

Exploring the Language of Flavor: Emotive Language Analysis of Culinary Tourism Promotion in Solo City

Djatkika^{1,*}, Riyadi Santosa², Tri Wiratno³, Rara Sugiarti⁴, Agus Hari Wibowo⁵

¹English Department, Faculty of Cultural Science, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta 57126, Indonesia

²English Department, Faculty of Cultural Science, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta 57126, Indonesia

³English Department, Faculty of Cultural Science, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta 57126, Indonesia

⁴English Department, Faculty of Cultural Science, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta 57126, Indonesia

⁵English Department, Faculty of Cultural Science, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta 57126, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Online platforms have become the primary source for tourists seeking emerging destinations like Solo City, Indonesia. While existing research has examined promotional aspects from economic and marketing perspectives, it has not sufficiently explored how evaluative language in these promotions influences reader trust and travel decisions. This research contributes to addressing this gap by revealing the use of evaluation language in culinary blog posts based on Appraisal theory. The research employs a systemic functional linguistics perspective and is characterized by both a descriptive and qualitative approach. The data were collected from four prominent tourism platforms (Wonderful Indonesia, TasteAtlas, Wisata App, Wanderlog) over the 2020–2023 period. The analysis indicates that the predominant tendency is APPRECIATION, with REACTION: IMPACT (56%) and REACTION: QUALITY (23%) being the most salient. VALUATION, however, manifests infrequently (8%). It is noteworthy that AFFECT and JUDGEMENT are nearly non-existent. Consequently, writers eschew personal or ethical stances, relying on a direct, impersonal style reinforced by INTENSIFIERS and ATTITUDINAL LEXIS. This paradigm prioritizes straightforward evaluations over emotional or experiential considerations. This factor contributes to diminished reader engagement and review comprehensiveness. Future research should examine cultural influences on evaluative language and collaborate with local authorities to design educational and sustainable promotional strategies.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Within the expansive domain of tourism development policies in the digital era, there is a burgeoning acknowledgment of the pivotal role played by culinary communication and promotion, particularly through online channels such as blogs dedicated to restaurant reviews or culinary explorations. This trend is changing how consumers behave and make choices. Online platforms make it easy for people to share their culinary experiences, and these shared stories influence other travelers. Accordingly, much research has looked at

*Corresponding Author: Djatkika ✉ djatkika@staff.uns.ac.id

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how tourism policies are formed and put into practice (Ariyani & Fauzi, 2022; Firman et al., 2023; Gallego & Font, 2021; Khan et al., 2020; Nusantara et al., 2021; Rizal, 2021). More recently, scholars have also recognized that digital platforms shape how people perceive and experience culinary tourism, especially after the pandemic (Hasan et al., 2021; Purwaningwulan & Dwi Ramdan, 2021; Qomariyah et al., 2020; Schimperna et al., 2023; Wibowo & Hariadi, 2024). On these platforms, people, both from professional food critics to ordinary diners, share their experiences with local dishes and restaurants. Their posts can strongly influence potential visitors (Cesiri, 2021, 2024). However, with so much information online, now the real challenge is to communicate not only authentic culinary experiences in a way that goes beyond marketing but also builds genuine interest. That is why understanding online culinary tourism communication matters for stakeholders and the public alike. By understanding how these online conversations work, tourism promoters can better highlight cultural heritage and support sustainable practices.

Indonesian tourism is now shifting. Instead of focusing almost exclusively on Bali, there is growing attention to Java's diverse heritage, especially in cities like Yogyakarta (Jogja) and Surakarta (Solo) (Judisseno, 2015; Nusantara et al., 2021; Pedersen, 2022). Bali was long seen as Indonesia's top destination, known for its scenery and culture. But people are now recognizing that Java also has a rich cultural heritage (Kurniati, 2023; Syafrini et al., 2020). Nowadays, Jogja and Solo are becoming cultural centers. Solo's culinary scene, for example, blends Javanese, Islamic, Dutch colonial, and Chinese influences. This diversity reflects Solo's culinary character, shaped by cultural fusion (Nurhayati et al., 2022; Sukmawati & Salimi, 2023). Moreover, online platforms are now helping the public slowly realize that Indonesian tourism includes not only Bali but also Java.

Solo City's culinary tourism is catching on outside of Solo. Both domestic and international tourists are paying more attention (Hasyimi & Azizalrahman, 2021). These days, tourists are using online resources like Google Maps reviews, food blogs, and social media to get ideas for places to visit. Solo's food selections have gotten a lot of notice on these platforms. Visitors share their opinions on and recommendations for restaurants, which increases the city's visibility and appeal as a food hub. But having so much information online also creates problems. It can be hard to communicate and portray Solo's culinary scene accurately. In this context, the language used in promotional materials and online reviews shapes how tourists see Solo's culinary scene and what they expect from it (Purnanto et al., 2022). Therefore, the effectiveness of communication strategies employed to promote culinary tourism experiences hinges on the linguistic intricacies, lexical choices, and grammatical structures used to evoke sensory experiences and convey the distinctiveness of Solo City's culinary offerings. Thus, there exists a need to critically examine the language of culinary tourism communication in Solo City to assess its impact on tourist perceptions and experiences.

