

What's in a Name? The Symbolic Meaning of Tourist and Traveler

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Semiotics and the Meaning of Words

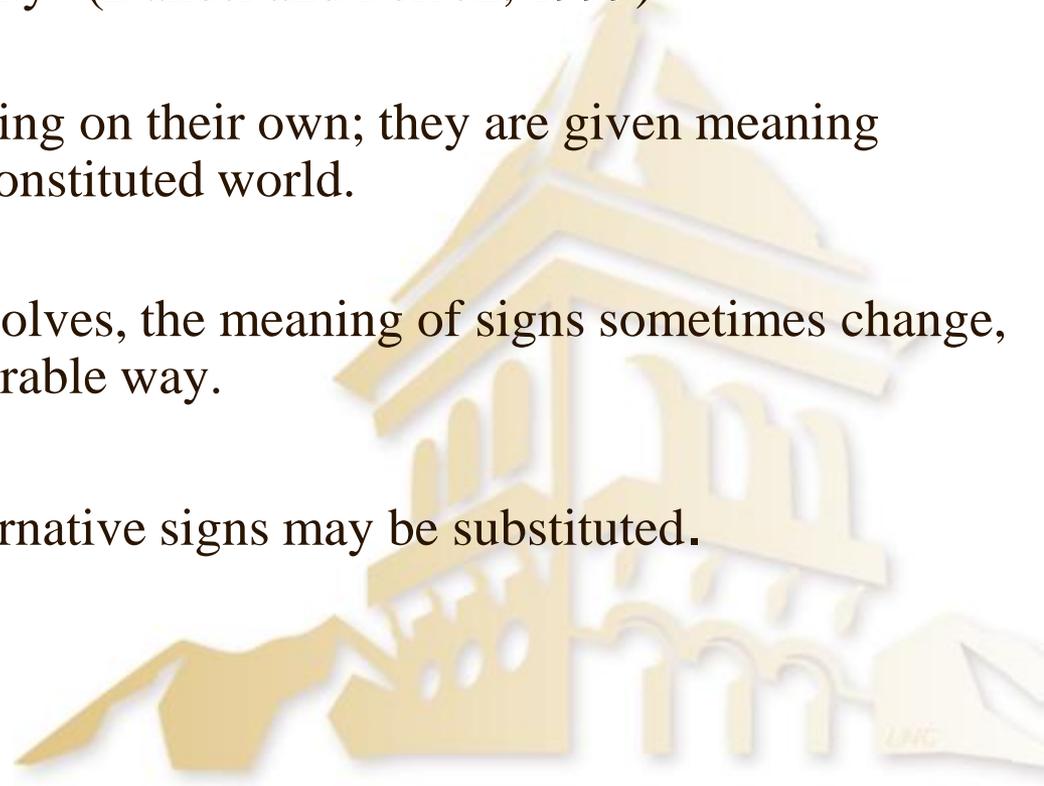
Semiotics is the study of signs and sign-using behavior (Encyclopedia Britannica)

In this sense, a sign is "something that stands for something, to someone in some capacity" (Danesi and Perron, 1999)

Signs do not have meaning on their own; they are given meaning through our culturally constituted world.

And, because culture evolves, the meaning of signs sometimes change, sometimes in a less desirable way.

When this happens, alternative signs may be substituted.



A rose by any other name?

<u>Old Name</u>	<u>New Name</u>	<u>Old Name</u>	<u>New Name</u>
Mailman →	Postal Carrier	Bird Watcher →	Birder
Used Car →	Pre-Owned	Diary →	Journal
Secretary →	Staff Assistant	Dog Catcher →	Animal Control Officer
Prisons →	Correctional Institutions	Handicapped →	Disabled
Global Warming →	Climate Change	I'm Sorry →	My Bad
Garbage Dump →	Landfill	Hospital →	Medical Center
Pain →	Discomfort	Kidnapper →	Hostage Taker
Ping Pong →	Table Tennis	Life Jacket →	Personal Flotation Device

Name Changes in Hospitality/Tourism

Old Name

Stewardess



Waitress/Waiter



Vacation



New Name

Flight Attendant

Server

Road Trip

Convention and Visitors Bureaus are also changing names:

San Francisco CVB



San Francisco Travel Association

Orlando/Orange County CVB →

Visit Orlando

Alabama Gulf Coast CVB



Gulf Shores and Orange Beach Tourism

Fort Wayne CVB



Visit Fort Wayne

Norfolk CVB



Visit Norfolk

Grand Rapids/Kent CVB



Experience Grand Rapids

Background: The Etymology of Tourist and Tourism

- ◆ The word “tour” appears to have been derived from the Latin, 'tornare' and the Greek, 'tornos', meaning 'a lathe or circle; the *movement around a central point* or axis'. (Theobald,1994)
- ◆ The word “tourism” was used by 1811 and “tourist” by 1840. (Online Etymology Dictionary: tour)

Note that:

- ◆ “ism” represents an action or process; typical behavior or quality
- ◆ “ist” reflects one that performs a given action
- ◆ So, when the suffixes are added to the word *tour* they suggest movement around a *circle*.
- ◆ This circle represents a starting point and that a tour is a journey that is *round-trip* and someone who takes such a journey is tourist

Classifying Tourism: The Name Game

In 1994, the United Nations classified three forms:

- ◆ **Domestic tourism**, involving residents of the given country traveling only within this country.
- ◆ **Inbound tourism**, involving non-residents traveling in the given country.
- ◆ **Outbound tourism**, involving residents traveling in another country.

Some more recent examples:

- ◆ **Ecotourism**, also known as ecological tourism, is responsible travel to fragile, pristine, and usually protected areas that strives to be low impact and (often) small scale.
- ◆ **Dark tourism** involves visits to "dark" sites, such as battlegrounds, scenes of horrific crimes or acts of genocide, for example: concentration camps.
- ◆ **Doom Tourism**, "Tourism of Doom," or "Last Chance Tourism" involves traveling to places that are environmentally or otherwise threatened.
- ◆ **Medical Tourism** is defined as traveling to take advantage of the price or regulatory differences is often referred to as "medical tourism".

(Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tourism>)

Background: The Etymology of Travel and Traveler

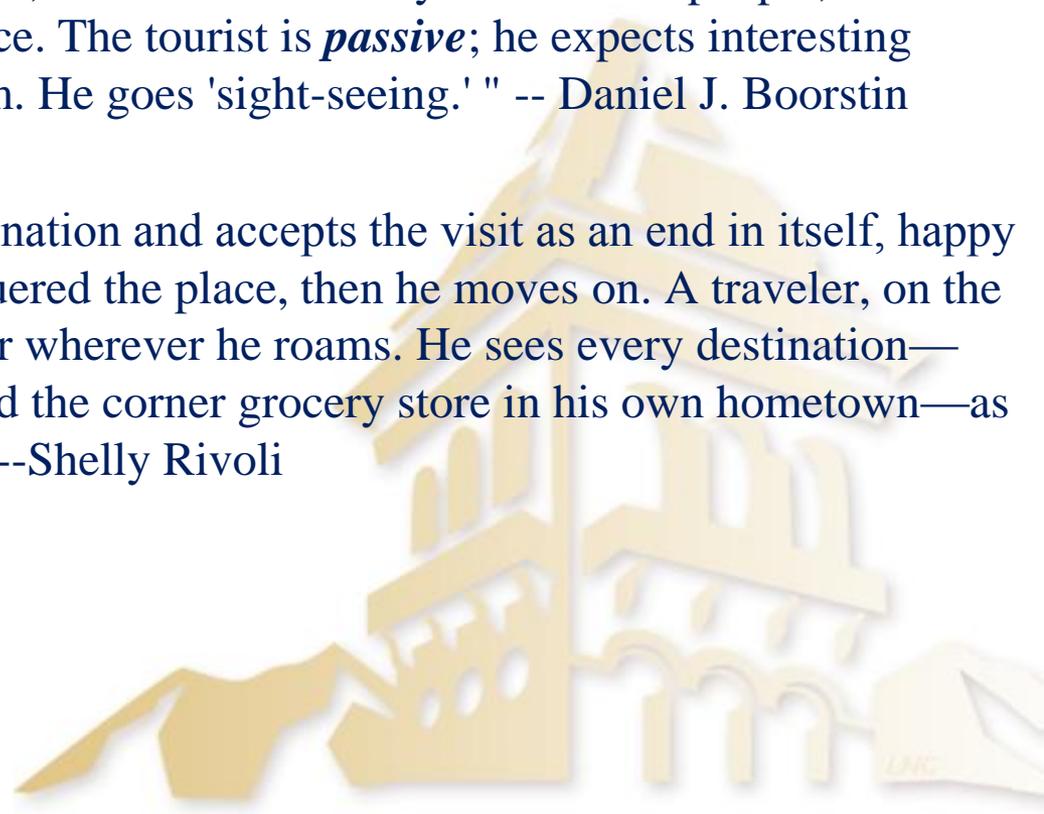
- ◆ The words appears to have been derived from “Travailen” (1300) meaning to “to make a journey.”
- ◆ The semantic development may have been via the notion of “go on a difficult journey,” but it may also reflect the difficulty of going anywhere in the Middle Ages.
(Source: <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=travel>)
- ◆ A “traveller”, therefore, is someone who “makes a journey”.
- ◆ Note that this definition excludes any reference to returning.

