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LINGUISTIC TOOLS OF PERSUASION IN TRAVEL ADVERTISEMENTS

Abstract

МОВНІ ЗАСОБИ ПЕРЕКОНАННЯ У ТУРИСТИЧНІЙ РЕКЛАМІ

Background. *The language of advertising in general has been widely researched since advertising became integrated in all spheres of our life. The researchers also mark the prominent role of extralinguistic elements in advertising. At the same time, the language as an important element of persuasion in tourist advertisements requires a more detailed coverage.*

Contribution to the research field. *The present paper makes an overview of the linguistic tools of persuasion in travel advertisements.*

Purpose. *The purpose of the present study is to analyse how linguistic tools are used to enhance the effectiveness and persuasive power of travel advertisements.*

Methods. *The given research uses the method of description and analysis in order to identify the essential linguistic tools of persuasion in travel advertisements and to evaluate their role in enhancing the effectiveness of travel advertisements.*

Results. *The study of travel brochures from leading tour operators based in the UK, Poland, Australia, New Zealand, the USA has shown that the language of advertising in tourism and in other spheres share a lot of common features,*

such as the extensive use of commendatory adjectives, frequent occurrence of metaphoric and metonymic expressions, play of words, modified forms of proverbs and sayings, comparisons. At the same time, the language of travel advertisements proper has its own specificities. The linguistic tools used in the texts of travel advertisements highlight the benefits of the advertised tour and help to create a clear image of the given destination. For this purpose, they are often complemented by additional information concerning the advertised tourist site.

Discussion. *The collected data demonstrate that expressive linguistic tools contribute to the overall effectiveness of travel advertisements.*

Keywords: travel advertisement, figurative language, epithets, interplay of meanings, comparisons, metaphoric and metonymic expressions, idioms.

У статті описано основні мовні засоби у текстах туристичної реклами. Зібрані дані свідчать, що застосування мовних засобів у рекламних оголошеннях у галузі туризму та в інших сферах має багато спільних рис. Водночас мовні засоби у текстах рекламних оголошень мають за мету створення привабливого та більш чіткого образу конкретної туристичної локації. Також показано, що поєднання мовних засобів із додатковою інформацією сприяє їх ефективності для досягнення рекламних цілей.

Ключові слова: туристична реклама, образна мова, епітети, взаємодія значень, порівняння, метафоричні та метонімічні вирази, ідіоми.

1. Introduction

A lot of countries depend on tourism as an important element in the structure of the national economy. Therefore, finding ways to involve an increasing number of people into tourism and making the idea of travelling and exploring new places even more attractive acquires special importance. Travel advertisements are often the first step in the interaction between travellers and tour operators or agencies. The aim of such advertisements is not only to present the information about the suggested tour but also to create the appealing first image of the sights included in the itinerary and a credible image of a travel agency, that will eventually stimulate the potential tourist to embark on a journey, to book the suggested tour. In discussing the language of advertising many researchers pay attention to extralinguistic elements, or paralanguage, usually accompanying advertising texts, such as visual aids, font effects, sound accompaniment depending on the type of media used. Commenting on the interrelation between language and paralanguage in advertising, G. Cook

notes that “...not only have pictures gained ground but also language, where it is used, leans further and further toward meanings it derives from interaction with pictures. In addition, many ads create powerful and complex images – entirely or almost entirely through pictures and music, and are virtually language-free” (Cook, 2001, p. 54). The language in tourist advertising plays a significant role because it helps provide information about the services offered and create a clear image of the destination, and in this way convert potential clients into actual tourists. While a lot of research has been performed concerning language of advertising in general, the language of travel advertisements requires a more detailed coverage.

The present research focuses specifically on the exploration of different linguistic tools used to improve the effectiveness of travel advertisements and their persuasive function.

