

## Making Tourism Marketing Work for You in the FL Classroom

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### Abstract

This paper shares strategies for using advertising, specifically Tourism Marketing, as an authentic source of language in higher education foreign language classes. The various agents, texts and voices in French, Spanish, Portuguese, and English demonstrate the relevance and timeliness of authenticity, particularly as connected with teaching adults. Thus, from knowing why something should be learned and valuing error and experience as learning activities to actively planning and evaluating their instruction, problem-centeredness fuels the intrinsic motivation of foreign language users in higher education. The languages and images of commercial goods, like Port wine and Jerez brandy as well as touristic products, services, and iconic images, reveal important considerations not only about theories of visualization that support foreign language users but also about the stereotypes promoted in a number of advertising campaigns. The cultural dimensions existing (or missing) in Tourism Marketing, including the campaigns which have been literally translated, provide a wealth of learning experiences for teaching not only language but also intercultural competence. When promoted effectively in the language classroom, this consideration can lead to greater recognition of cultural variation and promotion of student strategies for developing skills in global effectiveness. This investigative perspective of Tourism Marketing, ranging in selection for the discerning teacher from graphic and semiotic richness to a plethora of cultural and linguistic messages, highlights the potential for cross-cultural understanding.

**Keywords:** Foreign Language Teaching and Learning, Intercultural Competence, Realia, Tourism Marketing, Higher Education

### Introduction

The selection of quality teaching material from artifacts of the advertising culture for use in the foreign language (FL) classroom is made promising by its prominence – in magazines, newspapers, books, and in mailboxes, on billboards, streets, TV, the radio, and the Internet. In any place, advertising itself shows up in many different forms with many purposes, including commercial or social interest. Advertising does more than motivate buyers by attracting them, awakening interest, and instilling desire before the final acquisition of a specific product; advertising is also about communication (Baylon and Mignot 1994). In fact, the link with communication and the subsequent appeal of advertising to internationalization and plurilingualism was identified nearly a century ago as follows.

*La publicité est la fleur de la vie contemporaine; elle est une affirmation d'optimisme et de gaieté; elle distrait l'œil et l'esprit. Un art qui fait appel à l'internationalisme, au polyglottisme, à la psychologie des foules, et qui bouleversent toutes les statistiques ou dynamiques connues, en faisant une utilisation intensive, sans cesse renouvelée, et efficace*

*de matières et de procédés inédits [Advertising is the flower of contemporary life and an affirmation of optimism and gaiety; it distracts the eye and the spirit. It is an art that appeals to internationalism, plurilingualism, the psychology of crowds, and that shakes up all the known statistics and dynamics by making constantly renewed intensive and effective use of topics and of fresh processes]. ([authors' translation of] Cendrars 1927: 5)*

Advertising actually transmits a message that goes far beyond trying to sell a specific product because an ad works on the imaginary, the *subjective*, and the desires which condition the way a given people live and think. For the purposes of this article, advertising artifacts (hereon, *realia*) drawn from Tourism Marketing as an authentic source of language in higher education FL classes provide support through various agents, texts, and voices in French, Spanish, Portuguese, and English. For this paper on teaching strategies, the relevance and timeliness of the authenticity of these materials is paramount, particularly as connected with teaching adults (cf. Knowles 1968, 1980; Knowles et al. 2005). Thus, to direct these activities toward students in higher education, teachers are expected to have a firm grasp of the essential characteristics of these learners: from (i) their awareness of why something should be learned to (ii) valuing their own errors as essential information to enhance their progress and experience as well as (iii) their active involvement in the planning of learning activities and (iv) the need to regularly evaluating their instruction. Added to all of these features of learning, the problem-centeredness made possible by enhancing learning activities through Tourism Marketing has shown to fuel the intrinsic motivation of FL users in the English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese classes to be discussed in higher education.

