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English in Cultural Tourism Advertising: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Bali's Official Tourism Website

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how the Bali Tourism Department's English-language website mediates cultural representation for global audiences. Through qualitative critical discourse analysis, it investigates three interconnected dimensions including selective cultural highlighting, identifying which Balinese traditions are foregrounded or omitted; persuasive linguistic framing, analysing how emotive lexis, imperatives, and exoticizing metaphors reconstruct authenticity; and implied tourist identity, revealing whose cultural knowledge is privileged through translation choices. Findings expose tensions between market-driven commodification and cultural integrity, demonstrating how English functions as a hegemonic filter that simplifies complex traditions into consumable experiences. The research contributes to sustainable tourism discourse by advocating for ethically informed digital marketing strategies that centre Balinese voices and resist reductive stereotyping. Recommendations address post-pandemic tourism recovery priorities, including platform localization and audience-inclusive content design.

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1. Introduction

Bali's economy and cultural identity are inextricably linked to tourism, with the island attracting millions of international visitors annually through strategic destination branding. The Bali Tourism Department website serves as the primary digital gateway for potential visitors, functioning as both informational resource and persuasive cultural ambassador. In the post-pandemic recovery phase, digital platforms have become critically important for destination marketing, with studies confirming that over 80% of tourists rely on online media when planning trips to Balinese villages and cultural sites (Subadra & Hughes, 2021). This digital prominence elevates the website's role beyond mere practicality into the realm of cultural representation, where linguistic choices carry significant implications for how Balinese identity is packaged for global consumption (Subadra, 2024). The convergence of tourism promotion, cultural preservation, and digital communication creates a complex discursive space where language functions as both bridge and filter.

Furthermore, the predominance of English in international tourism is well-established, functioning as the default communication medium that bridges linguistic divides between diverse tourist populations and host communities. Its global dominance stems from historical precedents, media influence, and educational policies that collectively establish English as the industry's operational language from booking systems to hospitality services. However, this linguistic convenience comes with cultural consequences. When destinations like Bali employ English for

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cultural promotion, they engage in a complex process of cultural translation that inevitably reshapes local concepts for foreign understanding. Research indicates that tourism advertising language prioritizes emotional resonance and accessibility through direct imperatives and sensory vocabulary, often at the expense of cultural nuance (Sulaiman & Wilson, 2018; Chen, 2024). This tension between communicative effectiveness and cultural fidelity establishes the foundational urgency for examining Bali's digital promotional discourse.

English serves as the indispensable operational support of Bali's tourism ecosystem, functioning across multiple dimensions with profound cultural consequences (Widiastuti et al., 2021). As the primary language of digital access, English dominates official platforms like the Bali Tourism Department website, where it shapes international visitors' expectations before they even set foot on the island. This linguistic gateway extends into on-the-ground experience facilitation, enabling service delivery across hotels, tours, and emergency communications (Thongphut & Kaur, 2023). Yet beyond mere functionality, English actively mediates tourists' cultural interpretation during their visits, reframing local realities through an external linguistic lens (Zeng, 2023). Most critically, English operates as a tool of market persuasion deploying emotive vocabulary and strategic framing techniques that distill Balinese heritage into marketable narratives. This commodification process filters complex cultural traditions through commercially viable tropes, often privileging exoticism over authenticity. Simultaneously, English creates a cross-cultural negotiation space where diverse global tourists engage with Balinese communities (Verzella & Tommaso, 2014). While enabling communication, this "third space" demands constant cultural translation, where sacred concepts like Tri Hita Karana (Balinese philosophy of harmony) risk reduction to tourist-friendly soundbites. The tension between these operational necessities and cultural consequences underlines the urgency of examining how Bali's official promotions navigate this complex terrain where language doesn't merely describe culture, but actively reconstructs it for global consumption (Cavanaugh & Shankar, 2014).

Despite extensive research on tourism discourse, significant gaps persist in understanding how official destination marketing organizations strategically deploy English to navigate cultural representation. While content analyses reveal that Bali's tourism websites emphasize visual aesthetics and interactive features (Salim, 2018; Chan et al., 2021), there is insufficient examination of which cultural elements are systematically foregrounded or suppressed in English-language content. Research on comparative tourism websites indicates Bali prioritizes destination visualization differently than other Indonesian provinces, but fails to interrogate the cultural curation behind these choices. The website functions as a cultural filter where complex traditions like Balinese Hinduism, village rituals (banjar), and spiritual practices undergo simplification for tourist consumption. Studies on Uzbek tourism advertising reveal similar patterns where cultural pride is emphasized while complex historical narratives are streamlined, suggesting a widespread phenomenon requiring Bali-specific investigation (Fayzullaev et al., 2021; Diyorovich, S2025).

