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## THE LANGUAGE OF DIGITAL FOOD DISCOURSE: A STUDY OF AUDIENCE RESPONSES IN SOCIAL MEDIA

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**Abstract.** While the power of comments in social media to build community and shape markets is widely acknowledged, their specific linguistic characteristics that enable this power, particularly within the domain of food discourse, are poorly understood. This study investigates the audience responses in culinary posts on social media, moving beyond thematic description to analyze the linguistic construction of evaluation. Employing a qualitative problem-driven content analysis with Appraisal Theory framework, 2,170 comments from 256 reels and captions of five prominent food-promoting accounts were analyzed in terms of their sentiment and specific resources of attitude. The results show the dominant positive comments (60.9% positive, 7.7% negative, 26.3% neutral, and 5.1% irrelevant). The appraisal analysis reveals that the positive and negative comments are built through a combination of affect (emotional expressions regarding the food, prices, and place), appreciation, particularly valuation (evaluations of quality, composition, worth of food, and dining experience), and judgement, particularly the social esteem (assessment of service). The linguistic mechanism of positive comments, manifesting as taste/price endorsements or tagging others, constitute unpaid brand amplification, transforming users into marketing actors. It can also strengthen community bonds. Negative responses, primarily citing unmet expectations regarding taste, portion size, pricing, and reservation issues, highlight gaps between marketing and real experience and function as a form of persuasive public warning. Neutral and irrelevant comments highlight the functional platform use, establishing the space as practical, public-source forum for customer decision making. This study indicates that user responses on these platforms are rich and strategic with community and market influence.

**Keywords:** appraisal, audience response, digital interaction, food discourse, social media.

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## ЯЗЫК ЦИФРОВОГО ГАСТРОНОМИЧЕСКОГО ДИСКУРСА: ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ РЕАКЦИИ АУДИТОРИИ В СОЦИАЛЬНЫХ МЕДИА

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**Аннотация.** Хотя способность комментариев в социальных медиа формировать сообщества и влиять на рынки общепризнана, их специфические лингвистические характеристики, обеспечивающие эту способность, особенно в рамках гастрономического дискурса, изучены недостаточно. В данном исследовании изучается реакция аудитории на посты кулинарной тематики в социальных сетях, выходя за рамки тематического описания и фокусируясь на лингвистическом конструировании оценки. Используя качественный проблемно-ориентированный контент-анализ в рамках теории оценки (Appraisal Theory), были проанализированы 2170 комментариев к 256 видеороликам и скрытым текстам пяти популярных аккаунтов, продвигающих гастрономический контент, с точки зрения их тональности и оценочности. Результаты показывают преобладание позитивных комментариев (60,9% позитивных, 7,7% негативных, 26,3% нейтральных и 5,1% нерелевантных). Анализ показывает, что позитивные и негативные комментарии формируются на основе аффекта (эмоциональные выражения, касающиеся еды, цен и места), оценки качества, состава, ценности еды и впечатлений от посещения заведения, и социального признания (оценка обслуживания). Лингвистический механизм позитивных комментариев, проявляющийся в виде одобрения вкуса/цены или отметок других пользователей, представляет собой неоплачиваемое усиление бренда, превращая пользователей в субъектов маркетинга. Это также может укреплять внутригрупповые связи. Негативные реакции, в основном связанные с неоправданными ожиданиями в отношении вкуса, размера порций, ценообразования и проблем с бронированием, выявляют разрыв между маркетингом и реальным опытом, являясь формой убедительного публичного предупреждения. Нейтральные и нерелевантные комментарии подчеркивают функциональное использование платформы, превращая это пространство в практический, общедоступный форум для принятия решений клиентами. Данное исследование показывает, что ответы пользователей на этих платформах разнообразны и стратегически ориентированы, они также обладают способностью влиять на общество и рынок.

**Ключевые слова:** оценка, реакция аудитории, цифровое взаимодействие, гастрономический дискурс, социальные сети.

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### Introduction

With the rapid development of technology today, the context where language is used is no longer limited to face-to-face everyday conversations but also includes indirect conversations in the virtual world. As stated by Floreddu & Cabiddu [1] and Meredith [2], there are currently at least 269 billion emails, 55 billion WhatsApp messages, 9.5 billion photos and videos on Instagram<sup>1</sup>, and around 500 million tweets on X per day. This indicates the increasing significance of social media, compared to when it first emerged. Therefore, social media is no longer only used by individuals as a means of

<sup>1</sup> It is banned in Russia, belongs to the META organization, which is recognized as extremist in the Russian Federation.



self-expression but also by corporations and startups to promote their products [3]. In this case, social media is also a very important business tool that can bring economic benefits to various companies [4].

The diversity of messages conveyed through various posts on social media has also been observed in several previous studies. One example is a study conducted by Nišić & Plavšić [5], which highlights how the media is used to construct reality in the society and its physical impact. In addition, Holmberg et al. [6] conducted an exploratory study on how young people share photos of the food they consume and its context, and Nugraha et al. [7] presented facts related to the use of social media to promote the world of tourism virtually.

