| **RESEARCH ARTICLE**

Representing Islam: The Portrayal of Religion and Gender Through Fiction in Travel Literature

Meriem Rafik [1] ✉ **and Jamaa Ouchouid[2]**

[12] *Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, Cadi Ayyad University, Marrakech, Morocco*

Corresponding Author: Meriem Rafik, **E-mail**: qahtaanmushrif@gmail.com

| **ABSTRACT**

This study investigates Western orientalist viewpoints in the promotion of non-Western tourism destinations. The research focuses on narratives produced by Western advertisers which incorporate themes of religion and superstition. The study aims first to identify orientalist ideologies embedded within promotional discourse. Additionally, it examines the power dynamics exerted by advertising entities over both the Western tourist and the local Moroccan population.

1. Introduction

This article focuses on a study based on the concept of representational theory within the scope of tourism advertising. Furthermore, this study explores how orientalist doctrines shape the way advertising entities promote non-Western destinations. The research examines the marketing tactics used by Western advertisers to persuade their target audiences. Moreover, this work also highlights the influence of power dynamics in shaping tourism narratives. The importance of this research lies in its contribution to understanding how discourse and power relations are reflected in the promotion of Marrakech as a non-Western travel destination. Marrakech, a city in Morocco, was established in 1070 by the Almoravid dynasty and has been a significant contributor to the country's historical and economic development.

The social power which this article tackles is based on the textual discourse produced by Western advertisers in the promotion of Marrakech. Moreover, we are interested in revealing the type of language which foreign advertising entities project onto their promotional discourse. This language is laden with power dynamics which undermine Moroccans through fictional narrations. Likewise, this discourse revolves around a viewpoint which represents Arabs as an extremely pious group that resorts to extreme measures in order to rise up to religious expectations. As a result, this discourse builds on the foundational grounds for power dynamics which influence the Western tourist and undermines Moroccans.

This article will demonstrate how Western advertisers create an image of exoticism and peculiarity and assign it to the travel destination of Marrakech. This study indicates that this discourse attracts the Western tourist and alienizes the Moroccan community.

2. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative methodology grounded in critical discourse analysis, aiming to expose and challenge the ideological misuse of power present in discourse. Moreover, this study is based on a model of analysis constituted of van Dijk's critical discourse analysis framework. Critical discourse analysis or CDA is an approach which focuses on power dynamics in

discourse. However, critical discourse analysis does not present a simple construct to analyze social phenomena. Instead, CDA focuses on integrating a multimodal analysis to the any given conceptual framework. Therefore, CDA can be considered as a discipline which embodies both linguistic and sociocultural elements in the interpretation of discourse. It is important to note that it is primordial for the researcher to gather the necessary tools which prove to be relevant to the analysis.

Van Dijk's (2000), (2001) way of practicing CDA is based on three analytical levels: discourse, cognition, and society. The first level includes language. The second level is understood as an ideational perspective, which includes ideologies, belief systems and ideological representations. The third structure is viewed as an interpersonal medium which combines social groups and structures together. Moreover, this level tackles the mechanisms of power processes which influence and affect racial and cultural prejudice. In order to conduct a relevant analysis which examines the power dynamics in discourse, one must account for a medium which links language or discourse to social drawbacks, such as racism and discrimination. This medium is based on the ideational interpretations of language speakers. According to van Dijk (2001), these interpretations are part of our mental representations and constitute the interface between the levels of discourse and society. Once we define these interpretations, we begin to constitute a relevant contextual analysis to our study.

The dimensions of cognition and society are the main levels responsible for defining context in discourse. From an applied standpoint, the definition of context is achieved through the implementation of ideational mediation. This concept examines the writers' discourse by their representational interpretations which are influenced by their social and cultural backgrounds. Although a contextual analysis helps the researcher examine the power dynamics in discourse, it does not necessarily provide an in-depth study into the participants' social and biological motives. To elaborate, the participants' discourse is adapted to, and not defined by their age, race and gender. Instead, the participants' discourse is influenced by the interpretive perspectives they have about what they are talking about and to whom their discourse is addressed. The participants' interpretive perspectives are recognized as the contextual frameworks, which represent certain events and are stored in episodic memory. These frameworks are categorized using elements such as time, location, participants, identities, roles, achievements, and social relationships. This ideational representation is referred to as the situation models. Additionally, when people narrate these experiences through discourse, their narration changes depending on the audience. In other words, the content of the discourse is influenced by the personal mental representation of both the speaker and the listener involved in the communicative interaction.

