Framing Paradise Online: A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Destination Narratives on France Travel Website

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ABSTRACT

Tourism promotion increasingly relies on digital platforms where destinations are framed through carefully constructed narratives. Using a multi modal discourseanalytical approach, the present study seeks to examine textual and visual element from lonelyplanet website, particularly the destination of France to represent tourist destinations as idyllic "paradises." The analysis reveals that destinations are frequently framed through metaphors of escape, authenticity, and exclusivity, highlighting natural beauty and cultural uniqueness while downplaying local challenges or complexities. Additionally, multimodal resources—such as imagery, layout, and interactive features—play a central role in reinforcing persuasive narratives that align with global tourism imaginaries. Findings suggest that online tourism discourse constructs not only desirable places but also particular identities for travelers, positioning them as explorers, culture seekers, or luxury consumers. This study contributes to tourism discourse research by demonstrating how digital travel platforms commodify places through strategic language and multimodality, shaping both destination branding and tourist perceptions.

Keyword: Tourism Discourse, Destination Narratives, Discourse Analysis

1. Introduction

The rapid platformization of tourism has transformed destination promotion from static brochure-style messaging into dynamic, datafied narratives staged across online travel websites, destination marketing organization (DMO) portals, and platform ecosystems such as online travel agencies (OTAs). These digital environments assemble text, visuals, interface cues, and interactive widgets to frame places as desirable, low-friction experiences—what this study terms the online "framing of paradise." Such framings are not neutral: they shape tourists' expectations, filter notions of "authenticity," and set agendas for local stakeholders. Recent scholarship situates this transformation within the broader platform economy, in which visibility, mediation, and control over tourism flows are increasingly orchestrated through digital infrastructures (Sinanan & Ritter, 2024, Turnšek, 2025).

Within this landscape, multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) has emerged as a valuable framework for examining the persuasive power of tourism communication. Prior studies have investigated how verbal and visual elements interact in public places (Oda, et. al. 2025), promotional videos (Yanwei & Hassan, 2023)., and social media campaigns (Trans & Rudolf, 2022). These works demonstrate that tourism discourse relies heavily on hyperbolic language—such as "hidden gem," "untouched," and "escape"—that cooperates with high-saturation photography, hero banners, scannable microcopy, and booking affordances to naturalize

specific value propositions (Vojnović, 2020; Chen, Z. 2024). Collectively, this research confirms the utility of multimodal approaches for unpacking how tourism destinations are rendered attractive and consumable.

However, a significant research gap remains. While existing studies often focus on either the verbal or visual dimensions of tourism promotion, relatively few examine how *lexical choice* and *visual grammar* intersect in platform-based environments. Moreover, world-leading destinations such as France—regularly celebrated as the most visited country in the world for its UNESCO heritage sites, gastronomy, landscapes, and advanced tourism infrastructure (ETIAS France, 2024; Barrère, et.al. 2009; Popescu, 2017)—have not been systematically analyzed through this combined lens. Understanding how France is discursively framed online is particularly important, as it offers insights into how platform economies sustain and reproduce global tourism hierarchies.

This study addresses these gaps by applying a multimodal approach that integrates lexical analysis with Kress and van Leeuwen's Grammar of Visual Design (2006). Specifically, this study investigates how France is discursively framed as "paradise" on the Lonely Planet platform. It focuses on two dimensions: (1) the evaluative lexical strategies that construct affordability and desirability, and (2) the visual semiotic resources that reinforce narratives of accessibility and prestige. By combining these perspectives, the research aims to demonstrate how platform-based tourism discourse not only promotes destinations but also sustains broader hierarchies of global desirability.

1.1. Literature Review

Tourism websites increasingly rely on multimodal discourse to construct persuasive destination narratives. In digital media, communication rarely occurs through text alone; it integrates images, layouts, and textual elements to produce meaning (Kress, 2010). Recent studies of Indonesian tourism websites demonstrate how destinations such as Makassar and Toraja are framed through the combined use of pronouns, sensory adjectives, and culturally resonant visuals. For instance, the Makassar tourism page engages readers directly through the second-person pronoun "you," while accompanying imagery of local traditions signals cultural depth. Similarly, Toraja's website highlights "relaxing ambiance, cool temperature, and beautiful views," showing how linguistic strategies and visual representation converge to create a sensory and affective allure (Sukma, 2021). These findings emphasize that multimodality is not merely decorative but central to the meaning-making processes that frame places as desirable destinations.