One of social media platforms that allow users to share text, audio, and video is Instagram<sup>2</sup>. Initially launched in 2010 by Burb Inc for iOS, this platform was developed in 2012 to also be available on Android phones, followed by Windows 10 in 2016. As of April 2024, there were 2.2 billion active users globally, with India, the United States, Brazil, and Indonesia ranking 1–4. In Indonesia alone, Shewale [8] mentions that there are approximately 163.5 million people who use this platform for entertainment, content creation, and small business promotion.

In the Indonesian context, what Indonesians enjoy doing on social media is sharing text, photos, and videos of food, whether it is food they have produced themselves, consumed, or promoted as an endorsement [9]. Various accounts about culinary are quite popular with followers ranging from tens of thousands to millions of accounts. Some previous studies focused on the presentation of food on visual-based social media, such as by Kusumasondjaja & Tjiptono [9], Syahbani & Widodo [10], Aprilia [11], and Mulyani et al. [12]. These studies highlighted the visual elements of food photos and videos shared on the platform, their promotional contents and endorsements, and effects on buying decisions. Very limited studies focused on the fact that the audience responses to the posts provide similar importance to the successful marketing of the food.

Therefore, due to the widespread use of visual-based social media in Indonesia for various purposes and lack of study regarding food discourse, this study examines the use of Instagram<sup>3</sup> as a medium of communication and promotion for culinary entrepreneurs and the audience responses to the products displayed. Yogyakarta was chosen as the research setting due to the diverse backgrounds of its residents, who come from various cities in Indonesia and from other countries, which is expected to reveal more about the topic being studied.

Focusing on audience comments, this study systematically analysed their sentiment tendencies and linguistic compositions by combining sentiment with appraisal analysis. Sentiment analysis is employed to see whether social media users express positive, negative, neutral, or irrelevant attitudes toward the promoted products. Meanwhile, the appraisal theory is used to investigate those evaluative linguistic acts more deeply, as the comments are basically used to assess the taste, price, and service. Within the appraisal theory, this study focuses on its attitude system, which deals with the “feelings, including emotional reactions, judgements of behaviour and evaluation of things” [13]. In this way, this study reveals the general tendency of users’ comments on food promotions and uncover their specific discursive strategies.

### Literature Review

Given that interactions today are not only physical but also non-physical through the Internet, the language used in interactions has undergone many changes, both in terms of the linguistic forms and contexts. Various forms that were once considered unusual or impossible to use can become very popular in the virtual world. One of the most common examples is the use of abbreviations for the sake of message effectiveness, such as *cmiiw* – *correct me if I am wrong* and *pap* – *post a picture*. This style of language is widely used in the virtual world in the context of informal communication, for example

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on social media. Social media is defined as various online platforms that allow users to interact and communicate with one another [14, 15]. Roy [16] states that social media is not merely a technology but a techno-social system, in which various layers of information are presented, not only those that are technically presented through technology.

Various discourses and topics are shared on social media. One of them is about food, where food-related texts, photos, and videos are shared, whether they are produced by the users themselves, consumed, or promoted as endorsements [10, 17]. This digital discourse on food does not merely serve as a platform for promoting the products being shared but also reflects the cultural, economic, social, and political aspects surrounding them [17]. Therefore, discussions about food are significant both materially and ideologically [17, 18]. The elements that make up posts about food, the communication strategies used by account owners, and their impact on the audience are some of the things that cannot be overlooked in studies about food on social media [18].

Because social media posts involve various modes of communication, including visual, aural, and verbal, interaction with the audience is essential. Likes, comments, and other responses from users can indicate the success of the account owner's information delivery [17, 18]. The responses given by the audience can vary, in the form of positive responses that agree with the content of the post, negative responses in the form of statements of disagreement with one or all of the things conveyed in the post, neutral responses, or responses that are irrelevant to the information presented.

While those kinds of responses may reveal the general profile of users' comments, they fail to capture the specific linguistic resources that they employ to express their opinions or evaluate their experiences regarding the food promotion. Therefore, to precisely capture those linguistic features, this study applied the appraisal theory, particularly its attitude system. Attitude is a framework for mapping feelings. This system is divided into three regions of feelings: affect, judgment, and appreciation, encompassing positive and negative feelings [13]. Affect, which concerns with a person's feelings, is divided into un/happiness, in/security, and dis/satisfaction. Meanwhile, judgement evaluates a person's attitude measured to social esteem (normality, capacity, tenacity) and social sanction (veracity, propriety). Lastly, appreciation assesses things or phenomena realized through reaction, composition, and valuation. This framework enables a more fine-grained analysis of how the audience linguistically constructs evaluation in food-related social media discourse.

