A Cognitive Linguistic Study of Non-Verbal Persuasive Strategies in Selected Iraqi and Malaysian Tourism Brochures

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Abstract

The study is a part of an MA thesis; it investigates the role of non-verbal language in raising the sense of persuasion among tourists in general. The study is comparative in nature and seeks to enhance people and designers’ knowledge about image reading and the sense of persuasiveness among tourists. To meet the objective of the study, the researchers adapted a number of non-verbal techniques suggested by the following scholars: Dimbleby and Burton (1998); Jweitt and Oyama (2001; as cited in Leeuwen and Jewitt, 2004); Beasley and Danesi (2002); and Wang and Gut (2011). Data sampling is limited to four recreational panels, two Iraqi and two Malaysian. Conclusions have revealed that various shots of different angles need to be taken for each resort to sound more realistic and persuasive. Moreover, different content techniques need to be invested to evoke the associative and conceptual image in the mind of tourists to ultimately push them to come, explore and visit.

Keywords: non-verbal language, tourism, content, structure, persuasiveness.
1. Introduction

Tourism, as Hosseyni (2012) states, is "originated from the interaction among tourists, tourism service suppliers, host communities, source and target countries, universities and private organizations". It is a process that comprises attraction, transportation, entertainment, service offering, informing, guiding and managing tourists and visitors. It aims at establishing a good and effective communication with tourists.

As a sector, tourism is characterized as a significant part of any country’s economy. Accordingly, employees in tourism sectors, such as: tourism organizations, travel agencies need to be fully prepared to meet all kinds of demands made by their clients. One of these demands is tourism communicative discourse that is closely related to a wide range of cultural and political issues (Rážusová, 2009). These issues need to be counted when designing advertisements, ie., brochures. In this context, Dann (1996) states that:

….tourism, in the act of promotion, as well as in the accounts of its practitioners and clients, has a discourse of its own. Seen in this light, the language of tourism is thus a great deal more than a metaphor. Via static and
moving pictures, written texts and audio-visual offerings, the language of tourism attempts to persuade, lure, woo and seduce millions of human beings and, in doing so, convert them from potential into actual clients. (p. 2)

In this regard, Bin Salim, Ibrahim and Hassan (2012) elaborate that nowadays tourism is seen as one of the fastest increasing and spreading sectors in the world. Recently, it has also become part and parcel of the social as well as economic development. Habitually, tourism invokes images in relation to travelling to romantic and exotic destinations, separating and extending the network of relatives, friends, and acquaintances all together.

Tourism is further defined as "neither a phenomenon nor even a simple set of industries". This is because it is a human activity, which encompasses human behavior, use of resources, and interaction with other people, economies and environments (Bull, 1995; as cited in Cunha, n.d.). It includes a thoughtful relationship between humans and their environmental arena. Besides, tourism is "the set of licit activities developed by visitors by reason of their displacements, including the attractions and the means that originated them, the facilities created to satisfy their needs and the phenomena and the relationship resulting from all of the above" (Cunha, p. 111).

Hnziker and Krapf (1942) define tourism as "the sum of relations and phenomena resulting from the travel and stay of people outside their usual place of residence, provided that these travels and experiences are not used for the practice of a main lucrative activity, permanent or temporary" (as cited in Cunha n.d). Morgan and Arnette (1998; as cited in Bin Salim, Ibrahim et.al, 2012) shed light on the role of images in tourism in covering a wide range of activities and agencies. They (ibid., p. 24) maintain that the role of images reflects that of promotion aimed at persuading and influencing the audience. Accordingly, the image is utilized by tourism agents to portray the product in promotional media, i.e., brochures, websites, posters and other advertising media.

Mahadi and Al-Bahraini (2011) conducted a study on “How Language Stimulates Tourism”. According to these two researchers, tourism was classified as having two types: “Semiotic Tourism” and “Real Tourism”. By semiotic, they mean verbal and non-verbal language. To them, “Semiotic Tourism” precedes the act of “real tourism”; it “starts when people begin
searching, reading, listening to others in search for a suitable place that can be visited or toured; satisfy their needs, and that represent a source of rest, relaxation, adventure, exploration, etc.”. The building blocks of such a type of tourism is the words or the figures of a given panel (i.e., items of an image). They further called it “mental tourism” as everything is subjectively and conceptually portrayed and highlighted.

