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Signs, Myths, and Tourism Identity: A Semiotic Study of the Jordan Tourism Board's Social Media Narratives

Khalaf Lafee Alhammad ^{1*} , Yousef Awad AlMashaqbeh ² , Mahmoud Ahmad Alrajabi ³ , Abd Allah Sultan Aljalabneh ⁴ 

¹ Department of Public Relations and Advertising, Faculty of Mass Communication, Yarmouk University, Irbid 21163, Jordan

² Department of Journalism and Digital Media, Faculty of Media, Zarqa University, Zarqa 132222, Jordan

³ Department of Digital Media, Faculty of Media, Middle East University, Amman 11831, Jordan

⁴ Department of Radio and TV, Faculty of Media, Zarqa University, Zarqa 132222, Jordan

ABSTRACT

Tourism communication has become the strategic construction of symbolic narratives that influence destination reputation and global perceptions. Yet, in Jordan, there is a gap in research on how the Jordan Tourism Board (JTB) implements semiosis to shape the country's destination image online. This study, therefore, analyzes how JTB employs semiotic strategies to build Jordan's tourism image across Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) platforms. Using Roland Barthes' three-level model of denotation, connotation, and myth, twenty-three posts were examined through a qualitative semiotic framework. The findings show that JTB integrates the following five axes—historical, adventure, therapeutic, religious, and cultural—into a unified narrative of “Jordan: The Kingdom of Transformative Experiences.” Petra and Jerash posts also frame Jordan as the “Living Time Gate,” and desert landscapes project myths of “Enchanted Wilderness,” while wellness content emphasizes the “Healing Oasis”. In addition, there are religious visuals that portray the nation as the Land of Sacred Harmony, and the themes that are promoted in the cultural posts include the Taste of Generosity and the Bohemian Quarter. These myths and symbolic hashtags are supported with the use of visual strategies such as monumental

*CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Khalaf Lafee Alhammad, Department of Public Relations and Advertising, Faculty of Mass Communication, Yarmouk University, Irbid 21163, Jordan; Email: khalaf.alhammad@yu.edu.jo

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framing, monochromatic photography, and symbolic hashtags and cemented to construct an identity of Jordan as authentic, transformative, and spiritually harmonious. Combining the semiotic analysis with the impression management theory, the study proves the purposefulness of JTB discourse as self-promotion, exemplification, and ingratiation strategies. In theory, it is progressive in the sense that it correlates symbolic construction and strategy purpose, and, in terms of empirical research, this study is among the first semiotic analyses of Arab tourism boards' communication.

Keywords: Social Media; Semiotics; Impression Management; Jordan Tourism Board; Destination Image; Roland Barthes; Tourism Communication

1. Introduction

In modern tourism, the sector has become a symbolic landscape where countries seek to create persuasive images that can influence the way the world thinks about them and consequently guide their decision to travel^[1,2]. The picture of a destination has become the symbolic capital of the digital era, as important as any other assets, including natural resources or infrastructure^[3,4]. This symbolic capital is used to form desires of the tourists, spur aspirations and finally define tourism flows^[5]. The place of image-making has shifted to the digital realm with the spread of digital technologies, where narratives are made, negotiated and distributed to a global community^[6,7]. Experimental research has determined that there is a direct correlation between the popularity of the destination on social media and tourist inflow; in addition, the higher the popularity of the destination, the more tourists are drawn to tourism-related online material, which explains the importance of social media content in efforts to influence tourist destination preferences^[8].

In this context, the key role is played by the PR practices not as the means of promotion, but as the tool of creating meaning and building the reputation^[9,10]. The informational content created by destination management organizations and tourism boards is not informational content but rather a carefully crafted discourse that gives places symbolic representations and visits relevant experiences^[11]. It is the combination of language, image, and story that creates myths, which are cultural narratives that naturalise symbolic meanings and give destinations a depth, resonance and appeal^[12,13].