Culinary tourism communication strategies are changing, and these changes have important effects that need more study. Yet, researchers have paid little attention to these changes (Kasni & Budiarta, 2020). Only a few studies have examined how culinary tourism communication strategies have shifted, or how linguistic choices affect the development of culinary tourism (Fakhrudin & Salim, 2023; Kasni & Budiarta, 2020; Purnanto et al., 2022; Wiyana et al., 2021). Furthermore, existing research tends to focus on the pivotal role of gastronomic experiences in shaping destination identity and visitor satisfaction, advocating for stakeholder engagement, technological innovation, and a commitment to authenticity, sustainability, and cultural heritage to deliver compelling narratives and immersive

experiences in an evolving market landscape (García-Carrión et al., 2023; Liberato et al., 2020; C. A. Martin et al., 2021; Ramírez-Gutiérrez et al., 2021; Schimperna et al., 2021; Stone et al., 2022).

The current study looks at Solo City as an example and adds to this growing area of research by examining how linguistic details, particularly evaluative and emotive language, affect culinary tourism information exchange (J. R. Martin & Rose, 2007; J. R. Martin & White, 2005). These language features shape the story around food experiences, which affects how readers relate to the text, how they perceive things, and whether they decide to try new foods or visit places. One might assume that stories focusing on immersive food experiences would lead to different tourism outcomes depending on how they are told. But analyzing the emotional and rhetorical style of a community's food writing is more complex because of cultural factors (Isti'anah, 2020). This study also shows how evaluative and emotive language shapes people's perceptions and influences culinary tourism. Beyond marketing and economics, the use of evaluative and emotive language in culinary tourism helps pass on cultural values and supports the preservation of local heritage (Han et al., 2023).

This study explores how the subtle details in how words are chosen can impact culinary tourism communication techniques, particularly the use of language that conveys feelings and opinions. The investigation focuses on Appraisal Theory, which was introduced by James R. Martin and Peter White in 2005 as a part of Systemic Functional Linguistics, or SFL. In the SFL framework, language has three main roles in communication: ideational (experience-related), interpersonal (social interaction-related), and textual meanings (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Positioned within the interpersonal system at the level of discourse semantics, the Appraisal Theory provides invaluable insights into how language is employed by authors to navigate complex social dynamics and sustain interpersonal relationships accentuating the pivotal role of language through the expression of emotions, ethics, and aesthetics (J. R. Martin & Rose, 2007).

Martin and White (2005) describe the Appraisal framework as having three main components: Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation. Attitude refers to the expression of feelings, including emotional responses, judgement of human behavior, and evaluations of things or events. For example, saying "This dish is exquisite" is an expression of appreciation. Engagement deals with how attitudes are attributed and how different perspectives are brought into the discourse. This component looks at where attitudes come from and how different voices are negotiated around opinions. An expression like "According to critics" shows engagement, as it suggests the speaker's own perspective or the confidence in a statement. Finally, graduation is about making things weaker or stronger, and making the lines between categories more blurry or clearer. This component tweaks expressions to show various levels of intensity or emphasis. For example, the clause "This dish is absolutely divine" uses Graduation to highlight the "divine" quality of the dish using the word "absolutely".

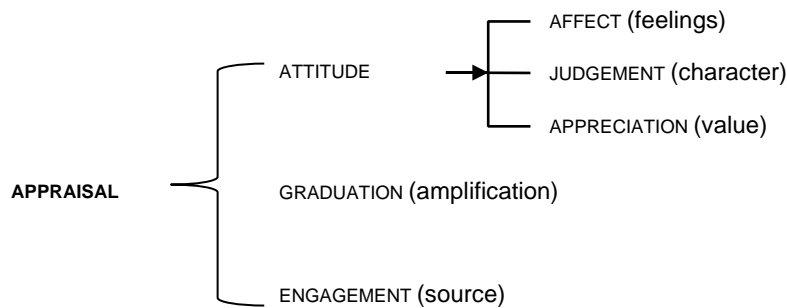


Fig. 1. Evaluative language derived from Martin and White's appraisal theory (2005)

Each component within the Appraisal framework consists of sub-components known as appraisal resources, as illustrated in Figure 1. ATTITUDE comprises three subsystems (J. R. Martin & Rose, 2007; J. R. Martin & White, 2005): AFFECT (emotions), JUDGEMENT (ethics), and APPRECIATION (aesthetics). AFFECT is how people express their feelings in conversation. For example, if someone says, "I find the taste delightful," that's an example of affect. JUDGEMENT looks at how people act, like "The restaurant staff doesn't follow the hygiene standards." APPRECIATION is about assessing things, such as how good something tastes and how it's presented, like the expression "The presentation of the dish is aesthetically pleasing."

Furthermore, GRADUATION weighs the meaning of the ATTITUDE expressions along two scales: FORCE makes the intensity of expression stronger or weaker ("The flavors exploded in my mouth"), while FOCUS makes the categories more precise or less defined ("The texture of the dish was subtly nuanced"). Lastly, ENGAGEMENT refers to resources for sourcing the attitude, whether it's the author's own opinion or citing someone else. These might include things like modals of probability ("It is likely that"), expressions of reality ("It seems that"), and attribution ("one customer says").

