

MPC Major Research Paper

Cultural Representation in Tourism Brochures: A Visual Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Craig & Muller (2006) assert that communication theory should take a critical approach because one of the main purposes of analysis from a communication's perspective is to question assumptions caused by "unexamined habits, ideologies and power relations" (p. 425). By working within a critical framework, this project investigates the possible ideological perspectives and power relations represented in contemporary tourism marketing, specifically regarding cultural representations. The main research questions guiding the major research paper are: How do tourism images construct visual representation of culture? And what ideological values are depicted? I collected 71 images found in G Adventure's North Africa/Middle East and Asia destination brochures and used Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) social semiotic and critical framework as a methodology for analysis. Findings reveal connections to postcolonial theory in particular, specifically how travel images participate in 'othering' foreign cultures from the perspective of the West. Images depict visual binary relationships, such as master/servant and traditional/modern, in addition to reflecting a level of detachment between the represented and interactive participants. Likewise, the viewer as the prospective traveller is encouraged to participate in a postcolonial bias upon the site.

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DEDICATION

For my younger brother, Jonathan.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

AUTHOR’S DECLARATION.....	ii.
ABSTRACT.....	iii.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iv.
DEDICATION.....	v.
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi.
LIST OF TABLES.....	vii.
LIST OF FIGURES.....	viii.
 Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	9
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	11
3. METHODOLOGY	30
4. ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION.....	32
5. CONCLUSION.....	51
6. REFERENCES.....	53

LIST OF TABLES

1. Analysis of Gaze
2. Analysis of Horizontal Angle
3. Analysis of Vertical Angle
4. Analysis of Social Distance

LIST OF FIGURES

1. Children
2. Young Woman
3. Wailing Wall
4. Children Running
5. Man with Camel
6. Men with Instruments
7. Person in Yellow Room
8. Sailor
9. Woman in Costume
10. Male Elder
11. Man with Face Paint
12. Shopping Scene
13. Children in Carriage
14. Woman Elder
15. Geisha

INTRODUCTION

Craig & Muller (2006) assert that communication theory should take a critical approach because one of the main purposes of analysis from a communication's perspective is to question assumptions caused by "unexamined habits, ideologies and power relations" (p. 425). In other words, critical analysis or discursive reflection refers to the process of exposing and reflecting on the often hidden power mechanisms used to produce varying social conditions. Craig and Muller believe that communication without discursive reflection is "inherently defective" because it blindly privileges certain groups over others (2006, p. 425). The analysis of visual communication also requires a critical approach. By working within a critical framework, this project investigates the possible ideological perspectives and power relations represented in contemporary tourism marketing, specifically regarding cultural representations. In fact, many scholars believe that existing tourism narratives, which include text, imagery and maps, reveal ideologies concerning race, sexuality, power, gender and ethnicity (Pritchard, 2000; Pritchard & Morgan, 1998; Shields 1991; Hall 1997)

Critical theorists such as Hall (1997) believe that tourism representations are intertwined in a "circuit of culture", which is defined by shared meanings. Hall (1997) reasons that society makes sense of shared meanings through language and thus, "language is central to meaning and culture and has always been regarded as the key repository of cultural values and meanings" (p. 1). The visual is a strong yet overlooked method of communication carrying the same potential for meaning making as one's traditional understanding of language as a system of verbal and written signs. Consequently, the main research questions guiding the major research paper are: How do tourism images construct visual representation of culture? And what ideological values are depicted?

This research project interests me because of my prior education background and travel and work experience.¹ I believe my contribution explores two uncharted territories in the tourism and postcolonial research field. First, I analyse travel brochures that target a younger audience (under 35 years of age). The two brochures in this analysis are distributed free at TravelCuts locations across university and college campuses. It is important to reflect on the ‘normalization’ of the following cultural representations within an academic environment. According to advertising critic Robert Goldman (1992), “ads saturate our lives [...] yet because ads are so pervasive and our reading of them so routine, we tend to take for granted the deep social assumptions embedded in advertising; we do not recognize them as a sphere of ideology (as quoted in Rose, 2012, p. 107). Second, I am exclusively critiquing a Canadian company, which is important because of the country’s reputation as a culturally diverse nation. Lastly, I am using a methodology for categorizing and interpreting a variety of visual elements found in Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen’s *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* (2006). I chose this method because the authors provide an analytic way of reading images. In summary, my contribution to the research field is interpreting images that are directed at younger audiences because researchers have not used Kress and van Leeuwen’s methodology to deconstruct student travel imagery.

¹ I hold an Honours Bachelor of Arts in Communication, Media and Film and a minor in Women’s Studies from the University of Windsor. My undergraduate course work focused on critical theory, cultural studies and message design. In the Master of Professional Communication program at Ryerson University, I presented seminars on critical theory (focusing on Marxism and the Frankfurt School) as well as visual rhetoric (focusing on semiotics). I am well versed in traditional and contemporary research and collection methods, specifically visual communication research methods. I am also a seasoned traveller having visited over 25 countries across Europe, South America and Asia. I am familiar with the variety of tourism marketing images both personally (through my own travels) and professionally (during my time spent as a public relations intern servicing clients in the international travel and tourism industry).

Literature Review

Postcolonialism & Tourism

The following literature review explains how postcolonial ideology shapes historical, political and cultural discourses and the ways in which people and places are represented in tourism marketing. Pritchard (2000) believes that tourism imagery has “remained divorced from discussions of power” for too long and deserves examination (p. 257). For this reason, I identify the ideologies and power relations that are visually communicated within contemporary tourism imagery, including the relationships between the viewer and the ‘viewed’. Lastly, I examine my findings for connections to postcolonial theory in particular, specifically whether travel images participate in ‘othering’ foreign cultures from the perspective of the West. I also discuss visually depicted binary relationships. According to visual scholar Gillian Rose (1993), ‘othering’ is a conceptual process in which people define who they are through contrast with other people and places (p. 116). Binaries may be reductionist and often over-simplified, but they are also rarely neutral. One part of the relationship is often regarded as dominate, for example male/female, right/wrong, upper class/lower class. According to Hall (1997), the “marking of difference is thus the basis of that symbolic order we call culture” (p. 236). In addition, Hall (1997) posits that ‘othering’ through the creation of binaries is essential to tourism. And yet, the relationship between tourism and postcolonial ideology is not a prominent research field as it should be. In fact, tourism is a major contributor in “transforming collective and individual values” and should be explored more intimately (Hall & Tucker, 2004, p. 12).

Postcolonial theory focuses on the complex construction of ‘the other’ to investigate possible power dynamics between groups of people or cultures. Postcolonial studies was originally influenced by Said’s (1979) seminal work *Orientalism* in which he redefined the word

‘orientalism’ to mean the false representations and beliefs that Western nations have towards the East, particularly the Middle East. Said (1979) explains that the East (‘the Orient’) is seen as in contrast with the West (‘the Occident’) and so, they create a binary relationship (p. 2). Examples of other binary relationships include exotic and normal, uncivilized and civilized and female and male and so forth.

Said’s work in *Orientalism* is grounded in Antonio Gramsci’s conception of cultural hegemony in which the ruling class maintains dominance by constructing a worldview using existing social structures and norms that seem natural (as cited in Cox, 1983). Said (1979) wrote, “It is hegemony, or rather the result of cultural hegemony at work, that gives Orientalism its durability and its strength” (p. 7). Said is saying that the West constructs representations about the East through various channels and socialization processes to maintain a dominant/subordinate ideology.

