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Abstract of the doctoral thesis

A SEMANTIC AND PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF TOURISM ADVERTISING

Tourist Leaflets from Sibiu, Romania and South Dakota, U.S.A.

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Key words: tourist leaflets, Sibiu, South Dakota, meaning, context, speech acts, presuppositions, implicatures, rhetorical figures, coherence, conceptual metaphors, multimodal metaphors, questionnaire, differences and similarities.

Abstract

Tourism is one the most important industries of the world economy, having a great contribution to economic development. In tourism, where the product is 'intangible' (there is nothing tangible for tourists to test in advance), 'inseparable' (services cannot be separated from their production), 'variable' (the experience is variable and subject to multiple factors) and 'perishable' (tourism product is perishable and cannot be stored for future sale), advertising has a vital role. People buy a holiday on the basis of certain symbolic expectations created by advertisers through words, pictures, sounds, etc. Thus, advertising constructs tourism experiences in our imagination and makes an intangible product tangible, using emotions and experiences. Since tourists do not know what to expect, advertising offers them physical representations of the tourism product.

Advertising is more or less a one-way channel of communication, in which the producer and the receiver are relatively distant, hence the challenges to create a relationship between them. As a process of communication, advertising is represented as a continuum of text functions, fluctuating between 'informing' and 'manipulating.' In this respect, advertisements should inform (giving appropriate and accurate information about the tourist product), persuade (they should influence people's attitudes to maintain their interest in the product), and induce action (encourage people to purchase the product advertised). In order to influence choices, advertising tries to demonstrate the uniqueness of their product and to constantly stimulate the desire to travel to different places.

Language is a great source of power for advertising; it uses different linguistic techniques at different levels to be persuasive and seductive, such as phonetics, lexis and morphology, semantics and pragmatics. These linguistic devices are so successful that they reflect both cultural and social values and manage to create new attitudes and needs. However, language is not the only tool used in advertising. Advertisers employ it in synchrony with many other forms of communication, such as images and sounds, in

conveying meaning to their messages. Therefore, I will analyze the tourist leaflets from a linguistic point of view, considering as well the images that accompany the text. Since advertisements are highly dependent on context and closely linked to societal values and cultural conditions, I will also consider the historical, cultural and social context of the tourist leaflets examined.

I intend to analyze tourist leaflets from Sibiu, Romania and South Dakota, United States of America in order to emphasize the similarities and differences between them and most importantly the verbal and visual devices underlying successful tourism promotional materials. To this end, I have collected, between September 2010 and February 2013, a convenience sample of eighty Romanian tourist leaflets and a hundred and thirteen American leaflets. These have been found mainly in tourist information centers, at tourist attractions and hotel lobbies.

With no pretence to cover every aspect of the discourse of tourism advertising, the aim of this thesis, beyond the linguistic investigation within semantics and pragmatics, is to provide an initial scientific investigation of the discourse of tourism advertising and to make it accessible for the students at the Faculty of Geography of Tourism and other people interested in this subject. I hope that this might improve tourist leaflets from Sibiu, which will have beneficial effects on the tourism sector.

This research follows an interpretative approach, combining qualitative and quantitative content analyses. Qualitative research is a combination of the rational, the explorative and the intuitive, where the feelings and emotions, the subjectivity of the author is highly involved in the process of interpretation. Thus, this kind of study does not lead to completely scientifically rigorous research because the researcher's interpretation of what she finds out is important; hence, the need to combine qualitative with quantitative analyses. Quantitative research is mainly descriptive, making use of numbers and statistics. Besides providing statistical information based on particular word or structure frequencies for instance, quantitative research covers a large number of texts at the same time. We have used content analysis to identify the occurrence of particular phenomena (such as alliteration, assonance, neologisms, polysemous words, conceptual metaphors, key-words, colors, illustration, etc.) in the research texts.

The paper begins by reviewing important issues in pragmatics and then it characterizes the tourism product and the discourse of tourism advertising from a marketing perspective. Afterwards, the paper analyzes the linguistic elements of the discourse, with the aim of building up a picture of how these contribute to its characterization and the assumptions and expectations that this particular type of discourse creates and maintains. Finally, the paper presents quantitative data concerning features of both Romanian and American tourist leaflets as seen by the students at the Faculty of Geography of Tourism and a comparative analysis of all the tourist leaflets under this study.

