

Collocations: Experiential Grammar and Conventionalization of Travel Advertising

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ABSTRACT: Collocations provide language users a way of representing the world. In the register of travel advertising, they are used mainly to represent scenic beauty, service hospitality and travel events. Compared with grammar and single words, ideational collocations are typically specific in their delineation of the world, typically process-oriented and typically evaluative. In order to unpack the semantic relations involved in collocations, we apply Halliday and Martin's framework of the logico-semantic relations of elaboration, extension and enhancement to reveal the semantic relations of the ideational collocations in travel advertising discourse, thus going into the experiential grammar of collocations in this register. Conventionalization plays an important role in the register of travel advertising. Typical collocations favored by this register are sorted out in this section. Statistical method of language study is limitedly used in this part. Some comparisons are made with other registers. Like other types of discourse, travel advertising is far from being neutral. Ideology and attitude pervade in texts. Collocations play an important role in expressing attitudes in discourse.

INTRODUCTION

This paper is intended to examine collocation in its experiential function, its guise as a way of representing the world. The corpus on which this study is based consists of 100 travel advertisements drawn in equal numbers from two most influential American magazines: *The Times Magazine* and *Newsweek*. Aimed at an affluent and trend-conscious readership, *The Times Magazine* specializes in entertainment-oriented items but also reports social and political issues. *Newsweek* is a weekly news magazine published in New York City, claiming a 2001 circulation rate base of 3.1 million. With 9 U.S. and 13 overseas news bureaus, it reports current affairs in the world and political trend in U.S.A. Each advertisement is numbered, with 1-50 coming from *Newsweek* and 51-100 from *The Times Magazine*. These advertisements range from 100 words to 1500 or so in length, therefore they qualify as either medium or long copy advertisements. They can be categorized into four types according to what they advertise for: 1) Airlines such as Air-India, The Australian Airline, Kuwait Airways, Saudia Arabian Airlines, Continental Air Micronesia, Philippines Airlines, British Caledonian, KLM Cargo, etc., 2) Hotels such as Hotel

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Beijing-Toronto (Jinlun), Sheraton Hotel, The Westin Plaza, Brother Hotel, The Dynasty Singapore, etc., 3) Sights such as Harbour Island of the Bahamas, The Swan at Lavenham, Nassau and Paradise Island of the Bahamas, Sariska Palace in India, Warwick Castle in England, Analucia in Spain, The Hague in Holland, the Land of Alaska, etc., 4) Other tourist attractions such as Genting Highlands Resort, Federal Express, Australian's Oriental-Express, Dawn Princess Cruises, Walt Disney World Magic Kingdom, Everest Conservatory, etc.

In the case of travel advertising discourse, collocations represent mainly scenic beauty and service hospitality. We shall unpack the semantic relations involved in ideational collocations in travel advertisements. What is followed is an examination of the ways in which lexis is conventionalized in the discourse of travel advertising and an interpretation of the conventionalization in terms of the communicative function of this specialized register. Finally, we will see how ideational collocation is relevant to the expression of attitude and ideology in discourse.

THE EXPERIENTIAL GRAMMAR OF IDEATIONAL COLLOCATIONS

Martin (1992) handles collocation under the heading 'nuclear relations'. Nuclear relations reflect the ways in which actions, people, places, things and qualities configure as activities in activity sequences. For example, the Process Medium structures *serve + ace, smash+ overhead, put away + volley, hit + winner, volley + winner*, etc. from the field of tennis illustrate the kind of relations involved. In order to unpack the semantic relations involved in collocations, Martin (1992) applies Halliday's general logico-semantic relations of expansion of clause to nominal and verbal groups. Therefore, the semantics of experiential grammar can be interpreted in terms of the logico-semantic relations of elaboration, extension and enhancement, which is summarized in Table 1 by Martin (1992: 317):

Table 1 *Elaborations, extension and enhancement across clauses and groups*

(from Martin 1992: 317)

Elaboration (=)	Extension (+)	Enhancement (x)
Process = Range	Process + Medium + Range: Entity	Process × Circumstance
take a shot	shoot the deer	shoot in the field
Classifier = Thing	Epithet + Thing	Thing × Qualifier
a parking lot	a new car	the car in the park
Event = Particle	Event + Event	Event × Qualify
shoot up	try to shoot	shoot carefully

Martin's study provides us with a framework to examine the semantic relations of the ideational collocations in travel advertising. The following are some of the observations we make in this respect.

