“Green, How I Want You Green”: The Discourse of the Brand I Feel Slovenia

ABSTRACT

The article examines the discourse of Slovenia’s official tourism brand I Feel Slovenia. It presents a study of the English version of the official website, focusing on the ways in which the text establishes connections between emotions and emotions in the construction of the brand. Special attention is paid to the role of the word green in the discourse construction of Slovenia’s official image. The study is based on the framework of evaluative language (Martin and White 1995). The analysis shows that the word green is primarily used as a value-laden term, functioning as a placeholder for different evaluative meanings. The word green ties different strands of Slovenia’s image into a holistic concept rooted in the English-language slogan I Feel Slovenia and the label Slovenia Green.

Keywords: I Feel Slovenia, brand, discourse, English, green

IZVLEČEK


Ključne besede: I Feel Slovenia, znamka, diskurz, angleščina, zeleno

1 A quote from Frederico Garcia Lorca’s Romance Sonambulo, translated into English by William Bryant Logan.
1 Introduction

In an economically globalized and socially interconnected world, brands have become ubiquitous indicators of modern consumerism, which penetrate almost every aspect of modern life (Kapferer 2004). The composition of brands should thus be treated as an interdisciplinary subject elucidated by various disciplines, such as economics, sociology, anthropology, history, and semiotics. Furthermore, modern brands have a significant virtual component as communication has increasingly moved to the screen with the expansion of the internet.

Brands confer distinctive identities to products, services, and destinations through verbal and visual communication. According to Yuen (2021, 50), a brand “gives people assurance and peace of mind, as it stands for quality and implies satisfaction with the product”. Building trust is thus one of the crucial elements of building a brand. In an economically globalized and socially interconnected world of the 21st century, it is not just businesses that have to compete for the consumer’s attention in an overcrowded market, but also places and destinations. A particular type of branding developed to increase the identifiability of destinations and even whole countries is called place branding (Ashworth 2009).

This article presents a study of the English-language version of the official brand of Slovenia as it is presented through its official website. The brand itself was created in 2007 by Slovene experts in tourism and advertising in cooperation with different groups of Slovene citizens based on contemporary models of place brands developed in advertising (Konečnik Ruzzier 2012). The primary purpose of the newly created brand, which was to replace the previous less successful attempts at branding Slovenia since its independence, was to construct a contemporary Slovene brand identity for the purposes of promotion, business, and tourism (Konečnik Ruzzier 2012). The brand uses the English-language slogan I Feel Slovenia, and the English-language label Slovenia Green. The material for the present study includes the wordings of the slogan and the label and selected texts in English accessible from the website I Feel Slovenia (Slovenian Tourist Board 2022; https://www.slovenia.info/en).

The main purpose of the study is to examine the discourse construction of the image that Slovenia wants to project to the world to attract international visitors. Special attention is given to the interplay of ideational and interpersonal textual elements that characterize the English discourse revolving around the crucial linguistic elements that construe Slovenia’s contemporary brand identity, such as the use of the word green.

2 The Process of Branding

The theory of branding offers a variety of definitions and classifications of brands and has yet to propose a universally accepted definition of a brand. According to the classic definition

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by the American Marketing Association (1960), a brand consists of a name, term, design, symbol, or a combination of these intended to identify the goods or services of a business and differentiate them from competitors. Brands foreground the distinctive features of businesses and emphasize what makes them different from their competitors. They are complex symbols that combine various ideas and invoke a body of mental associations that a product has acquired over time (Gardner and Levy 1955). Among features that can make a business distinctive, there are several aspects of a brand, such as a brand as a logo, an image in the consumer’s mind, and a value system (de Chernatony and Dall’Olmo Riley 1998). Brand names thus represent the sum of the mental associations they evoke in people (Brown 1992), providing memory shortcuts to consumers under time constraints (Keller 2003). The identity structure of a brand thus includes elements of culture, personality, and self-projection (Kapferer 1992). The net result of a brand is the public image in which the character and personality may be more critical for the overall status of the brand than technical facts about the product (Maurya and Mishra 2012).

Contemporary brands can be classified into different types, such as functional, aspirational, lifestyle, and responsible brands. Functional brands provide functional benefits by fulfilling concrete needs, aspirational brands make us emotionally invested by representing our “dream” products, lifestyle brands help us project an image that is consistent with our lifestyle philosophy, and responsible brands foreground ethical values over the pursuit of profit (Yuen 2021, 39–41). What is notable is that in addition to consumption-related needs, brands fulfil symbolic, internally generated needs for self-enhancement and identity, as well as experiential needs of cognitive stimulation, sensory pleasure, and variety (Park, Jaworski, and MacInnis 1986). Today, the insights gained from the branding process for products have also been applied to cities, countries, and regions. Place branding presents a place or a destination to a variety of potential consumers (domestic and foreign tourists, residents, and investors), shaping their expectations about a place and offering a promise of fulfilment of their various needs. Additionally, a place brand can be used to envision and provide a plan for the future development of a place (Ashworth 2009).