This thesis is structured in five chapters, a section dedicated to conclusions and an appendix section, which includes the Romanian and English version of the questionnaire, a table with all the Romanian and American tourist leaflets of this study and a list of all figures and tables employed in the five chapters.

1. Theoretical background

The first chapter begins by defining pragmatics and its aims. As a diverse field of study, pragmatics overlaps with several main areas such as semantics and discourse analysis. Pragmatics and semantics both focus on notions like intentions of the speakers, the effects of an utterance on the listeners, the implications that follow from expressing something in a certain way, the knowledge, beliefs and presuppositions about the world upon which speakers and listeners rely when they interact. Likewise, both discourse analysis and pragmatics are centrally concerned with the analysis of conversation and share several linguistic notions such as the deictic forms, the conversational 'maxims' and the way information is distributed within a sentence (Crystal, 2010: 124). Most definitions consider pragmatics as language in context, but in a modern, communication oriented terminology, as Mey (2001: 4-5) argues, it is described as the study of language in a human context of use, i.e. a societally oriented discipline. The chapter then presents the matter of meaning and context, reference and deixis, and the connections between semantics and pragmatics.

The chapter further approaches two major issues in pragmatics, namely Speech Act Theory and Cooperation and Implicature. The core of the speech act theory is that uttering of a sentence is an action (or part of it) within the framework of social institutions and

conventions, or simply stated words are deeds (Huang, 2006: 1000). Because speech acts allow us to interact in real-life situations, uttering a speech act requires knowledge not only of the language but also of its appropriate use within a given culture (Baiccchi, 2009:212). Since speech act theory is attributed to J.L. Austin, we present his performative/ constative dichotomy and the felicity conditions on performatives. Having abandoned this initial dichotomy, Austin introduced three kinds of acts that are simultaneously performed when saying something: locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts. Following Austin, J. R. Searle develops a classification of illocutionary acts, based on a number of pragmatic parameters. He argues that speech acts are universally grouped into five types: representatives, directives, commissives, expressives and declarations.

Furthermore, the chapter introduces Grice's theory on cooperation and conversational implicature, together with other theories of implicatures. We generally assume that speakers and listeners involved in conversation are generally cooperating with each other; they do not try to confuse, trick, or withhold relevant information from each other. Cooperation is the beginning of making sense of what is being said, it is an important starting point for inferences. The inferences called implicatures are ever-present in language use, but they are not guarantees. When a sincere performance of a speech act takes place in a certain context of utterance, what is conveyed by the performance, beyond what is literally said by it, it is an implicature of it. A major insight into the nature of language use is represented by its two separable parts: one reporting what is said and an additional one, reporting what was conveyed beyond what was said (Asa Kasher, 2009: 86).

Finally, the chapter presents discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis as interdisciplinary studies of discourse within linguistics. Discourse analysis is defined as language beyond the sentence in order to differentiate it from traditional linguistics. I have also argued, citing El-daly's (2010) study, that 'pragmatics' and 'discourse analysis' are both hybrid fields of inquiry, they have common themes such as 'language,' 'language users,' 'communication' and 'meaning in interaction;' therefore the two terms can be used interchangeably.

The theoretical issues discussed in this chapter help us to formulate some concluding remarks about language. First of all, we cannot overlook the fact that language is not just linguistic, as it has traditionally been seen, but also sociolinguistic. The

linguistics dimension of language integrates the knowledge of grammar and lexicon, i.e. phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics, and accounts for literal meaning. The socio-cultural dimension, in which we include pragmatics, accounts for conveyed or intended meaning. Second, communication between humans involves active receptivity from the hearer. And third, speaker and hearer/ writer and reader have to work together collaboratively to construct meaning. Consequently, it would be a mistake to analyze texts from the point of view of pragmatics or discourse analysis based on linguistic or social factors alone (El-daly, 2010: 258).