The non-verbal communication in view of Pleše and Dlačić (2015) is repeating, conflicting, replacing and highlighting or mitigating the verbal component. The former is profounder in persuasion than being merely a sub-part of the verbal component. It includes physical characteristics of a person's communication, movements and poses, and the communication environment, i.e., pictures, colors, symbols, signs… etc. Indeed, both verbal and nonverbal communication components are often used and stressed separately; and both are complementary parts in ads. Dimbleby and Burton (1998) further explain that advertisements probably communicate through pictures and words and thus people communicate through speech and non-verbal communication.

Al-Fatlawi and Al-Bahrani (2019) conducted a study entitled “Impact of Number and Type of Figures’ Identification on Accessing Caricatures’ Meaning”. They concluded that in both types of image deciphering, i.e., the strip identification of figures and the comprehensive identification, “there is no one-to-one correspondence between a figure and its highlighted concept in the mind of the participant”. This means that each participant or viewer conceptualizes the figures of a particular image in a different way, reflecting as a result his/her interest or background knowledge. In other way, each figure might have different conceptualizations by different people. That is why; it is important to have different shots of different points of emphasis to evoke the different schema within people.

Indeed, verbal and non-verbal language plays an essential role in articulating the social structures of culture mutually. However, the non-verbal is profoundly taken into consideration today by both admins and the artists to end up with such a creative work or a copy (an ad). Utterly, nonverbal communication contains all messages that people exchange beside the verbal communication; positioning celebrities, posters, images, signs and colors etc. Goddard (2001, pp.114-6) states, non-verbal means can function as carriers of
meanings; it constitutes a 'code' of their own, which is subject to cultural context. Consequently, to attract the attention of tourists and increase the sense of persuasion, designers have to invest the non-verbal part of tourism communicative discourse to the hilt. Accordingly, the present work will be dedicated to the examination of the non-verbal persuasive strategies, specifically images in two Iraqi and Malaysian tourism brochures. Such a study helps examine the different non-verbal persuasive strategies invested in the brochures in question, the number of investing each strategy, and the extent of persuasion of the brochures under study.

2. Characteristics of the Non-Verbal Language of Tourism

Generally, Kilyeni (2009) maintains that the non-verbal language has been established as one with the major influences, particularly in the area of advertisements, which includes road signs, airport announcements, brochures, restaurant menus, signs in shop windows, and different safety instructions and credit card facilities. Non-verbal language in advertising has increased considerably in importance. As such, pictures increased in size, occupying nearly all the editing space. Brierley (2002) adds that reading a print advertisement takes only 1.5 seconds on average by most people. However, copywriters have realized messages can be transferred more easily and effectively through illustrations (images); ie., they take less effort to read and a rapid impact.

For Cook (2001; as cited in Persson, 2012), visual language can have two modes: written and spoken. He further identifies "the substance" or the components of the non-verbal or paralinguistic elements to include the following: voice, tone, body language, letter size, fonts and so on. All these aspects carry additional meaning alongside the linguistic meaning. This is due to the fact that, as Cook claims, human language is featured as having "a double channel" or a "two-sided" mode. That is, all utterances carry both linguistic and paralinguistic meaning at the same time (ibid., p.72).

On the other hand, Dimbleby and Burton (1998) clarify that "media texts may be described through specialized language, or may use special language, spoken and visual" (p. 169). They also maintain that picking up some of that language in relation to visual texts is useful. Moreover, Barthes (as cited in
Epure and Mihaes, 2019) emphasizes the role of the good knowledge of visual semiotics for reading/interpretation any print advertising to be comprehensive and successful. According to Barthes (ibid.), "prints adverts are predominately visual in nature; they mainly consist of a picture that is coupled with minimal linguistic elements" (p. 251). Moreover, Barthes (1957; as cited in Al-Bahrani, Al-Saadi and Yousif, 2016) adds that signs in general have two levels of meaning: denotative and connotative.