2. Theoretical background

The language of advertising has attracted attention of numerous researchers. A fundamental work on the use of English in advertising was conducted by G. Leech. He marked the language of advertising as “loaded language” that aims to change the will, opinions, or attitudes of its audience (Leech, 1966, p. 25). He also defined the four essential qualities of any successful advertisement: it must draw attention, sustain the interest of the reader, be easily remembered and be able to prompt the right kind of action (Leech, 1966, p. 32). Guy Cook (Cook, 2001) analysed how advertisements interact with texts of other genres, and how they depend on the surrounding context (the media through which they are delivered to the reader, the accompanying visual and audio information). O. Chuvardynska and V. Danylenko explored the use of stylistic devices in the British news magazines (Chuvardynska & Danylenko, 2015). O. Dubenko studied similarities and differences in the use of stylistic means in English and Ukrainian advertising texts taking into account linguistic peculiarities of both languages and traditions in both cultures (Dubenko, 2020). N. Talan analysed the peculiarities of the translation of advertising texts by juxtaposing the original English-language versions with their translations into Ukrainian (Talan, 2022). I. Kapral, I. Usova et al., on examples of modern English-language advertising messages from the Internet studied the main cognitive mechanisms of their interpretation (Kapral, Usova, Maksymova, Yefymenko, & Boykoet, 2023). E. Djafarova (Djafarova, 2017) explored the use of figurative language, specifically metaphors and puns, in the texts of

travel advertisements. She indicated that figures of speech, especially those carrying essential information about tourist attractions or services, should be complemented by extra anchoring or explanations to improve their effectiveness, avoid ambiguity and misinterpretation on the part of the reader.

3. Methods

The research is based on such methods as description and analysis in order to identify the essential linguistic tools of persuasion in travel advertisements and to evaluate their role in enhancing the effectiveness of travel advertisements. The data for the research were collected from travel brochures issued by leading tour operators based in the UK (Cosmos, Railtrail Tours Ltd), Poland (Polish Tourist Organisation), New Zealand (House of Travel private travel agency), Singapore (Insight Vacations) during the last three years. In total, 20 complete descriptions of tours and 3 introductory articles were explored. To assess the contribution of each linguistic device into the creation of the overall image of the explored travel tours, the relative number of each of the devices was determined.

4. Results and discussion

Advertising is very diverse, it is present practically in all spheres of human activity. O. Y. Areshenkova suggested various criteria for the classification of advertisements. According to the methods of argumentation advertisements can be rational, appealing to the reason of the potential customer, giving convincing arguments, emotional, turning to people's feelings and emotions; associative, subject advertisements, etc (Areshenkova, 2018, p. 13). Tourist advertisements fall under the category of emotional, they try to engage new customers by influencing people's emotions, promising unique opportunities and experience. Among stylistic devices used to create a positive image of a tourist destination and arouse the interest of the potential tourists epithets hold a prominent position. In the explored advertisements, the number of unique epithets fluctuated at around 37 % of the 880 unique attributes. The quantitative analysis showed the following percentage of unique epithets in relation to the total number of unique attributes: Cosmos (UK) — 42,9 %, Insight Vacations (Singapore) — 41,1 %, Railtrail (UK) — 35,8 %, House of Travel (New Zealand) — 32,12 %, Polish Tourist Organisation — 26,9 %. As representative examples, the epithets describing cities, towns, other populated localities, also those describing views that make the journey unforgettable can be pointed out.