2. Advertising in tourism – interdisciplinary approach

The second chapter studies advertising from the perspective of marketing and linguistics, showing that advertising is an interdisciplinary phenomenon. Moreover, tourism advertising is different form other types of advertising mainly because the products are usually services, that is why advertising is crucial in tourism. Tourists cannot try or experience tourism products beforehand, tourism products are intangible, and they are only in our mind through the image created by the promoters. Therefore, scholars say that "tourism marketing is about the selling of dreams and that tourism itself is about illusion or about the creation of 'atmosphere'" (Morgan, Pritchard, 2001:10). The chapter begins by defining the tourist product and its characteristics and the advertising phenomenon as perceived in marketing. It continues by presenting common themes used in tourism advertising messages, such as *slice of life, fantasy, mood or image, lifestyle, musical, testimonial evidence* and *technical expertise*. In the end the chapter reveals four principal properties of the language of tourism, namely *functions, structure, tense* and *magic* and four additional characteristics that distinguish it from alternative forms of communication: *lack of sender identification, monologue, euphoria* and *tautology*.

3. The discourse of advertising

The third chapter presents a few aspects of the tourism advertising discourse processing. It aims to provide a bottom-up approach for tourism advertising discourse, by considering the

construction of meaning in advertising (in relation to sounds, words and sentence structure), certain pragmatic aspects of advertising and the distinctive features of tourism advertising and by examining the global meaning of the tourism advertising discourse, the process of interpreting the writer's intended meaning, and the inferences connected to general world knowledge, i.e. the overall quality of the discourse – coherence.

Advertisers use specific sound patterns (like rhythm, rhyme, alliteration, assonance, etc.), similar to those in poetic texts. Although sounds are more related to spoken advertising (speaker's voice/ accent), there are many linguistic slogans that use sound strategies to draw our attention and to make the product more appealing, as well as to better remember the text and recall it at the right moment. Moreover, Goddard (1998) argues that the way in which a text is written is also a form of image-making and therefore the matter of graphology is important in advertising, especially because different writings may have different connotations.

In advertising, creativity is at its ease and words are very carefully chosen to create something unique, surprising and memorable in order to achieve the most impact upon the audience. To this end, advertisers are constantly looking for novel, polysemous words and homonyms to create ambiguity; they also use descriptive words to emphasize the qualities of their products, such as simple verbs, nouns and lots of adjectives. Most of the time, the language of advertising is manipulative and it often tries to present a product far beyond its qualities. Advertisers achieve this by employing two figurative devices: simile and metaphor. Sentences in advertising are simple, but also clever and sometimes amusing, incomplete, with no linking words, yet grammatically correct, since advertisers can not afford to damage the image of their product. The simplicity is due to the fact that advertisers want their messages to be understood as fast and as clearly as possible.

This chapter also discusses certain distinguishing features of tourism advertising and the matter of coherence. In tourism advertising, verbal techniques, such as key words and keying, testimony and ego-targeting are widely used. Likewise, visual techniques, like color, format, and visual clichés are also very important in promotional materials. Most of the time, visual and verbal techniques are combined in the form of puzzle technique, collage and ousting the competition.

Coherence is one of the most important aspects of the advertising discourse. It is about the global meaning of the discourse, the process of interpreting the writer's intended meaning, about inferences connected to general world knowledge. Cohesive elements such as repetition, lexical items and referring expressions help us to detect coherence in text, but they do not create it. Coherence depends on pragmatic factors like the co-operative and politeness principle. Generally, tourism promotional texts do not create many interpretation difficulties, however, to understand them properly we have to infer a lot based on the features of the type of discourse and on socio-cultural knowledge.

4. Metaphors in tourism advertising

Advertising constitutes a body of texts and practices that is persuasive par excellence and metaphor, and language in general, has a tremendous power of persuasion and advertisers use it together with many other forms of communication to convey meaning in their messages, sometimes far beyond the potential of the product or service.

This chapter is divided in three sections. The first section offers definitions of metaphor, conventional metaphor, novel metaphor, conceptual metaphor and conceptual key, makes a distinction between conventional metaphors and novel or creative metaphors and relates metaphor to pragmatics. The second section analyzes Romanian and American tourist leaflets and identifies the conceptual metaphor that lies at the basis of the slogans and body copy as well as their source and target domain, according to Lakoff and Johnson's work *Metaphors We Live By*, 1980. It also examines the domain of the source and target, and tries to identify what preference is to talk about different tourism products. The third section discusses the multimodal metaphor in advertising based on the works of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), Charles Forceville *Pictorial Metaphor in Advertising* (1996), and Charles Forceville and Eduardo Urios-Aparisi (editors) *Multimodal Metaphor* (2009). It mainly argues that research in advertising should turn towards multimodality and that metaphors often occur in other modes than language alone.

