

# PERSUASIVE LINGUISTIC STRATEGIES IN DIGITAL TOURISM: DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE DOLAN BANYUMAS WEBSITE

Gigih Ariastuti Purwandari, Indah Puspitasari, Kristianto Setiawan

Universitas Jenderal Soedirman, Purwokerto, Indonesia

E-mail: [gigih.purwandari@unsoed.ac.id](mailto:gigih.purwandari@unsoed.ac.id)

Received: 2025-12-18

Accepted: 2026-04-08

Published: 2026-06-10

## Abstract

This study analyses persuasive linguistic strategies on the Dolan Banyumas tourism website to examine how promotional discourse constructs destination image and shapes audience perception. Using qualitative discourse analysis, the study examines promotional texts across key sections of websites, including homepage narratives, destination descriptions, cultural content, and calls-to-action. The findings reveal that persuasive discourse is effective through the integration of emotional engagement, experiential storytelling, and credibility-oriented information, presenting Banyumas as an attractive, accessible, and culturally distinctive destination. The website strategically combines evocative language with informative content to enhance affective appeal while maintaining institutional legitimacy. A key contribution of this study is its identification of vernacular affective language, particularly the local expressions *ngangeni* and *mbetaih*, which function as symbolic resources to reinforce authenticity and emotional attachment in digital tourism promotion. The study contributes theoretically and methodologically to tourism discourse and digital discourse analysis by demonstrating how persuasive language functions across promotional contexts. Practically, the findings offer insights for culturally sensitive digital place branding, highlighting the value of local affective expressions in strengthening destination image and audience engagement.

**Keywords:** *destination image; digital place branding; persuasive linguistic strategies; tourism website discourse; vernacular affective language*

## 1. Introduction

Tourism websites function not only as sources of information but also as persuasive platforms that shape how destinations are perceived. Through strategic language choices, these websites construct destination image by combining factual information with emotional and evaluative appeals that influence audience attitudes and travel intentions (Marine-Roig, 2021). As a result, promotional discourse plays a central role in contemporary digital place branding.

Recent studies emphasize that destination image emerges from the interaction between tangible attributes and symbolic meanings communicated through language,

visuals, and narratives (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2021; Zein & Maharani, 2025). While global research has increasingly explored the rhetorical and discursive construction of destination image in online tourism promotion, limited attention has been paid to how localized cultural meanings are strategically embedded in official regional tourism websites. Indonesian government-managed platforms, which now serve as primary digital gateways for regional tourism promotion, provide a particularly relevant context for examining culturally situated persuasive discourse.

This study focuses on the Dolan Banyumas tourism website, the official digital platform managed by the Banyumas Regency Government. The website is notable for its use of local affective concepts to project authenticity, emotional closeness, and cultural distinctiveness, aligning with recent calls to examine culturally grounded communication in destination branding (Chauhan, 2021). This makes Dolan Banyumas an appropriate case for investigating how persuasive linguistic strategies operate within localized digital tourism promotion.

Using qualitative discourse analysis, this study examines promotional texts across key website sections, including destination descriptions, cultural narratives, and calls-to-action. Rather than providing a surface-level description of linguistic features, the study analyzes how persuasive strategies function discursively to construct Banyumas as an appealing, accessible, and culturally rich destination (Li, Pearce, & Morrison, 2023).

Accordingly, this study aims to identify dominant persuasive linguistic strategies, analyze their discursive functions in constructing destination image, and examine the role of vernacular affective expressions in digital tourism promotion. The study addresses the following research questions: (1) What persuasive strategies are used in Dolan Banyumas promotional texts?; (2) How do these strategies construct destination image and shape audience perception?; (3) How are vernacular affective expressions integrated into persuasive discourse?

This study contributes academically to tourism discourse and applied linguistics by demonstrating how persuasive language operates in localized digital tourism contexts. Practically, it offers insights for destination managers and policy-makers on embedding local cultural values into effective and culturally sensitive digital place branding strategies, responding to current challenges in regional digital tourism governance (Govers & Go, 2024).

