

# Exploring Instagram-Based Social Media Marketing Approaches of Yacht Training Services: A Content Analysis of Photographs

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## Abstract

Instagram posts of sail training centers were examined and a comprehensive content analysis of photographs was used to comprehend the patterns of social media marketing and services offered. Two coders analyzed the Instagram profiles of five Turkish and five international yacht/sail training centers generating five main codes for a total of 288 codes with the Cohens kappa intercoder reliability calculated as 86%, which is considered reliable. The photographs were coded and analyzed using MAXQDA qualitative research software, and variables such as point of view, mood, and boat parts were explored. Qualitative analyses such as code distances mapping, code-subcodes analysis, and two-cases models comparative analyses were conducted, and results were discussed. The patterns that emerged were race focused, learning focused, license training, natural scenery/touristic appeal, warm, friendly/social, and lackadaisical/low social media activity. Several qualitative analyses were carried out, and the results were presented in terms of their contribution to the literature and managerial applications.

**Keywords:** Services marketing, Marine tourism, Social media marketing, Yacht training, Content analysis

## 1. Introduction

There is fierce competition among services across the world. Value-conscious customers with limited time seek the best option from thousands of offers, which necessitates appealing approaches. Social media facilitates efficient marketing communication by allowing customer participation [1] and the sense of belonging to a virtual community [2]. Furthermore, customer empowerment through resource integration increases value co-creation opportunities and repurchase intention [3]; additionally, image-based applications in social media enhance its benefits by expressing many words to the target customers in a short period of time [4]. According to a recent report conducted by *We Are Social and Hootsuite* [5], there are currently 4.20 billion people using social media. Over the previous year, this number has increased by 13% reaching 490 million. Approximately 45% of the world's internet users now turn to social networks for information on products and services they are considering to purchase.

Nevertheless, despite the importance of the competitiveness and sustainability of social media in the market, strategies for marketing purposes remain scarce [6]. Massive amounts of social media data in various forms may now be easily extracted and used as a result of improvements in information technology [7]. Thus, companies should resort to analysis based approaches using social media data to monitor how the content or form of their message affects consumer experience and continuously implement innovations in their social media platforms for ensuring that the marketing goals of the company are met [8].

Learning to sail a yacht and becoming part of a sailing team has intrinsic attractiveness. However, yachting is an experience-based activity [9] that cannot be easily envisaged beforehand and requires enhancing elements to be motivated. Today, sailing schools and yacht training centers extensively use the visual attraction of sailors, sails, and yachts via social media. Among the applications, Instagram is the most popular social media platform for

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sail training providers to promote their operations. On the other hand, these practices are limited to a few schools and are managed intuitively rather than in a systematic manner. Thus, an in-depth study of Instagram as a marketing tool is required for a better comprehension of the social media platform and the success of marketing campaigns [10].

The aim of the study was to explore the promotion of Instagram-based social media usage patterns of yacht training centers and the use of content analysis on photos shared on social media as a qualitative research tool. Therefore, the research question is what prominent elements are used for promoting yacht training centers. Furthermore, the study aims to enhance the findings questioning variables such as geography, culture, number of posts and followers, company experience in terms of social media usage commonalities, and differences in the patterns. The research agenda will begin with a review of the literature on social media marketing and the role of visual experience in sailing, followed by an analysis of cases taken from the Instagram accounts of ten yacht training centers (Annex 1). In the Conclusion section, suggestions are made to yacht training service managers on how to effectively communicate with their current and potential customers.

## 2. Conceptual Background

### 2.1. Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing uses online networks to build relationships and share information between businesses and their customers [6]. Companies contact and engage consumers at different points in the purchasing cycle thereby making it a significant resource for marketers [1]. Social media marketing has many applications such as customer blogs, online communities (e.g., Facebook, Instagram), and media sharing platforms (e.g., YouTube). It has a rapidly growing impulse for both the decision-making processes of customers and the marketing activities of suppliers for promotion, communication, distribution, and customer relationship management [11,12]. Today, social media marketing is not just used for promoting and distributing services; it is also utilized for service development thanks to the active voice of customers and building brand loyalty [12,13] in a more cost-efficient manner [14].

There are some prerequisites to being a skillful player in social media marketing. First, the social media accounts of companies must be attractive and user-friendly to convince and engage their target customers [12]. The images used must be compatible with the service and create a proposition on customer expectations from the services [4]. Furthermore, user motivation should be positioned at the heart of the web design [6]. Chi [2] reveals that the need for online social bonding influenced customer participation

attitude and inclination toward social media applications. The lifestyle, passions, and interests of customers are essentials for the desired visual social place where they think it is worth spending their time [15]. Social media users must be inspired to interact with companies for reasons related to their intellect, social standing, culture, or other factors [16]. Wibowo, et al.'s [8] study results indicate that in addition to the commercial facet, the social-oriented aspect, i.e., interaction quality between customer and company, also made an impact on the purchasing and participation intentions of the customers as well as their loyalty behavior toward social media marketing activities. The authors suggested that customer experience is influenced by a digitally created environment, which also increased the relationship quality of the company [17].

In this context, Instagram is a good instrument incorporating elements of music, story, and entertainment thereby evoking intense customer attention. Argyris, et al.'s [18] study on the effects of images in Instagram marketing revealed that images are more easily recognized, remembered, and are more effective at persuading people compared with words. Thus, it is expected that the popularity of Instagram and other photo-sharing platforms will increase daily. Djafarova and Bowes [19] and Kemp [5] state that Instagram is essential for the stimuli purchasing behavior of Generation Z customers who prefer images rather than long texts in their communications. The study conducted by Chen [10] illustrated that younger customers do not prefer advertisements that are too "obvious" and "deliberate," and thus recommended the companies to maintain up-to date marketing information while offering most recent product updates to their consumers. Based on the results of the study by Amelia and Hidayatullah's [14], Instagram has a significant and favorable impact on how people perceive the worth of luxury goods and services and contribute to consumer perceptions of luxury and purchase intention. Moreover, Instagram has been used for user-generated events; credits to user initiative and empowerment with the event management paradigm shifting as organizations are no longer the primary organizers and initiators of such events [20].

