

## THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE AND CULTURE COMODIFICATION IN BALI TOURISM

Ni Made Ernila Junipisa<sup>1\*</sup>, Made Ayu Purnami<sup>2</sup>, Ni Nyoman Nidya Trianingrum<sup>3</sup>  
<sup>1,3</sup> Universitas Triatma Mulya

<sup>2</sup> Institut Teknologi dan Pendidikan Markandeya Bali

Email: [1ernilatriatma@gmail.com](mailto:1ernilatriatma@gmail.com), [2madeayupurnami1995@gmail.com](mailto:2madeayupurnami1995@gmail.com),  
[3nidya.ningrum@triatmamulya.ac.id](mailto:3nidya.ningrum@triatmamulya.ac.id)

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### *Abstract*

In these decades, the impact of economic globalization influences culture, while international tourism is an inevitable product of worldwide communication. Although professional interpreters and tourist guides can mitigate the language barrier issue, the ever-increasing demand for the use and implementation of multilingual communication has become an important factor that needs to be considered for various necessities, especially for tourists. This article investigates the implications of communication for tourism development and the commodification of culture for Bali Tourism. The research recommends several activities that can be carried out by the community or the government to increase the benefits of language use in supporting local tourism such as (a) multi languages guide may improve guest experience beyond the visiting object, (b) promoting local culture could be explained in the people perception, (c) giving information about safety first, (d) and maintain online promotion and conventionally. . It is hoped that these four benefits above can help tourists understand matters related to tourism, especially Bali Tourism, such as performances and offered tours that are deeply associated and bound by culture and language. This research is expected to help elevate the function of language in enhancing Bali's tourism. Bali's tourism is known for its culture and language, which are of interest to foreign tourists. This can become a major attraction for tourists to better understand the Balinese culture through the application and learning of the language.

Keywords: Linguistic Commodification, Culture, Tourism

### **Introduction**

Language is a tool for communication; it is the bridge connecting travelers with destinations, local cultures, and the experiences they desire. In the context of tourism, the role of language is essential to understand, particularly in the service and promotion sectors of tourism especially in Balinese Tourism, which has a strong related with culture. In Bali the tourism sector is influenced by the culture. In this regard, success in communication, both verbal and written, is crucial as it can influence tourists' interpretation of the culture and the tourism itself. Culture, in this sense, can be understood as the intellectual achievements, social customs, behaviors, and language of human society. Theoretically, commodification explains the capitalist method of maintaining the goal to accumulate capital or

realize value through the transformation of use value into exchange value. According to Marx (1997) Commodification is often accompanied by a distinction between superficiality and the manipulation of society's authentic cultural commodities, commodification transforms objects, qualities, and signs into commodities goods that can be bought and sold on the market. Commodification is often accompanied by a distinction between superficiality and the manipulation of society's authentic cultural commodities. Cultural commodification helps business actors commodify their identity and psychologically approach clients. It certainly influenced by the accurate interpretation of the value being commodified. Given that this involves the transmission of the value intended for commodification, the role of language becomes foundational in this sector. This phenomenon is most evident in the tertiary industry (service sector). This sector greatly influences attracting tourists to enjoy the available destinations. Through services that utilize precise delivery and appropriate language, tourist interest can be successfully captivated. After all, tangible and intangible cultures have become commodities, and these cultural productions are the attractions and motivations of tourists to visit the destination especially in Bali. Based on previous research, the article focuses on several typical linguistic phenomena in tourism from a cultural commodification point of view.

## **Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

### **Language and Tourism**

Currently, the spread of international languages and linguistic commodification have become an integral part of the prospect of tourism. Language is also an essential component of culture. Language functions as a communication tool for a specific group or country. Internationalization now brings about more frequent exchanges in multiple languages across various countries, while multilingual interaction is becoming more common in the tourism world. In the case of tourism, particularly in Bali, which is evident in the souvenir trade sector, tourists, guides, and local hosts attach great importance to the role of language in drafting promotions and marketing management.

Language in Bali tourism is an essential resource for authenticating local identity, marking community boundaries, and commodifying cultural heritage. Therefore, language plays a critical role in transmitting cultural codes, while tourism is a platform for sharing diverse cultures. It is important to note that different languages in global advertising reflect different social stereotypes. Advertising is highly influential in many aspects of employment, the public, and daily life worldwide. According to Piller's findings (2017), the use of English in non-English-native speaking countries gives consumers an impression of modernization, elitism, and a free and open market. Meanwhile, French slogans are strongly related to refined taste, elegance, and a delicate lifestyle.