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Persuasive Language and Rhetoric in Tourism Discourse**

Tourism promotion is primarily persuasive, aiming to shape how audiences imagine, evaluate, and emotionally connect with destinations. Recent discourse-oriented studies conceptualize tourism language as a form of strategic rhetoric in which linguistic choices guide interpretation, legitimize destinations, and stimulate desire (Koller, 2021). Rather than relying solely on promotional adjectives, persuasive discourse operates through interacting resources such as evaluation, narrative framing, emotional appeal, and credibility-building information. Scholars increasingly emphasize that persuasion in tourism discourse must be understood as a contextual and culturally embedded practice, where meaning emerges from the interaction of linguistic strategies within specific communicative settings. This perspective provides the conceptual foundation for examining how such strategies are realized within digital tourism genres, particularly official websites.

## 2.2 Tourism Websites as Digital Promotional Genres

Digital tourism websites have become key sites for destination image construction, functioning as hybrid genres that integrate information, promotion, and storytelling. Recent research highlights that websites differ from traditional promotional media by enabling multimodal orchestration, interactive navigation, and audience-directed pathways through hyperlinks and calls-to-action (Bateman, 2020; Li, Pearce, & Morrison, 2023). Studies of official tourism websites show that institutional actors strategically align language and visuals to frame destinations as authentic, accessible, and emotionally appealing. However, much of this research remains descriptive, focusing on isolated features rather than explaining how persuasive strategies collectively operate to construct destination image in a systematic way. This gap points to the need for a discourse-based approach that connects textual strategies with broader processes of destination image construction.

## 2.3 Destination Image and Place Branding through Discourse

Contemporary tourism research increasingly views destination image as discursively constructed rather than passively reflected. Recent studies emphasize that language and narrative play a constitutive role in shaping the cognitive and affective dimensions of destination image, particularly within official promotional texts (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2021). Place branding scholarship similarly positions discourse as a central mechanism through which destinations articulate identity, values, and differentiation strategies in competitive tourism markets. Despite this theoretical convergence, few studies explicitly connect micro-level persuasive strategies such as evaluative language and affective expressions to macro-level branding outcomes such as authenticity, emotional attachment, and cultural distinctiveness. Accordingly, this study seeks to bridge this gap by demonstrating how localized linguistic choices contribute to the construction of destination image and branding in digital contexts.

## 2.4 Vernacular and Affective Language in Tourism Promotion

Recent tourism discourse studies highlight affect as a critical dimension of persuasion, noting that emotional resonance often precedes rational evaluation in travel decision-making (Molz, 2022). However, this body of research has predominantly focused on globally legible emotional appeals expressed in dominant languages, thereby overlooking the nuanced role of vernacular affective expressions. In Southeast Asian contexts, for example, affective rhetoric is frequently embedded in local linguistic and cultural practices. In Javanese tourism discourse, expressions such as *“ayem,”* *“adem,”* and *“ramah”* convey not only comfort but also culturally specific values of harmony and social warmth. Similarly, Balinese tourism promotion often employs affective expressions linked to *“taksu”* (spiritual charisma) and *“keramahtamahan”* to evoke emotional and cultural authenticity. These examples suggest that vernacular affective language functions not merely as decorative elements but as culturally grounded persuasive resources that shape how destinations are experienced and imagined. Emerging work suggests that culturally specific expressions can function as powerful symbolic resources, conveying authenticity, intimacy, and belonging in tourism promotion. However, the rhetorical functions of such vernacular affective expressions and their interaction with broader persuasive strategies remain under theorized, particularly in the context of official tourism websites. Therefore, this study extends existing

literature by systematically examining how vernacular affective language operates within a broader persuasive discourse framework in a Southeast Asian context.

## **2.5 Indonesian Regional Tourism Websites and Digital Promotion**

Over the past decade, Indonesian tourism research has increasingly addressed digital promotion, including social media, websites, and mobile applications (Utami & Indriani, 2018; Putra & Nurhadi, 2022). These studies demonstrate that digital platforms are instrumental in disseminating official tourism narratives and promoting regional destinations. However, scholarly attention has largely focused on national branding campaigns or commercial platforms, with relatively limited focus on regional government–managed tourism websites.