There are several examples of countries that have successfully reinvented themselves by creating a brand to improve their status and reputation, such as Spain, Ireland, and Croatia (Moilanen and Rainisto 2009). These examples show that a successful place branding process can transform a place’s image and identity in order to construct an image that engenders positive expectations, associations, and perceptions in potential visitors or investors.

3 Slovenia as a Brand

Slovenia’s current official tourist brand is I Feel Slovenia. According to the Slovene experts who helped create the brand, I Feel Slovenia was the first systematically designed and managed brand that presented the identity of Slovenia to the world since its independence in 1991, following several previous, failed attempts (Konečnik Ruzzier and de Chernatony 2013). Konečnik Ruzzier (2012) notes that Slovenia failed to receive the expected recognition from abroad in the initial post-independence period. The problem was that the initial attempts at building Slovenia’s brand were reduced to advertising and superficial slogans and logos, rather than a
holistic brand identity. Even more problematic, these slogans and logos frequently changed, further confusing both Slovenes and foreigners and thus not achieving the desired effects.

A place brand aims to distinguish the focal place from other destinations, which can be effectively achieved through stories (Morgan and Pritchard 2002). Previous attempts at promoting Slovenia were missing the consensus on the unique characteristics of Slovenia and the stories that a distinctive brand identity might engender, so the experts designed a questionnaire for focus groups of Slovenes from different walks of life, i.e., stakeholders, to determine their opinions about the distinctive features of Slovenia (Konečnik Ruzzier and Petek 2012).

Based on the analysis of the questionnaire, the authors of the study were able to make data-driven recommendations for the creation of Slovenia’s new brand identity. The answers showed that pristine nature, living in harmony with nature, safety, and cultural and natural diversity were considered the critical components of Slovenia’s identity. At the same time, the vision for Slovenia’s future focused on organic and sustainable development through advanced technology and a niche economy. When asked which colour they most associate with Slovenia, most respondents referred to the colour green as the most distinctive colour of the nation (Konečnik Ruzzier and Petek 2012).

For the new brand, experts created the slogan *I Feel Slovenia* and labels such as *Slovenia Green*, which evoke the values of living in harmony with nature and the pleasant emotions associated with such a lifestyle (Konečnik Ruzzier and de Chernatony 2013). The colour green is used as the shorthand for presenting Slovenia as an attractive, natural, healthy, and safe tourist destination. The centrality of the word *green* for Slovenia’s brand is explored in more detail in the analysis presented in Section 5.

### 4 Brands and the Language of Advertising

The language used in brands is linguistically similar to that used in advertising, which is a persuasive type of discourse. Thus it shares similarities with political and argumentative discourse. Classic approaches to advertising are based on semiotic analysis and emphasize the interconnections between verbal and visual modalities and their coded and uncoded elements (e.g., Barthes 1957). According to Crystal and Davy (1983, 222), advertising has two main functions: informing and persuading, with information being subservient to persuasion (Packard 1981). Goddard (1998, 109) points to the grammatical and lexical characteristics of persuasive discourse in advertising, such as the use of comparative references, the connotations of words, “problem-solution” discourse, the use of questions as hook-lines, and playing off written language against its spoken equivalent, such as the use of puns and wordplay. Goddard also mentions the importance of vocabulary connected with the product’s unique selling proposition, or “buzzwords” (Goddard 1998, 109). Buzzwords, such as *sustainable* or *environmentally friendly*, convey values and emotions, grab attention, and evoke positive associations in the target audience.

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3 The language of persuasion is also frequently used for propaganda purposes in political mobilization (e.g., Hazemali and Onič 2023).
All these principles are taken into consideration in the construction of brands. In creating new brands, special attention is devoted to creating brand names. Brand names “are created to convey information, carry desirable connotations and generate favourable perceptions” (Room 1994, 2). Among word-formation processes, compounding and blending are the most common for creating brand names (Danilović Jeremić and Josijević 2019, 2–3). Homographic overlaps represent another linguistic approach that is commonly exploited for a promotional purpose. A notable example of such creativity can be found in the formation of the slogan for Slovenia’s brand, which uses the homographic overlap between the word *love* and the segment -*love*- contained in the word *Slovenia* (cf. Section 6).

