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MICROCOPY, MACRO-IMPACT: UX WRITING, LINGUISTIC ERRORS, AND VERNACULAR AUTHENTICITY IN A LOCAL INDONESIAN MENU

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ABSTRACT

Bridging the gap between digital-centric theories and tangible cultural artifacts, this study applies the principles of User Experience (UX) Writing to a non-digital object: a menu from a local restaurant in Sumbawa, Indonesia. The research investigates how its textual elements—from microcopy to information architecture—address the communicative needs of a global tourist audience. Employing a qualitative textual analysis, the study systematically evaluates the menu against core UX tenets such as clarity, voice, and usability. The findings reveal a stark paradox: the menu demonstrates high functional clarity in its information architecture but significantly underutilizes persuasive strategies, rendering it effective as an informational guide but less persuasive as a marketing tool. However, the most compelling finding is how a series of unintentional linguistic errors generates a distinctive 'vernacular-authentic' tone. This study argues that these very flaws, typically viewed as unprofessional, function as markers of non-corporate authenticity that may appeal strongly to tourists seeking genuine local experiences. Consequently, this research provides two significant contributions. First, it demonstrates the robust applicability of UX Writing as an analytical framework for non-digital, everyday texts, thereby expanding the discipline's conventional boundaries. Second, it offers a novel perspective on authenticity in tourism discourse, proposing that textual 'imperfection' can paradoxically function as a powerful and strategic communicative asset, fostering a sense of genuine connection. Theoretically, this expands UX Writing by validating its applicability to physical cultural artifacts, bridging the gap between digital design principles and traditional tourism discourse.

Keywords: *UX Writing, Microcopy, Menu Analysis, Intercultural Communication*

INTRODUCTION

The linguistic landscapes of urban centers are profoundly shaped by the dual forces of mass tourism and migration (Santos Rovira, 2025). These transformative forces convert public spaces into complex semiotic arenas where diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds converge, necessitating a more sophisticated approach to communication. Within this dynamic context, the local restaurant menu emerges as a particularly compelling, yet often overlooked, artifact (Bousquet & Stone, 2026).

It represents a critical point of interaction where culinary traditions are translated into a global language

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to facilitate a commercial exchange between a local host and an international guest. However, empirical studies identify a tangible linguistic mismatch in tourist spaces, highlighting the gap between a restaurant's projected image and its functional reality (Artawa et al., 2023). This discrepancy often results in a loss of communicative efficiency, as the intended message frequently fails to resonate with the practical expectations of the global audience. This tension reflects a broader semiotic dissonance in which the choice of language in commercial artifacts actively constructs meaning (Fatima & Issa, 2025). As such, the language on a menu is never a neutral medium; rather, it is a strategic choice that signals the establishment's identity and perceived professionalism in a competitive market.

Conventionally, UX Writing is strictly tethered to digital interfaces such as apps, websites, and software, where the primary goal is to guide users through a non-linear digital journey. In these digital environments, every word and phrase is meticulously crafted to ensure clarity and to minimize any potential friction that might hinder the user's progress toward a specific goal. Applying this lens to a physical, static object, such as a printed menu, disrupts the discipline's traditional boundaries. However, the cognitive processes involved in decoding a menu are strikingly similar to navigating a landing page. For instance, when faced with a vast array of culinary choices, users scan for keywords, seek clear hierarchies, and make rapid decisions based on textual cues. This behavior is driven by the fact that users in high-traffic service environments are often under pressure to make decisions while managing limited cognitive load.

By transposing UX principles to this analog context, this study challenges the digital-centric bias in current literature, arguing that user experience is not confined to screens but is an inherent quality of any text designed to facilitate a transaction. This perspective suggests that the quality of an interaction is determined by the text's functional effectiveness, regardless of whether it is delivered on a digital screen or a printed document. These landscapes are not mere backdrops but active sites where identities and commercial interests are negotiated through language, a phenomenon clearly observed within Indonesian tourist areas (Ariani & Krisnawati, 2022).