A key aspect of persuasive destination discourse lies in the use of metadiscursive strategies, particularly in constructing identity roles for both the narrator and the audience. Research comparing official Facebook posts from Xiamen, China, and Sydney, Australia, shows that "inviter" language dominated Sydney's promotional discourse, while "introducer" language appeared more frequently in Xiamen's case (Huang, et. al. 2023). These differences reveal culturally distinct approaches to persuasion: one emphasizes relational closeness, while the other privileges descriptive authority. In both contexts, however, metadiscourse plays a critical role in shaping engagement and credibility. Such strategies function not only to present information but also to frame identity positions, inviting tourists to imagine themselves as explorers, participants, or insiders within the destination.

Another rhetorical device central to online tourism narratives is the use of temporal ambiguity. By deliberately blurring distinctions between past, present, and future, tourism slogans and taglines invite readers to envision a timeless experience. For example, the slogan "Greece. All Time Classic." constructs an enduring cultural imaginary that allows audiences to perceive Greece as perpetually relevant and desirable (Pan & Schmitt, 2019). This type of temporal framing creates a fantasy of permanence, where holidays are not bound to specific seasons or fleeting experiences but instead belong to a universal narrative of paradise. Such strategies strengthen the affective power of tourism discourse by transforming destinations into both heritage sites and aspirational futures.

Recent scholarship has also highlighted contrasts between official tourism discourse and user-generated content (UGC). On platforms like Airbnb, hosts often reframe everyday spaces—such as immigrant food markets, local parks, or residential neighborhoods—as "must-see" attractions, in contrast to the official discourse that typically emphasizes iconic landmarks. For example, a study of Berlin revealed how hosts constructed alternative imaginaries of the city that differed significantly from the traditional tourist board's framing (Guttentag, 2019). These alternative narratives demonstrate that tourism discourse is not monopolized by official agencies but is instead negotiated and recontextualized by a variety of actors. This tension illustrates how digital platforms can democratize destination representation, even as they reproduce certain dominant tropes.

In addition, semiotics and branding play an increasingly prominent role in what scholars call "smart tourism." Institutional websites now deploy a range of verbal and visual signs to project a "techtopian" identity,

emphasizing innovation, intelligence, and modernity (Gretzel et al., 2020). Such semiotic practices do not simply inform visitors but actively brand destinations as technologically advanced and future-oriented. The deliberate use of logos, color schemes, and terminologies conveys exclusivity and prestige, positioning the destination not only as a holiday site but also as a symbol of progress. This suggests that online framing strategies extend beyond cultural or natural attractions to encompass ideological constructions of modernity.

Despite this growing body of research, several gaps remain. Many studies examine either social media or promotional texts in isolation, but fewer conduct integrated multimodal discourse analyses of official travel websites where text, images, and layout converge in structured ways. Moreover, although branding and multimodal strategies are well-documented, relatively little attention has been paid to how temporal framing and metadiscursive roles operate simultaneously in constructing online paradise narratives. Finally, while user-generated and official narratives have been studied separately, the interaction between these two forms of discourse on the same platform has not been sufficiently theorized.

The present study addresses these gaps by offering a site-specific multimodal discourse analysis of a travel website. It explores how linguistic tropes, visual grammar, and metadiscursive roles interact to frame the destination as a timeless paradise, while also considering how these narratives align with or diverge from alternative framings. By integrating these dimensions, this research contributes methodologically to multimodal discourse studies and empirically to the understanding of how "paradise" is constructed and circulated in online tourism promotion.

2. Method

The data for this study is drawn from the Lonely Planet article *"Paris on a budget: affordable ways to experience the city - Lonely Planet"*. The article was chosen because Lonely Planet is a highly influential source of destination information, and the piece integrates both textual and visual elements to construct a coherent narrative of Paris as an affordable, yet culturally rich, destination. The analysis focuses on the entire article, including its written text and accompanying photographs, in order to capture the multimodal strategies through which affordability and desirability are framed.

The textual element is analyzed using lexical analysis while the visual component is analyzed using the Grammar of Visual Design (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006), focusing on composition, framing, perspective, color, and the representation of people and places. For instance, wide-angle shots of landmarks and urban streets will be examined for how they construct accessibility and openness, while images of cafés, hostels, or parks will be studied for how they visually reinforce the theme of affordability and everyday experience. Attention is also paid to the interplay between text and image—for example, whether captions and images work together to anchor meanings of "value" or "authentic Parisian life."

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Result

3.1.1 Visual Analysis

Below are images sourced from the Lonely Planet France travel website, showcasing some of the country's main tourist attractions.

Figure 1. Au Bon Jardinier mouffetard

This image shows a vibrant Parisian market stall, "Au Bon Jardinier," overflowing with fresh fruits and vegetables. The composition is dynamic, with colorful produce arranged in neat rows under red awnings, immediately drawing the viewer's eye to the abundance on display. The perspective places the viewer at street level, as if standing before the stall, enhancing a sense of immediacy and inviting participation. Bright reds, greens, yellows, and oranges create a lively palette, symbolizing freshness, health, and the sensory richness of local food culture. The scene, framed by surrounding cafés and buildings, represents the market not only as a place of commerce but also as a cultural and social hub that embodies Parisian everyday life.

