

# ISSA Proceedings 2010 - Argumentation In Tourism: An Analysis Of User-Generated- Contents About Lugano (Switzerland)



## *1. Argumentation in the (e)tourism context*

Tourism is an experience which needs to be communicated (Inversini & Cantoni 2009). In fact, both if it was wonderful or terrible, a travel experience is usually shared with others; telling it, discussing it, comparing it with previous experiences is nearly a need for someone who just came back from a journey.

Tourism is an experience of freedom, since it gives the tourist the opportunity to decide where, how and with whom to spend her free-time, fulfilling those desires which are usually subordinated to the duties and rules of the daily life.

Many elements of a journey contribute to shape a unique experience, but each journey is usually fixed in the memory because of one or a few more aspects, which makes it special and different from all the others. Such aspect represents the dominant value that a certain travel experience detains for the tourist. The touristic value of the journey one of the authors made in Rome some years ago, for instance, resides in the capacity the city has to evoke ancient civilizations. Every corner in Rome speaks of the glorious Roman empire, and reveals the roots of the European culture. This aspect constitutes the value that the author ascribes to her tourism experience in Rome and, thus, to the destination itself.

When designing a travel experience, the decision of the destination is rarely casual; the most of the times it is the subject of discussions and careful considerations, which are lead by material circumstances, as well as by expectations about the destination and the experience one would like to live, and by a constellation of criteria bound to the lifestyle, values and interests. Such expectations and constellation of criteria have a strong influence on the opinion

one gives of her tourism experience and the destination she visited. The tale of a tourism experience, actually, comes out to be a highly argumentative text, where the confrontation and discussion of different opinions with the self or the others brings one to form a reasoned opinion on the destination she visited and the time she spent.

If one considers tourism - i.e. tourism related communication - as a specific context of interaction, she can hypothesize that the argumentative discourse which takes place therein follows proper dynamics and rules. It seems therefore meaningful to ask how argumentation is molded on this kind of context, that is how an opinion about a tourism experience arises and how such opinion is put forward and defended. In argumentative terms it means, for instance, to look for recurring reasoning schemes or structures, which should help to determine the argumentative quality of the text.

The paper pursues a high-level objective, that is to start an investigation of the argumentative significance of a specific context of interaction, that is constituted by tourism experience and the respective communication. At a lower-level, the aim is to verify the hypothesis according to which the opinion about a tourism experience at a certain destination may be said to depend, principally, by the recognition of a dominant touristic value for that destination.

In order to pursue these two goals, a study has been developed which applied different tools of argument analysis to a corpus of texts reporting the tales of tourists on their experience at a certain destination; the texts were retrieved from the so called web 2.0.

In the last years, in fact, the way tourism-related information is distributed and accessed has been deeply reshaped by the Internet. Xiang and Gretzel (2009) explain that the predominant role is played both by social media websites, which are becoming increasingly popular in online travelers' use of the Internet, and by search opportunities given by the net, which allow to bear one's way in the huge amount of information available. A number of studies confirm the growing importance of social media in the online tourism domain, especially for travel planning (Gretzel 2006; Pan, MacLaurin & Crofts 2007; Inversini, Cantoni & Buhalis 2009). Social media allow users to directly publish contents and, on the other side, to enjoy genuine contents published by other users, this way becoming a valuable source of information besides being a means of social interaction.

Tourism related eWord-of-mouth represents people's wish to share their travel experiences, recommending a destination or complaining about it. Contents published and enjoyed online by tourists on social networks are known as User Generated Contents (UGC), and can equate electronic word-of-mouth. Tourism-related UGC usually reflect the experience of the tourist at specific destinations, her evaluations and reactions about the experience as well as about the destination itself. Prospective tourists use the net for gathering the necessary information to take decisions about the many different aspects of the journey; they trust more contents generated by other tourists – like online reviews or forum posts – than official sources, because they are considered more credible, genuine and not business-driven (Dwyer 2007).