Media, religion, government and education are examples of channels and processes that maintain hegemonic structures. For example, previous studies identify ways in which pictorial cultural representations serve to establish various dominant and subservient roles through education and advertising. Caton and Santos (2009) investigated representations of ‘the other’ in nonprofit organizations with humanitarian missions, more specifically within study abroad literature. Using postcolonial theory, Caton and Santos (2009) analyze promotional imagery from Semester at Sea, a study abroad program situated on a cruise ship. Their findings reveal hegemonic depictions of nonwestern cultures and polarizations between what the authors identify as “the West and the Rest” throughout the Semester at Sea brochure and web site (Caton & Santos, 2009, p. 198). Using categories of symbols guided by a postcolonial theoretical framework, including gender, age, ethnicity, activities, attire, architecture and landscapes, Caton

and Santos (2009) identify several binary relationships, such as “modern-traditional, technologically advanced-backward, and master-servant” (p. 191). The authors discover that their conclusions regarding a non-profit organization are similar to studies that analyze mass-marketing tourism images from for-profit and government agencies (Caton & Santos, 2009). For example, Echtner and Prasad (2003) analyzed tourism brochures using a postcolonial framework and found three myths communicated in the images and text: myths of the unchanged, myth of the unrestrained and myth of the uncivilised. The Caton and Santos (2009) study reveals similar myths in the form of binaries that propose a Western superiority ideology.

Furthermore, one seminal work by Pritchard and Morgan (1998) includes a discussion of the various discourses of cultural representations in travel imagery that reflect stereotypes that privilege one culture or group over another. The authors are interested in gendered representations and power relations in tourism imagery. In particular, they argue that tourism’s “promotional language and imagery privileges the white, male, heterosexual gaze” (Pritchard & Morgan, 1998, p.118). For example, in their analysis of the Jamaican Tourist Board, the researchers write:

Appeals to the male gaze are abundant, with sinful suggestions beneath the tempting sunsets – maybe, the audience seems to be invited to think, with the barely clad, tempting girls with exotic skin – clearly this is marketed as a white, male heterosexual paradise (Pritchard & Morgan, 1998, p. 127).

According to Pritchard (2000), stereotyping is “a manifestation of the power of one to label or define another” and it is often resistant to change (p. 247). Pritchard and Morgan (1998) posit that the representational paradigm of stereotyping is established through consensus within the dominant group, which also reflects Gramsci’s position on socialization processes creating

hegemonic structures. The researchers found that many national tourist boards in the Caribbean and East-Asia structured the representations and language in promotional material in structures that dominate the male, Western gaze. More specifically, Pritchard and Morgan (1998) write, “by constructing what is ‘Other’ as feminine and often child-like, tourism discourses are affirming existing inequalities between nations, genders, races, and sexes (p.132). In other words these authors note that through affirmations and consensus among similar marketing strategies, certain positions are usually taken for granted as truth. The connection between hegemony and postcolonialism becomes clearer.

More specifically, researchers Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1989) study postcolonial literature and identify hegemony as a key area of postcolonial studies. Ashcroft *et al.* (1989) use the term postcolonial to “cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day” and argue that its relevancy is focused on the ongoing influence of traditional imperial powers on less developed or developing countries (p. 2-6). This influence is cultural, political and economic. Some theorists argue that tourism is a new form of imperialism (Crick 1989, Matthews 1978, Nash 1989). For example, Crick (1989) notes that “in many areas of the Third World—the West Indies is a leading example—tourism is associated strongly with servility; it reawakens memories of the colonial past and so perpetuates resentments and antagonisms” (p. 330). In the West Indies, “local writers describe tourism as a re-experience of the race and labor relations of the past, as a meeting of Fanon's ‘wretched of the earth’ and the wealthy” (p. 322).

More recently, Hall and Tucker (2002) posit that tourism may provide insights into postcolonialism. They argue that tourism “both reinforces and is embedded in postcolonial relationships” (Hall & Tucker, 2002, p. 2). Indeed, Craik (1994) recognizes that

Tourism has an intimate relationship to postcolonialism in that ex-colonies have increased in popularity as favored destinations (sites) for tourists (the Pacific Rim; Asia; Africa; South America); while the detritus of post-colonialism has been transformed into tourist sights (including exotic peoples and customs; artifacts; arts and crafts; indigenous and colonial lifestyles, heritage and histories).

Further, the relationship between tourism and postcolonialism is revealed through various tourism texts, such as destination brochures, travelogues, and postcards. As Papson (1981) comments, “tourism depends on preconceived definitions of place and people” (p. 225).

Economically and strategically, the ‘marketing arm’ of government and private enterprise “not only defines social reality, but also recreates it to fit those definitions” (Papson, 1981, p. 225).

Papson analyzes both the Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island tourism bureaus and argues that modern tourism marketing is visitor-orientated and is based around the question, “‘what do these potential visitors want or desire?’” (p. 226). For example, Papson (1981) found that images in P.E.I’s lurebook, “establish the boundaries of experience by providing definitions of what is beautiful, what is scenic, what one should experience” (p. 227). Marketers want to sell a destination that encapsulates the consumer’s vision of what a person or a place should look like. Profits are a very important motivator.

Visual Culture and Tourism

This analysis of postcolonialism and tourism focuses on pictorial cultural representations found in travel materials. Like postcolonialism and tourism, visual culture and tourism are inseparably linked. Art historian, Svetlana Alpers, first coined the term visual culture in the 1970s (Evans & Hall, 1999, p. 5). Initially, it described the context of ‘image-making devices’

and ‘visual skills’ used in fine art by a particular culture (Evans & Hall, 1999, p. 5). The word is contemporarily used as an umbrella term for all visual aspects of culture, including advertising, film, television, and photography. Many scholars began examining the visual culture of tourism reflected first in paintings. For example, Fred Orton and Griselda Pollock (1980) were the first to study visual images in the context of tourism. Their seminal discussion of European paintings of Brittany in the 1880s revealed representations of the region as a “primitive and exotic place, removed from the upheavals of modernity” that contrasted with the actual reality of Brittany at the time (as cited in Crouch & Lubben, 2003, p. 4).

Visual culture is becoming much more central to knowledge and understanding. A comparison between actual histories and visual depictions are not the focus of my analysis as it was for Orton and Pollock’s (1980) study. Crouch and Lubben (2004) suggest, “the point is not whether the historical material is any more ‘truthful’ than the image produced” (p. 4). According to Rose (2012), “modern forms of understanding the world depend on a scopic regime that equates seeing with knowledge” (p. 3). The term ‘scopic regime’ is used here to explain how both what is seen and how it is seen are culturally constructed. Furthermore, “the first contact a sightseer has with the sight is not the sight itself, but with some representation thereof” (MacCannell, 1999, p. 110). MacCannell’s position reflects the idea that modern Western society has become ocularcentric (the centrality of the visual). Mirzoeff (1998) believes that Western society’s ocularcentrism occurs because people interact more with completely constructed visual experiences, not just because there are more images in circulation (as cited in Rose, 2012, p. 4). Consequently, tourists could be responding more strongly to the destination images than the social realities of a particular place. So, while a historical comparison might be useful in other

studies, this research paper focuses on an analysis of the represented image from a purely visual standpoint.

In, *Places on the Margin*, Shields (1992) argues that our perceptions of places are the result of a series of 'place-images', which conglomerate to form a 'place-myth' (p. 60). According to Shields (1991), place-images' are the various discrete meanings associated with real places or regions regardless of their character in reality" (p. 60). Shields (1991) uses the example of mentioning the word 'beach' and people will immediately think of "a particular kind of place, peopled by individuals acting in a specific manner and engaging in predictable routines" such as sunbathing and building castles (p. 60). The myth is that "we learn that bare, carefree and relaxed are not only appropriate but also natural attitude and behaviours for a beach" (p. 60). Moreover, 'place-images' "result from stereotyping, which over-simplifies groups of places within a region, or from prejudices towards places or their inhabitants" (Shields, 1991, p. 60). As noted, a 'place-myth' can impact perception of destinations because of its widespread dissemination and consumption (Shields, 1991, p. 61). In other words, the myth can gain acceptance among viewers because it is mass-circulated and reproduced . As noted, visual culture is highly responsible for constructing ideas about tourism and destinations. Photographs in particular can "become a scopically constructed form of visual culture whose power is to convey and reproduce the hegemony of the visual" (Crouch and Lubben, 2003, p. 10). In other words, the mobility and ease of photography has enabled images to become more powerful forms of knowledge and understanding. Tourism's 'Kodakization' refers to "the clearly marked site from which to see, the direction of view, even the framing in a circuit of visual culture" and it is widely used to construct and represent the 'Other' (Crouch and Lubben, 2003, p. 9).

