



Content Analysis of Tourism Section of Davao Oriental Official Websites

Nelson P. Pastolero, Ph. D.¹, Mary Ann E. Tarusan, Ph. D.²

¹Davao Oriental State College of Science and Technology, Guang-guang, Dahican, City of Mati, Davao Oriental, Philippines

²University of Mindanao, Matina, Davao City, Philippines

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Abstract— *This study identified the extent of language use in the tourism pages of the official websites of the province. The text and images of six tourism pages were subjected to qualitative content analysis, and data were coded to identify the linguistic features and discursive techniques employed by the tourism officers in promoting and motivating potential clients to visit tourism destinations in the province. The common lexical features were positive adjectives and use of proper nouns for descriptions while the syntactic features were declaratives in active voice, imperatives in the form of commands and requests, and interrogatives in the form of wh-questions. In addition, modality includes brightness, color contrast, and perspective; while the salience composes of perspective, relative size, and sharpness of objects in focus. The use of collage features three to six photos with descriptive texts and participants such as people captured in photos. On the discursive techniques, the tourism administrators employed the techniques to inform such practical necessities for decision-making like cognitive necessities, to persuade through manipulation, and to direct in the form of directives.*

Keywords— *applied linguistics, content analysis, tourism sections, official websites, Philippines*

I. INTRODUCTION

The language used in tourism promotions is one of the neglected research areas in language researches. Many linguists ignore tourism in their research and tourism institutions tend to neglect the significance of language as the primary tool of tourism (Phipps, 2007). Until today, studies about language and tourism are still in its infancy. Linguists are more focused on sociolinguistics where only a limited number of scholars attributed to the use of existing language theories applied in tourism promotions, a very challenging scenario which linguists must address (Cohen & Cooper, 1986).

The Philippines is less successful in luring tourists other than Korea and the United States. This lack of success are attributed to poor international connectivity (to Europe and Russia in particular), weak domestic infrastructure, and lack of a 'brand name' (van der Weide, 2010). A new marketing campaign in 2010 branded as "Pilipinas Kay Ganda" was launched. However, it took a major misstep

when it used Tagalog which is indecipherable for international audiences. In turn, it was widely criticized and the campaign was considered a failure. Meanwhile, Minges and Gray (2004) argued that a country's tourism industry must utilize modern ICT to innovative management strategies in addressing tight international competitions, to seize global opportunities, and to remain competitive.

Research Questions

1. What are the linguistic features of the tourism sections of official websites Davao Oriental?
2. What are the discourse techniques employed in the tourism sections of official websites Davao Oriental to motivate the public?

II. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

In this study, I employed the qualitative content analysis into the linguistic features and common highlights

of the tourism websites in Davao Oriental. Particularly, qualitative research involves interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. Subjects are studied in natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative content analysis is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting.

Research Materials

The research materials were taken from all available data from the internet on individual tourism pages in Davao Oriental. At least 10 municipal official websites (Boston, Cateel, Baganga, Caraga, Manay, Tarragona, Governor Generoso, San Isidro, Lupon, Banaybanay, one city (City of Mati) and one provincial website were considered (Provincial Tourism Website of Davao Oriental). The corpora I gathered included texts for linguistic analysis and text and photos for thematic coding of common highlights. All posts available were considered regardless of when the texts or photos were posted. These corpora collected gathered were validated by municipal administrators or municipal, city or provincial tourism officers for authenticity of the document extracted from their official websites.

Data Collection

I tirelessly surfed the internet, browsed the tourism pages and checked the available data for each municipality, one city website, and one provincial website. I personally checked each of the official websites of every municipal, city and provincial website to ascertain that all available data were significant as source of corpora. It took me almost a month to complete my search and re-research for each of the websites to notice if there were updates knowing that each of these areas have their or tourism calendar.

Data Analysis

To make the study meaningful, I analyzed the available data from the pages of four municipalities, one city, and one provincial tourism website. All available posted updates in each page were extracted from the six tourism portals. For the linguistic features, I used a separate tally for every page based on lexical and syntactic features of texts present as the research will only focus on these two linguistic features of the tourism pages. Likewise, I also draw a table for an inventory of images, logos, or any available visual image found on each page which were considered. These were my bases for coding the common highlights among tourism websites.

