



Research Article

**NARRATING THE ‘WHITE GOLD’: HOW TURKISH MEDIA SHAPES THE IMAGE OF MEERSCHAUM\*\***

Özgür KOYUN\* (orcid.org/ 0009-0004-7267-3156)

Gökçe YÜKSEK<sup>2</sup> (orcid.org/ 0000-0002-1010-8694)

<sup>1</sup>Anadolu University, Tourist Guidance Department, Tourism Faculty, Eskişehir, Türkiye

<sup>2</sup>Anadolu University, Tourist Guidance Department, Tourism Faculty, Eskişehir, Türkiye

**Abstract**

This study employs critical discourse analysis to examine 24 news articles published in national and local media between 2010 and 2025, to uncover how meerschaum is discursively constructed in Turkey. The research goes beyond viewing meerschaum as a simple geological resource, examining its symbolic transformation into an object of cultural, economic, and ideological meaning. The growing public and media attention to meerschaum in recent years forms the rationale for this investigation, reflecting wider debates about cultural heritage and its commodification. The analysis identifies five major themes: idealization of cultural heritage, which frames meerschaum as a nostalgic and authentic element of national identity; healing discourse, where the stone is attributed with wellness and protective qualities; intergenerational transmission of craftsmanship, emphasizing the preservation and continuity of artisanal skills; environmental concerns, highlighting issues of sustainability and responsible resource management; and use of technical knowledge for legitimization, where scientific language and expert voices are employed to strengthen its perceived value. Together, these discursive strategies illustrate how meerschaum is simultaneously positioned as a heritage asset to be protected and a commodified object integrated into tourism development policies, exposing the ideological tension between cultural preservation and economic exploitation.

**Keywords:** Meerschaum, Cultural Heritage, Critical Discourse Analysis, Media Representation

**Introduction**

Meerschaum (sepiolite), a natural resource unique to Eskişehir, is not only a geological formation; it is a living cultural heritage element through traditional production, aesthetic values and intergenerational transmission (Köşker and Karacaoğlu, 2019). Meerschaum, which has been shaped by the artisanal practice that has developed over centuries, has gained a place in individual and collective memory through objects such as pipes, rosaries and figurines; thus, it has turned into a symbolic element carrying the cultural identity of Eskişehir. The sustainability of this heritage is not only limited to the production processes but is also closely related to its representation in the media and public discourses (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004).

Beyond making cultural objects visible, the media frames them with certain meanings, emphasizing some aspects while relegating others to the background (Hall, 1997). In the case of meerschaum, expressions such as 'white gold', 'forgotten craft' and 'signature of Eskişehir', which are frequently encountered in local and national media, reveal that this product is presented in a nostalgic and exotic framework. Such discourses allow cultural heritage to be transformed into a commodity that can be marketed and integrated into tourism, not just as a value to be preserved (Arumugam et al., 2023). These representations shape not only the presentation of cultural heritage, but also society's perceptions of it and the values it attributes to it (Farrelly et al., 2019). However, the social perception of cultural heritage is largely shaped by representations constructed through the media. Beyond conveying information, media discourses serve as discursive tools that reconstruct social power relations, ideological orientations, and value judgments (Fairclough, 1995; Dijk, 2008). In this context, the primary concern of this study is how meerschaum is represented in media discourses, the ideological frameworks these representations are based on, and how they shape the perception of cultural heritage.

\*\*This study was supported by the Scientific Research Coordination Unit of Anadolu University under project number 2896.