First, let's look at elaboration. According to Halliday (1994: 225), one clause elaborates on the meaning of another by further specifying or describing it. The secondary clause does not introduce a new element into the picture but rather provides a further characterization of one that

is already there, restating it, clarifying it, refining it, or adding a descriptive attribute or comment. With clauses, this meaning is grammaticalized through Process \wedge Range (e.g. *take a look at, play golf*) structures. In *take a look at*, we make use of a general verb *take* (others including *make, have, do*) and express the experiential meaning of a process as a Range *look*. The Range in effect elaborates on the general verb by specifying the meaning involved. In *play golf*, we make use of a more specific verb *play* which the Range function then subclassifies. From the point of view of field, the Process \wedge Range structure involves just one meaning, which is realized through two lexical items; while the Process \wedge Medium structure (e.g. *play the ball*) involves two meanings, an action and the participant that action is mediated through. From the lexical point of view, the Process \wedge Range structure shows greater idiosyncrasy than the Process \wedge Medium structure, thus it is more qualified as habitual collocation. The two examples of Process \wedge Range structure cited above, and some others found in our corpus, are presented in Table 2:

Table 2 Elaboration in the clause

Clause		
Process	=	Range: Process
take		a look at
play		golf
play		one final round
fly		long distance
go		a long way
go back		five hundred years

Elaboration can also be found in the Classifier \wedge Thing (e.g. *sleeper chairs*) structures in nominal groups. These realize taxonomic features which cannot be manifested through a single lexical item (e.g. *economy class*) or which need not be (e.g. *dining tray*). The Classifier functions to specify the relevant subclass of Thing, which is in contrast to the Epithet in the Epithet \wedge Thing structure (e.g. *pink champagne*). The Epithet \wedge Thing structure, as we will discuss soon, is of the relationship of Extension instead of Elaboration. Note that a *dining tray* is not a tray that is dining, but rather a kind of tray used for dining. These examples of Classifier \wedge Thing structure, and some others found in my corpus are presented in Table 4.3. What should be pointed out is that the Classifier \wedge Thing structure is not the only form of realization of Elaboration in nominal group. The Pre-Epithet (e.g. *the largest of the hotels*), the Pre-Classifier structure (e.g. *a series of wall painting*), Pre-Numerative structure (e.g. *fifteen acres of rich, tropical gardens*), and Pre-Deictic (e.g. *the edge of its very own forest*) can also be classified as the Elaboration type. Like Classifier \wedge Thing structures, from the point of view of field these structures function simply as grammatical resources for isolating particular parts or classes of people, places and things (Martin 1992: 314).

Table 3 Elaboration in nominal group

Nominal group	=	Thing
Classifier		
sleeper		chairs
dining		tray
Indian and Continental		cuisine
economy		class
non-stop		flights
vintage		champagne
medieval		hotel

Elaboration can also be found in English verbal group, where phrasal verbs adjust the meaning of their main verb. From the point of view of field only a single event is involved, and most phrasal verbs can be paraphrased with single lexical items (e.g. *see about* = *arrange*). Some of the phrasal verbs found in TAC are presented below; the relevant Medium is provided in parentheses to clarify the phrasal interpretation.

Table 4 Elaboration in the verbal group

Verbal group			
Event	=	Particle	(medium)
teem		with	(fish)
refresh		with	(super river views)
ask		for	(reservation)
come fitted		with	(dining tray)
go rather well		with	(pink champagne)
make		for	(very interesting sights)
regaled		with	(jokes and stories)

Secondly, let's come to 'extension'. According to Halliday (1985: 207), 'extension' means 'adding something new to meaning'. What is added may just be an addition, or a replacement, or an alternative. In contrast to elaboration realizing a single meaning, extension is a strategy to combine different meanings. In the clause, while elaboration takes the form of Process \wedge Range: Process (e.g. *play a final round*), extension takes the form of Process \wedge Medium (e.g. *strike heart*). In the nominal group, while elaboration is realized by the structure of Classifier \wedge Thing (e.g. *non-stop flight*), extension is realized by the structure of Epithet \wedge Thing (e.g. *superb cuisine*). Whereas Classifiers elaborate, Epithets add qualities. These may be of an experiential (e.g. *crystal clear*) or an attitudinal kind (e.g. *breathtaking view*). With verbal groups, extension combines events. Halliday (1985: 255-269) categorizes a wide variety of verbal group complexes with respect to both expansion and projection. He reserves the category of extension for conation:

*try to do, fail in doing*¹. This analysis has the advantage of bringing out the relationship between group complexes and clauses complexes: *he asked to go: he asked Ben to go*. Martin (1992: 315), however, treats all verbal group complexes as involving extension, with the purpose of bringing out the proportionalities of the following kind: *look into* (phrasal verb, elaboration): *keep looking* (verbal group complexes, extension): *look carefully* (event × quality, enhancement). Table 5 summarizes extension in clause, nominal group and verbal group, with examples found in TAC:

Table 5 Extension in clause, nominal group and verbal group

Extension		
Clause	Nominal Group	Verbal Group
Process + Medium	Epithet + Thing	Verbal Group Complex
strike your heart	picturesque village	get to hear
offer easy access	fascinating Muslin Quarter	need to get message
provide a few highlights	gracious atmosphere	beckon to whisk clients
cruise the Caribbean	consummate care	decide to visit

Thirdly, let's look at 'enhancement'. With enhancement, one meaning qualifies another with respect to the circumstantial categories of Extent, Location, Manner, Cause and Matter (Halliday 1985: 137-144). Enhancement takes three forms: Circumstance in clause (e.g. *put us in the position*), Manner adverb in verbal group (e.g. *richly steeped in heritage*) and Qualifiers in nominal group (e.g. *a cruise on the historic Grand Canal*). The following are some of the ideational collocations with the semantic relation of enhancement.

Table 6 Enhancement in clause, verbal group and nominal group

Enhancement		
Clause	Verbal group	Nominal Group
Circumstance	Manner	Qualifier
dress you up in style	fully equipped business centre	high point of Chinese painting
buy at affordable price	delicately carved panel	voyage into the past
fly with us	delightfully unspoilt village	highlights at bargain price
bring destination to life	tastefully decorated room	echoes of its past

Above is an analysis of the semantic relations involved in ideational collocations found in our corpus. This analysis aims at bringing out the typical ways of representing the world of the lexicogrammatical resources in travel advertising and the typical activities involved in this register.

CONVENTIONALIZATION IN TRAVEL ADVERTISING

The notion that conventionalization plays a major role in language use is nothing new. Halliday

¹ This kind of expressions are called 'structural collocations' by Benson et al. (1997).

and Hasan (1989: 40) note that 'informal narrative and spontaneous conversation are the most open-ended kinds of registers. But we are never selecting with complete freedom from all the resources of our linguistic system. If we were, there would be no communication'. Most probably, the pervasiveness of conventionalized, prefabricated segments reflects the nature of a world in which humans are reluctant to admit to too much randomness, a state of affairs regarded as unfortunate by the rational mind and one that may be partially remedied by the recycling of recognizable patterns and collocations, leading in turn to greater cohesion (Norrick 1987). But the evolution of standardized strategies in language use must also be linked to the unavoidable recurrence of communicative goals (Coulmas, 1981), especially in narrowly focused registers. Given the narrow communicative function of advertising discourse, it is reasonable to assume that collocation as conventionalization, pre patterning and prefabrication will play at least some part in their composition.

1. NOUN

A salient character of the register of travel advertising is the frequency of long nominal chains. These sequences typically contain two or three items, but strings of four or five are not uncommon:

- (1) The mood is gentle and refreshing with superb river views from every room. A choice of seven restaurants and bars to suit every need. A swimming pool in a delightful riverside setting. The sophisticated and intimate atmosphere of the Suralai Lounge, Bangkok's finest nightclub. All with the style and comfort of Sharaton matched with traditional Thai standards of service and hospitality.
- (2) But our home offers pure white sand beaches, crystal clear water, and first-class resorts that are a world apart.
- (3) Paris is the world capital of fashion, art, food and wine.
- (4) They include a fully equipped 24 hour business center, a multi-tiered shopping promenade, and a health and sports club with six tennis courts, four squash courts and two swimming pools.

Sometimes they are introduced by such frameworks as *from...to...to...to* or *from...and...to...and*:

- (5) For relaxation, you can enjoy sports from SCUBA diving to tennis, Hobie Catting to golf, windsurfing to squash, all at prices designed to keep you active. [5]
- (6) Most hotels in Paris have no restaurants, as one of the pleasures of this incomparable city is the galaxy of choice of eating places, from humble pavement cafes, bistros and brasseries to the grandest and finest restaurants in the world.