III. RESULTS

The Linguistic Features of Tourism Section of Official Websites in Davao Oriental

After my careful investigation, the linguistic features of tourism websites in Davao Oriental were mainly classified into two; the language for textual aspect, and image for visual aspect. The language aspect was classified into the lexical and syntactic where each has specific subcategories or features.

For lexical features, I had them sub-categorized according to their common appearance, which are as follows: use of positive adjectives and use of proper nouns for descriptions. Meanwhile, the syntactic features, the most common forms include active form, commands or requests, and questions.

In the image or visual aspect, four categories were identified; modality, salience, use of collage, and participants. For modality, brightness and color contrast were considered to identify the features of images. Also, the perspective, relative size, and sharpness of objects in a photo were considered to emphasize salience. Some features of images in tourism pages include collage which includes three to six photos with descriptive text, and participants which showcase the people captured in photos.

Table 1 The Linguistic Features of Tourism Section of Official Websites in Davao Oriental

Linguistic Features	Category	Sub-category
Language	Lexical Features	Use of Positive Adjectives Use of Proper Nouns for Descriptions
	Syntactic Features	Declaratives (Active Voice) Imperatives (Commands/Requests) Interrogatives (Wh-Questions)

Visual	Modality	Brightness Color contrast
	Salience	Perspective Relative Size
		Sharpness of Object in Focus
	Use of Collage	3-6 photos with Descriptive Text
	Participants	People Captured in Photos

Table 1 presents the summary of the linguistic features of tourism websites in Davao oriental. The linguistic features are divided into lexical and visual aspects.

Lexical Features

Lexical semantics is a subfield of linguistic semantics. Lexical units make up the catalogue of words in a language, the lexicon. Lexical semantics looks at how the meaning of the lexical units correlates with the structure of the language or syntax. The study of lexical semantics looks at the classification and decomposition of lexical items, the differences and similarities in lexical semantic structure cross-linguistically, and the relationship of lexical meaning to sentence meaning and syntax. In this study, lexical features look at the classification of lexical items present in tourism websites. In my analysis, there were two *lexical features* that stood out: *use of positive adjectives and use of proper nouns for descriptions*.

Discursive Techniques Employed in Tourism Section of Davao Oriental Official Websites

The tourism administrators of Davao oriental used discursive techniques which were embedded in the text or text and photos combined to motivate the public to visit their respective towns and the city. In particular, three discursive techniques were employed to communicate their intentions, thereby affecting the decisions and choices of the said potential tourists. These include informing, persuading, and directing or reminding.

These discourses are commonly observed to attract tourists by providing them information that influences their travel plans. Also, the tourism administrators provide persuasive language to inject interest in the emotional aspect of readers. These persuasive expressions are trying to manipulate both cognitive and affective domains of clients for them to decide and become actual tourists.

Table 2 Discursive Techniques Employed in Tourism Section of Davao Oriental Official Websites

Discursive Technique	Category	Subcategory
Informing	Practical Necessities for Decision Making	Infrastructure
		Booking
	Cognitive necessities	Hotlines
		Time/Date/Weather
Persuading	Manipulation	Cultural
		Historical
Directing	Directives	Cognitive
		Affective
		Recommending
		Instructing

The language used by tourism administrators in actual manifestation of how textual and visual modes of tourism section of official websites in Davao Oriental is an advertising promote wonderful sites and events in the

province. The pages were represented by convincing, if not luring, language and inviting images that captivates the site visitors. These in effect are influential in the decision making of targeted tourists who wanted to experience the majestic beauty and welcoming ambiance of Davao Oriental. After a careful analysis of the results, I have figured out the answers to the objectives which this study is being anchored. These are discussed extensively below.

Linguistic Features

The first objective aimed at identifying the common linguistic features of each tourism section. Since tourism promotion does not only highlight textual aspects, it was found out that images likewise emerge under the linguistic features which ideally, photos and text are indispensable features of websites especially in the field of tourism.