\*Sorumlu yazar: okoyun@anadolu.edu.tr

DOI: 10.33083/joghat.2025.575

Although studies have focused on the geological, economic, and artisanal aspects of meerschaum in the existing literature, critical discourse-oriented research on how this heritage object is made meaningful through media representations is limited. The social perception of meerschaum reveals that this cultural product is viewed as both an authentic heritage that needs to be preserved and a tourism object with economic value. This situation leads to the simultaneous positioning of cultural heritage in both emotional and nostalgic, as well as commodified and commercial, frameworks (Köşker and Karacaoğlu, 2019). On the one hand, a craft that is about to disappear is conveyed in a nostalgic language, and on the other hand, it is presented as a value integrated into the tourism economy. How this product is represented in the media, which actors discuss it, and which aspects are highlighted are critical for the future of meerschaum. This study aims to examine how meerschaum is represented in media discourses, the discourse strategies through which these representations are constructed, and the effects of these representations on the perception of cultural heritage within the framework of critical discourse analysis. Thus, it aims to provide an in-depth analysis of the relationships between cultural heritage, locality, and tourism. In this context, it is of critical importance how the meanings attributed to meerschaum in media texts play a role in the construction of local identities and the shaping of sustainable heritage policies. In this respect, the study makes an original contribution to both cultural heritage literature and studies on tourism discourses by revealing that cultural heritage is produced and redefined not only as a physical entity but also through discursive means. In addition, it aims to develop a critical perspective on the economicization of cultural heritage by questioning how local values are made marketable on a national and global scale through the representation of meerschaum.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Meerschaum is not only a mineral unique to Eskişehir, but also a heritage element that is integrated with artistic production, artisanal labor, and local identity in Turkey's cultural memory (Güngör et al., 2023). UNESCO's Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) associates cultural heritage with the meanings attached to these assets, as well as the transmission of skills and collective memory, which extends beyond material assets. Meerschaum is a powerful symbol that reflects Eskişehir's cultural heritage with its production technique, intergenerational transmission and sense of regional belonging (Ertürk and Varol, 2016). In fact, meerschaum was registered as Turkey's first geographical indication product in the mining group (Köşker and Karacaoğlu, 2019). Geographical indication (GI) registration serves as a protection function at both cultural and economic levels, ensuring that a heritage element is identified with the geography to which it belongs (Sari et al., 2020). In the context of tourism, geographical indications allow emphasizing the unique product in destination marketing (Çevik, 2018). There are successful examples worldwide that transform traditional handicrafts into tourism attractions. For example, the workshops and museums in Murano, Italy, are a good example of preserving and presenting glass art as both a living heritage and an economic value (Evans, 2000). Similarly, the Spanish city of Toledo has turned traditional sword and steel craftsmanship into a touristic brand; tourists can visit workshops to observe production processes and demand authentic products (Kurş, 2019). In Malta, it is stated that with the increase in demand for souvenirs, lace and filigree works produced by local women are brought into the economy, but market-oriented production can cause changes in original motifs. This shows the importance of the balance between authenticity and commercialization in the context of cultural tourism (Markwick, 2001; Chang et al., 2008). In island countries such as Fiji and Tonga, the production of souvenirs for tourism has become a development tool, especially for women entrepreneurs and rural communities (Naidu et al., 2014). In the case of meerschaum, this registration not only certifies that the stone is indigenous to Eskişehir, but also contributes to the preservation of its production techniques, craftsmanship and local crafting traditions. As a matter of fact, in the National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism, this craft, registered under the title of "Meerschaum Processing Art", has been registered as a cultural element that should be protected and passed on to future generations (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2019).

Cultural heritage is not a fixed set of objects inherited from the past; it is a dynamic process that is constantly reconstructed in the social context (Abdelmoula et al., 2023). In this framework, crafts are not only production activities but also cultural practices that carry social memory, identity, and narratives (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004). Meerschaum embroidery, as one such practice, turns into a living cultural narrative through the technical knowledge and traditional form language transmitted through the master-apprentice relationship (Köşker and Karacaoğlu, 2019). However, this narrative does not remain constant; product development processes, especially those shaped by touristic demands, may cause traditional motifs and forms to evolve over time (Belk and Groves, 1999). At this point, cultural representation processes gain importance. As Stuart Hall (1997) points out, meanings do not exist spontaneously; they are produced through representational practices.

In the case of meerschaum, these forms of representation are clearly observed in media discourses. Expressions such as 'white gold', 'disappearing craft', and 'signature of Eskişehir' serve to present the product in a nostalgic and exotic framework; these discourses are shaped by certain ideological codifications (Dijk, 2008). In this context, the forms of representation of meerschaum point not only to the production process but also to the values and meanings attributed to that process. Symbolic capital, as conceptualized by Pierre Bourdieu, enables the transformation of labor and craftsmanship into social prestige within craft practice (Bourdieu, 1986). In media discourses on meerschaum, labor, technical knowledge and traditional craftsmanship is celebrated, and its economic value is presented together with a representation of cultural identity (Sennett, 2013; Bourdieu, 2023). This discourse is supported and strengthened by experts and institutions; for example, UNESCO emphasizes the importance of preserving craftsmanship, framing meerschaum craftsmanship as a "living heritage" that requires protection (UNESCO, 2003).

## Methodology

This study is structured on the basis of a qualitative research approach to analyze media discourses on meerschaum. In the survey, the representation of meerschaum in news texts, the themes through which it gains meaning, and the ideological structures to which these representations are related in the social-cultural context are examined through critical discourse analysis based on Fairclough's (1995) model. This approach aims to analyze not only textual descriptions but also the power relations behind the discourse, historical contexts and the social structures in which the discourse is produced (Dijk, 1989; Fairclough, 1995). The dataset comprises 24 digital news articles from national and local media outlets, published between 2010 and 2025. These news articles were selected using a purposive sampling method, considering the diversity of content, including themes such as the presentation of meerschaum as cultural heritage, its association with health, artisanal tradition, environmental impacts, and legitimization through technical information. In this context, news texts from various media organs, spanning different years and regions, were analyzed comparatively to evaluate whether the discourses carried historical and spatial continuity. Additionally, the thematic coding employed in the analysis process played a supportive role in discourse analysis, enhancing contextual integrity and depth of interpretation. This holistic methodological approach aims to demonstrate that the discourses on meerschaum constructed in the media are not limited to superficial representations, but reflect a more profound and multi-layered world of social meaning. A total of 24 media texts were selected, compiled using specific keywords (e.g. "meerschaum", "white gold", "Eskişehir craft", "forgotten"). The texts were analyzed with MAXQDA 24 software. In the research process, the triangulation method was adopted to increase reliability in qualitative studies (Renz et al., 2018). To enhance the reliability of the discourse analysis, this study employed a triangulation strategy. First, data were collected from multiple media types—national newspapers, local news portals, and digital media platforms reporting on meerschaum—allowing for a comparative examination of how different media environments frame the subject. This diversity prevented the analysis from being limited to the ideological perspective of a single media category. Second, a temporal comparison was conducted by examining news published between 2010 and 2025, which enabled the identification of how discourses related to cultural heritage, economic value, and craftsmanship evolved or remained stable over time. Third, researcher triangulation was applied: the coding process was carried out independently by two researchers, followed by consensus meetings to ensure the consistency of code–theme relationships. Bringing together different media types, multiple years, and contributions of more than one researcher strengthened both the analytical depth and the methodological transparency of the study. Thanks to this methodological structure, how the cultural heritage identity of meerschaum is reproduced within the media discourse, with which patterns of meaning it is framed, and how this process interacts with local identity and touristic perceptions are analyzed in a holistic manner. *Therefore, the study does not fall within the scope of research requiring ethics committee approval, and ethics committee approval is not required.*