The web allowed the authors to collect the texts for the analysis easily and quickly; it is not among the aims of this paper to discuss the features that argumentation assumes in the digital space. Web 2.0 only worked as a source for gathering convenient types of texts for pursuing the goals of the paper. The following paragraphs sets the method of analysis and describes the steps of the pilot study, which was developed both for observing argumentative interventions in the context of tourism, and for verifying the hypothesis that a dominant touristic value can be identified for a certain destination.

## *2. Giving opinions on a tourism experience*

Lugano has been chosen as destination of attention, due to its limited dimensions and because it is the authors' place of work. Lugano is, in fact, a small city in the Southern part of Switzerland, which counts only about 30.000 inhabitants, but has all the services and facilities of a big city. It is the biggest touristic destination in Ticino – the Italian-speaking canton of Switzerland. It sets at the foothills of the Alps, on the river of lake Ceresio – best known as lake Lugano. It is characterized by a Mediterranean vegetation, due to the temperate climate. It is the third financial district in Switzerland, hosting a number of banks and financial institutes; business and academic tourism has developed in the last few years also thanks to the congress center and the University.

UGC about Lugano have been collected on some of the most common Web 2.0 websites for tourism, including texts in English and Italian. Only UGC containing comments or reviews about the destination were considered, and all those commenting or reviewing services or attractions, like hotels, transports, cultural events, etc. were ignored. Texts were then filtered a second time to sort out only

argumentatively relevant ones. The *corpus* of analysis was made up of two kinds of texts: forum posts and reviews. While the former ones are usually short dialogical moves in an asynchronous discussion, the latter are longer monographic texts. Online discussion fora are considered a new type of communicative situation, characterized by the absence of most of the contextual features of face-to-face conversation. They present a considerable dialectical variability, in that the discussion usually moves from a focus on a given topic towards a focus on the interaction and the participants, topic tends to decay, turn-taking is dislocated and several conversations are jumbled together (Lewis 2005). Tourism-related fora are usually the place where to ask for specific and quick pieces of information or tips to organize a trip. Reviews, on the other side, can be compared to travel diaries, reporting the experience of the tourist on a destination as well as his/her comments and opinions. They are of help to get an overview of the destination, to size expectations according to unofficial voices who are, nonetheless, authoritative and trustworthy thanks to their personal experience gained on the place. Reviews are generally more argumentative, and argumentation develops in a more articulated fashion than in forum posts. Considered the organization process of a trip, if travel reviews support the first phase, that is the deliberation about the place to visit, travel fora are more useful to decide about specific aspects of the trip, because one can directly ask to the virtual community constituted by those who already visited the destination.

The selection process resulted in a corpus of eighty-two texts, constituted by:

- 10 reviews from the Lugano Travel Guide of [www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com)
- 47 posts in the Lugano Travel Forum of [www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com) (out of over 1000 posts divided in 335 threads)
- 10 reviews from [www.igougo.com](http://www.igougo.com)
- 2 reviews from [www.dooyoo.com](http://www.dooyoo.com)
- 11 reviews from [www.virtualtourist.com](http://www.virtualtourist.com)
- 2 reviews from [www.bootsnall.com](http://www.bootsnall.com).

The selection has been made in July 2010.

The corpus was firstly carefully read, looking for frequent occurrences of arguments supporting Lugano as a destination worth to be visited (standpoint). The hypothesis leading the study implied that only positive opinions were considered; if a dominant recognized touristic value for a destination exists, in fact, it should be identified among those aspects which positively impressed the

tourist.

From the analysis of the corpus they emerged three main types of argument supporting the standpoint.

1) The 'nature' argument focuses on the morphological aspects of Lugano, praising its location, often defined as a nestle in the foothills of the mountains, the scenic views of the Alps tumbling down to the lake, the small fishing villages around the city, the romantic and peaceful atmosphere. This argument is often expressed with epithets like: "a little Paradise on Earth", "the gem of Southern Switzerland", "a postcard".

2) The 'confidence' argument exploits the stereotype according to which Switzerland is well-organized, punctual, efficient, respectful of the rules, clean, tidy: these aspects contribute to create a sense of confidence, since nothing dangerous or unexpected can happen if everything remains at its place. In the forum posts it is said that "you cannot 'not get a train', because if you miss one, there will be the next one an hour later", that "i servizi, e non è cosa da poco, funzionano tutti bene"**[i]**; in the reviews they argue that there is "a simple bus system and (...) virtually no crime", that "if you are walking down the street, the second you step off the curb, cars stop to cross the street". The predictability of the city makes it "child friendly", that is, in its turn, an argument for families with children to visit Lugano.

