» has a dynamic character because it is possible to obtain a lot of information but truth is conceived as a ready message constructed by authors of the guide. Thus, the reader will feel passivity. On the other hand, in the «Me/Me» communication the reader conveys a message to himself (it is the case of the public spaces of writing) and he develops a qualitative transformation of the information. This kind of communication could shed some light on the reorientation of the «Me». When sender and addressee coincide, it is possible to see an intrusion of external codes (Lotman, 2001: 115-118) that increases the information causing a reorganization of the reader sense of identity

In this perspective, another aspect to take into account is the use of the verbs. In this text, verb tenses cannot be considered as tools to express the dimension of the real time, in this case present and future, because they represent deictic signs that place themselves on the axis that binds sender and addressee virtually (Weinrich, 1978: 13). The predominance of commentative verbs, in the sense of Weinrich (*Ibidem*), lets understand the valorisation of the passenger's body. In this sense, the prevision verbs, as the future, cause an interesting use of prolepsis or forecasts (such as «ti attendono moderni e preziosi centri benessere; modern and precious wellness centers wait for you», «coccole, relax, trattamenti mirati e tante attenzioni per far vivere a chi sceglie di trascorrere la crociera in una Cabina o Suite Samsara; cuddles, relax, focused treatments and a lot of attention to let live to whomever chooses to spend a cruise in a Samsara Cabine or Suite» or «un delicato infuso ayurvedico ti attende alla Casa del Tè giapponese; a delicate ayurvedic infusion waits for you in the Japanese Tea House»), that anticipate the presence of the body in different spaces like the suite, the cabin, the deck and the wellness spaces. A hypothesis is that even the mode of the verbs, in particular the imperative forms, invite passengers to modify their body's perception in «Abbandonati agli antichi rituali orientali; Indulge in ancient oriental rituals», «Prenditi cura di te; Take care of yourself», «Rigenerati con una crociera Costa; Heal yourself on a Costa

cruise», «Sperimenta il benessere totale; Experience total wellness», «Vivi fino in fondo l'esperienza Samsara; Live the Samsara experience fully» or «Scopri la vera dimensione del Benessere; Discover the real dimension of wellness».

The guide builds the body's symbolic representation through the reproduction of physical and cultural models. Initially, the body emerges from its own observation and from the sum of the other views that consider it degraded and in need of care. After a de-subjectification that neutralizes the immediacy of the pain perception as auto-donation (Henry, 2002: 94), the body can again experiment the embodiment's dimensions as the polarity between verticality (in «ogni immersion; every immersion», «lezioni di fitness; fitness lessons», «il movimento; movement», «partecipare a tonificanti pedalate di gruppo; to participate to toning group rides» or «percorsi fitness nella palestra attrezzata e attività fisiche equilibrate come lo Yoga e il Pilates; fitness paths and physical activities in the gym like as Yoga or Pilates») and horizontality (in «massaggio terapeutico; therapeutic massage», «il corpo verrà ricoperto di un tiepido olio per essere poi massaggiato con una crema sontuosa; the body will be covered by a lukewarm oil and then massaged with a lavish cream» or «mentre sarete avvolti in un confortevole velo, vi verrà versato su tutto il corpo un olio caldo e sensuale; while enveloped in a comfortable veil, a hot and sensual oil will be run all over your body»).

In addition, the state of pleasure of the treatment develops an affective tonality that is opposed to the previous pain state (as we can see in «sviluppare l'equilibrio interiore e il benessere più adatto alla tua persona; to develop the internal equilibrium and the wellness apt to you», «un olio essenziale calmante viene diretto sul terzo occhio per indurre lo stato alpha del rilassamento profondo [...] creando la coesione delle onde cerebrali; a relaxing essential oil is directed to the third eye to induce the alpha state for a deep relaxation» or «un olio caldo che rilassa il terzo occhio, calma la mente e migliora la consapevolezza; a warm oil that relaxes the third eye, relaxes the mind and improves consciousness»).

Furthermore, it is possible to take into account different freedoms such as the movement, the communication and the time freedoms. The first one corresponds to the possibility to enjoy the places informally (as in «cucina del ristorante Samsara; kitchen of Samsara restaurant», « Cabine con accesso diretto all'area termale; Cabines with direct access in the thermal area», «il Santuario Tridosha; the Tridosha Sanctuary» or «il Tempio della Pace; The Peace Temple ») and to conceive them according to a personal perspective.

