



Critical discourse analysis of gastronomy in digital media: Edit Value Modeling for sustainable culinary tourism in Bangkalan

Moch. Imron Rosyidi^{1*}, Ahmad Cholil², Tatag Handaka³, Muhtar Wahyudi⁴,
Drajat Wicaksono⁵

^{1,2,3,4,5}Department of Communication Science, Universitas Trunojoyo Madura, Bangkalan, Indonesia

*Corresponding author

Email address: imron.rosyidi@trunojoyo.ac.id

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Keywords: gastronomy critical discourse analysis Edit Value Model culinary heritage sustainable tourism	This study examines the discursive construction of Madurese gastronomy and develops the Edit Value Model as a conceptual framework for sustainable culinary tourism. Although Madura possesses a rich culinary heritage, including <i>bebek songkem</i>, <i>tajin sobbih</i>, and <i>kaldu kokot</i>, its gastronomic identity remains overshadowed by other regional tourism icons. Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the study investigates how gastronomy is constructed and negotiated across three types of digital media: mainstream, independent, and alternative. Data were collected through textual analysis of digital media articles, in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, and field observations in Bangkalan Regency. The findings reveal that digital mainstream media legitimize gastronomy as official heritage aligned with institutional tourism agendas, whereas digital independent media emphasize lifestyle, creativity, and everyday experiences. Digital alternative media, by contrast, combine promotion with critique by exposing socio-economic inequalities and forms of resistance. These discursive practices position digital media as “editors of meaning,” selectively amplifying, marginalizing, or reframing culinary values. The proposed Edit Value Model conceptualizes this process as a dynamic cycle encompassing cultural input, media editing practices, legitimization, lifestyle framing, and reflexivity. The study argues that sustainable culinary tourism depends on discursive justice, ensuring the inclusive representation of community voices alongside institutional interests.

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Introduction

Gastronomy has increasingly become a central element in contemporary tourism development (López-Guzmán & Sánchez-Cañizares, 2012), where food is recognized not merely as a biological necessity but as a cultural system that conveys identity, memory, value, and symbolic meaning (Rockower, 2012; Spence, 2016). In many regions, culinary traditions are inseparable from cultural heritage and collective experience, functioning as markers of place and social belonging. In this perspective, gastronomy serves as a cultural archive, a narrative medium, and a means of expressing social distinctions within and across communities (Zhang, 2015). Therefore, its role in supporting sustainable tourism extends beyond consumption—it is an agent of cultural communication and identity formation.

Madura, a region located in East Java, possesses a rich and diverse gastronomic heritage (Suryandari et al., 2023). Local dishes such as *bebek songkem*, *tajin sobbih*, *kaldu kokot*, and *lorjuk* are embedded in long-standing traditions and everyday practices of communal life (Rosyidi et al., 2025). These culinary forms are not disconnected from history and culture; rather, they represent lived experiences

of locality, spirituality, maritime ecology, and social resilience. However, despite this richness, Madurese gastronomy often does not occupy a strong position within broader tourism narratives. In many promotional or digital media representations, Madura tends to be associated with singular cultural stereotypes—particularly regarding perceived strong character, simplicity, and straightforwardness—while its culinary identity remains underrepresented, flattened, or overshadowed by dominant images of tourism from other Indonesian regions (Avcikurt et al., 2020).

This situation is closely tied to how meaning and identity are produced discursively (de Jong et al., 2018). Gastronomy is not only something that is cooked and served; it is also *spoken about*, mediated, circulated, and framed within power-laden symbolic systems. Media discourse plays a role in shaping public perception by selecting which culinary elements to highlight, which narratives to suppress, and how the cultural worth of food is defined (Meijer & Thaens, 2013). The abstract of this study indicates clear differences among mainstream, independent, and alternative digital media in constructing culinary identity. Mainstream digital media tend to align gastronomy with state-supported heritage

and tourism branding; independent digital media emphasize lifestyle and creativity; while alternative digital media often articulate critiques regarding inequality and marginalization of local culinary actors. These divergent representations underscore that digital media act as editors of cultural meaning, engaging in processes of amplification, reduction, and reframing (Turning, 2023).