Images as one of the non-verbal persuasive techniques are described by Brierley (1995) as being “easier to read than words: they take less effort and give the eye freer movement” (p.168). In this vein, Dimbleby and Burton (1998, pp. 196-197) list a number of points that need to be taken into account when examining images. These include: “composition” - the place of an item figure in a frame, “framing”, which consists of three types (“close up” - where only the head and shoulders can be seen, “medium-shots” -where the figures are cut at the knees, and “long-shots” - where the figures are fully presented (Jewitt and Oyama, 2001; as cited in Leeuwen and Jewitt, 2004), “colors”, “foregrounding” - placing figures to the front, “Middleground and background”, “Lighting”, “Focus”, “Perspective devices” - i.e., the illusion of the depth of an image, and “Angles” - i.e., line orientation (horizontal, vertical, diagonal, wavy). In this vein, Jewitt and Oyama (2001; as cited in Leeuwen and Jewitt, 2004) clarify the importance of angles in reflecting different senses, like that of power, detachment and involvement. The vertical shots are taken from either a top or bottom position. That is why, it is called the “bird’s eye shot”. The second type of shot is called the “eye-level shot” whereas the horizontal shot is captured from the front, back or side. They (ibid.) add that the vertical shot has a symbolic meaning. That is, when the viewer looks upwards, s/he will be dominated by the figure. On the other flip, when looking downwards, s/he will dominate the figure. Lastly, when the shot is at the eye-level, the symbolic sense will be neutral and equal.

Other features can be found in both verbal and non-verbal languages, such as the ones listed by Wang and Gut (2011): “Bandwagon” (i.e., persuading a consumer to buy, vote, give money, etc.) and join the wagon, “Beautiful People” to pull the consumers’ attention, “Testimonials” (i.e., involving famous people/ celebrities, experts or laymen/ plain folks), “Warm and Fuzzy” (i.e., the use emotional images, music, enjoyable voices, or evocative
words), “Intensity” (ie., the use of exaggerated images), “Emotive Techniques”, “Cause and Effect”, “Bribery”, which means offering free samples or giving something else), “Absence of language” as mentioned by Beasley and Danesi (2002, p. 120).

Diagram (1): Visual Persuasive Techniques (Complied and adapted by the researchers from Dimbleby & Burton (1998); Jewitt & Oyama (2001; as cited in Leeuwen and Jewitt, 2004);
3. Methodology of the Study

To meet the objective of the present work, which reads: “examining comparatively the persuasive aspect of the non-verbal language in the selected brochures”, the researchers are to adopt the techniques and sub-techniques listed by Dimbleby & Burton (1998), Jewitt and Oyama (2001; as cited in Leeuwen and Jewitt, 2004), Beasley and Danesi (2002), and Wang & Gut (2011) as stated in Diagram (1). To facilitate the process of analysis, two rubrics have been designed by the researchers based on the visual persuasive techniques listed in Diagram (1). The first rubric analyzes the structure of an image whereas the second analyzes the content of an image. As for the data of the study, it will be limited to TWO RECREATIONAL panels for the two countries selected.

4. Analysis, Results and Discussion

4.1 Iraqi Recreational Tourism Brochures

4.1.1 Analyzing the Structural Aspect of the Non-Verbal Language

To analyze the objective of the study, the researchers will start first with the Iraqi recreational panels by tackling first the structure and second the contents, as illustrated below in the Tables (1&2):

Panel (1)  Panel (2)
As far as Iraqi recreational panels, and particularly with the structural part of them, results have found the following:

1. The compositions of the panels reflect real shots and real things to be found and activities to be experienced in the areas in questions, the marshes and the waterfall. Both images contain (5) figures (ie., items). In the first panel, the focus is directed to the marshes, mashhoof, people, boats and sky (trees, far away buildings). All these components reflect the nature and originality of that place, the adventurers, tours and transport that can be done using the "Iraqi" traditional long boat or canoes, called "al-mashhoof". On the other flip, in the second panel, the image denotes a waterfall and water pouring down on rocks. A crowd of people are mountaineering and doing various water activities such as: swimming while others are content and enjoy watching the view.
2. For framing, the types of shots used are long and close-up shots, for the panels (1&2), respectively. The long shot highly fits such locations and such types of places and recreational tourism. It focuses on the area in full and gives it a semi-objective view. On the other hand, the close-up shot highlights the foreground rather than the background, reflecting, as a result, a limited and subjective view, and addressing at the same time the emotional aspect of the viewers. The first panel is limited to one shot; it is described as semi-objective. In such a type of tourism, to reflect objectivity, there should be several shots; one is long depicting the area in full and others are close-up shots portraying the details of the area. The second is considered subjective because it focuses on only one aspect which is the waterfall, discarding the other recreational activities and natural surroundings. It was supposed that when depicting people, the emphasis should be shed on their body and facial gestures, such as people's smiles, happiness, water-games enjoyment to stimulate the viewers and invite them to visit Kurdistan's waterfalls.