The communicative freedom does not refer to the dialogue between the future passenger and «other people» but it explores the communicational interaction with

his own body. Sentences like «per farti ritrovare [...] l'armonia e l'energia del tuo corpo; to enable you to find [...] the harmony and the Energy of your body», «dopo il trattamento termale il corpo richiede un momento di rilassamento per riequilibrare la propria temperatura; after the thermal treatment, the body requires a moment of relaxation to reequilibrate its temperature» or «il benessere del corpo passa attraverso tante piccole attenzioni; body wellness ensues many small attentions» are related to this textual interpretation.

In order to understand how the time freedom is marked, we have to think of these sentences such as « l'accesso illimitato nelle aree della Spa; the unlimited access in the Spa areas », « per gli spuntini fuori pasto o in cabina, il mini-bar e il room service delle cabine e della suite Samsara offrono prodotti e menu light e una selezione di tè da assaporare in ogni momento della giornata; for the snacks out meals or in the cabin, the mini-bar and the room service in the cabins and in the Samsara suite offer products or light menus and a selection of the teas to taste at any moment of the day» or «ogni giorno un piacere diverso; every day a different pleasure» where the passenger seems to be far from the alternation day/night, from the daily rhythm and the dates of everyday life.

What happens is, secondly, that the authors describe some products such as massages, mud baths, thermal baths, Turkish baths or haircuts and they add the duration 'per product' as we can see in these sentences «brillantezza per tutto il corpo Shirodhara (50 min.; Prezzo 110 €); brilliance for the whole body Shirodhara (50 min; Price 110 €)», «aromaterapia e terapia alle pietre Samsara (50 min.; Prezzo 195 €); aromatherapy and stones' therapy Samsara (50 min.; Price 195 €)», «massaggio Balinese (50 min.; Prezzo 115 €); Balinese massage (50 min.; Price 115 €)» or «Programma riduzione cellulite con ionithermia (3 sedute; Prezzo 300 €); Program to reduce cellulite with ionithermy (3 sessions; Price 300 €)».

Furthermore, each product has a price depending on the taken time. So, time freedom is reduced by the prices of the products that become semiotic markers (Floch, 1992: 37-39) to access a particular social status.

The signification of a space is determined by a qualitative and a locative deictic as we can stress in «nelle navi Costa [...] ti attendono [...] sontuose strutture che offrono una gamma di servizi [...] allineata a quella delle migliori e più affermate Spa del mondo; in the Costa's ships [...] sumptuous structures await you [...] structures that offer a range of services [...] aligned with that of the best and the most affirmed Spa of the world» or «a bordo potrai scegliere tra diversi rituali ayurvedici; onboard you can choose among different ayurvedic rituals».



The body is positioned thanks to a reference system that in certain cases is the sea (as in «il mare fa bene. È una sensazione che riconosci subito, appena ne respiri l'aria e il suo profumo ti pervade; the sea makes you feel good. It is a sensation that you recognize immediately, when you breathe its air and its perfume invades you» or in «una beauty farm completamente affacciata sul mare; a beauty farm completely overlooking the sea»); in other cases, the reference system is the ship («nelle navi Costa [...] ti attendono moderni e preziosi centri benessere; in the Costa's ships [...] modern and precious wellness centers await you»).

This is possible because the cruise represents a good reference point and this is due to its immobility and its size (Jackendoff, 1990)<sup>4</sup>. As a «building in the sea», the cruise is described through its nature of ubiquity that separates it to a physical context (the land where there are wellness centres) and rebuilds it as a tourism space where it is possible to have wellness treatments.

The wellness linguistic strategy of this text becomes strictly allegorical because of the use of rhetoric elements as metaphors and personifications.

According to Jakobson (1972: 40), metaphors are the selection of similar unities as in «con questo trattamento verrete sollevati dal peso dello stress della vita quotidiana; this treatment will free you from the weight of stress of everyday life» where the weight and the stress are similar things. It also happens in «il profumo pervade il corpo; the perfume invades your body» where the resemblance is between a concrete object and the fragrance.

