DANIELA CESIRI
"Ca' Foscari" University of Venice
daniela.cesiri@unive.it

LAURA A. COLACI
University of Salento
laura.colaci@unisalento.it

International Communication connected to the Expo Milano 2015 event: some case studies in English and German

"The Expo Milano 2015 is a non-commercial Universal Exposition [...]; an exhibition but also a process, one of active participation among a large number of players around the theme of Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life. It is sustainable, technological, thematic and focused on its visitors" (Expo Milano 2015 website). The event will take place in Milan (Italy) in May through October 2015 and is attracting the presence of many countries around the world whose main aim is to promote their own food culture as well as their actions in terms of global, sustainable nutrition.

Participation to the exhibition is promoted through links available in the Expo Milano 2015 main website in which the participating countries present themselves as public corporate organizations, using the same communication strategies that are applied by private corporate organizations "to communicate with stakeholders [...], delivering a corporate image [...] and communicating corporate social responsibility information" (Uysal 2013: 9).

Considering the promotional-informative websites that single countries are developing for the Expo Milano 2015 event as examples of 'nation branding' (see, e.g., Wang / Sun 2012), the study aims at analyzing the visual strategies and lexico-grammatical features for each Expo page of the countries considered. The study will focus on English-speaking and German-speaking countries that, recently, have presented themselves as particularly active in the promotion of local food culture, as it appears from their public campaigns promoting a healthy diet and lifestyle to fight obesity, maintaining sustainable levels in food production and food processing techniques. Particular attention will be paid to the strategies adopted by each country in order to show their commitment, especially as regards the theme of social responsibility related to global nutrition and food culture deriving from a sustainable food production.

The contribution will investigate the graphic and visual techniques to individuate the country/-ies that, most effectively, 'sell(s)' its/their idea to the general public; the analysis will also use corpus linguistics methods of research to investigate the lexico-grammatical features (by means of *WordSmith Tools* 6.0, Scott 2013) found in the USA and the UK websites

for the English language and of Germany, Austria and Switzerland for German. This phase of the analysis will highlight possible, shared or contrasting, patterns in the phraseology used in the webpages to compare and contrast the approach adopted by each country.

The ultimate aim of the work is to explore the ways in which the countries communicate to stakeholders and to the general public selling themselves and their ideas as a kind of product (i.e., through a form of nation branding), showing at the same time their commitment in terms of socially-sustainable and environmentally-friendly food production.

Keywords: Expo 2015, English, German, corpus linguistics, nation branding

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