Additionally, linguistic research identifies emotive lexis and sensory language as universal features of tourism discourse, but neglects to examine how these persuasive techniques reconstruct cultural authenticity. English-language texts globally employ superlatives ("most sacred," "unforgettable"), imperatives ("discover," "immerse yourself"), and exoticizing metaphors that transform living culture into consumable experiences. The German-English comparative study reveals that English advertising favors dynamic syntax and informal tone reflecting low-context communication preferences, but doesn't explore how these linguistic preferences might reshape Balinese cultural narratives. This gap is critical because framing devices construct what counts as "authentic" experience for tourists—a construction with real-world impacts on cultural preservation.

Although translation studies acknowledge cultural realia (culture-specific concepts) as persistent challenges, Bali's strategies for bridging these gaps remain unexamined. Research indicates that tourism translations frequently employ modulation techniques and descriptive explanations to handle untranslatable concepts, but whether Bali's website uses these methods effectively requires investigation. Crucially, the website's English content implicitly constructs an idealized tourist identity with specific knowledge, interests, and values. Cross-cultural analyses reveal that English texts assume greater global familiarity than Uzbek counterparts, which prioritize contextual richness, suggesting Bali might similarly privilege certain tourist demographics through linguistic

choices. This raises questions about inclusivity and whether translation strategies serve primarily commercial rather than cultural goals.

The timing of this investigation coincides with Bali's post-pandemic tourism rebuilding, where digital marketing strategies are being intensively leveraged for recovery. Current studies on Bali's digital promotion focus predominantly on technical effectiveness (website functionality, social media reach) while overlooking the cultural implications of linguistic choices. This gap is alarming given findings that tourism advertising fundamentally shapes visitor expectations and on-ground behavior. Without critical examination, the English translations circulating through Bali's primary promotional channels risk perpetuating cultural commodification where sacred traditions become consumable products and spiritual landscapes become Instagram backdrops.

Furthermore, Bali's unique position as a Hindu-majority region within Muslim-majority Indonesia creates layered cultural identity politics. Official translations must navigate not only foreign tourist expectations but also domestic cultural sensitivities. Studies of Bali TV's pandemic-era broadcasting reveal strategic messaging designed to generate tourism optimism, suggesting similar discursive strategies may operate on the website. The research proposed here addresses these urgent concerns by applying critical discourse analysis to the linguistic mechanisms shaping Bali's global cultural image. By exposing how selection, framing, and translation operate within the tourism department's English content, this study contributes to more ethically informed destination marketing that balances promotional effectiveness with cultural integrity—a balance essential for sustainable tourism futures.

While existing scholarship illuminates broad patterns in tourism discourse—such as the tendency of destination websites to prioritize aesthetic appeal over cultural depth and the documented prevalence of emotive language in English promotions compared to other languages—critical gaps persist in understanding Bali's unique cultural mediation strategies. International studies confirm that tourism platforms systematically employ linguistic framing devices (superlatives, imperatives, sensory vocabulary) to construct marketable experiences, yet how these techniques specifically reconfigure Balinese concepts of "authenticity" remains unexplored. Similarly, while translation theory recognizes modulation techniques as solutions for untranslatable cultural realia (*adat*, *tri hita karana*), the ethical consequences of such adaptations in Bali's official English texts - what sacred meanings are distorted or erased in translation demand rigorous investigation. Compounding these omissions, research reveals that tourism English implicitly codes assumed tourist knowledge, but fails to identify which visitor demographics (luxury seekers, spiritual pilgrims, backpackers) are privileged or excluded by Bali's linguistic choices. This confluence of unresolved questions—which cultural elements are curated or silenced; how persuasive language reframes spiritual traditions; whose gaze the translations ultimately serve—exposes a significant scholarly void. Without addressing these Bali-specific gaps, the island risks perpetuating reductive cultural commodification where sacred practices become consumable products and linguistic convenience overrides representational integrity.