ATTITUDE can be positive or negative, and it is further divided into different types and sub-types (J. R. Martin & Rose, 2007; J. R. Martin & White, 2005). AFFECT is the study of personal emotions. These emotions are divided into four types: INCLINATION, choice between two feelings: fear or desire; HAPPINESS, choice between: delight or disheartenment; SECURITY: confidence or apprehension; and SATISFACTION: contentment or frustration. JUDGEMENT, on the other hand, is divided into two main categories: SOCIAL ESTEEM and SOCIAL SANCTION. SOCIAL ESTEEM has three sub-types: NORMALITY refers to the usual way of doing things in a culture, conventional versus unconventional; CAPACITY refers to an individual's ability to do something, competent versus incompetent; TENACITY refers to an individual's dependability, reliable versus unreliable. Meanwhile, the term SOCIAL SANCTION refers to the acceptance or rejection of a person based on their honesty and how well they fit in with the culture. It includes VERACITY (evaluating honesty, such as truthful vs. dishonest) and PROPRIETY (assessing conduct based on cultural norms, such as polite vs. impolite). Finally, the category of APPRECIATION is divided into three aspects: REACTION, COMPOSITION, and VALUATION. REACTION is when someone think about things that caught the attention. It is either IMPACT (interesting vs. boring) or QUALITY (good vs. bad). Then, COMPOSITION is when the evaluation is about how things are put together. This includes BALANCE (harmonious vs. discordant) and COMPLEXITY (intricate vs. simplistic). Lastly, VALUATION is about thinking about how valuable or beneficial something is.

Despite growing research on culinary tourism discourse, studies have largely overlooked secondary cities like Solo, focused mainly on branding rather than evaluative language, and failed to compare food-focused versus restaurant-focused reviews or examine how negativity is mitigated in high-context cultures such as Java. To address these gaps, this study poses the following research questions:

1. What is the most common ATTITUDE in culinary blog posts about Solo City, especially when it comes to how people evaluate food versus ingredients?
2. What are the most common ATTITUDE in restaurant blog posts about Solo City, especially when it comes to how people think about the food and the place?
3. How is the positive/negative nature of the texts about food and restaurants constructed, and what strategies (GRADUATION and ENGAGEMENT) are used to convey an evaluation?

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This study used a descriptive qualitative discourse analysis approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2017), which is suitable for capturing the manufactured and subjective use of evaluative language in culinary tourism promotion. The analysis is grounded in the Appraisal framework (J. R. Martin & White, 2005) within Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

2.2 Data Sources and Corpus

Four prominent tourism digital platforms in Indonesia were selected to ensure diversity in source type and geographical orientation. For food review texts, the study draws on Wonderful Indonesia, the Indonesian tourism website, and TasteAtlas, an international culinary encyclopedia. For restaurant review texts, the study uses Wisata App, a local Indonesian travel application, and Wanderlog, an international trip planning platform. These sources are open to the public and often used by travelers researching food destinations (Aksionova et al., 2023; Zimovets et al., 2024). The chosen sources combine editorially prepared content (Wonderful Indonesia and TasteAtlas) with more personal reviews from blogs (Wisata App and Wanderlog). Also, this research also explores at possible cultural biases in the use of evaluative language because of the comparison between both local and international platforms. Furthermore, combining these four sources makes the linguistic data more reliable and diverse, as it includes both promotional rhetoric and real consumer experiences.

The corpus of texts was built according to specific criteria. It only includes texts published between January 2020 and December 2023. These texts focused on how tourism recovered during and after the pandemic. The utilization of this dataset timeline follows the precedent of contemporary 2026 tourism literature (Hanafiah et al., 2026; Tan & Li, 2026), which heavily relies on the 2020–2023 recovery window to retroactively analyze the profound ‘structural breaks’ and permanent changes in post-pandemic consumer behavior. Moreover, in recent prominent tourism research, Hanafiah et al. (2026) stated that researching travellers' post-pandemic perceptions is important for a better understanding of future travel intentions. In line with this, Tan and Li (2026) argued that post-pandemic tourism research is important for the basis of a modern tourism forecasting system. The language was restricted to English-only texts, as the study focuses on discourse directed at international tourists. Each text had to explicitly mention Solo City or Surakarta and refer

to specific dishes or restaurants. After removing duplicates and non-relevant entries, the final corpus consisted of 14 culinary blog posts (covering food and ingredients) and 25 restaurant blog posts (covering both place and food).

2.3 Sampling

The study employs a theoretically driven sampling approach based on the Appraisal Theory framework (J. R. Martin & White, 2005). In qualitative research, sampling is understood as a purposive, theory-guided selection of data units rather than a statistical procedure aimed at population representativeness (Gentles & Vilches, 2017). Accordingly, the unit of analysis in this study is the evaluative expression itself—that is, each clause or phrase that expresses an ATTITUDE with its GRADUATION and ENGAGEMENT aspects. In other words, every evaluative expression appearing in the collected texts was included as a data point. The study refers to this total inclusion of all theoretically relevant units as total sampling. As in qualitative research, the goal of the sampling approach is not statistical representativeness, but rather capturing the full range of appraisal resources in the defined corpus (Santosa, 2021).