Where regional portals are examined, analyses often prioritize content themes or marketing effectiveness rather than detailed linguistic and rhetorical strategies. Moreover, the strategic use of vernacular language in regional tourism websites, particularly affective expressions tied to local identity, has received minimal systematic analysis. This gap is significant, given that regional portals frequently aim to balance cultural authenticity with broader accessibility, making them ideal sites for examining localized persuasive discourse. This context underscores the importance of investigating regional tourism websites as sites where global and local discursive strategies intersect.

## **2.6 Research Gap and Positioning of the Present Study**

Synthesizing the literature reveals three key gaps. First, existing studies rarely integrate persuasive linguistic strategies into a coherent discourse-based model explaining how they collectively construct destination image. Second, regional government tourism websites remain underexplored compared to national or commercial platforms. Third, the persuasive role of vernacular affective language has not been systematically examined within digital tourism discourse. Positioned at the intersection of these gaps, the present study analyzes the Dolan Banyumas tourism website as a case of localized digital place branding. By examining how evaluative language, rhetorical appeals, narrative framing, and vernacular affective expressions interact in official promotional discourse, this study advances tourism discourse and applied linguistics while demonstrating how local cultural values can be embedded strategically in digital tourism promotion. Therefore, the study offers a more integrated and context-sensitive understanding of persuasive discourse in regional tourism promotion.

## **3. Research Method**

### **3.1 Data Source and Data Collection**

This study uses textual data from the Dolan Banyumas tourism website, the official digital platform managed by the Banyumas Regency Government for regional tourism promotion. Official tourism websites have been widely recognized as authoritative discursive spaces where institutional actors construct destination image and branding narratives (Li, Pearce, & Morrison, 2023). The Dolan Banyumas website was selected because it foregrounds localized persuasive language, making it suitable for examining culturally embedded tourism discourse.

The data consists of six promotional texts from various sections of the website, including homepage narratives, destination descriptions, cultural content, and calls-to-

action. The researchers systematically mapped the website structure, identified sections with explicit promotional intent, and manually extracted relevant textual materials. Visual elements such as images and layout were used to contextualize textual meaning and interpret persuasive alignment, but they were not subjected to independent multimodal analysis, in line with recent discourse-based studies of tourism websites that prioritize textual persuasion while acknowledging visual support (Hiippala & Bateman, 2020).

### 3.2 Analytical Procedure

The study employed qualitative discourse analysis to examine how persuasive language operates in digital tourism promotion. Discourse analysis is increasingly used in tourism studies to explore how language constructs meaning, identity, and destination image in online environments (Marine-Roig, 2021; Pizzo, 2021). The researchers coded the texts for key persuasive linguistic features, including evaluative lexis, affective expressions, modality, metaphors, and vernacular terms. These features were then grouped into broader rhetorical strategies such as emotional appeal, credibility construction, rational justification, and narrative framing.

The analysis was conducted across three interconnected levels. At the micro level, the study examined specific linguistic choices and affective expressions. At the meso level, these features were analysed as part of persuasive strategies and recurring rhetorical patterns. At the macro level, the study interpreted how these strategies function discursively to construct destination image dimensions such as authenticity, emotional attachment, and cultural distinctiveness in relation to digital place branding (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2021; Govers & Go, 2024). Through iterative comparison and synthesis, recurring patterns were consolidated into a discourse-based model of persuasive linguistic strategies in tourism website promotion. To enhance the trustworthiness of the analysis, the coding process involved iterative checking and peer debriefing among researchers to ensure consistency and interpretive reliability. Emerging categories and interpretations were continuously reviewed and refined to minimize subjectivity and strengthen analytical validity.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Results

#### 4.1.1 Emotional and Experiential Persuasion as the Core Strategy

The analysis showed that emotional appeal constitutes the primary persuasive strategy in the Dolan Banyumas tourism website. Promotional texts are dominated by positive evaluative lexis that foreground pleasure, serenity, freshness, and emotional satisfaction. Adjectives and descriptive phrases repeatedly emphasize natural beauty, calm atmosphere, and affective rewards, encouraging readers to associate Banyumas with emotional well-being rather than physical attractions. For example, phrases such as *“suasana yang sejuk dan menyenangkan”* and *“tempat yang cocok untuk melepas penat”* illustrate how emotional comfort is foregrounded as a key attraction.