3) The 'culture-mix' argument states that Lugano is a combination of the best traits of the Italian and the Swiss culture. This argument seems to particularly strike Lugano visitors: it is frequently reported and extensively argued.

The 'nature' argument occurs almost in every text, usually in addition to other arguments, to make the argumentation stronger. Since it is based on the ontological (i.e. morphological) aspects of the destination, it may be taken as a first necessary move to convince about its touristic value. In fact, the appearance is the aspect of a destination which immediately strikes a visitor. If this aspect is not valuable - i.e. because the destination cannot naturally boast a beautiful location - then, to support its touristic value one should concentrate on other aspects, which should constitute a sufficient defense. Lugano is naturally set in a charming location, so that the "nature" argument can be exploited to highlight its touristic value. Nevertheless, it is not a sufficient argument, since a tourist may like to find more than just natural attractions. This argument, in fact, is used as a sufficient defense of the standpoint only when arguing for a selected audience,

that is “nature lovers” or “outdoorsy types”. In these cases the writers *strategically maneuver* according to a specific *audience demand*. “Strategic maneuvering refers to the efforts arguers make in argumentative discourse to reconcile aiming for rhetorical effectiveness with maintaining dialectical standards of reasonableness” (van Eemeren & Houtlosser 2006, p. 383). Strategic maneuvering manifests itself in the choice of certain arguments from a paradigm of similar arguments, for framing the discourse in front of a certain audience, making use of certain presentational devices (for a detailed explanation see van Eemeren & Houtlosser 2007, 2009).

There are no solitary occurrences of the ‘confidence’ argument in the corpus. It is always put forward in combination with other arguments, this way constituting a *coordinatively compound argumentation* (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1982). Lugano’s reputation of an efficient and well-organized place does not suffice to support its touristic value.

From a rhetorical point of view, the ‘culture-mix’ argument opens in many cases the text, and it is proposed as a sufficient argument to support the standpoint, or it functions as the focus around which the text is developed. It is manifest, here, the use of strategic maneuvering, which takes place at the level of the *topical potential*, that is in the choice of arguments from those available to support the standpoint, according to the (actual features of the) destination considered (van Eemeren and Houtlosser, 2009).

Thus, the ‘culture-mix’ argument has been selected for a deeper analysis. It has been considered in all its occurrences, the most complex of them have been analyzed and compared, in order to reconstruct its *internal inferential configuration*, that is the intertwining of the logical pattern of reasoning and the cultural and factual premises to which the argument is anchored. The aim was to verify how this argument supports the standpoint that Lugano is worth a short visit and what its strong and weak points are.

### 3. A Pragma-Dialectical reconstruction of touristic UGC

The reconstruction of argumentative moves containing the ‘culture-mix’ argument followed the Pragma-Dialectical model of a critical discussion, particularly the studies of van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1982) and F. Snoeck Henkemans (1997, 2001) concerning argumentation structure and indicators. The argumentative reconstruction of the texts aims at driving their evaluation as argumentative interventions, in that it includes ideally all aspects of meaning that

are potentially relevant for assessing their dialectical consistency as well as their persuasive power.

Twenty-one occurrences of the 'culture-mix' argument have been counted in the corpus. Six representative occurrences will be here analyzed and discussed, in order to clearly define the meaning, the function and the structure of the argument.

Example (1) (from [www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com), Travel Forum, topic "*How many full days in Lugano?*", Nov 15, 2007, 8:28 PM):

About Lugano - I don't think that the mountains in the Ticino can compare with the mountains in the Bernese Oberland or the Matterhorn, and if you don't expect them to, you won't be disappointed. What the Ticino has is a startlingly different vegetation and ambiance - lizards and chestnut trees in the mountain forests, banana palms and olive trees on the shore of Lake Lugano. I find this combination of alpine but Mediterranean, Swiss but Italian, fascinating, and if it interests you, then you will like the Ticino.

