



## **Semiotic Analysis of Travel Agencies' Social Media Shares: Case of Konya**

**Serkan AYLAN<sup>a</sup>**

<sup>a</sup> Selçuk Üniversitesi, Turizm Fakültesi, Konya / Türkiye (serkaylan@gmail.com)

### **Extensive Summary**

The rapid development of technology in many areas in the 21st century has been very effective in both social and business lives of people. In the first quarter of the 21st century we are in, another technology product that developed very rapidly is social media, its use became widespread and popular. Social media, which offers the opportunity to deliver the message to thousands or even millions of people who are connected to the internet all over the world within seconds, has become very important for the tourism sector as well as for many sectors of the business world. It is seen that many businesses operating in the tourism sector are actively using social media. Instagram, which is one of the social media tools in question, is a platform that is used extensively by tourism businesses such as travel agencies. In this platform, where photography and short-term videos and comments can be shared, travel agencies reach their potential customers by sharing the photos and videos they take during the tours they organize, and also advertise them. They also gain new customers by giving messages about how many different places their customers participating in the tours they organize, visit, have fun and rest with the visuals they share

In this study, it was aimed to reveal the messages of the A group travel agencies operating in Konya to the consumers of the visual posts they made on Instagram for the tours they organized. The distribution of the photos shared by travel agencies on social media was made according to the categories, and these shared photos were interpreted by using the semiotic analysis technique on how they were perceived by a researcher. When the photographs selected with criterion sampling method are evaluated in line with the purpose of the study, they are divided into 5 categories: "for tour operation", "for accommodation establishments", "for nature tours", "for cultural tours" and "for nature-culture tours".

It is seen that with 175 photographs, the most sharing was made for hotel businesses. Then, with 122 photographs for tour operations frames from the tours were included. For the organized tours, 198 photos for nature tours, 70 for culture tours, and finally 100 photos for nature-culture tours were shared. When the photographs shared for the frames from the tours are examined with the semiotic analysis technique, it is thought that people from almost all ages are included and it is thought that people from all age groups are encouraged to participate in the tours individually or as a family. With the sharing of happy moments of the human elements used in the signs regarding the tour experiences, the message is given that potential customers will have fun and collect good memories if they participate in the tours.

In the photos shared for accommodation businesses, the signs vary according to the type of accommodation businesses. Commonly used objects in signs are the exteriors of hospitality businesses. It is seen that few signs are shared regarding the restaurants, rooms and other areas of use of the accommodation establishments and also there is no sign of animation activities offered by the hotels.

In the posts made for the accommodation businesses, the message is given that people have many alternative accommodation possibilities to take time and relax outside of the city, away from their daily routine life. In the photographs shared in nature tours, the richness of nature such as plateaus, sea, waterfall, botanical gardens, natural formations are shown as an element of attraction. When looking at these indicators, the message is given that we can relive the colors lost in us in the colorful botanical gardens, with the green relaxing effect, the sounds of birds accompanying the sound of water, the fascinating beauty of natural formations. With the historical objects in the photographs shared for cultural tours, it is shown that it will be possible to travel in time thanks to the opportunity to learn more about the history and culture of human beings, and to witness the war of life in the past. Finally, it is shown that a rich holiday experience will be experienced by presenting cultural richness and natural beauty indicators together in nature and culture tours.

When the signs in the photos shared by travel agencies are examined, it is seen that the same objects are generally used. In order to increase the attractiveness of tours in photographs, objects that will evoke more than one emotion in potential customers can be used as signs together. For example, both historical beauties and gastronomy items can be used together in a GAP tour. Human elements crowning lavender can be used in photos of lavender gardens. Thus, the message that a rich holiday experience will be experienced will be supported by more than one element. In addition, according to the rich tourism potential of our country, the

visiting points or tour content can be diversified in the photos they share. For example, relatively new tourist attractions such as gastronomic tours, bicycle tours, Göbeklitepe tours can be included in to them. In future researches using semiotic analysis in the field of tourism, photos and video images shared by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism for the touristic promotion of our Turkey on social media can be analyzed. In addition, social media sharings made for promotional purposes by other tourism countries (Greece, Italy, Spain etc.) in Mediterranean basin which Turkey competes with can be analyzed and compered with Turkey's social media sharings.