



Discursive Construction of Authenticity in Culinary MSME Branding: A Critical Discourse Analysis

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026-09-23 Revised: 2026-09-30 Accepted: 2026-10-23 Keywords: CDA, Multimodality, Authenticity, Branding DOI: 10.24256/ideas.v14i2.12701 Corresponding Author: Mentari Putri Pramanenda Sinaga mentari.sinaga1@gmail.com Administrasi Bisnis Politeknik Negeri Kupang	<i>Although authenticity has increasingly been examined in food and digital branding, less attention has been given to how Indonesian culinary MSMEs construct authenticity through comparative multimodal branding practices. This study investigates how authenticity is constructed in the branding of two Indonesian culinary MSMEs, The House of Raminten and Bebek Kaleyo, using Fairclough's three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis integrated with Kress and van Leeuwen's multimodal discourse analysis. The analysis draws on 12 publicly available digital materials produced during 2021–2025, comprising nine Instagram posts, two photographs retrieved through Google Images, and one Google Maps customer review. The materials were examined to identify the interplay of textual, visual, and interactive resources in the construction of brand authenticity. Verbal data were analyzed for lexical choices, evaluative language, and interdiscursive patterns, while visual materials were examined in terms of representational, compositional, and interactive meanings. The findings reveal that authenticity is not an inherent attribute but a dynamic discursive achievement produced through distinct branding strategies. The House of Raminten constructs authenticity through cultural immersion, employing Javanese heritage, cultural symbolism, and experiential narratives, whereas Bebek Kaleyo constructs authenticity through modernized tradition by combining culinary heritage and historical continuity with contemporary branding and service practices. The findings further demonstrate that authenticity is a relational process that is reinforced not only through brand discourse but also through consumer-generated discourse and audience participation. This study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of authenticity in culinary MSME branding by positioning it as an evolving process negotiated at the intersection of heritage, multimodal communication, and audience participation.</i>

1. Introduction

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the culinary sector play a strategic role in Indonesia's economy. According to Statistics Indonesia (Indonesia, Badan Pusat Statistik, 2024), there were approximately 4.85 million food and beverage service establishments in Indonesia in 2023, representing a 21.13% increase compared to 2016. This sector also employed around 9.8 million workers and generated total sales of IDR 998.37 trillion, demonstrating the substantial contribution of the culinary industry to the national economy. Alongside this economic growth, digital transformation has changed how culinary MSMEs communicate their identities, engage with consumers, and differentiate themselves in increasingly competitive markets. Culinary MSMEs increasingly rely on social media and digital content to build brand identity and reach broader consumer groups (Aryani & Tuti, 2023). In this context, authenticity has become an important symbolic resource for differentiating culinary brands from competitors (Alamanda, et al., 2024). However, authenticity is not an inherent characteristic of a product or brand; rather, it is socially constructed through communication practices, visual representations, storytelling, and interactions with consumers.

In branding literature, authenticity is not necessarily about whether a product is objectively genuine, but rather about how it is perceived and constructed discursively ((Beverland & Farrelly, 2010); (Napoli et al., 2014)). This construction often involves highlighting artisanal methods, local ingredients, cultural heritage, or narratives of entrepreneurial struggle, which resonate with consumers who seek more meaningful consumption experiences. From a critical perspective, authenticity should not be seen as a fixed property of a brand but as a performative quality that is continuously negotiated through discourse (Kadirov et al., 2024). In the context of MSMEs, this negotiation takes place across multiple semiotic modes, verbal texts, visual representations, packaging design, and digital storytelling on platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. These multimodal elements together construct a symbolic aura of authenticity that enhances consumer trust and differentiates MSMEs from mass-market competitors. Importantly, authenticity can serve both as a cultural resource and as a marketing strategy, making it a fertile site for critical discourse analysis.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) provides the foundation for this study in examining how authenticity is discursively constructed within culinary MSME branding. Following Fairclough (1995) three-dimensional model text, discursive practice, and social practice this study investigates linguistic patterns, intertextual strategies, and the broader socio-economic conditions that shape branding discourses. In order to capture the complexity of contemporary branding, this research also incorporates multimodal discourse analysis. Branding communication today is rarely monomodal; instead, it combines visual, textual, and sometimes audio elements that work together to construct meaning. As Bateman, Wildfeuer, and Hiippala (2017) on Flowerdew (2019) argue, multimodality involves the systematic study of how modes such as typography, layout, color, and imagery interact to produce cohesive messages. Multimodal discourse analysis thus allows us to examine how representational, compositional, and interactive meanings (Kress, Gunther & Leewen, Theo van, 2006) work in tandem with linguistic choices to communicate brand identity and credibility.

International studies have shown that contemporary consumers increasingly value authentic products and experiences because they are associated with quality, cultural heritage, and local identity ((James H. Gilmore & B. Joseph Pine, 2007); (Beverland, Michael B. & Farrelly, Francis J, 2010)). In the culinary context, authenticity extends beyond taste or traditional recipes to encompass narratives of origin, cultural representation, production practices, and consumption experiences communicated through various media ((Lu, Shun & Fine, Gary Alan, 2005); (Molz, Jennie Germann, 2004)).

Recent studies have increasingly examined authenticity in the context of Indonesian culinary and food branding. For example, research on Indonesian local specialty food brands has examined the relationship between brand authenticity and brand choice, highlighting the mediating roles of brand trust, brand love, and brand value among consumers (Yasri et al., 2024). Other research has investigated how social-media marketing contributes to brand authenticity and brand preference for local snack brands produced by Indonesian SMEs (Theresia & Antonio, 2023). Tambunan et al., (2025) have examined how culinary MSMEs use social media to strengthen brand identity, consumer interaction, and trust through personalized narratives and visual representation.