The success of these negotiations often depends on how well the linguistic choices align with the practical and functional needs of the international customer. To fully understand the menu's significant weight in shaping a customer's experience and decision-making process, we must move beyond traditional analysis. While extensive research has examined the sociocultural meanings of language choices (Santos Rovira, 2025) a significant gap remains in understanding how the functional effectiveness of the text is perceived from a user's perspective. While previous studies focus primarily on what the text represents, this research emphasizes how the text performs its duty as a primary user interface. This study contends that to truly deconstruct the menu's impact, we need a framework that prioritizes the user. Such a framework enables a more rigorous evaluation of how specific linguistic choices affect the overall efficiency of the transaction and satisfaction levels in a tourism setting.

The significance of this research gap cannot be overstated, particularly when considering the high-stakes nature of the hospitality sector, where the first impression is paramount. This gap is critical because, in a service encounter, the menu is the primary tool for reducing uncertainty and facilitating a transaction. In a culturally unfamiliar environment, the menu serves as a cognitive bridge, enabling international customers to navigate complex culinary options with a sense of security and control. An ineffective menu creates cognitive friction, a common issue in user experience design that can lead to user frustration and negative business outcomes (Maulidya et al., 2024). Within this framework, cognitive friction occurs when the mental effort required to process a message exceeds the user's capacity or patience, leading to a breakdown in the service journey. This frustration often translates into a diminished perception of brand value and can severely impact the long-term sustainability of local businesses in competitive tourist zones, where word of mouth and online reviews are critical to success.

We find this framework in the discipline of UX Writing, which offers a specialized approach to crafting text that prioritizes the reader's needs and cognitive patterns. Born from the tech industry, its principles are universally applicable to any user-centered text, regardless of the medium through which the information is delivered. The core tenets, which primarily include clarity, conciseness, and usefulness, are designed to guide users through intuitive interactions. These foundational elements are famously encapsulated by the principle “Don't make me think” (Hashim et al., 2021). This directive suggests that the most effective communication is that which requires the least amount of conscious effort to understand, thereby allowing the user to focus entirely on their primary objective. This principle, central to UX writing, argues that every ounce of cognitive effort a user expends on deciphering an interface reduces their capacity to achieve their goal, a concept with proven impact in the Indonesian e-commerce context (Widyaningrum et al., 2025). In a restaurant setting, this implies that if a customer struggles to understand a dish description, their overall satisfaction and willingness to order may decrease significantly.

The significance of these tenets is further highlighted by contemporary UX frameworks that conceptualize the user's journey as a balance between minimizing pain points, such as friction and confusion, and maximizing pleasure points derived from a seamless and positive interaction (Hashim et al., 2021). In this context, a menu acts as a vital touchpoint where every linguistic choice can either facilitate a smooth decision-making process or create unnecessary hurdles for the international traveler. Central to this

practice is microcopy: short, specific texts like button labels or, in our case, dish descriptions. Despite their brevity, these small fragments of text carry immense functional weight, providing the essential instructions and information needed to complete a transaction. The significant impact of such texts on user perception and behavior has been empirically demonstrated within the Indonesian digital commerce landscape (Widyaningrum et al., 2025). By extending this logic to physical artifacts, we can observe how small textual errors or brilliant descriptions can fundamentally alter a customer's perception of a local establishment.

Furthermore, UX Writing provides the concepts of voice and tone, a framework for analyzing how a text establishes a consistent personality while adapting to specific contexts. While 'voice' represents the brand's steady, unchanging personality, 'Tone' allows for emotional flexibility based on the user's situation and needs. This is not mere branding, but a process of actively crafting an audience, which can subtly persuade, include, or even exclude users (Portmann, 2022). In a multicultural tourism environment, the strategic use of voice and tone can make international guests feel welcome and understood, or, conversely, create a sense of alienation if linguistic choices are perceived as exclusionary. Furthermore, analyzing such texts through a critical lens aligns with broader studies in tourism discourse, which often employ frameworks like Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to deconstruct how tourism phenomena, such as sustainability, are represented and negotiated in various texts aimed at the public (Ayomi et al., 2023). By integrating UX Writing with these critical perspectives, this study provides a more comprehensive understanding of how language functions as both a tool for practical utility and a medium for cultural representation.

This study also integrates insights from two other relevant fields to provide a more interdisciplinary and nuanced perspective on how language operates in the tourism industry. First, it draws upon Error Analysis (EA) within Second Language Acquisition studies, which provides a systematic framework for documenting and classifying linguistic deviations (Floranti & Adiantika, 2019). While EA is traditionally used to assess the proficiency of language learners in a classroom setting, its application in this research maps the specific linguistic landscape of a commercial service environment. However, unlike traditional EA, which often stops at identifying errors as mere pedagogical failures, this study pushes further to analyze the communicative function of these errors within a real-world business context. This approach recognizes that every textual deviation carries a specific weight and potential impact on the reader's perception and decision-making process.

