



ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Discourse, Context and Media

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/dcm

Think small. The construction of imagined tradition in German "Land"-magazines



Carol Marley, Gertrud Reershemius*

Aston University – School of Languages and Social Sciences, GB – Birmingham, B4 7ET, United Kingdom

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 5 July 2016

Received in revised form

24 October 2016

Accepted 25 October 2016

Available online 2 November 2016

Keywords:

Land magazines

Discourse

Corpus linguistics

Multimodal analysis

ABSTRACT

This article is the first linguistic analysis of a new category of lifestyle magazines in the German speaking countries, based on methods of corpus linguistics and multimodal discourse analysis. Since the launch of the magazine *LandLust* in Germany in 2005, more than twenty publications of so called "land magazines" have appeared on the market, attracting millions of readers. Our research analyses land magazines as discursive events. We examine the specific combination of discourses land magazines are serving or creating by looking at the semiotic practices – writing and images – they manifest themselves by. Our results show that the magazine under scrutiny does not simply provide new forms of escapism but also positions itself politically in subtle ways as part of the traditional-conservative spectrum by reacting to metalinguistic discourses such as purism and feminist criticism.

© 2016 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction: "Land-magazines" as discursive events

In November 2015, the English version of the popular German lifestyle magazine *LandLust* (literally 'country pleasure') was launched in the UK, ten years after its first appearance and surprise success on the German print media market. Since its launch it has led to the development of a new category of lifestyle magazines, the so called "Land-magazines" (LMs), read by millions and currently dominating the displays of newsagents in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Since 2012, Germany-based multinational publishers such as Burda and Bauer have started to design similar titles for the UK market.¹ With the English version of *LandLust*, *Landwirtschaftsverlag*, the publisher of the magazine that started the trend of land magazines ten years ago in Germany, is now following suit. While the success of LMs in English remains to be seen, they have turned into a major trend in the German-speaking countries with millions of copies sold at a time when the

print media market generally is facing major challenges (see for example Milewski (2009)).

The success of LMs indicates that their discursive representations of the social world currently have a strong appeal to consumer audiences (Matheson, 2005).

In this article we therefore analyse the specific set or formation of discourses that constitute LMs in the German-speaking context. For our analysis we focus on the magazine *LandLust*, the market leader and originator of the LM trend in Germany in order to identify its discursive formation and discuss its appeal to consumer audiences in the German speaking societies at the beginning of the 21st century. Our approach to discourse analysis is a post-structuralist one. Based on Foucault (1989, 1991) we define discourse as a complex system of all things being communicated semiotically in a particular context or on a specific topic which are as discourses part of a network of relations of power and identity constructions (Matheson, 2005:10, Warnke, 2008:39).

More recent theoretical discussions in sociolinguistics underline the complexity of social contexts in which semiotic practices occur. Blommaert (2007) therefore suggests applying the concept of *polycentrism*, which views any semiotic manifestation as the result of communicative processes of evaluation, directed by various different centres, for example institutions, peer groups, or influential individuals such as parents, teachers, partners etc. For the context of LMs we can assume accordingly that their discourses are not homogeneous entities but directed by a number of centres within the magazine, such as for example the general editorial approach, the department of advertising and merchandising, the department

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: c.n.marley@aston.ac.uk (C. Marley), g.k.reershemius@aston.ac.uk (G. Reershemius).

¹ Two multinational publishers based in Germany launched LMs for the English market three years ago: Burda Media's contribution is called *LandLove*, introduced to the UK market in 2012. In the same year, Bauer Publishers also launched their LM *LandScape* in the UK. According to the Guardian (29.3.2012), *LandScape* supposedly markets itself as "a haven from the pressures of modern living, a chance to slow down and a reminder of the good things in life." <http://www.theguardian.com/media/greenslade/2012/mar/29/bauer-magazines> (accessed 8.11.2015). Both publications started with 40000 copies per issue (Meier, 2015).

that invites news about events from outside institutions. These centres within LL are projecting and promoting different discourses, as we will show below. As with discourse in general, these can be partly intended by the producers of the magazine, but to a certain extent they might be also unintentional, as they are part of a wider discursive network that currently represents social realities.

While LMs contribute to and create discourses, they are at the same time semiotic products: they are generated by a team of media producers in order to reach their target audience – consumers – and sell copies. We focus on the linguistic practices underlying LMs as products and as communicative practices, based in social contexts.² In addition, media discourses are always multimodal, and we therefore need to examine how media – in this case the LMs – “use language and images to construct meaning in society” (Smith and Bell, 2015:406).