This framework is commonly applied in studies related to evaluative language in social media, like Hussein & Ali [19], who studied Instagram<sup>4</sup> comments on educational posts, Maharani [20], who investigates advertiser attitudes in residential advertising tagline, Ishida et al. [21], who analyse citizen feedback in two different settings: nursery school life and restaurant takeout services, and Al-Attar [22], who explore appraisals in promotional discourse. Those studies confirm that users' comments on social media can shape community perception and customers' behaviours. Besides, they also highlight that appraisal theory is suitable for analysing online evaluation as it can reveal beyond what is said. Therefore, to reveal the linguistic features of digital food discourse, this study goes beyond users' sentiment description to include deep appraisal analysis.

## Method

Focusing on visual-based social media, this study selected Instagram<sup>5</sup> as the platform. The primary data consisted of 2,170 user comments. These comments were posted in response to 256 video reels and their accompanying captions uploaded by five of the most popular culinary accounts in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, each with more than 400,000 followers: 1) Kuliner Jogja, 2) Jogja Food Hunter, 3) Jogja Taste, 4) Kuliner Yogya, and 5) Voila Jogja.

The data were collected during Ramadan Month in March 1–31, 2025. This period was selected because Ramadan provides a commercially distinct context for culinary discourse in Indonesia due to

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the intense culinary marketing with substantial posts of promotional content that encourage audience responses.

Data collection was carried out through web scraping on the five accounts to collect verbal elements, including content creator narratives, captions, and comments, as well as visual elements highlighted from feeds and reels. The comments were the core dataset for investigating audience responses, and other elements became the context that was reviewed to accurately interpret the comments. Because the data were scraped from public feeds, informed consent from the author is not required.

Motivated by a specific question on how social media users respond to food promotions and informed by an available framework of appraisal theory to look for the deeper meaning in those evaluative language acts, this is a kind of problem-driven content analysis [23]. The data were analysed in two stages: 1) sentiment categorization of all comments into positive, negative, neutral, and irrelevant categories to profile the overall data, and 2) in-depth appraisal analysis to identify the specific linguistic resources of attitude. These procedures suited the research goal to make valid inferences about what the users are saying about the food promotions.

## Results and Discussion

This study investigated customer comments on video reels and their captions, as these comments represent a space for actual interaction between users. Comments also provide the most authentic qualitative data, as they are displayed without any filters. While the post narrative reflects the intent of the content creator, whether a restaurant owner or a content creator, comments reveal how the audience understands, interprets, and reacts to the message. Therefore, in the culinary discourse, comments are a primary source for understanding users' opinions, attitudes, and emotions, whether they are satisfied, disappointed, or enthusiastic about the menu, promotions, and prices of the culinary offerings. For the audience, these comments are crucial because they significantly influence their purchasing decisions. Customer reviews are a key consideration in determining purchasing decisions [11, 24] and they serve as a reference for improving service or product quality [25].

With most internet users being young, comments are very creatively written, reflecting youthful language that tends to be informal and deviates from the standard one, such as through vowel elongation to emphasize expressions in “*Iiiih lucuuuuukkkk*” [It's sooo cuuutteeeee], and the use of slang “*Endulita banget ini menu ramennya*” [This ramen menu is awesome]. When users want to communicate their feelings without words, they choose to use emojis, such as “👍👍👍” or “👉👉👉.” In addition to their more attention-grabbing visual characteristics, emojis are also more universal and can be understood across languages. The use of these emojis is very popular due to their highly visual and interactive nature, encouraging an emotional and lively communication style [26]. In 2015, nearly half of all comments contained emojis, demonstrating how the comment section has been ‘colonized’ by pictographs [27]. In addition to these two methods, a combination of verbal and non-verbal elements also dominates, for example, comments like “*Jadi pengen 🔥🔥🔥*” [I really want it 🔥🔥🔥] and “*Harjanya 😞😞*” [The price is 😞😞]. This combination of the two elements demonstrates the highest enthusiasm because the words and emojis strengthen each other, with the emojis deepening verbal expression.

Comments posted by Internet users can strengthen or undermine the culinary discourse constructed by content creators. To examine this sentiment, four categories of audience responses are observed: a) positive, b) negative, c) neutral, and d) irrelevant responses. The distribution of each of the responses is illustrated in the following table.

### Positive Responses

The data shows that most of the comments were positive. In addition to manual observations, the high frequency of positive responses was evident such as through the use of the words ‘delicious’