In addition to suggestions for best practice with teaching through this material, the article will further explore the way that languages and images of commercial goods, like Port wine and Jerez brandy as well as touristic products, services, campaigns and iconic images, reveal important considerations not only about theories of visualization that support FL users but also about the stereotypes promoted in a number of advertising campaigns. The possible cultural dimensions in Tourism Marketing, including the campaigns which have been literally translated, provide support for developing learning experiences for FL users in the classroom and for enhancing intercultural competence. It is the authors' experience that, when promoted effectively in the FL classroom, this consideration can lead to greater recognition of cultural variation and promotion of student strategies for developing skills in global effectiveness on the labor market. This investigative perspective of Tourism Marketing, ranging in selection for the discerning teacher from graphic and semiotic richness to a plethora of cultural and linguistic messages, highlights the potential for learning FL and promoting cross-cultural understanding.

## **Ads as authentic sources for teaching FL**

Using advertisements in the classroom provides an opportunity to explore this diverse range of texts and genres as the conjunction of many elements, be they psychological, social, economic, and/or linguistic with their use of varying figures of speech and style, especially for argumentation and persuasion. In addition to these characteristics, the language used in advertising includes many non-verbal signs and icons for persuasive and dynamic expression. Just as FL users in the classroom share and defend their ideas, putting into practice their dialogical speaking competence, ad copy (the text of an advertisement) implies an interaction between the two interlocutors – the writer/speaker and the reader/listener. The message of the writer/speaker may manipulate the reader/listener toward a given path, using both the text and the associated image. These advertising images, especially those created for Tourism Marketing,

provide a focus for teaching and learning FLs and cultures (Venison 2005; Raza 2004; Tomsky 2013). Fully aware of the distinction between advertising and marketing, the authors note that the fact that a number of ads for commercial products, such as Port wine and Jerez brandy, which are later adopted as icons of a country and its culture, acquire a dual role of marketing the country as well. In other cases, sports and cinema stars serve as representative spokespersons of their countries or even adopted cultures, as do visual icons and colors.

## The intercultural aspect of Tourism Marketing

As an authentic document rich in its implicit culture, speech acts, stereotypes, caricatures, stories, jokes, and the humor of a given society, ads are ideal tools in the FL class, where students are learning about “the other” while simultaneously learning about themselves and their own first language (L1). Critically informed selection so that the ads are balanced between descriptive and prescriptive sources of the target language will help the teacher create an environment in which FL users are more apt to contribute with their own observations and interpretations. This active involvement in their own learning process, through improved and motivated participation, can be strengthened by scaffolding with adequate lexical preparation for apparent and implied colors, shapes, planes, positioning, and perspectives. The teacher will then be better able to facilitate a diversity of contributions that will reinforce the needs of FL users in higher education. Namely, in the learning constructs promoted by the Bologna Process and by researchers in adult motivation for learning (Kapp 1833, in Thorpe et al. 1993; Knowles 1968, 1980; Knowles et al. 2005; Holmes and Abington-Cooper 2000, Włodłowski 2008; Rothwell 2008; Merriam et al. 2012), relevance and problem-centeredness are essential characteristics for materials and objectives in the classroom. Focus on the material selected to solve a given problem removes direct attention from the FL itself because language use becomes a means rather than an end (Coyle 1999, 2008; Coyle, Hood and Marsh 2010; Morgado et al. 2015; Arau Ribeiro forthcoming). Tourism Marketing *realia*, oriented by objective and specific goals which are realistic, measurable, achievable, and time-bound (cf. Walqui 2006; Włodłowski 2008), set up the lesson plan in higher education where intercultural competence is promoted for greater global mobility and better citizenship (cf. McKay 2000, Byram 2008).

The current learning perspective toward the media, a vehicle for advertising and marketing, supports building a solid and long-lasting educational base to be able to deal effectively with ads and the media in general. With the proper multimedia tools to deal with the need to share knowledge in the Knowledge Society, students are better able to also deal with cultural diversity as well. In recognition of the preponderance of the media, UNESCO has published an educational media kit (UNESCO 2006) to provide a tool to help understand the basics of dealing with short films and, especially, ads. Because it was conceived to be worked on by a group of professionals in collaboration, teachers, students, parents, and other professionals can acquire the competencies needed for decoding the different types of messages and information and the challenges posed for global citizenship and culture in any media-based ad (Hall 2001 [1980]). Note that, overall, while the connections that are established among the different collaborators are as important as the comprehension of the object, the sign, and the signifier (cf. Saussure 1966 [1915]), also per Hall (2001), the ability to decode these media texts and the actual decoding produced by consumers may contrast dramatically with the ideology at the base of the encoding by those who produce the media text.