Thus, on a tour of Italy, when visiting Florence, the tourists are offered an opportunity to *wander at leisure* and *admire the city's timeless beauty*. The epithet *timeless* implies that precious historical sites from older periods coexist with modernity. The mentioning of some of the city's landmarks in the advertisement helps to further enhance the created image. On a tour of Sicily, Italy, one of the places visited is Taormina, a small town on the east coast of the island of Sicily. One of the attractions of this town is Piazza Nove Aprile, *a paved square with unrivalled views of the sea and Mount Etna, Europe's largest active volcano*. The epithet *unrivalled*, supported by mentioning of the Mount Etna, helps to create the attractive image of the place. On a tour of Italian lakes, one of the destinations is the islands of Pescatori and Isola Bella on Lake Maggiore, where tourists are invited to visit *the extravagant Borromeo Palace built like a ship anchored just off the shoreline*. The epithet *extravagant* gives the general impression and is meant to arouse the reader's interest, while the additional information accompanying it helps to better visualise the site. On a tour of Spain, one of the items in the itinerary is visiting Granada, *a compelling city where Moorish influence, old-style tapas bars and historical sights coexist with a young population of university students, graffiti and exotic houses in the Albazyn quarter*. The epithet *compelling* helps to create the image of the city that will make a strong impression on the visitor. The epithet is followed by some details of the city's architecture which support the created image. On a tour of Portugal and Spain, one of the key places planned for visiting is *delightful* Seville. The epithet *delightful* arouses a picture of a charming city in the mind of the reader. While touring Switzerland, the tourists are offered an opportunity to *board Switzerland's most famous mountain railway, which passes over hundreds of bridges and dozens of tunnels to give unique panoramic views of the Swiss Alps and surrounding valleys, forests, streams, and picture-perfect villages*. The epithet *picture-perfect* prompts the reader to visualise the views typically seen on popular illustrations (a vivid picture of the described localities). Another tour of the country features spending time in Switzerland's capital city of Berne and visiting Lucerne, *a city straight out of a storybook*. The epithet *out of a storybook*, combined with some details of the city's architecture, contributes to the image of an exquisite journey. On a railway tour of Scotland, the tourists have an opportunity to *relax as magnificent vistas glide past their window and the sensational views unfold*. The epithets *magnificent* and *sensational* help to create the vivid image of the natural wonders of Scotland.

The interplay of two meanings of words or expressions, or pun, occupied 0,8 % of all the registered stylistic devices (3 units). Thus, in the description of a tour of Spain and Portugal, the travel advertisement says that, *as the capital of Spain and situated 2,180 feet above sea level, the Spaniards call Madrid the nearest thing to heaven*. Here the meaning of the set expression *the nearest thing to heaven*, very beautiful and attractive, and the divine interacts with the meaning closest to the sky. The second meaning is actualized due to the reference to the city's geographic location, which makes it one of the highest capitals in Europe. Describing St. Stephen's Basilica, the third highest church building in Hungary, located in Budapest, the advertisement says that *a visit to St. Stephen's Basilica will leave you breathless for more than one reason: there are 146 steps to climb if you want to reach the top of the dome, but when you reach the top you will have your breath taken away all over again; the views over the city and the Danube are spectacular*. Here the direct meaning of the word *breathless*, not able to breath easily, makes the figurative meaning, excited, even more prominent. Describing a tourist attraction near Wrocław, Poland, The Gold Mine and Medieval Technology Park, the advertisement says that *among the biggest surprises is a ride in a Leonardo da Vinci replica tank and an underground waterfall - the only one in Poland. And for those hungry not only for thrills but also for knowledge, there is a treasury with gold bars and an exhibition of minerals*. Here the interplay of the direct and indirect meanings of the word *hungry* is used to underline the idea that this tourist attraction will satisfy a wide range of tastes.

Modified forms of proverbs and sayings occupy 0,28 % of all registered stylistic devices (1 unit). Thus, introducing Frankfurt, the advertisement says: *In Germany all roads lead to Frankfurt: it is where the major autobahns and railways connect as well as being home to the second largest airport in Europe, so it is the perfect place to start or end any Central European excursion*. The modified form of the proverb is perceived against the background of its fixed form *All roads lead to Rome*, arresting the reader's attention and contributing to the creation of the peculiar image of Frankfurt as one of the busiest European transport hubs.

Metaphoric and metonymic expressions are also used to introduce a city or a place of interest. Unique metaphors occupy 8,04 % of all registered stylistic devices (28 units). Thus, on one of the tours of the United States, which includes visiting New York, the tourists are offered an opportunity to *take a bite of the Big Apple*. Here the indirect, metaphoric meaning of the expression *to*

take a bite of something, actualized by the context, to be introduced to the city's most famous sights, is perceived to be more prominent than the direct meaning, making the idea of visiting this place even more attractive in the eyes of the reader. Another travel advertisement metaphorically describes Budapest as *a treasure trove of architectural wonders*, highlighting the idea that this city's architecture might be of exceptional interest to the tourists. We find the following introduction of Stockholm in the description of a tour of Nordic countries: *With the central city stretching across 14 islands, the outlying archipelago comprising 24,000 islands and over thirty percent of its area made up of waterways, you will soon understand why Swedes refer to Stockholm as the "Venice of the North."* Here, the advertisement emphasises the layout features of Stockholm by making a metaphoric comparison to the Italian city of Venice, renowned for its canal system, even though they are located in different geographical regions. Metonymy occupies 0,28 % of all registered stylistic devices (1 unit). Thus, a brochure introducing Polish cities says that *state-of-the-art venues and stadiums stage critically acclaimed performances by the world's biggest names in entertainment*. The expression *biggest names* metonymically describes people acknowledged in the field of entertainment in order to create a vivid image in the listener's mind.