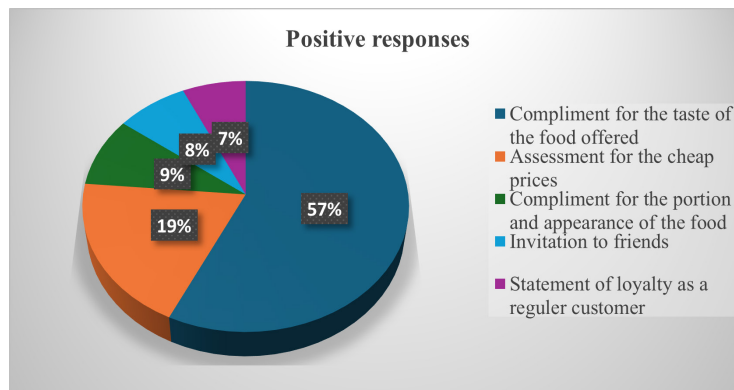


Fig. 1. Positive responses to culinary posts

Table 1. Distribution of audience responses

Account	Positive responses	Negative responses	Neutral responses	Irrelevant responses	Total comments
@kulinerjogya	512	77	216	48	853
@jogjafoodhunter	239	13	133	9	394
@jogjataste	296	30	87	24	437
@kulineryogya	134	14	64	12	224
@voilajogja	140	34	70	18	262
Total comments	1,321	168	570	111	2,170
Percentage	60.9	7.7	26.3	5.1	100

and ‘special.’ Similar to the research by Reagan et al. [28], the high frequency of positive comments indicates low public resistance to culinary advertising. In other words, they do not object to such advertising. These positive comments generally contained praise and invitations. Five themes emerged from the positive responses as illustrated in Fig. 1.

#### ***Compliment for the Taste of the Food Offered***

By only watching a short video, Internet users can already imagine the taste of the food on offer. Positive verbal responses to the taste of food tend to be conveyed briefly and without many words, such as “*enak banget*” [really delicious], “*maknyus*” [yummy], and “the best.” Although less expressive, these minimalist comments are quick and easy for other readers to understand. Positive comments are conveyed non-verbally using emojis. The most frequently used emoji in comments is 😍 (smiling face with heart eyes), which generally indicates love, admiration, and joy. In the context of culinary discourse, this emoji implies liking or enthusiasm for the food offered. In addition, other emojis that are also quite frequently used are 🤤 (drooling face), which implies a strong desire to try or irresistible enthusiasm, and the 🔥 (fire) emoji, which expresses high enthusiasm or can be used to praise something that is particularly good. To convey praise for the taste more strongly, many comments combined text and emojis, such as “*uwenakkkk 😍*” [deliiiiiciouuss] and “*Mantep Poll 🔥🔥🔥*” [so awesome].

#### ***Assessment of the Cheap Prices***

Besides taste, price is also an important consideration for customers. Restaurants or food stalls that offer affordable menus tend to receive positive reviews. The audience’s tendency to appreciate low prices reflects economic considerations amidst the Ramadan atmosphere, which tends to be synonymous with capitalism and luxury. Common comments include “*buset murah meriah*” [Wow, it’s so



cheap], “8rb udah kenyang, gass gak siiih?? 🍕” [Eight thousand rupiahs and we’re full. Shall we go?], and “murah tenan lur” [really cheap, bro]. This preference for affordable food is also reflected in the market, with numerous promotional offers available.

#### ***Compliment for the Portion and Appearance of the Food***

Not only the taste and price of the food but also its appearance are aspects that attract the attention of Internet users who leave comments. Some positive comments about the food’s appearance include “*menarik untuk dicobain semua*” [interesting to try it all], “*Jadi laperrrdehhh ah 🍔*” [I’m hungry], and “*Bikin ngiler 🤤*” [Makes me drool]. These comments reflect the concept of “food porn,” or food representations designed to elicit a sensory response through aesthetics [29]. These food displays are not simply documentation but provocations to arouse the audience’s desire to eat them. Moreover, during the fasting month, these displays appear even more tempting. For Muslims who are fasting, these food posts can be a joking temptation, prompting comments such as “*Ileng ilengg lagi puosoo 🙄🙄*” [Remember we’re fasting].

#### ***Invitation to Friends***

When the audience of culinary accounts are intrigued by the menu, they do not just offer praise. During Ramadan, when most of the reels posted feature *bukber* (breaking the fast together) packages at hotels, featuring large dining tables that can accommodate many people, comments containing these invitations increase in number, as many Indonesians take advantage of the fasting month to gather and eat with loved ones. For example, “*Hayuuukkkk... Agendakan jadwal iftar ndek Ajisaka*” [Let’s go... Schedule an iftar to Ajisaka]. Users who frequently engage in these activities likely view such a platform for strengthening social relationships rather than simply a place to share information [29]. However, this is very beneficial for business owners because when users share posts with their friends, it expands the reach of the advertisement beyond the individual user and creates the impression that the brand or product is endorsed by their friends [30, 31].

#### ***Statement of Loyalty as a Regular Customer***

The final theme of positive comments frequently made by users when visiting culinary accounts is statements of loyalty as regular customers, such as “*Iya ini enak. Langgananku*” [Yes, this is delicious. I’m a regular] or “*Udah langganan dr 2012 🍔🍔🍔*” [I’ve been a regular since 2012]. Nostalgic comments also strengthen promotions and deepen loyalty because they create the impression that the establishment has long been guaranteed quality and has become part of someone’s history. For example, “*Ya allah rindu bgt kesini dlu klo pas msh kuliah ngabuburit psti kesini 🙄 udh 10th g kesitu 😊*” [Oh my God, I really miss coming here when I was in college, I always came here to hang out 🙄. It’s been 10 years since I’ve been there 😊]. In short, many positive comments, expressed in the form of praise for the taste or price and invitations to others, can serve as free promotion for hotel/restaurant/food stall owners. Through these positive comments, Internet users can act as marketers, which is very beneficial for restaurant or food stall owners because they do not have to pay these marketers.

