

Fresh Science, Science Buffs, and Exclusive Science Classes **A Discourse Analysis of Travel Advertising in a Popular Science Magazine**

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Print advertising has been a staple data source in discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis, and multimodality research for decades (see, e.g., Cook 1992). While many studies focused on the representation of male and female bodies or food, the present study aims its attention at advertising for a specific form of “luxury travel” (see Thurlow and Jaworski 2014), i.e., ‘educational traveling’.

This study examines travel print advertising in the popular science magazine *Scientific American*. *Scientific American* is a monthly publication reporting on scientific news to an informed readership. The range of fields covered is comprehensive and ranges from physics, mathematics, genetics, archaeology, linguistics, and psychology, to planetary science, medicine, public health, and neuroscience. The data used for this study consists of the 18 travel ads published in the 24 issues of *Scientific American* in 2017 and 2018. While 16 of these ads can be considered unique, two of them are expanded ads (i.e., unique ads which were re-published in a longer and modified form). The analysis of the ads then followed the frameworks of discourse analysis and the study of multimodality to arrive at a first description of the linguistic and visual style of this advertising genre.

While conversational style is mainly avoided in the ads (no direct address via personal pronouns, no disjunctive syntax and questions), the body copy of the ads is extremely rich in imperatives. All material under scrutiny caters to an audience interested in ‘lifelong learning’ and the ads repeatedly point to the scientific value of the travel experience (e.g., via repetitions of the lexical item “science” and the use of adjectives like “important” and “up-to-date”). The prospective travelers are rhetorically constructed as part of an in-group of “science buffs”. Additionally, the ads allude to the exclusivity of the science experience, marking the privileged nature of the commodity under sale (which can also be found reflected in the price ranges of the advertised trips). Multimodal elements of the analyzed ads include, on the one hand, pictures traditionally connected to traveling and tourism, such as landscapes, maps, tourist attractions, and wildlife. On the other hand, visual material is also used to evoke the field of ‘science’, depicting, for example, cell cultures, solar cells, (stylized) atomic structures, and dinosaurs. Noticeable is also that only very few human actors are represented in the visual material (apart from portraits of the experts which accompany the advertised trip for lectures, Q&As, etc.).

The study presented here is part of a larger research project on advertising in (popular) science magazines, which, despite the interest in advertising in the fields of discourse analysis and multimodality, has not yet been investigated systematically.

References

- Cook, Guy. 1992. *The Discourse of Advertising*. London/New York: Routledge.
- Thurlow, Crispin & Adam Jaworski. 2014. Visible-Invisible: The Social Semiotics of Labour in Luxury Tourism. In Thomas Birtchnell & Javier Caletrió (eds.), *Elite Mobilities*, 176-193. London: Routledge.