Experiential persuasion is further enhanced through narrative positioning that places readers within the imagined travel experience. The frequent use of second-person address and inclusive expressions implicitly invites audiences to envision themselves enjoying the destinations. This linguistic positioning transforms the promotional text into an experiential simulation, allowing readers to emotionally pre-experience the destination before actual

visitation. For instance, expressions such as *“Anda dapat menikmati keindahan alam yang masih asri”* directly position the reader within the experience.

From a discourse perspective, this strategy aligns with recent tourism communication studies that emphasize affective engagement as a key determinant of destination attractiveness in digital environments (Koller, 2021; Pan & Ryan, 2023). Rather than relying on factual persuasion, the Dolan Banyumas website privileges emotional resonance as the central mechanism for influencing audience perception.

#### **4.1.2 Reassurance, Safety, and Accessibility as Persuasive Support**

Alongside emotional appeal, the website consistently deploys reassurance-oriented strategies to mitigate potential visitor uncertainty. Textual references to accessibility, infrastructure, facilities, and organized management function as implicit guarantees of comfort and safety. These elements are not presented through overt argumentation but are woven subtly into descriptive narratives. For example, phrases such as *“lokasi mudah dijangkau”* and *“tersedia fasilitas yang memadai”* signal accessibility and preparedness without disrupting the promotional tone.

This strategy reflects a pragmatic balance between desire and feasibility. While emotional appeal stimulates interest, reassurance strategies reduce perceived travel risk, a factor increasingly emphasized in post-pandemic tourism discourse (Zenker & Kock, 2020; Neuburger & Egger, 2021). By foregrounding accessibility without diminishing emotional appeal, the discourse constructs Banyumas as both inviting and manageable.

Importantly, reassurance functions discursively at the meso level by stabilizing emotional persuasion. The coexistence of affective attraction and rational reassurance strengthens persuasive coherence, ensuring that emotional desire is supported by perceived practicality.

#### **4.1.3 Vernacular Affective Expressions and Cultural Embeddedness**

A salient and distinctive finding of this study is the strategic use of vernacular affective expressions, particularly *ngangeni* and *mbetaih*. These terms encapsulate culturally specific emotional meanings longing, comfort, and familiarity that cannot be fully translated into standard Indonesian or English equivalents. For instance, the phrase *“suasana Banyumas yang ngangeni”* conveys a sense of emotional attachment that goes beyond simple enjoyment.

Rather than serving as decorative local color, these expressions operate as high-density affective signifiers. Their persuasive force lies in their symbolic function as markers of authenticity and emotional depth. By embedding vernacular language within official promotional discourse, the website bridges institutional authority and local cultural intimacy.

This finding extends recent research on authenticity and affect in tourism discourse, which argues that localized linguistic resources enhance emotional credibility and cultural legitimacy (Su et al., 2021; Giorgi & Vaccaro, 2022). In the Dolan Banyumas context, vernacular expressions function as a discursive shortcut to emotional attachment, reinforcing place identity while maintaining accessibility for broader audiences.

#### **4.1.4 Intertextual and Narrative Framing of Destination Identity**

The analysis also identifies narrative framing as a key persuasive mechanism. Promotional texts often construct Banyumas as a space of return, emotional renewal, and

cultural continuity. This framing implicitly connects tourism experience with memory, belonging, and personal restoration. For example, expressions such as “*tempat untuk kembali merasakan ketenangan*” highlight the theme of emotional return.

Intertextually, the discourse draws upon shared cultural knowledge and collective emotional schemas, positioning Banyumas as both a physical destination and an affective space. Such framing aligns with contemporary place-branding research that highlights storytelling as a central strategy in destination image construction (Pera et al., 2022; Tasci & Uslu, 2023).