On this reading, we can analyze personifications like «il mare ti rilassa; the sea relaxes you», «il mare fa bene; the sea is good» or «il mare ti rigenera; the sea regenerates you» which consider the sea as a person because of its human characteristics. If we assume that personifications show a relation among different images-schemas<sup>5</sup>, in terms of conceptual metaphor<sup>6</sup>, this personification is built on the basis of the conceptual schema «the sea is still and quiet» as «a person is still and quiet» revealing the sea agency (Duranti, 2004).

Another interesting personification is «time is a concrete object» where the initial image-schema is «an object is solid and it is owned». These properties are activated in the case of the time that is «an abstract object» and, in some sentences like «il tempo è tuo; time is yours», it becomes a concrete object. This is possible because the time is socially defined and, as we have seen, the tourists of the wellness centres can organize their own time through an individualistic perspective.

In the text a constant alternation between two kinds of categorization appears: euphoric and disphoric (Floch, 1992: 127). The first one is characterized by a

language related to wellness, pleasure and calmness; the second one is the state of anxiety, distress and pain.

Passengers are invited to pass an initial disphoric condition where the bodies are seen as ill patients (as in «Prenditi cura di te; Take care of you», «Prenditi cura del tuo corpo; Take care of your body», «Rigenerati e fai risplendere la tua bellezza; Regenerate you and let your beauty shine », «Rigenerati con una crociera Costa; Regenerate you with a Costa Cruise», «la cura del corpo è un piacere che riserva grandi soddisfazioni; body care is a pleasure that promises big satisfactions» and «il massaggio terapeutico ti regala anche uno dei piaceri più intensi che il corpo possa desiderare; therapeutic massage also gives you one of the most intense pleasures that the body could desire»).

But it is not simple to obtain privilege because of the pathemic behavior of the passenger in «quando inizi un percorso benessere non è sempre facile scegliere tra tutti i trattamenti proposti; when you begin a wellness path is not always simple to choose among all the proposed treatments». Another interpretative key is given by the importance of the natural elements that initially show an inanimate character. The overlapping between animate-inanimate generates, at first, the consideration of «the sea as a person» and, after, «the body as a natural element» because of the similarity between the ground and the body.

In this sense, «una calda pioggia tropicale laverà via i fanghi; a warm rain-forest rain will wash the muds» lets us understand that the tropical rain (i.e. a particular composition of water and oil used for the massage) washes the mud upon the body like the tropical rain sweeps away the mud on the ground.

Moreover, a significant path is created by the words «sacred, rituality, rebirth» referring to the body regeneration in a wellness centre that suggests to us the metaphor of «the body is a temple», in particular, the temple of the soul. This is confirmed by the terminology of philosophical and religious approaches such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism or Brahmanism where the doctrine of Samsara or the cycle of life, death and rebirth are central. Indeed, the wellness centre program is called «Samsara» and this is possible because it will give the tourist the possibility to change completely. In this sense, the wellness centres on the cruises become, through a metonymical process, wellness temples.

A noetical representation of the hypothetic purification process is developed in a narrative way. It begins with «inizi un percorso di benessere; you begin a wellness path» that prefigures the future «purification» of the body through massages, sports, diet, meditation (such as in «la purificazione inizia dal di dentro; the purification begins internally», «i vostri muscoli, sapientemente massaggiati, restituiranno al

vostro corpo una sensazione di morbidezza e allineamento perfetto; your muscles, wisely massaged, will return to your body a sensation of softness and a perfect alignment», «il ritmo melodico del tocco e l'insieme di sensazioni che crea saranno per voi una piacevole esperienza; the melodic rhythm of touch and the combination of sensations it creates, will be a pleasant experience for you » and «il Tempio della Pace offre una sontuosa sala dotata di letti per la meditazione in un ambiente arricchito da aromi mistici; the Peace Temple offers a sumptuous hall equipped with meditation beds in an environment enriched by mystic aromas»).

These kinds of treatments give the tourist the «energy» to change, as we can see in «ogni immersione risveglierà l'energia vitale del corpo; every immersion will wake the vital energy of the body», «ogni pensiero verrà allontanato dalla mente; every thoughts will be distanced from the brain», «libera la mente; Free the mind» or «l'aromaterapia o il massaggio a quattro mani - è un importante stimolo al flusso energetico e alla rivitalizzazione del corpo; the aromatherapy or the four hands massage - is an important stimulus to the energetic flux and the revitalisation of the body».