While, the tourism sector in Madura has experienced significant growth, particularly post-pandemic recovery, the increase in visitor numbers has not been accompanied by a proportional rise in local economic benefits. One of the key issues is the low length of stay (Sormaz et al., 2016), meaning that tourists do not remain long enough to contribute substantially to local revenue streams (Rosyidi et al., 2025). Gastronomy, with its immersive cultural potential, has strategic capacity to extend tourists' interaction with local environments, enabling deeper engagement and more inclusive economic participation at the community level (Rockower, 2012; Spence, 2016).

However, this potential will remain unrealized if gastronomic heritage continues to be framed merely as a commodity (Sormaz et al., 2016; Suryandari et al., 2023). When food traditions are reduced to market labels or surface-level tourism icons, the cultural meanings, embedded knowledge, and social identities attached to them risk being eroded. In other words, gastronomy may become detached from the communities that produce and sustain it. What is required, therefore, is not only a marketing strategy, but also a discursive reconstruction that ensures community voices, cultural nuances, and socio-historical narratives are present and recognized in public discourse (Forchtner & Schneickert, 2016).

To address this issue, this research adopts Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

as conceptualized by Teun A. van Dijk. CDA provides a framework for examining discourses at the textual, cognitive, and socio-structural levels. It enables understanding not only of how linguistic elements are arranged within digital media texts, but also of how shared beliefs, ideologies, and power relations influence the production and reception of meaning. Thus, CDA is appropriate for uncovering how gastronomic identity is shaped, legitimized, contested, or marginalized within communicative practices (van Dijk, 2008).

Teun A. van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) provides a comprehensive framework for understanding discourse not merely as a linguistic phenomenon, but as a form of social practice that is embedded within structures of power, ideology, and knowledge. van Dijk argues that discourse plays a central role in reproducing and challenging social dominance, particularly through everyday communication, digital media texts, and institutional narratives. His model operates across three interrelated dimensions: textual structure, social cognition, and sociocultural context (van Dijk, 1995, 2008, 2015).

The textual dimension examines the linguistic and structural organization of discourse. This includes analysis of word choice (lexicon), thematic emphasis, argumentation structure, coherence, metaphors, and rhetorical strategies. In gastronomic representation, for example, the choice to describe Madurese cuisine as "authentic," "rustic," or "exotic" is not neutral; it encodes value judgments and frames how audiences perceive cultural identity. By analyzing textual patterns, researchers can reveal how digital media selectively emphasize certain cultural attributes while obscuring others.

The social cognition dimension refers to the mental models, beliefs, and shared

knowledge that shape how individuals and groups produce and interpret discourse. van Dijk emphasizes that ideologies operate through social cognition by guiding how meaning is internalized and reproduced. In the context of gastronomic identity, social cognition involves understanding how communities, institutions, and audiences collectively define what counts as “traditional,” “valuable,” or “representative” food culture. Thus, discourse analysis must attend to how stereotypes or cultural prestige are maintained through shared mental frameworks.

The sociocultural context dimension situates discourse within broader social structures, including power relations, historical forces, and institutional influences. This dimension addresses questions such as: Who controls the narrative? Whose voices are amplified or silenced? In gastronomic tourism, government agencies, digital media industries, culinary entrepreneurs, and local communities may occupy unequal positions in defining cultural value. Thus, the sociocultural dimension highlights the political nature of cultural representation.

Method

This research adopted a qualitative Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach guided by van Dijk’s three-dimensional model. The method involves several stages. First, data collection includes gathering digital media texts, promotional discourse, documentary materials, interview transcripts, and field observations. These sources represent diverse discursive fields—from official tourism narratives to everyday storytelling practices within communities (Forchtner & Schneickert, 2016; van Dijk, 2015).