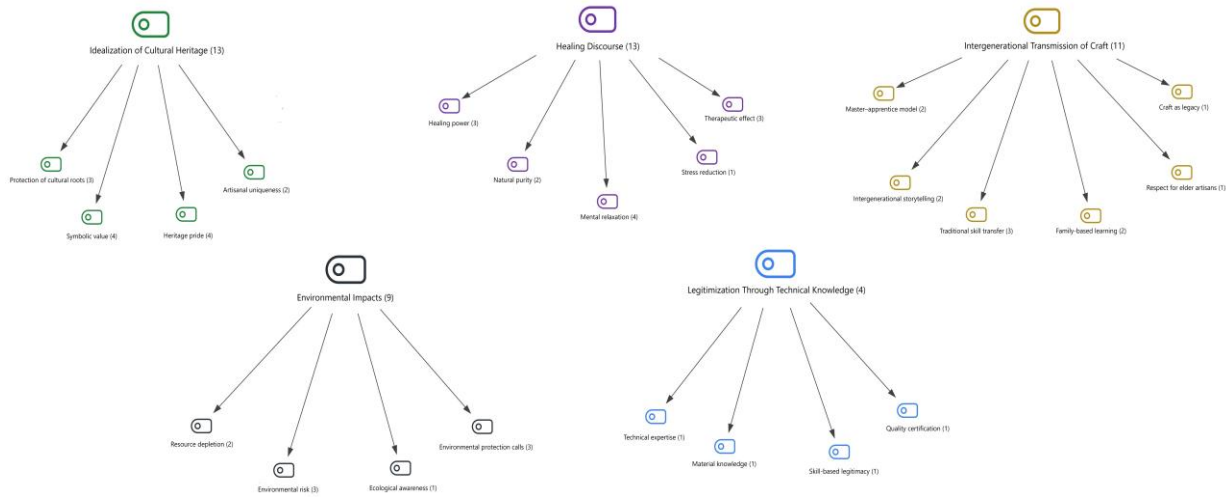
## Findings

In this study, 24 news texts published in national and local press between 2010 and 2025 were analyzed through critical discourse analysis. The fact that most news items focus on 2023 shows an increase in public and media interest in meerschaum. Among the most common sources are Anadolu Gazete, Yeni Şafak, ES Gazete, TRT News and İHA. The distribution of the analyzed news texts according to years and sources is presented in detail in the table below. This table provides a comprehensive framework for the data set of the study in terms of showing in which periods the discourses on meerschaum intensified and in which media outlets they were covered.

**Table 1. Media Outlets Where Meerschaum News Were Published According To Years**

Year	Newspaper
2010	Bloomberg HT
2013	Anadolu Gazetesi
2013	Anadolu Gazetesi
2016	Yeni Akit
2016	Anadolu Gazetesi
2017	Yeni Akit
2019	Esgazete
2019	TRT Haber
2021	Yeni Mesaj
2022	Yeni Şafak
No date	Media4Democracy
2023	İHA
2023	Eskişehir Haber Ajansı
2023	Bilecik 11
2023	Ulusal
2024	Yeşil Iğdır
2024	Şehir Gazetesi
2024	Evrensel
2024	Municipality of Eskişehir
2024	Milliyet
2024	Haberes
2024	Esgazete
2024	Pembe Pusula
2025	Anadolu Agency

The analysis of the distribution by years and media sources reflects how discursive tendencies shift over time and which outlets foreground particular narratives in specific periods. These findings offer an important framework for evaluating the connection between lületaş discourse and broader dynamics of cultural promotion and tourism policy. Figure 1 summarizes the key thematic patterns identified in the dataset, encompassing areas such as the idealization of cultural heritage, healing-oriented framings, transmission of artisanal knowledge, environmental concerns, and technical forms of legitimization. To complement the tabular overview and enhance analytical transparency, a code chart was produced in MAXQDA. This visual map illustrates the hierarchical structure between themes and subcodes as well as their relative prominence, providing a concise depiction of how the coding scheme was organized and consolidated throughout the analysis.