These chains constitute *ad hoc* collocations because they show very weak idiomaticity. Still they are collocations in that they illustrate Sinclair's idiom principle:

To some extent, the nature of the world around us is reflected in the organization of language and contributes to the unrandomness. **Things which occur physically together have a stronger chance of being mentioned together**; also concepts in the same philosophical area, and the results of exercising a number of organizing features such as contrast or series. (Sinclair, 1991: 110, emphasis by this author)

The frequency of these collocations show that writers of travel advertising are willing to dispense with many of the tools of syntactic elaboration such as heavy modification of noun phrases through listing. This reduces the need for the spatially costly function words that greater syntactic elaboration entails. Sometimes three or more nominal collocations are juxtaposed

together to achieve an ‘intuitive’ way of representing the world:

(7) The heady sensation of conquering Mount Kinabalu, Southeast Asia’s highest peak. The thrill of a descent into Mulu, the world’s largest subterranean complex. A quiet boat ride through the world’s oldest jungles. These are but some of the exciting experiences that await you.

In this case, the role of grammar in representing the world seemed to be reduced to the

minimum. Words appear to hold the key to talking about the world, to creating new worlds and to influencing our fellows by this means. The descriptive, representational role of lexis in relation to experiential phenomena is greater and more apparent than that of grammar in the functioning of lexicogrammar. The above text reminds us of the once-explosive *Liberty*, *Equality*, *Fraternity* and the lexically more novel *Skater on thin ice of truth* (headline). The following text offers further evidence on what the vocabulary can do even without drawing on the full resources of the grammar of a language:

(8) Magnificent curries, for example, spiced to perfection.

Succulent seafood dishes seasoned with subtle herbs.

And delicious noodles cooked a hundred different ways.

On Thai international, dishes from all over the world are prepared and served with the same characteristic skill and attention to detail. This year Thai celebrates 26 years as an international airline and we’d like you to fly with us.

It will be worth it for the food alone.

Sometimes a nominal collocation is used to open a discourse, therefore it is foregrounded:

(9) Quite, understated luxury.

Yes, the style and service for which Westin are renowned return to Singapore — in exciting Raffles City, the crossroads of the business and shopping districts.

The recurrence of some nominal collocations in our corpus allow us to make some quantifications, although very limited ones. For example, the 9 tokens of the term *touch* in our corpus represent 7 types, with only *extra touches* occurring 3 times:

(10) 4-star hotels with a high degree of comfort and extra touches of quality and service.

More importantly, among the 9 tokens of *touch*, 2 bears the meaning ‘a small addition or detail which makes something better’: *finishing touch*, *a touch of glamour*, 6 bear the meaning ‘style’: *our touch of Ming*, *personal touch*, *such touches as 24-hour butler service*, *extra touches* (3 occurrences). Only one case has the meaning ‘to move fingers or the whole hand quickly and lightly onto or off something’.

Heart is one of the words that occur frequently in our corpus. Of the 23 occurrences, 14 bear the meaning ‘center’. Examples are:

(11) a. The Philippines is, not only at the geographic heart of Asia, just an hour or two away, it is also a country known for its friendly welcome and tradition of hospital.

b. The palace has now been converted into a delightful, comfortable, superior medium class ‘heritage’ hotel, the Sariska Palace Hotel (picture right), in the heart of the colorful Indian state of Rajasthan.

Highlight occurs 12 times in our corpus, 6 occur in the collocational pattern *highlight...tour*:

(12) a. Highlights of your city tour includes a visit to the Fort and the Sarawak Museum.[61]

b. This is a land steeped in history and culture, and our tour will introduce you to the highlights of this truly fascinating country.

c. Our included sightseeing tour will show us the highlights.

d. In this classic tour of China, we have selected some of China's best loved highlights in four of the most well known cities.

e. Added to the splendours of Beijing, Xian and Shanghai; the charming market town of Chengde, a cruise on the historic Grand Canal and the picturesque riverside village of Yangshuo with its lively markets provide just a few of the highlights of this comprehensive tour.

Moreover, all of the occurrences of *highlight* have the meaning 'the best or most exciting, entertaining or interesting part'. It is in sharp contrast to the academic discourse, which most probably attracts the meaning 'to emphasize something important' and the verb form:

(13) Such an elaboration of the diagram highlights the similarity between the way in which 'V' is introduced into the chain and the way other elements are introduced, and gives rise to a question: Why did we not include 'V' in the sequencing rules for the simple chain?