The model used for this study is built on two essential components: the interactional context and the linguistic properties. The first component is built on a study of the context of our analysis, which incorporates an evaluation of the situational background of our data. In this segment we will be using van Dijk's (2000) tools of context analysis. First of all, we will start by situating the setting. This component defines the overall situational context of our data. Furthermore, the setting is responsible for providing the contextual foundation for the relevant representations of the communicative situations. Additionally, this feature shapes the social domain of the communicative event of discourse by providing an elaborate evaluation of the macro-level of the situational context. Secondly, we will examine the participants of our discourse through their communicative role, social and national identity, and their interpersonal relations among other participants. Next, we will assess the performative roles of the participants. This step determines the nature of the kind of action the participants engage in within the communicative event. Lastly, we will address the shared social knowledge of the participants involved in the interactional event. This feature identifies the shared morals, attitudes, and ideological orientations of the participants. Speakers/writers tend to share similar moral and ethical codes with their in-groups, or people and communities who share the same social and ethnic backgrounds. Therefore, it is primordial to highlight these key features in order to enrich the context of the communicative analysis.

To develop a thorough contextual analysis, our ideological model incorporates a theoretical foundation rooted in various marketing tools commonly used by advertisers to make their advertisements more attractive to target audiences. In promotional discourse, advertisers advertise Marrakech's monuments by employing a range of strategies designed to enhance the appeal of their promotional discourse. This approach can be seen as a strategic manipulation of power dynamics, enhancing the persuasiveness of the advertisements. This type of power is linked to orientalist ideologies which are embedded in the discourse used by advertising entities. The advertisements generate influence over two main participants: foreign tourists and the Moroccan community. Tourists are influenced through affect-based advertising, which aims to trigger emotional responses rather than relying on forceful arguments and rational persuasion (Fennis & Stroebe, 2010). Meanwhile, this kind of discourse also has repercussions for the Moroccan population, primarily through the reinforcement of Western ideological viewpoints about the Orient. The most relevant affect-based advertising theory in this study is tied to Dann's (1977) push and pull theory which is considered to be the most relevant explanation for tourist stimulus and motivation. The push features can be explained as an innate drive within humans for escapism. The pull features are considered to be the marketing tactics and devices elaborated by advertising entities to render their promoted destinations more appealing to potential customers. (As cited in Morrison, 2019). This framework elaborates on the notion of escapism by explaining it as a form of motivating drive for tourists to get away from their usual and familiar space to experience the unusual and exotic.

The emotional need that advertisers are seeking from their audiences is the need to feel peculiarity and strangeness toward the Moroccan culture. We may expand on the notion of peculiarity in our data through the promotion of Moroccans' beliefs in strange phenomena connected with notions of superstition, magic, myths, and old wives' tales. We shall connect this point with

Burton and Grandy's (2004) assessment on the relationship between the rational and orderly, almost scientific universe and its juxtaposition to another where notions of ghosts and demons allude to mystical and mysterious denotations which produce an independent reality from the natural laws of science. This particular promotion of the strange and unknown is advertised through a series of stories which make up for a projection of the Western advertisers' beliefs on the Moroccan culture. Additionally, these fictional narrations portray the religion of Islam as a phenomenon alongside with the Moroccans' attachment to occult related beliefs and practices.

The linguistic properties include tools of analysis which evaluate the cognitive features of orientalist doctrines. Accordingly, we will be using van Dijk's main discourse feature, (meaning). This category includes several sub-categories which are meant to analyze power plays in our promotional discourse. The meaning category is responsible for interpreting the ideological viewpoints of participants is discourse. Since the concept of meaning is complex, we strive to elaborate on its properties through the following sub-categories: actor description, implication, and presupposition. We use actor description whenever we intend to analyze how characters are presented in discourse by language users. Moreover, these descriptions often fall into several patterns linked with group ethnicity, cultural norms, functions, beliefs, etc. In this case, Western advertisers may present Europeans (in-groups) positively and non-Westerners (out-groups) negatively. Implication is used in discourse by language users to communicate degrading information about out-groups in an implicit manner. Presupposition is a tool used to uncover any illegitimate or irrelevant information in discourse. Accordingly, participants may generate a discourse which presents unclear or debatable arguments.

