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Representing Dayak Cultural Heritage in English-Language Government Tourism Texts: A Content Analysis of Central Kalimantan

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ABSTRACT

Cultural heritage plays a central role in tourism communication, particularly when local traditions are introduced to international audiences through English-language texts. This study examined how Dayak cultural heritage in Central Kalimantan is represented in English-language tourism texts published by official government institutions. A qualitative-dominant mixed-methods content analysis was applied to six documents from Indonesia.travel, the national tourism portal, selected through purposive sampling; the provincial tourism website offered no English version. Seventy-one textual segments were coded using Moran's five dimensions of culture, and the treatment of culture-specific terms was examined. Products dominated the texts (42.2%), followed by perspectives (26.7%) and practices (23.3%), whereas communities (7.8%) and persons (0%) were marginal. Values appeared mainly as general English abstractions concentrated in two documents, without local concepts or explanation of their spiritual basis, and no Dayak sub-ethnic group, individual, or indigenous religion was named. Local terms were retained with brief, functional, and sometimes inconsistent glosses. These patterns indicate that official tourism discourse presents Dayak heritage mainly as a set of attractions rather than as a living system of values. The study recommends fuller contextualization in institutional tourism writing and critical use of such texts in English language teaching.

Keywords: *Cultural Representation; Culture-Specific Terms; Dayak Cultural Heritage; Moran's Dimensions of Culture; Tourism Discourse*

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INTRODUCTION

Culture shapes the identity of a community and distinguishes one society from another. In tourism communication, cultural heritage is commonly introduced to visitors through written descriptions, promotional materials, and digital information, which allow people from different cultural backgrounds to learn about local traditions, social practices, and community values. Because English functions as the main language of international tourism, English-language tourism texts have become an important medium for presenting local heritage to international audiences. The language of these texts deserves attention because, as Dann (1996) argues, tourism discourse does not merely transfer information; it persuades and shapes how destinations and their people are perceived.

Central Kalimantan is culturally diverse and is home to a range of Dayak sub-ethnic groups, including the Ngaju, Ot Danum, Ma'anyan, and Lawangan, each with distinct traditions and identities (Suswandari et al., 2022). One prominent example of this heritage is *Huma Betang*, the traditional communal longhouse. Beyond its physical structure, *Huma Betang* embodies a philosophy of togetherness, equality, kinship, and mutual cooperation that continues to guide social life in the province (Pelu & Tarantang, 2018; Rico et al., 2022). When such heritage is presented in English, its meanings may be conveyed through local terms, descriptive expressions, or broader cultural explanations. How these elements are selected and described matters because international readers may not share the cultural knowledge needed to interpret them.

Representing local culture in another language involves several linguistic challenges. Culture-specific terms often have no direct equivalents in English, and certain practices and values require additional explanation to become accessible to outsiders (Baker, 2018; Newmark, 1988). Retaining a local term can preserve its original identity, whereas a general English description may help readers grasp its basic meaning. However, a description that focuses only on physical characteristics or tourist appeal may leave important social and spiritual meanings unexplained. The representation of cultural heritage should therefore be examined not only in terms of which cultural objects are mentioned but also through the linguistic choices used to describe them.

Previous research has approached this issue mainly from the perspective of tourism translation. Agorni (2012, 2018) emphasizes that translating tourism texts entails a responsibility to mediate cultural difference rather than simply replace source-culture references with familiar ones, while Katan (2012, 2016) argues that effective tourism texts should act as cultural informers that move readers beyond a superficial tourist gaze. Sulaiman and Wilson (2018) propose a cultural-conceptual model for translating tourism promotional materials, and studies on Japanese and Chinese destinations show that translation procedures for culture-specific items actively construct a destination's image (Amenador & Wang, 2023; Turzynski-Azimi, 2021). Chen and Zhou (2024) further demonstrate that culturally based semantic losses occur even in widely used international travel guides. In the Indonesian context, studies have identified the strategies used to translate culture-specific terms in culinary tourism texts (Arifin, 2019) and the translation problems found in regional tourism brochures (Napu & Pakaya, 2021). Closest to the present study, Bangsa and Sahayu (2026) analyzed a bilingual guidebook for tour guides in Lamandau, Central Kalimantan, and found that material, religious, and social references were usually retained with added explanation, whereas references to arts and knowledge were often left untranslated with little elaboration.

A second line of research has used Moran's (2001) five dimensions of culture to examine cultural content in English learning materials. Studies of Indonesian EFL textbooks have shown that local cultural content tends to be selective and that products are represented far more often than practices and perspectives (Nurjanah & Umaemah, 2019; Qodriani & Kardiansyah, 2018). These two lines of research leave a gap.