Second, textual analysis is conducted to identify representational strategies, linguistic patterns, framing devices, and symbolic cues used to construct meanings around Madurese gastronomy. This step involves coding thematic elements such as identity markers, cultural values, spatial references, and market-oriented representations.

Third, interpretive analysis of social cognition is carried out by examining interview data with stakeholders such as culinary practitioners, cultural actors, local residents, and tourism managers. This step aims to uncover shared cultural models, stereotypes, aspirations, and ideological assumptions that inform gastronomic meaning-making.

Finally, the sociocultural analysis stage contextualizes findings within broader systems of power, digital media circulation, and cultural policy. This includes mapping the relationships between actors involved in constructing gastronomic identity and identifying points of tension, negotiation, or exclusion.

By combining these stages, the study not only reveals how gastronomic discourse is textually formed, but also how it reflects and shape cultural identity, local agency, and economic participation. Thus, van Dijk’s CDA provides a methodological bridge between linguistic analysis and sociopolitical interpretation, enabling a holistic understanding of gastronomy as both cultural expression and contested discursive field.

Results and Discussion

The construction of gastronomic identity in Madura is not merely a reflection of culinary traditions, but rather a dynamic discursive process in which cultural values are continuously shaped, negotiated, and

reframed. This study finds that gastronomy in Madura functions as a cultural text—an ongoing narrative that conveys meanings related to religiosity, creativity, social bonds, and economic struggle. Through the lens of Teun A. van Dijk’s Critical Discourse Analysis (Forchtner & Schneickert, 2016; van Dijk, 2015), the representation of food is understood not as neutral description, but as a strategic act of meaning-making embedded within structures of power, ideology, and cultural negotiation. Digital media play a central role in this process, acting as what we identify as value editors—agents who selectively emphasize, diminish, reinterpret, or replace cultural meanings according to their orientation, audience, and institutional ties.

The gastronomic landscape of Madura provides fertile ground for such analysis due to the richness of symbolic meanings found in its well-known dishes. *Bebek Songkem*, for instance, is not simply a culinary product;

it embodies a culturally embedded act of respect and spiritual reverence. The term “*songkem*,” associated with the gesture of bowing or offering respect, points to a social ethic of kinship and humility deeply rooted in Madurese value systems. Meanwhile, contemporary dishes such as *Nasi Pocong* and *Nasi Setan* reflect the playful creativity and social fluidity seen in urban night-market culture, where food becomes a medium for humor, experimentation, and public gathering. Likewise, narratives surrounding local street vendors and pricing practices reveal a culture of economic resilience and informal negotiation—an ongoing assertion of autonomy against external economic structures. These cultural values serve as the raw narrative material available for digital media to reshape in their representational work.

In examining how digital media construct these meanings, this research focuses on three different types of digital media spheres:

Table 1. Narrative type of digital media

Digital Media Type	Narrative Logic	What Is Amplified	What Is Reduced	Ideological Orientation	Discursive Output
Mainstream	Heritage legitimization	Tradition, authenticity, cultural pride	Struggle, humor, critique	Institutional-national identity	Cultural Preservation
Independent	Lifestyle experience	Flavor, atmosphere, novelty	Ritual, history, power relations	Consumerist enjoyment	Commodification / Popularization
Alternative	Critical cultural awareness	Inequality, identity politics, agency	Government tourism rhetoric	Cultural self-reflection	Critical Cultural Literacy

Source: Primary Data (2025)

mainstream digital media, independent digital media, and alternative digital media. Each digital media type demonstrates a distinct narrative logic, editorial orientation, and ideological relationship toward cultural identity and the local gastronomic economy. Mainstream digital media tend to emphasize legitimacy, institutional coherence, and cultural pride. Independent digital media prioritize novelty, lifestyle appeal, and experiential immediacy. Alternative digital media foreground cultural reflection, social critique, and discourse of resistance. Although each digital media category draws on the same cultural content, they produce meaning in markedly different ways, leading to divergent images of what Madurese gastronomy represents.