This leads to the second framework, which is the sociology of tourism, particularly theories of authenticity. Authenticity remains one of the most debated and vital concepts in tourism studies, as it directly influences traveler motivation and overall satisfaction. Contemporary tourism research distinguishes between objective authenticity, which refers to the verifiable realness of an object, and existential authenticity, which represents a subjective, personal feeling of connection (Moore et al., 2021). This differentiation is essential because it shifts the focus from the technical accuracy of the artifact to the quality of the human experience it facilitates. This distinction is crucial, as it allows us to hypothesize that textual errors, while objectively wrong from a strictly grammatical perspective, may paradoxically trigger a sense of existential authenticity for tourists weary of standardized, corporate experiences. In this sense, linguistic imperfection can be perceived as a marker of human agency and local character, in contrast to the often sterile, automated nature of global corporate communication.

To fully understand the menu's significant weight in shaping a customer's experience, we must move beyond traditional analysis by incorporating multi-disciplinary perspectives that prioritize cognitive and operational efficiency in textual communication. While extensive research has analyzed tourism texts through the lenses of semiotics and identity construction (Wirza et al., 2025; Santos Rovira, 2025), and others have focused on linguistic pragmatics in restaurant discourse (Sudartinah et al., 2026), these valuable approaches primarily investigate the what, which refers to the socio-cultural meaning behind language choices. These existing studies often treat the menu as a passive cultural signifier rather than an active tool designed for navigation and decision-making within a high-pressure service environment. A significant gap remains in how the text's functional effectiveness is specifically perceived from a user's perspective. This distinction is vital because a text can be culturally meaningful yet functionally paralyzing if it fails to guide the user toward a successful transaction or if it creates unnecessary mental hurdles. Recent studies in HCI suggest that this functional gap impacts user trust (Wagle et al., 2021), yet this perspective has rarely been applied to physical menus, which continue to serve as the primary interface in many authentic service encounters. This study contends that to truly deconstruct the menu's impact, we need a framework that prioritizes the user to ensure that textual communication facilitates rather than hinders the overall intercultural dining experience.

METHODS

To achieve an in-depth understanding of textual communication in an intercultural context, this research adopts a qualitative case study design utilizing UX-informed discourse analysis. This qualitative approach is particularly suitable for this research, as it allows a nuanced exploration of how specific linguistic elements function in a real-world setting, moving beyond mere statistical descriptions toward a deeper interpretive understanding of communicative intent. The primary object of analysis is the complete English menu from

a local restaurant in Sumbawa, Indonesia, which is referred to by the pseudonym Santoana throughout this manuscript to maintain professional anonymity while preserving the authentic context of the data.

The selection of this case followed a purposive sampling strategy based on three distinct criteria, carefully designed to ensure the linguistic artifact's relevance and authenticity. The first criterion focuses on the location within a high-traffic international tourist zone, ensuring the menu serves as a primary communicative interface for a diverse global demographic with varying linguistic expectations. The second criterion is the local ownership and management, specifically as a non-franchise establishment, which ensures that the textual content represents genuine local linguistic resources rather than a polished corporate narrative produced by professional marketing agencies. The third criterion involves the exclusive use of English without bilingual translation, which highlights the restaurant's direct attempt to navigate the complexities of intercultural communication through a shared lingua franca. This selection ensures the artifact represents a genuine contact zone where local linguistic resources attempt to meet global tourist expectations, a choice validated by similar qualitative approaches to commercial artifacts in Indonesia (Fatima & Issa, 2025). By focusing on such a localized and specific artifact, this research can effectively deconstruct the intricate relationship between local cultural identity and global functional requirements.

The analysis was conducted through a streamlined three-stage process designed to ensure a rigorous, replicable evaluation of the text. First, data segmentation was performed to decompose the menu into discrete analytical units, ranging from macro-level category titles to micro-level item descriptions. This segmentation was necessary to allow a detailed examination of both structural organization and individual word choices. Second, the study employed Framework-Based Coding, a strategy consistent with discourse studies on tourism artifacts (Isti'anah, 2025). Instead of traditional linguistic tagging, each unit was rigorously evaluated against four core UX writing pillars: (1) clarity, (2) conciseness, (3) usefulness and persuasion, and (4) voice and tone. These specific pillars were selected because they directly address the functional and emotional aspects of the user's interaction with the text.