2.4 Analytical Framework and Coding Procedure

Appraisal Theory's three systems – ATTITUDE (comprising AFFECT, JUDGMENT, and APPRECIATION), GRADUATION (FORCE and FOCUS), and ENGAGEMENT (MONOGLOSS and HETEROGLOSS) – were operationalized as follows. ATTITUDE was coded by identifying lexical signals of emotion for AFFECT (e.g., “I love the taste”), ethical judgments of human behavior for JUDGMENT (e.g., “the staff are very attentive”), and aesthetic or functional valuations for APPRECIATION. APPRECIATION was further subdivided into REACTION (IMPACT and QUALITY), COMPOSITION (BALANCE and COMPLEXITY), and VALUATION. GRADUATION was coded via intensifiers (e.g., “very,” “absolutely”), attitudinal lexis (e.g., “authentic,” “legendary”), and comparative structures. ENGAGEMENT was coded for projecting clauses (e.g., “some patrons found that...”), concessions (e.g., “except for...”), and modal expressions (e.g., “it seems that...”).

The first author manually annotated all texts using spreadsheet software. Then, an expert in appraisal theory independently coded a random 20 percent of the total data. The inter-coder agreement was 89 percent, indicating strong reliability. The 11 percent of disagreements were resolved through discussion. The study required fine-grained functional categories that automated tools cannot reliably distinguish; therefore, no automated sentiment analysis was used.

2.5 Data Analysis

The data analysis followed the four stages of content analysis proposed by Santosa (2021), namely domain analysis, taxonomic analysis, componential analysis, and cultural theme analysis. These stages were applied cyclically to ensure a systematic and culturally grounded interpretation of the evaluative language.

First, domain analysis was used to identify broad categories of evaluative expressions based on the type of appraised entity; whether the evaluation targeted the food, its ingredients, or the restaurant establishment. In this study, the term domain also refers to the data context, which delineates what constitutes relevant data and what is excluded. Second, taxonomic analysis was used to categorize evaluative expressions into more

specific subcategories and distinguish between different ATTITUDE resources, such as AFFECT, JUDGMENT, and APPRECIATION. Third, a cross-analysis was performed using componential analysis between the domain categories (e.g., food, ingredients, and place) and the taxonomic categorizations (e.g., REACTION: IMPACT and REACTION: QUALITY). This cross-analysis reveals systematic patterns. For example, REACTION: IMPACT is used more often for food items, while REACTION: QUALITY is used more often for restaurant reviews.

First, frequency counts and percentages were calculated for each appraisal resource across text types (e.g., culinary reviews vs. restaurant reviews) and appraised entities (e.g., food, ingredients, and place). Then, patterns of positive and negative polarity were analyzed. The resulting compositional analysis provided a deeper descriptive interpretation of the data. For example, negative instances were examined further to understand the engagement strategies used to mitigate or attribute criticism. Finally, the fourth step, a cultural theme analysis was applied to interpret the overall evaluative patterns. This analysis involved examining the results of the compositional analysis alongside relevant studies and the main theory to understand the broader cultural context of Solo City's culinary tourism discourse. This four-stage framework enabled the study to progress beyond simple frequency counts to a deeper analysis of how evaluative language shapes and communicates cultural values as a social process.

3. RESULTS

This section provides a comprehensive analysis of how culinary tourism is communicated and reported, focusing on distinct aspects of evaluative language employed within culinary and restaurant review texts. The section is structured into five subsections, each elucidating specific evaluation patterns and linguistic phenomena observed within the discourse. The first subsection examines evaluation patterns in culinary review texts, highlighting prevalent linguistic strategies and thematic trends in conveying culinary experiences. Next, the second subsection explains the findings of the evaluation patterns in restaurant review texts, which are full of insights about how evaluative language is used to assess dining establishments in Solo City. Rather than focusing on individual evaluations, the third subsection provides an analysis of the interpersonal polarity between evaluations of food and restaurants, respectively. This subsection explains and examines the distribution of positive and negative sentiments within the discourse to illustrate how the patterns represent the texts. Finally, the last subsection discusses the language of flavor and relates the findings to how culinary tourism is communicated through the systematic, detailed use of evaluative language.

3.1 Evaluation Patterns in Culinary Review Texts

The analysis of evaluation patterns within culinary review texts reveals a predominant emphasis on APPRECIATION aspects, with the sole exception being capacity. Given the significance of APPRECIATION in these texts, this section provides an in-depth exploration of its various facets. The APPRECIATION aspects identified include REACTION: IMPACT, REACTION: QUALITY, complexity, and valuation. These aspects are further categorized based on the entities being evaluated, namely food and ingredients, as delineated in the accompanying table 1.

Table 1

Classification of Evaluation Aspects in Culinary Review Texts

| | IMPACT | QUALITY | VALUATION | COMPOSITION | CAPACITY | Σ |
|--------------------|----------|----------|-----------|-------------|----------|----|
| Food | 47 | 18 | 6 | 9 | 1 | 81 |
| Ingredients | 4 | 3 | 1 | 2 | | 10 |
| Σ | 51 (56%) | 21 (23%) | 7 (8%) | 11 (12%) | 1 (1%) | 91 |

The division between food and ingredients indicates what is being evaluated. Results show that food is the main entity evaluated, appearing more often than ingredients. Among the appreciation aspects, REACTION: IMPACT is the most common (56%), followed by REACTION: QUALITY (23%), COMPLEXITY (12%), and VALUATION (8%).