Lugano itself seems to divide visitors - some love it, some don't like it at all. I think some people don't expect it to be a city, and don't expect Switzerland to be so hot in the summer. (...) I could easily fill up 3 days in and around Lugano.

The argumentative structure of the extract is the following:

SP (1) - Lugano is worth a visit.

(1.1a - Lugano is in Ticino)

1.1b - If you don't expect the mountains in Ticino compare with the mountains in the Bernese Oberland or the Matterhorn you won't be disappointed

1.1c - Ticino has a startlingly different vegetation and ambiance (in comparison with the rest of Switzerland)

1.1c.1- Ticino is a combination of Alpine but Mediterranean, Swiss but Italian

1.1c.1.1a - Ticino has lizards and chestnut trees

1.1c.1.1b - Ticino has banana palms and olive trees

1.1d- Lugano has all the facilities of a city.

1.1e - (differently from the rest of Switzerland) Lugano is hot in the summer.

The post is an answer to the question opening the forum thread, that is "How many full-days [are worth spending] in Lugano?". The standpoint is expressed in the last proposition of the post extract and claims: "I could easily fill up 3 days in

and around Lugano“. It can be substituted with the standpoint that is assumed as the base for this investigation: “Lugano is worth a visit [of at least three full days]”.

The standpoint is supported with a *complex argumentation*. The five arguments directly supporting the standpoint constitute a *cumulative coordinative argumentation*, since they have to be taken together in order to sufficiently defend the standpoint, and every new argument is added to strengthen the acceptability of the standpoint. The unexpressed argument “Lugano is in Ticino”, is supported by a *complementary coordinatively argumentation*, according to which Ticino is worth a visit for its mountains but, above all, for its vegetation and ambience. “What the Ticino has” is, here, an indicator for complementary arguments: the argument expressed in “I don’t think that the mountains in the Ticino can compare with the mountains in the Bernese Oberland or the Matterhorn, and if you don’t expect them to, you won’t be disappointed” is an attempt to defend the fact that Lugano is worth a visit because it is in Ticino, by highlighting one of the features of Ticino that make it worth a visit, that are its mountains. Nevertheless, the arguer anticipates that Ticino’s mountains probably would not win the competition if compared to the Bernese Oberland, and the argument would thus not be a sufficient support. Therefore, the author of the post adds a complementary argument, that is what has been previously called the ‘culture-mix’ argument. In the post, indeed, the argument “Ticino is a combination of Alpine but Mediterranean, Swiss but Italian” refers to the vegetation and ambience, rather than to the culture of the place. This combination gives the destination a special charm (it is *fascinating*). The indicator “but” suggests that the combination is to be interpreted as an integration rather than as a sum of different traits: Swiss and Italian traits cannot be divided, they are so well integrated that they cannot even be distinguished.

Example (2) (from [www.dooyoo.com](http://www.dooyoo.com); “Italian Swiss-style”, Aug 14, 2000):

It seemed as if it would be a lovely place to spend a few days although not terribly lively. It is a little part of Italy, with the organization and efficiency of Switzerland. An odd, but somehow charming combination.

The argumentation put forward in the post can be reconstructed as follows:

SP (1) – (Lugano is a lovely place to spend a few days) Lugano is worth a visit

1.1a – The fact that Lugano is not terribly lively does not impact that much its touristic value



1.1b – It is an odd, but somehow charming combination of Italy and Switzerland.

1.1b.1a – (It is a little part of Italy =) Lugano shares the typical features of an Italian city

1.1b.1b – (with the organization and efficiency of Switzerland =) The organization and efficiency of Lugano are typical of Switzerland

(1.1b.1b.1 – Lugano is in Switzerland)

(1.1b.1b.1a – Italy is not organized nor efficient as Switzerland is)

(1.1b.1b.1b – Switzerland is organized and efficient)

The counter-argument according to which Lugano is not a lively place is acknowledged by the arguer to show that, even if it is true, it may be regarded as insufficient for attacking the touristic value of the destination which relies, instead, in its “odd, but somehow charming combination”.**[ii]** The arguer knows well that Lugano is in Switzerland (the author previously writes that “It is on Lake Lugano, in the foothills of the Alps in the Italian-speaking canton of Ticino”), but describes it as “a little part of Italy” having some Swiss features, that are organization and efficiency. It is thus likely to interpret the “combination” as an inseparable integration of cultural traits: Lugano is Italy (it does not look like Italy!), unless for the efficiency and the organization, that are truly Swiss.