More discourse-oriented research has also explored the construction of Indonesian culinary authenticity in digital spaces, including the lexical construction of Batak Toba culinary authenticity in Instagram captions (Saragi & Sinulingga, 2026). However, these studies differ in their analytical orientation: while existing research has primarily examined consumer responses, marketing effects, or specific linguistic constructions of culinary authenticity, less attention has been given to how different Indonesian culinary brands strategically construct authenticity through the interaction of verbal, visual, and consumer-oriented digital resources.

Despite these developments, an important gap remains in understanding how authenticity is simultaneously constructed through linguistic, visual, and interactive resources within the branding discourse of Indonesian culinary MSMEs. Existing studies have largely examined consumer responses to authenticity, the effects of social-media marketing, brand identity and performance, or particular linguistic representations of culinary authenticity. What remains less explored is a comparative multimodal examination of how culinary brands themselves construct authenticity through the interaction of discourse, visual representation, cultural references, and consumer engagement. This distinction is important because authenticity may be constructed differently across brands depending on how they negotiate heritage, modernity, storytelling, and audience participation. The present study addresses this gap by comparatively examining two Indonesian culinary brands, The House of Raminten and Bebek Kaleyo, through an integrated Critical Discourse Analysis and multimodal discourse analysis.

Accordingly, this study addresses the following research questions:

- RQ1. How is authenticity discursively and multimodally constructed in the digital branding of The House of Raminten and Bebek Kaleyo?
- RQ2. What similarities and differences characterize the two brands' strategies for constructing authenticity?
- RQ3. How do heritage, modernity, storytelling, and consumer participation contribute to these constructions of authenticity?

The novelty of this study lies not simply in its focus on culinary MSMEs, but in its comparative multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis of two Indonesian culinary brands that represent different strategies for constructing authenticity. The study examines how linguistic and visual resources work together to construct distinct authenticity orientations and how these constructions are reinforced through digital interaction and audience participation. By analyzing how authenticity is framed, negotiated, and legitimized across textual, visual, and interactive branding practices, this research conceptualizes authenticity as a relational and evolving process rather than a fixed quality associated with tradition or product origin. The findings contribute to a more specific understanding of how Indonesian culinary brands mobilize heritage, modernity, storytelling, and consumer participation to establish brand identity and legitimacy in digital marketplaces.

2. Method

This study employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the principal approach, applying (Fairclough, 1995) three-dimensional model to examine the relationship between textual features, discursive practices, and broader socio-cultural contexts. Since branding communication is inherently multimodal, the analysis also incorporates insights from multimodal discourse analysis, particularly (Kress, Gunther & Leewen, Theo van, 2006) visual grammar, to capture how verbal and visual resources co-construct authenticity in culinary MSME branding. This combined approach enables a critical investigation of both linguistic patterns and semiotic strategies that frame, legitimize, or contest the notion of authenticity.

The data consist of branding materials from two Indonesian culinary MSMEs: The House of The House of Raminten (Yogyakarta) and Bebek Kaleyo (Jakarta). These two cases were purposively selected due to their strong yet contrasting narratives of authenticity: The House of Raminten emphasizes heritage-based authenticity rooted in Javanese cultural traditions, while Bebek Kaleyo constructs authenticity primarily through marketing storytelling and claims of family recipes. The dataset covers branding content produced between 2021 and 2025, encompassing Instagram posts, Google images, and Google review. This time frame is chosen to capture the most recent developments in MSME branding narratives during the post-pandemic era, ensuring both relevance and contemporaneity for a 2026 publication.

The analysis was conducted in three stages. First, a textual analysis was performed to identify recurrent lexical choices, evaluative language, and interdiscursive references to tradition, heritage, and originality. Second, multimodal analysis was applied to visual and layout elements, including representational strategies, compositional arrangements, and interactive meanings. Finally, these findings were contextualized within broader socio-cultural discourses, such as the role of authenticity in local tourism, the commodification of cultural identity, and the use of storytelling in modern food branding. Through this triangulated methodology, the study aims to reveal not only how authenticity is articulated at the textual and visual levels, but also how it functions ideologically to position MSMEs within Indonesia's evolving culinary landscape.

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branding communication is inherently multimodal, the analysis also incorporates insights from multimodal discourse analysis, particularly Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) visual grammar, to capture how verbal and visual resources co-construct authenticity in culinary MSME branding.

This combined approach enables a critical investigation of linguistic patterns, visual representations, and audience-oriented meanings through which authenticity is framed and legitimized in digital branding discourse. The analytical framework operationalizes CDA through three dimensions text, discursive practice, and social practice while multimodal analysis focuses specifically on visual representation and interactive meaning. The analytical flow adopted in this study is presented in Figure 1.

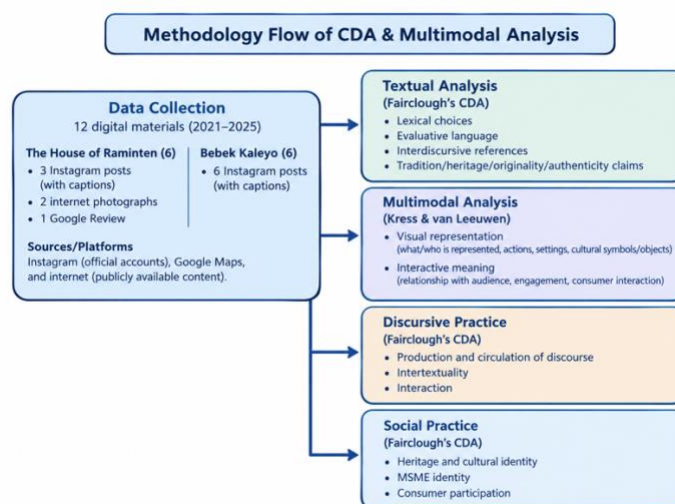


Figure 1

The data consist of 12 publicly available digital branding materials from two Indonesian culinary MSMEs: The House of Raminten (Yogyakarta) and Bebek Kaleyo (Jakarta). The dataset covers the 2021–2025 period and comprises nine Instagram posts, two photographs retrieved through Google Images from publicly accessible internet sources, and one customer review published on Google Maps. The House of Raminten is represented by six materials, consisting of three Instagram posts, two internet photographs, and one Google Maps customer review, while Bebek Kaleyo is represented by six Instagram posts. The captions accompanying the nine Instagram posts were examined as verbal components of the respective posts rather than treated as separate data items.