Translation studies have focused on strategies for individual terms without mapping which dimensions of a culture are made visible, while Moran-based studies have focused almost exclusively on textbooks. Moreover, the existing Central Kalimantan study examined a printed guidebook produced for tour guides rather than English-language texts that government institutions publish directly for international readers. To the authors' knowledge, no study has combined Moran's framework with an analysis of culture-specific terms to examine how Dayak heritage is officially represented in government tourism texts.

Addressing this gap is also relevant to English language teaching. Intercultural communicative competence requires learners not only to understand other cultures but also to explain their own culture to others (Byram, 2021). Cultural texts have been shown to support the development of this competence among Indonesian university students (Permatasari & Andriyanti, 2021), and studies assessing the intercultural competence of Indonesian teachers and students indicate that it remains an area requiring further development (Idris, 2020; Tambunan et al., 2021). Official tourism texts about learners' own region are authentic materials that may serve this purpose, provided their representations are critically understood.

Based on these considerations, the present study examined the representation of Dayak cultural heritage in English-language government tourism texts concerning Central Kalimantan. It addressed three research questions: (1) What types of Dayak cultural elements are represented in the texts according to Moran's five dimensions of culture? (2) What linguistic choices are used to describe cultural heritage and culture-specific terms? (3) Which cultural values, identities, and perspectives are emphasized, simplified, or left unexplained? By answering these questions, the study contributes to research on English-language tourism communication and offers pedagogical insights into the use of local cultural texts for developing intercultural awareness in English language learning.

METHODS OF RESEARCH

1) Research Design

This study employed a qualitative-dominant mixed-methods content analysis. Because no experimental manipulation or measurement was involved, the study did not use independent and dependent variables. Instead, it focused on three analytical aspects: the types of Dayak cultural heritage represented in the texts, the linguistic choices used to describe cultural elements, and the cultural values, identities, and perspectives that were emphasized or left unexplained. The analysis was guided by Moran's (2001) five dimensions of culture: products, practices, perspectives, communities, and persons.

2) Data Sources

The data consisted of publicly accessible English-language tourism texts published by official government institutions concerning Dayak cultural heritage in Central Kalimantan. Two institutional sources were examined: Indonesia.travel, the official national tourism portal managed by the Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Indonesia, and visit.kalteng.go.id, the tourism website managed by the Central Kalimantan provincial culture and tourism office (Disbudpar Kalteng). The provincial website was found to provide its content in Indonesian only and therefore could not be included in the English-language corpus; this absence is itself discussed as a finding.

The documents were selected through purposive sampling based on four criteria: (a) they were published or managed by an official government institution; (b) their main text was written in English; (c) they described Dayak cultural heritage in Central Kalimantan; and (d) they were publicly accessible online.

Documents were included only when they provided substantive descriptions of Dayak heritage rather than merely mentioning a destination or event. On the English edition of Indonesia.travel, eleven candidate entries related to Dayak culture in Central Kalimantan were identified. Five of them, covering the Dayak Ngaju language, the *katambung* percussion instrument, the *Deder* dance, the *suling balawung* flute, and *bangamat* cuisine, were presented only in Indonesian and were excluded. The final corpus therefore comprised six documents, listed in Table 1, all of which were accessed on 22 November 2026.

Table 1. Research Corpus

Code	Document title	Text type	Segments
D1	Huma Betang Traditional House	Travel idea (heritage)	22
D2	Central Kalimantan	Destination overview	7
D3	Museum Balanga	Destination (museum)	10
D4	Tari Hugo dan Huda	Travel idea (culture)	18
D5	Isen Mulang Cultural Festival	Event page	6
D6	Isen Mulang Cultural Festival 2018: Explore the Rich Culture of Central Kalimantan	Event article	8
Total			**71**

(Source: Indonesia.travel, English edition, accessed 22 November 2026)

The unit of analysis was the meaningful textual segment, defined as a sentence or list item expressing a relevant idea about Dayak cultural heritage. The surrounding paragraph or section served as the context unit to preserve the meaning of each segment during coding. Practical information, such as addresses, transportation, ticket prices, opening hours, and general facilities, as well as purely evaluative statements that referred to "Dayak culture" without identifying any cultural element, was not coded. Indonesian-language versions of the same entries were consulted as supporting references when relevant, but they were not automatically treated as source texts of the English versions, because the direction and process of translation could not be confirmed.