## Theories of visualization applied to FL teaching

Best practice for learning about cultural diversity and otherness from ad copy and marketing images draws on the theories of visualization according to the champions of semiotics – Charles Sanders Peirce, Ferdinand Saussure, and Jacques Bertin – especially in terms of graphic representation based on the combined principles of communication of standard logic for writing (Peirce 1998 [1931-1935], Saussure 1966 [1915] in Lotman 1990) and for topography (Bertin (1983/2010 [1967]) in the contemporary world, including the “object” (what is represented), the way it is represented (the “sign” used), and what is interpreted (the “signifier” per Saussure), where the signifier is the effect caused by the sign in our minds. The dyadic relation of signifier and sign for Saussure (cf. Thibault 1997) is expanded on by the triumvirate proposed by Pierce, which considers the sign to be the physical form of the object and the object as it is codified in the world as well as the meaning decoded by the interpreter him/herself. This recognition of the integral role of the third party (here understood as the language user) (cf. Atkin 2013) is what Bertin also encouraged in his study of Topography, as studied by contemporary students of Tourism. Accordingly, WHAT is represented is as important as the WAY in which it is REPRESENTED and the way it is INTERPRETED.

The graphics and semiotics in ads can offer cultural messages and suggest stereotypes worthy of debate, many of which have long been promoted about a product or company that tends to be construed as representative of a specific culture. Ads offer a specific unification of diverse linguistic and iconic signs which are, simultaneously, different and inseparable, in what Spitzer (1978) called the *image-texte* [or textual image]. Consequently, a multitude of pedagogical possibilities is opened up for FL teaching/learning when the teacher remembers the various perspectives available from visualization theories since these textual images become the game pieces for playing in the classroom.

The activities involve not only discovery of the message or even the slogan, explicit and implicitly, visible and invisibly, direct and indirectly conveyed, but also their oral and written comprehension and production. Narrative structures and intercultural notions can be explored and developed from the roots up as can the central idea and tangential but highly suggestive concepts. Stereotypes promoted over the years in a number of campaigns also serve as a warning regarding the creation of an image that can be taken out of context in a world that current generations would prefer to describe as increasingly intercultural.

Intercultural understanding as an overarching objective of the FL experience, nevertheless, requires a deep understanding and belief in mutually reciprocal relationships among and between cultures. Interculturalism itself can be said to exist when social structures and everyday interactions are defined by justice, mutuality, respect, equality, understanding, acceptance, freedom, diversity, peace-making, and celebration. This contrasts with the superficial and polite social interaction characteristic of multiculturalism, which tends to value tolerance and celebrates the others’ culturally distinctive outward expressions of culture, such as cuisine, dress, music, dance, and even those cross-cultural approaches, which require intentionality and programs of education and community-building to build bridges of relationship by sharing, listening, learning, and being open to change (cf. Kramsch 1995; Fries 2002; von Münchow 2012).

To best use *realia* in Tourism Marketing in higher education, the approach will also have to respect the FL users by reinforcing proactive learning behavior so that they (i) actively plan and evaluate their own instruction and (ii) value error and experience as learning activities. When they know why something should be learned, this understanding fuels their intrinsic motivation.

These teaching strategies together can be taken as general best practice for teaching in higher education; they acquire more importance with this material since it could be rejected as a tool in the classroom based on simple over-familiarity. Notwithstanding, it is this everyday experience that will give these FL users the preparedness to deal with material that is prominent in their daily lives.