The materials were selected through purposive sampling based on their relevance to the construction and negotiation of culinary authenticity. Materials were included when they contained textual or visual references to cultural heritage, tradition, locality, culinary identity, originality, family or traditional recipes, brand identity, consumer interaction, or other meanings directly relevant to authenticity. Materials without substantive relevance to these themes were excluded from the dataset. The two brands were selected according to criteria established independently of the analytical findings, namely: (1) their operation within the Indonesian culinary MSME sector; (2) sustained digital visibility; (3) the availability of publicly accessible branding materials during the study period; and (4) distinctive cultural and geographic positioning within the Indonesian culinary market.

These criteria provided a basis for comparing two culinary MSMEs that communicate their brand identities through digital platforms while operating within different cultural and market contexts. The contrasting authenticity orientations identified in the analysis cultural immersion in The House of Raminten and modernized tradition in Bebek Kaleyo were therefore treated as analytical findings rather than predetermined reasons for case selection.

The analysis was conducted through an integrated analytical procedure involving textual analysis, multimodal analysis, and contextual interpretation. First, textual analysis was performed to identify recurrent lexical choices, evaluative language, and interdiscursive references related to tradition, heritage, locality, originality, and authenticity. Particular attention was given to how linguistic choices constructed meanings of cultural identity, quality, credibility, and culinary authenticity. Second, multimodal analysis was applied to the visual components of the selected materials, focusing on visual representation and interactive meaning. The analysis examined represented participants, actions, settings, cultural symbols, and objects, as well as the ways in which visual and textual resources positioned or engaged audiences. Third, the findings were interpreted in relation to Fairclough's concepts of discursive practice and social practice, considering how branding materials were produced and circulated, how meanings drew upon existing cultural and branding discourses, and how authenticity was situated within broader issues of cultural identity, MSME branding, commercialization, and consumer participation. The three analytical dimensions were examined in relation to one another rather than as isolated stages, allowing the study to identify how linguistic and visual resources contributed to the discursive construction of authenticity.

To enhance analytical consistency, all 12 materials were examined systematically using the same analytical categories derived from Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA and Kress and van Leeuwen's visual grammar. Observations concerning textual, visual, discursive, and contextual features were documented and revisited throughout the analysis to maintain consistency across the two cases. As the study was conducted by a single researcher, inter-coder reliability was not employed. Instead, analytical consistency was supported through repeated examination of the selected materials and systematic documentation of interpretive observations throughout the analytical process. The study used publicly available digital materials and did not involve direct interaction with research participants. Customer-generated content, particularly the Google Maps review, was treated as publicly available consumer discourse and was used only for analytical purposes. Personally, identifying information, such as usernames, was not reproduced where it was not necessary for the analysis.

3. Result

Heritage and Tradition

The House of Raminten: Heritage as Cultural Performance

Both The House of Raminten and Bebek Kaleyo draw on heritage and tradition to construct culinary authenticity, but they emphasize different aspects of heritage. In The House of Raminten, authenticity is constructed through the visual and textual representation of Javanese cultural practices within the dining environment. The selected materials depict traditional attire, culturally marked architectural settings, heritage

objects, and Javanese philosophical expressions, positioning cultural heritage as an integral part of the restaurant experience.



Figure 2

Figure 2 provides a clear example of this representation. The image features two elderly women dressed in traditional Javanese attire and seated in a traditional architectural setting. A Javanese philosophical proverb is also prominently displayed within the visual composition. At the representational level, the elderly women, their clothing, posture, and surrounding environment constitute visual resources through which Javanese cultural identity is represented. The presence of elderly figures is particularly significant because it visually associates the representation with age, continuity, and cultural knowledge. The accompanying proverb reinforces this cultural framing by connecting the visual representation with Javanese philosophical discourse.

The combination of these elements presents heritage not simply as a reference to the past but as something represented through people, objects, spatial settings, and language. The visual representation of traditional attire and the cultural setting is therefore consistent with the textual reference to Javanese philosophical values. Rather than foregrounding the food itself, the material places cultural identity at the center of the representation, making the dining environment part of the brand's authenticity discourse.



Figure 3

Figure further supports this pattern through the representation of traditional costumes, culturally marked spatial elements, and ritual-like bodily gestures. These resources reinforce the association between the restaurant environment and Javanese

cultural practices. The combination of visual representation and cultural language positions the dining experience within a recognizable Javanese cultural context.

Taken together, Figures 2 and 3 indicate that The House of Raminten constructs authenticity by foregrounding cultural immersion. Heritage is represented through the integration of people, attire, spatial environment, cultural objects, and language, rather than through culinary products alone.

Bebek Kaleyo: Heritage as Culinary Lineage

Bebek Kaleyo constructs authenticity through a different representation of heritage. Whereas The House of Raminten foregrounds cultural immersion, Bebek Kaleyo emphasizes culinary continuity and inherited expertise. The selected materials combine food imagery with textual references to the history and origin of the brand's culinary identity.



Figure 4

Figure 4 primarily represents the restaurant's signature fried duck, *Bebek Utuh Goreng*. However, the accompanying textual material directs attention beyond the visual representation of the food itself. The caption refers to the recipe as having been preserved "since 1976," a temporal expression that explicitly establishes a connection between the present brand and an earlier period. The reference is also incorporated into the brand's Instagram identity, @bebekkaleyo76.

The phrase "since 1976" functions as a temporal marker of continuity. Rather than describing authenticity through cultural display, the expression constructs a relationship between the present product and a claimed historical origin. The visual representation of the dish therefore operates together with the temporal claim: the food is presented as a contemporary product whose identity is linked to an established culinary history.



