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Title

Jumping, horizon gazing, and arms wide: marketing imagery and the meaning of study abroad in the USA / Cynthia Miller-Idriss ; Jonathan Z. Friedman ; Jennifer Auerbach

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Abstract

Images of students in overseas settings have become a common feature of university websites in the USA, as universities employ bold visual imagery to encourage student participation in study abroad programs and to market the university more broadly. In this paper, we analyze the content of this visual material, reporting on an extensive analysis of 2000 screenshots from the websites of 39 leading U.S. research universities. We focus on three recurring visual categories of meaning that show up across the cases: images of students jumping, horizon-gazing, and standing with their arms open wide. We extend prior analyses of how marketing imagery commodifies study abroad, arguing that these images must also be situated within the cultural context of elite American higher education, where college is not only seen as a utilitarian or academic pursuit, but is also “or perhaps mostly” understood as a time of fun, maturation, personal discovery, and self-transformation. This work makes a methodological contribution toward the use of visual imagery in higher education

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research and also advances theoretical studies of how the meaning of study abroad is constructed and communicated. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)