### 2.2. Creating a Visual Experience for Yacht Training

Undoubtedly, services need to be supported through enhancing elements to convince their target customers since "value is a function of experience" [21], and service experience cannot be predicted before being purchased [11,22,23]. Images are potent triggers for remembering and effective animators because they make the intangible tangible [24]. Providing enhanced information by placing perfectly designed physical clues of the service in the promotion activities might help alleviate some of the

uncertainties [25], and using appropriate motivation factors might accelerate the tendency of customers toward services. Furthermore, Ryan [26] has stated that although participating in any sports activity needs intrinsic motivation, external stimuli are needed for long-term commitment. Thus, the imagination of the experience is a crucial part of marketing promotion activities, which requires defining the pillars of the activity during the first phase. Afterward, they are used appropriately and vigorously to entice clients to participate in any activity.

As is the case for all other services, the value acquired from sailing activity and experience cannot be predicted in advance. Sailing is a marine-based activity encompassing both tangible (i.e., boat) and intangible (i.e., crew behavior and attitude, other customers) aspects, and experience is produced based on all of their interactions. Various yachting studies have shown that human elements comprise the most influential attribute of the experience, followed by yacht attributes [27]. On the other hand, high-end yacht industry, which mostly comprises motor-yachts larger than 50 meters in length, differs from the other segments in that it has solely focused on characteristics of yachts such as swimming pools, helipads, and Jacuzzis [28]. Furthermore, participating in marine activities gives people a sense of accomplishment and competence as well as the opportunity to explore who they are [29]. Yachters have also sought for motives such as friendship development, spending time in intimate surroundings, perceiving nature and solitude, all while discovering new places [30-32].

Yacht/sail training can range from basic boat handling courses for hobbyists to international licensing education that can equip participants with a professional vocation, thus enabling them to embark on a new career path. Even though sailing is a nature/outdoor activity/sport, its training appeals to cultured, educated, white-collar city dwellers.

Today, the visual appeal of sailors, sails, and boats is used extensively by sailing schools and yacht training facilities in their social media accounts, particularly Instagram. Moreover, sailing students use social media to share their personal sailing experiences. As the need for sailing training rises, so does the volume of user-generated content.

### 3. Research design

#### 3.1. Research Setting

Instagram is used as the research media of the study. Instagram was launched in 2010 as a visual content-focused social networking platform, allowing users to capture photos and videos, employ embedded filters to improve images, and quickly share content with a group of friends or a larger audience of all Instagram users. According to a recent report [5], Instagram is ranked fifth among the world's most popular social media networks. Even though it is utilized for a variety of commercial promotions ranging from higher education to health by practitioners, Instagram has only been subjected to a few empirical social media marketing studies in literature [10].

#### 3.2. Data Collection and Sample Characteristics

The present study followed an interpretive approach. Ten different social media accounts were studied, five of which belong to Turkish sail training institutes chosen to represent different approaches to their services and Instagram usage patterns with five international accounts from various parts of the world. The 'characteristics for the sample group of the study are presented in Table 1. The first ten relevant posts that were uploaded on the Instagram accounts of sail/yacht instruction centers were evaluated and analyzed. The thumbnail image serves as a still image for video posts. Non-sail-related images, such as tributes for national holidays or anniversary celebrations were excluded. Photos

**Table 1.** Sample characteristics

	Nationality	Account owner	Significance	Posts/ Followers
1	Turkish	One Yacht Club	The only center that uses paid Instagram advertisements	400/15.7k
2	Turkish	Urla Sailing	One of the oldest trainers but with very few Instagram activity	57/570
3	Turkish	Gökova Sailing Academy	Conducts ocean going/long distance sails	189/4862
4	Turkish	Smart Sailing	Highlights happy mood, good social relations, relaxed atmosphere	286/3125
5	Turkish	Limon Sailing	Serious, race focused, advanced sailing training and teamwork courses	840/2914
6	Spain	Marbella Sailing School	Costa Del Sol - RYA licensing courses	381/4087
7	Czech Republic	The Big Bull Sailing	Trains at Croatian coasts.	229/250
8	USA	PYT	Professional Yacht Master Training - approaches sailing as a job	278/2081
9	Italy	Just Sailing	Highlights the historical and natural scenes of the Italian coast	102/195
10	Sweden	59 North	Sails at North latitudes, ice sailing, long distance sailing	2142/23.9k

posted by sail training centers with various characteristics such as training session, trainees' moods, and photos displaying boat parts were preferred in order to boost the research validity. The sample interpretation was finalized when no additional suggestions were received for improving the research [33].

### 3.3. Data Analysis

The first 20 Cleo covers between 1972-1974 were analyzed by researchers. They asked the participants to examine the covers and describe what they noticed. Image content analysis was pioneered in this study. Analysis started to shift toward computer software with advancements in computer technology and qualitative research software. *MAXQDA*, *NVivo*, and *Atlas* are among the most frequently used content analysis software in later research.

A comprehensive content analysis procedure was followed based on images, and two coders were employed with *MAXQDA Analytics Pro 2022* used for analyzing the images. The photos can be assessed as a whole, from the perspective of the coders, subjectively, or elements on the image can be counted/evaluated objectively. In this study, researchers have employed both strategies to analyze the media.

To increase intra-coder reliability, the first researcher examined the photos many times, as recommended [34]. The researcher employed an iterative technique, revisiting previously identified topics, fusing or separating them, and stopping when consistent results were found. Afterwards, the coding technique was divided into two phases [35]. The coding table, the hierarchical relationship of the codes, and the keywords associated to the codes were determined by the first coder, which were suggested to the second coder. During this stage, referred to as open coding, seven primary codes and twenty-one subcodes were obtained. Subsequently, the first author coded all the images and reviewed the findings with the second author. Following this preliminary stage, two sub and two main codes were canceled, and several codes were modified, with the axial coding process resulting in five main and 19 sub-codes, and the code table attaining its final shape. The first author used the final code table to code 100 Instagram posts from ten separate accounts making up a total of 288 codes. The second author evaluated the codes of the first author using a nominal scale of *agreeing* or *disagreeing* and compiled her proposals for the codes with which she disagreed. Following the final debate, three codes that could not be agreed upon among the coders were eliminated from the study.