REACTION: IMPACT refers to the emotional response that a dish or ingredient creates, showing how the reviewer tries to capture the reader's interest. This focus suggests that reviewers aim to engage readers by directly assessing the food or its preparation, rather than using emotional appeals. The frequent use of REACTION: IMPACT shows that reviewers value making their reviews engaging, using evaluative language to attract attention. Examples:

[IMPACT: food] ... nasi liwet is **cooked in clay pots**, and it is **served on banana or teak leaves**.

[IMPACT: ingredients] All of these ingredients are then **topped with a sprinkle of fried crispy Asian shallots**.

REACTION: QUALITY aspect used here is about evaluating food based on personal preference. This aspect reflects whether someone likes or dislikes something – essentially asking “Do I like this food?” Writers use this aspect to appeal to readers' feelings about a particular dish. In this context, quality depends on factors such as originality, how traditional the dish is, and visual appeal. Examples:

[QUALITY: food] Selat Solo is an **authentic Solo dish** ...

[QUALITY: ingredients] All of these ingredients are **combined into one hearty dish** ...

Additionally, COMPLEXITY describes how something is arranged or put together. In food reviews, complexity refers to the cooking method, specifically, how easy or difficult it would be to replicate the dish. A dish described as complex usually has an original preparation, with intricate techniques or processes that are not simple to copy. Here are the examples:

[COMPLEXITY: food] Savory rice is **cooked in coconut milk, chicken broth, bay leaves, and lemongrass**.

[COMPLEXITY: ingredients] ... beef **braised in a broth consisting of garlic, vinegar, sweet soy sauce, and Worcestershire sauce, seasoned with salt and pepper**.

The last APPRECIATION aspect found in culinary review texts is VALUATION. VALUATION judges how useful something is. In culinary discourse, this means asking whether a dish or its ingredients offer real benefits. These benefits can include health-related properties and other advantages. However, VALUATION is not used very often, as shown in Table 1.

Arguably, this creates an imbalance in the reviews: writers focus mostly on the appeal of the food rather than its practical benefits or health effects.

[VALUATION: food] ... soup is **rich in vegetables and proteins**.

[VALUATION: ingredients] This addition **adds more flavor profile** ...

Even though culinary reviews do not usually focus on health aspects, it is still worth recognizing the benefits of the food. When reviews focus only on appeal and desirability, readers may get an incomplete picture. A better approach would be to balance the enticing descriptions of food with some discussion of its benefits. This balance would give readers a fuller understanding of the culinary offerings and help them make informed choices.

3.2 Evaluation Patterns in Restaurant Review Texts

Like the culinary reviews, restaurant reviews also use APPRECIATION as their main evaluation aspect. However, restaurant reviews also include some AFFECT and JUDGEMENT, though not many. COMPLEXITY does not appear in restaurant reviews, likely because the focus is on the restaurant itself and its food, not on how dishes are made.

Table 2

Classification of Evaluation Aspects in Restaurant Review Texts

| | IMPACT | QUALITY | VALUATION | INCLINATION | SATISFACTION | CAPACITY | Σ |
|--------------|----------|----------|-----------|-------------|--------------|----------|----------|
| Food | 14 | 24 | 3 | 1 | 1 | | 43 |
| Place | 54 | 61 | 3 | | | 3 | 121 |
| Σ | 68 (41%) | 85 (51%) | 6 (4%) | 1 (1%) | 1 (1%) | 3 (2%) | 164 |

As illustrated in the accompanying table 2, evaluations are directed towards two main entities: place (restaurant) and food. Notably, the majority of evaluations are centered on assessing the place, signifying its prominence as the primary focus of attention. Interestingly, unlike culinary review texts, restaurant evaluations prioritize the REACTION: QUALITY aspect (51%) over REACTION: IMPACT (41%), suggesting a balanced emphasis on preferences towards aspects related to the reviewed place or restaurant. Despite the slight disparity in percentages, the utilization of these aspects remains relatively equitable. However, the presence of the VALUATION aspect (4%) in restaurant reviews is notably diminished compared to culinary review texts, underscoring a decreased emphasis on assessing the practical utility or benefits associated with the reviewed establishments.

[QUALITY: place] The atmosphere in this restaurant **feels so elegant**, ...

[IMPACT: place] Nasi Liwet Bu Wongso Lemu ..., **run by a traditional Ibu dressed in batik**.

[QUALITY: food] ... the taste is **consistently delightful**.

[IMPACT: food] ... and the prices are **affordable** ...

Compared to culinary reviews, restaurant reviews show a clear shift in focus. For REACTION: QUALITY, culinary reviews stress originality or uniqueness, but restaurant reviews focus more on taste. This shows a basic difference between reviewing a single dish and reviewing a full dining experience. Culinary reviews often assume the food is delicious, while restaurant reviews explicitly talk about taste, because not every restaurant is consistently

good. The same shift happens with REACTION: IMPACT. Culinary reviews highlight how food looks; restaurant reviews focus on whether the place is affordable, which is a key concern for diners. These differences show that reviewing a dish is not the same as reviewing a restaurant.

3.3 Interpersonal Polarity in Culinary and Restaurant Review Texts

In this section, the focus shifts towards examining the interpersonal aspects present in the text, alongside an exploration of how polarity is constructed. Interpersonal dynamics encompass elements of GRADUATION and ENGAGEMENT, while polarity pertains to the contrast between positive and negative assessments, as well as the manner in which polarity is conveyed. Within culinary texts, polarity plays a pivotal role in shaping the overall tone and atmosphere of the discourse, dictating whether the text exudes positivity or negativity. The findings elucidating these phenomena are detailed in the ensuing table 3.