A discussion of visual culture is not complete without also defining the word *visuality*. *Visuality* refers to “the way in which both what is seen and how it is seen are culturally constructed” (Rose, 2012, p. 2). Rose observes that the terms ‘visuality’ and ‘scopic regime’ are used interchangeably. Rose (2012) suggests that there is “a critical imperative to examine in detail how certain institutions mobilize specific forms of *visuality* to see, and to order, the world” (p. 10). Representations in tourism brochures are particularly helpful in understanding how institutions like advertising construct perceptions of the world and other cultures. The intersections between tourism, postcolonialism and the institution of Western mass media are most apparent in visual culture. Simmons (2004) argues that travel mediators in Western mass media use particular ways of communicating with the audience to “construct a preferred version of contemporary, or postcolonial, travel practices in texts” (p. 44). She refers to the study of two Barbados travelogue texts in which the traveler is expected to identify with “a leisured lifestyle of the wealthy who visit or live in Barbados and with the aristocrats of former colonial life” (Simmons, 2004, p. 49). More specifically, Simmons (2004) analyzes one text that highlights a plantation tour that aligns the tourist with the rich, male nobleman and not with the black African slaves who worked in the fields (p. 49).

Other studies also investigate the connection between postcolonialism and tourism imagery. A study by Nelson (2005) investigates Grenada’s tourism imagery in promotional materials and advertisements to determine ideological representations of the Caribbean island. Nelson (2005) used semiotics to analyze three distinct images: nature, places and people (p.131). The researcher did not use a postcolonial framework and yet the results reveal similar postcolonial binary relationships as studies that do use this particular framework, including binary oppositions such as, the exotic versus the familiar (Nelson, 2005, p. 140). For instance,

the findings connect exoticism to 'the other,' specifically referencing images of Grenadine women (Nelson, 2005, p. 135). Nelson (2005) argues that the local people are "represented as irrelevant unless they have a function to tourism, whether they serve as a tourism attraction or facilitator" (p. 136). This perception is structured by "the framing of the image, clothing, gaze and gestures [and] promotes the sexuality of the exotic female 'other'" (Nelson, 2005, p. 136).

Settler countries, such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand, were also subject to this particular critical analysis regarding cultural representation. Amaomo and Thompson (2010) argue that in countries with a history of colonization, the 'indigenous culture' is often misrepresented in tourism imagery. The researchers claim that the "cultural unfamiliarity of peoples is therefore mediated for the potential tourist as ways of seeing 'us' and 'them' initiated by the 'tourism brokers' who hold power" (Amaomo & Thompson, 2010, p. 37). They focus their analysis on the Maori people of New Zealand. Amaomo and Thompson (2010) discover that many tourism texts stereotype the culture and present the myth of being stranded in time, or unchanged. More specifically, many Maori images reinforce postcolonial binary relationships such as "changed/unchanged, modern/traditional" which fail to represent the indigenous cultures as "contemporary and changing" by exclusively representing traditional costumes and outdated indigenous practices (Amaomo & Thompson, 2010, p. 42). The authors believe that "such representations bear the hallmark of colonialism in the re-enactment of journeys and experiences of past colonial explorers promoted and re-created for potential tourists" (Amaomo & Thompson, 2010, p. 42).

In addition, Amaomo and Thompson (2010) believe that the postcolonial setting of tourism imagery can become a potential site for resistance. In other words, revised images provide a discursive space in which the Māori people can 're-articulate and re-present' their

culture (Amaomo & Thompson, 2010, p. 50). The Māori people “re-define cultural production through the re-construction and counter-representation of images” (Amaomo & Thompson, 2010, p. 37). This indigenous group is working with tourism operators and the New Zealand Tourism organization in this process of re-construction. The new images depict the indigenous group ““living their life day to day” rather than representing cultural otherness (Amaomo & Thompson, 2010, p. 44). For example, one website represents a Māori personality as a video narrator and the corresponding website images juxtapose “the iconic traits of Māori culture, such as carving, weaving and haka, with images that include beach and city landscapes, Māori musicians and Māori ‘socializing’ in urban settings” (Amaomo & Thompson, 2010, p. 45). Amaomo and Thompson (2010) redefine postcolonial tourism research as a field that not only points out the cultural constructions, but also investigates avenues for reclaiming discursive spaces.

The relationship between postcolonialism and gender within tourism imagery provides another point of analysis. Alessio and Johannsdottir (2011) examine how Iceland’s national tourism board began replacing images of natural landscapes (ex. lagoons, geysers and the Northern Lights) with sexualized images of women. The authors examine a variety of popular media, such as television programs, magazine interviews, travel magazines and newspaper articles that defined Icelandic women as sexy party girls, which lead up to the release of similar sexualized imagery in Iceland’s national tourism campaign and was later perpetuated by promotional material produced by Icelandair, the nation’s top airline. For example, a series of Icelandair advertisements invited visitors to ““pester a beauty queen’, while images of a young couple taking a mud bath were accompanied by the caption ‘a dirty weekend in Iceland’” (Alessio & Johannsdottir, 2011, p. 41).

In summary, Alessio and Johannsdottir (2011) consider gender an important element in analyses of postcolonialism in tourism texts. In the case of Iceland, the authors believe 'the other' is not a distinction between East and West, but rather between female and male. In this regard, women in Icelandic tourism imagery are represented as "waiting to be 'penetrated' or 'explored' by male voyagers" in a similar way the East was initially represented to European explorers (Alessio & Johannsdottir, 2011, p. 46). This argument stems from "a long tradition in utopian writing from the Renaissance onwards depicting islands and new worlds as feminine bodies 'ripe for conquest'" (Alessio & Johannsdottir, 2011, p. 44). Toyota (2006) is another researcher who has critiqued tourism images using a gender perspective. Rather than focusing solely on the consumer of images, Toyota (2006) argues that tourism "is a social experience which involves the whole process by which images of places are socio-culturally produced and consumed" (p. 158). Toyota (2006) analyses images of Bali in Japanese tourist literature and the personal experiences of the tourist in the 'contact zone' through field research and interviews (p. 164). He explores Shield's (1991) theory of 'place-myths' and how images become "packaged forms of collective signs" (Toyota, 2006, p. 164). Toyota (2006) found that,

Bali tourism for the Japanese additionally provides an experience of the familiar 'other'. The narratives of Japanese tourists emphasize 'sharing empathy', the commonality of Asian-ness, along with 'exotic otherness', thus combining both nostalgia for an idealized past with a sense of the new dynamic Asia (p. 168-9).

Toyota (2006) posits that representation is also a field of negotiation rather than a form of power and dominance. Toyota's argument is the result of his analyses both of the site of image consumption and of tourist experience. This research focuses on the site of image consumption in part because of the smaller scope and shorter timeframe of the project, but also because of the

rise of ‘armchair’ tourists who never physically travel to destinations, but merely consume travel images via the mass media. In summary, the focus is on what the images show in and of themselves rather than on the contrast between the images and reality.

Semiology

According to scholars Fyfe and Law (1988), “a depiction is never just an illustration [...]. It is the site for the construction and depiction of social difference” (p. 1). For the same reason, it is also unwise to regard travel imagery as objective representation. To analyze the images used in travel brochures, I will draw on semiotic and visual communication theory, including works by Gillian Rose (2012) and Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (2006).