## Selecting and preparing Tourism Marketing material

The agents involved in these valuable and synergistic components are the government authorities that promote a selected message via Tourism Marketing, companies, marketing firms, the media, teachers, students, and other people. The voices to be explored are those of plurilinguals, characterizing all FL users in a multilingual world, although for this study the languages and people are limited to those who speak French, Spanish, Portuguese, and English as an L1/L2 (or L3 or more, of course). The focus is on authenticity, based on the guiding philosophy that a real case scenario is preferable to something that is fabricated (Richards 2001, Kilickaya 2004), and the use of culturally relevant material to encourage interaction in the classroom. The texts themselves can be diverse but the format of communication in Tourism Marketing tends toward official ads, ad copy, news items (oral and written), school presentations, homework, and word of mouth. Classroom activities can aim toward developing strategies for finding the message(s) through graphics and semiotics as well as cultural and linguistic messages, all of which promotes the development of skills in global effectiveness, which includes not only the knowledge but the competence to effectively use tools to be a great communicator, bridging cultures and power differences competently. Scaffolding activities aim to stimulate the discovery and application of specific terminology for the description to include the aforementioned colors, shapes, planes, positioning, and perspectives as well as size, location, textures, sensations, and emotions.

In determining the focus of a FL lesson, teachers will learn to set up a relevant problem based on the proposed material. The discovery of which tools are missing from their own communication "kit" will become rapidly evident when faced with the types of dynamic activities suggested in the following sections. Before launching into the demonstrations of thriving learning and problem-solving activities for enhancing FL use and intercultural success, however, a few caveats must be mentioned. Note that, since the current trend in advertising is uniformity due to the globalization of brands, it is increasingly difficult to study the specificity of a country through the image that comes across in ads when they are so similar around the world. To better understand this dilemma, consider the consistent images, for example, of Lego, Zara, and BMW across countries. Nevertheless, when an ad is in fact conceived specifically for a particular country, the specific verbal and non-verbal message(s) and slogan are fine tools for interpreting the society, its values, and traditions.

## Using Tourism Marketing material

In general, to promote FL use for describing and characterizing the Tourism Marketing images and text, scaffolding can include word games, proverbs, and/or typical expressions. Interpretations of the image followed by guided and/or free writing practice provide ready support and reinforcement for the FL components used during the activities, of particular importance since the writing originates with the FL user. This writing evidences the previous knowledge and promotes the new competencies in a different context, beginning with their own

perspective of the description and moving on to include the connotations and information that the message may carry as well as relevant concerns and contrasts with other material.

Similarities and differences related to citizenship, eating habits, clothing styles, leisure activities, personal and family relationships, and celebrity worship as revealed in ads can be the building blocks to establish enriching contributions to FL exploration that offers a view to understanding basic sociocultural aspects. Developing intercultural competence includes knowing what (and what not) to do or say in a given situation, which can be characterized according to what is found in current and retro ads just as it can be defined by what is traditionally found in textbooks and classic or modern literature. Awareness and interpretation of the ads in the culture of the “other” can prepare the FL users for the realities of these other countries and make them more readily adaptable in the face of conflict, misunderstanding, and stereotypical representation.

By establishing comparisons that relate other realities with their own cultures, FL users also learn more about their own culture in addition to reaching metalinguistic goals (Martínez 2005). In terms of classroom behavior and professional preparation for citizenship, the commitment to constructive criticism and clear, rational explanation must be regularly reinforced from the first day of classes.

Using current ads of marketing campaigns draws student attention to the official press produced about a given country, strengthening their interest and curiosity about another culture. The visual cues and slogans can inspire any number of classroom activities and encourage contrasts with the campaigns for other countries.

## Some sample lessons

As can be seen in a variety of lesson types, intercultural and sociolinguistic developments, autonomy in the FL, and desirable citizenship is encouraged because their confidence in knowing the other as well as themselves is raised. For example, when analyzing slogans and designing counter proposals, students who studied in a small inland town reversed their self-esteem issued related to the capital city through the drive and motivation to promote their own previously maligned town based on a comparative study of Tourism Marketing in European City Centers.

Based on another written text promoting a town, FL users collaboratively brainstormed, designed, and presented new graphics for the logo of the town based on its offer as described in the text. The group and/or individual presentations of these creations promoted not only teamwork and leadership but also recycling of the descriptive FL components of the place in question. When comparing and contrasting two or more places, discussion and writing about similarities and differences that were identified helped to scaffold the discovery process, activating prior knowledge and basing new competencies on this previous experience.