Figure 5

Figure 5 provides further textual evidence through the expression “family recipe” (*resep keluarga*). This expression explicitly associates the culinary product with familial inheritance. The term “family” constructs the recipe as knowledge transmitted within a particular social unit, while “recipe” identifies the culinary practice through which this knowledge is maintained. The combination establishes continuity between culinary knowledge and family tradition.

Additional materials reinforce this positioning through expressions such as “Authentic Nusantara taste” (*Citarasa asli nusantara*) and “Madura special black-spice” (*Bumbu Hitam Khas Madura*). These lexical choices associate the product with geographical and culinary specificity, further connecting the brand with local culinary identity. Thus, Bebek Kaleyo's representation of heritage is primarily organized around culinary lineage. Historical reference, family inheritance, and local culinary identification are brought together to construct continuity between tradition and the present-day product.

Comparative Pattern: Cultural Performance and Culinary Lineage

The comparison reveals two distinct ways of representing heritage. The House of Raminten foregrounds heritage through cultural representation and experiential immersion, using traditional attire, cultural settings, objects, and Javanese language to make heritage visible within the dining environment. Bebek Kaleyo, in contrast, foregrounds heritage through historical and familial continuity, using temporal expressions, family-recipe discourse, and references to Nusantara and Madurese culinary identity.

This distinction can be summarized as heritage as cultural performance in The House of Raminten and heritage as culinary lineage in Bebek Kaleyo. The former emphasizes the experience and representation of Javanese culture, while the latter emphasizes the continuity and inheritance of culinary knowledge. The comparison therefore demonstrates that the two brands draw on the discourse of heritage while mobilizing different textual and visual resources to construct culinary authenticity.

Storytelling constitutes a second strategy through which the two brands construct authenticity. Although both brands use narrative to connect their present identities with cultural or historical meanings, they emphasize different forms of storytelling. The House of Raminten foregrounds cultural knowledge and Javanese identity, whereas Bebek Kaleyo emphasizes entrepreneurial history, continuity, and its relationship with customers.

The House of Raminten uses storytelling to connect its brand identity with Javanese linguistic and cultural knowledge. Rather than limiting its Instagram content to product promotion, the selected material presents cultural and philosophical information as part of the brand's communication.



At the textual level, the explanation of “Su/Soe” constructs an educational narrative in which linguistic knowledge becomes associated with the brand's identity. The post positions the Instagram account not only as a promotional channel but also as a space for communicating information about Javanese language and cultural values. This narrative reinforces the association between the brand and cultural knowledge. The visual representation in Figure 6 further supports this positioning through the representation of the Raminten persona in traditional attire. The illustrated character is presented with an exaggerated facial expression and a playful visual appearance. These elements construct a recognizable brand persona that combines cultural references with an approachable and distinctive character.

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the construction of authenticity from the culinary product to the representation of cultural knowledge and identity.

Bebek Kaleyo: Entrepreneurial Journey and Family Continuity

Bebek Kaleyo employs storytelling through narratives of entrepreneurial development and continuity. Rather than emphasizing cultural explanation or a distinctive cultural persona, its selected material connects the brand's present identity with its earlier business history and relationship with customers.



Figure 7

Figure 7 provides the clearest example. The post is titled “The Journey of Bebek Kaleyo” (*Perjalanan Bebek Kaleyo*) and presents an early roadside outlet in a Polaroid-style visual frame. The representation of the earlier outlet establishes a visual reference to the brand's beginnings and introduces a temporal dimension into the narrative. The accompanying caption uses inclusive expressions such as “you are part of our dream journey” (*kalian adalah bagian dari perjalanan mimpi kami*) and “thank you for growing with us” (*Terima kasih sudah tumbuh bersama kami*). The pronoun “*kalian*” directly addresses customers as participants in the brand's development, while “*bersama kami*” constructs the relationship as shared growth.

The narrative therefore combines two elements: a representation of the brand's humble origins and linguistic expressions that position customers within its subsequent development. The visual reference to the early outlet establishes continuity between past and present, while the inclusive language creates a relational dimension between the brand and its audience. Another textual reference appears in the expression “*Dari outlet pertama di Cempaka Putih*” (“From the first outlet in Cempaka Putih”). This phrase explicitly identifies a starting point in the brand's history and provides a concrete location through which the entrepreneurial narrative is anchored.

The combination of historical imagery, temporal reference, and inclusive language constructs authenticity through continuity between the brand's origins and its present identity. The narrative emphasizes development without disconnecting the current brand from its earlier form.

Comparative Pattern

The two brands therefore employ storytelling through different narrative resources. The House of Raminten uses cultural storytelling, particularly explanations of Javanese linguistic and philosophical meanings and the representation of a distinctive cultural persona. Bebek Kaleyo uses entrepreneurial storytelling, emphasizing its earlier business history, development, and relationship with customers. The contrast can be summarized as cultural narrative authenticity for The House of Raminten and entrepreneurial and relational narrative authenticity for Bebek Kaleyo. In the former, cultural knowledge is incorporated into brand storytelling; in the latter, historical development and customer relationships are incorporated into the brand narrative.

Modernity and Tradition

The third pattern concerns how the two brands negotiate traditional identity within contemporary branding environments. Both brands combine references to tradition with contemporary forms of digital communication, but their strategies differ. The House of Raminten emphasizes the continuation of Javanese cultural representation within contemporary digital media, whereas Bebek Kaleyo more explicitly combines traditional culinary identity with contemporary branding and service-oriented communication.

The House of Raminten: Cultural Immersion through Contemporary Branding

The House of Raminten constructs authenticity by integrating traditional Javanese representations into its contemporary digital branding. The selected material combines traditional attire, culturally marked interior spaces, heritage objects, and Javanese linguistic expressions.



