

# The Functions of Language in Realizing the Indonesian Culinary on the official tourism website of Indonesia: A Tourism Discourse Perspective

*by* Haedar Akib

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## The Functions of Language in Realizing the Indonesian Culinary on the official tourism website of Indonesia: A Tourism Discourse Perspective

Yuhadi Samad<sup>1</sup>, Muhammad Arifin Salim<sup>2</sup>, Haedar Akib<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>(Public Administration, Universitas Negeri Makassar, Indonesia)

<sup>2</sup>(Tourism Department, Politeknik Pariwisata Makassar, Indonesia)

<sup>3</sup>(Public Administration, Universitas Negeri Makassar, Indonesia)

**Abstract:** A tourism website is essentially an important domain in realizing the tourism products. Indeed, official tourism websites can be very powerful tool in representing the norms and values, which travelers should purportedly observe. However, there is only limited research on the constructions of tourism destination images and in particular on how official tourism websites promote products. Therefore, this study aimed at examining how the effective use of language and visual elements in realizing the Indonesian culinary on the official tourism website of Indonesia (OTWI). Implementing a discourse approach, the analysis was conducted on both language and visual elements. Discourse analysis, text and visual imaginary of the official tourism websites were selected for investigation. The use of lexical and syntactical aspects in the official tourism website of Indonesia are the focus of textual analysis. Furthermore, visual elements such as modality and salience are also looked over. The findings reveals that both, textual and visual elements, types complement each other as tourism discourse resources in realizing Indonesian culinary as the tourist attraction on OTWI.

**Keywords:** Realizing, culinary Tourism, language, visual, tourism discourse

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### I. INTRODUCTION

The culinary issue has been presented very common on the website and become an important discussion in the recent years. With technological developments, such as social media, and tourism website, promotion is growing increasingly more efficient and effective in providing key information about products and destinations to potential tourists. The potential tourist has to be offered reasons as to why he/she should visit a certain country instead of another. Thus, tourism promotion is needed for the development of tourism.

The growing food industries or restaurant make culinary tourism become popular in many countries. As recognised as big country in Southeast Asia, Indonesia has various languages based on the ethnic groups and cultures in the world. Consequently, Indonesia has many diverse traditional culinary from Saban to Merauke. Therefore, a relatively new discourse about culinary tourism and its advantages over every day culinary in Indonesia is found in every tourism promotion (Sukenti, 2014).

Indonesia is very famous with various tourism attractions and uniqueness such as natural resources, culture and tradition that make it different from other countries, in particular in terms of culinary (Sukenti 2014). The Indonesian culinary is a portrayal of the diversity of culture and tradition of every region in Indonesia. This richness is an advantage for Indonesia which enhances tourist destination for both domestic and foreign tourists. Culinary tourism has a specific characteristic in which Indonesia consist of different culture through out of Indonesia. Consequently, each group of ethnic has their own food, beverages and snacks. They are vast potency to support Indonesia's tourism. The portrayal of Indonesian cuisines cannot be separated from tourist activities. Therefore the Indonesian gastronomy with all its aspects is a great opportunity in portraying and promoting the type of dish and constituent materials, the variety of food the processes of food, and the food values. Culinary tourism is being developed as a tourist attraction in some countries such as Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia (Pullphothong, L. & C. Sopha, 2013; Mazza, G. M. C. 2013; Salim 2015). In fact, traditional Indonesian culinary is going to be one of the potential attractions for tourism. In such local culture has own unique culinary represents and articulates the "identity" of the country (Hornig & Tsai, 2010). Therefore, food and cuisine have an important role in promoting the uniqueness and the authenticity of tourist destinations.

Moreover, as many people travel to seek new gastronomic experiences, culinary tourism is a gradually essential part of "destination image" (Ignatov & Smith, 2006; Okumus, Okumus, & McKercher, 2007; Hornig & Tsai, 2010). The culinary tourism industry has become one of media which offers the uniqueness of tourist

destinations in which it is an opportunity to construct for themselves a unique competitive benefit (ICTA, 2008) through a positive construction between the local cuisines and national identity (Okumus et al., 2007). Hence Cohen and Avieli (2004), state that countries or regions become popular because of their unique and authentic cuisines. In addition, exploring the role of food as an important vehicle for tourism has become a powerful media to describe tourist destinations (Long, 2004). However, research on tourism from online perspective are required (Salim, Ibrahim, & Hassan, 2012, Hassan, 2014; Kivela&Crofts, 2005) and therefore this study aimed to study how Indonesian culinary are represented to realize a destination image using tourism discourse perspective.