Based on Piller's study, consumers tend to associate the application of a particular foreign language in product advertising with the stereotype of the country using the language. Therefore, Schneider (2010) indicates that attitudes towards different languages and linguistic ideologies are anchored in complicated social environments. Compared to language, tourism as a cultural performance plays a role in building a theoretical framework to understand the encounters between tourists and hosts and provides meaningful insights into training tourism workers'

skills. In Bali, the tourism sector has become a primary source of income. From a sociolinguistic perspective, tourism refers to "a staged performance where identities, ideologies, and languages are repurposed and refashioned to meet the tastes of tourism markets" (p. 410). Sassi (2018) also believes that the arrival of mass tourism has a significant impact on research on multilingualism and the advancement of the tertiary industry (service sector). Therefore, tourism can be a window for multilingual and transcultural communication.

### **Culture Commodification in Bali Tourism**

Several empirical studies have examined the correlation between tourism and multilingualism, and the commodification of culture in the context of internationalization. The commodification of local culture encompasses areas of life that were previously excluded from economic relations governed by market trade standards before tourism penetrated them. In Balinese tourism, we find sectors such as food, souvenirs, and cultural symbols that can be transformed or shaped into products consumable by customers. Research by Sharma (2018) emphasizes that workplace discourse in tourism also commodifies the service-oriented personalities of these workers to some extent. Similarly, Cole (2007) states that in addition to tangible commodities, the happiness and pleasure brought by communication in multiple languages also constitute a form of intangible cultural commodification. The use of other languages creates a discourse environment with commercial aims. In Balinese tourism, we often encounter relationships within the tourism sector that are highly dependent on language use. Balinese tourism is renowned for its cultural products packaged in such a way that they can be commercialized and marketed using international languages.

In the world of cultural commercialization, we can see it in the form of material objects and values in communication. The development of tourism accelerates the commodification process within culture itself. As human costs increase, tourism is gradually replacing industry as the new primary industry for many countries. The rise of the tertiary industry (service sector) is related to the deindustrialization of developed countries due to the tendency towards cultural commodification. Based on this, language in tourism can function as cultural capital to create conditions for its convertibility into commercial profit. The linguistic landscape of tourist destinations has become a marketable commodity for clients to enjoy. Goethals (2016) explains that the use of foreign languages plays a crucial role in fostering linguistic authenticity and exoticism when traveling abroad. Commodifying the linguistic heritage of an ethnic group or region can enhance the marketing benefits of a destination. Heller (2014) and Schneider (2018) argue that in the context of economic globalization, language has become a marketable commodity rather than a symbol of ethnolinguistic identity.

The commercialization of culture has significantly contributed to tourism growth. Tourism workers need to commodify language, identity, and cultural activities driven by profit, and the ideology of authenticity underpins these processes. For example, while the community considers English language proficiency a critical determinant for sustaining tourism growth, the Balinese community also recognizes the importance of language in tourism promotion. Without language, commercial transactions in Balinese tourism would be impossible.

## **Linguistic Commodification**

Linguistic commodification is defined as the reconfiguring of language as a commercial resource to meet market demands. Currently, English language skills are packaged as essential human capital to maximize the benefits of the economy itself. As we know, in interviews, tourism employees must use English to circulate travel information and position themselves and other visitors' cultural identities. Furthermore, traders who wish to offer their goods or services to tourists also utilize their English language skills. For example, workers in the front office also leverage language skills as a medium of information for visitors.

According to Tariq Rahman (2009), the commodification of language was examined in Pakistan's call centers from the standpoint of the English accent. The study reflected that speaking in an English accent approaching that of a native speaker is crucial for Pakistani service workers in conducting business. Call centers even stigmatize English with a Pakistani accent because workers are eager to learn native English accents. Although it is known that language is being used extensively in such a context, it has also become a potential tool for expressing character and can be a primary instrument in building a good and potential image.

## **Research Method**

The method in this research is descriptive qualitative research, which aimed at understanding, interpreting, and explaining social phenomena in depth within their natural setting. Its primary focus is on words, narratives, and the subjective meanings given by participants or sources. In this context, the research will detail the implication of communication and also language use on tourism development and the cultural commodification in Bali Tourism.

The researcher acts as the key instrument who actively collects data through in-depth observation and document analysis to gain an understanding of the role of language within the Bali tourism. The source can be taken from brochure, website, and also social media advertisement. Data Collection techniques are in-Depth observation in social media especially taken from social media advertisement, website, document etc, Document and Content Analysis and data Triangulation in which data is validated by cross-checking data from different sources (short interview to clearly see the real phenomena).

This research is focusing on describing, interpreting, and clarifying the phenomena, facts, or subjects of the research in depth and detail. The goal is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the role of language in tourism. Especially the implications of communication for tourism development and the commodification of culture for Bali Tourism.

## **Results and Discussion**

Language plays a strategic role in the development of the tourism sector in Indonesia, especially in Bali. As a primary communication tool, language not only facilitates interaction between tourists and tourism industry players but also serves as a medium for introducing local culture and traditions. In an effort to enhance the tourist experience, promote local culture, and establish effective communication, language holds a fundamental role.