Mainstream digital media, such as *radarmadura.id*, tend to portray gastronomic heritage in a tone that aligns with regional development agendas and tourism industry frameworks. In this narrative style, Madurese food is presented as a symbol of regional identity, a heritage commodity that supports cultural and economic progress (Graham, 2014; Hasan, 2026).

The representation foregrounds tradition, authenticity, and continuity. However, this framing also tends to neutralize conflict, avoiding mention of the tensions, struggles,

or internal diversity of culinary practices. Such narratives legitimize culinary heritage as part of a unified regional story, but in doing so, they may produce a sanitized and institutionalized identity, one that privileges state-approved heritage over everyday cultural complexity.

Independent digital media, represented here by platforms like *maduraindepth.com*, construct gastronomy differently. Instead of emphasizing cultural gravitas or legacy, independent digital media tend to highlight sensory experience, personal anecdotes, and social atmosphere. The culinary scene is presented as a field of exploration, excitement, and social engagement.

Food becomes a lifestyle object—something to be tried, shared, photographed, and circulated within peer networks. This form of representation democratizes gastronomy by making it relatable and personal; however, it often does so by downplaying the historical and cultural depth of culinary heritage. The result is a form of popularization that increases visibility, yet risks transforming gastronomy primarily into a consumable trend.

Alternative digital media, such as *pitutur.id*, operate at a different register entirely. These digital media spaces combine gastronomic storytelling with critical

Table 2. Contribution areas

Contribution Area	Significance
Theoretical	Offers a discursive framework for analyzing gastronomy as cultural text
Methodological	Operationalizes CDA in a culturally specific context
Practical	Provides a communication strategy for sustainable gastronomic tourism planning
Cultural	Encourages representation that balances identity, economy, and justice

Source: Primary Data (2025)

cultural reflection, addressing issues such as inequality, marginalization of small food vendors, tourism-driven displacement, and the economic fragility of traditional culinary labor.

Alternative digital media problematize the very structures that mainstream narratives stabilize and that independent digital media overlook. They present culinary identity as a contested field, one shaped by power relations between government, tourism entrepreneurs, cultural elites, and grassroots culinary actors. In doing so, alternative digital media encourage audiences to recognize food not only as something to be consumed, but as a site for social awareness and cultural self-interrogation.

Although each category of digital media draws upon a shared set of cultural foundations, their distinct editorial orientations produce three differentiated yet interrelated discursive outcomes: cultural preservation, cultural commodification, and critical cultural awareness. These outcomes are not discrete or mutually exclusive; rather, they represent overlapping modes of meaning-making through which gastronomy is constructed, circulated, and interpreted within the public sphere. Each digital media category operates as a selective apparatus, emphasizing particular dimensions of culinary culture while marginalizing others, thereby shaping how audiences perceive and engage with Madurese gastronomy (Spence, 2016).

Mainstream digital media predominantly generate narratives of cultural preservation. Through institutional legitimacy and extensive audience reach, they tend to frame gastronomy as an emblem of collective heritage, continuity, and identity. Culinary practices are represented as stable and authentic traditions that embody the historical and cultural essence

of a community. Such representations contribute to the consolidation of a shared cultural identity, positioning food as a symbolic marker of belonging. However, this preservative framing may also involve processes of simplification and idealization, wherein internal variations, historical transformations, and socio-economic tensions within culinary practices are underrepresented or obscured.