Table 3
Polarity of Evaluation in Culinary and Restaurant Review Texts

| Text | Appraised item | + | - |
|-----------------|----------------|-----------|----------|
| Culinary Review | Food | 81 | 0 |
| | Ingredients | 10 | 0 |
| Σ | | 91 (100%) | 0 |
| Resto Review | Food | 37 | 6 |
| | Place | 109 | 12 |
| Σ | | 146 (89%) | 18 (11%) |

Table 3 shows a clear finding about the difference in negative assessments between culinary and restaurant reviews. Culinary reviews have no negative assessments at all, while restaurant reviews have 11% negative. This suggests that authors write about food and restaurants differently. Meaning, in culinary reviews, writers may avoid criticism, perhaps because bad reviews could discourage readers from wanting to try the food. On the other hand, negative comments in restaurant reviews show that writers know no restaurant is perfect. Even though there are few negative assessments, they reflect the fact that restaurants have both strengths and weaknesses, separate from the food itself. Table 4 provides more detail on how negativity is expressed in restaurant reviews.

Table 4
Negativity in Restaurant Review Texts

| Appraised item | -IMPACT | -QUALITY |
|----------------|---------|----------|
| Food | 2 | 4 |
| Place | 6 | 6 |

The predominant focus of negative assessments within restaurant review texts pertains to the establishments themselves. It is noteworthy that negative evaluations of food items indirectly impact the overall assessment of the restaurant. Consequently, all negative assessments within restaurant review texts are inherently directed towards the

establishment, either directly or indirectly. Despite this, nuances in the conveyed impression are discernible, as illustrated by the following example.

[NEGATIVE IMPACT: place] It's also one of the **most expensive restaurants** ...
 [NEGATIVE QUALITY: place] The restaurant **has a small parking lot** ...
 [NEGATIVE IMPACT: food] ... the slightly **higher prices** compared to other similar options
 [NEGATIVE QUALITY: food] ... some patrons found the flavors to be **ordinary** ...

The example shows both similarities and differences in how NEGATIVE IMPACT is assessed in restaurant reviews. NEGATIVE IMPACT comments mostly focus on food prices, whether the comment is about the food or the restaurant itself. But with NEGATIVE QUALITY, the pattern changes. Negative comments about restaurants tend to look at the quality of the facilities, while negative comments about food target the taste of what is served there.

As for ENGAGEMENT, most evaluations come directly from the author (monogloss), which shows a personal viewpoint. Heteroglossic elements are also common, and they are often used to express negative opinions, as seen in the examples above and below.

[PROJECTING CLAUSE] ... **some patrons found** the flavors to be ordinary ...
 [CONCESSION] **except** for the costly hot lemon priced at IDR 18,000.-.

Authors use heteroglossic elements, such as PROJECTING CLAUSE and CONCESSION, when they need to express negative opinions in restaurant reviews. PROJECTING CLAUSE allows writers to present negative evaluations indirectly by attributing them to the opinions of others rather than stating them directly. CONCESSION, on the other hand, are used to create a sense of contrast by pitting the writer's view against an opposing one. This suggests that writers avoid stating negative opinions directly, particularly in the context of Javanese culture due to its norms of politeness. In simple terms, when offering an unfavorable opinion, writers tend to present an alternative perspective, allowing readers to decide for themselves.

The next evaluative aspect is GRADUATION, which concerns the degree of emphasis in the evaluations used above.

[INTENSIFIER: food] It would fill you **through the whole day!**
 [ATTITUDINAL LEXIS: food] Selat Solo is an **authentic** Solo dish ...
 [INTENSIFIER: restaurant] Nini Thowong Restaurant is an **upscale** dining establishment ...
 [ATTITUDINAL LEXIS: restaurant] Diamond Restaurant is a **legendary** supper club in Solo ...

As the findings indicate, the evaluation amplification is rare in the reviewed texts, and when used, it mainly involves INTENSIFIER and ATTITUDINAL LEXIS.

5. DISCUSSION

In elucidating the nuances of evaluative language within culinary tourism communication focused on Solo City, this study converges its findings into a comprehensive analysis under the rubric of “the language of flavor.” This synthesis encapsulates how authors intricately weave linguistic strategies to engage readers, convey attitudes, and amplify evaluations, thus delineating the emotive contours of their narratives. The authors use words that make their writing feel strong. Building on previous research, this study

confirms the importance of emotive language in online reviews, particularly in the context of culinary tourism (Chen & Farn, 2020; Guo et al., 2020; Packard & Berger, 2024; Rocklage & Fazio, 2020). These findings substantiate the notion that emotive language persists in shaping online discourse and facilitates the portrayal of the multifaceted culinary experiences associated with the food exploration.