Specifically, clarity was coded not merely by grammatical correctness but by the cognitive accessibility of the vocabulary for non-native speakers, recognizing that the ultimate goal of the menu text is to facilitate immediate understanding regardless of the user's linguistic proficiency. Conciseness was evaluated by analyzing the signal-to-noise ratio in dish descriptions, specifically to determine whether every word served a functional purpose or added unnecessary cognitive load. In this context, minimizing linguistic noise is essential to ensuring that the user can scan the menu effectively without feeling overwhelmed by redundant or irrelevant details.

Usefulness and persuasion were assessed by checking whether the text anticipated user questions, such as inquiries about the spiciness of a dish or the presence of potential allergens like nuts, and used sensory language to drive conversion. By evaluating these elements, the research could determine how well the menu performs as a strategic tool for both informational guidance and sales facilitation within the dining journey. Finally, voice and tone were analyzed through lexical choice and syntactic patterns to determine the consistency of the brand persona projected to the user. This step was crucial for understanding how the restaurant constructs its professional identity and how this identity is perceived by a global audience through the subtle nuances of its linguistic style.

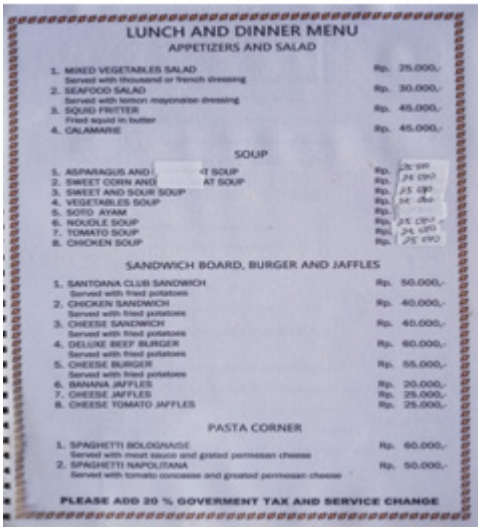
Finally, the analysis moved to thematic synthesis, where recurring patterns were consolidated to identify the menu's emergent identity and the broader communicative implications of its textual design. This final stage was instrumental in allowing the study to move beyond the identification of individual linguistic errors, focusing instead on how these disparate elements collectively shape the overall user experience. Unlike traditional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which uncovers power structures, this study prioritizes the text's functional effectiveness and user-centeredness (Li et al., 2022). By shifting the analytical focus from social hierarchies to practical usability, the research provides a more direct assessment of how the target audience processes and perceives information in a commercial setting. Furthermore, this approach ensures that the findings remain grounded in the operational realities of local businesses within the tourism sector, while acknowledging the researcher's positionality in interpreting these cultural nuances. This acknowledgment is vital, as it recognizes that the interpretation of authenticity and linguistic quality is inherently influenced by the researcher's sociocultural background and professional expertise in user experience principles.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The qualitative text analysis of the Santoana menu reveals a complex interplay between functional design and unintentional branding. The findings are synthesized into three critical themes: the paradox between cognitive fluency and persuasive gaps, the emergence of vernacular authenticity through error, and the tension between authenticity and trust in usability.

The qualitative analysis first reveals a significant theme regarding the paradox between high cognitive fluency and low persuasive power. The menu demonstrates a stark divergence between its structural logic and its communicative intent. Structurally, the information architecture is robust, reflecting a clear understanding of the user's organizational needs at a

macro level. By adopting conventional categorization and grouping dishes into universally recognizable categories such as appetizers and pasta corner, the menu creates a predictable structure that aligns with users' mental models. This alignment is crucial because it ensures that international guests can navigate the physical artifact intuitively, thereby reducing the initial cognitive effort required to locate specific food items within an unfamiliar dining environment.