Language

After investigating the language or textual features of tourism post in tourism sections of official websites in Davao Oriental, two common linguistics categories surmised, the lexical and syntactic features, respectively.

Lexical Features

For the Lexical features, the most common lexical categories used were the *use of positive adjectives* and *use of proper nouns for descriptions*.

Advertising typically attempts to describe benefits that appeal to targeted audience. Commonly, these are better expressed by adjectives because they carry significant weight to target audience who are greatly influenced psychologically or emotionally, affecting their choices or decisions.

In tourism, *positive adjectives* describe emotions such as happiness, love, inspiration, peace, hope, excitement, gratefulness, and amusement. The use of good in tourism website aims to elicit a happy atmosphere to attract tourist to visit.

The findings in the study supported the claims of Dann (1996) that promotion in tourism is anchored on glamour to bewitch tourists. The language uses positive expressions to promote services and attractions. This primarily accounts for the persuasive aspect of discourse where the audience is enticed or allured of the product or services yet to be experienced.

Notably, almost all posts in tourism sections in Davao Oriental contain *nouns that describe* places, events or activities, and other pertinent information regarding the promotion. Usually, the text is accompanied by images, or maybe the reverse, the images are accompanied by nouns to complete the information necessary to inform the potential

visitors. In the same view, this image makes the text in the page more appealing to the tourists. The inclusion of verbal and nonverbal content that is congruent with the culture allows for site structures that conform with and support existing cultural concepts.

The prevalence of nouns as descriptions of photos in tourism pages in Davao oriental evokes fascinating and colorful images that suggests strong sense of appeal to tourists. According to Cook (1994), audience utilize schemata to represent mental interpretations during discourse processes to predict and give meaning about the particular discourse context. For instance, when an audience has passion for socio-cultural activities of the town or province, they look directly for facts associated with people and their activities, and maybe the communities where these tribes are located or can be interacted with. Thus, the results confirmed the claims of Cook.

Syntactic Features

The common syntactic features of tourism posts in Davao Oriental, the most common forms include *active form, commands or requests, and questions*. These forms are found to headings or descriptions in photos and journalistic headlines.

Specifically, *active forms of declarative sentences* are dominant in the posts of tourism pages in Davao Oriental. These active forms can be observed in the journalistic headlines used to introduce the entire text. These posts in particular are forms of informative articles which issue relevant information on the activities which the provincial government is involved, particularly focused on tourism activities. The headline suggests what the text is all about, which of course is supported by a photo with a description.

Another syntactic feature of tourism pages in Davao Oriental is the presence of *requests or commands* used in suggesting or recommending and directing potential clients to visit or do other related things in relation to tourism. Requests of commands sentences are themed to give choices for touristic activities, foods, accommodations, or actions in case of unwanted incidence. These are observed in posts like giving contact numbers, directions on how to avail the services or how to acquire more detailed information.

Interrogatives in form of wh-questions were also used to give information or direction to possible tourist or clients. Usually, these forms are exhibited in the photos, street names and contact numbers answer the interrogative word "where". At times, other forms of interrogatives were used, like on the tourism page of Lupon, this time on different the heading with the interrogative pronoun "how". The question form "how to get here" not only gives

information and direction, but it also suggests that reaching the place as point of destination is not that difficult since the text after the question form gives details or directions to the tourists.

Image or Visual Features

To see is to believe is perhaps a trite expression, but for tourists like us, by just looking at a picture of a tourist spot, tourist activity, or tourist destination, it practically and affectively influences our decisions.

Based on the findings of Crawshaw and Urry (1997), they argued that the basic reasons for images in attracting tourists and tourism clients are viewpoints, pleasing subjects, the right conditions, and of course, good lighting. Through modifying the beauty and desirability of the scenery and taking out negative features of the destinations, images in travel brochures are often romanticized. The images found the tourism pages in Davao Oriental did not fall short of the vivid visual description of captivating touristic events or activities and popular tourism destinations. These images are presented realistically and fantastically that really intends to affect the perception and decision of prospective tourists.