[David Brazil 1995, *A Grammar of Speech*: 58]

The noun form of *service* occurs 43 times. Much out of our expectation, its environment is mostly Classifier (22 occurrences) rather than Epithet (8 occurrences). They include: *limousine service*, *economy service*, *individual service*, *room service* (2), *daily service*, *secretarial service* (2), *cleaning service*, *personal service*, *American Express Travel Service*, *butler service* (2), *full service*, *International Priority Service*, *International Distribution Service* (2), *time-definite service*, *inflight service*, *express train service*, *laundry service*, *dry cleaning service*. Among the Epithet type are *impeccable* (2), *warm* (2), *attentive* (3), *luxurious*, *friendly* (2), *a cut above the ordinary*, *par excellence*, etc.:

(14) a. In fact, you might notice that many aspects of our service are simply a cut above the ordinary.

b. The same impeccable service and elegant accommodation that is the essence of the legend is captured here.

c. Especially with warm attentive service in such a friendly atmosphere.

d. Luxurious standards of service.

e. It's all part of the unparalleled standard of service that has made Mandarine Oriental a legend among hotels.

f. But while they're here in the lap of luxury, they'll find services and facilities par excellence.

g. You'll enjoy friendly and attentive service whether you're dining in the oak-paneled restaurant or just relaxing on deck.

There are 16 occurrences of *choice*, among which 11 are in the collocation *a choice of*. The following are two of them:

(15) a. With so many Five-Star hotels and countless beach resorts you will have a wide choice of accommodations.

b. There's the magnificent Magic! Magic! Show at the theatre-restaurant, a choice of fine restaurants, many excellent bars and the best casino in the region.

4 of them collocate with *your/yours*:

(16) a. Prices vary according to your choice of hotel and the date you depart and are based on two people sharing a twin room.
 b. Whether your choice is golden sands or cool pine covered mountains you will find them waiting for you.
 c. Your choice of hotel...
 d. The choice is yours.

2. VERB

A high frequency of verbs such as *ensure*, *surprise*, *fly*, *feel*, *guarantee* could be said to constitute the defining characteristics of the travel advertising discourse:

(17) Relation Officer ensures prompt message delivery.
 (18) And at prices that will pleasantly surprise you.
 (19) So when you're flying long distance, fly the long distance specialist..Quantas.
 (20) The rooms are spacious, furnished with attention to detail that guarantees your comfort.

The collocational rigidity is stronger in verbal phrases than that in ordinary Process + Participant collocations, therefore verbal phrases, usually with illiteral meaning, are better to be treated as single processes:

(21) Give into temptation.
 (22) Whichever way you look at it, you'll gain an edge here at Ming court that will leave your competition unsure of his standing elsewhere.
 (23) But here a few you may like to bear in mind.
 (24) They consider even a tiny hair an inexcusable annoyance that must be done away with.
 (25) Wherever you come from you'll feel at home in The Dynasty Singapore.
 (26) You'll fall in love with the hotel with heart.

Come on or *come to* + place occur frequently in TAC, usually opening or closing a discourse:

(27) a. Come on up to Genting Highlands and enjoy first-class entertainment a cool 2,000 meters above sea level. (opening a discourse)
 b. Come on, admit it. That little kid inside you wants to see Micky and Minnie as much as the little kids around you. (opening a discourse)
 c. Come to Malaysia for a most exciting time. (closing a discourse)

The collocational frameworks *for...call* and *to + verb...call* occur at the end of most of the travel advertising discourse:

(28) a. For more information, call us on the following: 01420 88724 (Alto), 020 7287 5556 (London), 01565631636 (Manchetser), 0121 709 6001 (Birmingham).
 b. So call 0870 908 1082 for a free information pack. www.holland.com/uk.
 c. To book your champagne break at The Swan, or for a free Heritage Travel Guide call 0870 400 8855.

Sometimes words with very strong emotional meanings are used in travel advertising discourse

to express hospitality, such as *spoil, pamper, cosset, lavish*, etc.:

(29) Cross the Pacific our way with some island style relaxation enroute. After which we'll whisk you to Honolulu and San Francisco or Los Angeles in DC-10 comfort. Spoil you with executive Class service, complimentary champagne, and first-run movies.

(30) Best of all, at The Dynasty Singapore you are truly a guest. Someone to be pampered, cosseted and waited on 24 hours a day.

(31) We lavish you with polish treatment.

Like nominal collocations, verbal collocations can also be foregrounded by means of juxtaposition:

(32) Cruise The Caribbean

On the Dawn Princess and set yourself free.