Example (3) (from [www.igougo.com](http://www.igougo.com), “Lugano – The home of la dolce vita, Swiss style”, Nov 6, 2003):

One version of a well-known joke states that in heaven, among other things, the Italians are the cooks and everything is organized by the Swiss, and these criteria could also apply to Lugano. The lack of the English police, French lovers, and German mechanics also mentioned in the witticism possibly indicates that it is not quite paradise, but nevertheless, the combination of two sets of national traits is probably the single most appealing thing about the place.

The city has a picturesque backdrop featuring a lake and some mountains, which is obviously quite characteristic of Switzerland. In addition, the high level of efficiency and orderliness found throughout the country exists, but in combination with a less typical Mediterranean atmosphere. For example, sitting at outside café terraces is a popular activity with the stylish locals, as is dining in cozy restaurants such as *La Tinèra* that serve the fine Italian style regional cuisine.

The arguer makes use of a complex argumentation to support the (sub) standpoint that

SP (1) - The combination of two sets of national traits is probably the single most appealing thing about Lugano

then acknowledges the fact that

1.1a - The picturesque backdrop featuring a lake and some mountains is obviously quite characteristic of Switzerland

but implicitly considers it not a strong counter-argument if compared with the pro-argument

1.1b - The high level of efficiency and orderliness found throughout the country is combined with a less typical Mediterranean atmosphere

The Mediterranean atmosphere is exemplified by the fact that

1.1b.1a - sitting at outside café terraces is a popular activity with the stylish locals

and that

1.1b.1b - dining in cozy restaurants that serve the fine Italian style regional cuisine is a popular activity

The 'culture-mix' argument is better expressed by the witticism opening the review. The structure of the argument is the following:

SP (1) - In Lugano there is a combination of the best of two sets of national traits

(1.1a - The best of Italy is the cuisine / Italians are the best cooks)

(1.1b - The best of Switzerland is the organization / Swiss people are the best managers)

1.1a.1 - In Paradise Italians are the cooks

1.1b.1 - In Paradise Swiss are the managers

(1.1.1.1 - Only the best is worth to be in Paradise)

The witticism works well only if one adds a premise, that has been left implicit because it was assumed to be known by the audience - it is, properly, an *endoxon* -, that only the best is worth to be in Paradise. The combined cultural traits of Lugano are, therefore, the best traits, and this argument is not one reason among the others to visit the city, but it is the most appealing reason, it represents Lugano's distinctive trait, that exceeds the expectations.

In the same vein of example (3), in examples (4), (5) and (6), the 'culture-mix' argument is rewarded as the very touristic value of Lugano. It is expressed through a coordinatively compound argumentation, made up of two cumulative arguments: one of them supporting the sub-standpoint that Lugano has the best cultural traits of Italy, and the other one supporting the similar standpoint for

Swiss cultural traits.

Example (4) (from [www.dooyoo.com](http://www.dooyoo.com); "Lugano - The home of la dolce vita, Swiss style", May 27, 2009):

Unlike the rest of Switzerland, the atmosphere here is mainly Mediterranean. Trust me when I say that the Ticino, Switzerland's only Italian-speaking canton, is where the country comes alive. It's Italian lifestyle with Swiss efficiency: the best of both worlds.

In example (4), the two cumulative arguments are linked by the indicator "with" ("It's Italian lifestyle *with* Swiss efficiency"), which makes think of a new unique entity, not simply defined by the sum of its parts.

The exhortation "trust me" not only functions as a reinforcement of the argument, but moreover points out its relevance: the combination of two worlds is the very value of Lugano.