3. Data Collection

Our data is composed of two paragraphs taken from the following travel guides:
- Lonely Planet e-Pocket Marrakech Travel Guide (2017).
- Insight Guides Explore Marrakech (2019).

These travel guides use a promotional discourse which aims to exoticize and chastise several religious aspects of Islam. This Western representational viewpoint is based on a sequence of fictional storytelling reflecting the authors' viewpoint and perception on the Moroccans' beliefs regarding local lore and legends. Furthermore, this viewpoint reinforces the orientalist dogma which views Arabs as unscientific and authoritarian beings who believe in Islam's tyranny and inclusiveness.

Our data sourcing is composed of excerpts taken from two different travel guides, with the first guide predating the second. This procedure has been chosen to evaluate how the promotional discourse has evolved over time. The data of this study plays a key role in examining our research problem, which investigates how advertisers exert influence on tourists, while affecting the religious and social fabric of the Moroccan community. The travel guides are authored by foreign writers, and are selected to illustrate how Western viewpoints on the Orient are conveyed through promotional discourse. This selection offers valuable insight into the ways these guides perpetuate specific narratives about Islam, while also influencing how potential tourists make decisions regarding their travel destinations.

4. Analysis

Our analysis begins with an examination of the interactional context of our data. This section investigates the ideological processes of the overall context of the excepts taken from the travel guides[1]. The interactional context embodies several properties which will help situate the context of the paragraphs of our data in conformity with the field of tourism advertising.

The interactional context of our analysis introduces the setting of the communicative event of our excerpts. The promotional discourse is set in Marrakech. The participants include the advertiser and the target audience. The communicative role of the advertiser is that of an author/addresser. The target audience features the Western tourist who may also be the reader, holding the communicative role of the addressee. The national identity of these participants is of Western origins. The social identity of the addresser is an advertising entity, and the audience's is that of travelers/tourists. The relations between participants are based on a dynamic of power relations initiated by the advertising entity and applied on the tourist through persuasive tactics. The advertiser attempts to persuade the tourist to visit the promoted areas by encouraging their feelings of curiosity through the represented exoticism and peculiarity of Marrakech's historical and architectural monuments.

This viewpoint is reflected in the advertisers' stories which represent a reflection of orientalist doctrines. This frame of reference aligns with the action of this communicative situation in its reliance on promoting Marrakech's monuments through a storytelling sequence initiated by the advertiser. This action initiates a narrating procedure which embodies the representational beliefs of the Western advertiser on Moroccans. The shared social knowledge between the advertiser and the target audience revolves around the Western beliefs and opinions on non-westerners, and more specifically Moroccans. This shared social understanding rests on the orientalism viewpoint which recognizes Arabs and Islam as a homogenous phenomenon distinguished by its lack in objectivity and knowledge derived from scientific methods and disciplines.

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[1] For practical purposes, we will refer the travel guides of our data by their titles and not by their authors' names

In the following paragraph, the advertiser tells the story behind the Koutoubia mosque's minaret and describes it as a local legend, while simultaneously underlining the inclusivity and authority of Islam. "The minaret is topped by a spire of copper balls, sticking up antenna-like and glinting in the sun. Once made from gold, local legend tells that the balls were 'gifted' to the mosque by the wife of Almohad sultan Yacoub al-Mansour, who melted down her jewellery as punishment after being spotted eating during Ramadan fasting hours." (Lonely Planet e-Pocket Marrakesh, 2017, p. 46). In this passage, the advertiser portrays the sultan's wife as a victim who suffered consequences for eating during the fasting period. After a thorough examination of this paragraph, we may notice that the advertiser portrays the breaking of the fast of the Almohad's wife as an act of great defiance which needs to be repented through punishment. The act of penance regarding the sultan's wife discloses that the advertiser implies that Islam is a discriminatory and unforgiving religion that requires penance for any misconduct. This discourse thus represents Islam and its followers as authoritarian figures who are not capable of forgiveness. This observation thus reveals that this passage contributes in underlining the negative deeds of Arab Muslims. This reflection means that Arabs are represented as authoritarian figures who follow a religion which shows no mercy towards transgressors by demanding material offerings. Additionally, the made-up story behind the melted gold jewelry made into spheres would create a sense of wonder and curious bewilderment within the tourist and thus succeed in encouraging them to visit the minaret with the gold globes. To conclude, the advertiser performs a story-telling like discourse in order to attract the target audience's attention while simultaneously reinforcing the orientalism-based viewpoint which views Muslim Arabs as pious followers of an authoritarian religion which requires sacrifice and punishment upon any wrongdoing.