This research directly addresses these gaps through systematic analysis of how Bali's official tourism authority navigates the inherent tensions between cultural authenticity and market demands in its English-language representations. The findings will provide actionable insights for DMOs seeking to balance promotional effectiveness with cultural responsibility in an increasingly globalized digital landscape.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Selective Cultural Highlighting: Curating Balinese Identity

The notion of selective cultural highlighting can be situated within the broader theoretical framework of cultural commodification and representation in postcolonial and tourism studies. Tourism often constructs and consumes "staged authenticity," wherein local cultures are reconfigured to align with external expectations and economic imperatives (MacCannell, 2018; Bargenda, 2024; Subadra, 2024). This process reflects a power asymmetry in which host communities must negotiate the tension between cultural preservation and market demands. In Bali, the commodification of selective traditions results not only in the recontextualisation of heritage as a visual commodity but also in the marginalisation of cultural elements that resist easy consumption. The epistemological implications are significant: when intangible cultural values are overlooked in favour of performative

and photogenic representations, the knowledge systems embedded in rituals, cosmologies, and communal practices are delegitimised. This selective visibility underscores the politics of representation in global tourism, raising critical questions about who defines cultural value, and for whom.

Tourism advertising operates not merely as a promotional mechanism, but as a powerful cultural filter that selectively amplifies certain elements of local culture while marginalising or excluding others (Morgan & Pritchard, 2012; Zhang et al., 2025). In the case of Bali, this curatorial process is evident in the systematic elevation of visually appealing and performative traditions such as temple ceremonies, traditional dance performances, and colourful processions; while more abstract, philosophically embedded frameworks are notably underrepresented. For example, *Tri Hita Karana*, the indigenous Balinese cosmology that emphasises the harmonious relationship between humans, nature, and the divine, is often absent from mainstream promotional narratives due to its conceptual complexity and limited visual immediacy (Subadra, 2025).

Similarly, the *subak* irrigation system which is a UNESCO-recognised socio-religious practice rooted in communal values and spiritual cooperation is frequently reduced in tourism marketing to picturesque imagery, stripped of its epistemological and ritual significance (Subadra, 2022). This form of selective cultural highlighting reflects broader global tourism patterns in which ontological depth and socio-cultural authenticity are sacrificed for visual spectacle and commercial appeal. As a result, living traditions risk being commodified into digestible and exoticised symbols, reinforcing reductive representations of Balinese identity. Such practices not only distort the island's rich cultural landscape but also contribute to a form of symbolic erosion, whereby meaningful cultural systems are supplanted by aestheticised and market-driven interpretations.

2.2. Persuasive Linguistic Framing: Constructing Marketable Authenticity

Tourism promotion employs deliberate linguistic strategies to construct cultural authenticity for market consumption. Drawing on discourse theory and critical linguistics (Jaworski, 2014; Fowler & Kress, 2018; Wodak, 2022), this framing demonstrates how language actively shapes social reality rather than neutrally describing it. In Bali's tourism advertising, key techniques include imperative constructions ("Immerse yourself"), sensory metaphors ("Breathe in sacred energy"), and emotionally charged adjectives ("ancient," "enchanted," "timeless"). Collectively, these form a romanticizing semiotic system that essentializes Balinese culture. This discourse obscures the dynamic, evolving nature of local traditions, presenting them instead as static, consumable experiences designed for touristic pleasure. Consequently, authenticity shifts from an emic expression rooted in community practice to a curated affective experience tailored to global tourist expectations.

This linguistic strategy is intrinsically linked to the commodification of authenticity (Heller et al., 2014; Heller et al., 2018). Advertising promotes "constructive authenticity" by manipulating cultural signifiers to simulate genuineness, regardless of lived realities. For example, framing the *subak* ritual as "mystical" or "eternal" strategically detaches it from its tangible roles in land stewardship, water governance, and social cooperation. This disconnection serves the dual purpose of making culture palatable for consumption while flattening its inherent epistemological and ethical complexity. Thus, the tourist encounter with Bali is mediated by a rhetorical performance that privileges spectacle over substance and sentiment over structural understanding.