LUNCH AND DINNER MENU

APPETIZERS AND SALAD

1. MIXED VEGETABLES SALAD — Rp. 25.000,-
2. SEAFOOD SALAD — Rp. 30.000,-
3. SQUID FRITTER — Rp. 45.000,-
4. CALAMARE — Rp. 45.000,-

SOUP

1. ASPARAGUS AND [illegible]T SOUP
2. SWEET CORN AND [illegible]AT SOUP
3. SWEET AND SOUR SOUP
4. VEGETABLES SOUP
5. SOTO AYAM
6. NOUDLE SOUP
7. TOMATO SOUP
8. CHICKEN SOUP

SANDWICH BOARD, BURGER AND JAFFLES

1. SANTOANA CLUB SANDWICH — Rp. 50.000,-
2. CHICKEN SANDWICH — Rp. 40.000,-
3. CHEESE SANDWICH — Rp. 40.000,-
4. DELUXE BEEF BURGER — Rp. 60.000,-
5. CHEESE BURGER — Rp. 55.000,-
6. BANANA JAFFLES — Rp. 20.000,-
7. CHEESE JAFFLES — Rp. 25.000,-
8. CHEESE TOMATO JAFFLES — Rp. 25.000,-

PASTA CORNER

1. SPAGHETTI BOLOGNAISE — Rp. 60.000,-
2. SPAGHETTI NAPOLITANA — Rp. 50.000,-

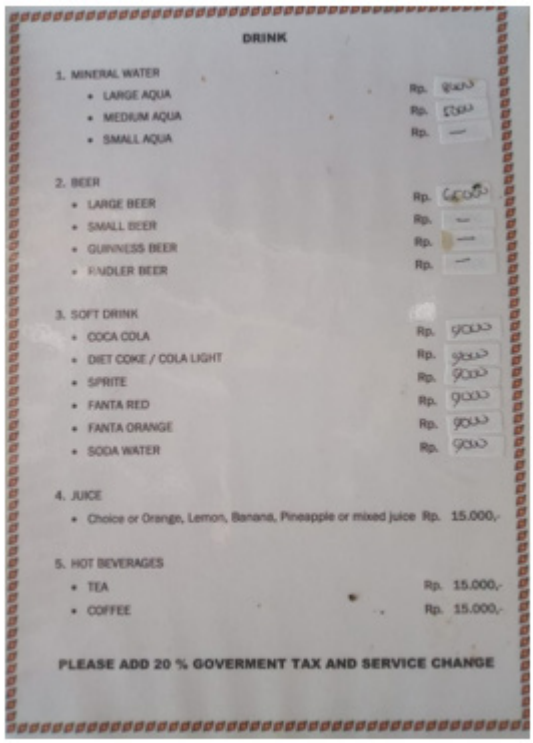
PLEASE ADD 20 % GOVERMENT TAX AND SERVICE CHANGE

Figure 1 Information Architecture Showing Categorization of Lunch and Dinner Items

As shown in Figure 1, this logical hierarchy facilitates high processing fluency—the ease with which information is understood, which consistently leads to favorable usability judgments (Li et al., 2022). This strategy is critical from a cognitive psychology perspective. By minimizing the mental effort required to navigate the menu, the restaurant successfully establishes a baseline of trust. For international tourists navigating an unfamiliar culinary landscape, this reduction in initial cognitive load is essential; it signals that the establishment understands their basic navigational needs, thereby setting a positive, albeit purely functional, tone for the dining experience.

This phenomenon can be further explained through the lens of cognitive load theory in consumer psychology. For a tourist in a foreign environment, the dining experience is often accompanied by a degree of background anxiety or hyper-stimulation. In such a state, a complex or artistic menu structure can overwhelm working memory, leading to decision paralysis. By adhering to a rigid and almost utilitarian structure, which is clearly evidenced by the numbered categorization and clean vertical alignment in the drink section shown in Figure 2, the Santoana menu effectively acts as a cognitive scaffold that allows the user to preserve mental energy for the actual decision-making process. This aligns with findings in tourism psychology suggesting that familiarity and predictability are key drivers of comfort in cross-cultural service encounters. However, this functional clarity is not matched by persuasive microcopy. The menu prioritizes functional description over persuasive seduction, a strategy that stands in stark contrast to the persuasive communication norms typically identified in restaurant discourse (Sudartinah et al., 2026).