3. As for the colors, they are quite good as they include the following: white, light blue, yellowish brown and black in the first panel. Here, white is used to symbolize purity, plainness and simplicity; black symbolizes the shadowed image of people and reflects their hard-work life, the direct exposure to sun light, and heat; blue symbolizes tranquility, calmness, purity, and mystery as well (Beasley & Danesi, 2002, p. 41). As to the colors of the second panel, they include the following: dark brown and green; that is, the colors of the mountains and the trees to set the natural atmospheres of this destination. Besides, there is white, the color of the water, which symbolizes purity, cleanliness, day time and sunny weather.

4. Speaking of grounding, the sky, water and greenery area are set as the background for the first image. Such elements are associated with the natural scene of the marshes. The old shacks and water represent the middle-grounding whereas the boat, people and water indicate the foregrounding. As one can see, water is the basic element of the marshes and can be noticed in all types of grounding. In the second panel, the trees are set as the background of the area, the rocks and waterfall as the middle-grounding of the area and water and people as the foreground of the area. As it is seen, water is found in two types of grounding reflecting, as a result, the waterfall resort.
5. Lighting is somehow well as a reflective element to the attraction of the whole image, yet it was supposed to have lightings that reflect the different times of the day to highlight more about the beauty of the area. This applies to both images.

6. The angle of the first image is a diagonal one to signify suspense or to foreshadow that something unexpected is about to occur. However, the second image is of a frontal angle to emphasize the middle part of the scene.

4.1.2 Analyzing the Contents of the Non-Verbal Language
As for the contents of the Iraqi panels, they are as examined in the rubric below:

**Rubric (2) Contents of the First and Second Iraqi Panels**

| No. | Contents of the Visual Panel | Panel (1) | Panel (2) |
|-----|------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| 1.  | Shapes                       |           |           |
| 2.  | Bandwagon                    | A call to come explore | A call to come and enjoy |
| 3.  | Beautiful people             |           |           |
| 4.  | Bribery                      |           |           |
| 5.  | Testimonial                  | Plain folk | Plain folk |
| 6.  | Intensity                    |           |           |
| 7.  | Absence of language          | ✓         | ✓         |
| 8.  | Warm & Fuzzy                 |           |           |
| 9.  | Cause and Effect Techniques  |           |           |
| 10. | Emotive Techniques           | Empathy, adventure, originality, simplicity, tranquility, hard life, somehow deserted or less populated | Youth adventure, popularity, originality, happy times, nice weather enjoyment, crowdedness |

Regarding the contents of the Iraqi recreational panels, results have shown the following:
1. As far as the bandwagon technique is concerned, it is a resilient rhetorical device of such images in general. It is an indication of being within the same social network or joining the crowd and not missing the chance of enjoying and having fun. Such a technique is used in both panels; the first panel is a call to come and explore whereas in the second there is a call to come and enjoy.

2. Plain folk technique can be found in both panels. For instance, one can find rural people who live there and laymen or tourists who are visiting this resort. This gives the idea that this area is residential in the first panel and populated in the second panel.