### **Negative Responses**

Customer expectations play a significant role in determining their shopping experience. If a product or service does not meet these expectations, customers will be dissatisfied, disappointed, and complaining, often on social media. Among the negative comments on these food posts, the audience generally highlighted five issues, as presented in Fig. 2.

Compared to positive responses, negative responses tend to be more elaborate. Those conveying dissatisfaction are generally delivered with lengthy explanations because the users want to convey their experiences in detail. Most of these negative evaluation themes were like those presented by Aksoy et al. [32] who found that the most common service failures in the culinary business concern food taste, service speed, and price.

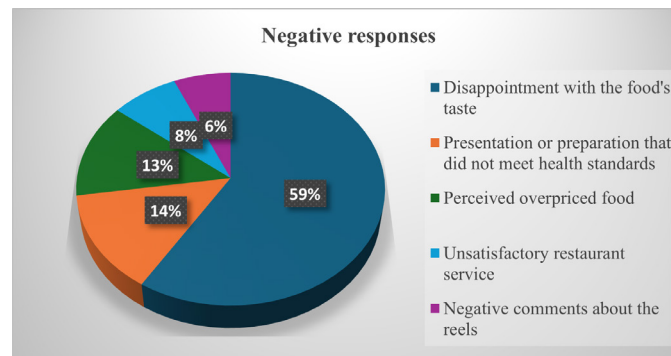


Fig. 2. Negative responses to culinary posts

### ***Disappointment with the Food's Taste***

Unpleasant experiences due to food not being as expected in taste and presentation are often shared on social media. Besides expressing disappointment, these comments are likely motivated by a desire to draw attention to the unpleasant experience and allow the restaurant to take corrective action. An example is “*Sing neng perempatan condongcatur, terlalu gosong mas, dagingnya pas di kasih ke kita alot.. rasane areng... selamat mencoba... mungkin tempat lainnya ngak gosong*” [At the branch in the Condongcatur intersection, the meat was too burnt. It was tough when given to us. It tasted like charcoal. Please try. Perhaps it won't be that burnt in the other branches]. Because the advertised restaurant has several branches, the comment specifically mentions that the restaurant at the Condongcatur intersection was the one that disappointed him. Besides expressing disappointment with the meat served, which he said was burnt, tough, and tasted like charcoal, the comment is also intended to encourage the restaurant to take corrective action to prevent a similar incident from happening again. These detailed comments can also help others decide whether to visit the restaurant.

### ***Presentation or Preparation That Did Not Meet Health Standards***

As health information has become easier to find through various media, public awareness of healthy eating and safe, high-quality food has also increased [33]. This awareness of the importance of health has led users to frequently comment on things that do not meet health standards, such as the use of plastic in heated food, such as in “*Pernah mau makan di situ langsung gak jadi, lontongnya bungkus plastik 🙄 daripada beli buat penyakit mending puter balik*” [I once wanted to eat there, and I canceled it. The rice cake was wrapped in plastic rather than buying it and getting sick, I'd rather turn around]. By openly criticizing food processing and serving practices that fall short of health standards, the audience aims to nudge businesses to pay more attention to health aspects. They exert social pressure on businesses to comply with health regulations.

### ***Perceived Overpriced Food***

Besides the taste of food, price is a determining factor that influences someone in deciding whether to buy a product or not [34, 35]. In economics, there is a kind of ‘implied contract’ that the amount of money spent must be commensurate with the quality received. Therefore, if this is violated, the buyer will consider the seller to be ‘injustice.’ In this case, if they receive food that does not meet expectations, many will ‘protest,’ for example through comments on social media. One such comment is the following: “*Tp aku kesana kuciwa bgt. Harga mahal2 tp rasa gak sesuai. Awalnya jajan itu gegara kangen kampung halaman ealah malah zonk. Cuma nek versiku kemahalan segitu dg rasa dan porsi yg diterima*” [When I went there, I was disappointed. The price was high, but the taste was not up to par. I went there because I missed my hometown, but it was a dud. To me, it was too expensive for the taste and portion I received]. By providing details of each item purchased and its price, this user attempted to create evidence-based commentary. The desire to eat there, as if from their hometown,



was betrayed by the seller, whose food quality fell short of expectations. This disappointment can lead to distrust, making customers reluctant to return to the stall.