The analysis of language styles further reveals how directive discourse cultivates performative tourist engagement (Maci, 2020; Zokirovna, 2024). Such phrasing positions tourists as protagonists in a pre-scripted exotic narrative. By prioritizing emotional resonance over contextual accuracy such as labeling *subak* as "timeless" these linguistic choices actively reconstruct authenticity to align with market logics (Subadra, 2024). Ultimately, persuasive framing transforms culture into an emotionally driven commodity, where the tourist's feeling of authenticity supersedes its socio-cultural depth.

2.3. Implied Tourist Identity: Audience Targeting and Exclusion

In Bali's tourism discourse, the predominance of English functions not only as a communicative bridge but also as a mechanism of selective inclusion (Thurlow & Jaworski, 2011). While English facilitates global accessibility, particularly for tourists from Western countries, it also implicitly constructs a narrow image of the 'ideal' or 'implied' tourist (Wilson, 2018; Akram, 2024). Given that tourism contributes approximately 80% to Bali's GDP, the linguistic strategies adopted in promotional materials are calibrated to appeal to a global, affluent demographic typically Western, educated, and proficient in English. This linguistic targeting becomes evident through textual choices that reflect globalised aspirations, such as references to "luxury getaways", "exclusive villas", and "spiritual retreats", often with little to no contextualisation of their meanings within Balinese cosmology or everyday life.

Untranslated Balinese terms such as *pura* (temple) or *banjar* (local community organisation) are frequently used without accompanying explanations, assuming a level of cultural literacy or curiosity that aligns with an elite, cosmopolitan audience. Such omissions may alienate non-Western tourists or budget-conscious travellers who may neither identify with these representations nor have access to the cultural capital needed to decode them. Furthermore, these linguistic practices contribute to the marginalisation of local voices, as they are not designed for or reflective of Balinese perspectives (Taylor & Sutton, 2016; Catedral & Djuraeva, 2023). Indigenous narratives are often filtered or flattened to accommodate the preferences and expectations of an external audience.

This dynamic reflects what scholars have termed linguistic hegemony, wherein one language and by extension, the culture and worldview it represents dominates the communicative space, thereby reinforcing existing power asymmetries (Eriksen, 1992; Suarez, 2002; Reagan, 2018; Rodriguez-Mojica et al., 2019). In this context, the 'implied tourist' effectively becomes a co-author of Bali's cultural representation, with greater influence than local stakeholders. As a result, the portrayal of Balinese culture in tourism marketing is shaped more by the tastes, assumptions, and desires of the global North than by the lived realities and aspirations of the Balinese people themselves. These perspectives underscore the intricate interplay between language, culture, and commerce in Bali's tourism industry. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing more culturally sensitive and ethically grounded tourism communication strategies.

3. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research approach to explore how language is used in the promotion of cultural tourism in Bali to understand the meaning of the existing phenomena (Subadra, 2025). The focus was on analysing the linguistic and visual representations featured on the official website of the Bali Tourism Department. As a secondary data source, the website provided both textual content and accompanying images that reflect how Bali's cultural identity is marketed to international audiences.

The data collection process involved systematically extracting relevant texts such as promotional narratives, descriptions of tourist attractions, and campaign slogans as well as associated visual elements that appeared on key webpages. These materials were selected based on their relevance to cultural tourism and their prominence within the website's structure. The data were analysed using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase method. Initial familiarisation with the content was followed by the generation of initial codes, which were then collated into broader themes. These themes captured patterns related to linguistic strategies, cultural representation, and the presence or absence of indigenous Balinese values such as *Tri Hita Karana* (Subadra, 2021). Particular attention was paid to the ways language constructs tourist expectations and how cultural elements are commodified or simplified in the digital space.

4. Discussion

This study focuses on three key dimensions of English-language advertising featured on the Bali Tourism Department's website: selective cultural highlighting, persuasive linguistic framing, and implied tourist identity. These dimensions are examined through an analysis of three specific advertising captions "Welcome to the Island of God," "Welcome to Bali – where Journey Supports Sustainable Destination," and "We Love Bali Movement" as discussed in the following sections.

4.1. Analytical Discussion of "Welcome to the Island of God"

The opening salutation, "Welcome to the island of god," on the Bali Tourism Department website constitutes a sophisticated discursive strategy that shapes the island's identity for prospective visitors (Figure 1). This analysis reveals its operation through three interconnected dimensions: selective cultural highlighting, persuasive linguistic framing, and the implication of a specific tourist identity.