Jordan exemplifies this phenomenon with a rich historical legacy. Having a rich history, working on various natural landscapes, religious places, and rich cultural life, the image of Jordan is constantly being redefined and superimposed through the communicative activity of the Jordan Tourism

Board (JTB). Through its semiotic tactics, the JTB creates stories beyond description to portray Jordan as a transformative destination to provide the visitors with authenticity, adventure, healing and spiritual harmony^[14]. Understanding how these myths are constructed and communicated is essential not only for analyzing the Jordanian case, but also for advancing broader discussions on the symbolic dimensions of tourism promotion in the digital age^[15,16]. From an international tourism perspective, therefore, "the very act of visiting another country plausibly embodies a certain symbolism that is pivotal to identity work"^[17]. By focusing on symbolism, we study the art of semiotics by identifying the use of symbols and signs and the meaning behind this usage^[18], which is the main rationale of this study.

As a result, the current research uses the semiotic model developed by Roland Barthes to examine the digital discourse of JTB, especially the metamorphosis of the denotative and connotative signs into the commonly accepted cultural myths that shape the tourism image in Jordan^[12]. Another theory applied in the study is the Impression Management Theory that clarifies the nature of strategic intentions behind these meaning-making practices and puts them in the form of planned performances aimed at shaping the perceptions of the audience^[19,20]. Finally, this paper goes beyond the message conveyed to the analysis of the ways meanings are created and to determine the factors specific to certain symbolic decisions. It offers empirical understanding about the tourism discourse in Jordan and also presents conceptual contributions to the research on semiotics and impression management in tourism communication. Thus, the research seems to be one of the first studies on semiotics in Jordan that makes a connection between semiotic theory and tourism, although the studies in this area were very limited at the end of the previous century and remain the same today, although some authors directly established the correlation between

tourism and the theory of signs^[18].

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in semiotics, particularly Roland Barthes' model of meaning-making, which distinguishes between denotation, connotation, and myth^[12]. Denotation refers to the literal meaning of a sign, connotation captures the cultural and emotional associations it carries, and according to Barthes' *Mythologies* (1957), myth represents the dominant cultural narrative that naturalizes these associations. In tourism communication, this model is especially useful for analyzing how images and texts transform destinations into symbolic experiences and myths that resonate with audiences. Viewed in this light, this study examines how the JTB's digital discourse constructs narratives that transcend information-sharing to produce cultural meaning. Barthes and Moriarty "extend the study of signs in culture, and how they function in reinforcing cultural ideologies, or myths 'to evaluate their links with mass culture'"^[21]. According to Barthes, ideology means "the deployment of signifiers for the purpose of expressing and surreptitiously justifying the dominant values of a given historical period"^[21]. In this study, we attempt to understand how JTB is communicating the country's culture and heritage through the use of signs and symbols.

Additionally, the study employs Impression Management Theory (IM), particularly digital indirect IM. A recent study shows "[e]arly work on indirect IM deems that it positively influences career-related outcomes, such as self-promotion"^[22] through 'impression formation'. JTB is presented in this study as the body that self-promotes Jordan online, which implies creating a favorable and attractive image of Jordanian tourism destinations over the internet. Thus, being a 'dedicated website'^[23] for promoting Jordan to tourists worldwide, JTB's role as a digital self-promoter connotes dedication, tourism promotion trend, tourists' visits motivator, and destination visibility moderator^[24].

Recent research conceptualized impression management as the process by which individuals or organizations attempt to control the perceptions of themselves through carefully orchestrated performances^[25]. Other studies identified strategies such as ingratiation, self-promotion, exemplifica-

tion, intimidation, and supplication^[26]. These are strategies, that can be identified not only in the sphere of interpersonal communication but in the sphere of organizations as well. In tourism promotion, they offer a context in which one can comprehend how destinations strategically seek to portray some identities to the audiences worldwide. Through the combination of semiotics and impression management, this paper can deal with the processes of meaning construction (how signs and myths are created) and the strategic nature of meaning creation (why certain narratives are focused on).

2.2. Empirical Studies on PR and Destination Image (DI)

Previous research highlights the importance of digital promotion in shaping tourism images, but it often emphasizes outcomes rather than processes. Quantitative studies have identified digital marketing, branding, and mobile engagement as significant drivers of DI^[27,28]. However, such studies primarily address the 'what' of image building without raising the question 'why' by examining the deeper symbolic and cultural mechanisms through which images acquire meaning. DI is recognized as:

an individual's mental representation of knowledge (beliefs), feelings, and overall perception of a particular destination... destination image...[is] a tool to enhance the number of tourists to a spot, and... that this factor is very important because it influences the selection of a destination, eWOM [electronic word of mouth], tourist satisfaction, tourist loyalty, intention to visit, and individual tourist decisions^[29].