3) Research Instrument

The main instrument was a document analysis and coding sheet developed by the researchers. It recorded document information (title, text type, source link, and access date), the extracted textual segments, and their codes. The coding categories were operationalized from Moran's (2001) five dimensions, as summarized in Table 2. Additional fields recorded the local terms used, their English rendering, the presence or absence of cultural explanations, and contextual meanings. A segment could be assigned to more than one category when its content supported multiple classifications.

Table 2. Operational Definitions of the Coding Categories

Dimension	Operational definition	Examples of coded content
Products	Tangible or identifiable cultural creations and artifacts, including buildings, tools, clothing, food, crafts, and art forms	*Huma Betang*, *balanga* jars, *mandau*, beadwork, *Juhu Umbut Rattan*
Practices	Actions and interactions carried out by members of the culture, including rituals, ceremonies, performances, games, and daily customs	*Tari Hugo dan Huda*, the Isen Mulang festival, *Lawang Sakepeng*, *Besei Kambe*

Dimension	Operational definition	Examples of coded content
Perspectives	Beliefs, values, attitudes, and worldviews that give meaning to products and guide practices	Togetherness, respect for ancestors, connection with nature, *Isen Mulang*
Communities	Specific groups and social contexts in which the culture is practiced, including sub-ethnic groups, villages, families, and institutions	Families sharing a longhouse, Tumbang Manggu Village, "Dayak tribes"
Persons	Individual members who embody the culture or speak on its behalf	No instance found in the corpus

(Source: Adapted from Moran, 2001)

4) Research Procedures

The research was conducted in six stages. First, the official tourism websites of the national and provincial governments were searched for entries on Dayak cultural heritage in Central Kalimantan. Second, the candidate documents were screened against the selection criteria. Third, relevant textual segments were extracted together with their surrounding context and document information. Fourth, preliminary coding was conducted on D1, the longest document (22 segments), to test the clarity and applicability of the category definitions; this stage led to two refinements of the coding rules, namely the exclusion of practical visitor information and of purely evaluative references to Dayak culture. Fifth, the refined coding framework was applied to the full corpus. Coding decisions and their justifications were recorded in the coding sheet and reviewed by both authors, and disagreements were resolved through discussion. Finally, the coded data were organized for quantitative and qualitative analysis.

5) Data Analysis

The quantitative component counted the number of category assignments for each of Moran's dimensions to describe the frequency and distribution of the represented cultural elements. Because a segment could receive more than one code, the total number of category assignments exceeded the number of analyzed segments; percentages were therefore calculated from the total number of assignments. The qualitative component examined how cultural elements were presented through linguistic choices, descriptive expressions, and contextual explanations. The treatment of culture-specific terms was classified with reference to Newmark (1988) and Baker (2018) into retention without explanation, retention with a superordinate term, retention with a descriptive gloss, and retention with a functional gloss. The quantitative and qualitative findings were then integrated to explain patterns in the representation of Dayak cultural heritage in government tourism communication.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings in line with the three research questions and discusses them in relation to previous studies. The first subsection reports the distribution of cultural elements across Moran's dimensions, the second examines the linguistic treatment of culture-specific terms, the third discusses the values and identities that were emphasized or left unexplained, and the fourth considers the pedagogical implications.

1) Distribution of Dayak Cultural Heritage across Moran's Five Dimensions

The analysis of 71 textual segments from six documents yielded 90 category assignments. Their

distribution across Moran's (2001) five dimensions, by document, is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Distribution of Category Assignments across Moran's Five Dimensions

Document	Products	Practices	Perspectives	Communities	Persons	Total
D1	15	3	9	1	0	28
D2	7	1	1	1	0	10
D3	9	1	1	1	0	12
D4	5	6	10	1	0	22
D5	1	4	2	1	0	8
D6	1	6	1	2	0	10
Total (n)	**38**	**21**	**24**	**7**	**0**	**90**
Percentage	**42.2**	**23.3**	**26.7**	**7.8**	**0.0**	**100**

(Source: Data analysis, 2026)

As Table 3 shows, products were the most frequently represented dimension, accounting for 42.2% of all category assignments. The texts described the physical structure of *Huma Betang* in considerable detail, including its length, stilts, ironwood construction, palm-leaf roofing, and room layout (D1); listed the collections of Museum Balanga, such as antique *balanga* jars, weapons, traditional clothing, and miniature longhouses (D3); and promoted local dishes and souvenirs such as beadwork, woven rattan, and wooden carvings (D2). Concrete objects are easy to describe in English and function as visible markers of distinctiveness, a tendency consistent with the persuasive orientation of tourism language described by Dann (1996). The same dominance of products has been reported in Moran-based analyses of Indonesian EFL textbooks (Nurjanah & Umaemah, 2019), which suggests that this pattern also characterizes institutional tourism communication.