In order to express appropriate values and emotions, advertisers must be familiar with their target audience’s values and expectations and the values they want to convey. According to Hoey (1994), written discourse creates a relationship between the writer and the imagined reader, within which the writer makes assumptions about the ideal reader’s expectations and knowledge. In the persuasive language of advertising, the lexically expressed values suggest assumptions about the ideal customer. In the language of advertising, these assumptions are explicitly or implicitly expressed through attitudinal lexis expressing social values and emotions (Martin and White 2005). Križan (2016, 200), for example, applies the discourse semantic appraisal model by Martin and White (2005) to the analysis of the language of advertising, claiming that this model “is a useful analytical tool for revealing how the language of advertising evaluates the participants it engages, and further, how it helps shape, reflect and naturalize values, norms, and relationship through attitudinal judgment”. The main aspects of Martin and White's model of evaluative language used in this study are presented in Section 5.

Martin and White’s appraisal framework is used to examine how the word *green* acquires evaluative dimensions through its figurative use and thus plays a central role in the construction of the brand. As noted by Vidaković Erdeljić and Milić (2023), the underlying motivation for using the word *green* figuratively in the context of environmental topics is clearly metonymic, as it involves the activation of a part for whole, whereby the colour term stands for nature in general. The metonymic nature of the word *green* has recently received increased scholarly attention in the context of studies of communication in the time of climate crisis (e.g., Stramljič Breznik and Plemenitaš 2023).

5 **Materials and Methodology**

The present analysis focuses on attitudinal meanings expressed on the English-language version of the website of Slovenia’s official brand. Particular attention is given to capturing the semantics and the role of the word *green* in its evaluative dimension, primarily as an expression of positive appreciation of a variety of values and positive emotions.

The text for the analysis was taken from the English language version of the website of the brand *I Feel Slovenia* (Slovenian Tourist Board 2022; https://www.slovenia.info/sl). As

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4 The analysis is applied to the version of the website from March 2022. It has to be noted that some aspects of the website presented in the study no longer exist in the same form.

5 The languages, in addition to Slovene and English, are German, Italian, French, Russian, Spanish, and Chinese.
mentioned in Section 2, *I Feel Slovenia* is the brand that was developed by Slovene experts based on a systematic survey of different groups of the general Slovene population. The brand also functions as a slogan, forming the logo’s tagline. The Slovene Tourist Board manages the website, while the Government Communication Office supervises the brand.

The website of Slovenia’s brand is called *I Feel Slovenia*, which is the main slogan of the brand. The logo with the slogan is displayed in the upper-left-hand corner of the website. The slogan is written against a green background (Figure 1). The colour green functions as a recurrent visual motif on the website through its use in graphic signs and its prominence in photographic material. The banner on the homepage contains a section entitled “Explore”, which leads to a selection of texts contained on the website. In the version of the website from March 2022, the “Explore” section leads to texts about the Tour of Slovenia, a national cycling competition similar to the Tour de France. The lower part of the banner contains three horizontally organized headlines (“things to do”, “places to go”, and “plan your trip”) which can be clicked to reach further thematically organized sections, ultimately linking to individual articles and videos on the website. Below the banner, there is a short text followed by several sections that are organized vertically and represent another route to reach the articles and videos on the website. They include sections “Stories from Slovenia”, “Inspiring places”, “Slovenia at a glance”, “Taste Slovenia”, “Developing green Slovenia”, “My way of planning new adventures”, “My way of finding new means of relaxation”, and “My way of discovering the local character”. Each headline covers three or four clickable photographs with taglines that lead to the articles on the website. Towards the bottom of the website there is a section reserved for social media content, such as Instagram, Facebook and Twitter, information on travel and safety guidelines, and a business section.

A website can be regarded as a macro-genre, a genre within which it is possible to identify a range of other genres (e.g., Martin 1992). Texts posted on a website are usually connected through links and function as hypertext. The *I Feel Slovenia* website resembles a network structured hypertext, with a starting point in the sections on the home page but no particular ending point. The links attached to every text enable multiple paths and can lead back to the texts on the homepage in a cyclical fashion. The network structure of the website thus encourages digressions. It keeps the readers engaged, prompting them to open new texts and thus get immersed in more and more promotional texts about Slovenia and its tourist offers. The links to the texts are grouped into several sections on the home page, and most of these links are presented as a picture with a tagline. The analysis includes texts that are directly linked from the home page of the website, a total of 26 texts, in addition to headlines and captions. The examined textual material consists of 10,868 words. The analysis of the visual material is outside the scope of the study due to space limitations. However, other sources provide a deeper insight into the inter-modal connection between text and pictures of the Slovenia brand (e.g., Ivanuša 2021).