In contrast, independent digital media are more closely aligned with processes of cultural commodification. Operating within a dynamic and often market-oriented environment, these digital media translate gastronomy into consumable content that aligns with the logics of visibility, engagement, and economic value. Culinary culture is reframed as an experiential product, emphasizing sensory appeal, uniqueness, and aesthetic presentation. In this context, Madurese gastronomy is frequently positioned within broader circuits of tourism and lifestyle consumption. While such representations can enhance exposure and create economic opportunities, they also risk reducing complex cultural practices to standardized and market-friendly formats. Consequently, gastronomy may be detached from its socio-cultural context and rearticulated primarily in terms of exchange value.

Alternative digital media, by contrast, play a crucial role in fostering critical cultural awareness. These platforms tend to adopt a more reflexive and interrogative stance, examining the broader socio-economic, political, and ethical dimensions of gastronomy. Rather than merely celebrating or commercializing culinary practices, alternative digital media problematize the conditions under which food is produced, represented, and consumed. They draw attention to issues such as labor relations,

cultural appropriation, inequality, and the uneven distribution of benefits within gastronomic tourism. In doing so, they encourage audiences to critically engage with culinary culture, not only as consumers but also as socially situated actors.

Importantly, these three discursive formations—preservation, commodification, and critical awareness—should not be conceptualized as sequential stages or isolated categories. Instead, they coexist within a dynamic and interconnected discursive field. A single culinary narrative may simultaneously embody elements of heritage preservation, market-oriented representation, and critical reflection, depending on the context of its production and reception. This simultaneity underscores the complexity of cultural meaning-making and highlights the role of digital media as an active agent in shaping the public imagination of Madurese gastronomy.

This analysis suggests that gastronomy is not merely a static tradition to be preserved, but rather a dynamic cultural language that is continuously negotiated and rearticulated (de Jong et al., 2018). Culinary practices function as sites of meaning production, where cultural values are expressed, contested, and transformed in response to shifting social conditions, economic imperatives, and identity politics. In this sense, gastronomy operates as both a symbolic and material domain through which broader processes of cultural change are mediated.

To account for these processes, this study proposes the Edit Value Model as an analytical framework for understanding how cultural meanings are constructed within digital media discourse. The model conceptualizes local cultural values as inputs, which originate from the lived experiences, traditions, and knowledge systems of communities. Digital media

institutions and practitioners function as editing mechanisms, selectively framing and transforming these inputs in accordance with their editorial orientations, institutional logics, and target audiences. The resulting outputs are public narratives that circulate within the broader cultural field, shaping collective perceptions of gastronomy.

Crucially, the Edit Value Model does not posit a linear process of degradation or loss of meaning. Rather, it emphasizes the strategic and context-dependent nature of meaning transformation. Cultural values are not inherently diminished through mediation; instead, they are reconfigured in ways that reflect the intentions, constraints, and power relations embedded within the digital media environment. The key analytical concern, therefore, lies in identifying who performs the act of editing, for whom the narratives are constructed, and to what ends they are directed. This perspective shifts the focus from questions of authenticity toward issues of representation, agency, and discursive power.

The implications of this framework are particularly significant for the development of sustainable gastronomic tourism. Conventional approaches to sustainability often prioritize economic growth, promotional strategies, and the commodification of cultural assets. However, this study argues that sustainability must also be understood in terms of discursive justice, defined as the equitable representation and participation of local cultural actors in the construction of their own narratives. Without such justice, efforts to promote gastronomy risk reproducing asymmetrical power relations and undermining cultural integrity.

When local communities maintain control over the representation of their culinary heritage, gastronomy can function as a site of self-articulation and empowerment. In

such contexts, tourism becomes a medium for meaningful cultural exchange, enabling visitors to engage with the lived realities and values that underpin culinary practices. This participatory approach enhances both cultural sustainability and social equity, ensuring that the benefits of tourism are more evenly distributed.

Conversely, when culinary narratives are dominated by external actors such as digital media industries, market forces, or tourism agencies there is a heightened risk of cultural reductionism. Gastronomy may be reconstituted as an aestheticized and decontextualized object, detached from the social relations and historical processes that give it meaning. Such representations often prioritize visual appeal and consumer desirability, leading to the proliferation of simplified and stereotypical images of cultural identity. In this scenario, local voices are marginalized, and cultural expressions are redefined according to external expectations.