The following passage promotes objects as symbols of paranormal knowledge in the daily lives of Moroccans. "Doors are often works of art, impressively studded, sometimes with a smaller inner door (for humans), leaving the larger for heavy loads or donkeys. A potential gateway for djinn (demons), doors are often decorated with prophylactic symbols such as eyes, hands or geometric motifs." (Insight Guides Explore Marrakech, 2019, p. 123). In this paragraph, the advertiser describes the architectural designs of traditional Moroccan studded doors, while simultaneously highlighting their decorative designs as warding symbols for supernatural entities. This declaration shows that the advertiser aims to showcase the Moroccans' convictions on the power of symbolic spirituality and its connection with the supernatural. The only difference between this excerpt and the previously analyzed one lies in the object of such superstitious beliefs. In this passage, the advertiser communicates that Moroccans believe that doors represent a gateway for demons and that is the reason why they are decorated with warding symbols. Regardless of which object the advertiser chooses to represent as an item for Moroccan superstitious beliefs, one thing is certain: this representation communicates a negative portrayal of Moroccans, one that differentiates Orientals from Westerners. The reason why superstition is deemed negative in this study is because of the long-established disparity between Westerners and non-Westerners or what Bruhl (1910/1966) calls 'primitives', as they are characterized by living in a different reality than westerners, a reality based on beliefs in the supernatural powers of magic. The difference between these two disparate realities implies that Westerners live in a developed and progressive reality while non-Westerners, or Moroccans in this case live in a reality dominated by aspects of social declination and regression. This analysis touches down on two points. The first one is about the Western advertiser's opinion on Arabs being unscientific groups who blindly believe in the supernatural powers of the occult. The second point is based on a mere logical advertising tactic which aims to implant feelings of curiosity and wonder within the tourists' thought processes in order to persuade them to visit the promoted site.

We may retain from this discourse that Westerners represent Muslims as believers in magical and almost transcendental phenomena. This observation reveals degrading insinuations from the advertiser towards Moroccan Muslims, and recalls Said's (1979) reflection on a viewpoint of orientalism which presumes that Islam is an undeveloped, unscientific phenomenon that is incapable of progress and evolution. The repetition of this discourse in the recent travel guide confirms the fact that the advertising entities are adamant to portray Moroccans as believers in magic and supernatural entities. This viewpoint diminishes from Moroccans through an implicit communication on their lack of knowledge and scientific objectivity.

5. Conclusion

In promotional discourse, Western advertising entities see Islam not as a religion but as an authoritarian and unitary phenomenon which imposes strict rules and regulations on its followers. This outlook presumes that Arabs (or Moroccans in this case), are tyrannical beings who are incapable of self-development, lack scientific and objective knowledge, and are therefore considered backward and somewhat primal in their lifestyle conduct. This viewpoint is communicated through a series of stories narrated by the advertising entities, highlighting the representation of Islam's authority on Muslims. Additionally, this promotional discourse also reflects the represented backwardness of the Moroccan community's belief in folk stories, legends, and supernatural phenomena. These observations lead us to understand that Islam's representation as a tyrannical phenomenon and the Moroccans' attachment to occult-related practices authenticate Western orientalist dogmas. From a promotional perspective, these series of fictional stories represent the advertisers' aim to persuade their target audiences to visit the city of Marrakech through the advertising strategy of curiosity. To elaborate, the advertising entities seek to spark the tourists' emotional appeal of curiosity through the peculiar and exotic aspects of the Moroccans' beliefs in the strange and peculiar

myths and legends they are represented to believe in. Additionally, these findings confirm the efficiency of emotional effects of promotional discourse on potential tourists.

Conflict of Interest Statement
The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this article.

About the Author(s)
Jamaa Ouchouid is a full professor at the faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, Marrakech, Morocco. His areas of interests include Linguistics Translation, Culture and Education.

Meriem Rafik is a doctoral student. She is a member of the laboratory of Translation, Intercultural Dialogue and Knowledge Integration at the faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, Marrakech, Morocco.

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