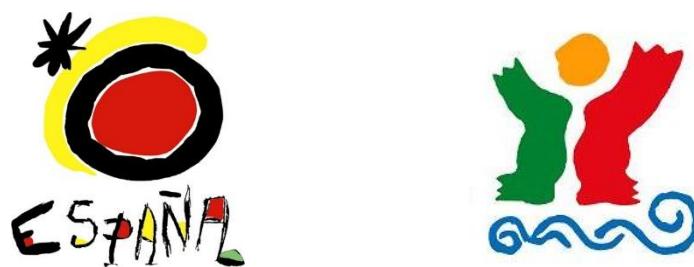
In analyzing two historical ads for the same product over time, changing gender and cultural stereotypes were identified as were different approaches toward leisure. Porto Cruz, the Portuguese Port wine company, has had a campaign running in France for three decades with the slogan “Porto Cruz, pays où le noir est couleur” [Porto Cruz, the country where black is a color]. Analyzing whether black can be construed as a color can remain technical or be taken into metaphorical and sociological areas of discussion, inspired as well by the silhouette of a Portuguese woman on the label of the wine bottle, whose appearance seems to reflect the modernization of the country over time. Early on she wears black as a grieving widow; later, as a society girl, she wears the classic black dress for a night on the town. To practice dates and

decades, these observations were classified on a timeline to be updated and the alterations were clearly identified, exercising FL use of the comparative and superlative forms among other language forms.

To pick up on this black theme in Portugal, classroom discussion may turn to other symbolism of black in the country, such as the black of the students' traditional suits in higher education [the *traje académico*] and Fado, the national heritage music acclaimed by UNESCO, or even the simple elegance of black as seen in society from the caterers to the musicians and the people in high society. Curiously, Porto Cruz introduced their rosé wine in 2010, and was elected as the best ad of the year (Debain 2010), with the slogan "Pink, Porto Cruz" but without the woman's silhouette, aiming this time for the female target market. Pink, this time, was a mark of glamour, festivity, and elegance, which in the FL classroom was treated as an opportunity to research color therapy and sexual stereotyping.

Offering opinions and making suggestions for improvement is another useful thread, reinforcing the active role of the FL user whose opinion actually matters and whose input is valued. Teachers who have the opportunity to teach more than one FL, as well as teachers who manage to work with those teaching other FLs, will find it interesting to plan lessons that interrelate Tourism Marketing discoveries between and among countries, regions, and cultures.

Based on the official logos for Spanish and Portuguese tourism, the similarity of the color palette and references to the sun seem to reflect the Iberian Peninsula as a whole, as if the countries were actually working together. While each logo (in images 1 and 2 below) is based on the colors of their respective national flags, Portugal's includes an anthropomorphic suggestion as to its maritime history and close associations with the sea, whereas Spain's incorporates the spirit of their internationally renowned artist, Miró.



**Figures 1 and 2 – Official tourism logos for Spain and Portugal**

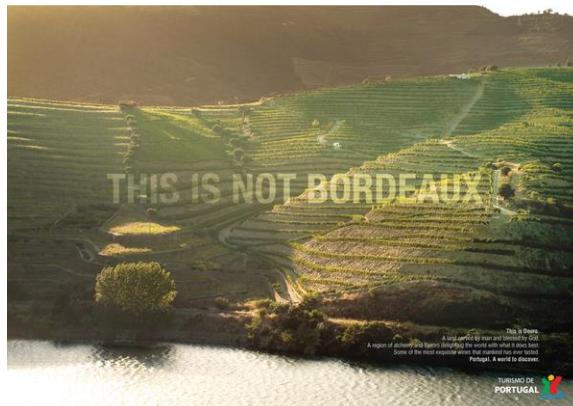
The tasks and problem-solving that can be based on these and other observations can draw in other countries at the discretion of the participants. From flags and tourism logos to national icons, the discovery can set sail to any number of research assignments to unveil not just differences but also similarities among countries and cultures as based on their projected traditions.

