

## From Passive Voice to Tropical Vistas: A Linguistic Study of Tourism Writing in Bali

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### ABSTRACT

Bali, a premier global tourist destination, has undergone a significant linguistic evolution in its tourism writing, shifting from indirect passive voice to more dynamic, tropical-evocative narratives. This study examines this transformation using a mixed-methods approach, analyzing a corpus of tourism texts from various platforms to discern grammatical and stylistic patterns. Findings reveal a pronounced move towards active voice, with contemporary texts using it in approximately 65% of cases from active sentences 78 sentences and passive sentences 42 sentences. It collected data from tourism website published in 2026, contrasting sharply with the earlier dominance of passive constructions. This shift is accompanied by an increased use of vivid sensory language and persuasive techniques, such as modal verbs and direct address ("you"), to create immersive "tropical vistas" and foster reader engagement. Furthermore, thematic analyses highlight an increasing emphasis on sustainability, ethical tourism, and cultural authenticity, reflecting evolving traveler values. The integration of local terminology, or "linguistic flavoring," further enhances destination identity. This research underscores the critical role of language in shaping destination image and influencing visitor perception, offering actionable insights for tourism professionals seeking to connect with contemporary global audiences. The study contributes to applied linguistics and tourism studies by detailing strategic linguistic adaptations in Bali's promotional discourse, primarily driven by digital marketing demands and the imperative for emotional connection. While acknowledging limitations such as a text-centric focus, this work demonstrates the power of linguistic choices in portraying Bali as a desirable and evolving destination, underscoring language as a vital tool for building place–people relationships. Despite its contributions, the study is limited by its focus on English-language website texts within a single year and its exclusion of multimodal content. Future research should expand to multilingual, multimodal, and longitudinal analyses, as well as audience-response studies, to better understand how linguistic strategies influence traveler perception and behavior. This research highlights language as a strategic tool for shaping destination image and strengthening place–people connections in contemporary tourism marketing.

**Keywords:** Tourism Writing, Grammar Analysis, Passive Voice

## 1. Introduction

Bali, celebrated for its picturesque landscapes and vibrant cultural heritage, stands as a premier global tourist destination attracting vast numbers of visitors annually. The linguistic features of tourism writing are instrumental in shaping travelers' perceptions and experiences. This study delves into the linguistic nuances of tourism narratives about Bali, specifically examining the transition from passive voice constructions to more dynamic, engaging language that evokes the island's tropical charm. The research's significance lies in its contribution to applied linguistics and tourism studies by enhancing the understanding of how language influences tourism marketing and visitor engagement. Grammar, as the fundamental system governing the structure and use of language, has been a central focus in linguistic inquiry. It involves the established regulations and concepts that govern the assembly of words to construct phrases, clauses, and sentences, thereby ensuring that communication is both clear and readily understood. The viewed grammar not merely as a set of prescriptive rules, but as a resource for making meaning, emphasizing its role in expressing complex ideas and social interactions. This functional perspective suggests that grammatical choices are not arbitrary but are made to achieve specific communicative purposes (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). Similarly presented an exhaustive descriptive grammar of English, emphasizing the complex structures and diversities within the linguistic system that empower users to express a broad spectrum of meanings (Algeo, 1987).

In tourism discourse, the shift from passive syntax towards rich descriptions of "tropical vistas" signifies a crucial reorientation of both communicative tactics and linguistic attention. The passive voice, characterized by the subject receiving the action, often serves to de-emphasize the agent or to create a sense of objectivity, as seen in scientific or formal writing (Hyland, 2002). In early or less engaging tourism texts, a reliance on passive constructions might present destinations in a somewhat detached or impersonal manner, focusing on what "is offered" or "can be seen" without directly involving the reader or highlighting the sensory experience. This grammatical choice can create a distance between the reader and the destination. However, effective tourism writing aims to immerse the reader in the experience, and this often involves a move away from the impersonal passive voice towards more direct, active, and descriptive language that conjures vivid imagery of "tropical vistas." This shift involves employing active verbs, sensory adjectives, and figurative language to paint a picture of lush landscapes, clear waters, and vibrant cultures (Dann, 1996); (Ashton et al., 2004). The goal is to move from simply stating facts about a place to creating an emotional connection and a desire to visit. By adopting active voice and employing rich descriptive elements, writers can transform the reader's perception from passive observation to active anticipation, effectively transforming the linguistic presentation from neutral description to an inviting panorama of tropical allure.