As illustrated in Figure 2, the menu displays several linguistic inconsistencies, such as the use of 'or' instead of 'of' in the juice description, and the prominent misspelling of *goverment* and *service change* at the bottom of the page. Furthermore, beverage categories are presented in a purely functional list, where items such as 'juice' are described as simple fruit options rather than using sensory-rich narratives that might evoke taste or freshness. Furthermore, the presence of prominent linguistic errors at the bottom of the page, specifically the phrases *goverment tax* and *service change*, serves as a primary example of the non-professional linguistic landscape that characterizes this establishment. These deviations, along with the handwritten price updates, reinforce the raw, unmediated nature of communication between the local host and the international guest.


DRINK

1. MINERAL WATER
   - LARGE AQUA — Rp. [illegible]
   - MEDIUM AQUA — Rp. [illegible]
   - SMALL AQUA — Rp. —
2. BEER
   - LARGE BEER — Rp. [illegible]
   - SMALL BEER — Rp. —
   - GUINNESS BEER — Rp. —
   - FADLER BEER — Rp. —
3. SOFT DRINK
   - COCA COLA — Rp. [illegible]
   - DIET COKE / COLA LIGHT — Rp. [illegible]
   - SPRITE — Rp. [illegible]
   - FANTA RED — Rp. [illegible]
   - FANTA ORANGE — Rp. [illegible]
   - SODA WATER — Rp. [illegible]
4. JUICE
   - Choice or Orange, Lemon, Banana, Pineapple or mixed juice — Rp. 15.000,-
5. HOT BEVERAGES
   - TEA — Rp. 15.000,-
   - COFFEE — Rp. 15.000,-

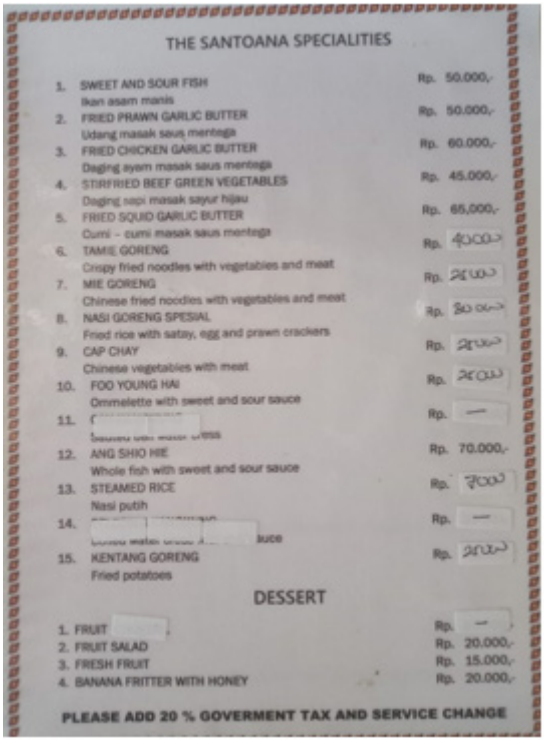
PLEASE ADD 20 % GOVERMENT TAX AND SERVICE CHANGE

Figure 2 Functional Information Architecture with Visible Orthographic Errors and Handwritten Price Updates in the Drink Section

From a UX perspective, it represents a significant missed opportunity. The ability to craft compelling narratives is a complex skill that goes well beyond mere functional description (Sumekto et al., 2023). By ignoring it, the menu overlooks the potential of seductive microcopy to anticipate user needs and craft an emotional connection (Kanellis et al., 2024).

The reliance on a dry inventory of ingredients and the lack of polished copywriting further reinforce the document's purely transactional nature. Consequently, the menu succeeds as an informational guide answering the question of 'what it is,' but fails as a marketing instrument answering the question of 'why I should want it,' thereby reducing the dining experience to a transactional exchange rather than a cultural encounter.

Another prominent theme identified in the data concerns the role of linguistic imperfection as a form of vernacular authenticity, a unique communicative phenomenon. The most distinct finding emerges from the analysis of voice and tone. While the menu lacks a consciously designed, professional voice, a series of textual inconsistencies and linguistic errors collectively constructs a highly distinctive, emergent tone. This tone is not the result of deliberate branding strategies but rather a byproduct of local linguistic constraints that paradoxically foster a sense of genuine connection between the establishment and the international tourist seeking a more personalized, humanized experience.