The readers can access the website in eight different languages. The present analysis focuses on the English text version of the website. The brand name (and the slogan) exist only in English, and there is no official Slovene version of the name or slogan.

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6 The languages, in addition to Slovene and English, are German, Italian, French, Russian, Spanish, and Chinese.
The study presents a qualitative analysis of the use of the word *green* in selected texts from the official Slovene tourist website, including the slogan and labels. For the purpose of capturing the full semantic nature of the word *green* combined with various headwords, the analysis adopts some aspects of Martin and White’s categorization of evaluative lexis in the system of interpersonal meaning called appraisal. The appraisal model is a systemic-functional model of evaluative language used to categorize interpersonal meanings that are construed through lexis and grammar. In Martin and White’s appraisal theory (2005), primary attention is given to the linguistic resources of the basic appraisal categories of graduation, engagement, and attitude. Engagement is concerned with the way the value position is aligned between the author and the audience, i.e., whether the value position is presented as one which can be taken for granted for a particular audience or as one which is in some way contentious (Martin and White 2005, 92), while graduation deals with linguistic resources for upgrading or downgrading evaluative meanings (Martin and White 2005, 135). Attitude, however, deals with expressions of positive and negative evaluations expressed explicitly or implicitly as lexical items.

The present analysis is mainly concerned with attitude, which subsumes the lexical expression of personal and moral judgments of character (judgment), emotion (affect), and evaluations of things (appreciation). Judgment is the evaluation of human behaviour expressed through the categories of normality (how special one is, e.g., lucky), tenacity (how dependable one is, e.g., brave, headstrong), capability (how capable one is, e.g., clever, stupid), veracity (how honest one is, e.g., frank, disloyal) and propriety (how far beyond reproach one is, e.g., kind, rude) (Martin and White 2005, 52). Affect is an expression of emotions, which are divided into the categories of (dis)inclination, e.g., love, hate, (in)security, e.g., safe, unsafe, (un)happiness, e.g., happy, sad, and (dis)satisfaction, e.g., content, discontent (Martin and White 2005, 45). Finally, appreciation is concerned with the evaluation of things. This category, in particular, is essential for the expression of values, as it is attributed to objects or abstract referents rather than people. According to Martin and White (2005, 56), appreciation can be divided into ‘reactions’ to things (if they catch our attention; if they please us, e.g., beautiful, captivating, ugly), their ‘composition’ (balance and complexity, e.g., intricate, simple), and their ‘value’ (how innovative, authentic, timely, significant, e.g., groundbreaking, innovative, sustainable).

6 Findings and Discussion

6.1 The Construction of the Slogan and Labels as Frames of Slovenia’s Brand

The colour green dominates in the visual representation of Slovenia’s brand through its use in the design of the logo and other graphic signs, and the display of photographic material with a focus on the green countryside. At the same time, the importance of the colour *green* is also emphasized through discourse, as it is used as an attribute with a wide variety of referents, including the whole country of Slovenia, as illustrated by one of the headlines on the website, “Developing green Slovenia”.

The importance of the colour green for Slovenia’s brand is explicitly acknowledged in various sections of the website, most notably in its business section that explains Slovenia’s brand:

Slovenia has a brand with a meaningful message – I feel Slovenia. The Slovenia brand combines all areas of Slovenia, including tourism, and a mix of emotions, sensibility,
and the Slovenian green colour are at its core and identity. (Slovenian Tourist Board 2022; https://www.slovenia.info/en/business/slovenian-tourist-board/i-feel-slovenia)

Notably, the colour green is referenced through the nominal phrase “the Slovenian green colour”, in which the adjective Slovenian classifies the colour based on national identity. This identity-based reference to green is further framed by the attitudinal meaning of affect, as the phrase “the Slovenian green colour” is directly coordinated with expressions of positive affect (“a mix of emotions and sensibility and the Slovenian green colour”), all defined as the elements at the core of Slovenia’s identity. The “Slovenian green” is further described as “more than a colour” and as an expression of “a balance between the calmness of nature and the diligence of the Slovenian people” (Slovenian Tourist Board 2022; https://www.slovenia.info/en/business/slovenian-tourist-board/i-feel-slovenia). With this additional framing through the attitudinal meanings of positive appreciation (“the calmness of nature”) and positive judgment (“the diligence of the Slovenian people”), the word green becomes semantically imbued with all three categories of attitudinal meaning used in its immediate context, i.e., affect, judgment, and appreciation (cf. Martin and White 2005).