With this procedure, the inter-coder reliability was assessed using the Cohen Kappa approach, and the kappa value was

determined as 86.4% as can be seen in Table 2. Since this coefficient is above the level accepted in the literature [36], the research results are considered as *reliable*.

**Table 2.** Cohen Kappa reliability

P <sub>o</sub>	99.0%
P <sub>c</sub>	92.3%
P <sub>c1</sub>	0.2%
P <sub>c2</sub>	92.2%
KAPPA*	86.4%
$*Kappa = \frac{P_o - P_c}{1 - P_c}$	

## 4. Findings/Results

The gathered data was analyzed using *MAXQDA Analytic Pro 2022* software (version 22.0.1), and the following findings were obtained. The codes and subcodes are presented with their frequencies of occurrence in Table 3.

Code matrix analysis indicates that no significant difference has been observed categorically between the Turkish and International groups of sail training centers, but the frequencies of the categories. The most notable difference is that the Turkish Instagram accounts post male and female individuals; while foreign accounts prefer team/group poses. Table 4 displays the codes that differ the most between the two groups.

Analysis of codes distances map (Figure 1) reveals three groups of themes diversifying from the other codes. Group **a\*** consists of two codes that are *sails and masts* and *POV outside*, which is understandable given that images from a particular distance have sails and masts in their frames. Training centers use group **a\*** photos to highlight the **boat** posting drone photos or photos taken from other yachts. Group **b\*** has the *POV inside* photos, which contain male and female individuals, focused/learning and happy/relaxed moods, and steering shots which all highlight the ambiance of the inner spaces of yachts. This group aims to present the scope of their services to their target audience and social media followers.

Figure 2 displays the codes derived from the specific parts of boats. The wheel/rudder/steering (28 times) is the most frequently depicted feature of the boat, usually accompanied with a trainee steering the yacht, followed by the masts and sails (24 times). Even though the major theme is sail and yacht, photographs that do not contain any of those have been coded nine times.

**Table 3. Code Frequencies**

Mood	41	Yacht /Boat	90
Happy/relaxed/social	21	Wheel/Rudder/Steering	28
Learning/Focused	13	Sails/Mast(s)	24
Fast/Adventure	7	Multiple boat/yacht	13
<b>Point of View (POV)</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>No boat/No sail</b>	<b>9</b>
POV Inside	41	Winches	9
POV Outside	33	Berthed/Alongside/On land	7
<b>People</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>Other codes</b>	<b>40</b>
Male	15	Scenery/Nature	12
Female	14	Advertisement/Flyer	9
Group/Team/couple	14	Race related/Ceremony/Graduation	9
<b>Main Codes</b>	<b>5</b>	Food & Beverage	5
<b>Subcodes total</b>	<b>288</b>	Night Photo	5

**Table 4. Code matrix comparison Turkish-Foreign**

Codes	International	Turkish	Difference
Male	3	14	11
POV inside	25	16	9
Team	10	4	6
Female	7	13	6
Scenery nature	8	3	5

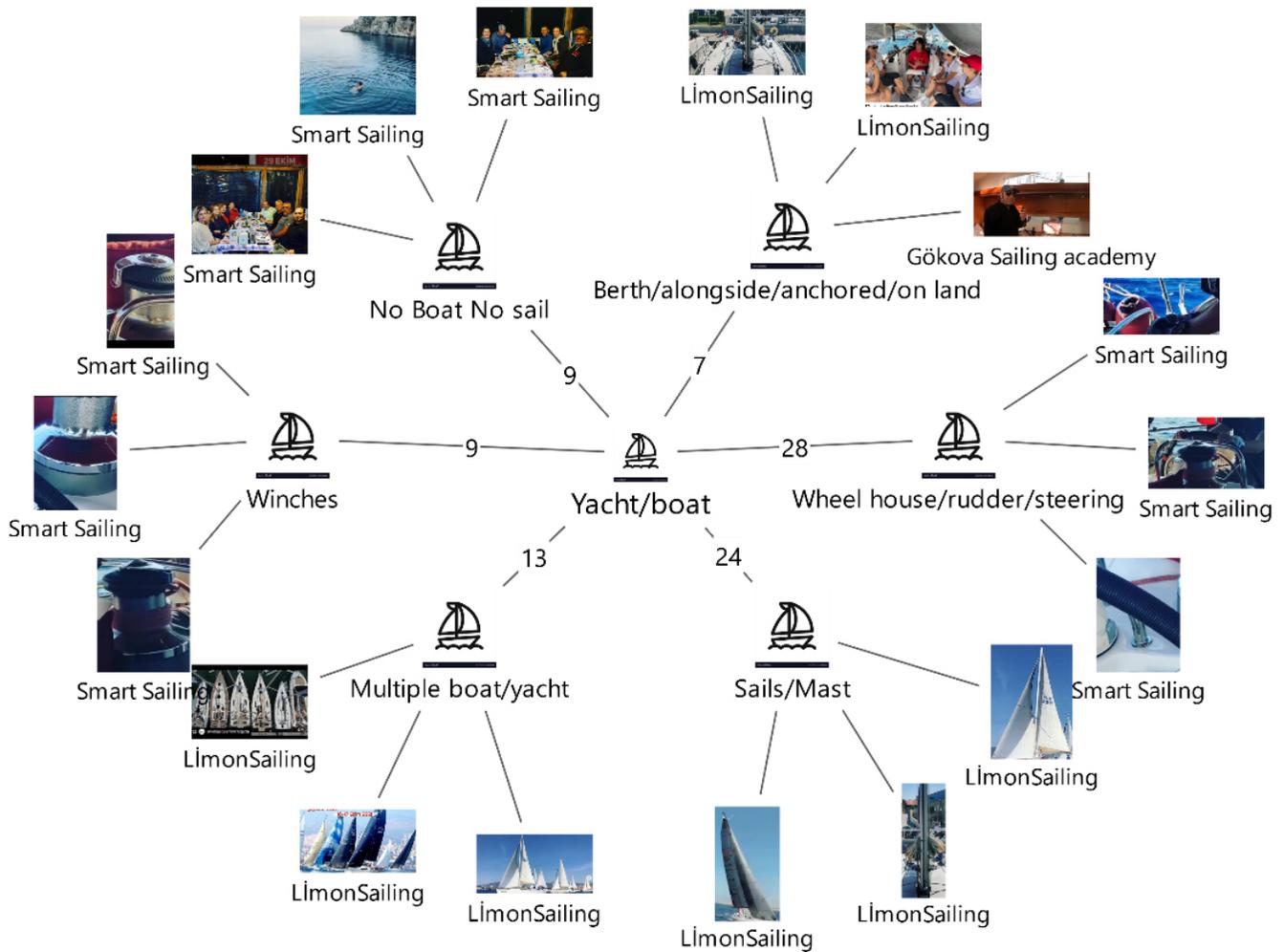
People’s moods have been coded into three categories (Figure 3): happy/relaxed/social (21 times) when the environment is more about enjoying the time spent, learning/focused (13 times) when the focus is on training, and fast/adventure (seven times) when the photo highlights speed or adventurous occurrences. Instagram profiles of training institutions that promote themselves as having good social settings frequently employ the happy/relaxing/social mood.