Semiology is a useful approach to visual analysis and involves the study of signs. It “provides a precise and rich vocabulary for understanding how the structure of images produces cultural meaning” (Rose, 2012, p. 147). Rose (2012) provides a number of steps to conduct a semiological analysis including identifying the signs, their signification, their relation to other signs and their connection to larger meaning systems like ideology. Robert Hodge and Gunther Kress (1988) also identify the relationship between ideology and semiology. They write, “in order to sustain these structures of domination, the dominant groups attempt to represent the world in forms that reflect their own interests, the interests of their power” (p. 3). In fact, John Urry (1990) refers to this process as being ‘socially organized’ (p. 83).

I also draw from Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* as a methodology to analyze the images in question. Their work is set within a social semiotic and critical framework. Their analytical concepts are useful for this project because the authors describe how major compositional structures reflect meaning and more

specifically, how various visual elements have certain connotations. Kress and van Leeuwen's methodology for decoding images is a useful tool to explore and reflect critically on assumptions, attitudes and beliefs, and thereby conduct a critical analysis in communication as suggested by Craig and Muller (2007).

More importantly, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) argue that semiology is always motivated. They believe that "images of whatever kind [are] entirely within the realm of the realizations and instantiations of ideology, as means for the articulation of ideological positions" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 14). In brief, if images are within the realm of ideology, then the goal of this visual semiotic analysis is to explore the specific ideological positions within travel imagery.

Further, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) argue that visual structures produce images, which are bound up with the interests of social institutions within which the images are produced, circulated and read. As noted, visual structures are ideological. They identify three structures of visual communication: the ideational, the interpersonal and the textual. In the ideational metafunction, the decoder examines how a semiotic system makes sense conceptually. In the interpersonal metafunction, the decoder examines how the system makes sense of the relations between the viewer and the viewed. In the textual metafunction, the decoder examines how the system makes sense both internally and externally within the context in which the images are produced. I analyzed the following travel images within the interpersonal and textual metafunctions. I focus on only two of the structures because of the limitations of this study and also because the categories within each metafunction can be more visibly identified.

Interpersonal Metafunction

In the interpersonal function, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) discuss the position of ‘participants’. They argue that images involve two distinct participants: the represented participant, such as the depicted people, places and things, and the interactive participant, or the real people who communicate with each other through images, such as image producers and viewers (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 114). In this analysis of tourism imagery, the represented participants are those framed within the image, typically the local people, Western individuals or both, while the interactive participants include students and young adults who view the images and those responsible for the production of the image, including advertising creative, editors, publishers, and photographers.

According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), there are three sets of relations between represented and interactive participants: “relations between represented participants; relations between interactive and represented participants (the interactive participants’ attitudes towards the represented participants); and relations between interactive participants (the thing interactive participants do to or for each other through images)” (p. 114). To understand and interpret these relations, I will use several of Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) concepts including gaze, social distance, and horizontal and vertical angles.

I. Gaze

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) identify two represented gazes in images: the demand and the offer. Both gazes are identifiable through vectors. In visual communication, a vector is represented as either a real or imagined line. In a demand gaze image, the represented participant connects with the viewer using a direct eye-line vector or a vector formed by a gesture in the

same direction, like a pointed hand (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p.117). In other words, the represented participant may be gazing directly into the reader's own eyes or even pointing directly at the reader. The demand image has two functions. First, it directly addresses the viewer and then subsequently forms an 'image act' where the producer uses the image to demand something from the viewer (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p.117). One example of an 'image act' is for the viewer to buy a product. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), if the represented participant is gazing directly at the viewer and making contact, the participant is demanding that the viewer enter into a relation with them. This relation can differ based on other factors within the image, such as body language and facial expression.

Alternatively, the offer image exists when the viewer is not directly addressed. Rather, the viewer is the source of the gaze (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p.119). The viewer gazes upon the image. The represented and interactive participants do not make eye contact. In some cases, the demand or offer is used to establish whether the viewer should engage with the participant or not. It may even reveal relationships that exist between participants (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p.119-120). In addition, a demand or offer image may facilitate connections or dissociations between the represented and interactive participants.

II. Vertical & Horizontal Angles

According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), producing images involves selecting a distinct point of view. In visual communication, point of view is expressed through angles and reveals "subjective attitudes towards represented participants" (p. 129). In other words, angles in images are not objective, but rather they produce socially determined attitudes. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) argue that there is symmetry between "the way the image-producer relates to

the represented participants and the way the viewer must [...] also relate to them” because image producers, such as photographers and publishers, select the type of angle in each shot (p. 131). Essentially, the viewer is being guided through the connotations of the angle on how to relate to the people within the images.

To illustrate, the vertical angle is a function of power. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), “if a represented participant is seen from a high angle [...] [then] the interactive participant has power over the represented participant” (p. 140). By comparison, if there is a low angle, the represented participant has power over the interactive participant. If the angle is at eye-level, there is typically equality assumed between both participants.

Meanwhile, the horizontal angle “is a function of the relation between the frontal plane of the image-producer and the frontal plane of the represented participants” (p. 134). The frontal planes in the image can either be parallel from one another or form an oblique angle. According to Kress and van Leeuwen, the frontal angle suggests involvement between the viewer and the viewed while the oblique angle connotes detachment.

III. Social Distance

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) argue, “the choice of distance can suggest different relations between represented participants and viewers” (p. 124). They refer to varying camera shots more commonly used in film. The close shot depicts the head and shoulders of the subject; the medium close shot depicts the subject from the waist up; the medium shot is cut off at the knees, the medium long shot shows the full subject; and the long shot features the subject at about half the height of the entire frame (p. 124). The authors believe the closer the viewer is to the represented in the shot, the more engaged and personal the relationship becomes. For

example, close personal distance describes an intimate distance where the viewer is close enough to embrace the represented participant, whereas public distance represents a lack of relationship in which the represented participant is a stranger or more fittingly 'the other.' Social distance varies across this scale.

Textual Metafunction

The textual metafunction, a second category of analysis for this study, is concerned with “the way in which representations and communicative acts cohere into meaningful wholes” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 15). The function uses compositional arrangements of the image layout to allow for the realization of meanings within a text. To illustrate, composition “relates the representational and interactive meanings of the image to each other through three interrelated systems,” which are the information value system, salience and framing (p. 177).

I. Informational Value System

In the informational value system, zones such as left and right, top and bottom and centre and margin have specific values attached (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006, p. 177). First, the left and right informational zones, also called Given and New, make use of the horizontal axis of the image frame. Elements placed on the left of the image are represented as Given, in other words familiar or agreed upon, and elements placed on the right are represented as New, in other words unknown or something that the viewer must pay attention to (p. 181). Second, the top and bottom informational zones, called the Ideal and Real, make use of the vertical axis of the image frame. Elements placed at the top of the image are depicted as Ideal, or something that ‘might be’ or is idealized, and elements placed on the bottom of the images are depicted as Real, or something

that is practical or 'what is' (p. 186-87). Lastly, there is also the Centre and Margin information value zones, where one element is in the middle of the layout and other elements surrounding it are of equal size and proportion to each other. The element in the Centre is 'the nucleus of the information to which all the other elements are in some sense subservient' (p. 196). The Centre and Margin information value is not common in traditional realist photography. It is found more often in drawing and paintings. I decided to analyze only the Given/New and Ideal/Real information value zones because of the traditional photographic quality of the images in the travel brochures. Centre/Margin values are typically found in illustrations, paintings and other mediums, not typically in photographs of real people in real settings.

II. Salience

According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), "salience is the degree to which an element draws attention to itself due to its size, place in the foreground, overlapping of other elements, colour, tonal values, sharpness or definition, and other features" (p. 210). It helps create a hierarchy of importance among the other points of analysis such as gaze, social distance and informational value systems. In other words, interpretations based on the most salient elements are often the most significant in meaning.