LandLust (LL), the magazine we focus on in this article, was launched with 70000 printed copies in 2005 by *Landwirtschaftsverlag Münster*, a publisher that had thus far concentrated on professional magazines for farmers such as *Top Agrar*, *Milchrind* or *Land & Forst*. The original target audience was farming families. However, it soon became apparent that the magazine was a huge success and that its appeal was significantly broader than the farming communities originally envisaged as its main audience at a time when most German print media were in a state of crisis (Milewski, 2009). Since 2005, the number of LL-copies sold has steadily increased and has long passed the one million threshold: during the third quarter of 2013, LL sold 1,041069 copies per issue (AWA, 2013). Each copy sold, however, is read by multiple readers, so each issue of LL was actually read by 3.75 million people in 2013, increasing to 4.46 million per issue in 2015 (AWA 2015). LL appears six times a year and its audience consists predominantly of women (75%), a majority of them 40–59 years old (AWA, 2013). In 2008, 85% of its buyers were exclusive readers, which means that they did not consume any other comparable magazines (Milewski, 2009 on the basis of data from GfK Roper Consumer Styles). Only 15% of LL's current readership belong to the originally intended target audience of farming families. The majority of LL readers own their houses, have a garden, live in places with fewer than 20,000 inhabitants and earn slightly more than the average income in Germany (Statistica, 2014). The magazine's success shows that the concepts underlying LL seem to have hit a nerve and to have been new for German readers.³ LL also triggered a trend in the German print media markets: in the wake of LL's success, more than twenty other LMs have been launched over the last ten years, although none of them has been as successful as LL. Adding up the audiences of all LMs we can assume that five to seven million readers in the German speaking countries read LMs on a regular basis.

The question arises why since 2005 increasing numbers of readers in industrialised societies of late modernity are drawn to LMs. Journalists in almost all major German language newspapers have raised this question at some point over the last ten years, partly on the look-out for remedies for the ever decreasing print media market, partly in order to analyse the zeitgeist. Amann et al. (2012) for example underline that the rural idylls evoked in LMs have nothing to do with reality of life in the countryside. Most commentators agree that reading LMs is a form of escapism and that the countryside has become a projection screen for those who feel disenchanting with the promises and pace of modern life (see

also Riehl (2010), Seifert (2010), Stock (2011), Sauerbrey (2012), Brämer (2014), Haffner (2015) and Meier (2015)).

The research we present in this article contributes insights which allow us to add new aspects to both the questions and the answers raised above: we see the success of LMs as a discursive event that combines a specific set or formation of discourses at a specific point in time (Foucault, 1989). The aim of our research is to describe this formation and its semiotic manifestations – writing and images – which constitute LL.

The main research questions we address are:

- Which specific formation of discourses can be identified in the LM analysed?
- How do these discourses manifest themselves semiotically in the writing and the images of the magazine?
- Do the discourses identified contribute to current political debates?

In order to answer these questions we apply an approach that combines corpus assisted and multimodal discourse analysis, thus ensuring that the multimodal discourse analysis is built on a quantitative basis. The following Section 2 is dedicated to data and methodology, followed by the corpus analysis in Section 3. In Section 4 we examine typical examples of the visual aspects of the magazine, in Section 5 we discuss our findings.

2. Data and methodology

The basis of our analysis is an electronic corpus of all texts published in a year's cycle of LL. On the basis of frequency lists and collocations – frequent patterns of co-occurring lexical choices – we establish dominant topics and identify underlying discourses. We thus follow the methodological approach of corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS) (see, for example, Mautner, 2007; Partington, 2004, 2006; Stubbs, 2001). CADS adds a quantitative dimension to discourse analysis by not only uncovering patterns of linguistic practices that might otherwise have been overlooked but also by indicating the frequency of their occurrences. CADS focuses on lexical choices: in order to signify a specific concept, media producers for example have a large repository of words at their disposal. Their choice of certain words and collocations over others contributes to a particular representation of the content they are communicating. Van Dijk (1995:259) famously gives the example of the choice between the words 'terrorist' versus 'freedom fighter' for an extremist activist, depending on the ideological stance of the media producer. Words that seem to be neutral can transport ideology when put into specific discursive patterns or when co-occurring with certain other words as collocations: “Collocations are especially interesting to investigate, as they can point to the salient ideas associated with a particular phenomenon. In doing so, they can provide indications as to how the phenomenon is frequently framed in discourse” (Jaworska and Krishnamurthy, 2012:406). Collocations are normally widely shared within linguistic communities of practice (Stubbs, 2001:35), so that frequent words and collocations can be seen as directly connected to underlying discourse patterns (Baker, 2006:47–69; Spitzmüller and Warnke, 2011:36). Thus, corpus linguistics analyses language as a collection of discourse data resulting from communication with language, particularly in the area of media analysis, for example on issues such as the media representation of feminism (Jaworska and Krishnamurthy, 2012), climate change (Grundmann and Krishnamurthy, 2010), homosexuality (Baker, 2004), refugees (Baker and McEnery, 1996; Gabrielatos and Baker, 2008) or Islam (Baker et al., 2013; Törnberg and Törnberg,

² For the interplay between text, context and discourse see for example Auer (1995), or Blommaert (2005:39–67).

³ Since the 1990s several so called “Country Magazines” following British examples such as *Country Life* were published in Germany but were not nearly as successful as the LMs. *Country Life* for example targets a different, more upper middle class audience.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7532678>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7532678>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)