Primarily, the phrase engages in selective cultural highlighting. It foregrounds Bali's association with Balinese Hinduism and its spiritual essence ("god") as the island's defining characteristic. This selective representation elevates the sacred, ancient, and mystical aspects while simultaneously marginalizing other significant realities. Contemporary complexities such as rapid urbanization, mass tourism infrastructure, economic disparities, the cultural diversity within Bali (including non-Hindu communities and modern artistic expressions), and the nuanced polytheistic and animist roots of Balinese Hinduism itself are obscured. This simplification commodifies spirituality, presenting a romanticized, exoticized vision of "timeless tradition" tailored to appeal to a Western tourist seeking perceived authenticity, effectively rendering a complex cultural and social landscape into a marketable essence.

Figure 1. Welcome to the Island of God



Secondly, the phrase employs powerful persuasive linguistic framing to construct a compelling destination image. The term "Welcome" functions as an active gesture of hospitality and inclusion, positioning Bali as a welcoming actor rather than a passive location. The core metaphor, "the island of god," is profoundly persuasive: it sacralizes the geographical space, transforming Bali into a consecrated destination uniquely blessed or divine. This framing imbues the island with an aura of mystique, uniqueness, and otherworldly beauty, promising an experience transcending ordinary tourism. It implicitly elevates Bali above competing destinations, justifying its appeal and potential premium by tapping directly into deep-seated emotional and aspirational desires for transcendence, peace, and connection with the numinous, rather than focusing on rational factors like amenities or cost.

Consequently, this selective highlighting and persuasive framing work synergistically to construct an implied tourist identity. The direct address "Welcome" positions the tourist as an honored and desired guest. The emphasis on the sacred ("island of god") implicitly invites tourists to self-identify as spiritual seekers or pilgrims, motivated by a quest for inner peace or connection, rather than mere leisure or hedonism. Gaining access to this rarefied space suggests privilege and discernment, constructing the tourist as a worthy and exclusive insider. Furthermore, the sacred framing implicitly demands the role of a reverent observer, encouraging respectful behaviour and appreciation of Balinese spirituality, thus subtly discouraging identification with mass tourism practices often associated with disruption or cultural insensitivity. This idealized identity, however, presents an aspirational image that may contrast sharply with the on-the-ground realities of mass tourism.

The statement "Welcome to the island of god" is thus a masterful act of destination branding. It strategically selects and simplifies Bali's cultural and spiritual complexity into a potent, marketable core. Through carefully chosen language and metaphor, it persuasively constructs Bali as a uniquely sacred, welcoming, and transcendent paradise. Simultaneously, it interpellates the prospective tourist, offering them an appealing identity as a privileged, spiritually-minded, and respectful guest. While highly effective in attracting visitors seeking transformative experiences, this discursive strategy inherently involves commodification, cultural simplification, and the potential perpetuation of neo-colonial narratives framing the "East" as a site of timeless mysticism. It represents not merely an invitation, but a powerful interpretive lens through which Bali is presented for global consumption, inevitably creating a potential dissonance between the marketed ideal and the multifaceted realities experienced by both tourists and residents.

4.2. Analytical Discussion of "Welcome to the Island of God – Where Journey Supports Sustainable Destination"

The Bali Tourism Department's campaign slogan, "Welcome to Bali - where journey supports sustainable destination", strategically deployed alongside the implementation of the Foreign Tourist Levy (Regulation of the Governor of Bali Province Number 6 of 2023), functions as a sophisticated discursive mechanism designed to legitimize the new fee and reshape the island's destination image (Figure 2). This phrase warrants analysis through the lenses of selective cultural highlighting, persuasive linguistic framing, and implied tourist identity to reveal its role in policy acceptance and destination marketing.

Primarily, the slogan engages in selective cultural highlighting to anchor the levy's purpose. While Bali's established spiritual identity ("island of gods") remains an implicit foundation, the foregrounded element is unequivocally sustainability. This selective emphasis strategically positions Bali's commitment to environmental preservation, cultural integrity, and responsible tourism management as its paramount contemporary value proposition, intrinsically linked to the levy's existence. By centering "sustainable destination," the discourse elevates this aspiration to the defining characteristic of the Bali experience, simultaneously marginalizing complex counter-narratives.