We suspect that JTB's online activities, communication, signs and symbols are structured to shape a well-built DI. Creating and maintaining a 'positive' DI is important in the field of tourism. Recent research demonstrates DI is "the most essential antecedent of travel's post-purchase and decisions with tourists' behavior...[it] is also connected to several components, such as eWOM, tourist loyalty, intention to visit, and tourist satisfaction, which impact services for tourists"^[29]. As "tourists make decisions based on destination image perception rather than reality"^[30], semiotically analyzing how meaning is constructed by studying JTB's dig-

ital narratives is importance as “tourists intend to revisit the destination if they perceive a positive destination image”^[30].

Empirically speaking, studies connect PR to sustainable tourism development^[31,32], while others underline the role of social media in cultivating trust and awareness^[33]. Jordan-focused studies also acknowledge the significance of social media photos and videos in attracting tourists^[14,34], yet they do not analyze the symbolic codes, myths, or cultural narratives. In short, these focus on managerial or persuasive functions, but neglect the semiotic and mythological dimensions of PR discourse, which further justifies our study and highlights its importance.

2.3. Semiotics in Tourism Research

The literature demonstrates the value of semiotics in tourism studies. Scholars have shown how postcards and posters construct destination myths through icons, symbols, and rhetorical design^[16,35,36]. Others have examined semiotics in museums^[37], urban tourism branding^[38], or even pandemic-related public communication^[15]. These studies reveal the interpretive richness of semiotics in uncovering how meanings are naturalized. Nonetheless, their scope often lies in artifacts, city branding, or niche contexts rather than the systematic analysis of official national tourism board communication. As semiotics contributes to tourism, the literature equally believes that^[13]:

Tourism can contribute to semiotics, first, because it explicitly identifies the salient features of the social and natural world as phenomena articulated by what Percy calls “symbolic complexes.” Revealing the modern quest for experience as a quest for an experience of signs, it helps us to understand, through the structural alienation or incompleteness of that experience (the need for markers or photographs, for example), something of the nature of semiotic structures.

2.4. Research Gap

Despite PR studies and semiotic analyses, few researchers have systematically applied Barthes’ mythological framework to the digital discourse of national tourism

authorities. This gap is evident in the Arab context, where tourism boards are highly active on digital platforms yet remain underexplored from a symbolic and interpretive perspective. This study addresses this gap by examining JTB’s use of semiotic strategies and impression management in constructing Jordan’s image as “The Kingdom of Transformative Experiences.” This research is both an empirical and theoretical contribution to the literature on the decoding of tourism narratives in Jordan, and the incorporation of the semiotic theory with the notion of impression management, hence offers a more in-depth insight into the strategic production and continued utilisation of tourism imagery.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The research design embraced in this study is a qualitative descriptive-analytical research design which is considered to be appropriate to interrogate the symbolic and cultural phenomena in the sphere of communication scholarship. The qualitative paradigm helps to ascertain the meaning of what is written in texts, visual representations and stories, unlike the quantitative assessment of variables^[39]. This descriptive approach aimed at classifying the JTB’s tourism-promoted posts online. Meanwhile, the analytical research design applied semiotic interpretation to uncover the deeper connotative and mythological structures. Such an interpretive approach aligns with the fact that semiotics is not concerned merely with the presence of signs, but with how these signs operate within cultural contexts to generate meaning^[40].

3.2. Population and Sampling

The population of the study consisted of all the posts made by JTB on Facebook and X in 2024 in English. Social media content was chosen because it was the primary arena for image-building in the digital era, where destinations relied on interactive and symbolic communication to influence a global audience^[6,41]. To ensure depth and representativeness, purposive stratified sampling was adopted. Purposive sampling is recommended in qualitative research as it allows the selection of information-rich cases that provide the greatest insight into the research problem^[42]. Stratification