Free to step ashore and explore islands like Barbados and Antigua; or simply to step out and experience paradise from your own private balcony. Free to enjoy a choice of cuisine from around the world, that's available around the clock. And free to spend your nights strolling under moonlit skies, wishing they could be longer. A two-week cruise to St. Thomas, Martinique, Tortla and 7 other exciting ports starts at only 1,636 pounds.

(33) Gaze in awe at the soaring peaks of the Andes, arguably the worlds most magnificent and imposing mountain range; listen to the haunting sounds of the traditional panpipes; take a train ride through the Andes to the great Machu Picchu, the 'Lost City of the Incas'; admire the brilliant colored artefacts produced by weavers and potters; and enjoy the beauty and symmetry of the Spanish colonial architecture. This is a land steeped in history and culture, and our tour will introduce you to the highlights of this

truly fascinating country.

Boast is a word favored by travel advertising. The following are 5 occurrences:

- (34) a. The hotel boasts one of the largest swimming pools in Cairo.
- b. Many have awards for their cuisine or boast top leisure and sports facilities.
- c. Little wonder that the waters off popular resorts like Hurghada and Sharm-el-Sheik boast some of the most sought-after snorkelling and scuba diving in the world.
- d. The area boasts wonderful mountains and lakes, picturesque towns and villages, and impressive hill-top castles.
- e. Reims boast cosmopolitan shopping, from designer boutiques to GalleriesLafayette.

Interestingly, all of the 5 occurrences of *boast* have the meaning 'have or possess something to be proud of'. All collocate with adjectives indicating high degree: *largest, top, most, wonderful, cosmopolitan*.

In order to illustrate the conventionalization of collocation, we have examined the collocation behavior *offer*, a frequently used word in travel advertisements, and have compared its collocational environments with those in the book *Lexical Phrases and Language Teaching* (Nattinger and DeCarrico 1992). Of the 28 occurrences of *offer* in TAC, 23 mean 'agree to give' (e.g. *offer a wide selection of fresh dishes*), among which 7 (25%) are noun (e.g. *our special offer*) and 16 (58%) are verb. Only 5 (17%) bear the meaning 'provide' (e.g. *offer the opportunity*). In the 12 occurrences of *offer* in *Lexical Phrases and Language Teaching*, however, 11(92%) bear the meaning 'provide', only 1 (8%) has the meaning of 'agree to give'. This contrast (presented in Table 7), we believe, can show the variations of the collocational behavior of *offer* across the register of travel advertising and that of academic prose.

Table 7 Register variations of the collocational behavior of *offer*

	<u>Agree to give</u>		Provide
	Noun	Verb	
Travel Advertising (28)	25% (7)	58% (16)	17% (5)
Academic Prose (12)	0% (0)	8% (1)	92 % (11)

3. ADJECTIVE

A salient characteristic of the register of travel advertising is the frequency of long adjectival chains. While there is nothing in the literary grammar to specify the number of consecutive items that can modify a nominal group, both the length of these chains and their pervasiveness would stretch the limits of acceptability in any other registers, including formal written ones. Adjective chains are usually found in premodifying position. Although chains of two or three elements are especially common, strings of up to four or five modifiers are by no means rare:

(35) The palace has now been converted into a delightful, comfortable, superior medium class 'heritage' hotel, the Sariska Palace Hotel (pictured right), in the heart of the colorful Indian state of Rajasthan.

The experiential structure of the nominal group with adjectival chain in (48) can be presented in Figure 1:

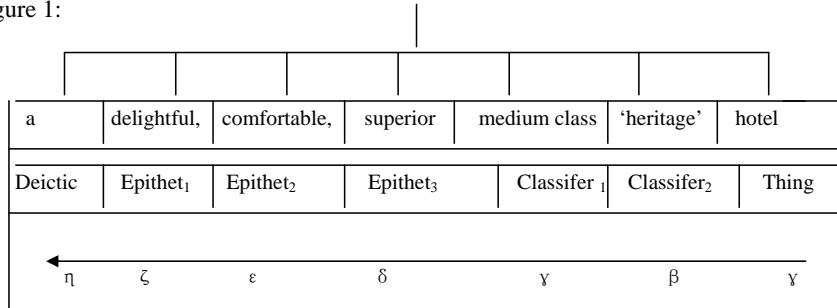


Figure 1 An analysis of the experiential structure of the nominal group with adjective chain

Sometimes two adjectives are put together with the framework *as...as it is...*:

(36) a The Dynasty Singapore promises a stay that is as different as it is unforgettable.
 b. ...wooden panels make the lobby as impressive as it is distinctive.