**Figure 1. Themes And Number Of Repetitions**

### ***Idealization of cultural heritage***

One of the prominent themes in the news regarding meerschaum is the glorification of this natural resource in terms of both its economic value and its cultural heritage. In the news texts, meerschaum is idealized by positioning it as a "national symbol" or "local pride" based on its historical origins. For example, in the news article titled "We Introduced Our White Gold in Europe" published in Anadolu Gazete, it is emphasized that meerschaum is "Eskişehir's most precious value" and it is seen that it is assigned a national "cultural ambassadorship" function through promotions in Europe (Anadolu Gazete, 2016). Similarly, Bloomberg HT's article titled "The Product China Cannot Imitate: Meerschaum" presents meerschaum as a "unique" and "strategic" element in both cultural and technological terms (Bloomberg HT, 2010). The discourse here reveals that meerschaum is positioned not only as a touristic product but also in relation to the ideology of domestic and national production. This approach, when evaluated in the context of Fairclough's (1995) hegemonic discourse theory, reveals the strategy.

In the news article titled "Republican Artists Interpret Meerschaum" published in Şehir Gazete, the works produced by artists are defined as "an art form mixed with culture" and meerschaum is represented as an aesthetic heritage (Şehir Gazetesi, 2024). In this framework, the stone goes beyond material production and gains a symbolic value. Yeni Şafak's article titled "Oasis of Culture in the Middle of the Steppe: Odunpazarı" presents meerschaum not only as a craft product but also as an icon reflecting cultural identity in regional tourism (Yeni Şafak, 2022). The metaphor of "cultural oasis" produces a discourse that romanticizes both the place and the product; this idealization creates a framework that serves the marketing of cultural heritage rather than its preservation. Finally, in a news article in Eskişehir News Agency, the purpose of the scientific research project on meerschaum was presented as "protecting cultural memory"; thus, even scientific discourse was placed on a ground that reinforces the legitimacy of cultural heritage (EHA, 2023).

### ***Healing discourse***

In some of the news articles, meerschaum is positioned as an object that provides physical and spiritual healing. This discourse positions meerschaum as an "alternative medicine" product. In the news article titled "You will not believe the miracle of meerschaum" published on Ulusal Kanal, it is claimed that meerschaum "attracts negative energy and radiation from the body" (Ulusal Kanal, 2023). The news article includes expressions such as "calming people down" and reducing stress thanks to the "positive frequency" of the stone. A similar discourse is seen in the content published on Bilecik11.com with the title "Meerschaum Absorbs Negative Energy and Radiation in the Body"; here, the anti-radiation effect of the stone is reported without any academic source (Bilecik11, 2023).

It is observed that such news reports directly or indirectly act on the assumption that "what is natural is beneficial". This, as Norman Fairclough (1995) notes in his critical discourse analysis, is an ideological discourse of naturalness and is based on cultural assumptions rather than scientific verification (Mullet, 2018). Another example is the news article published by İhlas News Agency (İHA) with the title "For 30 years, he has been mixing meerschaum powder with his tea and water and drinking it" (İHA, 2023). The news article reports that a citizen believes that the consumption of meerschaum powder "increases body resistance"; this

practice is normalized as an individual belief. However, such discourses pave the way for the legitimization of the product through health and the manipulation of consumer tendencies. Similarly, the news article titled "Meerschaum also has health benefits" in Media4Democracy mentions the stress-reducing effect of the stone and states that especially women turn to this product for spiritual relaxation (M4D, n.d.). Here too, a gender-related health discourse was established and meerschaum was marketed as "a source of healing for women". This discourse indirectly determines the consumption target group of the product and provides a basis for a gender-based marketing strategy.

When evaluated in this context, healing discourses define meerschaum as "a healing object that comes into direct contact with the body", making it more than just a touristic item. However, these definitions are based on folk narratives, individual experiences and spiritualist assumptions rather than scientific data. In this way, the product is positioned as a "traditional healing element" that can be used in alternative and complementary fields of health tourism, which expands the meaning of the stone but also makes it vulnerable to exploitation.

### ***Intergenerational transmission of craftsmanship***

Another prominent aspect of the discourse on meerschaum is the emphasis that the tradition of craftsmanship is in danger of extinction. In many news articles, this traditional handicraft is presented as a "vanishing profession"; the aging of the masters and the failure to train new apprentices are reported with a language of emotional anxiety. This discourse is presented in an individualized framework in which the indifference of individuals is held responsible, not the social structure and state policies.

In the article titled "Half-century-old Meerschaum Master's Call for Apprentices" published in Anadolu Gazete, a master who has been practicing this profession for 50 years expresses his regret that he can no longer find apprentices. In the news article, expressions such as "Young people are running away from this business, they all want desk jobs" are cited, and the lack of interest among new generations in the profession is presented as the main reason for the problem (Anadolu Gazetesi, 2013). Such statements create a nostalgic subject of craftsmen, far from structural solutions, and render the deficiencies in the craft education system invisible. In the article titled "He Started at the Age of 16, Hasn't Quit for 64 Years" in Yeşil Iğdır, the figure of the craftsman is idealized as "a master who has devoted his life to art". This news article reinforces the perception that craftsmanship is a "way of life" rather than a profession (Yeşil Iğdır, 2024). A similar discourse is seen in the article titled "Training a Meerschaum Master" published in Yeni Mesaj gazete; here again, it is emphasized that the new generation is not inclined towards this business and that the master-apprentice chain is broken (Yeni Mesaj, 2021).