The present schema is activated and employed in the interpretation of the present discourse. In the images, tourists are lured to explore and experience the town has to offer. In the same view, this image makes the text in the page more appealing to the tourists. The inclusion of verbal and nonverbal content that is congruent with the culture that allows for site structures to conform with and support existing cultural concepts.

Meanwhile, on the visual aspect I have considered aspects of *modality* (brightness, color contrast, perspective), *saliency* (Perspective, relative size, sharpness of objects in focus), *use of collage* (3-6 photos with descriptive text), and *participants* (people captured in photos).

In the visual aspect, I analyzed first the images under the category of *modality*. I considered an important aspect of visual discourse analysis which is the reliability of the images, termed “modality” by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996). The proponents defined the term as the truth value or credibility of (linguistically realized) statements about the world. Also, they pointed out that modality judgment is dependent on the viewers for whom the representation is primarily intended.

In the case of Davao oriental websites, photos were presented as if to mystify or put some magic in the each of the images. To clearly test for the credibility of the images, two sub categories were identified, the brightness and color contrast. Influential into the visual analysis was the work of Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) where they postulated that a

photo would be high in modality based on its saturation and *bright color*, great pictorial details. For example, Aliwagwag falls in Cateel town is portrayed with very bright water creating a real life chilling and rushing experience. The image highlighted the cascading, ladder like flow of the crystalline water which contrasts to the still and serene backdrop of the falls.

Another aspect of modality that would represent the image of reality is *color contrast*. This visual aspect of communicating convinces the potential clients of the realistic features of objects captured in photos. As an example, the image which portrays the majestic view of the famous landmark before entering the city of Mati, the contrast between the lush and green island with clear blue waters enlivens the visual experience of seeing the Sleeping Dinosaur. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) pointed out that modality judgment is dependent on the viewers for whom the representation is primarily intended. In the case of Davao oriental pages, it is the tourists’ perception (instead of the locals’) on which the modality judgment is based. *Saliency* is another category where images can be analyzed. Saliency simply suggests the positive aspect of tourist attractions, highlighted so as to enhance persuasive power. In this connection, Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) introduced the concept of “saliency”, which concerns the degrees to which the elements are used to attract the viewers’ attention. Saliency can be discussed using perspective, relative size, and sharpness of objects in photos.

Perspective as can suggest the placement of object in the foreground or background. Preferably, the angle to which the subject is highlighted or focused affected the visual context to which the attention of the viewer is directed. In the image from the official website of Banaybanay shows the welcoming image of the municipal mayor in foreground, while the attractive object (municipal Hall) at the background seems to invite the tourists to visit the place. Both objects in the photo can be forms of political factors.

Objects in photos are detailed depending on their *relative size*. It is observed that not all objects found in images have the same size. Size is dependent of the angle that the photographers take advantage. The image below demonstrates this salient property of size among objects in an image.

This panoramic view of the landscapes in Manay features a serene view of the sunset set against the green hills and mountain ranges. The photo is only focused on the wonderful views of the town from the distance, notwithstanding the details on how to get there. The image

presents objects which are captivating but fail to include trails roads which can be of a challenge.

Another feature of salience is the *sharpness of objects in focus*. In the case of tourism pages in Davao oriental, often the images are portraying objects which appeal attractive to the tourists. For example, the photo from the provincial tourism site the good governor is portrayed in sharp contrast against the background (the event streamer). The central focus of the photo is on the governor receiving the award from the Mindanao Association of Museums.

In the findings of Gold (1994) in his study about tourism advertising, one distinctive feature of place promotional advertising that points out that *collage* typically employs three to six photographs of the place concerned along with a portion of descriptive text. The text stands for a visual summary of the different elements in the selling image. The placing of several visual elements in one image often involves foregrounding or backgrounding of a certain element and overlapping of elements. The resulting images can hardly be seen as a true representation of reality. The screen shot from San Isidro's official website is composed of many photos with the description all about Mt. Hamguitan. The collage is made up of ten photos featuring the diversity flora and fauna existing in the first and only world heritage site in Mindanao.