Figure 2. Welcome to Bali – Where Journey Supports Sustainable Destination



Significant existing environmental pressures (e.g., water scarcity, plastic pollution, overtourism impacts), potential administrative challenges associated with levy collection, or debates concerning

the transparency and efficacy of fund allocation are obscured. This framing presents sustainability not merely as an ideal but as an actionable, tourist-funded initiative achieved through the levy, thereby legitimizing the fee as the essential enabler of this highlighted virtue while downplaying broader systemic challenges or alternative funding mechanisms.

The slogan "*Welcome to Bali - where journey supports sustainable destination*" is a strategic discursive response to the implementation of the Foreign Levy. It *selectively highlights* sustainability as Bali's core contemporary value, intrinsically linked to the levy's purpose, while marginalizing complex challenges. Through *persuasive linguistic framing*, particularly the transformative use of "journey supports," it masterfully reframes a mandatory financial transaction (the levy) as an active, ethical contribution by the tourist to a shared, desirable goal. This, in turn, constructs an *implied tourist identity* centered on responsibility, ethical consciousness, and valued partnership. The campaign thus serves to justify the levy, enhance Bali's destination image as proactive and responsible, and encourage tourist compliance by appealing to their desire for positive self-identification and meaningful travel. However, it also risks oversimplifying the path to sustainability and commodifying tourist ethics, potentially obscuring the need for broader systemic changes and effective, transparent governance of the levy funds.

4.3. Analytical Discussion of "Welcome Love Bali Movement"

The slogan "We Love Bali Movement", prominently featured by the Bali Tourism Department, constitutes a sophisticated discursive strategy designed to foster shared ownership and responsibility for the island's sustainability (Figure 3). This analysis deconstructs its rhetorical efficacy through the interrelated lenses of selective cultural highlighting, persuasive linguistic framing, and implied tourist identity.

Figure 3. We Love Bali Movement



Selective Cultural Highlighting is central to the slogan's construction of meaning. The phrase strategically foregrounds collective affection and care ("We Love") as Bali's defining communal ethos and primary motivator for action. This selective emphasis elevates "love"—framed as a unifying, positive, and active emotion to the status of a core cultural principle driving progress. By centering this abstract emotional concept, the discourse deliberately shifts focus away from complex, potentially divisive realities. Specific environmental crises (e.g., water scarcity, waste management challenges), socio-economic tensions arising from tourism (e.g., unequal benefit distribution, cultural commodification), and the distinct roles, responsibilities, and potential conflicts between stakeholders (tourists, local communities, government, large businesses) are effectively marginalized. The term "Movement" further implies dynamism and tangible progress, suggesting this collective affection is actively translating into positive outcomes. Consequently, this highlighting constructs a simplified narrative where universal love for Bali supersedes intricate political, economic, and environmental problems, presenting an image of unified purpose grounded in shared positive emotion.

The slogan's persuasive linguistic framing employs potent devices to foster inclusivity, evoke emotion, and imply moral obligation. The inclusive pronoun "We" acts as the cornerstone, linguistically erasing boundaries to create an illusion of a unified community encompassing tourists, locals, government, and industry. This fosters a powerful sense of collective belonging ("we are all in this together"). The emotionally charged verb "Love" transcends rational argument, appealing directly to deep-seated feelings of affection, care, and connection. Framing the relationship to Bali through "love" imbues the implied actions of the movement with inherent moral weight and positive intent, transforming practical necessity into an emotional imperative. The term "Movement" is pivotal, converting passive affection into active participation and collective agency. It implies organized effort, momentum, purpose, and positive change, framing desired behaviours (tourist and local) not as optional compliance but as essential participation in a morally righteous collective endeavour. This framing strategically bypasses potential resistance by embedding expectations within a compelling narrative of shared passion.

Consequently, this selective highlighting and persuasive framing synergistically construct a specific implied tourist identity. The inclusive "We" interpellates the tourist as a Belonging Community Member—no longer an outsider or mere consumer, but an integral part of Bali's extended community sharing a deep emotional bond. The emphasis on "Love" positions the ideal tourist as a Caring Steward, emotionally invested in Bali's well-being beyond their personal vacation, demanding responsible behavior (environmental consciousness, cultural sensitivity, ethical consumption) as natural manifestations of this affection. The concept of a "Movement" further constructs the tourist as an Active Participant, an essential agent of positive change whose choices (e.g., reducing waste, respecting temples, supporting local businesses, paying fees) are vital contributions fostering agency and meaningful impact. Ultimately, loving Bali becomes a marker of virtue, defining the tourist as a Morally Aligned Visitor distinct from those perceived as indifferent or harmful; compliance is framed as a reflection of moral character driven by affection, not obligation.