Example (5) (from [www.virtualtourist.com](http://www.virtualtourist.com); "In many ways Ticino is my...", August 26, 2002:

In many ways Ticino is my favorite part of Switzerland, it has a lovely mix of the best bits of Swiss and Italian culture. It is more laid back and relaxed than the rest of Switzerland, but it retains the cleanliness, punctuality and respect. (We thought that there were far more good looking guys here too, Italian looks, romanticism etc, but Swiss manners!)

In example (5), the indicator "but" can be said to represent an exception to the rule for which "if a '*p* but *q*' utterance is put forward by the protagonist in an implicit discussion, it may in general be assumed that the standpoint supported by the second conjunct is the protagonist's own standpoint" (Snoeck Henkemans 1995, p. 292). Here, *p* ("It is more laid back and relaxed than the rest of Switzerland") and *q* ("it retains the cleanliness, punctuality and respect") are, in fact, not arguments for two opposite conclusions, but they are both pro-arguments for the same conclusion that Lugano "has a lovely mix of the best bits of Swiss and Italian culture". The defense of the standpoint requires a combination of the arguments conjoined by "but". It is the combination of relaxed and laid-back Italian attitude and Swiss cleanliness, punctuality and respect, that constitutes the lovely cultural mix.

Example (6) (from <http://www.bootsnall.com>; "Lounging in Lugano", Aug 23,

2006):

[Lugano, the pride of Southern Switzerland, conjures up images of beautiful scenery and delightful Mediterranean weather. I was holidaying in Switzerland last May with my family (husband and two kids) and had decided to spend a few days at this distinctly Italian flavored resort in the Ticino region. I had heard that Lugano enjoyed the best of Italian and Swiss culture – the vibrant charm of the Italians and the order and punctuality of the Swiss. I was soon to discover more than just that. (...)]

I had found this beautiful city to be a laid-back and cheerful place, with warm locals, their easy-going attitude, superb cuisine and great scenery – not to mention eyeing the handsome Lugano men; even middle aged guys are quite dashing, from the cab driver, to the carpenter, to the housekeeping guy – all with a smile on their faces and trying their best to help you. The Lugano ladies must have been beautiful too, but for that you will have to ask my husband! Mamma Mia, lovely Lugano, we promise to come back again!

Argumentation in example 6 deserves to be reconstructed in detail, for it helps seizing the relevance of the ‘culture-mix’ argument.

SP (1) – Lugano is the pride of Southern Switzerland

1.1a – It conjures up images of beautiful scenery and delightful Mediterranean weather

1.1b – It enjoys the best of Italian and Swiss culture

1.1b.1a – It enjoys the vibrant charm of the Italians

(1.1b.1a.1 – The vibrant charm of people is the best trait of Italian culture)

1.1b.1b – It enjoys the order and punctuality of the Swiss

(1.1b.1b.1 – The order and punctuality of people is the best trait of Swiss culture)

1.1c – It is a laid back and cheerful place

1.1d – Locals are warm and have an easy-going attitude

1.1d.1 – Men are handsome and dashing

1.1e – Cuisine is superb

The final passage of the review lists, in a condensed way, all the arguments that have been put forward in the text to support the standpoint “Lugano is the pride of Southern Switzerland”, that was stated immediately at the beginning of the text. It is a case of coordinatevely compound cumulative argumentation, in which every new argument is added to strengthen the acceptability of the standpoint. The arguer takes herself the commitment to give further evidences for the

standpoint, since she attacks the sufficiency of the first proposed argument. For her, Lugano is the pride of Southern Switzerland not only and not mainly because it combines the best traits of two cultures, but also for a number of other reasons. Nevertheless, the arguments put forward are nothing else than a list of typical aspects of Italian culture: a laid-back and cheerful place, where locals have a warm and easy-going attitude, men are handsome and dashing, cuisine is superb.