ensured that all thematic axes of JTB's communication—historical, adventure, therapeutic, religious, and cultural tourism—were represented. The final sample consisted of 23 posts, with the most interactive ones selected from each category, reflecting theoretical relevance in qualitative sampling^[43]. Each post served as the unit of analysis. Coming up with the five axes was grounded in the methodological approach of this study. Each of the qualitative inductive approach and content analysis, together with the semiotic analysis, has allowed for the production of categories from the data, which guaranteed that these specific axes reflected the JTB's actual promotional practices^[44]. Accordingly, five main axes were identified, which represented the JTB's organizational schema of defining tourism sites. This classification was guided by five semiotic indicators that formed the message's rhetorical framework^[45] as follows: firstly, history and archaeology by framing the civilizational heritage through concepts of authenticity and eternity, transforming the visitor into a discoverer of living history^[46]. Secondly, adventure and nature by framing activities in nature as means of self-discovery and transcending personal limits, rather than merely recreational sports^[47]. Thirdly, healing and wellness by framing the destination as a place for renewal and holistic well-being, connecting it to spiritual and physical health^[48]. Fourthly, religion and heritage are put into the context of establishing Jordan as a spiritual tourism destination, thus highlighting the virtues of harmony and tolerance^[49]. Lastly, the culture and city life are also conceptualized through the depiction of local interaction as a chance to integrate into a new culture and experience the reality of urban life^[50].

3.3. Data Collection Instrument

A form of semiotic analysis was created to use as the main tool of information gathering. The form has been clearly designed based on the three-fold model of denotation, connotation and myth suggested by Roland Barthes^[12], hence ensuring methodological coherence with the theoretical basis of the study. The explicit coding tools have been recommended in qualitative research since they provide consistency, transparency, and rigor in data interpretation^[51]. The form included five axes, namely (1) identification data, (2) denotative description, (3) connotative interpretation, (4) mythological extraction, and (5) image impact assessment.

This structure provided greater dependability of the analysis and also made the analysis open to the interpretive depth, which is consistent with traditional traditions of semiotic studies^[52].

3.4. Data Collection Procedures

Data was gathered by making a systematic archival of the posts made by JTB in 2024. By categorizing and screening the entire corpus Inclusion within a stratified sample, the entire corpus was inventoried, categorized, and filtered. All the chosen posts were copied into a semiotic analysis template, which guaranteed the same treatment of the dataset. These coding and archiving processes are the common practice in qualitative content analysis, which ensures traceability and replicability of the methodological process^[53].

3.5. Data Analysis

Interpretation was performed in three stages of analysis of data analysis. To begin with, there was an analysis of posts at the denotational, connotational, and mythological levels. Secondly, each thematic axis was comparatively analyzed, in order to find repetitive codes and symbolic motifs. Thirdly, the synthetic analysis combined knowledge along axes, consequently making it possible to recreate the overall image of tourism at JTB. The logic in this interpretive development is that which leads by the analysis of semiotics, a development that rises, as it were, through micro-to macro-level signs to macro-to-cultural myths^[12,54]. The Impression Management Theory came to the rescue to give strength to the interpretations and place the semiotic results in a larger context that explains the process of institutions to create and seem to manage their image in a strategic manner^[20,25]. In this way, the methodology was able to guarantee credibility and theoretical richness. To reach the level of trustworthiness, we followed suggestions in the framework of qualitative inquiry, paying equal attention to both methodological and interpretive depth^[55].

4. Results

The semiotic analysis showed that there is a consistent storyline that positions Jordan as the Kingdom of Transformative Experiences. All thematic axes, such as historical, ad-

venture, therapeutic, religious, and cultural, produced myths, which strengthened the Jordanian tourism image. Its findings are as follows.

4.1. Historical Tourism: “Journey Through Time”

The articles highlighting Petra, Jerash, and Azraq Castle involved monumental visual depictions often expressed in a way that emphasized the sense of continuity and permanence. These visual representations were more specific, on the denotative level, to architectural details and sweeping views. Connotatively, the use of warm tones and majestic compositions emphasized authenticity and endurance. Mythologically, these posts constructed Jordan as “The Living Time Gate” and “Guardian of Complete History,” projecting it as a pulsating archive of human civilization. Such

myth-making aligns with the literature’s observation that historical sites are often framed as timeless cultural treasures to enhance destination prestige^[35]. By asking the question of “how do tourists construct their perception of destination from a mythical imaginary”^[56], the authors use Barthes’ model to understand myths in the field of tourism. According to Barthes^[56], myth-making replaces the reality by another; “the concern to differentiate itself from other destinations may lead to reconstruct perception of a difficult destination... [where the] reality can lead to future problems of vulnerability and decline of the destination”. Furthermore, mythologies are “generalizations of reality expressed in common terms by groups of individuals”, proposing that such mythologies are used to organize and interpret perceptions and present a novel way to study experiences^[57]. **Figure 1** illustrates historical and family landmarks in Jordan.