Another characteristic feature of this register is the frequent use of bombastic adjectives such as *breathtaking, unprecedented, impeccable, superb*, etc.

(37) At Travelbag all our reservations agents have traveled extensively throughout this breathtaking country and can advise you on all aspects of your trip.

(38) You're used to that little bit extra, whether it's unprecedented buying power.

(39) The same impeccable personal service and elegant accommodation that is the essence of the legend is captured here.

(40) The mood is gentle and refreshing with superb river views from every room.

(41) Committed lunch and dinner venues that combine value for money with superior ambience and cuisine.

Other collocations with these register-specific adjectives are: *breathtaking beauty / drama* (2) / *country* (2) / *Chilean fjords / view*; *impeccable personal service / English*; *superb cuisine / offer / cathedral*, etc. What is interesting is the 3 occurrences of the collocation *superior medium class Hotel*, in which *superior* and *medium class* modify *hotel* simultaneously:

(42) a. 4 nights superior medium class Mount Lavinia Hotel...

b. Morning flight to Kuching, transfer to the superior medium class Holiday Inn hotel, where your room looks across the Sarawak.

c. Return by train to Cusco for 3 nights, staying in a superior medium class hotel.

Other adjectives with high frequency are *spectacular* and *fascinating*, each occurring 13 times: *spectacular harbor views / theatre-restaurant / cruise ship / drive / 5 night Yangtze Cruise / coastline / scenery* (2) / *displays of jousting / train journey / helicopter flight; fascinating city* (3) / *customized excursions / totemic art / collection / country / way of life / calendar of events and entertainment / Swan Hellenic Discovery Cruise / Muslim Quarter / array of*. In order to emphasize the environmental protection of the scenic spots, *unspoiled* is also favored by the travel advertising discourse. There are 4 occurrences in TAC:

(43) a. The area known as 'The Golden Circle', is renowned for its delightfully unspoil historic villages, where you'll be able to get close to the real Dutch way of life.

b. Its fine wines and gourmet food, sunshine and unspoiled countryside provide the recipe for a perfect holiday.

c. unspoilt beaches.

d. unspoilt nature trails.

To call for people's nostalgia for their past, *Mediaeval* is frequently used in travel advertising. It collocates with *Life / Festival / arena / houses and churches / villages / streets / Charles Bridge / city of canals / Flemish art / hotel / city*. To call for people's visual imagination, color terms are frequently used, among which *pink* is a favorite one. It can collocate with *champagne / bougainvillaea / heart / beach*, even with *city*.

More conventionalization can be noticed from the collocates of the word *complimentary*. This word occurs 5 times, 4 of them collocate with *drink/food*, 1 with *bus journey*:

(44) a. Spoil you with Executive Class service, complimentary champagne, and first-run movies.

b. Complimentary drinks to help you unwind.

c. Whichever you select, you benefit from a private elevator, express check-in/check-out at the Club Reception, private Lounge and Concierge, complimentary Continental breakfasts and laundry/dry cleaning services and other special amenities.

e. To celebrate the reopening, quests at The swan are being offered a complimentary bottle of Perrier-Jouet Belle Epoque vintage champagne when they book a full price 2-night midweek break

before 31st July.

d. A mere 15 minute complimentary shuttle bus journey away and Changi airport beckons to whisk your clients away to new horizons.

The collocational behavior of *complimentary* fully proves that collocation is a highly register-specific phenomenon. In the competence-based *Longman Dictionary of English Collocations* (Benson et al. 1997), no such collocations have been listed. The only one collocation under the entry *complementary* is *complementary to: these two approaches are complementary to each other*. Nor are they mentioned in *Cambridge International Dictionary of English* (Procter 1995), which is based on a corpus of one hundred million words. In this dictionary, five collocates of *complimentary* are mentioned: *needs/products/services/angles/medicine*.

Crystal occurs 4 times in our corpus, among which 3 collocate with *clear*, one with *lake*:

(45) a. My role is crystal clear. (title)
 b. Colonies of penguins and sightings of whales, dramatic coastlines and crystal lake.
 c. But our home offers pure white sand beaches, crystal clear waters, and first-class resorts that are a world apart.
 d. Scattered across the Indian Ocean, lie islands with the finest white sand beaches and the clearest crystal blue waters.