Figure 8

Figure 8 explicitly connects the restaurant's Javanese atmosphere with the appearance of its employees. The accompanying text states that the restaurant presents a Javanese atmosphere not only through decoration but also through staff members wearing traditional Javanese clothing: "*The House of Raminten menghadirkan suasana Jawa, tidak hanya dekorasinya, pramusaji juga memakai pakaian adat Jawa.*" The statement is significant because it establishes a direct relationship between the visual representation

of staff attire and the textual claim of Javanese identity. Traditional clothing is therefore represented as part of the restaurant's overall atmosphere rather than as an isolated decorative element.



Figure 9

The accompanying visual material further includes a traditional royal carriage as part of the dining environment. The presence of this heritage object in Figure 9 adds another material representation of Javanese cultural history to the restaurant's visual environment. Together with traditional attire and architectural elements, it contributes to a consistent visual association between the restaurant and Javanese cultural identity. The use of Javanese expressions in the digital materials further extends this cultural representation from physical space to digital communication.

Thus, the traditional identity is reproduced across both the restaurant environment and its digital representation. The pattern indicates that Raminten's approach to modernity does not replace its traditional identity. Instead, contemporary digital communication becomes a medium through which traditional cultural representations are circulated. Authenticity is consequently constructed through cultural immersion, in which traditional identity is made visible and communicable within a contemporary branding environment.

Bebek Kaleyo: Modernized Tradition

Bebek Kaleyo constructs authenticity through a closer integration of traditional culinary identity with contemporary branding and service practices. Its materials refer to Indonesian/Nusantara culinary identity while simultaneously presenting the brand through standardized and contemporary forms of communication.



Figure 10

Bebek Kaleyo constructs authenticity by combining references to traditional Indonesian cuisine with contemporary branding practices that emphasize convenience, accessibility, and service efficiency. While the brand consistently positions itself as serving *bebek goreng khas Nusantara*, the visual and textual discourse extends beyond culinary heritage to highlight modern consumer expectations. Promotional materials feature clean corporate-style layouts, standardized brand colors, digital food delivery partnerships, discounted meal bundles, and messages that stress customer convenience, such as "When you arrive and the crew already know your favorite order" (*Saat kamu datang dan crew sudah tahu pesanan favoritmu*).

Likewise, the collaboration with Atria Hotel visually signifies the brand's expansion into formal hospitality spaces while maintaining its culinary identity. These multimodal elements portray Bebek Kaleyo as a professional and reliable restaurant chain capable of delivering traditional cuisine within a modern service ecosystem.



Figure 11

The material also presents standardized promotional layouts and food representations in Figure 10 while the collaboration with Atria Hotel places the brand within a formal hospitality setting. These elements position the traditional culinary

product within a broader contemporary service environment. The resulting pattern is one of modernized tradition. Traditional culinary identity remains central, but it is communicated alongside contemporary expectations concerning accessibility, service, consistency, and professional presentation.

Comparative Pattern

The comparison demonstrates that the two brands negotiate tradition and contemporary branding through different emphases. The House of Raminten incorporates traditional cultural representations into a contemporary digital environment, producing authenticity through cultural immersion. Bebek Kaleyo, by contrast, combines traditional culinary identity with contemporary service and branding practices, producing authenticity through modernized tradition. Thus, the distinction is not simply between a “traditional” brand and a “modern” brand. Both employ contemporary digital communication. The difference lies in what is modernized and what remains central to the authenticity narrative: Raminten modernizes the circulation of cultural heritage, whereas Kaleyo modernizes the presentation and consumption of traditional cuisine.

Consumer Participation and the Relational Construction of Authenticity

The final theme concerns the role of audiences and consumers in reinforcing the authenticity narratives constructed by the brands. The available materials show that authenticity is not represented exclusively through producer-generated branding. In particular, the Google Maps review associated with The House of Raminten provides consumer-generated discourse, while Bebek Kaleyo's Instagram material contains explicit invitations for audience participation. Because consumer-generated content forms only part of the selected dataset, these findings are interpreted as evidence of audience participation and validation within the selected materials, rather than as a comprehensive measurement of consumer engagement.

The House of Raminten: Consumer Experience and Cultural Validation

The Google Maps customer review provides a direct example of consumer-generated discourse concerning The House of Raminten. The review in Figure 12 draws attention to distinctive aspects of the restaurant experience, including traditional Javanese attire worn by staff, unusual service arrangements, and heritage-related elements within the restaurant environment.

Raminten's authenticity extends beyond its own promotional content and is reinforced through audience interactions on digital platforms. Customer reviews consistently highlight distinctive cultural elements, such as waitstaff wearing traditional Javanese attire, the absence of conventional cashier systems, and heritage artifacts displayed throughout the restaurant. Rather than focusing primarily on food quality, reviewers repeatedly describe the immersive cultural atmosphere, demonstrating that authenticity is recognized and reproduced through customers' own narratives and experiences. This dialogical process allows consumers to participate in constructing the brand's authentic identity by validating the cultural meanings promoted by the restaurant.

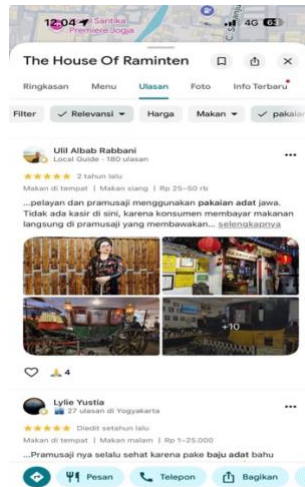


Figure 12

These observations are significant because they correspond with cultural features represented in the brand's own materials. The customer-generated discourse therefore provides an additional perspective on how the restaurant's cultural identity is experienced and described by visitors. Rather than introducing a completely separate representation of the restaurant, the review reinforces several elements already present in the brand discourse: traditional clothing, distinctive spatial features, and an unconventional dining environment. The consumer discourse consequently contributes to the circulation of the cultural meanings associated with Raminten. Within the selected material, authenticity can therefore be understood as relationally reinforced: the brand presents a culturally distinctive environment, while the customer review provides an external account that recognizes and describes some of the same characteristics.