Finally, the tourist can reach a kind peaceful condition similar to Nirvana or to the Paradise where he/she can find his/her real self. Sentences like «Risplenderai di luce; You will shine» or « questo massaggio porterà in Paradiso la vostra mente, il vostro corpo e la vostra anima; this massage will take in Paradise your brain, your body and your soul » confirm this idea.

The analysis of this text allows a contractual nature between author and the future passenger to emerge where it is possible to understand a didascalical and gnostic aim that represents the grammaticalized culture; on the other hand, the possibility to change is described only by an experiential strategy that picks out the textualized character of the guide. In this sense, the analysis shows that the text builds the spaces where the tourists will go and this *a priori* mental experimentation of the wellness spaces tells us about the body interaction with the space.

It is testified by a particular use of keywords (Williams, 1976) that polarize a specific connotation of the wellness cruise or the customer of the wellness cruise. Indeed, words as «discovery, abandon, therapy, treatment, care, regeneration, freedom, experimentation, experiential, wellness, pleasure, energy, enjoyment, relax, rituality» have a praxeological constituent because they prefigure the effects on the body in the cruise wellness spaces<sup>7</sup>. If we are continually plunged into spaces and we think and reconstruct the world-space through our knowledge, the world will be what we perceive and what we will live and we will experiment (Merleau-Ponty, 1945: 84-85).

We are embodied beings and the space is related to the experimentation made by our body. So, if there is life, there will be cognition and if there is a body, there will be knowledge (Varela, 1993: 21). The modality to know the space is the mental perception: in fact, we will know the wellness spaces on a cruise, if we read the tourist texts. In this way, we have the possibility to mentally experiment a space before visit it. According to Zunshine,

«Mental images share a few key features. They are as reliant on the mechanics of memory as they are on propositions about the world or patterns for engaging with it. Some imagery can be prompted by instruction (i.e. the cruise guide)<sup>8</sup>, and some is spontaneous. The strength of mental images, as well as their ability to be controlled and manipulated by the person experiencing them, varies from person to person, from time to time, and by sensory mode. Visual images for most people are stronger and more controllable than any other kind; auditory and motor images can be strong as well as controllable; and images of smell and taste are generally neither strong nor particularly subject to individual control (think of Proust and his *Madelaine*). Such variations - across modes but also across individual and cultures - are of structural importance» (Zunshine, 2010: 277).

In this perspective, the mental imagery developed by the guide words builds a spatial construct which coincides with our explication of the spatial environment.

## **2. Body, nudity and space**

From an anthropological point of view, analyzing wellness centres in cruise tourism implies a larger reflection about a dynamic that involves at least three issues: body, nudity and space. Here we discuss this dynamic using some ethnographic examples emerged during an anthropological fieldwork onboard some cruise ships.

In the tourism industry the manner in which space is organized is fundamental in structuring an individual's experience while travelling or on vacation. Although generally it is possible to associate particular spaces to a specific form of tourism, some spaces and some kinds of tourism present a more important degree of complexity than others. Cruise tourism is one of these cases since it utilises a particular symbolic and experiential universe to build both its spaces and their representation.

A cruise vacation offers two different experiences: onboard and ashore. Onboard is where it is especially possible to observe particular conceptions and uses of the body. Actually, onboard, the ways how people use or can use the body above all

depend on the space where they are. Moreover the issue of the body implies at least the ideas of “care” and “nudity” and both are also related to a particular organization and representation of “space”.

Considering space from an anthropological and semiotic point of view, it appears to be defined by “boundaries”. The concept that we refer to is what the Russian semiotician Lotman expressed in his studies about cultural dynamics. According to him, a way in which culture uses to describe itself is by building a spatial model. The latter involves “topological categories”, defined (at least) by a boundary (Lotman & Uspenskij, 2001). This boundary splits space in two parts: on one hand it creates an organized and internal space for a “We”. On the other hand it creates an external and disorganized space for “The Others”. The space of “We” inside is like a cultural continuum which stops close to the space of “Others”.