Classifying Travelers: The Name Game

- ◆ **Drifter:** a person who is continually travelling without a home or job
- ◆ **Rogue:** a person who wanders from place to place, an independent person who rejects conventional rules of society in favor of following their own personal goals and values.
- ◆ **Vagabond:** an itinerant person. The word is derived from the Latin adjective vagabundus, “inclined to wander” and from the verb vagor, “wander”.
- ◆ **Vagrant:** a person in poverty, who wanders from place to place without a home or regular employment or income
- ◆ **Nomad:** a person who does not stay long in the same place; a wanderer
- ◆ **Perpetual traveler:** a traveller/migrant who is not considered a legal resident of any country
- ◆ **Voyager:** a person who explores new lands and worlds.
- ◆ **Tourist:** a person who is travelling or visiting a place for pleasure
(Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Traveler>)

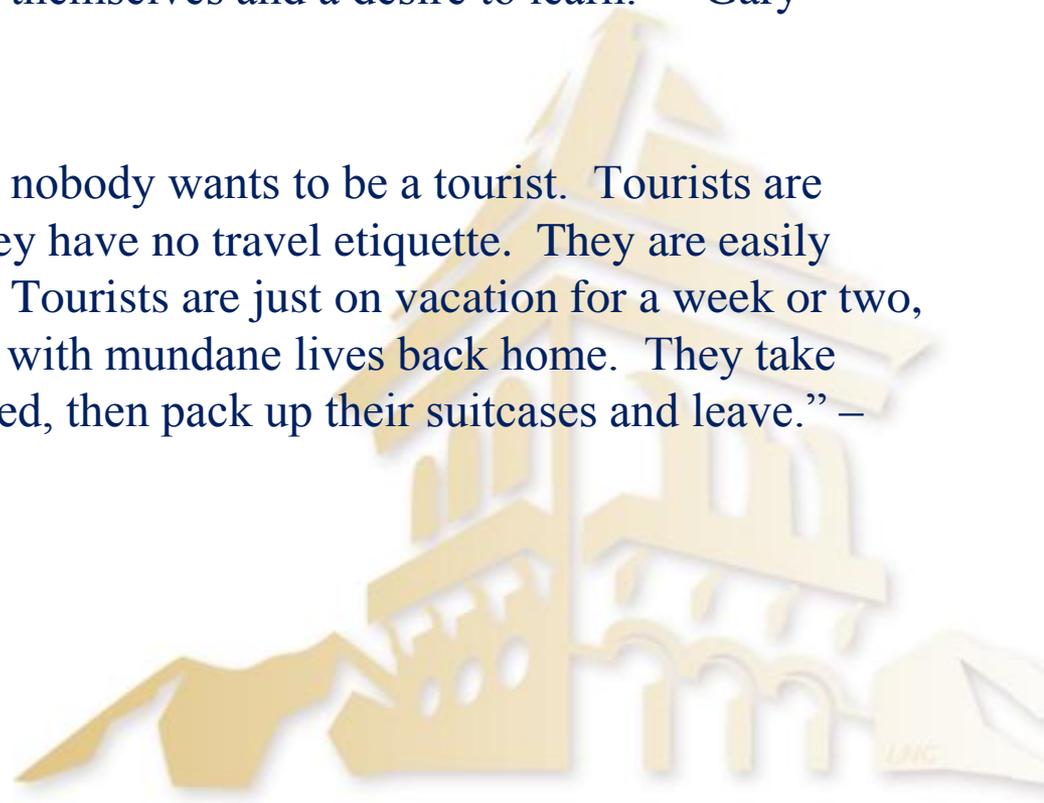
“Tourist” versus “Traveler”: What are They Saying?