The evaluative meaning of positive affect plays a significant role in the discourse of Slovenia’s brand. It is also expressed in the main slogan, I Feel Slovenia, through the highlighted segment of the slogan. The logo with the slogan, which is displayed on the website, consists of a non-symmetrical trapezoid with a green background containing the line I Feel Slovenia (Figure 1). The line is written inside the trapezoid in capital letters. The words I, feel, and the string of letters coinciding with the segment -love- in the word Slovenia are marked white, while the remaining segments of Slovenia, i.e., s- and -nia, are marked with a pale shade of green. The highlighted segments form the sentence I Feel Love. To achieve this evaluative effect, the language of the slogan exploits the homographic overlap between the English word love and a four-letter segment -love- from the word Slovenia, reaffirming positive emotions associated with Slovenia.

Figure 1. The official logo of the brand I Feel Slovenia (Slovenian Tourist Board 2022; website I Feel Slovenia; https://www.slovenia.info).

In addition to the slogan, another important framing element is the certificate Slovenia Green (Figure 2). Slovenia Green is the main certificate conferred to destinations and accommodations that fulfil the Tourist Board’s criteria of being environmentally friendly.7

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7. The brand also contains the certificate Green & Safe, which was of particular importance during the Covid pandemic.
The graphic sign for the *Slovenia Green* certificate consists of a non-symmetrical trapezoid with a light background and a leafy green-grey design on the right side (Figure 2). The segment marked in dark green highlights *Love Green*. Similarly to the slogan *I Feel Slovenia*, it uses the homographic segment -love- inside the word *Slovenia* to achieve an evaluative framing of positive affect. The marked segment can have different syntactic interpretations: it can be read as an imperative sentence, i.e., ‘love green!’, as an elliptical sentence, i.e., ‘I/we love green’, and perhaps more unusually, as an adjectival or nominal phrase with *green* as the headword and *love* as a nominal premodifier (i.e., ‘green of the type associated with love’). Furthermore, the full phrase *Slovenia Green* can also have multiple syntactic interpretations: it can be read as an adjectival or nominal phrase with the adjective *green* as the headword and the noun *Slovenia* as the premodifier (i.e., ‘green of the Slovene type’). Similarly, the line can be interpreted as a nominal phrase, with the word *green* as a noun. Perhaps less probably, it can also be read as an elliptical sentence with a missing linking verb (i.e., ‘Slovenia /is/ green’).

![Figure 2](https://www.slovenia.info/sl/poslovne-strani/zelena-shema-slovenskega-turizma/druzina-slovenia-green)

**Figure 2.** The official label *Slovenia Green*: the example *Slovenia Green Destination Platinum* (Slovenian Tourist Board 2022; website *I Feel Slovenia*; https://www.slovenia.info/sl/poslovne-strani/zelena-shema-slovenskega-turizma/druzina-slovenia-green).

Both the slogan *I Feel Slovenia* and the certificate *Slovenia Green* express the evaluative meaning of positive affect. The wording of the slogan *I Feel Slovenia* achieves this in the following way: the word *Slovenia* functions in a syntactic position which is typically filled by a noun expressing an emotion or sensation. Due to its syntactic positioning, the word *Slovenia* acquires the semantic flavouring of emotion. Second, the highlighting of the segment -love- in the word *Slovenia* in the same line reinforces the conceptual connection between Slovenia and the emotion of love, i.e., feeling Slovenia is akin to feeling love, which also leads to happiness. According to the appraisal theory, love is a subcategory of happiness (cf. Martin and White 2005, 50).

The wording of the certificate *Slovenia Green*, on the other hand, establishes a special interpretation of the colour green based on the Slovene national identity through the premodification of the word *green* by the noun *Slovenia*. Like the slogan, it exploits the segment -love- in the word *Slovenia*, showing the word *green* in the syntactic position of the object of affection (i.e., *love green*). With this sleight of hand, it manages to create a conceptual

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8 The analysis of evaluative meaning in the wordings of the slogan and the certificate, including the highlighted segments, is applied to their conventional syntactic readings.
tie between Slovenia, the feeling of love, and the colour green. The explicit explanation of the elements of the brand further strengthens the connection between Slovenia and positive affect.