To emphasize attractive goods and services, *atmosphere* is another word favored by travel advertisements. Adjectives collocates with it include *sophisticated and intimate / friendly / happy / gracious / enchantingly different / so real / home-to-home / British*. To foreground the evaluative role of adjectives, travel discourse sometimes use adjectives in titles or opening sentences:

(46) Tempting Executive fare. A First Class seat on our Executive Class. (title)
 (47) Shocking, isn't it? (opening sentence)

The most characteristic feature of travel advertising discourse is that they are usually loaded with fancy, eulogistic adjectival collocations:

(48) Elegant luxury awaits the business executive. On the banks of Bangkok's Chao Phya-the River of Kings. The mood is gentle and refreshing with superb river views from every room. A choice of seven restaurants and bars to suit every need. A swimming pool in a delightful riverside setting. The sophisticated and intimate atmosphere of the Suralai Lounge, Bangkok's finest nightclub. All with the style and comfort of Sheraton matched with traditional Thai standards of service and hospitality.
 (49) Over and above these, the Crown Prince offers exceptional cuisine at both our Sichuan and Janpanese restaurants. A 24-hour cafe that also serves up a fabulous view of Orchard Road. A cosy, intimate lounge with live music. A sun-drenched pool. An efficient and fully equipped Business Centre. Spacious meeting rooms with audio visual facilities. Round-the-clock room service. And the quiet refuge of 303 newly refurbished luxurious rooms and suites.

IDEATIONAL COLLOCATIONS AND ATTITUDE IN DISCOURSE

In theory it may be possible to produce a totally neutral, non-committal text; in reality, such texts are not produced except in special circumstances, for example, short texts consisting of largely nonsense words: *All mimsy were the borogroves, And mane raths ourgrabe* (Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*). Highly technical discourses, whether written or spoken, such as those

belong to the register of mathematics or physics or symbolic logic may seem to be candidates for neutrality, but even these typically argue a thesis to prove or disprove a theory and therefore embody evaluations (Gilbert and Mulkay 1984). Appraisals in these types of discourse may emerge more strongly at the global text level, not at the micro-level of the individual sentence or individual word.

In non-technical, informal discourse such as conversation, discussion, journalism and advertising as in the present study, attitude is clearly present, sometimes markedly so. It has been noticed by Cook (1996) when he discusses the 'unrealism' in ads:

Yet it is not just that the worlds in ads is 'unrealistic', as are the worlds of science fiction; they are also bland and problem-free. All families are happy; all days are sunny; all meals nasty; all Christmas snowy; all grannies kind and white-haired; all countryside litter-free; all farming traditional. The conventional nature of this 'unrealism' is borne out by the fact that all of the above occur. In the real world, a granny who rolls out of home-made pastry and then sits in a rocking chair by a log fire is possible; so is the bad-tempered granny who cooks tasteless meals. There are cows and chickens which roam freely in green meadows and farmyards, as well as those in factory farms. By convention, however, the former cases are regarded as less realistic. (Cook 1996: 219)

In the case of travel advertising, all flights are comfortable; all beaches are clean; all waters are crystal clear; all hotels are hospitable; all views are spectacular; all services are impeccable; all countries are breathtaking; all fares are promotional; all tours end with happiness. There is no delay for service; there is no pollution of environment; there are no complaints from customers; there are no overcharges of prices.

Whatever the appraisal, what is important is that this appraisal is part of the meaning of a discourse carried by its vocabulary. Such appraisals typically emerge from the collocational pattern of content words. In this sense, ideational collocations play a vital role in expressing attitudes in discourse. They constitute an essential part of the meaning potential to represent the world, to represent the world conventionally with regard to register, and represent the world evaluatively, attitudinally and unrealistically. The objective language and language speaker, like the ideal one in a homogeneous community, is a convenient myth. It is especially true when advertising is concerned.

CONCLUSION

Collocations provide language users a way of representing the world. In the register of travel advertising, they are used mainly to represent scenic beauty, service hospitality and travel events. Compared with grammar and single words, ideational collocations are typically specific in their delineation of the world, typically process-oriented and typically evaluative. In order to unpack the semantic relations involved in collocations, we apply Halliday and Martin's framework of the logico-semantic relations of elaboration, extension and enhancement to reveal the semantic relations of the ideational collocations in travel advertising discourse, thus going into the experiential grammar of collocations in this register. Conventionalization plays an important role in the register of travel advertising. Typical collocations favored by this register are sorted out in this section. Statistical method of language study is limitedly used in this part. Some comparisons are made with other registers. Like other types of discourse, travel advertising is far from being neutral. Ideology and attitude pervade in texts. Collocations play an important role in

expressing attitudes in discourse.

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