III. Framing

The last key concept in the textual metafunction is framing. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), "the stronger the framing of an element, the more it is presented as a separate unit of information" (p. 203). Kress and van Leeuwen suggest that framing is achieved "by actual frame lines, by white space between elements by discontinuities of colour, and so on" (p.

203). In other words, vectors, colour and shape are all examples of how elements can be framed within an image. Framing is also helpful in identifying relations among elements. Kress and van Leeuwen believe that the “absence of framing stresses group identity, its presence signifies individuality and differentiation” (p. 203).

Methodology

I collected images from two 2012/2013 student travel brochures, which I obtained from TravelCuts, located at Ryerson University in Toronto, Canada. TravelCuts is a Canadian travel-booking agency that disseminates literature from the leading tour and volunteer abroad organizations in the travel industry. I selected two brochures produced by G Adventures (a Canadian company) because it is one of the highest rated adventure travel outfitters according to *National Geographic* (Christ & Martin, 2009).

I collected images found specifically in G Adventure's North Africa/Middle East and Asia destination brochures because many of Said's (1979) arguments focused on the relationship between the East and the West, more specifically the Middle East. The North Africa/Middle East brochure is 64 pages, printed in Canada and is in full-colour. Destinations include Morocco, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Turkey, Iran, United Arab Emirates, Oman, and Israel. The Asia brochure is 125 pages, printed in Canada and is in full-colour. Destinations include Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, Burma, Malaysia, Indonesia, Borneo, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet, China, Japan, Uzbekistan and Mongolia.

I only selected images depicting local people (i.e. North Africa/Middle East and Far East people) or both local people and travellers represented in the same image. This selection process is in-line with other tourism image analyses that focus mainly on representations of local people (Dann, 1996). In total, across the two destination brochures, there are 71 images that fit my criteria. Images that did not fit the criteria include representations of travellers alone and landscape images without any people in the frame. Due to time and resource limitations of the study, 71 images is an appropriate pool of images from which to analyze. Larger studies have analyzed over 100 images (Caton and Santos, 2009) to more than 750 images (Pritchard, 2000). I

categorized all 71 images using the interpersonal metafunction preceded by a close reading of several images using both the interpersonal and textual metafunctions. Pritchard (2000) expresses a growing need for critical analyses of tourism representations “to develop tools which can be used quantitatively to complement extant qualitative analyses” (p. 250). In other words, analyses of tourism representations need a structured coding system to categorize specific image qualities. Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) methodology is an appropriate tool for cultural representation analyses because of its critical approach in decoding images. The authors also make relevant connections to ideology and often use representations of indigenous groups in Australian textbooks as examples throughout their text. I counted images in the two brochures to provide an overview of the distribution of specific strategies identified by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) followed by several close readings of particular images.

Analysis & Discussion

All examples were selected for their illustrative representation of the specific elements defined by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), such as the gaze, angles, social distance, informational value, framing and so forth. More importantly, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) argue that information in images is “presented as though it had status or value for the reader, and that readers have to read it within that structure, even if that valuation may then be rejected by a particular reader” (p. 181). While the following interpretations may be different from another decoder or rejected by another interpreter, the important point is that the following interpretations are made using the visual elements defined by Kress and van Leeuwen.

I. Gaze

Table 1: Analysis of Gaze

Gaze	% of Total Images*	% of Images in the North Africa/Middle East Brochure*	% of Images in the Asia Brochure*
Demand	10% (n= 7)	6% (n= 1)	11% (n= 6)
Offer	82% (n= 58)	94% (n= 16)	78% (n= 42)
Both	7% (n= 5)	0%	9% (n= 5)
N/A	1% (n= 1)	0%	2% (n= 1)

*** numbers are rounded up**

The offer is the most predominate gaze used in the two destination brochures. Eighty-two percent (n= 58) of the total images demonstrate the offer gaze (Table 1). The offer gaze is also the most predominate gaze in each individual brochure. Seventy-eight percent (n= 42) of the images in the Asia brochure and 94% (n= 16) of images in the North Africa/Middle East brochure depict the offer (Table 1). Given the purpose of the documents, the offer is not unusual because the images are offering the viewer information about travel destinations and culture and yet, the particular gaze “offers the represented participants to the viewer as items of information, objects of contemplation, impersonally, as though they were specimens in a display case” (Kress

and van Leeuwen, 2006, p.119). The gaze encourages the viewer to objectify the represented participants as ‘things’ to look at and not as ‘people’ to engage with. A possible binary relationship between ‘I versus It’ is established.

Figure 1: Children



Ten percent ($n=7$) of the images analyzed depict the demand gaze, while 7% ($n=5$) depict both the demand and offer (Table 1). Typically, represented participants with the demand gaze are children (see Figure 1). Of the twelve images depicting a demand gaze or both the demand and offer gaze, 67% ($n=8$) are from children and 17% ($n=2$) are from the elderly. One image is of a striking, young Cambodian woman (Figure 2) and the remaining image depicts a Middle Eastern man. Children, the elderly and young women (comprising 92% ($n=11$) of the demand gaze or both demand and offer gaze images) are often categorized as vulnerable groups in society. Therefore, the ‘image act’ is demanding the viewer to visit the destination and book a tour in a non-threatening way.

Figure 2: Young Woman



Seventy-five percent of the demand images depict the represented participants smiling. As noted, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) argue that these facial expressions often connote a friendly relationship. In his analysis of Grenada tourism images, Nelson (2005) argues that the “direct gaze is intended to create an intimacy between the viewer and the subject that implies a welcoming and willingness to please or serve” (p. 136). His argument is based on the discovery that many smiling Grenadines in promotional imagery were women or tourist service workers (Nelson, 2005, p. 136). Furthermore, according to Pritchard (2000), “there are many images of smiling young children in tourism promotional literature and in travel articles devoted to the East” (p. 257). Pritchard writes that even adults often have child-like qualities represented in similar promotional texts. Similarly, Said (1979) argued that the Orient is often portrayed as “irrational, depraved, childlike and different” and the Occident is thus considered rational, mature and normal (p. 40). In this situation, the dominant relation between the represented participants and the viewer is friendly, but this may not be an equal relationship, as Nelson noted earlier. There are power dynamics at play. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) insist that the ‘image act’ often defines the viewer (p. 119). For example, if the demand images feature mostly children, the elderly or young women (typically fulfilling more subordinate roles), the viewer is

defined as more dominant, which ensures that the demand (i.e. to book travel) is represented in a non-threatening manner. The viewer is in a position of greater dominance.

II. Horizontal Angle

Table 2: Analysis of Horizontal Angle

Horizontal Angle	% of Total Images	% of Images in the North Africa/Middle East Brochure	% of Images in the Asia Brochure
Oblique	70% (n= 50)	71% (n= 12)	70% (n= 38)
Frontal	20% (n= 14)	18% (n= 3)	20% (n= 11)
Both	8% (n= 6)	12% (n= 2)	7% (n= 4)
Indeterminable	1% (n= 1)	0%	2% (n= 1)

The oblique angle is the most often used angle across images. Seventy percent (n. 50) of images present solely the oblique angle (Table 2). The prevalence of the oblique angle across both brochures was consistent between 69-70% (Table 2). Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) claim that “the oblique angle says, ‘what you see here is not part of our world; it is their world, something we are not involved with’” (p. 136). This form of ‘othering’ is in-line with postcolonial theory and creates an “us versus them” binary relationship. As earlier defined, ‘othering’ is a conceptual process in which people self-define by contrasting themselves with other people and places (Rose, 2012, p. 116).