The wording *Slovenia Green* also semantically opens the headword *green* to different evaluative interpretations based on the category of appreciation, depending on which values associated with Slovenia are focused on in a particular context. Consequently, the certificate of *Slovenia Green* can be attributed to a wide variety of actors that align with the value systems of the brand. The main values expressed by the label are concerned with the areas of environmental protection and lifestyle, and in particular the preservation of a healthy environment and the benefits of living in harmony with nature. *Slovenia Green* thus functions as an attribute with a wide range of different referents, including *Slovenia Green* destinations, providers, accommodations, *Slovenia Green* parks, travels, agencies, and even attractions.

The general framing elements of the brand, i.e., the slogan, certificates, and the official explanation of the brand, however, are all connected through the expression of love as a category of positive affect.

It is worth noting that the wordings of the slogan and certificates, such as *I Feel Slovenia* and *Slovenia Green*, only exist in the English language version. Even the plaques awarded to the Slovene tourism providers lack a Slovene translation of the slogan, labels, or accompanying text. Martina Drakulić, a Slovene expert on contemporary tourism trends, is critical of the lack of official Slovene translations (personal correspondence), but notes that Slovene tourism providers have accepted English-language slogans, certificates, labels, and English borrowings of new terms in tourism (e.g., *nesting*, *glamping*). In the field of tourism, the use of English language slogans and certificates for Slovene providers is often justified by the fact that their primary target audience consists of international visitors, who account for 80% of all tourist visitors (Drakulić, personal correspondence).

Figure 3 shows the plaque with the certificate *Slovenia Green* awarded to Bohinj. The plaque exists exclusively in its English-language version.

Throughout the website, the colour green is strongly associated with a variety of feelings belonging to the category of positive affect, including feelings of trust and safety, in addition to love. This is further shown in Section 6.2, which examines the evaluative dimensions of the word *green* in selected texts from the website.

### 6.2 Evaluative Dimensions of the Word *Green* in the Main Sections of the Website

In this section, the evaluative dimensions of the word *green* are examined in the discourse of the texts contained in the main sections displayed on the home page of the website.

On top of the webpage, the banner prominently displays four evaluative terms expressed as a series of sentential fragments, i.e., “Nature. Freedom. Passion. My Way”. The word *nature* is

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9 The author is indebted to Jana Vilman for drawing attention to the lack of Slovene translations of the awarded plaques (personal correspondence).
followed by three different evaluative expressions: the word *passion*, which has the meaning of positive affect, the word *freedom*, which has the meaning of the positive judgment of capability, and the phrase *my way*, which contains an implicitly expressed positive judgment of determination (cf. Martin and White 2005). The word *nature* is thus strongly associated with evaluative meanings. This kind of evaluative framing is also common with the word *green* used in the discourse of the website.

The headline “Explore” inside the banner leads to an article about the Tour of Slovenia, an international cycling event. The tour is described as “more than just a cycling race” – it is a “journey across a green country”. This wording echoes the description used in the definition of the brand (cf. Section 6.1), where the colour green is described as being “more than just green”. The association of the race with the colour green in the phrase “a race across a green country”, confers a special significance to the events and activities of the tour. This section offers additional meta-messaging on the double meaning of the colour green, as the term *green* is explicitly acknowledged as a term with both a literal and figurative meaning. Green is the colour of “the green jersey” of the tour’s overall winner, but also of Slovenia’s movement “towards sustainable development”.

Figure 3. The plaque with the English-language certificate *Slovenia Green* awarded to Bohinj (source: personal archive by Jana Vilman).
The text featured below the banner is entitled “Slovenia is waiting for you to explore it. In your way”. In this text, the word green is associated with the feeling of safety and isolation from the rest of the world. The text describes Slovenia as a “small region offering so much”, “a perfect green and safe oasis”, and “the green heart of Europe”. The metaphors entailed in the use of the nouns oasis and heart highlight the smallness, isolation, centrality, and uniqueness, i.e., an oasis is a small, flourishing place surrounded by a desert, and a heart is the small, central organ that propels the body. As their attribute, the word green acquires an evaluative meaning of positive appreciation, i.e., of the value of smallness, coupled with the value of diversity (“a small region offering so much”) and exclusivity (“boutique experiences”). In addition to the category of positive affect, i.e., feeling safe and positive appreciation as exclusivity, the text also foregrounds positive judgment of the hosts’ behaviour as responsible and positive appreciation with regard to the experiences offered by Slovenia as enjoyable and unforgettable.