The last category that explains the visual content of tourism websites in Davao oriental is about *participants* which determine the people captured in each photo. The photo for example from the city of Mati tourism page about Dahican shows at least three objects, a skim boarder, an ultralight enthusiasts, and beach goer. The place in particular has become a sanctuary of surf boarders, beach goers, even joy riders from within the region. On the other hand, because of its popularity especially on occasions like Summer Frolic, the picture presents another idea, not much about the soft and fine white sand, nor sea, but sky.

The participants in the photo seem to suggest to the tourists who views the picture to realistically experience the magic that the image brings, a feature of visual property of tourism promotions that ideally convinces or motivates people to visit a place.

Discursive Techniques Employed in Tourism Section of Davao Oriental Official Websites

The tourism administrators employed the techniques to inform (practical necessities for decision making, cognitive necessities) to persuade (manipulation), and to direct (directives). In particular, three discursive techniques were employed to communicate their intentions, thereby affecting the decisions and choices of the said potential tourists. These include informing, persuading, and directing or reminding.

The objectives of tourism advertising are no different from those of advertising for other products. Berger (2004) describes advertisements as a genre of communication using words and images to convince clients exposed to the advertisement to purchase the product or service being promoted. The description is also applicable to the case of tourism advertising, which is exactly what travel brochures aim to achieve. The table below presents the summary of findings on the discursive techniques employed in tourism websites in Davao oriental.

Informing

In the tourism field, information is always demanded by prospected tourists (Calvi & Bonomi 2008) to satisfy the *practical and cognitive necessities* (Calvi, 2011). In the case of tourism promotions in Davao oriental, the categories on *practical necessities* for decision making include *infrastructure, booking, hotlines, maps, or even time and weather*.

Tourists need factual information to finalize their travel in a particular place. Exact information about amenities and services are vital in the decision making of visitors or travelers to lessen their burden in time and expenses. In providing exact and updated information, it has become an edge for tourism destinations or hosts to accommodate inquiries and eventually bookings for their clients.

Among tourists, one basic issue of consideration when they travel or visit a place is its accessibility and accommodation facilities, or the *infrastructures*. Reaching Davao oriental is unproblematic for four wheeled or motorcycle enthusiasts since the roads are concreted. Likewise, the building infrastructures that house tourism activities are accommodating enough to answer the demands of the visitors. For example, the Subangan museum is a must visit place since it is a one stop place that showcases natural wonders, cultural heritage, historical events, and even records or memoirs of natural phenomena like typhoon Pablo that devastated Davao oriental in 2012. This of course suggests varied experiences for tourists who at one stop could experience what Davao oriental can offer.

Tourism websites in Davao Oriental also feature information on how *to book* in advance to allow clients to feel hassle-free after long travels. This would entice them to actually visit the place since transactions on reservations are done prior to actual visit. In many cases, the contact numbers, contact person, and address were provided. The information provided can help the tourist to decide through inquiries and later on, to book.

In the tourism pages, not only beach resorts, hotels, or restaurants were published, tourism officers and their contact numbers are also given, shown in the following

example Above, the tourism administrator encourages tourists by giving them the opportunity to connect not only with tourism office but even at mayor's office, though in a form of email.

Perhaps one of the more encouraging aspects of tourism promotion in Davao Oriental is its inclusion of *hotline numbers* where security concerns are answered since one of the concerns of tourists is the safety. This aspect of tourism features the accessibility of security and surely would affect the decision of a tourist to visit Davao Oriental the place is peaceful, crime rate is low, and law enforcers are a dial away in cases when unnecessary things happen.

The information on the climactic features of place would also affect decision making among tourists. For instance, a photo included the *time, date, and weather* during the actual visit on the site was given. It presented that during that period, Davao oriental has fine weather at 30 degrees centigrade of temperature.

On the other hand, tourism officers of the province also used *cognitive necessities* to inform tourists, which are *cultural and historical* by nature. Some tourists visit places with rich cultural heritage. Davao oriental has strong *cultural* backdrop from its people as was depicted in their lifestyle and language. In the image featured in the provincial tourism site, the traditional dance is performed by Mandaya dancers wearing their traditional Dagmay costume woven from abaca, a fabric which the province also boasts commercially. This cultural showcase of their native dance entertains the spectators, as the actions of both dancers suggest in the image.