To analyze the patterns of the shared posts, the photographs were categorized according to point of view (Figure 4). If the camera was inside the boat when the photo was taken, the point of view is coded as PoV inside (41 times); if the camera



**Figure 1. Codes Distances Map\***

\*Code distance maps depict the relationship between codes. The more two codes co-occur, i.e., the more similar they are in terms of their use in the data, the closer they are placed together on the map



**Figure 2.** Codes and subcodes of Yacht/Boat

was outside the boat when the photo was taken, such as a drone shot or a snapshot taken from shore or another boat, the point of view is coded as PoV outside (33 times).

The remaining codes are classified as *other codes* (Figure 5), which include advertisements/flyers (9 times), food/beverage photos (5 times) that are mostly coded alongside a happy/relaxed mood code, night photos (5 times), race-related or ceremony of a race event or graduation event posts (9 times), and scenery photos of nature, touristic places, or artsy photos (12 times).

#### 4.1. Two Cases Models and Comparative Analyses

Several case comparison analyses were performed while reviewing the data. Many of them did not reveal any substantial differences in the social media usage patterns of the sail training center clusters. The following are several examples of comparative case analyses that exhibit some degree of difference.

**Turkish-International two cases model analysis:** The main distinction is that Turkish Instagram profiles post

individuals (male 14, female 13) whereas international profiles do not tend to as much (male 3, female 7). When it comes to posting persons, international profiles favor group shots (International 10, Turkish 4), which can be interpreted as a cultural difference. Highlighting scenery is used more by the International profiles (International 8, Turkish 3), such as Just Sailing from Italy presents historical tourist spots in the background, and 59 North posts ice and snow scenes to attract the visitors' interest, is an example of geographical difference as each country highlights their unique attributes on their social media accounts. Turkish profiles shared sunrise/sunset scenes on all of their three scenery codes (Figure 6).

**License training-casual social two cases model analyses (Figure 7):** Two of the ten profiles chosen are license training schools (Marbella and PYT), which have legislative prerequisites, while two are more casual, social sail training centers (Smart and Just), offering a friendly social setting. Some significant disparities were discovered following an analysis of the Instagram posts of these sets.