In an article published in ES Gazete with the title "Exhibition Time at the Festival", it is stated that the interest of young people in exhibitions on meerschaum craftsmanship is insufficient (ES Gazete, 2024). However, this inadequacy is presented as the result of individual preferences, not educational policies or employment opportunities. This indicates that the discourse is constructed within an individualist framework and is distanced from its social context. Finally, in the content titled "Let There Be a Meerschaum School" in the local media organ Haberes, a structural demand was brought up for the first time, and it was stated that a vocational training institution should be opened for meerschaum workers (Haberes, 2021). However, this news item remains an exceptional example within the general discourse trend. Most of these news reports do not cover structural issues such as state support, institutional training, cooperatives or sustainable craft policies. Instead, a discourse of "tragic decline" is constructed through individual stories such as "the master who cannot find an apprentice" and "the artisan who has dedicated his life to this business" (Ballantyne, 2021). As Fairclough (1995) points out, such individualized narratives ideologically obscure structural problems and remove social responsibility.

### ***Environmental impacts***

Another striking theme in news items on meerschaum is the silence or ignoring of the environmental impacts of mining activities. For example, the article published in Milliyet titled "They Dig 65 Meters Under the Ground: The Great Reserve Known in the World is Here" mentions the rich meerschaum reserves in Eskişehir and the depth of the mining activities, but makes no mention of the soil structure, water resources or ecosystem balance (Milliyet, 2024). Instead, the value of the stone in the international market, the "white gold under the ground," and "economic opportunities" are mentioned. In the context of the mechanisms of ideological discourse outlined by Fairclough (2001), this is a pattern in which economic interest-oriented discourse suppresses environmental reality (Garlitos, 2020). However, although rare, there are also news items that challenge this silence. An article published in Evrensel gazete titled, "Reaction to Meerschaum Quarry in

Eskişehir: They are endangering the villagers' livelihood. " (Evrensel, 2024) covered the reactions of the villagers that their agricultural lands and livelihoods would be harmed as a result of the expansion of the mining areas (Evrensel, 2024). In this news article, it is clearly emphasized that meerschaum extraction is an ecological and social issue, calling for development in harmony with the environment. Similarly, the article titled "Meerschaum will become a tombstone due to thermal power plants" published in ES Gazete warned that thermal power plant projects threaten meerschaum reserve areas and the natural structure of the region (ES Gazete, 2018). The article draws attention to the fact that the production areas of artisans who are directly interested in meerschaum may disappear; thus, the ecological threat is associated with a cultural loss, and an attempt is made to create public awareness. In this context, it is one of the examples where the symbiotic relationship between nature and culture is established at the discursive level. On the other hand, many news reports fail to mention environmental impacts; instead, stone quarrying is often portrayed as a "traditional", "skillful", or "selfless" activity. Especially in the content published in more institutional news organs such as TRT News, Yeni Şafak and Anadolu Agency, meerschaum production processes are romanticized through "labor" and "culture", and the relationship between these processes and nature is rendered invisible.

### ***Legitimization through technical knowledge***

Another discursive strategy that draws attention in the news on meerschaum is the legitimization of the cultural and economic value of the stone through technical terms, scientific references and expert opinions. In such news articles, the reader's ignorance on the subject is assumed, and this gap is filled with authoritative sources of information (scientists, engineers, inventors, local government officials, etc.) to increase the persuasive power of the discourse. For example, in the news article titled "A Local Radiation Shield Invented by a High School Prodigy" published in Yeni Akit in 2016, the "radiation shield" developed by a high school student using meerschaum is described. The technical function of the stone is explained in scientific language, featuring its "radiation preventive structure" (Yeni Akit, 2016). In the news article, meerschaum is equipped with technical terms such as "conductivity", "natural insulation feature" and "protective material", thus legitimizing the traditional use of the stone by blending it with modern technology. This discourse highlights the capacity to channel public funds and institutional support, rather than seeking public attention.

Similarly, the content titled "Scientific Research for Meerschaum from Odunpazarı" published in Eskişehir News Agency introduced the scientific project focusing on meerschaum conducted by Odunpazarı Municipality (EHA, 2023). In the news article, it is stated that research on the sustainability of the stone will be "supported by scientific reports", "geological structure analyses will be conducted" and "mining inventory will be made"; thus, the protection and evaluation of meerschaum is presented as a technical necessity. Such discourses are essential in terms of legitimizing the policies to be developed on meerschaum based on technical knowledge. On the other hand, in the news report titled "Those who make their living from meerschaum" published on TRT News, it was emphasized that people engaged in stonemasonry "should have technical knowledge as well as manual skills"; this presented craftsmanship not only as a traditional profession but also as "semi-engineering" (TRT News, 2019). In such news reports, the discourses of technical knowledge and expertise are used as a strategic tool to increase the value of meerschaum, to position it in the modern world system, and to find economic-political support. However, this process of legitimization can often serve as a veil covering structural issues such as environmental impacts, labor exploitation or social inequalities (Fairclough, 1995).