#### The Discourse of Tourism

Tourism embraces the direct interaction between cultures and consists mainly of culture and heritage, folklore, customs, gastronomy, dancing, rules, etc. Indeed, in tourism, many people recognize their annual holidays as an experience that offers romance and exoticism of place, food and accommodation, and this becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy (Dann, 2012). This desire encourages people to look for romantic and exotic locations in pursuit of an unspoiled, primeval aspect of nature and unique food. Responding to this demand, the tourism industry stakeholders and practitioners offer a variety of holiday places or destinations in which the images highlight the beautiful scenery in conjunction with culture, nature and culinary.

According to Machin (2004), images in magazines, newspapers, promotional materials, and advertisements do not represent actual places or events and do not document the reality, but rather, they symbolically represent the marketing concepts and moods, such as contentment and freedom. However, images use high quality colours and attractive models to express the full message (Dann, 1996). In recent years, several studies on the construction of destination images by visual means have been conducted (e.g. Jaworski, 2010; Santosa, Belhassenb, & Caton, 2008; Iwashita, 2006; Kim & Richardson, 2003; Larsen & George, 2006). Tourism promotional tools, such as websites, brochures, and booklets, describe places or events through different discourses, for example, the use of a specific language with a very careful selection of vocabulary and visual elements of attractive images (Dann, 1996). Hence, tourism promotion as a discourse through its textual and visual resources has become contributory in introducing the tourist destination to potential tourists

The connection between language and tourism has been examined by several scholars, such as MacCannell (1976) ;Dann (1996) and Urry (1990), who argue that tourism development depends on how language is employed to construct and define the tourist experience and destination images. Indeed, as Boyer and Viallon (1994) revealed, it is not that so many destinations are integrally touristic, but rather that the language used makes them so. This notion was then developed by Graham Dann (1996), who further categorized the role of language as it is used in tourism promotion to contextualize the tourist experience of the destination.

Several studies have explored the significance of the tourism discourse, in particular, the tourism promotional document. In addition, many have conducted content analysis of promotions in offline media, such as brochures, guide books, and booklets (for example, Small, Harris & Wilson, 2008; Samani& Maliki, 2010). However, few researchers, if any, have conducted an analysis of both the language and images found in tourism promotional tools (Salim, Aireen and Hassan, 2012). Therefore, this study, which embarks on an analysis of both the textual and visual resources utilised in online tourism promotional platforms to enhance the culinary tourism, will provide a more holistic insight and understanding of the different discourses of tourism.

As a discourse, tourism has become one of the most common community discourses, with many people involved in its construction regarding the plethora of communicative situations (Jóhannesson&Huijbens, 2010). From a promotional perspective, tourism, in the interpretations of tourism experts, has its own discourse (Rázusová, 2009). From this perspective, the language of tourism is therefore significantly more than a representation. Through still or moving pictures, written texts, and audio-visual offerings, the language of tourism tends to 'persuade, lure, woo, and seduce' people and, in doing so, it transforms them from potential into real tourists (Dann, 1996).

Furthermore, language and visual images are the representation and neutral reflections of reality in the world (Midalía, 1999; Morgan and Pritchard, 1996). Tourism websites are ideal for discovering the language and visual images offered to potential tourists, as they improve the understanding and perception of the products and destinations. Therefore, the interrelation between text and image may represent and portray the tourist products and destinations on tourism websites.

#### Tourism Promotional Websites

Tourism promotional website play a significant role in promoting of all aspects of international tourism including the culinary tourism in recent years (Wan, 2002). Many countries including Indonesia are now constructing the official tourism websites, in the hope that tourists can access information about their potential

destinations by browsing them (Boyne, Hall, & Williams, 2003), the official tourism website has also become a significant means of advertising the local cultures and cuisines of culinary tourist destinations (du Rand et al., 2003). Therefore, constructing effective government tourism websites is the first step in the marketing of these destinations.

Tourism promotions can be divided into two categories: print media, for instance, advertisements, brochures, magazines and guidebooks; and electronic media, such as the internet or websites, and social media, such as travel blogs and Facebook. Thus, the website is the most popular tool used by tourists to explore destinations, as most tourists prefer using online mediation to gain information about a particular tourist destination (Fakharyan et al., 2012; Loda, 2011; Krochmal, 1998). Suradnya's (2006) study shows how 24% of tourists used the website as a source of information for exploring destinations in Indonesia followed by promotional media, with approximately 8 to 15%. Therefore, the website is the leading tool used by holidaymakers as a source of information about the destination. Due to advances in information technology, the use of the website tends to continue to increase while printed media, such as brochures, booklets and advertisements, remain as a secondary tool for tourists in decision-making.