Figure 3: Wailing Wall

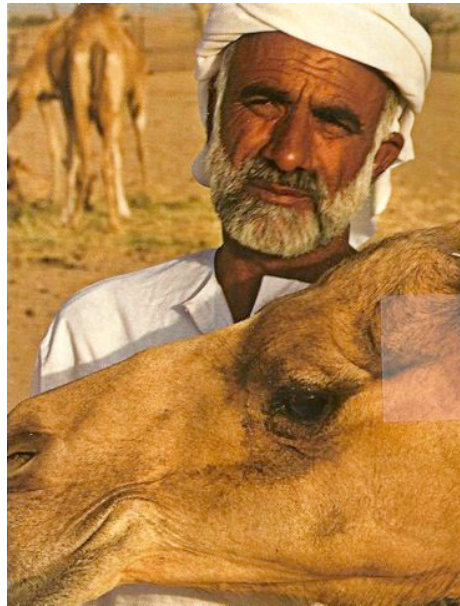


Figure 4: Children Running



Furthermore, 36% (n= 18) of the oblique angle images depict the represented participant(s) with their backs turned to the viewer. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) believe that “to expose one’s back to someone is also to make oneself vulnerable, and this implies a measure of trust, despite the abandonment which the gesture also signifies” (p. 138). To demonstrate, 72% (n= 13) of these images depict children, women or other local people engaged in overt ‘other’ activities, such as a cultural dance or religious ceremony (see Figure 3). In one image, two small children are depicted running away from the camera (see Figure 4). This is significant because children are the most vulnerable group and the depiction of them running further away from the viewer connotes a similar vulnerability. This is an interesting marketing technique for it instills a sense of security in the prospective traveller. Like the offer images, the back images also assure that there is no need to be frightened by the other because the viewer is in control. The message is consistent. In addition, the back images reveal that the ‘other’ may reject associations with the West; or perhaps that the ‘other’ prefers the separation or ‘abandonment’. It is as if the children running away are ‘abandoning’ the relation with the viewer, thereby perpetuating the ideology of contrasting worlds. Making the ‘other’ responsible for the cultural divide puts less pressure on Western viewers to address postcolonial ideology.

Figure 5: Man with Camel



By comparison, 20% (n= 14) of the images depict the frontal angle, which connotes a higher level of involvement between the viewer and viewed, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006). One interesting trend in the findings suggests that images reflecting only the frontal angle often depict the represented participants(s) as ‘other’ by also incorporating overt cultural artifacts, including umbrellas, staffs, traditional clothing, head-ware and face paint. The cultural artifacts distort the degree of involvement as prescribed by the frontal angle. For example, one image features an old man with a white headscarf frontally facing the viewer; however, there is a large camel in front of him, acting as a barrier between the viewer and the viewed (see Figure 5). Despite the use of the frontal angle, the local people in the images are represented as not part of ‘our’ world, nor something we ‘are’ involved with outside of tourism activities.

On the other hand, 8% (n= 6) of the total images feature both angles in a single shot. The majority of these images capture large groups of local people and half of these images feature

shopping scenes. Consumerism is a cornerstone in Western economies and it is certainly part of 'our' world as well as the local economies that depend on this activity. Hence, these images represent the involvement that the tourist has with consumerism, but also the detachment they

Figure 6: Men with Instruments



might have with the local people themselves. Concurrently, there is a clear distinction between represented participants shot from an oblique angle and those shot from a frontal angle, especially when there are only two represented participants in the image. For example, there is one image of an older traditionally dressed man and a young contemporary man (see Figure 6). The traditional male is represented at an oblique angle, whereas the contemporary man is represented frontally. Nevertheless, the contemporary man is slightly obstructed by the traditional music instrument, similar to the obstructed represented participants in images that depict only the frontal angle. Consequently, 'Old and new,' or 'traditional versus modern' are two examples of binary relationships reflecting a postcolonial bias where traditional, old and East are in contrast with modern, new and West.

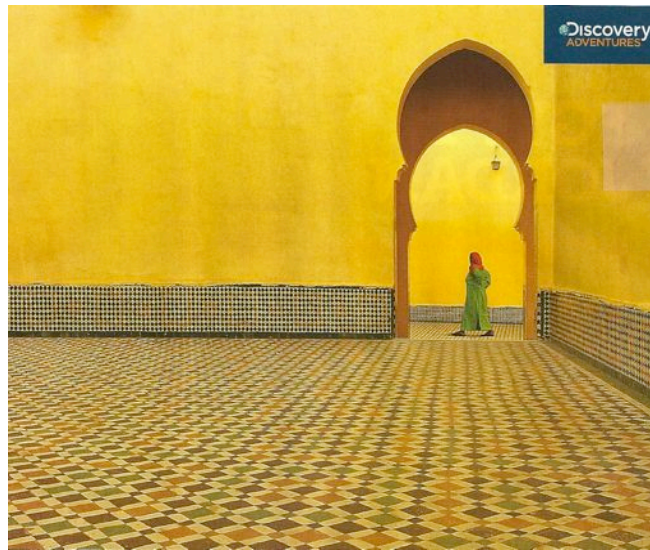
III. Vertical Angle

Table 3: Analysis of Vertical Angle

Vertical Angle	% of Total Images	% of Images in the North Africa/Middle East Brochure	% of Images in the Asia Brochure
High	20% (n= 14)	35% (n= 6)	22% (n= 12)
Low	21% (n= 15)	12% (n= 2)	17% (n= 9)
Eye-Level	59% (n= 42)	53% (n= 9)	61% (n= 33)

Kress and van Leeuwen argue that often “there is no immediate apparent motivation for point of view” (p. 143). They explain that “the angle may be high and frontal, and so convey power over and involvement with the represented participants, but the precise nature of the relation of power and involvement is not given” (p. 143). Their reflection contextualizes judgments about power and involvement, otherwise called the ‘narrativization of the subjective image’ (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 143). ‘Narrativization of the subjective image’ involves the process of storytelling and story construction through contextualization. One way of doing this involves relating point of view to concrete situations in which “one should always ask, ‘Who could be in this scene in this way?’ ‘Where would one have to be to see this scene in this way, and what sort of person would one have to be to occupy that space?’” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 143). The point of view defines the viewer and in the example of a tourism brochure, the viewer identifies with the tourist.

Figure 7: Person in Yellow Room



Fifty-nine percent ($n= 42$) of images are shot from an eye-level angle, 20% ($n= 14$) of images depict a high angle and 21% ($n= 15$) depict a low angle (see Table 3). Many images using an eye-level angle continue to reinforce a separation between the traveller and the local people, despite the measure of ‘equality’ initially suggested by the angle. For example, one image depicts a figure at the opposite end of a spacious room (Figure 7). Here, the figure is completely covered and the viewer cannot see the figure’s face. Even though the photo is at eye-level, there is a great deal of space between the represented and interactive participant. The represented participant is objectified by the viewer’s stare, and more specifically, by the viewer’s surveillance of the cultural space. The tourist might be encouraged to engage with the space or tourist sight, rather than with the local people or even experience the local people from a distance. A second example of how the narrativization process works regarding point of view is the image of a man sailing a boat (Figure 8). He is shot from a low angle, but after contextualizing the viewpoint, it can be argued that the man is not represented as an equal with the interactive participant. He is providing a service to the tourist (who is seated based on the point of view) by sailing the boat. In his analysis of people in tourist brochures, researcher Dann

(1996) also discovered that “often the tourist was seated, while the servant was standing or stooping” (p. 73). Similarly, Pritchard (2000) argues that images of the Middle East are more populated by men, who are usually employees in tourism or featured as ‘local colour’ (p. 256).

The master/servant relationship or story is also reflected in Figure 8: Sailor. The sun in the background of the image renders the represented participant as a silhouette. He has no distinguishable features and his long robe blends in with the sails next to him, so that he appears as part of the boat rather than as a human agent. In this case, a typical postcolonial criticism is that “‘we’ are ‘human’ and ‘they’ are not” (Said, 1979, p. 41). The figure is simply part of the boat. If anything, the image suggests his only value is in sailing the boat, while the viewer enjoys the ride. Again, this interpretation emphasizes the master/servant binary relationship made earlier.