#### 4. *Looking for the Touristic Value of a destination*

Once the 'culture-mix' argument has been investigated in its different occurrences, and its facets have been pointed out reconstructing the respective argumentative moves, its internal inferential configuration can be further analyzed, to identify the elements which determine its logic validity and its pragmatic persuasiveness. The *Argumentum Model of Topics*, developed by Rigotti and Greco Morasso (Rigotti 2006, 2009; Rigotti & Greco Morasso 2009), allows to reconstruct the two inferential paths which together lead to the conclusion (the standpoint). Figure 1 shows how this type of representation is made up of a Y-like structure, constituted by the intertwining of two reasoning lines. The right-hand line (Maxim – Minor premise – Final conclusion) represents the logical pattern that underpins the argument; because of its logic-oriented, procedural nature it is called the *procedural* component (Rigotti and Greco Morasso 2010). The left-hand component (Endoxon – Minor premise – First conclusion) derives from the anchoring of the argument in the cultural and factual premises supplied by tourists who have visited Lugano; its culture-dependent and context-dependent nature justifies the term *material* component (ibid.).

The procedural component originates from an implicit *maxim*: "If a certain effort is worthwhile to get X, the same effort is particularly worthwhile to get twice X value". The concept of *maxim* comes from the Topical tradition, and refers to an inferential principle having the form  $p \rightarrow q$ , which connects two or more aspects of the ontological relationship between premises and the conclusion on which the argumentative reasoning is based. The type of ontological relationship between premises and the conclusion constitutes the *locus* (e.g. cause-effect, genus to species). The maxims generated from the same locus are implications of the ontological relationship constituting the locus (Rigotti and Greco Morasso 2009). In the 'culture-mix' argument the relationship between premises and the conclusion is based on a specific aspect of the touristic value Lugano is argued to have. The touristic value of Lugano lies in the fact that it combines the aspects of

two different cultures, that are considered the touristic value (the “best”) of those cultures. The touristic values of such two cultures are in Lugano so well combined, that they give birth to a new unique more valuable entity. The *locus*, here, is based on a paradigmatic relationship of analogy, since the touristic value of Lugano is implicitly compared to the touristic value of another generic destination – it is a relationship among similar alternatives. It is, more precisely, the *locus from the more and the less*, which instantiates a relationship between premises and conclusion on the base of the probability or value of one of their factors. If a destination having a recognized touristic value is worth a visit, a destination combining two recognized touristic values is particularly worth a visit. [iii]

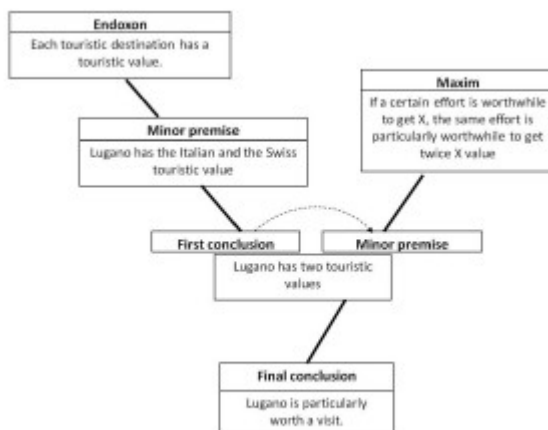


Figure 1: Synergic structure of the 'culture-mix' argument.

The material component, represented in the left-hand part of figure 1, originates from an *endoxon*. “*Endoxa* are the remarkable opinions of a community, that is to say the propositions that are in the common opinion (i.e. the *doxa*) and, as a consequence, are generally accepted, reliable and credited within a community” (Tardini 2005, p. 281). The community to which authors of travel reviews or travel forum posts refer is the generic community of tourists, constituted by all those who intend to organize a trip or are simply keen on travelling. It is thus reasonable to think that the *endoxon* here evoked is: “Each touristic destination has a touristic value.”

From the fact that Lugano has both the Italian and the Swiss touristic values, and from the logical implication that a destination having two touristic values is more worthwhile than another having only one of them, comes the conclusion that Lugano is particularly worth a visit.