The tourism promotions conducted by Indonesia have focused essentially on its wonderful destinations with virgin nature (white sand beaches, blue sky, national park, marine life), and a wealth of authentic cultural attractions and heritage including variety of culinary. Simultaneously, natural, cultural heritage and culinary tourism are reflected an integral part of Indonesia's tourism industry, while concurrently, that tourism website is also utilised to portray the Indonesian culinary tourism, preserve the cultural heritage and sustain the natural resources. Thus, promotional activities have an important role in increasing the value of the tourist attraction including culinary tourism. For example, the use of the official tourism websites Indonesia has become the new trend in promoting and marketing the tourist attraction including culinary (Salim, 2015; Lawa, Qi and Buhalis, 2010). Websites are considered an effective method for achieving promotional mediation, as this tool uses a variety of different discourses to enhance the product or the tourist destination (Salim, 2014; Loda, 2011). Therefore, this current study examines how discourse portrays the Indonesian culinary on the official tourism website of Indonesia.

In addition to portrayal, official tourism website is provided for tourists in different forms of promotional tools (Loda, 2010; Salim, 2014; Salim, 2015, Salim, 2017) Particularly, it is interesting to note that website typically provide an easily accessible information source. As a promotional tool, the official tourism website of Indonesia is a rich source of information, using both language and images for the purpose of promoting tourist products a Methodology

Food is one of the most important elements in tourists' destination choices and travelers' decision-making. Food tourism is therefore gradually charming as an essential subject to researchers in the field of tourism. Thus, the need for effective food tourism enhancing and marketing is obvious. Conversely, very little research has been piloted to investigate food tourism on the official tourism websites. This study was considered to examine how the effective use of language and visual elements in realizing culinary tourism on the OTWI. The research applied the multimodal discourse analysis evaluating the text and visual element used on the OTWI. Information regarding promotion of food, food-related activities, food products, and food tourism information was examined. The results are expected to help the tourism stakeholders improve their strategies to attract more tourists.

Due to advances in information technology, the use of the website has tended to continue to rise while brochures/advertisements remain as a supporting mediation for tourists in decision-making. The official tourism website of Indonesia (OTWI) was selected as the object of the study. This study is supported by a number of former studies on language and visual images on tourism promotion (for example, Pepeng, 2005; Pritchard & Morgan, 2005; Mocini, 2005; Loda, 2011; Pan, Tsai & Lee, 2011). This study employed a qualitative approach in developing the research design. The reason behind this choice lies in the assumption that qualitative research methods offer more insight into the philosophical assumptions in this current research. In the context of tourism research, this research was qualitative in nature because it aimed at exploring the different discourses of tourism as realised through the language use and the visual elements in the tourism website of Indonesia.

The data collection was carried out through surfing and searching the OTWI and downloading the homepage and the popular destination links. The data collection through electronic documentation of this research was meant to gather critical information regarding the role of language and visual elements on tourism websites. The data were collected electronically by utilizing the OTWI from major destinations. It was conducted for 2 weeks in March 2014. As websites are in digital form, they assist the analysis of text and images in ways that would be too taxing or time consuming otherwise. One more practical point is that because online destination promotion does not have the same space constraints as hard copy brochures and pamphlets, tourist attraction sites seemingly have a greater opportunity to include discussions of further destinations. As the nature of websites means they were constantly updated, the researcher needed to justify the time of documenting

the data from the websites. However, the researcher took into account the occasional changes and updates in the four official tourism websites. Moreover, the website has a variety of pages and links, the data collection focused on the homepage and the popular destination links. Therefore, this study used two types of analysis: textual analysis and visual analysis. Textual analysis was used to analyse the text found in the tourism websites, in particular lexical and syntactical choices, whilst visual analysis was used to examine the visual components of the tourism websites by focusing on the modality, the salience, and the use of collage on tourism websites. and destinations. As a subject of research, the tourism website is interesting, as the representations of the destination are cleverly constructed through various discourses of tourism. The aim of the tourism website is to portray destinations or tourism products in a positive light and in an attractive way. This applies especially to valorising destinations and products via textual and visual means.