Generally in a cruise ship it is possible to use some services that are part of the package bought by the passengers before departure, such as swimming pools, gyms, and thermal bath. Moreover, cruisers can purchase other services on the ship during the holiday, such as hairdressing or more exclusive facilities like access to spas for wellness treatments. Onboard, every one of these services involves particular spaces and particular representations of the body which are related to physical and symbolic “sites”. For example, some of these dedicated spaces are outdoors (swimming pools), others are indoors (spa, wellness treatments, aesthetic centres), others again (thermal baths) may be both inside and outside: it happens especially in some ships equipped with removable covers which suddenly allow the creation of a semi-open or a covered deck.

Although modern cruise ships are enormous and always being created as greater structures, conversely they are also limited and defined spaces. Onboard, nearly every space is conceived for a specific use and the ways the body is “exhibited” change according to the idea of the projected place. Focusing on a short analysis of the spaces onboard is useful, because it allows us to introduce a complex dynamic determined by a particular way in which a cruise produces and reproduces a specific kind of “geography”. A cruise ship is a complex juxtaposition of symbolic and physical spaces which can be sometimes superimposed. In this sense, a ship seems a big container of spaces where it is possible to do sports, eating, or go shopping. The space can be compressed or dilated and in this way, every activity has its own dedicated place even though everything remains in a same ship. This process sometimes uses hyperbole or paradox: for example, in some cruise ships in the Mediterranean Sea, it is even “possible” to try activities such as free climbing or ice skating while onboard.

Onboard, some “boundaries” cut out and define places: they are often boundaries more symbolic than physical, with thematic furnishings associated to wall colours, signage and indications useful for the passengers. This aspect is in line with the needs of planning and organising life onboard in a predictable manner. The need to specifically organize and structure the spaces is more understandable when one considers that a cruise ship can carry up to 4,000 passengers.

In addition onboard the categories “inside”/“outside” are often defined and redefined through a process of “semantization” that use inversion: what should be outside is inside and vice versa. So for example, some areas onboard are dedicated to shopping with duty free shops. They are built to represent a typical central square of a hypothetical town. The external space, the square, is located inside thereby becoming an internal space. Similarly, some shops have showcases that suggest an external wall, although they are also an internal space of the ship. Furthermore, the particular organization of the spaces determines a varied dynamics of “sight”. Thus, natural and human elements on the ship can be enjoyed from balconies and glass windows: the sea, as well as the destination (a city, a port) symbolically are not separated from individuals onboard. The space observed becomes an effortless appropriation for the observers-passengers.

Similarly the wellness centre onboard is a “specific” space, marked by boundaries: the areas dedicated are often to the bow and even the entrance to these areas clearly signals it is a space “apart”. Labels, lights, mirrors, displays of beauty products around the entry doors distinguish the place where passengers (buying it) can have a treatment. Usually, onboard, the majority of places open to the passengers are freely accessible. On the contrary, individuals who do not purchase services offered in the wellness centre cannot enter: the wellness centre appears to be an exclusive space. During the fieldwork on board many informers said to choose a wellness treatment because inside the spa they could be “pampered” or “protected”: there they could experience “regenerating themselves”. According to informers the onboard wellness centre was “an extraordinary experience” inside the other extraordinary experience, the vacation on cruise. Indeed, when passengers referred to the wellness centre during interviews they generally described it as a “special place”, a kind of completion of their experience. Synthesizing some keywords emerged during interviews, a positive universe of value is generally attributed to the wellness centre: so it is “relaxing”, “elegant”, “unique”, “exclusive”, “nice”. What we indicated in the linguistic analysis has correspondence with the data collected through the fieldwork. The pleasure of the body treatment seems to be a process made up of many steps but the overall experience for wellness users in their narrations is “recomposed” in a few summary adjectives. The reason

for this positive evaluation was mostly indicated in the “body care”. In this sense, in an on board spa it is possible to experience a special condition where the body becomes protagonist of a process of transformation<sup>9</sup>. Indeed, during fieldwork some passengers who tried a treatment said how a “tired and stressed body” becomes a “rested and relaxed body”. This fact seems to confirm that the concept of “care” shown before in the linguistic analysis is prevailing: there (inside the centre) somebody will take care of the passengers’ body.