3. Both panels lack any verbal language and depend thoroughly on the non-verbal language. As for the emotive appeals of the first panel, they include the following: (empathy, adventure, originality, simplicity, tranquility, hard life, somehow deserted or less populated). Here, there is a reference to empathy, which is represented in the embodiment of poverty and physical hard work of the rural life. Marshes connote to Iraqi people the originality and the past experience of ancestors which, in turn, deepen their love (patriotism) and the sense of belongingness towards their country. There is also a sense of adventure, simplicity of life, quietness, as there are not many shacks or people even the water is stand-still. In the second panel, there is a sense of youth, adventure, popularity, originality, happy times, nice weather, enjoyment, and crowdedness. In the researchers’ opinion, the second panel reflects the sense of coming, enjoying and practicing different activities while in the first, there is a sense to come and explore because the image is tranquil and almost void of people. All in all, the testimonial techniques in recreational tourism brochures are ill-used due to relying on the plain techniques solely in both recreational images.
4.2 Malaysian Recreational Tourism Brochures
4.2.1 Analyzing the Structural Aspect of the Non-Verbal Language

As for the structural components of the Malaysian panels, they are as examined in the rubrics below:

Rubric (3) Structure of the First and Second Malaysian Panels

| No. | Structure of the Visual Panel | Panel (1) | Panel (2) |
|-----|------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| 1.  | Composition                  | Water species, a diver, water plants | Boats, people, tropical trees, water |
| 2.  | Framing                      | Close-up shot | Medium |
| 3.  | Colors                       | Blue, black, green, red, Light pink, white and purple | Dark green, black and white |
| 4.  | Foregrounding                | Plants and water | Water and part of the boat and people |
| 5.  | Middle grounding             | A diver and water | Water and the full boat |
| 6.  | Backgrounding                | Water | Tropical trees, water and far away boats |
| 7.  | Light                        | Good | Medium |
| 8.  | Focus                        | Water species, the diver | Cruise, people and water |
| 9.  | Perspective                  | Subjective | Semi-objective |
| 10. | Angles                       | Low | Eye-level |
Here, results have shown the following:

1. As a composition, the first image portrays water species, a diver and water plants. These elements are essential in reflecting the real nature of that place as well as the water life of the desired destination. In the second image, the components are boats, people, tropical trees and water, typical elements of equatorial places. Nevertheless, the water is shown unclear and deep. The image further displays people of both genders and different ages, who are boarding a cruise on water. Some of them are astonished of the view while some others are smiling. At a distance, another boat can be observed enjoying the river, the forest and the species.

2. As far as the framing is concerned, the first panel is of a close-up shot, ie., echoing the beauty of the diving activity where a diver is obviously noticed as diving and mediating water's creatures, plants...etc. In the second panel, the framing is of a medium shot which is not of that great resolution. One can notice tourists' facial expressions and their body language; however, the figures and non-verbal expressions are not clear-cut depicted.

3. The colors of the first panel include dark green, black, and dark blue which are all important in depicting the underwater world. In addition, there are light pink, red, white, and purple which reflect the colors of the underwater plants. All these different colors push the viewer to come and enjoy the activity of diving. In the second panel, the colors include: dark green, white, and black which reflect the colors of the tropical places.

4. Talking about the grounding of the first panel, one can see that water represents the background of sea atmosphere. It adds mystery to the view and is associated with ambiguity and the love to come and explore. The diver and water represent the middle grounding whereas the plants and water indicate the foregrounding. Thus, one can see that water can be seen everywhere because it is the world of under the sea. In the second panel, the trees, water and far away boats represent the background; the water and full boat represent the middle-grounding; whereas the water, people and only the front part of the boat represent the foregrounding. Again, water can be seen everywhere, which is a typical milestone of tropical areas.

5. The lighting of the first panel is good as it reflects the life under the sea, which is in reality total darkness. In the second panel, the lighting is
medium and highly reflects such areas, and so helps attract the viewer's attention to the image.

6. To some extent, the perspective of the first panel is subjective as it focuses on a specific part of the life of under the water, and the beauty of life under the sea. This, in turn, addresses tourists’ points of interest and pushes them to come and enjoy. In the second panel, the perspective is semi-objective as it gives a view of the surrounding area limitedly and on people’s facial gestures as pieces of evidence.

7. The angle of the first panel is low with a high shot that is somehow titled to the left. The low angle sets that the water has a power over the viewer. The angle of the second panel is of an eye-level shot to reflect that both the viewer and the objects are equal in position ie., the destination is within the reach of every tourist.