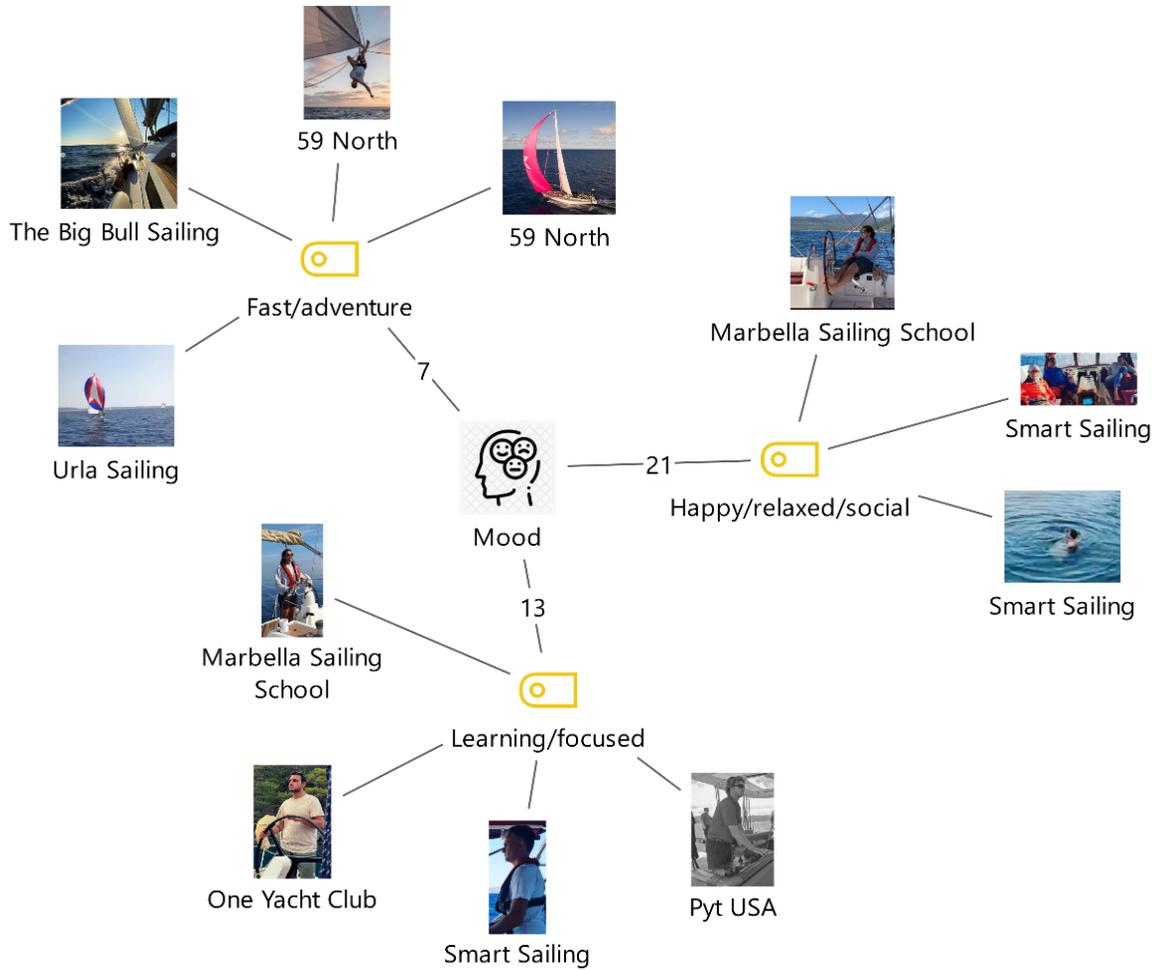


Figure 3. Codes and subcodes of the mood

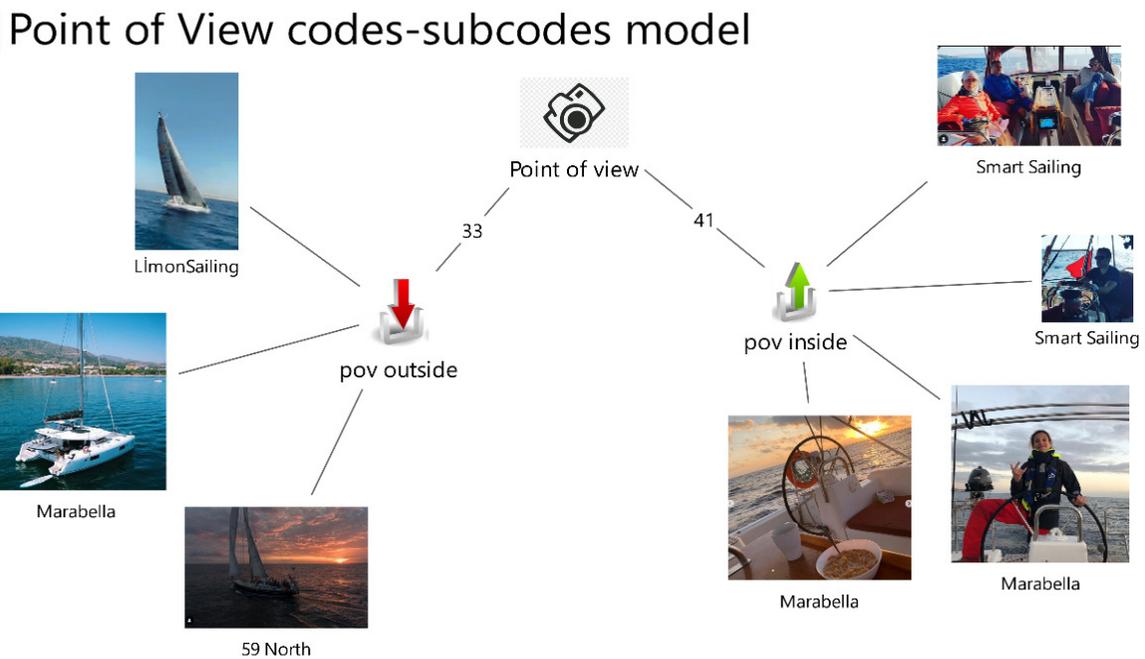


Figure 4. Codes and Subcodes of point of view

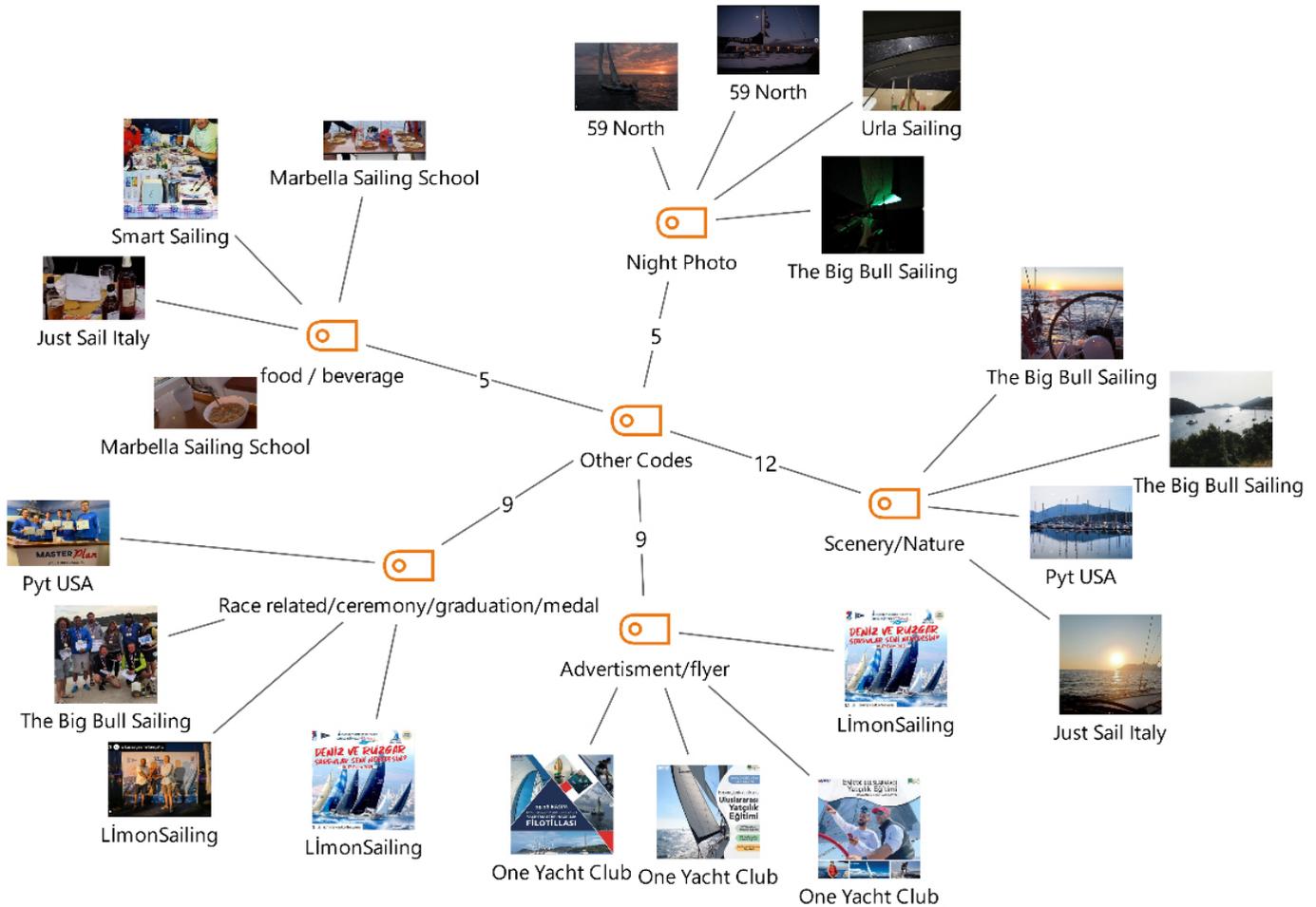


Figure 5. Other codes

Advertisements and flyers are exclusively posted on licensing schools; therefore, casual/social training centers publish posts from non-moving boats as well as fast adventurous photos one after the other.

**Limon Sailing- Smart Sailing two cases model analyses (Figure 8):** Each of the ten accounts was modeled as two independent pair cases, and a total of 45 distinct models were run and analyzed. Limon Sailing and Smart Sailing have been identified to have the most substantial difference between their Instagram accounts. Returning to the two institutes' social media accounts and reviewing previous Instagram postings, the social media usage habits were discovered to be substantially different. Limon positions itself as a focused, serious, race and team training service provider. Smart, on the other hand, communicates the impression that anyone can learn to sail and that you will feel welcome and at ease here. To convey these messages, Limon prefers PoV outside shots (Limon 6 Smart 1) to showcase the sail/training performance of the yacht; on the contrary, Smart uses PoV inside shots (Smart 6 Limon 1) to present the ambiance inside the yacht. Five

codes were exclusive to Limon, such as sail and masts (5 times) and multiple boats (3 times) due to outside shots and race related posts (4 times), which is one of the main focuses of their social media account. Three codes were exclusive to Smart, which are winches (5 times), due to inside shots, happy and relaxed mood (3 times), and photos of snacks and coffee coded as food/beverage (2 times).

## 5. Conclusion and Discussion

As customers increasingly share their service-related experiences on their personal social media profiles, the importance of social media for service marketing continues to expand. The emphasis has shifted away from "sharing the experience" toward "living the experience for the sake of sharing." This phenomenon encourages service providers to offer *instagrammable* services, which are visually appealing in a way that is suited for photographing and publishing on social media platforms, most notably Instagram. Even though social media has practically become an integral part of the daily routine of everyone, service providers have begun to reconsider how they use social media in the light of