Figure 1. Historical and family landmarks in Jordan.

Source: Jordan Tourism Board’s Facebook and X page, posted in 2024. Available from: <https://x.com/VisitJordanAR> and <https://www.facebook.com/VisitJordanAR>.

4.2. Adventure and Nature Tourism: “Immersion and Challenge”

The content focused on Wadi Rum, Dana Reserve, and desert landscapes relied on expansive compositions and cinematic aesthetics. Denotatively, posts depicted wide hori-

zons, desert treks, and eco-tourism activities. Connotatively, the framing suggested mystery, challenge, and spiritual renewal. The resulting myths— “Enchanted Wilderness” and “Land of Spiritual Adventure”—positioned Jordan as a space of physical immersion and transcendence. From an ontological perspective, this study ‘objectively described’ and

constructed the tourism reality that the JTB is publishing online ‘denotativeness’, and extracted ‘suggested’ meanings from the sample and focused on their relationship ‘connotativeness’^[58]. As this study investigates the DI that JTB is shaping of Jordan’s tourism, “[t]he construction of an image is synonymous with improving the connotation of the destination image and establishing an emotional connection with the traveling customers”^[59].

These results are aligned with the general findings related to tourism communication, where natural landscapes are constructed as places of ecological care and transforming restoration^[15]. With regard to the essence of communication in tourism, communication has been identified to be a key factor within the tourism sector, therefore redefining how companies and organizations interact with their audiences and, hence, impacting the decision-making process and the general experience of the tourists^[60]. It has been found that communication techniques progressively play a crucial role “in influencing traveler behavior and perception, suggesting that a comprehensive understanding of these elements is essential for both academic research and practical application in the tourism industry”^[60]. Consequently, this study analyses the communication meanings that lie in the signs that JTB is publishing to the world. Motivating tourism has never

been easy. Recent research, however, states that “[t]ourists’ decision towards a destination is highly influenced by individuals (such as influencers) or organizations while they search for the information [over the internet, particularly] on social media”^[8]. Other study concludes that “the images were able to link the visual identity with the value, societal, heritage and civilization dimensions through which the vision was launched”^[61]. Interestingly, the literature highlights that “the main challenge facing the [tourism] sector is the direct and immediate access of users to information through the internet”^[18], as the digital environment can negatively affect destination image and ultimately, tourist’s decision-making. Paying attention to semiotics while framing signs and creating meanings to shape perceptions, therefore, is highly important. Moreover, recent studies highlight the concept of semiotic construction, which indicates ‘meaning construction’. From an interdisciplinary perspective, researchers state that “[i]n tourism studies, semiotics is used to describe or explain how specific items are symbolized as tourism attractions, such as daily necessities, landmark buildings, holiday destinations, and cultural phenomena”^[62]. Consequently, this study examines how JTB portrays Jordan’s historical destinations for public consumption worldwide. **Figure 2** shows nature and adventure tourism in Jordan.



Figure 2. Nature and adventure tourism in Jordan.

Source: Jordan Tourism Board’s Facebook and X page, posted in 2024. Available from: <https://x.com/VisitJordanAR> and <https://www.facebook.com/VisitJordanAR>.

4.3. Therapeutic Tourism: “Renewal and Healing”

Posts showcasing the Dead Sea and Ma'in Hot Springs highlighted wellness experiences. Denotatively, visuals presented floating bodies, mineral waters, and spa rituals. Connotatively, these elements symbolized purity, vitality, and release from modern stress. **Figure 3** highlights medical and wellness tourism in Jordan. Mythologically speaking, Jordan emerged as “The Healing Oasis” and “Primal Sanctuary of Rebirth,” aligning with global narratives of wellness tourism. Such symbolic framing resonates with the research findings that wellness communication often draws on elemental imagery (water, earth, body) to project destinations as restorative environments^[38]. Regarding symbolic framing, “individuals interpret signs in relation to their own sociocultural backgrounds and biographical narratives”^[63], which makes framing more important and risky in semiotics. The surrounding literature illustrates that^[63]:

“communicative” frames, [are] “communicative strategies that prompt particular patterns of thinking” ...Communicative frames are dependent on cognitive frames [which are concerned with the background knowledge necessary to understand a concept and make sense of the things around us]and interrelated with semantic frames since many forms of communication use language. The communicative properties of frames have been discussed within social movement research, where communicative frames can be used to diagnose and draw attention to social problems, offer prognostic solutions to those problems, and motivate participants into collective action...Lastly, communicative frames exist when cognitive frames utilise language, objects, and images in order to activate cognitive associations. (p. 29)



Figure 3. Medical and wellness tourism in Jordan.

Source: Jordan Tourism Board's Facebook and X page, posted in 2024. Available from: <https://x.com/VisitJordanAR> and <https://www.facebook.com/VisitJordanAR>.

4.4. Religious Tourism: “Spiritual Elevation”

The results show the content related to Bethany Beyond the Jordan, Salt, and prominent mosques frequently

employed black-and-white photography and solemn tones. Communication has also been identified in the context of tourism as a key component in the sector, thus redefining the interactions between businesses and viewers and, by

extension, the factors that lead to decision-making processes and the general tourist experience. This mirrors the argument that religious tourism discourse often uses solemn aesthetics to evoke spiritual legitimacy and elevate a destination's symbolic value^[36]. A recent study clarifies that “[r]eligious tourism draws its essence from religion, with tourists visiting religious sites for various reasons, including curiosity, admiration of spiritual lifestyles, and the desire to learn about new places”^[64]. According to Jack and Phipps (2005)^[65], “[t]ourism also constitutes an information-intensive business as tourism discourse mediates the relationship between tourists and their tourism

destinations by manipulating various kinds of linguistic and audio-visual resources to persuade potential consumers and turn them into real clients”, which takes us back to semiotics. The literature demonstrates it is semiotics that studies “how the structure of knowledge relates to the structure of the ‘knowledge carriers’^[66]. It sees sign processes as a ‘unitary phenomenon which connects living nature with human culture and distinguishes them both from inanimate nature’ ”^[66]. This study uses semiotics to delve into the hidden meanings that JTB publishes over social media platforms to communicate with the public. **Figure 4** reveals religious tourism in Jordan.



Figure 4. Religious tourism in Jordan.

Source: Jordan Tourism Board's Facebook and X page, posted in 2024. Available from: <https://x.com/VisitJordanAR> and <https://www.facebook.com/VisitJordanAR>.

4.5. Cultural Tourism: “Living Authenticity”

Posts promoting traditional cuisine (e.g., Mansaf), historic cafés such as the Duke's Diwan, and modern Amman districts emphasized sensory and everyday experiences. Denotatively, they depicted shared meals, cultural festivals, and urban life. Connotatively, the imagery projected generosity, hospitality, and vibrancy. Mythologically, Jordan was constructed as “The Taste of Generosity” and “The Bohemian Quarter,” suggesting a living culture where tradition and modernity coexist harmoniously. This shows that cultural tourism is often theorized as an embodied experience of authenticity, but through food, art, and urban identity^[37]. The scholars differentiate between denotative and connotative senses by means of a semiotic framework developed by Roland Barthes, where denotative refers to the literal meaning and connotative refers to the symbolic or ideological meaning^[67]. According to Barthes (1977)^[67],

The first level is known as denotation or the literal meaning of a sign, and the second

level is known as connotation that includes the symbolic meaning that arises due to the cultural, ideological and associational systems. Barthes emphasized that connotation is not only linguistic but also ideological; it both constructs and reflects systems of power within society. In this regard, every sign inherently carries cultural and ideological values that reinforce dominant worldviews.

Relatedly, the literature reveals that cultural tourism “immerses travellers in a destination's local culture, engaging with its tangible and intangible heritage. It seeks to offer authentic and immersive experiences that enable visitors to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of the cultural heritage of their destination”^[68]. Touristic social media narratives have to combine the cultural dimension of the promotional communication messages shared on digital platforms with semiotics professionally. **Figure 5** demonstrates cultural and urban tourism in Jordan.