5. Quantitative analysis of Romanian and American tourist leaflets

The fifth chapter examines the tourist leaflets under this study from a quantitative point of view in order to provide a complete image of the similarities and differences of the two countries. The chapter is partitioned in two sections. The first section is dedicated to the questionnaires designated for the students at geography of tourism specialization with the purpose of identifying the elements that lead to a successful tourist leaflet and of exploring the positive features of the tourist leaflets from both countries. It includes a brief overview of the research methodology considering social perception, perception and stereotyping and questionnaires; then, it identifies the hypothesis and objectives of the questionnaire; certain aspects relating to sampling and development of instruments; the interpretation of he questionnaires and finally some concluding remarks of the questionnaires results. The second section provides useful insights on tourism and recreation in Sibiu and South Dakota for a better understanding of the differences and similarities of the analyzed tourist leaflets. Furthermore, it introduces quantitative data upon all tourist leaflets of this study, with reference to items such as folds, format, slogan, number of words used, number of images and colors.

Concluding remarks

Romanian tourist leaflets use, to a great extent, the referential style of language, while American ones convey a more persuasive message under an informative mask and the receiver gets a delusive impression of a referential message. In order to achieve this delusive impression American tourist brochures use specific sound patterns such as rhythm, rhyme, alliteration, assonance and onomatopoeia in order to create memorable slogans and headings. They contain many more polysemous words and homonyms, as well as novel words, as compared to Romanian leaflets.

Descriptive words are employed to emphasize the qualities and uniqueness of products and services. The verbs are simple, present tense (with the aim of satisfying the desire of the present and of being universal and timeless) or simple imperatives. American tourist leaflets make use of such verbs as 'see,' 'touch,' 'learn,' 'enjoy,' 'discover,'

'experience,' 'stay' and 'visit.' Romanian slogans and headlines are mainly composed of nouns, such as 'elegance,' 'style,' 'discretion,' 'tradition,' 'nature.' However, there are certain slogans and headlines that include such verbs as: 'experience,' 'live,' 'don't hesitate' or 'enjoy.'

American advertisements abound in adjectives, like: 'memorable,' 'affordable,' 'exciting,' 'authentic,' 'well-trained,' 'experienced,' 'friendly,' 'fun' and 'educational.' Romanians use them too, but not as much; 'comfortable,' 'friendly,' 'deluxe,' and 'warm' are some of them. Since the language of advertising relies on exaggerations, most adjectives occur in their comparative and superlative form, which increases their effect. As expected, American tourist leaflets make full use of superlative adjectives, such as: 'the best,' 'greatest,' 'perfect,' 'unique,' 'fabulous,' 'delightful,' 'ideal,' 'magnificent,' 'exceptional,' 'exquisite,' etc.

In general, American tourist leaflets employ more figures of speech than Romanian ones and as a consequence their advertisements are more persuasive and effective. Furthermore, figures of speech, and puns in general, are interpreted by readers in their own way, although within the semantic and grammatical rules of the language; the effect is not unpredictable, though it not controllable. However, the readers receive a pleasant intellectual experience by solving the intended meaning of rhetorical figures.

In addition to the language devices mentioned above, certain verbal and visual techniques are used in the language of tourism, such as key-words, testimony, ego-targeting, color, visual clichés, puzzle, collage and ousting the competition. The key words from Romanian tourist leaflets differ from the American ones, which result from the different cultures of the two peoples. Thus, South Dakota promises excitement and adventure, while Sibiu emphasizes its spirituality through its ancient culture and traditions, as well as its beautiful landscapes and rural areas. Romanian advertisements present their traditions as being 'authentic,' just as American ones speak about the 'authentic' Native American traditions and 'genuine' cowboys of the Old West. Both use testimony to build credibility; but while Romanian leaflets abound in testimonies alluding to great personalities, people of culture, American leaflets largely use the testimonies of the satisfied customers. American advertisers directly address the audience; they recruit and

transform the audience into spectators and consumers, while Romanians still prefer the informative, but generally neutral style of language.