The primary method of evaluation employed by writers in Solo City's discourse on culinary tourism is APPRECIATION. Thus, the focus is on positive attributes of things and sensory experiences. The use of APPRECIATION by authors also serves to highlight the appeal and desirability of Solo's food as highlighted by Martin and Rose (2007) that APPRECIATION helps capture readers' interest through vivid descriptions. More detailedly, by using REACTION: IMPACT, REACTION: QUALITY, COMPLEXITY, and VALUATION, writers create a story that appeal to readers' senses and emotions. Consequently, this focus on APPRECIATION also builds excitement as it invites readers to explore Solo's food scene. This result supports previous research (Isti'anah, 2021) that found positive reactions in tourism materials commonly used to attract potential tourists. The alignment of these findings likely stems from shared contextual dynamics, wherein positive reactions serve as critical indicators of noteworthy attributes. Furthermore, the deliberate selection of evaluative features, particularly APPRECIATION aspects, plays a pivotal role in enhancing promotional efficacy aimed at persuading tourists (Jalilifar & Moradi, 2019).

Moreover, APPRECIATION gives culinary texts persuasive power through sensory descriptions and emotive expression, thereby making them more promotional and encouraging tourists to visit (Isti'anah, 2020). These findings on evaluative patterns also show that compelling narratives full of positivity matter for reaching the target audience and ultimately helping tourism promotion succeed (Malenkina & Ivanov, 2018). Thus, focusing on APPRECIATION is a logical and strategic way to promote culinary tourism and build Solo City's food reputation. In doing so, the discourse strengthens the city's culinary identity and boosts the local economy (Recuero-Virto & Valilla Arróspide, 2024). Culturally, the strong presence of APPRECIATION reflects Solo's cultural value of food. Food plays a central role in Indonesian culture, supporting social bonds, cultural expression, and sensory enjoyment (Wijaya, 2019). By using APPRECIATION in their reviews, writers honor this cultural importance and celebrate the culinary heritage that shapes Solo's digital food landscape (Sharma et al., 2023).

However, the lack of VALUATION in Solo City's culinary tourism discourse is worth noting, because VALUATION could give readers a fuller picture of the food. VALUATION covers the real benefits of food items, such as health and practicality. These aspects help readers make better dining choices (Fengmin et al., 2022). If writers included more VALUATION, they could address concerns about nutrition, sustainability, and whether a dish is suitable for different needs. This would allow readers to choose food that fits their diet and health goals (Lee et al., 2020; Tahiri et al., 2022; Wijaya, 2019). While APPRECIATION, especially REACTION and QUALITY, is important for engaging readers and describing sensory experiences, using too much of it can tire readers out and cause them to lose interest. Repeating similar patterns too often creates monotony and weakens the engaging aspects of the text (Berger et al., 2023; Izotova, 2022). Therefore, balancing different evaluative aspects, including VALUATION, is essential for keeping readers engaged while ensuring the text remains informative.

Furthermore, according to Van Hooijdonk (2021), when AFFECT (emotional responses to food) and JUDGEMENT (assessments of behavior and service) are missing from the texts,

this is a possible missed opportunity. Including these aspects could enrich the reviews by creating a sense of connection with readers. However, the focus may be solely on being informative and not promotional, which means that the writer is more concerned with indirect influences on where people choose to eat. So, while excluding AFFECT and JUDGEMENT completely may not be necessary, writers should consider including them to make their reviews completer and more relevant.

Besides, authors use evaluative language in skilled ways, adding emotional depth to their writing by using evaluation amplification. INTENSIFIER and ATTITUDINAL LEXIS help emphasize the qualities of food and restaurants (Abdurakhimovna, 2024). For example, phrases like “It would fill you through the whole day!” and words like “authentic” and “legendary” not only express positive feelings but also create a lively and appealing picture of Solo City’s food scene. ENGAGEMENT also helps build a connection with readers and makes the culinary experience feel more immersive. Authors deftly utilize HETEROGLOS elements, such as PROJECTING CLAUSE and CONCESSION, to convey negative assessments subtly (Tian, 2013). By attributing criticisms to external sources or juxtaposing contrasting viewpoints, authors navigate the delicate balance between critique and endorsement, thereby maintaining reader interest and credibility.

Finally, the findings generate new understanding beyond the case of Solo City. Theoretically, they challenge the assumption that APPRECIATION is sufficient for effective culinary discourse: the near-absence of AFFECT and JUDGEMENT reduces social presence and emotional bonding, suggesting that current appraisal-based models of promotional language need to incorporate a balanced tripartite view even in seemingly “aesthetic” domains like food. For tourism developers and travel writers, the results indicate that overreliance on “impact” and “quality” (e.g., “amazing,” “authentic”) may lead readers to disengage. However, this approach may be suitable for tourists who just want quick information, not a story. This is similar to criticism of cooking recipes, where readers often get tired of long introductions and want the main information to be more straightforward. Meanwhile, the strategic use of heteroglossic projections and concessions for negative feedback, as observed in the data, depicts how writers should respect norms and politeness, even when sharing their subjective opinion. At a broader sociocultural level, this study explains one aspect of heritage tourism: culinary tourism. While Solo City’s discourse is appreciative, it largely omits feelings, which are strongly represented in Javanese culture. Therefore, culinary texts should be engaging as well as informative, turning culinary reviews into vehicles for cultural values and, indirectly, heritage preservation.

This study shows how important it is to use specific language when talking about culinary tourism, focusing on the food options in Solo City. The research tries to provide information about how people’s opinions can influence their buying habits (Mehraliyev et al., 2020; Packard & Berger, 2021, 2024). Therefore, this research can also serve as a reference for writers of culinary blog posts by indicating that authentic representation of Solo City’s culinary scene – without exaggeration or misrepresentation – is valuable, especially when combined with sustainable practices. By following these principles, writers may better showcase Solo’s culinary heritage, build positive perceptions, and encourage responsible tourism.