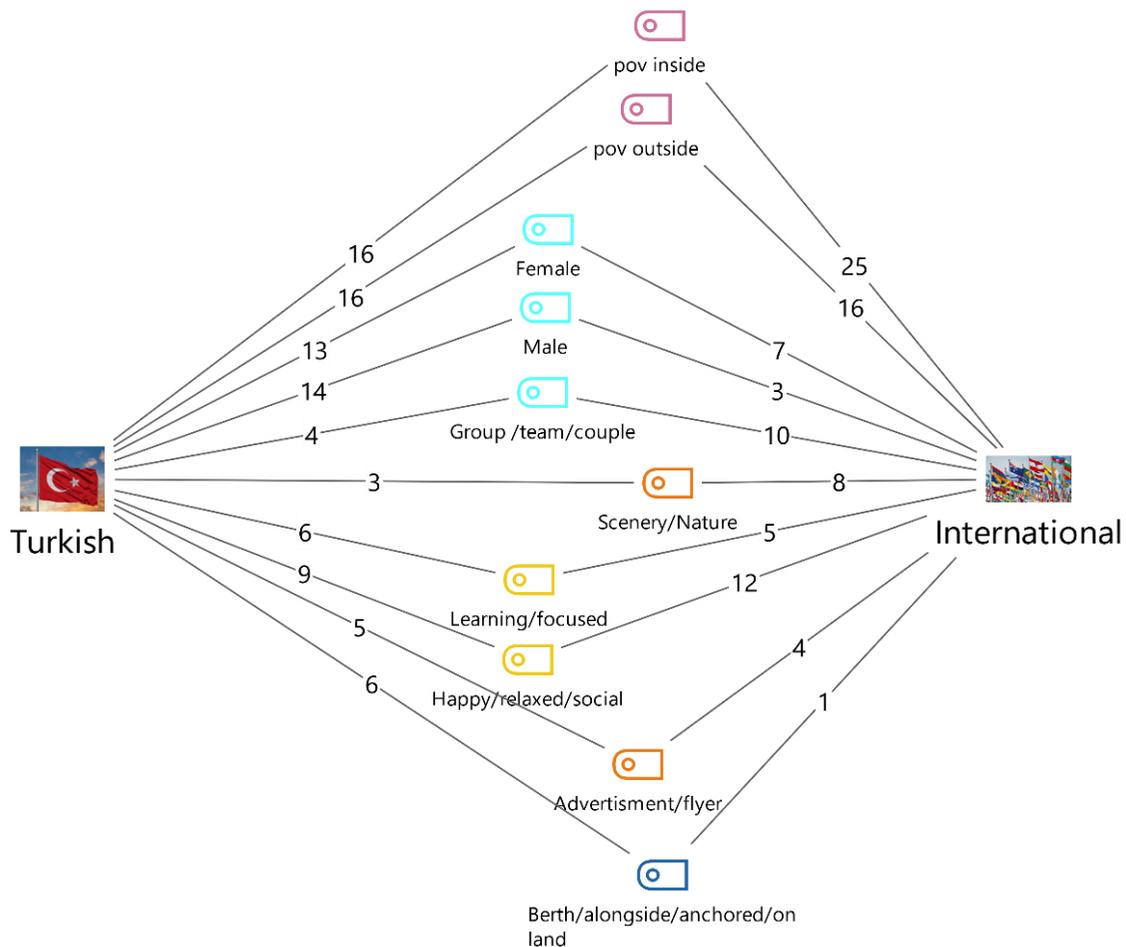


Figure 6. Turkish - International two cases model analysis

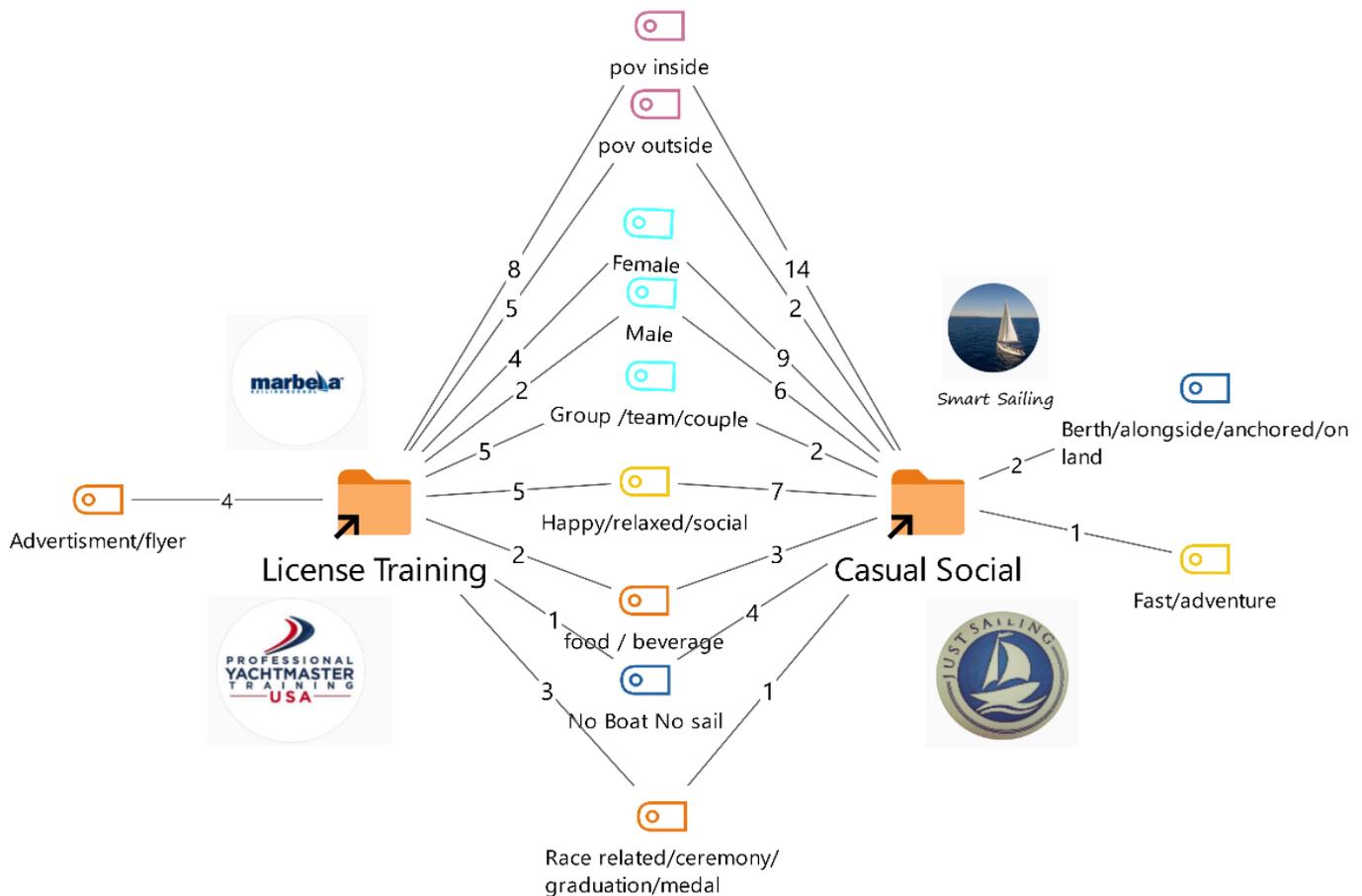
the prominence of the new era. In a sense, service providers supply the frames the customers may choose to share on their own social media. Thus, the present study aims to explore Instagram marketing patterns of yacht training services through photograph-based content analysis.

According to the data, the primary goal of yacht training centers is emphasized in the Instagram postings rather than the service design aspects. Some of them, for example, stress the educational part of the institutes by posting licensing elements in the images, whereas others tend to post their hedonic ambiance, such as food, coffee, and relaxed people, which prefers *POV inside* images to capture the atmosphere while sailing. Furthermore, some centers focus solely on fast race yachts, mostly via *POV outside* images, to convey the notion that they are training individuals and preparing teams for sail races. In addition, destination attributes are also visible especially in the Instagram accounts of European based institutes. As an example, historical spots in Italy or glacial fjords in Sweden are also marketed alongside to training services. It can be said that using such aspects to create a distinct vivid representation in the minds of their target clients is one of the most popular social media

marketing techniques employed by training institutions. On the other hand, the service features provided are not clear with a lack of novelty regarding the services in the photos, both of which are fundamentals of social media marketing [4,12]. Furthermore, printing text messages on photos and carrying complex communications are rarely employed. According to the literature, Generation Z needs to be informed with simple messages [10], which is consistent with the findings of our study.

Even though the diversity of the patterns was not as extensive as initially predicted, several trends emerged after conducting a thorough study on the social media accounts of Turkish and international sail training institutes. The most frequently used themes are;

- Race focused,
- Learning focused,
- License training,
- Natural scenery/touristic appeal,
- Warm, friendly/social,
- Lackadaisical/low social media activity.



**Figure 7.** License training - casual/social two cases model analysis

The study results reveal that international institutes post more of the themes connected to the *motivations* of people who are interested in yachting [30-32] such as sensing nature, discovering new places, sharing experiences with friends, and socializing.