Figure 2. Hôtel de Ville in Paris

This image captures the Hôtel de Ville in Paris, framed by its grand Renaissance Revival façade with intricate sculptures and a central clock tower. The composition is symmetrical, directing the viewer's gaze to the building's center and reinforcing its authority and historical significance. The perspective is frontal and eye-level, positioning the viewer directly in front of the landmark, enhancing a sense of stability and monumentality. Soft daylight highlights the pale stone against the clear sky, while the blurred figures of people in motion across the square introduce dynamism and contrast, symbolizing the coexistence of tradition and modern urban life. The scene represents the Hôtel de Ville not only as a political and architectural symbol but also as a lived space where culture and community intersect.

Figure 3. The Seine in Paris

This image portrays a group of cyclists riding along a designated bike lane in an urban setting, lined with autumn-colored trees. The composition leads the viewer's eye into the depth of the scene, following the cyclists toward the background, which conveys movement and rhythm. The perspective is slightly behind and at eye level, placing the viewer as part of the cycling flow, reinforcing inclusivity and shared mobility. The contrast of the blue bicycle lane signs with the warm tones of the trees highlights order, safety, and the integration of sustainable transport in the city. The presence of multiple cyclists symbolizes community, eco-friendly urban living, and the everyday rhythm of Parisian life, where modern infrastructure supports both practicality and culture.

Figure 4. The bastille district

This image depicts a lively French street market, bustling with vendors and shoppers. The composition is linear, with stalls arranged along both sides of the street, drawing the viewer's gaze toward the vanishing point at the horizon, which creates depth and movement. The perspective places the viewer at eye level within the crowd, enhancing immersion and making one feel part of the market experience. Bright colors from the produce, striped awnings, and clothing create vibrancy, reflecting abundance, diversity, and everyday life. The presence of people of different ages, including families and vendors, emphasizes the market as a social and cultural space, representing community, tradition, and the rhythm of local French urban life.

Figure 5. Crepes in one of the restaurants

This image shows the preparation of French crêpes on a hot plate, with one crêpe topped with raspberries and drizzled chocolate. The composition directs attention to the foreground crêpe, with the spatula and the cook's red clothing framing the act of cooking, emphasizing craftsmanship and immediacy. The perspective is close-up and angled, positioning the viewer as if standing directly at the food stall, creating intimacy and sensory appeal. The warm tones of the crêpe, contrasted with the vivid red raspberries and the cook's attire, highlight freshness and indulgence, while the slightly messy surroundings suggest authenticity and artisanal preparation rather than industrial uniformity. Though the cook is only partially visible, the scene represents both the food and the human presence behind it, evoking French street culture and the culinary artistry that is part of everyday life.

Figure 6. Rue Mouffetard

The image presents neatly arranged stacks of French cheeses, with labels such as "Crottin de Chavignol" serving as focal points. The tight grouping of cheeses without strong borders conveys unity and abundance within culinary diversity, while the slightly elevated perspective mirrors a customer's viewpoint, inviting viewers into the market scene. Warm earthy colors highlight naturalness and artisanal authenticity, reinforcing a rustic atmosphere. Although people are absent, the regional labels evoke French identity and heritage, positioning the cheeses as cultural signifiers rooted in place and tradition.

Figure 7. The Louvre Museum

This image shows the Louvre Museum with its iconic glass pyramid at the center, framed by the grand historic architecture surrounding it. The composition emphasizes contrast between old and new, as the pyramid's modern geometric design stands out against the ornate classical façade. The slightly low-angle perspective enhances the monumentality of both structures, positioning the viewer as a spectator before a cultural landmark. Bright colors—blue skies, golden stone, and transparent glass—convey vibrancy and openness, reinforcing the Louvre's identity as a global symbol of art and history. The presence of diverse groups of people in the foreground highlights the site's role as an international meeting point, representing cultural exchange and shared heritage.

Figure 8. The Palace of Versailles

This image depicts the Palace of Versailles, with its ornate Baroque façade crowned by the French national flag. The composition is symmetrical, guiding the viewer's gaze directly toward the central building, which conveys power, grandeur, and order. The perspective is slightly low and frontal, making the palace appear imposing and majestic, emphasizing its historical role as a symbol of monarchy and authority. The warm golds and reds of the architecture contrast with the clear blue sky, highlighting richness, opulence, and national pride. Although no people are shown, the French flag prominently displayed represents the palace not just as a historic monument but as a continuing emblem of French cultural identity and heritage.