The "We Love Bali Movement" slogan functions primarily as a tool for emotional mobilization and identity construction. Through selective cultural highlighting, it elevates universal love and collective action as Bali's core unifying principle while marginalizing complex socio-environmental challenges. Its persuasive linguistic framing—the inclusive "We," emotionally potent "Love," and action-oriented "Movement"—masterfully fosters a sense of shared belonging, moral purpose, and collective agency. This synergy constructs an implied tourist identity cantered on belonging, caring stewardship, active participation, and moral alignment. While potentially effective in promoting pro-social behaviour and fostering a positive destination image, this discursive strategy carries significant risks. It oversimplifies responsibility by framing complex sustainability and cultural preservation issues primarily through the lens of individual emotion and voluntary participation ("love"), potentially obscuring the need for robust governance, structural reforms, and accountability for powerful industry actors. The discourse effectively commodifies "love", transforming an affective relationship into a tool for behavioural management within the tourism economy, placing disproportionate emphasis on the tourist's emotional commitment as the primary driver of change.

5. Conclusion

The sequential analysis of Bali's tourism slogans "Welcome to the island of god", "Welcome to Bali - where journey supports sustainable destination", and "We Love Bali Movement" reveals a strategic discursive evolution reflective of shifting governance priorities. This progression transitions from spiritual commodification to ethical transactionalism, culminating in emotional collectivization, each recalibrating Bali's destination identity and tourist subjectivity in response to intensifying sustainability pressures.

The earliest slogan, "island of god", anchored Bali's brand in spiritual exoticism, selectively highlighting transcendent cultural heritage while obscuring modernity's complexities. Its successor, "journey supports sustainable destination", marked a pivotal neoliberal turn: sustainability became positioned as a product funded through visitor levies, linguistically reframing a mandatory financial transaction as an ethical act of "support." This discursive shift transformed the tourist role from

passive consumer to tourist-as-funder, embedding fiscal policy within narratives of environmental stewardship.

The "We Love Bali Movement" represents the most sophisticated evolution, replacing transactional language with affective collectivism. Here, "Love" functions as an emotional solvent that dissolves stakeholder boundaries into an imagined community ("We") united by care. While effectively mobilizing tourist responsibility through identity construction—positioning visitors as "Caring Stewards"—this framing risks depoliticizing sustainability. Complex socio-ecological crises are reduced to challenges solvable through unified affection, obscuring institutional accountability and power imbalances.

Critically, all three campaigns share a core neoliberal strategy: commodifying intangible values to shape tourist behavior. "God" marketed spiritual distinction, "support" sold ethical capitalism, and "love" trades emotional belonging. Each constructs an idealized tourist identity such as Reverent Seeker, Ethical Patron, and Emotional Stakeholder respectively that aligns behavioral compliance with self-actualization. This discursive trajectory systematically displaces responsibility onto individual tourists, diverting attention from corporate externalities, governance failures, and structural inequities inherent in mass tourism systems.

This discursive trajectory reflects tourism governance adapting to critique by rebranding responsibility. Where "island of god" catered to colonial fantasies of untouched paradise, later slogans reframe tourists as saviors—financially ("support") or emotionally ("love") rescuing Bali from crises partly wrought by tourism itself. While effective in promoting behavioral change, this strategy embodies neoliberal environmentalism: systemic problems are individualized, public goods are privatized (via fees), and care is commodified. The "We Love Bali Movement," despite its inclusive rhetoric, exemplifies this paradox, leveraging emotional affiliation to foster compliance while leaving hierarchical power structures unchallenged.

Bali's slogans demonstrate how destinations deploy selective highlighting, linguistic reframing, and identity interpellation not merely for marketing, but for crisis governance. This case underscores discourse's role in legitimizing policies, redistributing responsibility, and sustaining tourism's political economy amid ecological and social strain. Future research should interrogate the material impacts of such campaigns: does "love" translate to equity, or does it merely greenwash extraction under a veneer of collective goodwill?

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