Davao Oriental boasts *historical* sites that reflect its identity, especially as a Christian community when it was discovered by Spaniards. One example is the San Salvador del Mundo Church in Caraga town which historians claimed to be one of the oldest churches built by Spaniards in Mindanao many centuries ago. The church still stands as strong foundation of Catholic faith that particularly dominates among the religious groups in the province.

Persuading

Another discursive technique used in tourism websites in Davao Oriental is *persuading*. Persuasion can be done in using *manipulation*. Swaying ones decision or choice can be manipulated using language that appeals to cognition and at the same time the language that strikes the emotive domains (Mocini, 2009). With the use of illustrations and sensationalized and lively presentations, audiences can practically be affected. These materials are better in shaping the tourists decisions than using straight facts, raw data or complex numbers (Steinecke, 2010). As such, these discursive techniques can be manipulative. Manipulations can be *cognitive or affective*.

Some posts in the tourism pages intend to *manipulate* their prospected clients by offering low cost services or products for food and amenities, good to excellent accommodations, security, and even promise wonderful experiences. Information in form of tour packages rates present an overview of how tourism administrators try to implicitly lure adventure lovers to try their services. In the photo taken from the official website of San Isidro included information that tourists who are fond of island hopping, which the town offers the Tinaytay and Burias Reefs with breakdown of specific rates.

On the other hand, another case is different in City of Mati's Tourism website which included an invitation to download forms. Here, it is clear that local clients, perhaps local investors are lured to download available forms which are needed in their business which is also integral in tourism (business and occupational permits). These portray cognitive manipulations.

Tourism administrators also target the *affective* aspect of tourists. As a discursive technique, this is directly pointed on the feelings or behaviors of the prospected clients. In the example from the provincial tourism page, the official statement of the governor regarding the spread of wrong information or fake news on the attack at Aliwagwag falls is directed more on the emotional aspect of readers or viewers. The text transcription of the video intended to assure the tourists that Davao oriental is safe, and insurgency or security is not a matter of concern among visitors since the local and provincial law enforcers are still in control. Again, as the text explicitly suggests, the readers, or tourists are ideally made to believe that indeed, there is no insurgency problem in Davao Oriental, implicitly saying that is safe to travel as far as Cateel own.

Directing

Meanwhile, the last discursive technique employed by tourism administrators in the province features directing. This discursive approach guides the tourist steps, like *orienting or recommending*. By nature, instances of instructing or presenting series of activities or actions in forms of sequences are under the umbrella of directives (Calvi, 2011). Directives can be in forms of recommending or instructing, as shown in the textual information on pages regarding how get there, contact numbers for booking, or posting comments or suggestions and cases of more information or queries.

In the photo from the official website of San Isidro at least two *recommendations* were observed. The text "Get connected to us" recommends to tourists that the Facebook of the municipality is also accessible for more information. In the same page, it is likewise recommended to "read

more” about gastronomic delights, Mt.Hamiguitan, and Destinations/ Attractions, and Adventure.

Meanwhile, the last form of directing as a form of discursive technique is *instructing*. Common rhetorical devices such as instructing may likewise appeal more to readers. These could be implied or explicit, affecting their moods which in turn lessen the propositional quantity of language use (Abarca, 2001). For tourists, they are a way of touching, listening, tasting, and, above all, of direct seeing (Mocini, 2009). These information suggest to tourist on the easy accessibility, cost of expenses, time of travel, and other significant information that would influence their decision to travel to Davao oriental and experience the thrill and joy that the province offers. The text from Lupon Website, it clearly states a classical example of directing tourist on how to get there. The reader is guided by the instructions on where and what to ride, where to stop. In other instances, the text also instructs in case there is a need for further inquiries, along which the contact numbers are given with corresponding contact person.

In other instances, directives are also observed as forms of reminders, as in the case of the following example taken from the provincial website. At the right side of the image, a reminder instructs the readers to dial the numbers “in case of emergency”. It even instructs further to “click here for more directory” in instances that the tourist needs to find a particular office or person authorized. At times, some directives in websites also suggest like “leave a reply” as shown in the provincial website after the article is posted.

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