Therefore, the Edit Value Model contributes not only to theoretical debates on digital media, culture, and gastronomy, but also offers practical insights for policy and development. It underscores the need for more inclusive and reflexive approaches to tourism, in which local communities are recognized as active agents rather than passive subjects (Sahin, 2015). Furthermore, it calls upon digital media practitioners to acknowledge their role as cultural intermediaries, whose editorial decisions have significant implications for how cultural meanings are constructed and disseminated.

In conclusion, Madurese gastronomy should be understood as a dynamic and contested field of cultural production, shaped by multiple and intersecting digital media discourses. Through processes of preservation, commodification, and critical engagement, it continues to evolve as both a

marker of identity and a site of negotiation. The Edit Value Model provides a conceptual lens through which these processes can be analyzed, highlighting the importance of agency, representation, and power in the construction of cultural meaning. By foregrounding the principle of discursive justice, this framework offers a pathway toward more equitable and culturally grounded models of gastronomic tourism.

Media gatekeeping and narrative authority in digital food culture

In contemporary media landscapes, the representation and circulation of gastronomic knowledge have undergone profound transformation. Traditional models of journalistic gatekeeping—wherein institutional media organizations served as primary arbiters of cultural narratives—are increasingly challenged by decentralized, platform-driven forms of content creation (Yilmaz, 2025). The shift from institutional control to algorithmic mediation fundamentally reshapes how culinary practices, food traditions, and gastronomic identities are constructed, circulated, and consumed across public discourse. This transformation extends beyond mere technological change; it represents a structural reconfiguration of epistemic authority, narrative production, and cultural representation in the digital public sphere (ul Haq, 2025).

The implications of this shift are particularly significant for regional and local food cultures. Where institutional media once determined which culinary narratives gained prominence and legitimacy, algorithm-driven platforms now fragment the information ecosystem into multiple, often competing arenas of narrative production (Hasan, 2026). The tension between maintaining journalistic credibility

and competing within an attention economy that rewards sensationalism fundamentally alters how gastronomic heritage is mediated and understood. This transformation raises critical questions about discursive justice, cultural representation, and the preservation of culinary authenticity in an era dominated by virality and engagement metrics.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Madurese gastronomy is not merely a collection of culinary products but a cultural discourse shaped through dynamic processes of representation, negotiation, and value editing across different media spheres. The analysis reveals that the cultural meanings embedded in dishes such as *Bebek Songkem*, *Nasi Pocong*, and *Nasi Setan* function as symbolic carriers of religiosity, creativity, community ethics, and resistance. These meanings are not static; they are actively reinterpreted through digital media narratives that serve as value-editing mechanisms. Mainstream digital media contribute to the preservation of gastronomic heritage by framing local cuisine as a cultural asset aligned with tourism and regional identity. Independent digital media facilitate popularization and commodification, transforming gastronomy into a lifestyle-oriented, experiential commodity that circulates widely in digital culture. Alternative digital media promote critical cultural awareness, foregrounding issues of inequality, labor conditions, and cultural marginalization within the culinary sphere.

The proposed Edit Value Model conceptualizes this process as a cycle involving (1) cultural values as discursive inputs, (2) media framing and narrative construction as the editing phase, and (3) cultural positioning outcomes that

shape public understanding and identity. Therefore, gastronomy emerges as a living cultural language that reflects and shapes Madurese identity in ways that are both symbolic and material. The model underscores that sustainable gastronomic tourism requires more than promotional visibility—it requires discursive justice, ensuring that local communities retain agency in narrating and defining the value of their own culinary heritage.

Declaration of Ownership

This article is our original work.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest to declare in this article.

Ethical Clearance

This study was approved by the institution.

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