Figure 5. Cultural and urban tourism in Jordan.

Source: Jordan Tourism Board's Facebook and X page, posted in 2024. Available from: <https://x.com/VisitJordanAR> and <https://www.facebook.com/VisitJordanAR>.

4.6. Integrated Image of Jordanian Tourism

Collectively, the myths across thematic axes converged to form a narrative of Jordan as a destination of authenticity, transformation, and harmony. Through its symbolic repertoire, JTB positioned Jordan not as a fragmented tourism product, but as an integrated cultural experience—“The Kingdom of Transformative Experiences.” The findings suggest that the communicative strategy of the JTB is in compliance with the existing theories of impression management, especially the aspects of self-promotion and exemplification^[20]. The strategies will help develop the image of Jordan as a country with an impressive history and deep-rooted belief in environmentalism, a peaceful devotion to spirituality, a fascinating cultural environment, and a cultural atmosphere.

5. Discussion

The current research project adds to the scholarly literature on the topic of tourism communication because it shows that official digital discourse is more of a meaning-building system than a promotional instrument. Using the semiotic model developed by Barthes, it is shown how the denotative signs (photographs and captions) have been trans-

formed into connotative meanings (e.g., authenticity, challenge, harmony) and finally mythic narratives (Living Time Gate, Healing Oasis, Land of Harmony). Such myths are used to naturalize the identity of Jordan in the form of the Kingdom of Transformative Experiences, and thus a deep symbolic narrative is created as an alternative to a shallow tourist catalogue. The results, therefore, highlight the essence of communication in the tourism industry. Simply put the following^[69]:

The intangible goods of the purchasing process necessitate the implementation of the broadest variety of product presentation aspects, a broad variety of highly salient markers that will be offered to the potential tourists in a way that they will be able to select a destination with regards to their expectations.

5.1. Semiotics as Lens of Power and Limitation

The existing methodology was able to go beyond descriptive studies of public relations because it dealt with the making of meaning by the use of cultural codes. Previous studies have emphasized the role of digital tools in brand-

ing tourism^[27,28]; the current research shows how meaning is interwoven very complexly through symbols and myths. At the same time, the semiotic analysis is open to interpretive subjectivity. Although a systematic semiotic analysis approach enhanced the consistency of its methodology, its results are still subject to critical commentary, which is also admitted to in the qualitative traditions, such as the claim that [t]here is no more intellectual empire than the semiotic one^[66]. The study therefore comes up with the following conclusion^[69]:

By applying a semiotic model, marketers can make evidence-based conclusions about the relevance and possible power of iconicity, indexicality and symbolisms contained in representations. Furthermore, it will alleviate the inclination to perceive representations as unitary and unchanging and instead recognize those as heterogeneous and dynamic entities in an ongoing process.

5.2. Integration of Impression Management

This theory offers explanatory depth, framing JTB's communication as deliberate performances designed to influence global audiences^[19,26]. Historical narratives exemplify *self-promotion*, religious content reflects *exemplification*, and cultural posts employ *ingratiation* by highlighting generosity. These strategies correspond to the organizational attempts of crafting credibility, likability, and distinctiveness in competitive tourism markets^[20].

5.3. Myth-Making as a Strategic PR Practice

The deliberate use of unity in visual techniques (e.g., black-and-white photography of heritage and cultural contents) was used as a semiotic focal point that centralized the representation of national identity in Jordan. Similarly, hashtags (e.g., Kingdom of Time) were applied to enhance the historical layers and, at the same time, appealed to digital users. Such strategies represent the intersection between semiotics and a public-relations approach: the myths can serve as symbolic capitals that enhance destination branding and reputation management. A study demonstrates that^[70]:

Arguably, JTB is involved in commercial tourism of

promoting the heritage and historical sites of the country. Observed in this light, Thompson and Tian (2008)^[71] believe that commercial mythmaking is:

Advertiser campaigns, brand marketing, tourist promotion, and other marketing agents, trying to position their products and services into culturally resonant texts that consumers can use to resolve the salient contradictions in their lives and to make certain desired identities both personally and communally, commercial mythmaking may also serve as an ideological process that establishes a specific interpretive account of the past and its sociocultural significance.