Since metaphor is the easiest way to reach the collective subconscious, the aspirations and wishes of tourists, at the basis of almost every slogan or body copy lies a more or less standardized conceptual metaphor: structural, ontological or orientational. We have found that the most frequently encountered conceptual metaphors in tourism advertising are the *structural metaphors*. Among these, the most common is PRODUCT X IS AN ABSTRACT CONCEPT. Another type of structural metaphors frequently used in tourism advertising is PRODUCT X IS QUALITY AT SUPERLATIVE. Promoters promise their tourists magical moments, hence the structural metaphor PRODUCT X IS MAGIC is also currently employed. In the analyzed brochures we have found two types of *ontological metaphors*: A CITY IS A LIVING ORGANISM and A TOURIST ATTRACTION IS AN ENTITY. There is a general tendency in tourism advertising to personify a tourist attraction, a city or a country in order to manage the unfamiliarity of that tourist destination.

Finally, the third kind of conceptual metaphors is represented by *orientational metaphors*. Tourist brochures make use of the orientational metaphor MORE IS UP, sometimes with the purpose of suggesting the transformations of the tourism product. Another orientational metaphor encountered in tourism advertising is INSIDE IS UP, OUTSIDE IS DOWN. Tourist destinations, such as cities, resorts, hotels, even museums, are presented as being a relaxing and more viable alternative to the stressful life outside. We are invited to stop for a while and enjoy peaceful moments as if we were in a better world.

The conceptual metaphor does not necessarily draw analogies but it expresses one product or service as being something else, in order to highlight a resemblance. The source and the target domains vary. Conceptual metaphors typically employ a more abstract concept as target and a more concrete or physical concept as their source. However, in tourism advertising it would appear that sources of metaphors are often abstract concepts viewed as positive and desirable by consumers, such as 'fun,' 'adventure,' 'excitement,' 'escape,' and 'getaway' in American leaflets. Similarly, when the target is a hotel it identifies with 'luxury' and when the target is a museum with 'history,' 'culture,' 'tradition,' and 'authentic,' both in Romanian and American leaflets.

To sum-up, metaphors represent violations of the normal, literal use of language and thus require more work from the reader to comprehend them. In tourism advertising they are usually an interplay of both verbal and visual elements. Typically the visual metaphor supports the verbal one, hence increasing the comprehensibility of the metaphor. Metaphors in tourism advertising, as literary ornaments and cognitive tools, are redoubtable mechanisms, infallible means for obtaining and sustaining tourists' attention, persuading and inducing the behavior desired by tourism promoters.

American leaflets provide less information, but suggest more, while Romanian leaflets still offer significant body copies. The fact that Romanian students chose Romanian leaflets as being their favorite may indicate that we still appreciate great amount of information regarding destinations and tourist attractions and services in order to make the right decision when purchasing a vacation. Although the truth is that in this modern society and technological era, people read less than they once did. Another explanation could be their attachment to local values, traditions, products and services, and mostly the accessibility of information.

It is not necessary for an advertisement to contain all the elements, i.e., headline, illustration, subheads, body copy, captions, boxes and panels, slogans, seals, logotypes (logos), and signatures. However, from our analysis it would appear that American leaflets better integrate these elements; they make use of as many of them as possible, whereas Romanian leaflets employ fewer. In fact, our study reveals that more than fifty percent of advertisements do not contain a slogan, although sixty percent of Romanian students have identified it as being important. With regards to all the elements of a tourist leaflet, the students believe that title, images, body copy, slogan and legend of illustration are important 'in a very large measure' and 'in a large measure.' The elements that Romanian leaflets lack the most, such as subtitle, brand, logo and signature are regarded as less significant by the students.

This comparative analysis of Romanian and American tourist leaflets is slightly forced due to the size and the economic power of the state of South Dakota in comparison to Sibiu County. I believe that some of the differences mentioned between the two units of comparison are a consequence of the Americans' financial power and also their experience in advertising. No doubt that the different ideologies of the two peoples, as well as their

cultural and historical background greatly contributes to these differences. However, the main purpose was to highlight the strengths of both Romanian and American leaflets in order to provide students at the Faculty of Geography of Tourism, Sibiu and other people involved in tourism promotion useful insights for successful tourism advertisement. We have a rich history, an inspiring culture, and wonderful landscapes with breathtaking views that deserve better promotion.

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