#### ***Unsatisfactory Restaurant Service***

Although the product promoted is food, aspects unrelated to the food also significantly influence customer satisfaction, such as the service provided. Negative comments regarding service relate to several factors, such as the interaction between the seller and the customer, and the food delivery process. For example, the attitude of restaurant staff is highlighted in “*Di Babarsari pegawainya ga ramahhhh 😊*” [The staff at the Babarsari branch were not friendly.] Although subjective and less specific, making it less persuasive, this comment still reflects customer disappointment and highlights weaknesses in the restaurant visited. The friendliness of employees in the food business is an important factor that cannot be overlooked. This friendliness of service falls under the dimensions of responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, three of the five dimensions that determine service quality [36]. Responsive and helpful staff significantly influence customer perceptions of the business, resulting in positive customer experience. In addition to employee friendliness, speed of service delivery is also crucial in the culinary business. Ensuring prompt delivery is crucial to maintaining customer satisfaction [36]. Therefore, it is not surprising that some comments expressed frustration with the slow food service time that tends to be a recurring issue. It implies that the problem is systematic and experienced by many customers.

#### ***Negative Comments on Reels***

The final aspect that did not escape negative evaluation from users is the content of the posts or reels displayed and the way the creator delivers that content. One comment highlighted the creator's use of language: “*Coba pake bahasa Indonesia full!!! Karena Indonesia bukan Jawa walaupun penduduk Indonesia kebanyakan di pulau Jawa*” [Try using full Indonesian!!! Indonesia isn't Javanese, even though most Indonesians live on the island of Java]. This comment is constructive criticism because platform's reach is vast, so using regional languages can make it difficult for audience from outside the region to understand the content. Therefore, using regional languages without subtitles is exclusionary. Comments on culinary accounts are not only about food, but also about identity negotiations in the public digital realm. This demonstrates that this digital space serves as a dynamic arena for discussing various issues, including Indonesian diversity and identity in the global era.

#### **Neutral Responses**

In addition to comments that convey both negative and positive sentiments, these culinary promotion accounts also contain neutral comments (26.3% out of the total 2,170 comments). These neutral comments do not express support, praise, or criticism of the restaurant being promoted or the post. Responses to these posts generally only contain information, such as various questions about menu availability, complete addresses, and the validity of promotions. Some examples of comments intended to solicit information include: “*Ada nasi goreng gak mas di sana? 🤔*” [Do you have fried rice there, sir?] and “*Harga per pack brp?*” [How much does it cost per pack?] Although they do not convey a positive evaluation of the food or the post, such comments are crucial because the audience is in the process of deciding and needs specific data to determine whether to proceed. Unfortunately, many of these questions go unanswered, either from the restaurant, content creators, or other users. Responses to these questions do not only provide information as needed by the audience but also serve as a valuable source of public information that can encourage visitors.

#### **Irrelevant Responses**

In addition to neutral comments in the form of questions, there are also irrelevant comments intended for promoting other irrelevant services and goods (5.1%). Those comments are ‘deviant’ because they have no relevance to the displayed post and even promote something else, e.g., “*Jangan*



*lupa mampir ke Simply fresh laundry express yaakk 😊* [Don't forget to stop by Simply Fresh Laundry Express, okay?] and *“yuk, belajar ngaji di @rumahtadarus”* [Let's learn to recite the Quran at @rumahtadarus]. This implies that users do not always view the comments section on social media platforms as a forum specifically for the topic being discussed. In this case, they see the comment section as a public forum where they can ask questions to the public and hope that others will help them solve their problems, making the forum a social space for various purposes. These comments exploit the audience of other accounts for promotional purposes for their own gain by spamming and violating communication ethics. This indicates poor and unprofessional business performance because it uses tacky marketing strategies.

### Evaluative Language in Comments

Regarding appraisal analysis, comments function as evaluative language resources [13]. This study found that attitudinal resources are extensively employed in the comments, namely affect, judgement, and appreciation. Throughout this analysis, the audience is referred as appraiser while the posts are referred as appraised [13]. Additionally, only positive and negative comments are subjected to appraisal since those comments are overtly encode evaluative resources from the appraisers to the appraised [13]. Thus, neutral and irrelevant comments are excluded as they primarily serve as informational or interactional functions. The findings of the employment of evaluative language resources in the comments are presented in the following table.

**Table 2. Evaluative language resources employed in comments**

Evaluative language resources	Audience responses		Total
	Positive	Negative	
1. Affect resource			
a. Un/happiness	529	3	532
b. In/security	73	26	99
c. Dis/satisfaction	226	60	286
Total affect resources	828	89	917
2. Appreciation resource			
a. Reaction	623	39	662
b. Composition	53	19	72
c. Valuation	66	14	80
Total appreciation resources	742	72	814
3. Judgement resource			
a. Social esteem – normality	8	6	14
b. Social esteem – capacity	3	0	3
c. Social esteem – tenacity	0	8	8
d. Social sanction – veracity	0	12	12
e. Social sanction – propriety	1	0	1
Total judgement resources	12	26	38

#### *Affect Resource in Comments*

Affect deals with resources related to emotional reactions [13]. Within the affect resource, the appraisers show feeling towards the food, prices, place, and dining experience. The study reveals three sets of affects: un/happiness, in/security, and dis/satisfaction. As presented in Table 2, affect is the most dominant evaluative resource, particularly through expressions of happiness (e.g., “*Mantapp*”



[really good] or “*uwwoooooow 🤩🤩*” [wow]) and satisfaction (e.g., “*Udah langganan dr 2012 🤩🤩🤩*” [Has been a loyal customer since 2012]). This pattern indicates that audience responses are largely driven by emotional reactions to the food and dining experience.