#### 4.1.5 A Multi-Level Discourse-Based Model of Persuasive Tourism Communication

Synthesizing these findings, this study proposes a three layer discourse based model of persuasive tourism communication:

1. Micro level: linguistic resources, including evaluative adjectives, affective expressions, modality, pronouns, and vernacular terms;
2. Meso level: rhetorical strategies such as emotional appeal, experiential narration, reassurance, and narrative framing;
3. Macro level: destination image construction, encompassing authenticity, emotional attachment, accessibility, and cultural distinctiveness.

Vernacular affective expressions play a pivotal mediating role within this model, connecting micro-level linguistic choices to macro-level place identity formation. This integrative model demonstrates how persuasion in digital tourism discourse emerges from the interaction of language, culture, and promotional intent.

#### 4.2 Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that persuasive tourism discourse on digital platforms primarily operates through affective and experiential mechanisms, rather than informational persuasion alone. The dominance of emotional and experiential appeals on the Dolan Banyumas website reflects a broader shift in digital tourism communication, where destinations are marketed as emotional experiences and affective spaces instead of merely geographic locations. Evaluative lexis, second-person address, and experiential narratives work together to simulate pre-visit emotional engagement, allowing potential tourists to inhabit the destination before arrival imaginatively. In this respect, examples such as “*menenangkan*” and “*melepas penat*” illustrate how emotional experience is foregrounded in discourse. This supports recent studies emphasizing that emotional resonance is a central driver of destination image formation and travel intention in online environments (Koller, 2021; Pan & Ryan, 2023). Importantly, the Banyumas case demonstrates that emotional persuasion does not function in isolation but is discursively stabilized by reassurance-oriented language related to accessibility and comfort, thereby reducing perceived travel risk while maintaining affective appeal—a balance increasingly recognized as crucial in post-pandemic tourism communication (Neuburger & Egger, 2021; Tasci & Uslu, 2023).

A key theoretical contribution of this study lies in its analysis of vernacular affective expressions as strategic persuasive resources within official tourism discourse. The use of culturally embedded terms such as *ngangeni* and *mbetaih* illustrates how localized

emotional language can function as high-impact affective markers that condense complex emotional meanings into culturally recognizable symbols. The finding that *ngangeni* functions as a marker of emotional authenticity further reinforces the role of affective lexis in shaping imagined experience. Rather than weakening communicative clarity, these expressions enhance emotional credibility and perceived authenticity by indexing local identity and collective cultural memory. This finding extends existing research on authenticity in tourism discourse, which has largely focused on visual symbolism and narrative storytelling (Su et al., 2021; Giorgi & Vaccaro, 2022), by foregrounding the role of vernacular affective lexis as a linguistic mechanism for authenticity construction. In this context, vernacular language mediates between institutional authority and local intimacy, enabling a government-managed tourism platform to communicate persuasively without adopting overly standardized or generic promotional discourse.

At a broader discursive level, the interaction between micro-level linguistic features, meso-level rhetorical strategies, and macro-level destination image functions reveals how place branding emerges as a multilayered semiotic process. Micro-level affective choices and vernacular expressions are strategically organized into meso-level persuasive strategies such as emotional appeal, reassurance, and narrative framing, which collectively contribute to macro-level constructions of authenticity, emotional attachment, and cultural distinctiveness. This integrative perspective advances current destination branding frameworks by demonstrating that affective language is not merely ornamental but constitutive of place identity in digital tourism promotion (Pera et al., 2022; Pan & Ryan, 2023). By articulating these relationships through a discourse-based analytical model, the study offers a transferable framework for analyzing how regional tourism destinations negotiate global visibility and local identity through language.

## 5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the Dolan Banyumas tourism website achieves persuasion through an integrated use of affective language, experiential narration, reassurance strategies, and vernacular affective expressions. Together, these strategies construct a destination image that is emotionally resonant, accessible, and culturally distinctive, encouraging audiences to form personal and affective connections with Banyumas.

This study contributes theoretically by proposing a discourse-based model that links micro-level linguistic resources, meso-level rhetorical strategies, and macro-level destination image construction in digital tourism promotion. Methodologically, it offers a qualitative discourse-analytic framework that can be applied to the study of tourism websites and official promotional platforms. Practically, the findings highlight the strategic value of embedding local affective language into digital place branding, providing insights for regional tourism authorities seeking to promote destinations without losing cultural specificity.

