
Learning Activity

Nature Images: Constructing “nature” in Visual Culture and Ads

Summary

Students observe and reflect on photographs of “nature” and then explore how nature imagery is used in advertising. This activity consists of two parts. First, students view images of nature and write words or phrases they associate with the images and they engage in a discussion about their word choices. Next they explore how nature imagery is used in print advertisements.

Learning Outcomes

- *Media Literacy*: Students will develop media literacy skills by critically analyzing how nature is utilized in advertisements to convey messages and influence perceptions.
- *Emotional Intelligence*: Students will enhance their emotional intelligence by recognizing and articulating the emotions and feelings evoked by nature imagery.
- *Critical Thinking*: Through discussions and analysis, students will practice critical thinking skills in evaluating whether the portrayal of nature in advertisements is realistic or idealized, fostering a deeper understanding of media representations.
- *Message Decoding*: Students will learn to decode and interpret the values and messages advertisers aim to communicate through the use of nature imagery, promoting a nuanced understanding of advertising techniques.
- *Persuasion Awareness*: By identifying techniques and strategies used to make nature imagery more appealing or persuasive, students will gain insights into the persuasive power of advertising and its impact on consumer behavior and decision-making.

Time Required

25-40 minutes (depending on how many images are used)

Procedure



The purpose of this activity is to have students explore how our understanding of nature is constructed through experience, language, culture, and media.

Preparation: [Use the accompanying slidedeck](#) or create your own. It consists of two parts: 1) a series of nature photos and 2) advertisements that use nature imagery.

Part 1: Using a slidedeck of nature images, show each slide for ten seconds and ask students to write the first three words that come to mind in reaction to each image. Instruct them to not self-censor and to write whatever associations come to mind, even if it seems odd or nonsensical. Refer to the guiding questions for a follow-up discussion.

Part 2: Show slides of print advertisements with nature imagery and ask students to discuss how it is meant to trigger emotions and associations.

Guiding Questions

Part 1:

- What kinds of words were used (descriptions, emotions, associations, etc.)?
- Why did you choose these words?
- What is the source of these associations?
- Are these associations based on direct experience?
- How many of these associations come from culture or media?

Part 2:

- How is nature used in this advertisement to convey a message or sell a product?
Encourages analysis of the role of nature in the advertisement's messaging.
- What emotions or feelings does the nature imagery in this advertisement evoke in you?
Prompts reflection on the emotional impact of the imagery.
- Do you think the portrayal of nature in this advertisement is realistic or idealized? Why?
Sparks discussion about the authenticity of the nature portrayal.
- What values or messages do you think the advertiser is trying to communicate through the use of nature in this ad? *Encourages exploration of the underlying messages conveyed.*
- Can you identify any techniques or strategies used in this advertisement to make nature more appealing or persuasive? *Prompts analysis of the advertising techniques employed to enhance the appeal of nature imagery.*



Background

Corbett, J. B. (2006). [Communicating nature: How we create and understand environmental messages](#). Island Press.

Chapter six is focused on nature imagery in advertising. [Borrow for free from the internet Archive](#).

López, A., & Ivakhiv, A. (2024). When do media become ecomedia? In A. López, A. Ivakhiv, S. Rust, M. Tola, A. Y. Chang, & K. Chu (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of ecomedia studies* (pp. 19–34). Routledge.

Helps explain how the concept of “nature” is socially constructed, and puts it into a historical context. [Free open access chapter](#).

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