The next section, entitled “Stories from Slovenia”, offers further strengthening of the evaluative dimension of the word green. The introduction to a promotional film entitled “A documentary that reveals the green orientation of Slovenia” focuses on the importance of the colour green for Slovenia, talking about Slovenia as a “green destination” and as a country with a “green orientation” having “green ideas”. The word green premodifiers abstract referents, i.e., the country’s goals and ambitions, and thus transforms into a future-oriented concept denoting telos and tenacity in referencing the aspiration and determination of a whole country. The metonymical use of the word green is also explicitly acknowledged: “[Y]ou will learn that it ['Slovenia'] is truly green. Literally, in the colours of its endless forests and figuratively, in the effort of the locals for it to remain so”. The use of the intensifier “truly” in the phrase “truly green” shows that the adjective green is used as a gradable evaluative concept. The figurative level of the word green is explained as Slovenia’s efforts to preserve nature and develop sustainably. These efforts are also implicitly connected to the positive judgment of the capabilities and character attributed to Slovenes (“the locals”), who are presented as hardworking and responsible. In addition to being an adjective, the word green is used adverbially (e.g., “A documentary that makes you think only green”), denoting a way of thinking. The adjective green is also used as an attribute of the noun “story”, i.e., a semiotic entity, in the phrase “a green story of Slovenia,” which conceptually summarizes all the different uses of the word green.

The section entitled “Inspiring places” uses the word green predominantly as an attribute of place nouns. This use is framed by all three categories of attitudinal meaning: positive appreciation, expressed as a category of aesthetic evaluation and sustainability, is combined with positive judgment, expressed as a category of capability, i.e., health, and positive affect as a feeling of well-being and self-confidence. The Slovene capital, Ljubljana, for example, is described as “a lively green city combining the charm of a small capital and the self-confidence of large European cities” and as “the green capital of a green country”. Here, the value of smallness is combined with positive affect, i.e., “self-confidence”. Well-being as a category of positive affect is strongly associated with health as the positive judgment of capability, both of which are attainable in “every corner of green Slovenia”, where you can find “natural healing remedies, each of which has its own beneficial effect on health and well-being”. Framed by the category of positive affect, in particular well-being and relaxation, the colour green
is also used as an attribute of a variety of abstract entities denoting activities, feelings, and experiences related to holidays, which are all framed by positive affect, i.e., the feelings of well-being, relaxation and taking a break, e.g., “green relaxation at a thermal spa”, “pamper yourself in a green way”, and “a green break at Mala Nedelja Bioterme”.

The section “Discovering green Slovenia” towards the bottom of the website discusses Slovenia’s policy with regard to the development of tourism by mentioning the Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism. The use of the adjective green in the name of the policy reinforces the link between the colour green and the values of sustainability and responsibility. The article states that under the auspices of the Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism, “tourism is developed in a responsible and sustainable way”, through the promotion of “green policies” and “green experiences”. The adjective green thus additionally functions as an attribute to entities with institutional meaning, such as policy and scheme. Slovenia prides itself on being one of the first countries to adopt a green certification scheme, which has been implemented since 2015. The certification scheme reinforces the connection between emotions and values through the positive affect of trust, a feeling that comes from shared values and connects visitors, tourist providers, and destinations: “Now it’s time for more trust between us”.

The article at the bottom of the homepage, entitled “Five green and safe reasons for me to choose Slovenia”, presents additional framing of the brand I Feel Slovenia in the form of a listicle with five items. The article focuses on Slovenia being a safe, clean country with high hygiene standards, which was of particular importance during the time of the COVID-19 epidemic. The adjective green is paired with the adjective safe, whereby green can be interpreted as a co-hyponym of safe, thus both expressing positive appreciation as a value of security. They are used as attributes of the headword reasons, i.e. an abstract noun denoting logic, which expands the range of headwords with green as a premodifier even further. A prominent display of the sign with the wording Green & Safe is accompanied by the exclamation “Welcome to green and safe Slovenia”, repeating the pairing of green and safe from the headline. This framing adds an important component to the adjective green, as it associates it with freedom from disease.

At the end of the section, the Slovenia Green label is described as an umbrella term encompassing the different values and feelings the word green is imbued with. Its main purpose is to encourage tourism providers “to go green”. This is another indication that being or becoming green is a conscious choice that can be attributed to a wide variety of referents.

6.3 The Diversity of the Use of the Word Green

In the discourse on the website, the word green is predominantly used as an adjective in attributive position with a range of different headwords. Its use in nominal form is rare. Exceptions would be an alternative interpretation of the adjectival phrase Slovenia Green as a nominal phrase and the use of the noun greenery derived from the base green, i.e., “the embrace of greenery at Terme Dobrna”. In one case, green is also used as an adverb, indicating a way of thinking, i.e., “A documentary that makes you think only green”. This adverbial use is similar to the use of the adjective green in an adjunct realized as a prepositional phrase, i.e., “pamper yourself in a green way”.