Perspectives ranked second (26.7%), slightly above practices (23.3%). At first sight, this suggests that the texts paid considerable attention to Dayak values. A closer reading, however, shows that 19 of the 24 perspective codes came from only two documents (D1 and D4), where values were presented in list form under headings such as "Philosophical Meaning." The values named there, such as togetherness, harmony, strength, gratitude, respect for ancestors, and connection with nature, were expressed as general English abstractions that could describe many cultures. No local value concept was used; D1, for instance, did not mention principles such as *belom bahadat* or *handep*, even though such values are central to the meaning of *Huma Betang* in Central Kalimantan society (Pelu & Tarantang, 2018; Rico et al., 2022). Elsewhere, spiritual or symbolic meanings were asserted without explanation: Bukit Batu was said to have "high spiritual value" for the Dayak people (D2), and the *balanga* jar was said to hold deep historical and symbolic value (D3), but neither text explained what these values are.

Practices accounted for 23.3% of the assignments and were concentrated in the dance and festival texts (D4, D5, and D6). They consisted mainly of performances, competitions, and traditional games presented as attractions for visitors, such as the Isen Mulang carnival, *Sepak Sawut*, and *Besei Kambe*. Life-cycle and religious rituals were almost absent: D3 mentioned artifacts and tools used in religious rituals without naming any ritual, and no document in the English corpus described *Tiwah*, the secondary burial ceremony of the Ngaju, or mentioned Kaharingan, the indigenous religion that underlies many Dayak practices. Communities appeared in only 7.8% of the assignments, always in general terms such as families sharing a longhouse, a traditional village, or "Dayak tribes." Persons were not represented at all. The only

named individual in the corpus, Tjilik Riwut, appeared solely in the names of an airport and a street in the practical information of D3.

2) Linguistic Treatment of Culture-Specific Terms

All six documents retained local terms in their original form, but the amount of explanation attached to them varied considerably. Representative examples are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Examples of Culture-Specific Terms and Their English Rendering

Local term	English rendering in the texts	Strategy	Document
Betang	"means longhouse"	Retention with descriptive gloss	D1
betang	"traditional betang houses"	Retention without explanation	D2
balanga	"a traditional Dayak jar"	Retention with descriptive gloss	D3
mandau	"traditional weapons such as mandau"	Retention with superordinate term	D3
Kalumpe	"Dayak cassava leaf vegetable"	Retention with descriptive gloss	D2
Tari Hugo dan Huda	"a traditional dance"	Retention with superordinate term	D4
Isen Mulang	"Spirit of Perseverance"	Retention with interpretive gloss	D5
Isen Mulang	"never retreat"	Retention with literal gloss	D6
Lawang Sakepeng	"martial art"	Retention with functional gloss	D6
Habayang	"spinning top"	Retention with functional gloss	D6

(Source: Data analysis, 2026)

The dominant strategy was retention with a brief gloss, usually placed in parentheses or in an appositive phrase. This strategy maintains local color and signals that readers are encountering an indigenous culture, while giving them a minimal key to its meaning. A similar tendency was reported by Bangsa and Sahayu (2026), who found that material references in a Central Kalimantan tourist guidebook were generally retained with added explanation, and by Arifin (2019), who identified loanwords with explanation as a recurrent strategy in Indonesian culinary tourism texts. However, the glosses in the government texts were short and mostly functional. Rendering *Lawang Sakepeng* as "martial art" or *Habayang* as "spinning top" maps Dayak practices onto familiar English categories, which aids comprehension but erases what distinguishes them. The *mandau* was introduced only through the superordinate "traditional weapons" and, in the same sentence, linked to weapons used in the 2001 ethnic conflict in Sampit (D3), so that its ancestral and ritual significance was replaced by an association with violence. This supports Baker's (2018) view that translation is never a neutral transfer of meaning, because target-language choices shape how cultural concepts are perceived.

The analysis also revealed inconsistency across documents. *Betang* was glossed as "longhouse" in D1 but left unexplained in D2 and D3, so that readers who reached the latter pages first received no explanation at all. The provincial motto *Isen Mulang* was rendered as "never retreat" in D6 but as "Spirit of Perseverance" in D5, two renderings that frame the same value as defiance and as endurance, respectively. Non-standard forms also appeared, such as the adjective "Dayaknese" in D6. Such semantic reduction and inconsistency mirror the culturally based losses that Chen and Zhou (2024) observed in international travel guides and confirm that the treatment of culture-specific items contributes to

constructing a destination image (Turzynski-Azimi, 2021). They also resonate with the problems found in regional Indonesian tourism brochures (Napu & Pakaya, 2021).