4.2.2 Analyzing the Contents of the Non-Verbal Language

As for the contents of the Malaysian panels, they are as examined in the rubric below:

| No. | Contents of the Visual Panel | Panel (1)                          | Panel (2)                          |
|-----|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1.  | Shapes                        |                                     |                                    |
| 2.  | Bandwagon                     | A call to explore                   | An invitation to enjoy              |
| 3.  | Beautiful people              |                                     |                                    |
| 4.  | Bribery                       |                                     |                                    |
| 5.  | Testimonial                   | Plain folk                          | Plain folk                          |
| 6.  | Intensity                     |                                     |                                    |
| 7.  | Absence of language           | ✓                                   | ✓                                   |
| 8.  | Warm & Fuzzy                  |                                     |                                    |
| 9.  | Cause and Effect Techniques   |                                     | Feeling happy because of the wonderful nature |
| 10. | Emotive Techniques            | Adventure, popularity, boldness, culture | Fear, adventure, culture           |
In this context, results have shown the following:

1. A bandwagon technique, i.e., a call to come and explore is invested in the first panel to motivate the viewers to visit the desired place. On the other hand, the second panel implies a call to come, enjoy and experience the happiness of the people.

2. A plain folk technique is represented in the first panel as an unknown and a far-seeing diver whereas in the second panel, this technique is very encouraging elements to visit "Kinabatangan".

3. No verbal language has been used in both panels; this means that the designers have depended thoroughly on the verbal techniques in delivering the message.

4. The second panel has used the cause and effect relationship as it is represented by the facial expressions of people. This gives an invitational sense of coming and enjoying the resort.

5. Emotive techniques of the first panel involve using adventure, popularity, boldness, and culture. The emotive techniques of the second panel include: fear (from animals and the unknown), adventure, and culture.

5 Conclusions

Structurally, it is to be concluded that:

1. It is not necessary to have many structural non-verbal techniques, but what is important is to choose the best of them or to invest them in a good-looking way. In the selected samples, the components of nature-reflected images evoke symbolic and conceptual impressions in the mind of tourists that help affect them emotionally and later behavioristically.

2. For framing, to be objective, it is highly recommended to have a long shot and close-up shots. These different types of shots will give a comprehensive idea or realistic view about the areas in question. In both countries, the shots were limited to only one type in each panel, reflecting, as a result, subjective or semi-objective perspective.

3. Generally speaking, colors are well invested as far as the limited shots of the chosen places are concerned. It is really highly recommended for
designers to reflect the different colors of the areas at different times to be more objective and realistic, and to call more tourists accordingly.

4. Grounding is well invested in all of its types in both samples, reflecting the different layers of focus of the resorts in question.

5. Lighting is well invested though limited to the chosen shots. It is highly recommended to portray the resorts at different times, reflecting, as a result, the various serious and romantic lightings.

6. Angles were limited to one type in each shot. That is why, it is highly recommended using different angles to reflect an objective view of the places.

7. Structurally speaking, all these non-verbal techniques affect the psychology of tourists, help forming the building blocks of the conceptual and mental image, and highlight different associative meanings; a matter that ultimately pushes tourists to act forward.

From the contents point of view, it is to be concluded that

1. Generally, the samples of each country use almost the same number of the content non-verbal techniques, ie, majorly (4). However, it is highly recommended to invest and include other types of testimonial, cause and effect relations, experts, beautiful people, and bribery techniques to pull tourists’ attention to the place persuasively. The more realistic and reflective shots, the higher the level of persuasiveness is.

2. Again, the contents of any panel represent the decoration of the building blocks of the highlighted conceptual meaning in the mind of tourists. They further add flavor to the basic and real features of the place. Thus, having figures (ie., components of an image) without texts increases the level of imagination and mental touring to places. This conclusion is in line with Al-Bahrani et. al (2016) who maintain that the lack of language “has given the freedom to the respondents to construe it in different ways proving as a result White’s idea (2012, p. 29) in that an ‘image is polysemous’”.

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3. The figures (i.e., items of an image) in the structural aspect of images should be read together with the entire contents to give a comprehensive point of view and enhance the various emotive senses that differ from a tourist to another. This conclusion is in line with Al-Fatlawi and Al-Bahrani (2019) in that “in both strip and comprehensive identifications of figures, there is no one to one correspondence between a figure and its highlighted concept in the mind of the participant”. This means that different emotive meanings can be highlighted by different tourists when viewing an image, reflecting, consequently, individual differences as far as their points of interest, psychology and their points of emphasis as well.

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