### **Conclusion**

Media discourses on meerschaum play an important role in the construction of cultural values, the shaping of social memory, and the economic marketing of local products. Critical discourse analyses conducted within the scope of this study revealed that meerschaum is mostly represented in media texts around five main themes: idealization of cultural heritage, healing discourse, intergenerational transmission of craftsmanship, ignoring environmental impacts, and legitimization through technical knowledge. Firstly, it is seen that meerschaum is treated as an idealized representative of cultural heritage in news texts. The stone is presented as a "unique and original" value not only of Eskişehir but also of Turkey, and this value is often reinforced through discourses of "national pride." According to Smith, cultural heritage is not a neutral transmission of the past, but a process that is restructured according to the ideological and political needs of the present (Smith, 2020). In this context, news texts reproduce meerschaum as a "symbol of local and national values". Secondly, the healing discourse attempts to place meerschaum at the center of alternative tourism areas by building on claims with questionable scientific basis. This discourse is supported by spiritual expressions such as naturalness, energy, purification; traditional uses of the stone are blended with modern health narratives. This situation carries the risk of

commercialization and exploitation of stone with pseudoscientific claims. Spiritual discourses in the marketing of alternative tourism products often aim to create an emotional impact rather than a scientific basis (Zheng et al., 2020).

The third theme, the intergenerational transmission of craftsmanship, is shaped by individual stories of mastery and dramatic narratives about the lack of apprentices. In the news texts, young people's lack of interest in this business is mostly explained by individual indifference and institutional deficiencies are ignored. This is a strategy of representation in which social responsibility and structural solutions are suppressed (Fairclough, 1995). Fourthly, the discursive suppression of environmental impacts is one of the main problems that draws attention in news texts on meerschaum and creates a serious gap from a sustainability perspective. While many news reports portray the process of extracting the stone from underground as a matter of technical success or economic gain, they often overlook environmental issues such as ecosystem destruction, damage to agricultural areas, and the transformation of local habitats. According to Dryzek, environmental discourses are usually framed in terms of economic growth and prosperity, thus redefining nature as a marketable resource rather than a value to be protected (Dryzek, 2001). As Van Dijk (1998) emphasizes, ideologies are acquired and reproduced mainly through discourse; in discourses on meerschaum, ideological themes such as nationalism, localism, and environmental awareness are reconstructed in the public consciousness through linguistic strategies. Fifthly, the discourse of legitimization through technical knowledge is reinforced by statements that the stone is useful in scientific, technological, or engineering fields. While this strategy lends persuasiveness to the discourse, it also functions to recode the traditional dimension of the stone and harmonize it with the modern world. Discourses of expertise are strategically used to legitimize and maintain social power relations (Altan Olcay, 2021). In this context, technical terminology becomes a tool that increases the value of the stone but at the same time creates an armor of legitimacy closed to political interventions. The analysis shows that meerschaum is positioned on various axes such as cultural heritage, craftsmanship, environment, and tourism, and that these narratives are negotiated in overlapping and contradictory ways. Therefore, meerschaum becomes not only a physical mineral extracted from underground, but also a discursive object that mediates the expression of social values, identity constructions and ideological orientations. While this discursive construction transforms meerschaum into a symbol of belonging in the specific case of Eskişehir, it also overlaps with Turkey's broader discourses of cultural and economic development. Thus, meerschaum is considered as a cultural mirror that both preserves the meaning maps of the past and shapes visions for the future.

In this context, future studies on meerschaum should not be limited to discourse analysis, but should be multidimensional, focusing on field research, political analysis and tourism strategies. Transforming meerschaum into an experience-based product in domestic tourism can increase tourist interaction with traditional production through workshop visits, participation in production processes and cultural storytelling. This transformation requires the product to be removed from the souvenir framework and re-evaluated from the perspectives of cultural heritage management, tourism economics, and local development. Qualitative field studies based on community-based sustainability models have the potential to protect both the cultural identity and ecological balance of meerschaum. In this direction, state-supported programs should be developed to preserve craftsmanship, and production processes should be monitored transparently by geological sustainability principles. On the other hand, if health and healing discourses are to be used in meerschaum tourism, such claims should be based on scientific foundations and pseudoscientific approaches should be avoided. Instead, a communication strategy that prioritizes cultural continuity, focusing on the historical uses of the stone, local knowledge systems, and folk narratives, should be adopted. In this way, meerschaum can be positioned as a permanent cultural value integrated into sustainable and responsible tourism rather than a nostalgia.

## References

- Abdelmoula, E., & Abdelmoula, B. (2023). Promoting health and wellbeing through building the relationship with built and cultural heritage. *European Psychiatry*, 66(S1), S988. <https://doi.org/10.1192/j.eurpsy.2023.2100>
- Altan-Olcay, Ö. (2021). Expertise at the intersection of technicality and ambiguity: International governance of gender and development. *Third World Quarterly*, 43(1), 206–224. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2021.2000856>