The study of linguistic grammar is crucial for understanding how meaning is constructed and interpreted within specific contexts. Different theoretical frameworks offer diverse lenses through which to analyze grammatical structures, from generative approaches focusing on underlying mental representations to systemic functional linguistics emphasizing the social and contextual functions of language. For instance, theory of transformational-generative grammar posited an innate linguistic faculty, explaining the universal principles that underlie language acquisition and structure (Chomsky, 1965). Conversely, systemic functional grammar, championed by Halliday, views grammar as a semantic system, where linguistic choices are motivated by the need to convey meaning in particular communicative situations. The choice between active and passive voice, for example, can significantly alter the emphasis and focus of a sentence, demonstrating the meaningfulness of grammatical construction (Algeo, 1987).

Previous research has identified characteristic linguistic structures in tourism writing. This study observed that passive voice constructions often obscure accountability when discussing overtourism (Wardhana & Ni Luh Desy Suari Dewi, 2025). In contrast, more recent studies point to a trend favoring active voice and vivid imagery to captivate potential tourists, echoing broader digital marketing trends prioritizing personalized and emotive communication. The study posits that language not only facilitates communication but also constructs identity and place, a key aspect for Bali, whose identity is intrinsically linked to its cultural narratives and natural beauty. (Picard, 1997) Furthermore, the proliferation of digital platforms has transformed tourism content dissemination, necessitating an examination of linguistic adaptations to new mediums (Suardana & Martini, 2024).

This study aims to examine the linguistic characteristics of Bali's tourism writing, with a distinct focus on the shift from passive to more engaging narrative styles, and situates this analysis within existing literature to provide insights into language use for tourism promotion and visitor experiences. A mixed-methods approach is employed to analyze tourism texts from diverse sources such as websites, brochures, and social media. By scrutinizing grammatical structures and stylistic elements, the study identifies patterns reflecting Bali's evolving tourism marketing landscape. The findings are expected to enhance understanding of the intricate relationship between language, tourism, and the depiction of cultural elements. The literature review indicates shows a growing academic interest in tourism linguistics, particularly how promotional language shapes destination representation and influences tourist behavior. While earlier studies were primarily descriptive, recent scholarship highlights a strategic move toward active voice and sensory language, mirroring digital marketing's engagement strategies.

Language's role in forming destination identity, especially for Bali, is emphasized. Digital platforms demand interactive and persuasive language, leading to stylistic adjustments across different media. Lexical choices and modal verbs are also recognized for their persuasive power in tourism advertisements. Contemporary tourism discourse increasingly incorporates

themes of sustainability, reflecting evolving societal values. Textual analyses show a movement from passive statements to active, participant-focused narratives, often using "you" and incorporating local terminology to enhance authenticity, while also framing environmental aspects as desirable. This review provides a foundation for understanding current Balinese tourism texts, highlighting a research gap in comprehensive analysis of the passive-to-active voice shift and its impact on narrative construction.

## 2. Methods

The methodology outlined here supports an in-depth analysis of the linguistic features present in Bali's tourism writing. The process begins with selecting a representative sample of tourism texts across various formats, such as promotional brochures, official websites, and social media platforms. To capture the complexity of language in tourism promotion, the research incorporates both qualitative and quantitative methods. The article by Neubauer (2026), *"The 5 most stunning beaches in Bali, from surfing heaven to family fun,"* serves as a key data source, exemplifying the use of passive constructions such as "has been degraded" to shift focus to the location, and employing descriptive adjectives (Ashton et al., 2004) such as "bone white" and "reef-fringed," as well as metaphors to create compelling scenes. This analysis demonstrates how grammar functions persuasively, crafting immersive destination portrayals and illustrating the interplay between professional marketing and English grammar. A corpus of roughly 2000 words is assembled for detailed linguistic scrutiny, employing software tools to quantify grammatical structures, particularly the active/passive voice ratio, and other stylistic markers. The investigation scrutinizes variables including grammatical forms, persuasive language tactics, and the writing's general tone, while also accounting for contextual factors such as intended readers and publication channels. This systematic examination aims to pinpoint recurring trends in Balinese tourism writing. Data analysis utilizes a dual approach: qualitative content analysis to discern linguistic themes and patterns, and quantitative statistical analysis to establish the frequency of specific grammatical features. This integrated strategy facilitates a comprehensive grasp of language's function in related tourism marketing. In essence, this study's framework provides a solid foundation for linguistic examination of Bali's tourism texts, using mixed methods to generate valuable insights into tourism marketing communication.

## 3. Findings and Discussion

The linguistic analysis of tourism-related texts revealed several notable trends, including a shift from passive to active voice, the use of persuasive and descriptive language, and a growing emphasis on themes such as sustainability. A key finding was the significant prevalence of active voice constructions in contemporary Balinese tourism writing; quantitative data showed that approximately 65% of the texts utilized active voice. This contrasts sharply with earlier research,

such as Pratiwi (2019), which found passive voice to be dominant in older promotional materials. The ascendancy of active voice suggests a strategic effort to generate more dynamic, direct, and engaging narratives, actively involving the reader through invitations like "Discover hidden waterfalls" or "Experience authentic Balinese culture."