### **Culinary Tourism**

In addition, Hjalager (2003) explains that the tourists pursue food and beverage recipes and eating experiences that substitute culture. Furthermore, culinary in a destination is an important aspect not only for tourists satisfy hunger but also for gaining in-depth understanding about the local cuisine and of the destinations culture (Kim, Yuan, Goh, & Antum, 2009). Local food as a tourism product is offered to tourists in many ways during their holiday, such as; in direct purchases from farms and in the restaurants, which allow for local products in their menus.

## **II. MATERIAL AND METHODS**

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### III. Result

This section deliberates the discourses realized through text and visual images on the OTWI. The discussion in this section will connect to the theoretical and practical concepts of tourism discourse. Specifically, the discussion will focus on the discourse of authenticity realised through text and visual images which has emerged from the data analysis of the OTWI. The table below illustrates the discourse of tourism found on the OTWI

**Table 1:** Tourism Discourse construction on OTWI

Discourse	Text Strategy	Visual Strategy
Discourse of Authenticity	Lexical choice: <i>Descriptive words</i> Syntactical choice: <i>Declarative sentence</i>	Modality Saliency
	Lexical choice: <i>Descriptive words</i> Syntactical choice: <i>Declarative sentence and conditional sentence, narrative</i>	Participant

Text and visual image on the OTWI play an important role to realize the culinary attractions. The discourse of authenticity is the principal discourse used on the OTWI constructed through text and visual element and to enhance the tourists' perception towards the destination. Local cuisines are one of the most popular tourist attractions in all destinations in Indonesia. Definitely, tourists deliberate the food when they are researching a certain destination. Indonesia has the world's fourth largest population, which is made up of approximately 250 ethnic groups and over 6,000 islands; thus, Indonesia has a large variety of local cuisines, with the food as varied as its culture. In fact, the OTWI employ specific language features on a certain link to realize the enticement of the local Indonesian cuisines.

Extract [1] *Many people visit Bandung, the capital of West Java province, to pamper their taste buds. You'll be amazed with what Bandung has to offer. From various food sold on street vendors to haute cuisine, every visitor will be able to find something to their liking here, in Bandung. (BC-P1)*

Extract 1 tempts the potential visitors through specific lexical choices, with phrases such as 'pamper their taste buds', 'You'll be amazed', 'various food sold on street vendors to haute cuisine' to describe the local cuisines. The aim is for this syntactical choice to authenticate the local Indonesian cuisines. In line with Mac Cannell (1973); Dann (1996) that the functions of language and visual elements is to enhance the tourists' perception toward the destinations.

The finding shows that the website of Indonesia employs discourse authenticity in realizing the Indonesian culinary. It was realized through declarative, descriptive and conditional sentences in textual analysis (Dann, 1996). Therefore, language has an important role to realize the culinary tourism (Calvi, 2000; Choi, et al., 2010; Salim, 2017). The website portrays the all elements of tourism attractions including culinary as a tourist attraction. The OTWI significantly employ specific language element such as declarative sentence, conditional sentence and descriptive lexical to construct the social reality "culinary tourism" on OTWI (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Kim, 2010).

Furthermore, language is the representation and neutral reflections of reality in the world (Midalia, 1999; Morgan and Pritchard, 1996). Tourism websites are ideal for discovering the language offered to potential tourists, as they improve the understanding and perception of the products including culinary tourism.

Furthermore, Extract 2 illustrates the local Sundanese cuisines, which are famous with food such as sambal dadak, natitimbel and sayurasam. These local foods offer a specific temptation to tourists who love tasting a variety of local cuisines. Thus, Extract 2 seems to indicate the varied authentic experience of Indonesian cuisine, which has become a specific attraction for potential tourists.

Extract [2] *Sundanese (the people living in West Java are called Sundanese) has tempting refreshments. Sundanese food tends to be bland yet tasty unless you add sambal dadak (chili and other ingredients grinded together) to your food. If you're looking for more spicy taste, just add this sambal dadak with nasitimbel (steamed rice formed into a roll inside a banana leaf) and other specialties. This mouthwatering treat is too good to be missed! Usually sour vegetables soup (sayurasam) is accompanied by nasitimbel.*

This can be construed from the use of words such as 'tempting refreshments', 'bland yet tasty unless you add sambal dadak', 'more spicy taste', 'this mouthwatering treat is too good to be missed'. Thus, it is clear that the lexical and syntactical choices significantly highlight the authentic variety of Indonesian cuisine. They provide authenticity to enhance the tourist's willingness toward the authentic experience of the culinary

(MacCannell, 1973). The findings show that Indonesia is one of the popular culinary attraction in East Asia. As a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural nation, Indonesia has abundant of food taste tourist attractions. Picard (1990); Kim, Yuan, Goh, & Antum (2009); Salim (2018) argue Indonesia originally has different authentic attractions including culinary in which the tourists experience its authenticity.