Un/happiness is a subtype of affect, which concerns with the appraiser’s emotional response. In the data, comments are categorized into happiness when the appraisers explicitly encode positive emotional reactions and unhappiness when the appraisers explicitly encode negative emotional reactions. The expression “*Wiiih, mantul 🤩🤩*” [Wow amazing] shows happiness as the appraiser reflects excitement toward the appraised. Meanwhile, the excerpt “*Moon maaf nasinya lembek dan agak berbau kak, dah krm DM kagak di respond sedih banget 😭*” [Sorry, but the rice was mushy and had a slight odor. I already sent a DM, but there was no response, very sad] explicitly encodes unhappiness through the phrase *sedih banget* [very sad] and the crying emoji. Thus, these excerpts illustrate that comments in food discourse are not merely utterances but also a realization of the appraisers’ feelings of pleasure or distress.

In the affect resource of in/security, the appraisers deal with emotional assurance or anxiety. The positive security is illustrated in the comment “*Akhirnyaa aku bisa kesana... krna dekat dengan rumah 🙌❤️*” [Finally I can go there... because it’s close to my house]. This comment reflects the appraiser’s feeling of comfort and reassurance due to the proximity from home to the restaurant. On the other hand, insecurity is realized as seen in “*Pernah mau makan di situ langsung gak jadi, lontongnya bungkus plastik 😬 daripada beli buat penyakit mending puter balik*” [I once wanted to eat there, and I canceled it. The rice cake was wrapped in plastic rather than buying it and getting sick, I’d rather turn around]. In this comment, the appraiser articulates anxiety and avoidance to the appraised due to fears toward illness *daripada beli buat penyakit* [rather than buying it and getting sick]. Overall, in/security resources show that in food discourse comments are not only limited to taste or enjoyment but also emotional assurance of comfort and risk.

Lastly, the dis/satisfaction is a subtype of affect dealing with the appraisers’ feeling of fulfillment or frustration, oriented toward the evaluation of results. It is related to whether the expectations are met or failed. The comment “*Udah langganan dr 2012 🤩🤩🤩*” [Has been a loyal customer since 2012] is affect-satisfaction because it shows a long-term patronage. This indicates that the appraiser experienced sustained satisfaction. Additionally, the temporal marker ‘since 2012’ signals repeated positive experiences. Meanwhile, the comment “*Pas aq beli kok 8rb min*” [When I bought it, it was 8,000 rupiahs] shows disappointment, which leads to dissatisfaction because the appraised mentioned that the price of the promoted food was 4,000 rupiahs. This indicates the dissatisfaction of the appraiser who had to pay twice the expected price. Additionally, the lexical item *kok* is a word used to emphasize or strengthen the meaning. Thus, through this comment, the appraiser emphasizes dissatisfaction with the price discrepancy. These data illustrate how emotional reactions are not only evaluating the taste of the food but also experiences.

#### ***Appreciation Resource in Comments***

Appreciation refers to evaluation of things or phenomena such as food, atmosphere, and price. Related to comments in food discourse, the study reveals the appraisers employed three types of appreciation namely reaction, composition, and valuation. The realization of appreciation in the comments is used to assess the quality, composition, and overall worth of food and dining experiences, rather than the behavior of people or the emotional states of the audience.

Appreciation is predominantly expressed through reaction, which is related to the question ‘did it grab me?’ and ‘did I like it?’ [13]. For example, the comment “*Rekomend bgt tmpt ini smlm ksni dan temptnya oke dan rasa masakannya enaakk loh*” [Highly recommended, came here last night, the place is nice and the food tastes good] depicts a positive reaction toward both the ambience and the taste of the food. It means the appraiser evaluates both the place [the place is nice] and the food [the food tastes good] as engaging. Conversely, the negative comment “*Wah weruh tutorial maem roti tisu*



*kok koyone rekoso yo min 😂*” [Wow, seeing the tutorial for eating Tisu Bread, it looks kind of troublesome, admin] evaluates the appeal of the eating process suggesting that it appears inconvenient or difficult (*rekoso* or “troublesome”). Although expressed humorously using the laughing emoji 😂, the comment reflects a negative immediate impression of the food experience. This indicates that the appraised does not attract the appraiser. Thus, the appreciation resource of reaction in food discourse is used to construct immediate evaluations of how appealing or engaging a food product (thing) or experience is (phenomena).

