

A corpus-based discourse analysis to identify the perception of nature in travel promotion texts

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During recent years consumers have become increasingly concerned about the protection of the environment. In fact, after the 1980s, issues such as ‘global warming’ and ‘ozone depletion’ began to appear more frequently in media coverage, leading to a rise in environmental consciousness (Holden, 2008). By the end of the 20th century these concerns had become more prominent, leading the tourism industry to respond to them (ibid) through the implementation of the so-called eco-tourism. As a consequence, the tourism industry is now taking advantage of the concept of nature travel, exploiting the term linguistically in its advertisements.

Advertising has the power to manipulate and alter our vision of nature and what is depicted as natural (Hansen, 2010). The perception of the natural world risks to be a social construction which is shaped over time according to the needs of society (Howlett and Raglan, 1992; Thelander, 2002; Hansen, 2010). Studies on advertising illustrate how nature is continuously used in these types of media discourse in order to remind readers of how their attitude towards nature (e.g.: concerned, neutral, superficial) can shape the growth or decline of nature.

This study will attempt to analyse the uses of nature in a corpus of British and American travel promotion texts. In particular, the aim of the paper is to: a) identify how nature is described by advertisers in travel promotion texts in order to attract potential eco-tourists, and b) reveal how the search terms “nature” and “natural” are employed within these texts in order to reveal the functions that nature serves in these texts.

The methodological approach of the study involves an integration of Corpus Linguistics and Discourse Analysis which will provide both quantitative and qualitative perspectives (Baker, 2006). To this end, collocations of the terms “nature” and “natural” will be analyzed along with their concordances in order to identify and uncover linguistic patterns and the related social and cultural features.

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