In addition, Extract 15 demonstrates another variety of local food on the OWIT, such as pisangmolen, brownies kukus, escendol, bajigur. Thus, Extract 16 proves that Indonesia has a number of local cuisines as varied as its ethnic groups, from west to east. In fact, the lexical choice highlights the authentic local cuisines in Indonesia, which may persuade potential tourists who love tasting different kinds of local food and sweet refreshments to visit the destinations.

Extract [3] People with sweet tooth might fancy pisangmolen, an Indonesian traditional pastry filled with banana and cheese. For a variation, try brownies kukus (steamed brownies). Escendol, made of blended/grinded rice, palm sugar, and coconut milk, is delightful on a hot day. While for a colder day, you might want a taste of bandrek or bajigur. (BC-P5)

It is clearly shown that the texts describe the diverse authentic food to ensure the potential tourist. These touristic create authentic picturesque which is different from the other places. For example the use of descriptive word variations. The OTWI portrays this authenticity through language use (Burr, 1995; Rotry, 1992). In fact, the finding shows that the pristine food of Indonesia is portrayed through careful of selection words. By means of these phrases portray the authenticity of food as a tourist attraction (Dann, 1996). Therefore, it clearly be emphasized that solely text has a myriad 'effect' to construct the discourse of authenticity in culinary (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Dann, 1996; Cohen, 1983).

Similar to the linguistic resources, visual images also give a description of the tourism products. For example, Figure 6 illustrates the traditional food of Indonesia. The picture on the top left illustrates customers enjoying traditional food as street food, as Indonesian people are most likely to eat such food in the street. The next photo image on the right shows a man bringing a number of plates with different kinds of food. The photo image at the bottom starts off with the traditional food called gado-gado with full colour saturation to portray the wonderful cuisine, while the image on the right illustrates the traditional drink (cendol). The functions of the images are signifiers of Indonesia's wonderful cuisines. The images are placed in the front and at the centre to connote salience (Hassan, 2012; Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996).



**Figure 1:** Traditional foods

Hence, non-linguistically the visual element of the OTWI play a significant functions to construct discourses of tourism. This website uses a number of pictures to portray the the variation of food of Indoensia. For example, Figure 1 illustrates the picture of the different of food from different part of Indonesia (escendol, gado-gado, nasipadang and soto). The food is the salient of picture because of the foreground picture and has difference in sharpness in focus and colour contrast. Therefore, this picture illustrates significant meanings in term of the Indonesian taste. This is to say that culiary tourism is one of the authentic attraction which engage the potential tourist to visit and enjoy the Indonesian culinary attraction.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The tourism industry usually proposes a combination of themes in its promotion process in order to generate an attractive offer for potential clients. The combination of domains allows the sender to transform multiple messages, which may reach a wider audience and make them more profitable than if the classification of concepts were exceptionally selective. The webpages of the tourist destinations of Indonesia, which are intended to appeal to a wide market segment of patrons with varying interests, offer an example of verbal communication and visual images that tries to capture the interest of as many potential tourists as possible through the application of a complex mesh of specific discourse areas. Although some concepts may be more

obvious than others, destination websites generally employ specific discourse to realize the the tourist attractions, which aim to satisfy all types of interests.

Specifically, this study focused on the language use and visual elements of the tourism website of Indonesia, in which a dialectic regarding the culinary tourism is revealed. The findings of this study provide insights into the way language and visual elements are purposefully utilised to realize the description of Indonesia as a famous tourist destination in Southeast Asia. This investigation improves the understanding of the Indonesian tourist destination in particular the taste of food, which is highlighted through specific discourses authentic culinary.

As noted, this study emphasizes that it is important to pay careful attention to how the OTWI realizing the different tourist culinary attractions, through an integration of language and visual elements. This outcome yields a wide range of understanding of the discourse analysis. However, the study could be improved by broadening the data source; for example, a more extensive investigation could include videos, which would offer a considerable data source to obtain an in-depth understanding of certain effects in the field of tourism discourse.

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