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The adjective *green* is used mostly figuratively with a range of different headwords. In most cases, the figurative use involves metonymy, with a few examples occurring as part of a metaphor, e.g., a reference to hops used in the brewing industry as “green gold”, or the description of Slovenia as “the green heart of Europe”.

Furthermore, the adjective *green* is rarely used in its literal sense of the colour of vegetation or other features of nature. Even in its literal meaning, it tends to be framed by positive appreciation, such as the value of accessibility to an active life, e.g., “Green nature is only a step away from any city centre”, or aesthetic appreciation, e.g., “wonderful green nature”.

In its metonymical figurative use, the adjective *green* becomes an attribute of a variety of referents, denoting both concrete and abstract entities. They include concrete entities (e.g., “green products”), places (e.g., “green haven”, “green sanctuary”, “green land”, “the green capital of a green country”, “green Slovenia”, and “green hotels”). They also include abstract entities, such as activities and states (e.g., “green experiences” and “green life”), abstract concepts of cognition or logic (e.g., “green ideas”, “green mindset”, “green buzz of sustainability”, “green reasons for choosing Slovenia”). Furthermore, they include semiotic referents (e.g., “a green story”) and institutional entities (e.g., “green policies” and “a green scheme”).

The figurative meanings of the adjective *green* evoke a host of positive evaluative meanings and present a promise of the various experiences that can be enjoyed in Slovenia. The colour green is connected to positive affect in the form of love or comfort, well-being, and relaxation; it is further associated with the positive judgments of Slovene people as reliable, responsible, and healthy, and it also represents broader values in the form of positive appreciation, such as safety, sustainability, progress, uniqueness, diversity, authenticity, and a healthy lifestyle. However, these values are in the service of exclusivity rather than inclusivity, as Slovenia’s striving for “boutique experiences” shows that the green experience is not aimed at the masses. It is also interesting to note that aesthetic evaluations, e.g., “wonderful green nature”, are not foregrounded in the discourse of the brand. This may be a conscious choice of the creators of the brand to avoid sounding too trite and clichéd.

In the process of absorbing evaluative meanings of different categories, the word *green* becomes a placeholder that has the potential to be filled with a wide variety of evaluative content. The physical aspect of the colour green is referenced rarely, mostly when the adjective *green* modifies the headword *nature*. Even when there is a clear focus on colour as a physical category, it is framed by evaluative meanings. This is illustrated by the following sentence: “For years, we have strived to act in a sustainable and responsible manner towards its wonderful green nature and rich local cultural heritage, setting an example for others with our actions.” In this sentence, “green nature” is explicitly framed by several evaluative meanings: positive appreciation as an aesthetic value (i.e., “wonderful green nature”), positive appreciation as a category of sustainability (i.e., “sustainable...manner”), and positive judgment based on moral behaviour (i.e., “responsible...manner”; “an example for others”).

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This semantic space, however, is not open to negative figurative meanings of the word *green*, such as the meaning of being immature or envious, e.g., *green with envy, green behind the ears*. 

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Although positive judgments and values feature prominently in the discourse surrounding the brand, it is the category of positive affect, i.e., the emotions of love and trust, that functions as the general evaluative frame, connecting visitors, tourism providers, and destinations by recognizing their shared values: “Now it’s time for more trust between us”.

7 Conclusion

Slovenia’s brand, I Feel Slovenia, ties together elements of the image that contemporary Slovenia has selected to present itself to the world. The English language has a significant role in conveying the brand, since the slogan and related labels, certificates and plaques are realized only in the English language. By highlighting the segment -love- in the word Slovenia, the English-language slogan frames the discourse of the brand with positive emotion, establishing a conceptual connection between feeling love and experiencing Slovenia.

Another vital element in the discourse construction of Slovenia is the word green, which is always framed by positive evaluations expressed in its context. The analysis of the texts from the main section of the website confirms the use of the word green as an evaluative term. The word green is used metonymically to modify a wide variety of referents, from concrete entities, such as features of the landscape, places, or products, to abstract referents, such as activities, semiotic entities, and institutions. In this way, the adjective green functions as a placeholder for feelings and different positive values and judgments that present the basis of the construction of Slovenia’s brand. With emphasis on the evaluative meanings of love, responsibility, and sustainability, I Feel Slovenia presents itself both as a lifestyle brand and as a responsible brand.

Future research could include a wider variety of promotional texts in different languages for corpus-based research into the modern discourse of promotion and tourism, in particular in the context of the digital and green transitions.

References