An inspiring search for images online that can be assigned will reveal that even the vibrant colors of the current logos have changed over time for both Portugal and Spain, with campaigns moving away from the pastels and watercolors of up to the 1970s. The selected iconic images tend to include monuments, beaches, drums and Fado for Portugal, flamenco for Spain, and bulls and bullfighting for both countries. Shared icons can lead to carefully researched debates or even spontaneous sharing of initial reactions to the identified topics, such as bullfighting, or the justification for international recognition of a musical heritage, such as fado.

To understand the way a country might be seen from abroad, a search of Internet images using keywords like “Portuguese icon”, at the time of presentation, resulted in the famous Google doodle of writer Fernando Pessoa, a Portuguese guitar, a blue and white tile, and Cristiano Ronaldo with the Portuguese flag, a soccer ball, and a net. In an English course for Portuguese students, an examination of the relevance of these icons to the youth of today revealed that they identified exclusively with the final icon of the FIFA tri-champion and further labeled the other images as created for tourists who are not interested in knowing the “real” Portugal.

The specific language of communication of the tourism marketing campaigns themselves, as well as the themes identified, further reveals the identity of their target market and the discussions that can be focused on issues of mobility. The altered spelling of the Algarve into ALLgarve in Portugal’s tourism campaign for the region was considered an offense by speakers of Portuguese but it was readily identifiable to an English-speaking target market, dominated by the British, Dutch, and German.

In a recent campaign by Turismo de Portugal, the agency responsible for promoting and regulating tourism in the country, the target public is unexpectedly provoked by the claim that a given place in Portugal “is not... Bordeaux” or “is not... the Côte d’Azur”, with the accompanying images in the following ads.



**Figures 3 and 4 – Turismo de Portugal: sample campaign ads “This is not...”**

Portuguese regions that are very similar to these regions in France can attract multitudes. Note that, while France has its Bordeaux region and its wine, Portugal has the Douro region and its Port wine. While France offers the Côte d’Azur, a region full of beaches and sun, Portugal has the Algarve with beaches that are equally attractive and the same temperature as those in the south of France. Then, as a counterpoint to the unusual negative language of this marketing

campaign, Turismo de Portugal also presents a campaign with the slogan “The beauty of simplicity”, exemplified by the following examples.



**Figures 5 and 6 – Turismo de Portugal: sample campaign ads “The beauty of simplicity”**

The focus on the food, *mexilhões na cataplana* [mussels cooked in a *cataplana*], has frequently served as the classroom inspiration for reporting on favorite and/or curious recipes, which lend toward language practice in sequencing, phrasing, and the discovery of specialty vocabulary. The landscape itself can open the students' horizons to the field of literary description, as represented by the awe and beauty portrayed by the Romantics in poetry, short stories, and art.

## Conclusion

Advertising, as an uncontested art form of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries (cf. Spitzer 1978), offers a number of possibilities for teaching, covering the language and intercultural competences that students need to develop. These, in turn, adapt to the myriad practices in their learning so that the students' autonomy of expression is developed and content is differentiated in FL teaching. Advertising makes it easier to access some hidden meanings in a system of representations full of social and cultural patterns and awakens curiosity to cultural similarity as well as difference, resulting in a more critical stance on the discovery of explanations of the choices made in advertising. In addition to image, the accompanying text in an advertisement may be the reflection of how language is really spoken in current society since advertising tends to follow the changes in society in an attempt to be as up-to-date as possible since, although it is not reality, it is the image of reality. As such, this authentic material evolves with time and calls for practices that are less common in the traditional classroom with its appeal to experimentation and innovation in teaching and learning.

As has been shown through specific examples drawn from Tourism Marketing and related stereotypical icons, advertising provides motivating material in and out of the FL classroom

because students come to understand that so much can be learned from these real images and/or texts. This exposure will optimally set off open debate in the classroom over ideas, convictions, and proposals for paths to take.

By using advertising as a valuable instrument in the classroom, teachers can potentially reach results that could never be expected from more conventional classes. By connecting experiences and interpretations of images from advertisements, students can be guided toward more critical skills and a greater concern for discovery and analysis to become contemporary poets of the modern world, surrounded by citizens who are aware of the importance of images and text in society.

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