The paper by Pritchard and Morgan (2001) argued that historical, political, and cultural discourses constrain the nature and use of tourism representations utilised by various tourism marketing bodies in their branding initiatives. The report will discuss this later, using railway posters as examples. Railway posters came from the years 1905-1965 (Highlands and Ireland) and 1914-1990 (Wales). The number of samples is uneven (what might cause false arguments during comparison) – 60 posters of the Highlands, 59 of Ireland and 88 samples of Wales. In most cases, railway posters were produced by companies like London Midland & Scottish Railway (LMS) and British Railways (BR). These railway posters were produced for the general public of all ages and genders, with the intention of promoting rail travel and encourage people to use railway transportation.

Based on a detailed examination of all the posters, using extensive, superficial and quantitative methods, we identified several key symbols and features that appeared most often on the posters. These key symbols provide useful information for distinguishing between intentions and methods of depicting railways across the UK. These key symbols are presented below as a bar chart, followed by the summarising table and a detailed description of the posters. To make our results clearer, and coherent we decided to divide them into two big categories; category *natural features* include hills, animals, water bodies, beaches, and category *anthropogenic features* include trains, people, boats, harbours, bridges and buildings.

**Figure 1.** Counted occurrence ofnatural features for three different regions depicted on railway posters.

**Figure 2.** Counted occurrence ofanthropogenic features for three different regions depicted on railway posters.

**Table 1.** A tabularised summary of qualitative data and dominant features of railway posters (RP) for three different regions across the UK The percentage was calculated as a proportion of the total number of all features.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **RP Highlands** | **RP Wales** | **RP Ireland** |
| **% of counted natural features** | 66.89 | 43.9 | 50.34 |
| **% of counted anthropogenic features** | 33.11 | 56.1 | 49.66 |
| **Key symbols** | Hills, lakes | Beach, people | Boat, sea, shamrock |
| **Season** | Autumn | Summer | Not very pronounced |
| **Weather** | Cloudy | Sunny | Sunny and partially clouds |
| **Use of colours** | Darker | Brighter | Brighter |

Firstly, it's crucial to remember that how landscapes and destinations are portrayed has a big impact on how people think about them (Pritchard and Morgan, 2001). Tourism representations do not exist in a vacuum; they are inextricably linked to a cultural cycle in which representations employ and reflect identity and pictures are constantly produced and consumed (Hall,1997). There is an idea that people often connect Wales with the sea. Although it is true that the Highlands have coastlines as well, there is a crucial difference in usage of these shores. Wales has better climatic conditions, which allow people to swim in the sea and enjoy sunny days on the beach. Sadly, the Highlands railway posters portray this region as a very gloomy part of the country, and certainly not as a holiday destination, as in the case of Wales. This marketing representation could have a significant negative impact on historical, political and cultural processes. Also, there is an idea that the meaning and representation of Wales are changing, and because of changing socio-cultural discourses, its identity is being debated (Pritchard and Morgan, 2001).

Next, the interesting evidence is that although Ireland’s posters are used to promote railway transportation, 20 of them depict boats and only 2 of them depict train. This might be caused by the fact that Ireland is an island state, and the rest of the UK must use boats in order to approach it. For example, in front of a ship, the poster depicts a connecting express train on a bustling quayside in Fishguard Harbour, Pembrokeshire. There is also an idea that passengers may conveniently take their cars on the steamer and travel with them. A similar concept applies to the posters of Wales, which include 20 posters with boats and 23 posters with trains. Conversely, neither trains (only 6) nor boats (only 4) dominate the Highland posters, and they rather rely on purely natural landscapes.

On the posters, text is limited (Wales and Ireland use a bit more text than Highland’s posters), and vast space is devoted to a picture. Most of the railway posters use inscriptions in their lower part and point to the place which is depicted on the poster (e.g., Loch Etive, Inverness, Snowdonia, Portrush etc.) together with short slogans such as: by train, more trains shorter journey times or where holiday fun begins. The font of a text is neutral, without pronounced artistic elements, with a mostly darker colour and medium size. All posters consist of cartoon paintings (there are no photographs) and are mostly in the same style. However, Wales and Ireland posters also include different styles, where there is no such thing as a painting of landscapes, but rather just an abstract style with a train and concrete timetable, or some other artificial visualization. Another feature which is used in these posters is a representation of the posters such as maps of a particular region showing different train stations and sightseeing.

To examine Wales first, in five cases, posters depict only one person, who is often a young, good-looking, smiling woman in a nice dress or swimsuit. At first sight, this woman is full of joy and happiness, which inconspicuously encourages you to visit the particular place depicted on the poster. The rest of the posters are either without the presence of people and depict only a landscape, or in the case of 29 posters, there is some group of people, mostly present on the beach or on a meadow. There are mostly larger groups, such as families with children or couples, having fun together by playing various games or talking on a sunny day.