Moreover, the wellness centre appears as an “exotic space” - and almost a hidden place to whom did not purchase a treatment - a sure and peaceful place where one can be relaxed and receive new energy. In this sense the body appears also inscribed in an identity dynamic: some of the interviewed passengers consider a positive “mark” booking (or having) a treatment. According to some informers users of a wellness centre «the person who decides to book a spa treatment put their self-care above all else». On the other hand, «those who do not value this experience and judge it important miss out on a pleasant part of the cruise vacation». In this way trying a spa treatment means to be part of a virtual “group”: those who takes care of themselves. So, the wellness centre works as a boundary, it can be an “exclusive place” because it includes somebody and vice versa. Although the wellness centre on board could be perceived as an ancillary service, actually it is able to complete the experience on cruise of some passengers and its symbolic power seems to be its ability to “regenerate” and “recharge” the body and mind. Finally, to better understand how the body is involved in relation to the onboard wellness centres, another element to consider is nudity. In a cruise ship some spaces are forbidden for a partial naked body and others are especially conceived for nudity.

In general, the spaces where nudity is allowed are marked in some way, symbolically fenced or even closed. It is possible to show a body in bathing suits around the outdoor swimming pools or in the solarium along the open decks. Usually some of the restaurants onboard are placed around or very close to the swimming pools. This means that people could enter to eat wearing only bathing suits, although some signs indicate that it isn’t appropriate. Actually if an individual does not adhere to the prescription, there is always some kind waiter to remind this individual to wear something more. Conversely, other outdoor restaurants are set just around the swimming pools, in the open decks and here it is possible to eat even wearing bathing suits. Sometimes, for lunch, tables for fast food consumption may be arranged where people can eat wearing what they wish. Conversely the wellness centre is the place where nudity is “normal”. While in a cruise there is an organization of the space which involves the body in a dynamic of nudity/dressed, the wellness area is “out” of a similar logic: a complete wellness treatment often

implies that operators can directly act on a body and it must be partially naked. This concept of nudity is confirmed by many informers. Actually, for the majority of the interviewed passengers nudity was not a problem inside the spa: for them it was “easier to exhibit [their nudity] for a treatment than to wear a swimsuit in the area around the pool”. On this topic, Löfgren’s notes regarding some dynamics that concern the pool in modern time are useful. According to the anthropologist the cultural ways to conceive a pool are related to the way to “use” the beach:

«[...] beach body work was not only about exposing your body or being judged, it was also about exploring the body in relation to the physicalities of sand, sea, and sun as well as different forms of motion. The languidness of swimming also influenced body movements on land. People learned to walk and move very differently on the beach. There was some kind of magic and liberating transformation occurring the moment your feet hit the sand. The new beach bodies also demanded beachwear. [...] An appetizing destination must advertise its beach, but when you get there you often find out that there are very few people in the water: it is too cold, too windy, too polluted. The sand is sticky or full of cigarette butts. The tourists have withdrawn to the safer territory of the hotel pool, but they have brought with them all the necessary skills developed at the beach» (Löfgren, 2002: 196-203).

There is an interesting aspect linked to nudity. When informers say they feel “pampered” and “protected” inside the wellness centre they imply a “fragility” condition. Individuals must undress before a wellness treatment and their nudity is hidden by an exclusive (but, of course, inclusive for themselves) place, “covered” by the expertise of qualified staff. Only in this way the wellness centre’s users can receive a regeneration, having confidence (symbolically and physically naked) in this relation system articulated between nudity and coverage.

### **3. Wellness centre, body and rituality**

The dynamic in which body and space are involved allows the recognition of a social value ascribable to the “exhibition” of the body. Now it is important to analyze another aspect that appears related to the rituality observable onboard: the symbolization of the body. The way in which a wellness centre is used by the passengers allows us to better understand this process. As we have shown in the last paragraph, booking a treatment, staying inside the “closed” space of the onboard spa can be interpreted as similar to a “preparation for” something new. Indeed, linked to the body is a kind of “sense of the sacred” and accordingly the wellness centre becomes an appointed place to realize a new condition. This can happen



because in that place there are specialist people with specific knowledge and ability to use tools (hands, creams, natural elements like water) correctly in order to “take care” of the body.