Figure 8: Sailor



IV. Social Distance

Table 4: Analysis of Social Distance

Social Distance	% of Total Images	% of Images in the North Africa/Middle East Brochure	% of Images in the Asia Brochure
Intimate	4% (n= 3)	0%	6% (n= 3)
Close Personal	20% (n= 14)	12% (n= 2)	22% (n= 12)
Far Personal	20% (n= 14)	23% (n= 4)	19% (n= 10)
Far Social	21% (n= 15)	24% (n= 4)	20% (n= 11)
Public	32% (n= 23)	35% (n= 6)	31% (n= 17)
N/A	3% (n= 2)	6% (n= 1)	2% (n= 1)

Five categories of social distance are depicted in the two brochures: intimate personal distance where only the head or face is visible; close personal distance or “the distance at which one can hold or grasp the other person;” far personal distance or “the distance that extends from a point that is just outside easy touching”; far social distance suggesting “a more formal and impersonal character”; and lastly, public distance or the distance between strangers (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 124). The dominant social distance in the two brochures is public distance followed by close personal, far social and far personal which are similarly prevalent at 20-21% each. Intimate distance is the least common social distance represented, while the remaining images were impossible to decipher because the upper body of represented participants were cropped out of the image.

Figure 9: Woman in Costume



Figure 10: Male Elder



As noted, social distance helps define the level of engagement between the viewer and represented participant, so it is important to first analyze the images depicting the two closest distances, which are intimate and close personal. Of the three images featuring intimate distance, two images depict children (see Figure 1) and the last image depicts a highly adorned Chinese female (see Figure 9). In the close personal distance category, the men have their backs turned or they are blurred or they are much older with graying hair (see Figure 10). Comparatively, the women in this same category are highly adorned in traditional clothing and artifacts. The final category of represented participants depicted at close personal distance is children. In addition, many of the represented participants at closer distances have cultural face-paint markings (see Figure 11). However, the paint is not something the viewer is made to either understand or relate to. As a result, the closeness may connote the curiosity of the tourist rather than an engaging personal relation. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) posit that “non-intimates cannot come this close, and, if they do so, it will be experienced as an act of aggression,” (p. 124). However, in

Figure 11: Man with Face Paint

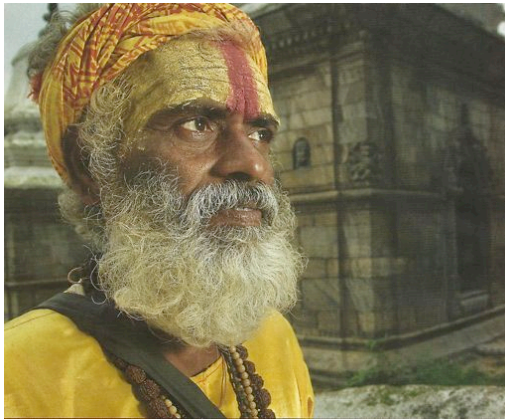


Figure 12: Shopping Scene

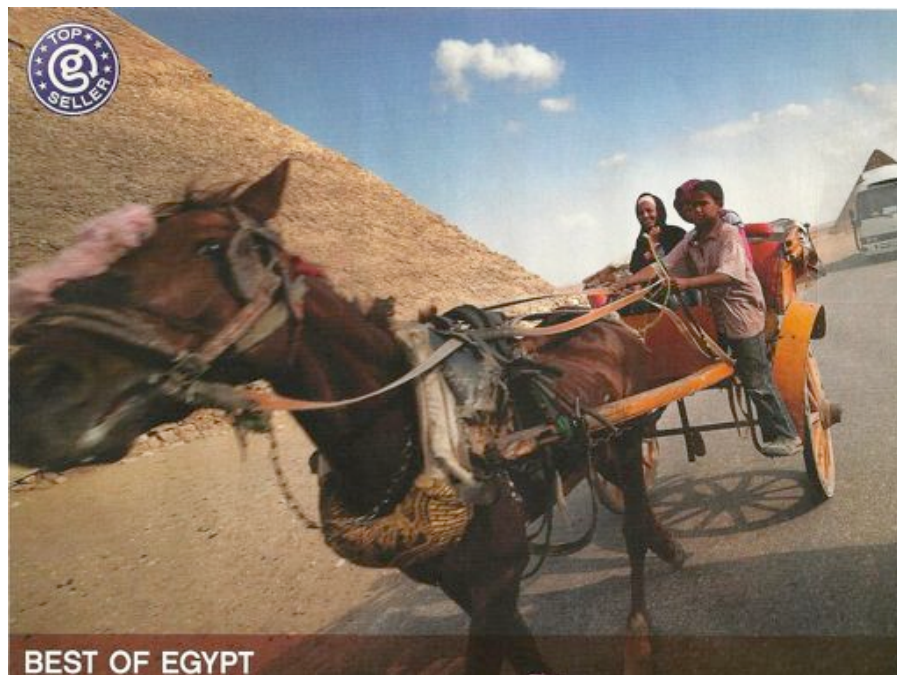


this situation, it appears that the closer social distance images reflect a colonial ideology that encourages the viewer to be explorers of the unknown and ‘other’ worlds. By representing mostly women, children and the elderly at closer distances, the connotation is that the tourist is safe to explore the ‘other’.

Finally, the majority of the total images fall into the public distance category. Represented participants in this category are often depicted as strangers to the viewer who are gathered in public places (Figure 12). The characterization is not uncommon for a travel brochure as the prospective tourist has yet to make any contact with local people. In addition, despite traveling to ‘exotic’ destinations, the Western traveller might always remain strangers with the ‘other’. This idea relates back to Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) discussion of the interactive participant and how viewers are sometimes made to view the image through the point of view of the photographer. The image may connote that even the image producer or photographer is unable to move beyond the ‘stranger’ relationship with the local people.

Close Readings

Figure 13: Children in Carriage

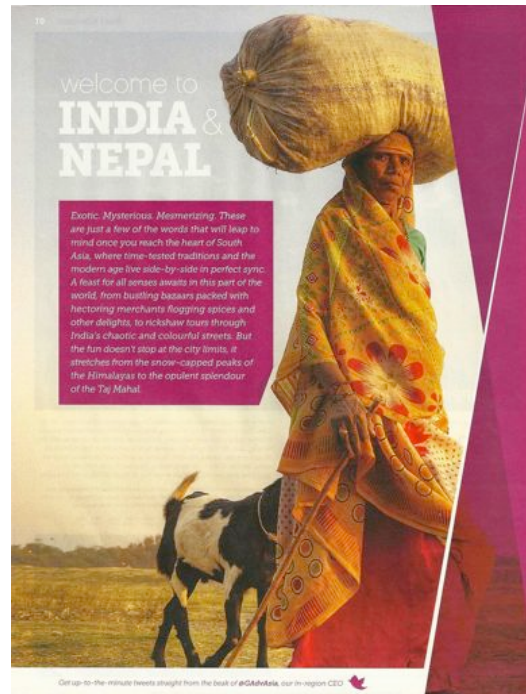


The following section provides a close reading of several images using concepts from the textual and interpersonal metafunctions. In Figure 13, three children travel by horse and carriage on a paved road through a dry landscape featuring Egyptian pyramids. Framing is used strategically in the image. For example, the diagonal vectors from the road and two pyramids guide the viewer's gaze to the boy and two girls. The same vectors also frame the children. And although the horse is closer to the reader and uses a demand gaze, the horse is blurred and hides in the shadow of the vehicle, thereby diminishing the connotation suggested by the two values (gaze and social distance). In addition, the horizontal angle of the image and individual represented participants is oblique suggesting a further detachment from the viewer. The vertical angle is high, but there is no threat of dominance because the represented participants are children who offer themselves as items of contemplation to the viewer through the gaze (the offer). Moreover, the children are represented at public distance, so they are also defined as

strangers to the viewer. In this scene, the viewer or tourist is not connecting with the local children, but observing them from a distance. In addition, the image also represents a contradiction between the methods of transportation: the outdated horse and carriage versus the modern van.