Bebek Kaleyo: Digital Participation and Public Validation

Bebek Kaleyo constructs authenticity by fostering public participation and community engagement on digital platforms in Figure 13. Rather than focusing solely on the quality of its traditional cuisine, the brand actively invites followers to participate in quizzes, giveaways, and interactive campaigns using inclusive expressions such as "Kaleyo Lovers" and "Let's guess" (*Tebak Yuk*). The post encourages users to comment, tag friends, follow the account, and share branded hashtags, transforming audiences from passive consumers into active participants in the brand community. These interactional strategies create a sense of belonging while simultaneously increasing the visibility and circulation of the brand across digital networks.



Figure 13

These lexical and interactional choices position followers not simply as recipients of promotional information but as participants in the brand's digital communication. The use of the collective expression “Kaleyo Lovers” constructs a recognizable audience group, while “*Tebak Yuk*” uses an informal invitation to encourage participation. The calls to comment, tag, follow, and share further extend the communication beyond the original post by encouraging audience responses and circulation. In this material, consumer participation is therefore explicitly incorporated into the branding practice.

The selected material supports an interpretation of participation as a form of public validation. Rather than treating visible engagement as direct proof of product authenticity, the analysis indicates that interactive practices create opportunities through which audiences publicly associate themselves with the brand and contribute to the circulation of its identity.

Comparative Pattern

The two cases demonstrate different forms of audience involvement. In The House of Raminten, the Google Maps review provides consumer-generated description of the cultural experience, allowing an external account to reinforce aspects of the brand's cultural representation. In Bebek Kaleyo, audience participation is more directly solicited through interactive Instagram language and calls to action. The distinction can therefore be described as consumer validation through experience in Raminten and participatory digital engagement in Bebek Kaleyo. In both cases, however, consumer or audience discourse extends authenticity beyond the brand's own promotional claims.

Comparative Synthesis of Authenticity Construction

The comparison across the four thematic dimensions demonstrates that the two culinary MSMEs employ different combinations of textual, visual, and interactive resources to construct authenticity.

Dimension	The House of Raminten	Bebek Kaleyo
Authenticity basis	Javanese cultural heritage and experiential identity	Culinary heritage, historical continuity, and lineage

Dimension	The House of Raminten	Bebek Kaleyo
Heritage strategy	Cultural representation and immersion	Culinary continuity and inherited expertise
Narrative strategy	Cultural and linguistic storytelling	Entrepreneurial journey and family continuity
Visual emphasis	Traditional attire, cultural settings, and heritage objects	Culinary products, historical imagery, and contemporary brand presentation
Tradition–modernity relation	Cultural heritage circulated through contemporary digital branding	Traditional cuisine integrated with contemporary branding and service practices
Audience/consumer role	Consumer description and validation of cultural experience	Explicit digital participation and public interaction
Dominant authenticity construction	Cultural immersion	Modernized tradition

The comparative pattern indicates that authenticity is constructed through different emphases rather than through a single standardized branding strategy. The House of Raminten consistently places Javanese cultural representation at the center of its textual and visual discourse, while Bebek Kaleyo connects culinary tradition with historical continuity, entrepreneurial development, and contemporary service practices. Across the selected materials, consumer and audience participation further extends these constructions by providing opportunities for cultural validation, interaction, and public circulation.

4. Discussion

Authenticity as Discursive and Multimodal Performance

This study demonstrates that authenticity in culinary MSME branding is not an inherent characteristic of a product or brand but a discursive and multimodal construction. Across the two cases, authenticity emerges through the selective combination of linguistic, visual, narrative, and audience-oriented resources through which particular meanings of cultural identity, continuity, and credibility are made recognizable. This finding supports conceptualizations of authenticity as something perceived and constructed rather than simply possessed by a brand (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010). From a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective, the finding also demonstrates how authenticity is produced through the relationship between textual representation, discursive practice, and broader social meanings (Fairclough, 1995).

The comparison, however, shows that authenticity is not constructed in the same way across culinary MSMEs. The House of Raminten foregrounds Javanese cultural heritage through traditional attire, culturally marked spaces, heritage objects, Javanese language, and experiential representations. These resources construct authenticity primarily through cultural immersion, in which consumers encounter the brand through a recognizable representation of Javanese identity. Bebek Kaleyo, in contrast, connects authenticity with historical continuity, family culinary knowledge, and contemporary service and branding practices. Its authenticity can therefore be characterized as

modernized tradition, in which traditional culinary identity is maintained while being communicated through contemporary commercial and digital forms.

This finding extends previous Indonesian research on brand authenticity by shifting attention from the consequences of authenticity to the discursive processes through which authenticity is constructed. Yasri et al. (2024), for example, demonstrate that brand authenticity is associated with brand choice among consumers of Indonesian local specialty-food SMEs, with brand trust, brand love, and brand value playing mediating roles. Similarly, Theresia and Antonio (2023) show that social-media marketing activities contribute positively to brand authenticity and brand preference among consumers of Indonesian local snack brands. While these studies demonstrate the relevance and effects of authenticity from a consumer-oriented perspective, the present study illustrates how such authenticity is discursively produced through specific verbal and visual resources.

The finding also complements Saragi and Sinulingga's (2026) discourse-oriented analysis of Batak Toba culinary authenticity on Instagram, which identifies lexical constructions associated with sensory, procedural, historical, and locality dimensions of authenticity. The present study extends this linguistic perspective by demonstrating that culinary authenticity is not constructed through language alone. Rather, linguistic choices operate together with visual representation, spatial imagery, narrative, and audience-oriented communication. Authenticity can therefore be understood as a multimodal discursive performance in which different semiotic resources work together to make particular versions of culinary identity credible and recognizable.