- Arumugam, A., Nakkeeran, S., & Subramaniam, R. (2023). Exploring the factors influencing heritage tourism development: A model development. *Sustainability*, 15(15), 11986. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su151511986>
- Ballantyne, N. (2021). Tragic flaws. *Journal of the American Philosophical Association*, 8(1), 20–40. <https://doi.org/10.1017/apa.2020.39>
- Belk, R. W., & Groves, R. (1999). A critical examination of consumer culture: Implications for media representations. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 5(1), 23–45.
- Bourdieu, P. (2023). *Kültür üretimi: Sembolik ürünler, sembolik sermaye* (S. Yardımcı, Trans.). İletişim Yayınları.
- Chang, T.-C., Huang, S. Y., & Lo, A. (2008). Mobilising tourism in the age of globalisation: Modes of post-colonialism in island destinations. *Island Studies Journal*, 3(2), 307–330.
- Çevik, S. (2018). Coğrafi işaretli ürünlerin turizmdeki rolü: Eskişehir turlarına ilişkin bir içerik analizi. *Journal of Recreation and Tourism Research*, 5(4), 21–44.
- Dryzek, J. S. (2001). Resistance is fertile, *Global Environmental Politics*, 1(1), 11–17. <https://doi.org/10.1162/152638001750336741>
- Ertürk, N., & Varol, E. (2016). Our living handcraft meerschaum craftsmanship for the future, *New Trends and Issues Proceedings on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(1), 305–310. <https://doi.org/10.18844/gjhss.v2i1.305>
- Evans, G. (2000). Planning for urban tourism: A critique of the cultural planning approach to urban regeneration. In N. Washington & T. Phillips (Eds.), *Tourism and culture in regeneration* (pp. 171–182). London: Birkbeck University Press.
- Farrelly, F., Kock, F., & Josiassen, A. (2019). Cultural heritage authenticity: A producer view. *Annals of Tourism Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2019.102770>
- Garlitos, P. (2020). Shades of green reporting: A critical discourse analysis of eco-news reports in the Philippines. *Journal of Language and Literature*, 20(1), 25–39. <https://doi.org/10.24071/joll.v20i1.2381>
- Güngör, N., Demir, B., & Özdoğan, A. (2023). The role and importance of meerschaum-type sepiolite in the promotion of Türkiye. Eskişehir Technical University *Journal of Science and Technology A - Applied Sciences and Engineering*. <https://doi.org/10.18038/estubtda.1370092>
- Hall, S. (1997). Culture and power. *Radical Philosophy*, 86, 24–41.
- Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, B. (2004). Intangible heritage as metacultural production. *Museum International*, 56(1–2), 52–65. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1350-0775.2004.00458.x>
- Köşker, H., & Karacaoğlu, S. (2019). Turizm bağlamında geleneksel Türk el sanatı lüle taşı işlemeciliğinin değerlendirilmesi. *Bingöl Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 9(18), 991–1014.
- Kuriş, F. (2019). Lüle taşının coğrafi işareti süreci ve kültürel mirasın yerel temsiliyeti. *Journal of Cultural Heritage Studies*, 7(4), 112–130.
- Markwick, M. (2001). ‘Staging heritage’: The commodification of local culture in tourism and media discourses. *Media, Culture & Society*, 23(4), 485–502.
- Mullet, D. R. (2018). A general critical discourse analysis framework for educational research. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, 29(2), 116–142. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1932202X18758260>
- Naidu, R. V., Gupta, K., & Rathore, R. (2014). Media representations of cultural heritage: A critical discourse analysis of national campaigns. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 9(3), 232–246.
- Renz, S. M., Carrington, J. M., & Badger, T. A. (2018). Two strategies for qualitative content analysis: An intramethod approach to triangulation. *Qualitative Health Research*, 28(5), 824–831. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732317753586>
- Sari, M., Kumalasari, N., Nugroho, S., & Yatini, Y. (2020). The optimization of geographical indication protection in the realization of national self-sufficiency. *Padjadjaran Journal of International Law*, 7(1), 85–101. <https://doi.org/10.22304/pjih.v7n1.a5>

- Sennett, R. (2013). *Zanaatkar* (M. Pekdemir, Trans.). Ayrıntı Yayınları.
- Smith, L. (2020). Emotional heritage: Visitor emotions in the heritage experience. *Routledge*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315713274>
- UNESCO. (2003). *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*. Paris: UNESCO. <https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention>
- van Dijk, T. A. (1989). Structures of discourse and structures of power. *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 12(1), 18–59. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23808985.1989.11678711>
- van Dijk, T. A. (2008). Discourse and context: A sociocognitive approach. *Cambridge University Press*.
- Zheng, C., Zhang, J., Qiu, M., Guo, Y., & Zhang, H. (2020). From mixed emotional experience to spiritual meaning: Learning in dark tourism places. *Tourism Geographies*, 22(1), 105–126. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2019.1618903>