One significant role of language in tourism is enhancing the tourist experience. In the process of tourism promotion and services, the use of Indonesian language

provides convenience for travelers, particularly in understanding information related to destinations, local culture, and local customs. When tourists are able to comprehend the cultural values and local traditions of Bali through language, their experience becomes more meaningful. For instance, during visits to cultural villages, guides who are language practitioners can often provide in-depth explanations regarding the meaning behind every ritual or cultural symbol they encounter.

Furthermore, language also plays a critical role in promoting local culture. As a nation rich in heritage, Indonesia bears a great responsibility to preserve and promote this richness to the world. In this context, language serves as the bridge connecting tourists with the traditions and customs of the local community.

These findings recommend increased investment in language training, the utilization of user-friendly translation technology, and the development of multilingual promotional materials to ensure the tourism industry can provide a safe, satisfying, and memorable experience for all visitors. Activities to enhance the benefits of language in supporting local tourism. Below are several activities that can be carried out by the community or the government to increase the benefits of language use in supporting local tourism.

### **1. Enhancing the Tourist Experience**

Multilingual Guided Tours (for example, guides at Borobudur Temple fluent in English, Japanese, and Mandarin). By providing multilingual tour guides, tourists from various countries can understand the historical narrative, philosophical meaning, and architectural details of the tourist site in depth. This can change the perception of a visit from merely seeing to a memorable and satisfying learning experience. The other activity can be Labeling of Food and Restaurant. Labeling Menu in English and Indonesian, along with visual images. This activity can reduce confusion or anxiety among foreign tourists regarding food ingredients (e.g., allergies or dietary restrictions) in restaurants or eateries in tourist areas, especially in Bali. As we know, tourists from various countries come to Bali to enjoy its tourist attractions. It's no secret that tourists also enjoy the food and drinks available at tourist attractions. Labeling the food makes it easier for tourists to choose their meals, and restaurant owners also benefit by avoiding potential complaints. This builds trust and makes the dining experience better and safer for visitors who have specific restrictions.

### **2. Promoting Local Culture**

The other activities that government can do is Short Local Phrase Learning Sessions (for the example 10-minute course on basic Balinese or Indonesian phrases) offered at hotels or airports. This activity can encourage tourists to become more familiar with the languages or phrases commonly used in daily activities. It also fosters warmer and more genuine interactions with local residents. When tourists try to say “*Terima kasih*” (Thank you) or “*Om Swastyastu*”, they feel more connected to the culture, which enhances the destination's image. Besides that, added subtitle explanation or narration in foreign language in art performances, for the example Kecak Dance performance accompanied by English narration or Mandarin Narration. This ensures that the values and stories behind complex dances can be understood by international audiences, not just their visual beauty. Language becomes the key to cultural appreciation.

### **3. Communication and Safety**

Information Boards and Direction Signs in tourist attractions, public facilities, or airports that only use Indonesian. Ensuring that every sign is in both Indonesian and English will increase tourists' awareness of the signs. This initiative certainly requires attention from all parties, not just the government, but also the public. Anyone who sees signs in public should report them immediately to the relevant authorities so that the vital signs can be translated into English, not just Indonesian.

### **4. Website Marketing and Promotion**

Official Tourism Websites and Promotional Brochures are the first face foreign tourists see of Balinese tourism. Translating the website content can make it easier for us to introduce our culture and tourism to the outside world. The official website is also the first source of information tourists receive and read when they want to learn about tourist attractions, activities, and even local cuisine. Therefore, it's crucial to ensure the website can be translated into multiple foreign languages. This helps expand the market reach globally. Materials presented with good and accurate language will attract more potential tourists and give an impression of professionalism.

Overall, language ability is an investment that directly improves the quality of services, deepens cultural engagement, and ensures safety, all of which lead to an increase in competitiveness and tourist satisfaction.

### **Conclusion**

Language in tourism is often used as a necessary means to achieve transcultural communication with tourists from countries at variance and higher economic profit. Second language speaking with mother tongue accents is widely used for confirming local identification and marking regional boundaries. The occurrence of both situations is consistent with globalized economic development. Conversely, spoken English with near-native accents has tremendous advantages in attracting international trade. In addition to pronunciation, service language in call centers concerns discourse style and professional qualities. In a culture of commodification, individuals ought to avoid inherent racism cognition behind various languages. Whether travel or study abroad, both travel agencies and colleges commodify exotic experiences as a cultural product with interaction value to sell. In my collecting references process, a large volume of research focuses on studying the dominant role of English in linguistic commodification. It seems that fewer researchers explored the commodification of other languages, particularly on languages with fewer native users. Hence, future studies should pay more attention to dying languages and other international languages. Perhaps other languages are not enough frequent-used as English in international business, but the commodification of diverse languages in domestic trade might have potential academic value.

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