Heritage, Selectivity, and the Commercial Construction of Authenticity

A more critical reading of the findings shows that authenticity also involves the selective representation of heritage. Neither brand represents tradition as a complete or neutral cultural reality. Instead, particular cultural elements are foregrounded as resources for establishing brand identity.

In The House of Raminten, the selected materials foreground traditional Javanese attire, culturally marked architectural settings, heritage objects, Javanese expressions, and philosophical meanings. These elements transform aspects of Javanese cultural identity into recognizable signs within the restaurant's brand discourse. The result is not simply a representation of heritage but a selective organization of cultural signs around the experience offered by the brand. The authenticity claim consequently depends on which dimensions of Javanese identity are made visible, narratable, and commercially meaningful.

Bebek Kaleyo performs a comparable process through a different set of cultural resources. Rather than emphasizing a broad cultural environment, it foregrounds temporal continuity, family recipes, Nusantara culinary identity, and regional taste. Expressions such as "since 1976," "family recipe," "authentic Nusantara taste," and "Madura special black-spice" establish culinary continuity as a central basis of authenticity. Heritage is consequently articulated through origin, inheritance, and culinary specificity.

From a CDA perspective, these patterns raise an ideological question concerning whose version of tradition becomes visible as authentic. The findings do not demonstrate that either brand represents the entirety of Javanese or Indonesian culinary culture. Rather, they show that branding discourse selects particular cultural signs and organizes them into coherent narratives of authenticity. In this process, cultural heritage becomes

not only an identity resource but also a resource for differentiation within the culinary market.

This observation provides a more precise basis for discussing commercialization and commodification. Rather than asserting that heritage is simply commodified, the findings indicate a process in which selected cultural signs are incorporated into market-oriented brand representations. In Raminten, traditional clothing, cultural objects, language, and spatial aesthetics become part of the experience through which the restaurant distinguishes itself. In Kaleyo, historical origin, family recipes, and culinary locality become resources for establishing credibility and continuity. Thus, cultural meanings are not detached from commercial communication; they are reorganized as brand resources that can be communicated to consumers.

This interpretation is consistent with Fairclough's (1995) view that discourse participates in the organization of social meanings and practices. The branding of heritage is therefore not merely descriptive. It contributes to defining which cultural features become salient within the contemporary representation of culinary authenticity. This also qualifies a purely celebratory understanding of heritage branding: while cultural representation may strengthen local identity, it simultaneously involves processes of selection, framing, and market-oriented circulation.

Hybridization of Tradition and Modernity

The findings further indicate that authenticity is not constructed through a simple opposition between tradition and modernity. Instead, both brands integrate traditional references into contemporary forms of branding and digital communication, although they do so differently.

For The House of Raminten, traditional Javanese cultural signs remain central while contemporary digital platforms provide the means through which those signs are circulated and narrated. Traditional attire, heritage objects, Javanese language, and culturally marked environments are therefore not confined to a historical or physical setting; they become part of a contemporary digital brand identity. Modernity in this case operates primarily as a medium of cultural circulation, allowing heritage-based meanings to remain visible within contemporary branding practices.

Bebek Kaleyo demonstrates a different form of hybridization. Traditional culinary identity is combined more directly with contemporary expectations of professional service, standardized presentation, accessibility, and digital interaction. The brand does not abandon tradition in order to appear modern. Instead, traditional cuisine is presented as compatible with contemporary consumption practices. Authenticity consequently emerges through the integration of culinary continuity and modern service-oriented branding.

This pattern extends Theresia and Antonio's (2023) finding that social-media marketing activities can contribute to brand authenticity among Indonesian local snack SMEs. Their findings establish the relevance of digital marketing to authenticity, whereas the present study demonstrates how this relationship is realized through particular discursive and multimodal strategies. It also complements Tambunan et al. (2026), who found that social-media use among culinary micro and small enterprises can strengthen brand identity, customer interaction, and consumer trust through personalized narratives, humanized brand identities, and consistent visual representation.

The present findings therefore suggest that the relationship between tradition and modernity should not be understood as mutually exclusive. Instead, authenticity may be constructed precisely through their articulation. Raminten's strategy can be understood as cultural immersion through contemporary circulation, while Kaleyo's strategy can be understood as modernized tradition through contemporary consumption and service practices. The distinction lies not in whether the brands use modern branding, but in how modern branding is made compatible with the particular version of tradition each brand foregrounds.

Consumer Co-construction of Authenticity

One of the more significant findings of this study concerns the role of consumers and audiences in the construction of authenticity. The findings suggest that authenticity does not end with the brand's own representation. It can be further reinforced when consumers describe, respond to, or participate in the meanings circulated through digital platforms.

The Google Maps customer review associated with The House of Raminten provides direct evidence of consumer-generated discourse. The review describes aspects of the restaurant experience that correspond with the cultural representations emphasized in the brand's own materials, including traditional attire and distinctive features of the dining environment. The consumer discourse therefore extends the authenticity narrative beyond producer-generated branding by providing an external account of the cultural experience.

Bebek Kaleyo presents a somewhat different form of participation. Its interactive Instagram material explicitly addresses followers through expressions such as “Kaleyo Lovers” and “Tebak Yuk,” accompanied by invitations to comment, tag, follow, and share. These linguistic choices position audiences as participants in the brand's digital communication rather than merely as recipients of promotional messages.

These findings support the argument that authenticity can become relationally constructed through interactions between organizational discourse and audience participation. Importantly, however, the present study does not establish that the quantity of likes, comments, or other engagement metrics objectively determines authenticity. Rather, the selected materials show how digital interaction provides opportunities for audiences to participate in and reinforce the meanings associated with the brand.

This finding extends existing research on Indonesian culinary SMEs. Yasri et al. (2024) demonstrate that authenticity is relevant to consumer responses such as brand choice, trust, love, and value, while Theresia and Antonio (2023) establish a relationship between social-media marketing, authenticity, and brand preference. The present study extends these consumer-oriented findings by conceptualizing authenticity as a process in which brand discourse and audience participation intersect.

