Language, Power, and Tourism: Media Representation of FORNAS KORMI as a Branding Strategy for Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara

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Abstract

This study examines how online media construct the representation of the National Recreational Sports Festival (FORNAS) organized by KORMI as a strategic instrument for tourism branding in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara. Using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the research explores linguistic choices, framing strategies, and discursive practices employed by national and local media in shaping public perceptions of the event. The analysis draws on news articles published between January and August 2025, covering pre-event, implementation, and post-event phases. Findings reveal that media discourse consistently links FORNAS with Lombok's tourism identity, portraying the event as a celebration of cultural richness, natural beauty, and regional progress. Through selective diction, metaphors, and narrative structures, media outlets emphasize themes of festivity, economic benefit, and destination appeal while marginalizing critical issues such as infrastructure challenges and environmental concerns. The dominance of official voices further reinforces power relations that privilege government and tourism-industry interests. This study concludes that media coverage does not merely inform audiences but actively constructs symbolic meanings that strengthen Lombok's branding as a leading sport-tourism destination. The findings underscore the strategic role of language, power, and discourse in shaping tourism imaginaries and policy directions.

Keywords: media discourse, tourism branding, critical discourse analysis

Introduction

This study examines how online media construct the representation of the National Recreational Sports Festival (FORNAS) organized by KORMI as a strategic instrument for tourism branding in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara. Using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the research explores linguistic choices, framing strategies, and discursive practices employed by national and local media in shaping public perceptions of the event. The analysis draws on news articles published between January and August 2025, covering pre-event, implementation, and post-event phases. Findings reveal that media discourse consistently links FORNAS with Lombok's tourism identity, portraying the event as a celebration of cultural richness, natural beauty, and regional progress. Through selective diction, metaphors, and narrative structures, media outlets emphasize themes of festivity, economic benefit, and destination appeal while marginalizing critical issues such as infrastructure challenges and environmental concerns. The dominance of official voices further reinforces power relations that privilege government and tourism-industry interests. This study concludes that media coverage does not merely inform audiences but actively constructs symbolic meanings that strengthen Lombok's branding as a leading sport-tourism destination. The findings underscore the strategic role of language, power, and discourse in shaping tourism imaginaries and policy directions.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework. This approach is chosen because it reveals how language functions not only as a medium of communication but also as an instrument of power in shaping the image, identity, and meaning of an event. In the context of FORNAS KORMI Lombok news coverage, CDA provides a lens for understanding how the media construct reality, frame messages, and guide public perceptions of the event as part of tourism-branding strategies.

Data for this research were obtained from various online news reports published between January and August 2025. This timeframe was selected because it covers the phases before, during, and after the implementation of FORNAS, allowing the researcher to observe shifts in narrative more comprehensively. News articles were collected from national and local media outlets, including Kompas.com, Detik.com, CNN Indonesia, Tempo.co, Lombok Post, Suara NTB, and Radar Lombok. These media were selected due to their high news intensity and wide readership, which significantly influence public perception.

Data were collected using a purposive sampling technique. The researcher selected only news articles that directly discussed FORNAS KORMI Lombok and were relevant to tourism discourse, local culture, or regional branding strategies. Each article was then saved in digital form for in depth analysis. At this stage the researcher began initial coding by marking keywords, metaphors, narrative structures, and the presence of particular actors within the texts.

The analysis was carried out in stages following Fairclough's three dimensional CDA model. The first stage was text analysis. In this stage the researcher examined the linguistic elements appearing in the coverage, from diction and language style to the metaphors used and the ways the media portrayed actors such as regional government, KORMI, tourism stakeholders, and the Lombok community. This stage helps reveal how FORNAS is represented by the media whether as a mere sporting event, a tourism promotion, or a symbol of government achievement.

The second stage was the analysis of discursive practice. The researcher sought to understand how the texts were produced and circulated, including the editorial strategies used by the media in determining the focus of coverage. In this stage, the researcher observed specific patterns for example, whether the media emphasized cultural aspects, tourism potential, or government achievements. This analysis also examined which sources were given more space to speak and how their quotations were used to reinforce particular narratives.

The third stage was the analysis of social practice. In this stage, media coverage was placed within a broader social context, particularly in relation to Lombok's tourism development agenda, NTB's sport-tourism strategy, and the dynamics of the creative economy that accompany national events such as FORNAS. This analysis enabled the researcher to understand how the discourse constructed by the media intertwines with ongoing political, economic, and cultural agendas in the region.

Data validity was maintained through source triangulation and theoretical triangulation. By comparing various reports from national and local media, the researcher was able to identify the consistency or divergence of emerging frames. At the same time, the analysis was strengthened with Entman's framing theory, Urry's tourist gaze, and Jenkins' destination image theory to minimize interpretive bias. The entire research process was conducted based on academic ethical principles, maintaining objectivity, and respecting the content of the news without making alterations.