Several limitations must be acknowledged aside from the findings. First, the corpus is limited to English texts, which may exclude rich evaluative expressions in Indonesian or Javanese. Second, the study only examined written text; a multimodal analysis of images, emojis, and video reviews could reveal additional affective resources. Future research

should employ longitudinal designs to track how evaluative language evolves with destination popularity. While this study captures the maintenance and rise of culinary tourism during the pandemic, future research could examine the shift in culinary text trends and the potential connection between economic and tourism growth.

6. CONCLUSION

The analysis reveals that APPRECIATION dominates culinary blog posts about Solo City. The most frequently used resources are REACTION: IMPACT (56%) and REACTION:QUALITY (23%), while COMPLEXITY (12%) and VALUATION (8%) appear considerably less often. In restaurant blog posts, APPRECIATION also dominates, but with REACTION:QUALITY (51%) slightly outweighing REACTION:IMPACT (41%), reflecting a greater emphasis on taste and the overall dining experience. Unlike culinary posts, restaurant reviews include marginal traces of AFFECT and JUDGMENT, though these remain limited. COMPLEXITY is entirely absent as the focus shifts from food preparation to the establishment itself. Polarity analysis reveals a striking asymmetry: culinary blog posts contain no negative assessments, whereas 11% of restaurant blog posts are negative. This suggests that writers adopt different strategies when reviewing food versus restaurants, possibly avoiding criticism in culinary posts to maintain reader appetite and interest. Negative evaluations in restaurant reviews are often expressed indirectly through heteroglossic elements, such as PROJECTING CLAUSE and CONCESSION. This may reflect a culturally influenced avoidance of direct criticism. Meanwhile, GRADUATION is used sparingly, primarily through INTENSIFIER and ATTITUDINAL LEXIS. This indicates a relatively direct and unembellished writing style that prioritizes communication over the complexity of language, which is often considered more engaging.

The study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. Firstly, the corpus is restricted to English texts, which may exclude rich evaluative expressions in Indonesian or Javanese that could reveal different Appraisal patterns. Secondly, the absence of negative polarity in culinary blog posts may be due to platform norms that generally avoid criticism in editorial content, rather than a deliberate authorial choice. Future research could explore this distinction through interviews or surveys with content creators. Thirdly, the study focuses exclusively on written texts. Multimodal analysis incorporating images, emojis, or video reviews could reveal further affective resources that are not captured by written language alone. Building on these limitations, future research could take several different approaches. For example, cross-cultural comparisons between Solo and other culinary destinations, such as Yogyakarta or even Bali, could help to identify cultural specificity in Appraisal choices. Longitudinal studies tracking changes in evaluative language as destinations gain or lose popularity would also be valuable.

Additionally, extending the analysis to short-form social media content (e.g., TikTok videos and Instagram captions) could reveal whether affect is more prevalent on informal, visually driven platforms. Finally, incorporating creator interviews could shed light on the conscious or unconscious strategies behind Appraisal selection, providing practical insights for tourism stakeholders. Overall, this study provides a systematic, appraisal-based account of how Solo City's culinary tourism is presented online. It offers a foundation for more effective, culturally sensitive, reader-oriented communication in this area.

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Availability of Data and Materials

All the data generated and/or analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request

Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests

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Authors' Contribution

Djatkika conceived the main conceptual ideas, designed the study framework, supervised the overall research process, and wrote the original manuscript. Santosa performed the formal analysis and statistical computations, including the frequency counts, percentage calculations, and polarity analysis, and contributed to data validation and visualization. Wiratno and Sugiarti collaborated to collect data from four tourism platforms (Wonderful Indonesia, TasteAtlas, Wisata App, and Wanderlog), process the corpus, and provide software support for data organization and visualization. Wibowo proofread the final manuscript, reviewed the language and style, and contributed to validating the coding procedure. All authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Authors' Information

DJATMIKA is a lecturer at the English Department, Doctor of Linguistics, Professor of Discourse Analysis, Faculty of Cultural Science, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta, Indonesia

Email: djatkika@staff.uns.ac.id; ORCID <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2802-6838>

RIYADI SANTOSA is lecturer at the English Department, Doctor of Philosophy, Professor of Systemic Functional Grammar, Faculty of Cultural Science, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta, Indonesia

Email: riyadisantosa@staff.uns.ac.id; ORCID <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9677-2253>

TRI WIRATNO is lecturer at the English Department, Doctor of Linguistics, Professor of Linguistics, Faculty of Cultural Science, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta, Indonesia

Email: tri_wiratno@staff.uns.ac.id; ORCID <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8645-9629>

RARA SUGIARTI is researcher at PUSPARI, Master of Tourism, Lecturer of English for Tourism, Faculty of Cultural Science, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta, Indonesia

Email: rarasugiarti@staff.uns.ac.id; ORCID <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4679-7601>

AGUS HARI WIBOWO is lecturer at the English Department, Doctor of Linguistics, Senior Lecturer in Linguistics, Faculty of Cultural Science, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta, Indonesia

Email: agushari67@staff.uns.ac.id; ORCID <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9335-8524>

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