

# **The Language of Ecotourism**

## **Doctor of Philosophy**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research examines the construction of language in the field of ecotourism through a number of disciplines and discourses. Following Graham Dann's (1996) lead in investigating tourism texts through a socio-linguistic study of language, I focus on the niche of ecotourism to look specifically at the way nature is represented within its texts. An increasing body of interdisciplinary research is developing with a bias towards describing environmental discourses through political, managerial, sociological and business lenses (see Cohen, 1978; Haenn, 1994; Hall & Kinnaird, 1994; Hollinshead, 2000a; Jones, 1987). This bias creates a gap in the literature on ecocritical, discourse analysis and sociolinguistic reviews of ecotourism language (Dann, 2012). This research is important because it demonstrates how the methods used by discourse and its operations, such as marketing and promotion, are deployed to transform ecological space into a commodity. Political and cultural discourses position nature as a theme within them to perform a host of utilitarian functions. Creative writing, travel writing, copywriting and poetics all contribute to the methods through which ecotourism is promoted, constructed, understood, consumed and desired. Fundamental to understanding the importance of language in creating the experience and identity of ecotourism is the role of the Internet: its keywords, search engine techniques, consumer feedback capacities and websites. Websites allow destination managers to create a direct relationship with an international audience of potential guests.

By reviewing literature from different disciplines and producing a new set of comprehensive data, I contribute to the literature on ecotourism by demonstrating how it produces and is produced by culture in ways that influence the design and promotion of marketing material by the tourism industry. Ecotourism emerges as a scene conflicted by its construction through multiple disciplines and discourses; creating an ambiguity with political and ideological consequences. I examine the key themes, discourses and ideologies present in ecotourism and how these interact with the conservation, industry, socio-political and policy agendas implicit in its texts. I investigate how tourists and destination managers engage with ecotourism as a business, literary, tourism and cultural activity to enrich knowledge about ecotourism's story, business and rhetoric and how it is constructed to appeal to tourists; who are in turn assumed to hold certain sets of ideologies.

Certification of Thesis

I certify that the ideas, work, results, analyses, interpretations and conclusions reported in this thesis are entirely my own effort except where otherwise acknowledged. I also certify that the work is original and has not been previously submitted for any other award, except where otherwise acknowledged.

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Signature of candidate

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Date

Endorsement

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Signature of Supervisor

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Date

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