Result and Findings

The findings of this study show that online media coverage of FORNAS KORMI in Lombok did not merely highlight the recreational sports dimension but consistently linked the event to the region's tourism image. Through an in-depth reading of the news texts, it became evident that the media constructed a relatively uniform narrative: FORNAS is not only an alternative sports event but also positioned as a *promotional window* that strengthens Lombok's randing as both a national and international tourist destination.

In the descriptive analysis stage, it was found that media outlets routinely opened their reports by emphasizing the large number of participants, the liveliness of the event, and the diversity of traditional sports showcased. This emphasis on visuality and festivity created the impression that FORNAS was a "must-visit" moment capable of attracting tourists. Additionally, the diction used tended to be evaluative such as *meriah* (festive), *mendunia* (world-class), *menarik minat wisatawan* (attracting tourists), and *memperkuat ekonomi daerah* (strengthening the regional economy). These linguistic choices indicate that the media were not simply reporting facts but also celebrating the event as a symbol of regional progress.

When Pan & Kosicki's framing analysis is applied, the patterns of discourse structure become more apparent. At the level of syntactic structure, news across media outlets concentrated on official figures such as the Governor of NTB, the Chair of KORMI, or regional officials who delivered positive statements regarding FORNAS's contribution to tourism. Their direct quotations were frequently placed at the beginning of the articles, establishing authority and legitimacy from the first paragraph.

At the script level, the sequence of information presentation was consistently structured: starting with the scale of the event, followed by official statements, and finally an emphasis on economic impact and tourism promotion. The thematic analysis reveals that the dominant theme highlighted by the media is *"Lombok as a space for cultural and recreational convergence."* This theme merges the region's two main strengths: natural

beauty and cultural richness. Consequently, FORNAS is portrayed not merely as a sports activity but as a strategy that connects local cultural identity with tourism attractiveness.

Meanwhile, rhetorical elements are strikingly visible in the use of photographs featuring participants in traditional attire, large crowds of spectators, and iconic settings such as beaches or well-known landmarks. These elements reinforce the message that FORNAS is *"embedded"* within Lombok's tourism landscape.

Within Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, these representational practices cannot be separated from the power relations among the media, local government, and the tourism industry. The media appear to function as agents that legitimize tourism promotion policies, while simultaneously constructing the reality that recreational sports can serve as an instrument of destination branding. The discursive practices observed indicate a systematic effort to direct readers' attention toward the economic benefits and positive image of Lombok, while downplaying other critical issues such as infrastructure capacity, potential environmental degradation, or social inequalities that may arise from hosting a large-scale event.

The findings also show that the media tend to foreground elite voices rather than those of local communities. Community members are typically represented merely as "spectators" or "UMKM actors," whereas critical voices or alternative perspectives are rarely highlighted. This reflects the media's alignment with narratives of development and tourism, rather than opening space for dialogue about grassroots social dynamics. In other words, the discourse leans more toward promotion than reflection.

In the context of destination branding, this discourse has significant implications. FORNAS is projected as an event capable of increasing Lombok's national visibility. The repetitive media narrative creates a strong association between Lombok and recreational sports, reinforcing the region's identity as a welcoming, safe, and culturally vibrant space. Thus, the media do not merely report on FORNAS; they actively participate in constructing an imagined tourism landscape that benefits Lombok's image.

The findings of this study reveal that media coverage of FORNAS in Lombok reflects a complex discursive process from lexical choices to news structure which ultimately shapes a strategic representation of regional tourism. The media position themselves as actors that reinforce the government's vision of Lombok as a leading tourist destination, and through a series of editorial decisions, they produce discourse that strengthens power relations while expanding the narrative of tourism-based development..

Conclusion

Media coverage of FORNAS KORMI in Lombok is not merely informative but actively constructs discourse that links recreational sports with regional tourism branding strategies. Through lexical choices, news structures, and the prominence given to official actors, the media reinforce the narrative that FORNAS is a strategic moment for promoting Lombok as a culturally rich, safe, and attractive tourist destination.

The framing analysis of Pan & Kosicki reveals that the media consistently frame FORNAS as a major event that generates economic benefits and positive imagery, while critical issues or alternative perspectives receive limited attention. From the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), these findings indicate power relations that favor government authorities and the tourism industry, with the media acting as agents that legitimize tourism-based development agendas.

The representation of FORNAS in the media does not merely reflect a sporting event; rather, it constructs a symbolic reality that strengthens Lombok's identity as a leading tourist destination. The discourse produced by the media helps shape public perceptions of the

region's economic potential and image, while also affirming the strategic role of the media in meaning-making and opinion formation related to tourism promotion.

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