THE SANTOANA SPECIALITIES

1. SWEET AND SOUR FISH — Rp. 50.000,-
   Ikan asam manis
2. FRIED PRAWN GARLIC BUTTER — Rp. 50.000,-
   Udang masak saus mentega
3. FRIED CHICKEN GARLIC BUTTER — Rp. 60.000,-
   Daging ayam masak saus mentega
4. STIRFRIED BEEF GREEN VEGETABLES — Rp. 45.000,-
   Daging sapi masak sayur hijau
5. FRIED SQUID GARLIC BUTTER — Rp. 65,000,-
   Cumi – cumi masak saus mentega
6. TAMIE GORENG — Rp. 40000
   Crispy fried noodles with vegetables and meat
7. MIE GORENG — Rp. 25000
   Chinese fried noodles with vegetables and meat
8. NASI GORENG SPESIAL — Rp. 30 00-
   Fried rice with satay, egg and prawn crackers
9. CAP CHAY — Rp. 25000
   Chinese vegetables with meat
10. FOO YOUNG HAI — Rp. 25000
    Ommelette with sweet and sour sauce
11. [illegible] — Rp. —
12. ANG SHIO HIE — Rp. 70.000,-
    Whole fish with sweet and sour sauce
13. STEAMED RICE — Rp. 7000
    Nasi putih
14. [illegible] — Rp. —
15. KENTANG GORENG — Rp. 25000
    Fried potatoes

DESSERT

1. FRUIT — Rp. —
2. FRUIT SALAD — Rp. 20.000,-
3. FRESH FRUIT — Rp. 15.000,-
4. BANANA FRITTER WITH HONEY — Rp. 20.000,-

PLEASE ADD 20 % GOVERMENT TAX AND SERVICE CHANGE

Figure 3 Examples of Orthographic and Lexical Errors Contributing to Vernacular Authenticity

As seen in Figure 3, the menu contains inconsistent number formatting with multiple variations (e.g., Rp. 25.000,- vs. Rp 25000) and orthographic errors such as *goverment*. Meanwhile, other lexical errors like *crilled* (shown in Figure 4) further demonstrate the distinctive tone of this menu, constructing a non-corporate, localized identity. From a conventional Error Analysis (EA) perspective, these deviations are typically categorized as deficiencies that need correction (Floranti & Adiantika, 2019), or as negative signals that erode professional credibility (Low, 2021). However, in this specific non-standard tourism context, these errors operate differently; they function as a strategic communicative resource constructing a non-corporate, localized identity (Wirza et al., 2025).

This textual performance stands in stark opposition to the Starbucksification of global tourism, in which standardized language creates a predictable yet sterile experience. In professional corporate copywriting, a typo is a sign of incompetence that breaks the user's immersion. However, within the semiotics of a local *warung* or restaurant, perfection can ironically signal inauthenticity—a sign that the experience has been sanitized for mass consumption. The errors found in the Santoana menu, therefore, act as a form of phatic communication, signaling a direct, unmediated channel between the local host and the guest, devoid of corporate gatekeepers. This phenomenon mirrors the characteristics of glocalized English found in other Southeast Asian tourist landscapes, where hybrid word formations are seen as a dynamic communication strategy rather than mere failure (Bennui, 2024; Utomo & Sari, 2022). Also, weaknesses in grammar often reflect inferences from local languages, signaling the writer's origin (Nurhayati & Djatmika, 2020).

Drawing on the sociology of tourism, this aligns with the concept of existential authenticity, where tourists prioritize a subjective feeling of genuine connection over objective correctness (Moore et al., 2021; Li & Li, 2022). In an era dominated by Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE) tools like Grammarly, the absence of automated perfection constructs a unique, humanized character (Dewi, 2022). The menu's voice succeeds because it is discernibly not a machine's; a relatable, human persona can be more effective at building rapport than grammatical perfection (Saddhono et al., 2024).

The final key theme explored in this analysis is the trust boundary created by usability gaps in pricing, which serves as a cautionary counterpoint to the appeal of vernacular authenticity. However, the charm of authenticity has a hard limit, primarily defined by the concept of trust. The analysis identified a critical usability flaw in the Pizza Category, where prices are omitted for several items. This specific omission introduces significant navigational friction and financial uncertainty, as it forces users to seek manual clarification from staff. Such gaps in essential information ultimately undermine the user's confidence in the transaction and underscore that functional transparency remains a non-negotiable prerequisite for a positive, reliable user experience.