In comparison, the Highlands posters contain people only in 12 cases, where 4 posters depict only one person, and the rest depict a larger group of people. Two posters show an illustration of the legendary Scottish folk hero and outlaw Rob Roy. Once he is presented as a big figure in the middle of the poster with a fighting atmosphere, surrounded by the rain. On the other poster, he is depicted together with other men preparing to ambush the military, beside Loch Katrine. Another famous person depicted on the poster is Prince Charles Stuart, landing at Loch-Nan-Uamh in July 1745, prior to his unsuccessful invasion of England. Other posters illustrate a group of Scottish men dancing in traditional dress, with the Highland games taking place in the background, or a Scot dancing the Highland Fling, accompanied by a piper.

In the case of the Ireland posters, they are somewhere between Wales and the Highlands, there are 20 posters containing people. It is more difficult to find some pattern as in previous posters because people are depicted in various situations and don’t represent one universal mode of illustration as in the case of Wales. For example, there is a woman standing on the cliff with a dog, on the other poster passengers are seen eating, drinking, dancing and relaxing on the various levels of the ship, group of people playing golf, or indoor spaces of Midland Station Hotel in Belfast, which are full of people eating and chatting together. Also, as in the case of Highlands posters, people are predominantly used in the background, and the focus is often on boats (either small fishing boats or a big cargo steamer), seas, or places popular for tourists such as The Giant's Causeway, Ulster (traditional Irish province), Portrush, or Dublin).

We can observe a strong contrast in how people are presented in the Highlands and Wales posters. Whereas Wales’s posters use people as a dominant feature, mostly in the foreground and emphasize its significance, the Highlands' posters rely on the notion of pristine nature without people and use them mostly in the background. Moreover, highlands ' posters depict people in a traditional way (as Highlanders) in a concrete region with traditional clothes and other elements (e.g., pipe). Wales' (and Ireland's) posters prefer people in a casual way, with a sense of summer, wearing light clothes or swimsuits. Therefore, all regions have different target groups of people. Someone who doesn’t like wild nature will rather take a train to sunny Wales and spend days on stunning beaches. Also, this may suggest a stronger and longer cultural history of Highlanders than Cymry or Irish people.

In terms of buildings, Highland railway posters use this feature in a very limited number of scenes, often depicting them as small villages or lonely cottages in the middle of nature. Wales and Ireland’s posters illustrate it as small coastal towns. There is also usage of castles (see figure 2), where Wales lead and its railway posters include specific castles (or abbeys) such as (from those that are recognizable) Tintern Abbey (2), Rhuddlan Castle (1), Harlech Castle (1), Caernarvon Castle (1) and Conwy Castle (1), all castles are set into amazing natural scenery. Usage of historical buildings may have beneficial consequences and encourage people to visit particular places (and use railway transportation).

Symbols (see table 1) play an important role and allow us to better examine discourse analysis. There is a presence of the three-leaf clover (shamrock) on four posters, which has been considered as an unofficial national flower of Ireland for centuries. On posters, the position of these shamrocks is not very dominant and rather represents symbolic value as a main feature for attracting people’s attention.

Animals could also be seen as some form of symbolism, and they are used in posters for all three regions, although in a slightly different way. Unlike the railway posters in Ireland and Wales, which depicted animals in the background and with little significance, some of the Highland railway posters depict deer as the poster's most prominent feature. This is not surprising given that the European Red Deer is synonymous with Scotland and Celtic culture in general. In overall, occurrence of animals is as follows: RP Highlands – 7 animals (3x deer, 2x fish, 1x cows, 1x sheep), RP Wales – 9 animals (1x sheep, 1x parrot, 2x seagull, 2x dog, 3x horse), RP Ireland – 6 animals (1x dog, 1x cattle, 1x horse, 1x fish, 2x seagulls). The reason why seagulls are illustrated there is the notion that this bird is typical of the sea, beach, and sunny days, which is often presented on Wales and Ireland railway posters.

Another important feature of posters, which is used very often, is water bodies in various forms (lakes, rivers, seas). As figure 1 shows, different water bodies are represented in uneven ratios for each region. As it was mentioned before, Wales and Ireland have much stronger connections to the beach and therefore to the sea as well as the Highlands where rivers are illustrated the most. Rivers perfectly fit into the Highlands concept as wild, without anthropogenic impact, and untamed, together with the picturesque lochs located in the mountains. These Highlands rivers are also depicted as very fast-flowing, whereas Wales and Ireland rivers are calm.

Boats are frequently depicted on railway posters in Ireland and Wales, either as white sailing boats (mostly depicted in the background as very small boats) or as large cargo steamers (depicted with a bit more importance, but rarely with a full focus). This symbol perfectly fits into this discourse, as a boat represents a journey, adventure, and exploration. Also, as can be seen in table 1, the bridge occurs on a lot of posters, usually together with a train that crosses it. In many cases, this illustration has a full focus and might suggest some notion of connection and the fact that railway transportation has no barriers.

Finally, there are some doubts about how certain we can be about our arguments and findings because sample sizes seem to be small. With certainty, there are some biased conclusions, as each person defines e.g., brighter or darker colours in a slightly different way. Also, during counting features and analysing posters, there might be some mistakes due to lack of focus.

**References**

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