Antithesis is used in travel advertisements to highlight some idea. It occupies 0,8 % of all registered stylistic devices (3 units). Thus, presenting the services to the potential clients, a travel brochure says: *Go beyond the guidebooks to discover the off-the-beaten-path experiences you won't find by getting lost in a crowd! Instead, lose the crowd on a Cosmos Undiscovered tour*. The juxtaposition of two contrasting ideas, the one of getting lost in a crowd while doing sightseeing and the metaphorically expressed idea of "losing the crowd," accentuates one of the important benefits of the given tour – the opportunity to explore the sights not being diverted by a mass of people around.

Another advertisement says: *Short on time but big on travel dreams? In just 10 days you'll see our favourite highlights in seven European countries, with stays in Venice and Paris!* Here the travel advertisement also stresses one of the features of the given tour – the opportunity to cover the most popular sights in a limited time.

Idioms are used to give emotional colouring to the utterance and to attract the reader's attention. In the explored advertisements, idioms occupy 0,57 of all registered stylistic devices (2 units). Thus, describing one of the sights in Munich, Germany, a travel advertisement says: *BMW Museum is a great*

Museum and you don't even have to like cars to enjoy it! But if you do happen to like cars then this place will blow your mind. The idiomatic expression *to blow someone's mind* is described by the Oxford Dictionary of Idioms as informal and explained as “affect someone very strongly.” Obviously, the intention was to stir the reader's imagination, to catch his interest and create a more vivid image of the place. Introducing one of Prague's most famous attractions, the Charles Bridge, the travel advertisement says that, if you manage to visit this place at the time when it is not overcrowded, *your reward will be the castle, river, and statue-lined bridge all emerging from the mist in the soft pink dawn light – a sight that is guaranteed to give you goosebumps.* The idiomatic expression *to give someone goosebumps*, used along with the details of the appearance of the place, helps to create an intriguing, attractive image of the given location and inspires the interest of the reader.

One of the most important language tools used in travel advertisements is comparison. It occupies 2,01 % of all the registered stylistic devices (7 units). To persuade the potential clients to trust the organisation of their tour to the travel company, a travel brochure says: *From our first conversation to your return from vacation, we make travel planning as carefree as a walk on the beach.* Comparisons are widely used to give a vivid description of a landscape or a cityscape. Describing Harz Mountains in Germany, a travel advertisement says: *Germany's timeless Harz Mountains are arguably even more spectacular in winter with the towns half-timbered houses and snow-dusted forests resembling a picturesque Christmas-card scene.* A brochure introducing Polish cities and the opportunities for tourism in Poland says: *Every Polish city has its own particular history. Some of them are full of treasures from the past, others have been building their identity in more recent times. A walk along the streets of any town or city is like a walk through the ages.* Travel advertisements use elements of comparison to give an evaluative characteristic of tourist attractions. Describing the places of special interest for tourists in Warsaw, Poland, a tourist advertisement says: *For all music enthusiasts and people who want to learn more about the life of the great composer Chopin, there is yet another attraction: the Chopin Museum in the centre of Warsaw. The exhibits found here are unique, unmatched anywhere in the world.* Another advertisement presenting the city of Łódź in Poland, says: *The murals decorating many of the walls in Łódź are in no way inferior to those in New York or Berlin.*

5. Conclusion

The conducted research shows that epithets are widely used in travel advertisements to form the favourable image of the advertised travel destination, present the services of tour operators and highlight their distinctiveness in the eyes of the potential clients. Other stylistic devices also contribute to memorability and sustainability of travel advertisements. Accompanied by detailed and clear factual information, these tools bring the effectiveness of travel advertisements to a new level.

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