Meanwhile, the composition and valuation are related to the questions ‘did it hang together?’ and ‘was it worthwhile?’ [13]. In this study, the composition is used by the appraisers to evaluate the composition of food elements or dining experience as the texture, taste, or the surrounding ambience. The comment “*Renyah, gurih, dan pedesnya membuat saya tidak bisa berhenti makan! 🔥🔥🔥*” [The crispiness, savory taste, and spiciness make me unable to stop eating!], for instance, shows a positive composition. This comment highlights how the composition from the texture *renyah* to the flavour *gurih* and *pedas* are perceived as a well-balanced composition. In addition, in the comment “*Rasanya mantap, harganya cuma 10 rb isi 7*” [The taste is amazing, and it’s only 10,000 rupiah for 7 pieces], the appraiser constructs a positive valuation towards the food. After mentioning the taste of the food, which is described as delicious, the appraiser evaluates the price as worthy because it is affordable for only 10.000 rupiahs for 7 pieces. Thus, the appraiser considers the food as worthwhile and economically beneficial.

Overall, composition resource in food discourse is used to construct the perceived harmony or imbalance between different elements namely the food and the dining environment, while valuation reflects how appraisers assess whether a dining experience is worth the money and effort, based on the balance between cost, quality, and overall experience.

#### ***Judgement Resource in Comments***

Judgement is attitudinal resource concerned with construing toward people and their attitudes [13]. In the present study, judgement appears as the least frequently used evaluative resource, which is realized through both social esteem and social sanction. The social esteem-normality is the main to use, e.g., in the comment “*Makanannya enaak... servicenya jg oke... staffnya ramah2... toilet dan mush-ola bersih*” [The food is delicious... the service is good, the staff are friendly, and the toilet and prayer room are clean]. Here, the evaluation of staff friendliness functions as judgement, as an acceptable standard reflecting positive normality or the expected norms in food services.

In addition, the social esteem-capacity and propriety are employed in positive comments only. Within the social esteem-capacity, the appraisers evaluate a person’s ability, skill, or competence, such as the chef’s great skill in cooking high quality food; and a person’s moral and ethical behaviour according to rules or norms are assessed through the social-esteem propriety, such as through the expression of approval and wish for business success.

On the other hand, the social esteem-tenacity and veracity are found only in negative comments. In the data, negative tenacity, for instance, expresses a failed reservation and unresponsive service. By labelling the service as ‘very unprofessional,’ the appraiser positions the staff as lacking commitment and responsibility. Within social sanction-veracity, the appraiser concerns evaluations of a person’s honesty and truthfulness, reflecting how transparency in pricing is treated as a moral expectation in food transactions.

The dominant employment of affect and appreciation resources combined with the least frequently employed judgement resource suggest that the audience is less focused on evaluating people involved in the service, such as staff or management, and instead prioritize their personal feelings toward the food and the dining experience itself. Overall, this pattern indicates that within digital food discourse, evaluation is directed primarily at phenomena, namely food quality, price, and dining atmosphere, rather than at human behaviour or moral attributes. Consequently, emotional engagement (affect)



and experiential evaluation (appreciation) play a more central role than social judgement in shaping audience interaction and engagement in food discourse.

### Conclusion

Regarding the various types of comments posted by social media users on culinary accounts, this study found that digital discourse on such accounts is more than just an indicator of customer satisfaction. The discourse conveyed by the audience is very dynamic and does not only revolve around culinary topics. The comments section has become an online space for interacting with and sharing experiences of visiting a restaurant or food stall. The most prevalent sentiment, positive comments, which are usually conveyed with emojis and words that show excitement, help promote restaurants and encourage others to enjoy the same pleasant experience. Negative comments, whose occurrences are far below the positive ones, are usually accompanied by detailed stories and objective evidence and can be used to convey complaints, warn others, and even embarrass businesses. In addition, there are also neutral questions aimed at seeking information. These comments are very important to the community because they can help potential customers make realistic decisions. However, distractions in the form of irrelevant comments are also inevitable. Although the number is not significant, these distractions show how people use online public spaces for their own interests.

To move beyond a descriptive account of comment types, this study applies Appraisal Theory to examine how users linguistically construct evaluation in culinary social media discourse. Through the attitude system, the analysis reveals that the audience expresses positive and negative feelings through affect, judgement, and appreciation. Within the affect region, the audience expresses both positive and negative emotional responses toward the food, prices, and place. Meanwhile, judgement assesses the behaviour and credibility of individuals involved in the food experience positively to the chefs and negatively to the sellers and administrators. Lastly, appreciation is employed to evaluate food, price, and dining experiences related to its quality, composition, and overall worth of food and dining experiences. Thus, digital food discourse is more than just a discussion about food but shows how digital platforms make it easier for people to connect with one another in complex and multifunctional dynamics. By examining the attitudinal resources, the study demonstrates that language in digital food discourse is not merely about liking or disliking food, but also about negotiating emotions, social expectations, and perceived worth in a public online space.

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