Before going in a cruise generally passengers know about wellness centres on board. They have more than an idea of those services. Indeed, during fieldwork on cruise informers have referred to be aware of the spa through two ways: through advertising and through the referral of other former passengers (relatives, friends) who tried a wellness treatment. Both those ways, storytelling and advertising, work like a powerful “universe of meaning” (Geertz, 1977) for the passengers who start a cruise. They can count on various narrations to build their experience (and, in turn, narrate it once returned at home). This happens even in the case of wellness centres on board. Interviewed passengers have referred to wanting to try an experience on board spa for curiosity or to feel “pampered”. The ways they imagined this experience appear linked to the “representations” of the wellness centre provided by other passengers and also by cruise companies. Informers often used words such as “paradise” or “relax”. In general, considering what emerged during fieldwork it is possible to say that the wellness centres experience is perceived like a “regeneration” of the body and as a kind of identity affirmation. Just to give an example of this dynamic it can be useful to shortly refer to a case observed on board. In a cruise there are some moments where the dress code is strictly formalized: the gala dinners. On that night passengers are invited to wear a formal evening dress. Furthermore, the captain of the ship and his officers officially meet passengers. This event happens once per cruise, in the middle of the week and it can be interpreted like a hierophany: the officers represent a power and a knowledge that passengers never met after the departure of the cruise ship. The night before this gala dinner a small group of informers, three young women, talking to each other declare their desire to book (the day after) a complete wellness treatment in order to be “nicer” and “prepared” when they meet the master and the officers<sup>10</sup>. In other terms, the informers perceived that they are not ready for this important meeting without a special preparation, and actually they had a complete wellness/beauty treatment before going to the gala dinner in formal dress. What emerges is that the wellness centre becomes an extra-ordinary place able to prepare - using special tools and knowledge - “normal” people for a meeting with a kind of secret power (officers of the ship, who represent the authority). The body seems regenerated through a wellness treatment: in this way it becomes “ready” to meet the Otherness, the human part of a cruise ship that stays hidden from passengers until the gala night.

Synthesizing the reflections here proposed, from an anthropological and semiotic point of view we can say that the wellness centre represents an extra-ordinary

place - it is closed, apart, even the access is marked by physical and symbolic boundaries - where body is conceived and represented as something that has a value and “sacred” meanings, something of which it is important (or necessary) to take care. This symbolic construction of the body is possible through a specific cultural model of wellness that implies a “service for” something else such as “being better”, “being pampered”, “taking care of itself”. These points appear to confirm what emerges from the linguistic analysis of the advertising in Costa’s guide.

For passengers who are onboard using a wellness centre seems to be part of a rite of passage (as Van Gennep, 2009 would say): the specialists who work in the centre are able to provide tourists with a mystic initiation that turns a “normal” condition into a “different” dimension or, in the case here analyzed, makes them “ready” (nicer, cared, etc.) for a hierophany (master and officers at the gala evening). Indeed before unknown passengers meet a “power”, they need to have a prepared body, not ordinary, but renewed.

The narrations through which cruisers share their experiences when they return at home (or when they are still on board) are based on a complex symbolic universe. Similarly to other aspects of a cruise, in the case of the wellness centre passengers produce and reproduce images, texts and stereotyped models using both narrations of other cruisers and specific advertising in order to build their own narration.

Finally, it is possible to affirm that the experience of the “care of the body” on board appears to be involved in a complex ritual dynamic that defines or redefines not only the awareness of the “Self” (“We”) in a space of “Otherness” (the wellness centre) but also the spaces and their perception by passengers.

## Conclusion

Both the analysis of the web guide and the cases emerged during the anthropological fieldwork enable us to understand that some processes of embodiment in the Cruise’s spaces is prefigured through a complex imagery which is concretely confirmed in the behaviour of tourists. On the one hand, the linguistic devices reinforce the mental appropriation of the body showing a concrete path, real movements and possible interactions with the cruise’s spaces and objects. On the other hand, the anonymity of the guide reader becomes a real experience of perception where a user has a ticket, a room in the cruise and a social status.

We observed that this tourist guide has the role to create a habitus (Merleau-Ponty, 1988: 33), a sample of typical behaviours where the intention and the agency of the readers’ body can play out. The narrative structure of this brochure

permeates the mental path through the experimentation of actions, postures, visions that implicate a symbolic kinesthesia.