However, this study is limited to a single regional tourism website and focuses primarily on textual analysis, which may not fully capture the multimodal and audience dimensions of digital communication. Future research could expand this discourse-based model by incorporating multimodal analysis and audience-response data to examine how visitors interpret vernacular affective language across different tourism contexts. Comparative studies across regions or countries would also provide a broader understanding of how local and global discursive strategies interact.

Overall, this study presents the role of language as a central semiotic resource in tourism promotion and offers a forward-looking contribution to discourse analysis and digital tourism communication by emphasizing the importance of culturally grounded persuasive strategies in an increasingly globalized digital landscape.

## References

- Bateman, J.A. (2008). Multimodality and genre: A foundation for the systematic analysis of multimodal documents. *Routledge*. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230582323>
- Chauhan, H. (2021). The role of cultural & heritage destination branding in the economic development of Jaunsar Bawar: A tribal region of Himalayas. *The Journal of Contemporary Issues in Business and Government*, 27(2), 1820–1827. Retrieved from <https://cibgp.com/index.php/1323-6903/article/view/1086>
- Giorgi, S., & Vaccaro, A. (2022). Place branding and authenticity in digital tourism communication. *Journal of Business Research*, 144, 125–135.
- Govers, R., & Go, F. M. (2024). *Place branding: Glocal, virtual and physical identities, constructed, imagined and experienced*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hiippala, T., & Bateman, S. (2020). *Multimodality: Foundations, research and analysis: A problem-oriented introduction*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429448891>
- Marine-Roig, E. (2021). Measuring destination image through travel reviews in social media platforms. *Sustainability*, 9(8), 1425. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su9081425>
- Kavaratzis, M., & Hatch, M. J. (2021). The dynamics of place brands: An identity-based approach to place branding theory. *Sage Journals*, 13(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470593112467268>
- Koller, V. (2018). Discursive constructions of tourism destinations: A multimodal perspective. *Journal of Language and Tourism*, 9(1), 23–40.
- Li, X., Pearce, P. L., & Morrison, A. M. (2023). Online destination image formation: A discourse-based perspective. *Tourism Management*, 60(3), 280-297. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2016.12.012>
- Molz, J.G. (2022). Attuning to affect and emotion in tourism studies. *Tourism Geographies*, 24(2-3):187-197. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2021.2012714>
- Neuburger, L., & Egger, R. (2021). Travel risk perception and tourism communication. *Journal of Travel Research*, 60(4), 753–766.
- Pan, S., & Ryan, C. (2023). Emotional engagement and destination image formation in online tourism promotion. *Tourism Management*, 94, 104657.
- Pera, R., Viglia, G., & Furlan, R. (2022). Storytelling and place attachment in destination branding. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 23, 100675.
- Pizzo, A. (2021). Emotional appeal and narrative persuasion in tourism communication. *Discourse, Context & Media*, 41, 100503. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2021.100503>
- Putra, D. A., & Nurhadi, Z. F. (2022). Digital tourism promotion and destination branding in Indonesia. *Jurnal Komunikasi*, 14(2), 155–170. <https://doi.org/10.24912/jk.v14i2.18765>
- Su, L., Huang, S., & Pearce, J. (2021). Toward a model of destination authenticity. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 88, 103179.
- Tasci, A. D. A., & Uslu, A. (2023). Narrative-based destination branding in the digital era. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 47, 101058.

- Utami, S., & Indriani, S. S. (2018). Government tourism websites and destination branding in Indonesia. *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*, 15(1), 45–60. <https://doi.org/10.24002/jik.v15i1.1456>
- Zein, T. T., Afdal, T., & Maharani, P. (2025). Framing paradise online: A multimodal discourse analysis of destination narratives on france travel website. *LingPoet: Journal of Linguistics and Literary Research*, 6(3), 164–172. Retrieved from <https://talenta.usu.ac.id/lingpoet/article/view/22682>
- Zenker, S., & Braun, E. (2017). Questioning a “one size fits all” city brand: Developing a branded house strategy for place brand management. *Journal of Place Management and Development*, 10(3), 270–287. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPMD-04-2016-0018>