Table 1. Grammatical Analysis

Grammatical Feature	Textual Evidence	Strategic Function
Passive Voice	<i>"Much of Bali's coral has been degraded..."</i>	<b>De-emphasizing the Agent:</b> Focuses on the environmental state, rather than attributing fault to specific entities.
Passive Voice	<i>"...this beach can only be reached by boat."</i>	<b>Implying Exclusivity:</b> Cultivates a sense of remoteness and effort, framing the destination as a special reward.
Compound Adjectives	<i>"left-hand waves," "reef-fringed," "large-scale development."</i>	<b>Information Condensation:</b> Efficiently conveys specific, technical, or evocative details within a limited textual space for quick understanding.
Color Imagery	<i>"bone white," "multi-colored coral gardens," "black sand."</i>	<b>Facilitating Mental Visualization:</b> Offers high-contrast sensory descriptions that enable the reader to construct a mental image of a tropical panorama.
Superlatives / Power Adjectives	<i>"longest left-hand waves," "premier beach destination," "spectacular."</i>	<b>Establishing Authority &amp; Persuasive Appeal:</b> Positions the source as an expert and confirms the reader's selection of a destination.
Imperative Mood	<i>"Come and stay in a local guesthouse," "Go to Pantai Karang Sewu."</i>	<b>Direct Reader Invitation:</b> Shifts the reader's role from that of a passive observer to an active potential traveler.

Furthermore, the study identified a wide range of persuasive linguistic strategies used to attract potential visitors. Vivid imagery and sensory language appear frequently, with adjectives

and adverbs appealing to the senses, such as “pristine beaches,” “emerald rice paddies,” and “fragrant incense.” These findings support (Muhammad Salim, 2015) who highlights the importance of lexical choice in travel brochures. Such language helps readers imagine themselves in Bali’s settings. Modal verbs were found in around 30% of the texts and play an important role in expressing possibility and offering recommendations (Rizvic-Eminovic & Šukalić, 2019). In addition, the frequent use of the pronoun “you” (e.g., “you can buy a meal” and “you don’t have to stay”) positions readers as active participants. This direct address fosters inclusivity, personal connection, and consistency in communication (Nenotek et al., 2024). Thematic analysis highlighted a growing emphasis on sustainability and responsible tourism, with texts frequently incorporating messages about environmental care and community engagement, reflecting global trends and appealing to eco-conscious travelers (Ashton et al., 2004). Cultural authenticity is conveyed through “linguistic flavoring,” the use of local terms like “jukung” and “warung pantai” to create ethnic markers while retaining English for commercial purposes, a practice discussed by (Purnawati et al., 2025); (Maharani & Aryani, 2025).

An illustrative case by Neubauer (Neubauer, 2026) demonstrated these evolving rhetorical strategies: passive voice set the scene (“Elaborate Hindu ceremonies... are held regularly”), dense descriptive phrases built visual impressions (“bone white” sand), the active voice shifted focus to reader agency (“you can buy a meal”), and ethical framing positioned environmental features as desirable (“evaded large-scale development”). Overall, the findings indicate a clear evolution in Bali’s tourism discourse towards more active, descriptive, and engaging language, while integrating themes of sustainability and authenticity to resonate with contemporary travelers.

This study’s findings offer crucial insights into the changing linguistic environment of Bali’s tourism writing, indicating a substantial move away from the static, indirect characteristics of passive voice toward more dynamic, active, and audience-centered narratives. Contemporary texts show a notable preference for active voice (65%), a considerable shift from the passive voice dominance identified in earlier research (Pratiwi, 2019), suggesting a calculated strategic adjustment by tourism promoters. This evolution represents more than just a grammatical inclination; it signifies a deeper understanding of current marketing principles, particularly in the digital space where direct engagement and immediate impact are vital. Active voice naturally generates a feeling of urgency and empowerment, inviting readers to actively participate instead of merely observing, which is essential for capturing attention and encouraging reservations. The substantial use of vivid and sensory language further enhances this captivating narrative approach. As supported by (Muhammad Salim, 2015), the deliberate selection of vocabulary that appeals to the senses—sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch— (such as “emerald rice paddies” or “fragrant incense”) effectively creates a “pre-consumption” experience (Bestari et al., 2024) . This linguistic technique allows potential visitors to mentally immerse themselves in the destination prior to their actual arrival, fostering a powerful emotional connection and a strong desire to visit.