3.1.2 Linguistic Analysis

3.1.2.1 Direct Address and Imperatives

The article employs a highly interactive and engaging style, most notably through the frequent use of the second-person pronoun "you" ("you'll find a wealth of ways," "you might want to think outside the box"). This creates immediacy and intimacy between writer and reader, aligning with research that identifies second-person address as a key engagement marker in tourism discourse (Hyland, 2019; Huang, et. al. 2023). Such direct address positions the reader not as a passive recipient of advice but as an empowered traveler with agency to shape their own experience, a function also emphasized by Zein and Afdal (2024) in their corpus-based study of pronoun use in tourism discourse. Complementing this are imperatives and directive structures, such as "Choose your season wisely" or "Learn the art of the flâneur," which function as instructional yet inclusive strategies. As Sujatna (2024) notes in her discussion of "directive politeness," such commands in promotional texts are not authoritarian but framed as friendly tips that guide readers while preserving their autonomy.

3.1.2.2 Evaluative Lexis and Contrastive Framing

The discourse employs evaluative lexis to reframe affordability as a pleasurable pursuit rather than a restriction. Expressions like "pocket-priced cuisine," "excellent value for money," and "picnic perfection" emphasize enjoyment, while adjectives such as "glorious" and "majestic" reinforce affective appeal. This rhetorical strategy reflects Magagnino's (2021) findings that evaluative vocabulary in tourism discourse reconciles economic constraints with aspirational experiences. Similarly, the article mobilizes contrastive framing between luxury and budget. Paris' reputation for haute couture and "legendary luxury hotels" is acknowledged, but then balanced with alternatives such as hostels, street food, or markets, coupled with reassuring phrases like "don't despair." This juxtaposition, identified by Malenkina (2018) as a common persuasive move, validates the audience's aspirations while offering accessible pathways, echoing Zein and Afdal's (2024) insight that tourism language often negotiates inclusivity and prestige simultaneously.

3.1.2.3 Metaphors, Identity, and Lexicogrammar of Accessibility

Cultural metaphors and identity markers further enrich the rhetoric, particularly through the figure of the "flâneur," which elevates cost-saving walking into an act of cultural sophistication. Such metaphorical

framing, as Silaški and Đurović (2019) argue, strengthens perceived authenticity and cultural belonging. Similarly, collocational clusters like "hostel dorm bed," "carafe d'eau," and "Navigo Easy card" form a lexicogrammar of accessibility, providing linguistic "scripts" that guide behavior and planning (Jaworska, 2019). The text's reassuring and inclusive tone—evident in conversational markers like "voilà" or "don't despair"—balances authority with solidarity, echoing Hyland's (2019) findings on metadiscourse and Dann's (2019) notion of the "language of social belonging."

3.1.2.4 *Enumeration, Temporal Framing, and Cultural Enrichment*

Other discursive strategies include enumeration, which provides clarity and transparency in sections like "Daily costs" (e.g., "Fresh baguette: €1.30; Coffee: €3–4"), thereby fostering trust through semantic certainty (Jaworska, 2019). Temporal framing also positions time as a resource to optimize, as when mid-week May is described as a "sweet spot" for affordability (Malenkina, 2018). Local lexicon ("flâneur," "prix fixe menu") and intertextual references to figures such as Oscar Wilde and Édith Piaf embed cultural authenticity and symbolic prestige. Finally, embodied metaphors like "freewheel along the Seine" cast budget travel as immersive, sensorial, and enriching (Magagnino, 2021; Dann, 2019). Altogether, these strategies construct a discourse where affordability, culture, and identity intersect, reframing budget tourism in Paris as an empowering and culturally prestigious mode of experience.

4. Conclusion

The analysis of images sourced from the Lonely Planet France travel website reveals a multifaceted representation of France's tourist landscape—where cultural heritage, local life, and everyday authenticity converge to construct a compelling travel narrative. Visually, the selected images depict iconic landmarks such as the Louvre Museum and the Palace of Versailles alongside vibrant scenes of markets, street food, and communal spaces like Rue Mouffetard and the Bastille district. This juxtaposition of the monumental and the mundane illustrates a deliberate narrative strategy that invites travelers to engage not only with France's historical grandeur but also with its living culture.

Linguistically, the accompanying discourse reinforces this approach through strategies that emphasize inclusion, personalization, and empowerment. The frequent use of direct address, imperatives, and culturally rich vocabulary transforms readers into active participants rather than passive observers. Through evaluative lexis, contrastive framing, and metaphorical language, budget-conscious travel is reimagined not as a compromise but as a refined, culturally immersive experience. These linguistic choices align closely with visual elements that highlight sensory richness, human presence, and accessibility.

Together, the visual and linguistic data construct a tourism discourse that democratizes the French travel experience—bridging iconic prestige with everyday charm, and luxury with affordability. Ultimately, this discourse not only promotes France as a destination but also reshapes how travel itself is imagined: as a journey into cultural identity, community, and lived experience.

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