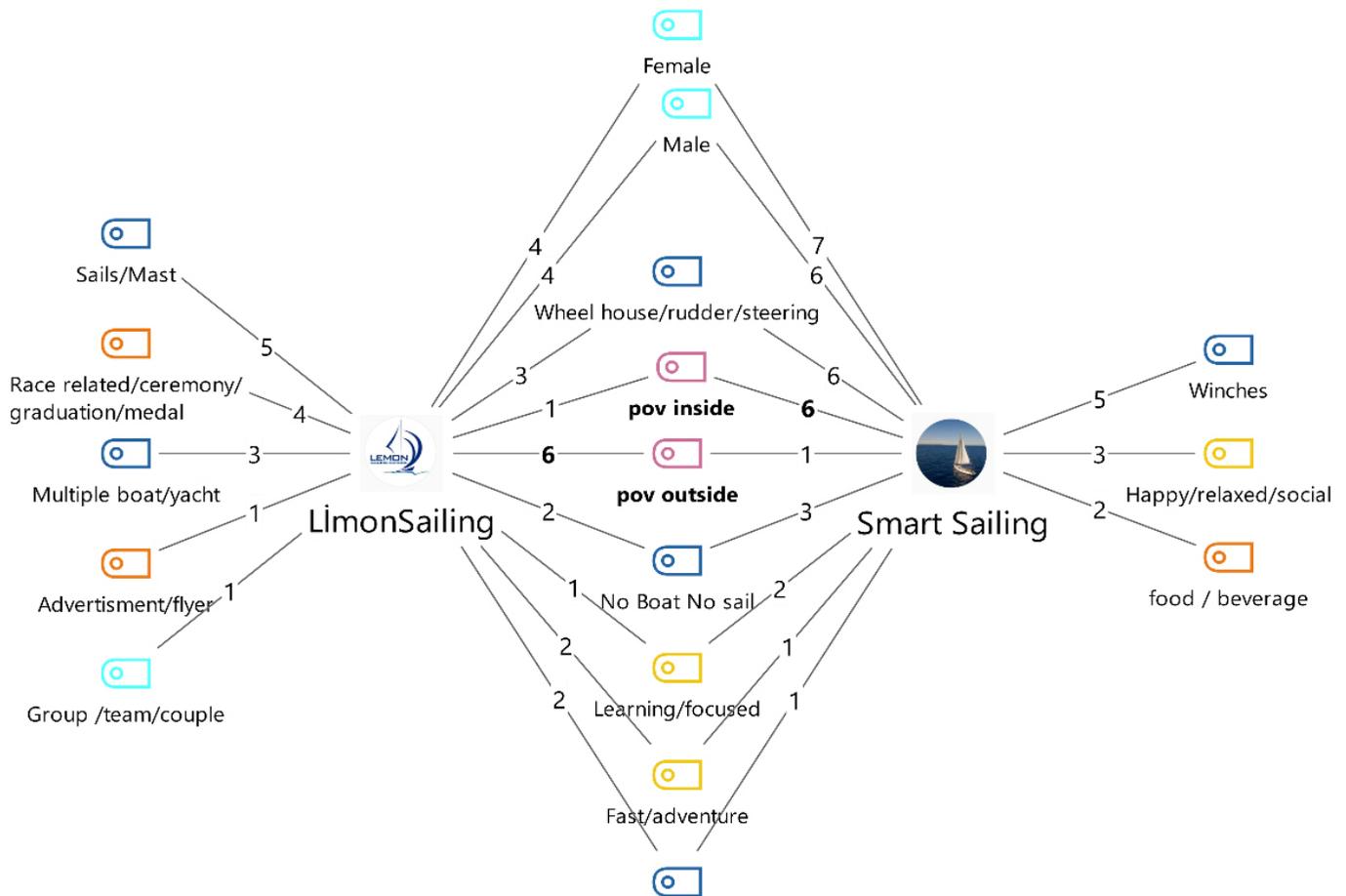
Moreover, the volume of training center activity and the number of trainers/trainees/boats have been found to be uncorrelated to social media engagement. Some accounts have many students but few Instagram posts/followers, while the opposite may be true for others. Furthermore, image quality ranges from smartphone snap shots attempting to capture and share the moment to high-quality images obtained by air drones or professional photographers.

The study makes some theoretical contributions to the relevant literature. The use of content analysis on photographs is limited in social media research. The present study shows that analyzing visual data produced by service providers can disclose a wealth of information about the services provided. Instagram is a rapidly developing image-based social media platform that is a strong source of visual data and has had a few studies undertaken in the field of

social media marketing and this study is the only one published so far on yacht and sail training.

Some suggestions can be offered for social media marketers based on the findings. Service providers of all types should maintain the prominent features of their services accessible on their social media by employing pictures of the aspects they wish to convey to their present and potential customers. Specifically, services related to marine tourism such as nature, the marine environment should not be left unengaged, and the yacht and her equipment, as well as people and events even if organized by customers [20] could be highlighted. Social media communications, which are intended to be two-way, are typically underutilized. The reviewed yacht training accounts suggest that accounts that respond to comments obtain greater traffic from users. It is advised that the comments, inquiries, and remarks not to be left unanswered. Using hashtags and inviting customers to share their own images with specified hashtags on their accounts could be a practical way to grow the community.

The most prominent limitation of the study is that it has solely included Instagram as a social media platform. Other image-sharing social media networks, such as Facebook and



**Figure 8.** Limon sailing - smart sailing two cases model analysis

Pinterest, could have yielded different results. The sample of training facilities might be enlarged to include educational institutes such as maritime colleges and navy training schools, and comparative studies could be conducted to evaluate how patterns differ between them.

Image coding and content analysis on images can now provide us with additional insight thanks to recent advancements in analysis tools. Such analysis is lacking in the marine tourism industry, and additional research might be undertaken in areas such as cruise ships, marinas and terminals, superyachts, as well as water sports. Future studies can evaluate Instagram's efficiency and effectiveness in promoting education services both separately and in comparison to the results of other social media platforms, considering expected benefits, such as customer loyalty and satisfaction.

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## Annex 1

List of instagram profiles subject to this study:

<https://www.instagram.com/sailmarbella/>

<https://www.instagram.com/justsailing1/>

<https://www.instagram.com/lemonsailingschool/>

<https://www.instagram.com/thebigbullsailing/>

<https://www.instagram.com/59northsailing/>

<https://www.instagram.com/gokovasailingacademy/>

[https://www.instagram.com/pyt\\_usa/](https://www.instagram.com/pyt_usa/)

<https://www.instagram.com/urlasailing/>

<https://www.instagram.com/oneyachtclub/>

<https://www.instagram.com/smartsailingacademy/>