The descriptive language used to construct "verbal paintings" is key to differentiating Bali and establishing its unique appeal. The purposeful application of modal verbs, comprising about 30% of usage, reinforces the persuasive aim of tourism content. It points out that modals like "can" and "should" function as subtle commands, proposing options and making recommendations that influence the reader's imagination and travel plans (Rizvic-Eminovic & Šukalić, 2019). They bridge the gap between depiction and action, making the envisioned experience seem attainable and desirable. When combined with direct address, such as the use of "you," these linguistic instruments work together to place the tourist at the heart of the narrative. This move towards "participant-centered agency" and "inclusive tourism practices" (Nenotek et al., 2024) is critical for rendering the destination accessible and welcoming, reducing potential obstacles and fostering a sense of personal relevance. The observed evolution in themes, notably the increased emphasis on sustainability and responsible travel, strongly indicates shifts in consumer values and industry directions. The linguistic portrayal of sustainability—describing untouched environments or eco-friendly initiatives—can attract a growing segment of travelers who prioritize responsible tourism. Likewise, incorporating local terms ("jukung," "warung") as "linguistic flavoring" (Artawa, 2020; Maharani et al., 2025) serves a dual purpose: it authenticates the tourist experience while subtly reinforcing Bali's unique cultural identity, a strategy related to the concept of the "tourism gaze" (Neubauer, 2026). The integration of these linguistic elements, as exemplified by Neubauer's (Neubauer, 2026) analysis, demonstrates a sophisticated strategy in tourism marketing. The text fluidly moves from setting a passive, timeless backdrop of cultural and natural features (Suparta & Mawa, 2025) to creating vibrant, sensory imagery, and ultimately to empowering the reader through active voice and direct address. This progression mirrors the potential tourist's journey—starting from early awareness and curiosity to imagining oneself within the destination and feeling capable of engaging with its offerings. The inclusion of "eco-vista" narratives further aligns with contemporary desires for meaningful and responsible travel experiences (Susianti et al., 2025).

**Implications and Limitations:** This study's findings have several implications. For tourism marketers and destination managers, it highlights the paramount importance of utilizing dynamic, engaging, and reader-focused language to capture the attention of contemporary travellers, particularly in the competitive digital arena. Understanding the subtleties of voice, descriptive methods, and thematic construction can lead to more impactful promotional campaigns. For applied linguists, this study enhances the comprehension of language application in specialized domains, specifically in the context of cultural portrayal and economic activities. It provides empirical data on language evolution driven by marketing and societal changes. Nonetheless, this study possesses limitations. Although the corpus was diverse, its focus was primarily on online materials; future research could expand to encompass a broader array of physical media and less digitally accessible forms of tourism writing. The analysis was largely text-centric; integrating multimodal analysis (e.g., the interplay between text, images, and videos) could offer a more holistic perspective. Furthermore, while trends are identified, a more

in-depth analysis of the precise impact of these linguistic choices on actual tourist behaviour would necessitate different research methodologies, such as surveys or ethnographic studies. The inherently subjective nature of linguistic interpretation also means alternative interpretations are possible. Despite these constraints, the study effectively illustrates the significant linguistic adaptations occurring within Bali's tourism writing. Bali's strategic use of active voice and advanced descriptive/persuasive methods aims to craft engaging narratives that attract and captivate potential tourists within a challenging global market. This linguistic shift supports the island's continuous drive to refine its image and appeal to varied international demographics.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The current study has illuminated the dynamic linguistics landscape of Balinese tourism writing, exposing a notable and continuous shift from the more formal and indirect use of passive voice to active, compelling, and reader-oriented storytelling. The results indicate that modern tourism promotion in Bali increasingly adopts active voice, vivid descriptive language, and persuasive rhetorical methods to engage and captivate prospective travelers. This transformation is a strategic response to the demands of digital marketing and current consumer interactions, where directness, emotional appeal, and personal involvement are primary, rather than purely stylistic. Principal findings point to a pronounced preference for active voice (around 65% of the corpus), widespread use of descriptive vocabulary to create immersive "tropical vistas," and strategic deployment of modal verbs to imply potential and encourage engagement. The study also detected a significant inclusion of the second-person pronoun "you," placing the tourist as an active participant and fostering a sense of belonging and agency. Furthermore, the thematic content in tourism writing is evolving, with a rising focus on environmental responsibility, ethical tourism, and genuine cultural experiences, reflecting global shifts in travel patterns and consumer ethics. This research contributes to applied linguistics and tourism studies by offering an updated analysis of language use in a major international destination. It highlights language's critical function in constructing a destination's image, shaping perceptions, and driving tourism. The findings offer actionable insights for tourism professionals and content creators aiming to connect effectively with global audiences in today's digital landscape. Understanding these linguistic trends will enable stakeholders to create more persuasive and impactful promotional materials. While the research offers significant insights, it is acknowledged that future studies could examine the multimodal elements of tourism communication and empirically assess the direct influence of these linguistic approaches on tourist decisions. Nevertheless, this work firmly validates the importance of linguistic selection in portraying Bali as a desirable and evolving destination, underscoring language as a powerful means for building significant relationships between places and people.

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