DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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Title of the dissertation

Photographic Messages in Tourism Advertising. Advertisers' Planning for the Production of as well as Potential Tourists' Interpretation of Photographic Messages in Tourist Brochures

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Goal and objectives of the dissertation

The overall aim of the dissertation is to further the understanding of photographic message communication in tourism print advertising. The primary aim is to describe how the production of photographic messages is planned by tourism organisations, and to describe the intended photographic messages of tourism organisations communicated through tourist brochures. The secondary aim is to describe and analyse how potential tourists interpret photographic messages in tourist brochures. The tertiary aim is to analyse what factors associated with market segmentation influence the fit between the intended photographic messages of tourism organisations in their

brochures and potential tourists' interpretation of the same messages. The factors tested are age, dominating travel motive, gender, nationality and travel frequency.

Methodology

Two Swedish tourism organisations and one international tourism organisation were studied to describe the planning process. This involved interviews with six advertisers responsible for the planning for the production of photographic messages were conducted. Then seven potential tourists from Germany, Great Britain, Serbia-Montenegro, Sweden and Switzerland were asked in an interview to describe and analyse their interpretations of photographic messages. In the third study, 740 potential tourists from these countries were studied to analyse what factors associated with market segmentation influence the fit between their interpretations of photographic messages and tourism organisations' intentions when using them. The quantitative data was analysed using chi square tests.

Theoretical conclusions

Tourism organisations plan and produce informational and transformational photographic messages. Informational photographic messages aim to inform potential tourists of the attractions destinations have to offer (e.g. nature). Transformational photographic messages aim to appeal to potential tourists' travel motives (e.g. relaxation). Informational photographic messages are interpreted by potential tourists in the way that tourism organisations intend them to be, more often than transformational photographic messages are. Potential tourists' interpretation of photographic messages is influenced by past experience. Factors such as gender, nationality and travel frequency significantly influence the fit between potential tourists' interpretation of photographic messages and the intention of tourism organisations.

Practical application of the dissertation

Advertisers may consider producing informational photographic messages intended to inform potential tourists that a destination offers interaction. They may also produce transformational photographic messages with the purpose of enticing in the potential tourists' ideas of relaxation, the enhancement of kinship relationships and the facilitation of social interaction. Photographic illustrations of beaches evoke thoughts of nature and activity, as well as reasons for travel such as relaxation and enhancement of kinship relationships. Boats and people illustrated in photographs have connotations of activity and interaction, as well as the travel motives such as the escape from a perceived mundane environment, relaxation and enhancement of kinship relationships.

Content of the dissertation

Abstract of chapter one

The first chapter highlights the theoretical and practical relevance of print advertising and its problem areas have been discussed. Definitions of major concepts, intended theoretical contribution and practical implication are described. The purpose of this thesis and its delimitations is also outlined.

Abstract of chapter two

Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework including a literature review of ways to communicate messages and advertising strategies. Issues like informational and transformational advertising are discussed. Literature on semiotics is introduced to enhance the understanding of potential tourists' understandings of photographic signs. Literature about motivation is described to help illustrate potential tourists' associations of photographic messages with motives for travel.

Abstract of chapter three

Chapter 3 presents the methodological approaches of three studies conducted in this dissertation.

Abstract of chapter four

Chapter 4 presents how three tourism organisations (two Swedish and one international), plan for the production of twelve photographic messages (four photographs from each tourism organisation) in tourist brochures. Interviews were conducted with six advertisers working for these three tourism organisations.

Abstract of chapter five

Chapter 5 describes and analyses how seven potential tourists interpret the twelve photographic messages of three tourism organisations. The focus here is on how and why potential tourists classify the photographic messages under various photographic motifs and how and why they associate them with travel motives. Interviews with seven potential tourists from Germany, Great Britain, Serbia-Montenegro, Sweden and Switzerland were conducted.

Abstract of chapter six

Chapter 6 presents a study on how 740 potential tourists from Germany, Great Britain, Serbia-Montenegro, Sweden and Switzerland interpret the twelve photographic messages of the three tourism organisations. The purpose is to analyse which factors associated with market segmentation such as age, gender and nationality influence the fit between potential tourists' interpretation of photographic messages and the intentions of tourism organisations.

Abstract of chapter seven

Chapter 7 presents the conclusions of the three studies mentioned above. Theoretical contribution and practical implication are also discussed. The suggestion of further research is also presented.

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