### Web-based References

- Bloomberg HT. (2010). Çin'in taklit edemediği ürün: Lületaşı. Retrieved June 23, 2025, from <https://www.bloomberght.com/cinin-taklit-edemedigi-urun-luleyasi-544847>
- Anadolu Gazetesi. (2013). Deniz köpüğü lületaşı açıldı. Retrieved June 29, 2025, from <https://www.anadolugazetesi.com/deniz-kopugu-luleyasi-acildi-14963.html>
- Anadolu Gazetesi. (2013). Yarım asırlık lületaşı ustasının çırağın çağrısı. Retrieved June 16, 2025, from <https://www.anadolugazetesi.com/yarim-asirlik-luleyasi--ustasinin-cirak-cagrisi-16062.html>
- Yeni Akit. (2016). Liseli mucitten radyasyona karşı yerli zırh. Retrieved June 16, 2025, from <https://www.yeniakit.com.tr/haber/liseli-mucitten-radyasyona-karsi-yerli-zirh-152720.html>
- Anadolu Gazetesi. (2016). Beyaz altınımızı Avrupa'da tanıdık. Retrieved June 19, 2025, from <https://www.anadolugazetesi.com/beyaz-altinimizi-avrupa-da-tanidik-32124.html>
- Yeni Akit. (2017). Bozkırın içinde bir kültür vahası Odunpazarı. Retrieved June 11, 2025, from <https://www.yeniakit.com.tr/haber/bozkirin-icinde-bir-kultur-vahasi-odunpazari-351203.html>
- Esgazete. (2018). Termik nedeniyle lületaşı mezar taşı olacak. Retrieved June 17, 2025, from <https://www.esgazete.com/termik-nedeniyle-luleyasi-mezar-tasi-olacak>
- TRT Haber. (2019). Ekmeğini lületaşından çıkaranlar. Retrieved June 13, 2025, from <https://www.trthaber.com/haber/yasam/ekmegini-luletasindan-cikaranlar-416396.html>
- Yeni Mesaj. (2021). Lületaşı ustası yetişmiyor. Retrieved June 27, 2025, from <https://www.yenimesaj.com.tr/luleyasi-ustasi-yetismiyor-H1376745.htm>
- Yeni Şafak. (2022). Lületaşı efsanesi nerede? Retrieved June 12, 2025, from <https://www.yenisafak.com/foto-galeri/ekonomi/lule-tasi-nerede-cikarilir-lule-tasinin-ozellikleri-nelerdir-luleyasi-efsanesi-nerededir-2062501>
- Media4Democracy. (n.d.). Eskişehir'in beyaz altını lületaşının sağlığa da faydası var. Retrieved June 18, 2025, from <https://media4democracy.org/haberler/eskisehirin-beyaz-altini-luletasinin-sagliga-da-faydasi-var/>
- İHA. (2023). 30 yıldır lületaşı tozunu çayıyla ve suyuyla karıştırıp içiyor. Retrieved July 4, 2025, from <https://www.ihha.com.tr/haber-30-yildir-luleyasi-tozunu-cayıyla-ve-suyuyla-karistirip-iciyor-1154753>
- Eskişehir Haber Ajansı. (2023). Odunpazarı'ndan lületaşı için bilimsel araştırma. Retrieved June 9, 2025, from <https://www.eskisehirhaberajansi.com/odunpazarindan-luleyasi-icin-bilimsel-arastirma>
- Bilecik 11. (2023). Lületaşı vücuttaki negatif enerjiyi ve radyasyonu alıyor. Retrieved June 6, 2025, from <https://bilecik11.com/luleyasi-vucuttaki-negatif-enerjiyi-ve-radyasyonu-aliyor/>
- Ulusal. (2023). Lületaşının mucizesine inanamayacaksınız. Retrieved June 28, 2025, from <https://www.ulusal.com.tr/yurt/luletasinin-mucizesine-inanamayacaksiniz-luleyasi-vucuttan-negatif-enerjiyi-aliyor-luletasinin-faydalari-nelerdir-15039351>

- Yeşil Iğdır. (2024). *16 yaşında başladığı lületaş sanatını 64 yıldan beri bırakmıyor*. Retrieved June 5, 2025, from <https://www.yesiligdir.com/16-yasinda-basladigi-luletasi-sanatini-64-yildan-beri-birakmiyor/36669/>
- Şehir Gazetesi. (2024). *Cumhuriyet sanatçıları lületaşını yorumluyor*. Retrieved June 20, 2025, from <https://www.sehirgazetesi.com.tr/eskisehirde-cumhuriyet-sanatcilari-luletasini-yorumluyor>
- Evrensel. (2024). *Lületaş maden ocağına tepki: Köylülerin ekmeğiyle oynuyorlar*. Retrieved June 15, 2025, from <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/520081/eskisehirde-luletasi-maden-ocagina-tepki-koylulerin-ekmegiyle-oynuyorlar>
- Eskişehir Belediyesi. (2024). *Lületaş müzesi açıldı*. Retrieved July 2, 2025, from [https://www.eskisehir.bel.tr/icerik-detay.php?icerik\\_id=10144&cat\\_icerik=1&menu\\_id=24](https://www.eskisehir.bel.tr/icerik-detay.php?icerik_id=10144&cat_icerik=1&menu_id=24)
- Milliyet. (2024). *Eskişehir’de yerin 65 metre altında kazarak ilerliyorlar*. Retrieved July 1, 2025, from <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/gundem/eskisehirde-yerin-65-metre-altinda-kazarak-ilerliyorlar-dunyada-bilinen-buyuk-rezerv-burada-7221758>
- Haberes. (2024). *Lületaş okulu olsun*. Retrieved June 25, 2025, from <https://www.haberes.com.tr/luletasi-okulu-olsun>
- Esgazete. (2024). *Festivalde sergi zamanı*. Retrieved June 30, 2025, from <https://www.esgazete.com/festivalde-sergi-zamani>
- Pembe Pusula. (2025). *Eskişehir’in beyaz altını Lületaş Van’da ilgi odağı oldu*. Retrieved June 21, 2025, from <https://www.pembepusula.org/eskisehir-in-beyaz-altini-luletasi-van-da-ilgi-odagi-oldu/289089/>
- Anadolu Ajansı. (2025). *Baba mirası lületaş işlemeciliğini 35 yıldır sürdürüyor*. Retrieved June 10, 2025, from <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/yasam/baba-mirasi-luletasi-islemeciligini-35-yildir-surduruyor/3444483>