A further finding concerns language access itself. Five of the eleven candidate entries on the English edition of the national portal, including the entry on the Dayak Ngaju language, were available only in Indonesian, and the provincial tourism website offered no English version. As a result, the heritage elements that international readers can access in English are limited to a small set of houses, objects, dances, and festivals. Following Sulaiman and Wilson's (2018) cultural-conceptual approach and Katan's (2016) call for texts that act as cultural informers, institutional writers could use consistent glosses, add short explanatory notes on values and rituals, and complete the English versions of existing entries.

3) Values, Identities, and Perspectives Emphasized or Left Unexplained

The values that the texts emphasized were positive and consensual: togetherness, harmony, unity, strength, perseverance, and the preservation of tradition. These values are attractive for promotion and easy to communicate in English. In contrast, the spiritual and religious foundations of Dayak culture were simplified or left unexplained. References to ancestors, spiritual value, and religious rituals appeared only as brief labels, Kaharingan was never named, and none of the documents explained how these beliefs shape the objects and practices they described. Agorni (2018) notes that tourism promotional discourse often adopts an outsider perspective that selects cultural elements according to what visitors are assumed to expect; the Central Kalimantan texts reflect this orientation by offering values that are pleasant to read but detached from their cultural source.

Identity representation was also simplified. None of the six documents named a Dayak sub-ethnic group; the texts referred only to "the Dayak people," "Dayak tribes," or the province's diverse ethnic cultures. This overlooks the internal diversity of Central Kalimantan, where groups such as the Ngaju, Ot Danum, Ma'anyan, and Lawangan maintain different languages, kinship systems, and customs (Suswandari et al., 2022). This homogenization may serve the purpose of building a unified regional brand, but it limits readers' understanding of the province's cultural plurality. The complete absence of persons further means that Dayak people appear as the collective subject of description rather than as named artisans, dancers, customary leaders, or narrators of their own heritage. Overall, the texts successfully promote Central Kalimantan as a culturally rich destination, but they display a superficiality bias in which indigenous perspectives are named rather than explained.

4) Pedagogical Implications for Intercultural Awareness in English Language Teaching

The findings have direct implications for English language teaching in Indonesia. Government tourism texts about Central Kalimantan are authentic, readily available, and locally relevant, which makes them potentially valuable materials. Tomlinson (2012) emphasizes that effective materials should engage learners with meaningful and authentic content, and local cultural texts can help learners connect English proficiency with the expression of their own identity. Permatasari and Andriyanti (2021) showed that cultural text-based teaching can improve the intercultural communicative competence of Indonesian university students, which suggests that tourism texts about learners' own region could serve a similar function.

However, the limitations identified in this study indicate that such texts should not be used uncritically. If learners encounter only simplified descriptions, they may come to view their own heritage through the eyes of an idealized foreign tourist. Byram's (2021) model of intercultural communicative

competence highlights critical cultural awareness as a core component, which requires learners to evaluate perspectives and practices in texts rather than simply absorb them. Teachers can therefore design activities in which learners identify which dimensions of culture are present or missing in a text, compare competing renderings such as "never retreat" and "Spirit of Perseverance" for *Isen Mulang*, consult community sources, and rewrite promotional paragraphs to include local value concepts, sub-ethnic groups, and community voices. Such tasks would develop both language skills and the ability to explain Dayak heritage accurately and respectfully in English.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that English-language government tourism texts about Central Kalimantan represent Dayak cultural heritage predominantly through tangible products (42.2%), followed by perspectives (26.7%) and practices (23.3%), while communities (7.8%) and persons (0%) are marginal or absent. Although values appear relatively often, they are concentrated in two documents and expressed as general English abstractions without local concepts or explanation of their spiritual basis. Culture-specific terms are consistently retained, but their glosses are brief, functional, and sometimes inconsistent across documents. Consequently, official tourism discourse currently functions more as a promotional showcase of attractions than as a vehicle for intercultural understanding.

The study contributes to research on tourism communication by combining Moran's dimensions of culture with an analysis of culture-specific terms, an approach that reveals both what is represented and how it is represented. Practically, government institutions are encouraged to provide English versions of existing entries, use consistent glosses, explain the values and beliefs behind cultural objects and practices, distinguish Dayak sub-ethnic groups, and involve community members in producing tourism content. English teachers are encouraged to use these texts critically as materials for developing intercultural awareness. This study was limited to six English-language documents from a single national portal accessed at one point in time and did not examine how international readers interpret them. Future research could include printed materials, regency-level publications, and social media content, compare government and community-produced texts, and investigate reader reception.

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