- ◆ “What defines a tourist is *ignorance*. Locals may go to Pike’s Place in Seattle along with the tourists, but they do not go to the space needle” -- Kate Hopkins
- ◆ "The traveler was *active*; he went strenuously in search of people, of adventure, of experience. The tourist is *passive*; he expects interesting things to happen to him. He goes 'sight-seeing.' " -- Daniel J. Boorstin
- ◆ “A tourist visits a destination and accepts the visit as an end in itself, happy to have seen and conquered the place, then he moves on. A traveler, on the other hand, is a traveler wherever he roams. He sees every destination—even the post office and the corner grocery store in his own hometown—as a point of departure.” --Shelly Rivoli



Tourist versus Traveler: What are They Saying?

- ◆ “Tourists are those who bring their homes with them wherever they go, and apply them to whatever they see. They are closed to experiences outside of the superficial. Travelers, however, leave home at home, bringing only themselves and a desire to learn.” --Gary Langer
- ◆ “Within travel writing, nobody wants to be a tourist. Tourists are amateurs at travel. They have no travel etiquette. They are easily duped and get robbed. Tourists are just on vacation for a week or two, they’re just consumers with mundane lives back home. They take snapshots, get sunburned, then pack up their suitcases and leave.” – Cynthia Ord



Maybe there isn't a difference

- ◆ “*There is no difference.* It is a distinction used by *pretentious* people to make themselves feel superior to others. To the locals, no matter how long you've been traveling or whatever your mindset is, you are still a tourist. After two years on the road, I'm still a tourist when I show up somewhere new.” --Gary Arndt
- ◆ “Does anyone admit to being a tourist? When comparing the word tourist vs. traveler, all of a sudden I hear silence in the room. Disdainful! Oh no, there are no tourists here. Am I right? Yes, no one wants to admit to being a tourist unless you're just being pampered on some all inclusive cruise ship. But the truth of the matter is, *for everyone who travels for pleasure there's a bit of the tourist in all of us.*” Mac a'Bhaird

Maybe there isn't a difference

- ◆ In a semantic dispute, one could argue that a traveler is anyone engaged in the act of travel. I traveled to the post office yesterday, downtown to dine with friends. More semantics: A tourist is anyone who is not a local or, alternatively, one who is in a location to tour, to see the sites. The underpinnings of this question are clear, though, to anyone who reads about travel. My take: This question must die. *There's no difference. None.*" -- Pam Mandel
- ◆ “Oh, the aura, the romance, the mystique of the ‘traveller’. It just sounds more adventurous, more gritty, more authentic than the ‘tourist’. I can scarcely spit out the confession, so painful is the suspicion that *my own travels were really more ‘tourist’ than ‘traveller’.*” --Jacquie Ross
- ◆ “We all want to think of ourselves as travelers, but staying in a cheap dorm with other westerners or drinking on the roof of our hostel does not make us one. It's being open and accepting of new cultures, of different ways of living. The goal of traveling is to learn about yourself and about the world, and anyone can do that if they try. Even tourists.” --Aaron Joel Santos

Maybe there isn't a difference

- ◆ “**There isn't any.** Being a tourist has been spoiled by a few bad apples, while travelers have been over-romanticized.” -- Tammie Dooley
- ◆ “A traveller, which is what I am, is someone who gets off the beaten tourist path and to see and experience that which others miss; for example, a unique and architecturally significant feature on a building in the heart of the city. I always stop and take a picture, even though sometimes the locals curse at me for stopping right in front of them. Yup, travellers... We are so different than tourists. I'm also smarter, a better driver and frankly I am more above average than even those kids in Lake Wobegon.” --Greg Wesson
- ◆ “For me ‘travelers’ look at tourists the way PETA looks at meat-eaters. With a healthy dose of contempt. And the locals of the countries visited don't care about the holistic or materialistic reasons one visits. If being a “traveler” means I adopt a contemptuous attitude towards tourists who are usually middle class hardworking folks back home and don't have a lot of time or cash to stay for months at a time, then sorry I won't be part of your group.” --Calfran

Conclusions and Directions for Future Research

The analysis suggests that the distinction between “tourists” and “travelers” can be considered from the perspective of “motive”.

1. Cognitive motive: a thought-provoking learning experience
2. Emotional motive : a fun and emotional experience

Future research may want to conduct survey research that examine the general public’s perceptions of the meaning of “tourist” and “traveler”.