## 5. Conclusion

The paper presents a first attempt to critically consider tourism-related User-Generated-Contents, as a means to let emerge and better understand tourists' opinions on their travel experiences and on the destination they visited. The study discussed in the paper suggests that tourism is an interesting context for argumentation studies, considered that opinion giving and deliberation are the engines of tourism organization and consumption. People who intend to leave for a journey, go through a process of information seeking and evaluation aimed at deliberating about the place to visit and the time to spend there. Once they come back from their journey, they are in *the position to know* (Walton 1997) about a destination, and they become worth trust because of their experience. In the Internet society, tourists always more give their opinions and look for others' opinions on the web, by means of social networks. UGC represent, thus, an easily accessible source for gathering the information needed.

Here, UGC have been used to develop a pilot study on the opinions given by tourists who visited Lugano. The hypothesis leading the study was that it can be identified a dominant value for a certain destination recognized by the most of the tourists, which makes it unique and worth a visit. The pilot study confirmed the hypothesis.

So, what can one say about the touristic value of Lugano? An analysis of a corpus of eighty-two texts produced and published online by tourists has allowed to point out three argument classes which tourists frequently refer to when they report of a positive touristic experience in Lugano: 1) the 'nature' argument, which is based on the morphological aspects of the destination; 2) the 'confidence' argument, which exploits the stereotype usually accompanying Switzerland, that is of an organized, efficient and respectful place; 3) the 'culture-mix' argument, which focuses on the peculiar touristic value of Lugano, given by the combination of the best traits of the Italian and the Swiss culture. The 'nature' argument occurs almost in every text, but usually together with other arguments, since a tourist may like to find more than just natural attractions in a place. It is, thus, not a sufficient argument, unless it addresses a specific audience, that are "nature lovers" or "outdoorsy types". The 'confidence' argument is put forward in addition to other arguments. Lugano's reputation as an efficient and well-organized place does not seem to be sufficient for recommending it for a visit. It is the combination of cultures that particularly strikes Lugano visitors: the

'culture-mix' argument is frequently reported in the texts, extensively argued and many times constitutes a sufficient reason for a visit according to the writer.

This argument has been therefore observed in its most relevant occurrences in the corpus. The argumentative reconstruction of the text passages where it was employed, shows that it represents the key touristic value of Lugano and, broadly, of Ticino. This standpoint, which is expressed with different wordings (e.g. "Ticino is where Switzerland comes alive", "Lugano is the pride of Southern Switzerland"), is supported by a coordinatevely compound argumentation, made up of two similar arguments: one states that Lugano shares the best traits of Italian culture - identified in the easy-going and warm attitude, the fine cuisine, the Mediterranean vegetation - and the other states that Lugano shares the best traits of Swiss culture - identified in the organization, efficiency, order. The charming cultural combination gives birth to a new and unique entity, which has a "double" touristic value, if compared with other destinations, which can boast only one set of cultural traits. The analysis of the inferential structure of the argument has, in fact, shown that this argument is based on the *paradigmatic locus of the more and the less*, and is rooted in the *endoxon* according to which each destination has a touristic value; such *endoxon* allows the argument to be accepted by the community of tourists.

Future studies should be developed in order to further verify the hypothesis. The corpus used in the case here discussed was made up of texts belonging to different genres: travel reviews, blogs and forum posts, but such difference was not take into account in the analysis. Almost no account of the communication context within which argumentation became relevant was either given. The fact that UGC are produced on the web, in the frame of specific interaction modes having proper rules, dynamics and roles, should be considered in future studies on argumentation in the context of tourism.

## NOTES

**[i]** "All services work well, and this aspect should not be taken for granted" [the implicit comparison is with Italy].

**[ii]** According to Snoeck Henkemans, when arguers acknowledge counter-arguments, this acknowledgment is apt to show that the counter-argument is less important than the pro-argument. Therefore, the arguer's implicit claim of the irrelevance of the counter-argument should be added to the pro-argument, and the argumentation structure should then be considered coordinatively compound



(Snoeck Henkemans 1997).

**[iii]** Rigotti & Greco Morasso (2009) classify the *loci* according to a taxonomy, which distinguishes among: *paradigmatic loci*, based on relations *in absentia* (of alternativeness), both of opposition and of analogy; *syntagmatic loci*, based on relations *in praesentia* that refer to aspects ontologically linked to the standpoint, as for instance the relationship between the whole and its constituent parts; *complex loci*, which are on the borderline between the previous two ones.

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