5.4. Implications and Ethics

To the practitioners, the current enquiry indicates that it is important to come up with consistent symbolic narratives that cut across various facets of tourism. However, myth creation brings on great ethical issues. Although narrative framing can enhance likability, it can also be prone to idealization or bias. Maintaining credibility, therefore, requires ensuring that there is concordance between digital promise and what is on-site.

5.5. Future Research

The current research focused on content production, thus impacting the reception. Audience studies can provide explanations as to whether the international tourists internalize such myths in the manner they are intended. Comparative studies on the neighboring destinations would further put into context the symbolic strategies of Jordan in the wider regional competition. Applying the analysis to the visual-dominant media platforms, including Instagram or TikTok, would lead to further information regarding semiotic strategy adaptation to specific media settings.

5.6. Research Contribution

This paper contributes to scholarship on tourism communication and PR in three different aspects. The first is that it provides a semiotic frame that goes beyond descriptive accounts of digital promotion by revealing the symbolic and

mythological processes involved in destination representation. Analyzing the trilevel model by Barthes, the discussion shows how the denotative signs and connotative meanings develop to become the cultural myths, naturalizing the identity of Jordan as the place of transformation. Secondly, the study incorporates both semiotics and impression management theory, which demonstrates the strategy of using symbolic content in conscious image-management schemes. This two-fold structure provides a more delicate insight into the construction of meaning and a selective focus on certain myths, to which symbolic communication is connected with organizational tactics of self-promotion, exemplification, and ingratiation. Third, the empirical enquiry clarifies the Jordan tourism image, decoding how the Jordan Tourism Board strategizes the themes of history, nature, wellness, spirituality, and culture into a unified story that is collectively titled as the Kingdom of Transformative Experiences. In this way, it addresses a research gap in the field of Arab tourism communication research, the little-researched semiotic and mythological aspects of digital PR. As a result, the research is both conceptually new and practically relevant in providing practically viable information to tourism boards desiring to use symbolic capital in the global destination branding.

6. Conclusion

The results prove that the digital discourse of JTB does not just work in terms of promotion, but rather it is a type of symbolic production mechanism that is designed strategically to create the image of a unified cultural myth of Jordan. Using semiotic tactics such as monumental framing, monochrome photography, symbolic hashtags, and cultural codes, JTB creates the image of a destination with sincerity, peace, and change to discover Jordan. Historical, adventure, therapeutic, religious, and cultural are the thematic axes, which give stories that help to support the identity of the Kingdom of Transformative Experiences in general. This is the key concept of the current research; the idea of transformative experiences is an overall theoretical concept that connects all five themes and determines the central Brand Positioning of JTB. It reflects a worldwide trend in post-modern tourism whereby the travelling motive has changed to fly-by-wire amusement to the process of self-development and meaning-making^[72]. The fact that JTB depends on this

construct is compliant with the concepts of the Experience Economy, where the tourist experience has been authored to deliver a desired promise of change, which ends with a positive and sustainable change in the life of the tourist^[73]. The five thematic areas thus support the branding strategy in the following manner: first, the subject of cognitive transformation the History and Religion thematic are thus used in the promotion of the brand as visitors receive understanding of their relationship with time and heritage; second, the subject of existential and psychological transformation the Adventure and Nature thematic are thus applied in the promotion of the brand with radical renewal and holistic health; third, physical and spiritual transformation is promoted through the Healing and Wellness themes.

This discussion shows that the Kingdom of Transformative Experiences is a holistic analytical model that conveys the transformative value as a whole branding strategy. The combination of semiotics and impression management provides a powerful analytical tool, which indicates that the discourse of JTB demonstrates the cultural strength of myth-making and a clear strategic plan of impression management.

This paper emphasizes how PR is instrumental in creating national images as a symbolic capital that improves reputation and competitiveness in the international tourism market. This ethical concern is also raised by the findings; myth-making is useful in constructing narrative; otherwise, when not grounded in lived authenticity, it is at risk of selective representation. In the case of Jordan, the digital storytelling should align with the real-life experience in order to maintain credibility and build long-term trust. Summing up, the case of Jordan presents a good example of how digital PR can be used to create the desired destination identity based on cultural stories, which has further implications on the wider academic and practical scope of tourism communication.

Author Contributions

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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