In Figure 14, a woman stands in a field carrying a large sack on her head and shepherding a goat. The image was selected for analysis because of its illustrative compositional values of Given and New (i.e. the elements placed on either the left or right). Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) argue that “the meaning of the New is ‘problematic’, ‘contestable’, ‘the information at issue’ while the Given is presented as commonsensical, self-evident” (p. 181). The Indian or Nepalese woman is positioned in the right, or New zone, while the text box introducing India and Nepal as destinations is positioned on the left, or Given. The informational value of Given and New enhances our understanding of what is clearly problematic and ‘other’. The represented participant is presented as ‘other’ not only because of her informational value, but also by the representation of traditional clothing and labour practices in the image. She is also depicted at an oblique angle suggesting detachment, as defined by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006). More importantly, the text description participates in the process of ‘othering’. The destination information is presented as ‘commonsensical’ and ‘self-evident’ because it is positioned in the Given zone. The first three words of text read, “Exotic. Mysterious. Mesmerizing” implying that it is perhaps an acceptable and obvious definition for this region in the world. The image is presenting the destination as ‘other’ not only in the representation of the women, but also in the description. In addition, the text not only defines the region, but also the woman. She is exotic, mysterious and mesmerizing.

Figure 14: Woman Elder



In Figure 15, a decorative Japanese geisha is represented holding a paper umbrella. Her gaze can be categorized as an offer because she does not connect with the viewer using a direct eye-line vector. The geisha offers herself to the viewer as a cultural icon, but also as a service provider because of her historical role in serving tea and entertaining. She is set off right from the centre element (the umbrella), but she is still the most salient object because of her bright white face in contrast with the richer hues of red and blue. Despite the contrast in colour, there is similarity in the shape of both the geisha and umbrella. The centre of the umbrella is symmetrical with the roundness of her face and is positioned in a similar oblique angle suggesting detachment between the represented and interactive participants. Furthermore, the flowers that surround the umbrella are also similar to the ones that frame her face. These features participate in equating and aligning the object (umbrella) with the person (geisha). As a result, there is little visual difference between object and subject to the viewer.

Figure 15: Geisha



The informational value system of Ideal/Real is illustrated within the image. As noted, elements in the top portion of the frame are valued as Ideal, while those in the lower portion are Real. Elements placed in the Ideal zone are “presented as the idealized or generalized essence of the information” and as a result, they become the most salient elements in the image (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 187). The Ideal/Real system is specifically used in the positioning of the geisha herself. In the Ideal section, the viewer sees her artificial, painted face and in the Real section, the viewer sees her natural olive skin hand. Vectors from the umbrella handle and the v-shaped collar of the kimono frame the geisha’s hand. As a result of this framing, the viewer’s gaze is guided to pay particular attention to her hand. In this case, there is contrast between the hand and the face that reflects the opposition of Ideal/Real. The Ideal interpretation also extends to the traditional qualities of a geisha, or a woman whose purpose is to be an object of desire, culture and service. The Ideal/Real is also evident in the text. The actual tour, called the Japan Express, highlights the best sights and attractions in the shortest amount of time. The Real is

juxtaposed with the Ideal cultural symbol (or stereotype) of Japan, the geisha. Furthermore, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) posit that the dividing planes may also have a connective element (p. 186). In the image, the geisha's hand delicately holds the paper umbrella, which extends into the Ideal plane, possibly expressing her own inner desire to personify the idealized Japanese woman. The image represents not only what a tourist may find ideal about Japan (the stereotypical image of the geisha), but also what the local people idealize as well.

To summarize, a visual analysis of these brochures reveals ideological divisions. More specifically, there is level of detachment between the represented participants and interactive participants in both brochures. Likewise, the viewer as the prospective traveler is encouraged to objectify the cultural people and participate in a postcolonial bias upon the site. Indeed, postcolonial theorists are particularly interested in the "system[s] of discourse by which the 'world' is divided" (Said, 1979, p. 41). The viewer is not often socialized to engage with the 'other' on an equal level because of the use of visual binaries. In fact, the analysis suggests there is an absence of 'us' as a group of equal individuals and an abundance of 'them' as others in travel imagery.

There were several differences between the two brochures that are important to discuss in this analysis. References to gender varied between the two brochures. For example, the Asia brochure represented women more commonly than the Middle East/North Africa brochure. In addition, Pritchard and Morgan (2000) argue that portrayals of Asia men are often emasculated, as "the young Buddhist monk or the aged, wise even stoic, Oriental," and as such, they are never sexually threatening to the white majority (p. 249). This argument is evident in the Asia brochure as well. Many Asian men are represented as either religious followers or elders or having child-like qualities. Moreover, the only representations of women in the Middle East/North Africa

brochure were two young girls (see Figure 13), two covered women in a public distance shot and Western travellers. This lack of female representation is not uncommon. Pritchard and Morgan (2000) write, “the Middle East is largely populated by men [...] often astride camels or trading souks” (p. 256).

Conclusion

It is important to examine how foreign cultures and destinations are “portrayed, packaged and presented by the cultural brokers of tourism” because of imagery’s influence on identity construction, values and belief-systems (Adams, 1984). Travel brochures may seem like a lowbrow item of visual culture and yet, some argue that tourism images are often “implicated in the politics of producing the nation” (Moors, 2003, p. 34). It is possible that images have a significant persuasive appeal in society’s understanding of foreign countries and cultures and of the society’s own identity, referring back to Hall’s (1997) earlier claim that the symbolic order of culture depends on the marking of difference.

Rose (2012) specifies that there are three criteria for a critical approach to visual imagery, “one that thinks about the agency of the image, considers the social practices and effects of its viewing, and reflects on the specificity of that viewing by various audiences, including the academic critic” (p. 17). Student travel imagery, as presented in these brochures, conveys specific attitudes and beliefs about cultures. The process of selecting photographs for a tourism text seems motivated and not a random process. The travel brochures are distributed and consumed in locations where young people frequent and in an academic environment, it is important for young people to become more critical of images as they are not always objective.

It is also important to note several limitations of this study. Because this analysis focused on postcolonialism, it is essential to convey that the theories and methodology in this paper are sourced from Western scholars. For example, I used part of Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen's social semiotic analysis, which is explicitly a Western methodology. The visual grammar they prescribe is only applicable from a Western semiotic landscape. In other words, interpretations of visual elements are decoded from a Western perspective in the same way that

the meaning of a ‘thumbs up’ gesture varies across cultures. In brief, different cultures have different codes to interpret meaning. The ‘visual grammar’ (i.e. set of codes) that I have used is set within a Western perspective.

People must be able to recognize that many images are ideological constructions, not accurate representations of reality. After all, “contemporary representations are more insidious in that they are less overt” (Pritchard, 2000, p. 248). Photographs are constructed to convey particular meanings, but these readings are never absolute. Travel images can also be a place to convey resistance and invite negotiation. In order for this to happen, the viewer must have access to other ways of understanding and seeing whether this is through their own experience, scholarly research and/or images via the mass media.

My hope is that the analysis becomes relevant not just within academia, but throughout the tourism industry as well. Outfitters, like G Adventures and other players in the industry must have a better, more equitable understanding and presentation of cultures and tourist destinations. There is also a practical need for the tourism industry to understand what potential tourists take away from images that goes beyond marketing and economy, but extends to the quality of experience and authenticity. The goal is to try and match tourist expectations with a more ‘truthful’ representation of reality, or in the very least have them reflect on the existence of a constructed worldview as suggested in critical theory. Industry can still profit from depictions of a particular place and its people, but first, visuality needs amendment. This change must occur throughout the circuit of culture, not just in the selection of images for tourism brochures.

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