It also complements Tambunan et al. (2026), whose study highlights customer interaction, personalized narratives, and humanized brand identity in culinary MSME social-media practices. The present findings add a specific authenticity dimension to this discussion: interaction does not merely increase engagement or humanize the brand; it can also contribute to the public negotiation and reinforcement of what the brand is understood to represent as “authentic.”

Accordingly, the findings support a shift from understanding authenticity as a brand claim toward understanding it as a relational process. The brand initiates particular authenticity narratives, but those narratives acquire additional social meaning when audiences recognize, reproduce, respond to, or participate in them.

Implications for Multimodal CDA and Culinary MSME Branding

The findings have implications for both multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis and research on culinary MSME branding. Theoretically, the study demonstrates that authenticity can be examined as a relationship between linguistic choices, visual representation, discursive practices, and audience participation. Fairclough's three-dimensional framework helps explain how authenticity claims are embedded within processes of production, circulation, and broader social meanings, while Kress and van Leeuwen's multimodal perspective makes it possible to examine how cultural identity is simultaneously communicated through people, objects, spaces, and textual elements.

The contribution is therefore not simply that Indonesian culinary MSMEs use authenticity in branding. Previous empirical research has already established the importance of authenticity, social-media marketing, consumer response, and digital interaction in Indonesian SME contexts (Theresia & Antonio, 2023; Yasri et al., 2024; Tambunan et al., 2026). Rather, this study shows how different authenticity constructions are produced multimodally and how their meanings are extended through audience participation.

The comparison between The House of Raminten and Bebek Kaleyo further demonstrates that culinary authenticity does not require a single representational model. Raminten constructs authenticity through cultural immersion, foregrounding heritage as an experiential and visible component of the dining environment. Bebek Kaleyo constructs authenticity through modernized tradition, connecting culinary lineage with contemporary branding and service practices. These contrasting strategies demonstrate that authenticity is flexible enough to accommodate different relationships between heritage, identity, modernity, and market communication.

For culinary MSMEs, the findings suggest that authenticity may be strengthened when cultural narratives, visual representations, and audience interaction are mutually consistent. However, the critical perspective adopted in this study also indicates that authenticity claims should be approached reflexively. Because branding necessarily selects particular cultural meanings, entrepreneurs should consider how heritage is represented, whose cultural identity is foregrounded, and how consumers are positioned within the resulting narrative. In this sense, authenticity-oriented branding involves not only effective communication but also responsibility in the representation and circulation of cultural identity.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting these findings. First, the study examines only two Indonesian culinary MSMEs, limiting the extent to which the findings can be generalized to other culinary businesses or cultural contexts. The comparative design is intended to provide analytical depth rather than statistical generalization. Second, the study uses a purposively selected digital dataset consisting of 12 publicly available materials produced during 2021–2025. The findings therefore reflect the discursive and multimodal characteristics of the selected materials rather than the

complete branding activities of either organization. Platform-specific characteristics may also shape how authenticity is represented and interacted with. Third, as an interpretive Critical Discourse Analysis, the study reflects the analytical perspective of a single researcher.

Although the materials were examined systematically using consistent analytical categories, the findings should be understood as interpretive rather than as objectively exhaustive accounts of the brands' meanings. Finally, the study does not include interviews with brand managers or consumers. Consequently, the analysis identifies how authenticity is represented and negotiated in publicly available discourse but cannot establish how brand producers consciously intended particular meanings or how consumers privately understand authenticity beyond the consumer-generated material included in the dataset. Future research could combine multimodal CDA with interviews, ethnographic observation, or larger-scale digital discourse analysis to examine more extensively how organizational and consumer understandings of culinary authenticity interact across platforms.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that authenticity in culinary MSME branding is a dynamic discursive achievement rather than a fixed characteristic of products, places, or traditions. Through a comparative multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis, the findings demonstrate that The House of Raminten and Bebek Kaleyo construct authenticity through distinct strategies. The House of Raminten foregrounds cultural immersion, integrating Javanese heritage, cultural representation, linguistic resources, and experiential meanings into its brand identity. Bebek Kaleyo, in contrast, constructs authenticity through modernized tradition, connecting culinary heritage and historical continuity with contemporary branding, service, and digital communication practices.

The findings further demonstrate that authenticity is not produced solely through brand-generated discourse. It can also be relationally reinforced through consumer-generated discourse and audience participation. The selected consumer review of The House of Raminten and the interactive communication practices of Bebek Kaleyo show how audiences can participate in the circulation and validation of meanings associated with brand authenticity. Authenticity therefore emerges through the interaction between organizational discourse, multimodal representation, and audience engagement rather than as an inherent quality possessed by the culinary product itself.

The study also highlights the selective nature of heritage representation in authenticity-oriented branding. Both brands foreground particular cultural resources such as Javanese attire, cultural spaces, language, historical continuity, family recipes, and regional culinary identity and incorporate them into contemporary brand narratives. This demonstrates that authenticity is negotiated not only through claims of tradition but also through the ways particular cultural meanings are selected, represented, and circulated within digital branding practices.

Theoretically, this study contributes to research on authenticity and multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis by showing how culinary MSMEs construct different versions of authenticity through the interaction of verbal, visual, narrative, and audience-oriented resources. Rather than treating authenticity as a static brand attribute, the study positions it as a relational and evolving process shaped by heritage, contemporary branding practices, and consumer participation. The findings also extend research on Indonesian

culinary branding by demonstrating how authenticity can function simultaneously as a cultural resource, a branding strategy, and a negotiated social meaning.

Practically, the findings suggest that culinary MSMEs can develop distinctive brand identities by integrating cultural narratives, multimodal representation, and meaningful audience engagement. At the same time, authenticity-oriented branding requires attention to how cultural heritage is selectively represented and transformed into market-oriented brand resources. Such awareness is important for developing branding practices that communicate cultural identity while maintaining credibility and cultural sensitivity.

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