When the path becomes concrete through the cruise experience, the tourist can adhere at last to the world designated by the guide. Tourists start to have a situated body and the rediscovered factuality gives them the capacity to read the cruise world through the repetition of the mental paths created with the help of the guide.

From an anthropological perspective, the dynamics produced by wellness centres onboard are really interesting. These dynamics imply at least some elements: space (shared or reserved), body and nudity. Moreover, booking and having a treatment imply symbolic processes and a universe of values that produces and reproduces images and models above all through two ways: the narrations of passengers (and ex passengers) and the advertising system. Part of the latter are the guides on board dedicated to the wellness centre. They play an important role in the process of appropriation of an imagery linked to the body care and, more in general, linked to an experience on cruise.

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## Notes

1. Refer to appendix images number 1, 2 and 3 which show the Costa Crociere's web site guide.
2. Mariangela Albano has written «A linguistic analysis of the textual advertisement of the Costa Crociere web site» and «Conclusion»; Gaetano Sabato has written «Introduction»; «Body, nudity and space»; «Wellness centre, body and rituality».
3. Even though the biggest market are American and European areas.
4. From this point of view, it is interesting to pay attention to the cognitive studies that «have observed as an interesting semantic circumstance that concrete objects perceived by their forms are mainly determined by scale and domain [...] there is a natural ordering of concrete 'things' according to (physical) scale and (semantic) domain: hand scale objects [...] have domain determinations that give them standard meanings in human contexts of action and passion. Body scales objects [...] have other domain determinations related to slightly more abstract human doings. And these domains contain the first domains as their objects [...]. In the same way, group scale objects [...] correspond to even more abstract domains embedding the domains of body scale objects [...]. What I want to show is that the concrete world is

semantically ordered, and that this order of the concrete is finite and therefore represents a heavy constraint at work in human phenomenology as experience of coherence or existential meaning» (Brandt, 1995: 108-109).

5. The word appears for the first time thanks to the philosopher Johnson (1987: 14) who defines it such as «a recurring dynamic pattern of our perceptual interactions and motor programs that gives coherence and structure to our experience. The verticality schema, for instance, emerges from our tendency to employ an up/down orientation in picking out meaningful structures of our experience. We grasp this structure of verticality repeatedly in thousands of perceptions and activities we experience every day, such as perceiving a tree, our felt sense of standing upright, the activity of climbing stairs, forming a mental image of a flagpole, measuring our children's heights, and experiencing the level of water rising in the bathtub».

6. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 5), «the essence of metaphor is to understand and experience one kind of thing in terms of another». In this perspective, conceptual metaphors are the expression of a concept and they refer themselves to an entire existence field. The conceptual domain from which we draw metaphorical expressions is called "source domain" and the conceptual domain that we try to understand is called "target domain". To recognize a conceptual metaphor means to grasp a mapping that is the systematic set of correspondences that exists between constituent elements of the source and the target domain (*Ibidem*, 1980).

7. From this point of view, the «régime sémantique praxéologique ou praxéoprescriptif» seems useful. According to Charbonnel (1999), we can consider the existence «dans les textes d'opinion, d'un grand nombre d'énoncés métaphoriques qui ne relèvent ni d'un régime sémantique expressif, ni d'un régime sémantique cognitif, mais bien de ce que j'appelle régime sémantique praxéologique ou praxéoprescriptif, c'est-à-dire qui enjoignent quelque chose à propos d'une praxis. Ces énoncés ne se contentent pas de porter un acte de langage d'expressivité. Ils font autre chose : par l'appel à un comparant (toujours hétérogène) et valorisé (comme dans le régime sémantique expressif) ils enjoignent au lecteur, à l'interlocuteur, quelque chose à faire, dans la praxis extralinguistique. Dire : 'L'enfant est une plante qui a besoin de beaucoup de soleil' (Michelet) c'est enjoindre au parent de donner à l'enfant de l'affection».

8. It is an inclusion of this article's author.

9. See also the following paragraph.

10. It should also be noted that at the gala night the official on board photographer offers to photograph the passengers "with" the master of the ship. Those who like can pose close to the master to make a "souvenir" of the cruise. This probably confirms a sense of the spectacular nature of the event (Augé, 2000; Bruner E., 2005).