As demonstrated in Figure 4, this omission forces a manual intervention—interrupting the flow to ask staff—which violates the core UX principle of *Don't Make Me Think* (Harrington et al., 2022). While stylistic flaws may build rapport, price opacity introduces unnecessary friction and financial risk. High perceived risk directly undermines consumer

confidence and negatively affects purchasing behavior (Fatima & Issa, 2025).

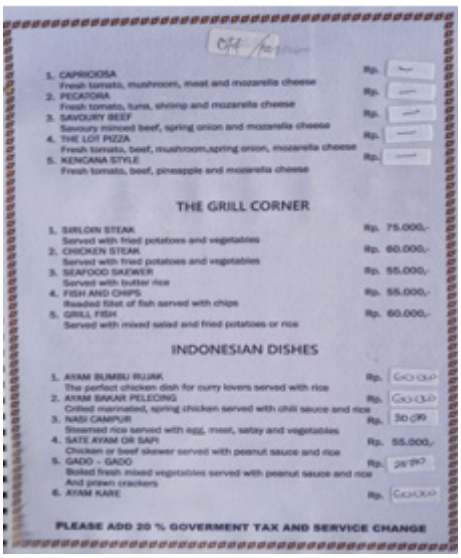


Figure 4 Usability Flaw: Missing Price Information in the Pizza Category

Psychologically, price opacity triggers what behavioral economists term the pain of paying. When the cost is unknown, the user's brain focuses on the potential negative outcome (the financial loss) rather than the benefit (the food). In a high-context culture like Indonesia, local customers might comfortably negotiate or ask for prices, but for international tourists accustomed to low-context, explicit communication, this ambiguity is paralyzing. It shifts user interaction from browsing mode to defensive mode, where the primary goal becomes avoiding a scam rather than enjoying a meal. This illustrates how a usability flaw in Information Architecture can invoke deep-seated psychological barriers. This finding nuances the study's argument: the user's perception of authenticity is not monolithic. While linguistic inconsistencies can be reframed as authentic, functional usability flaws (like missing data) effectively cancel out that positive signal by eroding trust (Wagle et al., 2021).

This flaw creates a critical tension in the menu's overall communication. While the linguistic errors might be interpreted as charmingly non-corporate, the omission of prices is a flaw far more likely to be perceived as strategically opaque. It aligns with Bousquet and Stone's idea (2026) conceptualization of the menu as a complex artifact where commercial interests and cultural representation collide. Ultimately, the very usability flaws that undermine trust threaten to cancel out the authentic character unintentionally created by stylistic flaws, thereby showcasing the delicate and often contradictory nature of grassroots intercultural business communication.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has conducted an in-depth analysis of the Santoana restaurant menu through the lens of UX Writing to understand how textual elements influence the user experience in a non-digital setting. The analysis demonstrates a paradoxical performance, with a significant discrepancy between functional organization and emotional engagement. While the menu succeeds in its information architecture by providing a predictable, easy-to-navigate structural logic, it lacks persuasive strategies that are traditionally used to drive customer desire and increase sales in a competitive tourism market. Crucially, the study reveals that linguistic errors, typically seen as flaws within formal linguistic frameworks, unintentionally create a vernacular-authentic tone that appeals to tourists seeking non-corporate experiences.

This finding suggests that, in specific intercultural encounters, the perception of authenticity is not rooted in grammatical perfection but in the perceived sincerity of the local voice, offering a refreshing contrast to standardized global narratives. However, this appeal is fragile and highly dependent on maintaining information transparency. When functional usability is compromised, specifically through omitted prices, the trust required to sustain this authenticity is broken, and the communicative relationship between the local host and the global guest is significantly damaged.

Theoretically, this study extends the boundaries of UX Writing by validating its applicability to non-digital, physical cultural artifacts that serve as primary interfaces in everyday life. By doing so, the research effectively broadens the disciplinary scope of user experience design beyond the digital screen and recognizes that any functional text is subject to the same cognitive principles and navigational requirements. It challenges the conventional view of error in Applied Linguistics by proposing that in tourism discourse, textual imperfection can function as a marker of existential authenticity. This perspective encourages a shift from a purely corrective pedagogy to a more functional and strategic understanding of linguistic deviations in the context of global business communication.

Practically, these findings suggest that local businesses can leverage their unique voice, even if imperfect, as a differentiator against standardized franchises that often dominate the global tourism market through sterile and automated communication. By embracing their local character and humanized persona, small establishments can create a more memorable and emotionally resonant experience for their guests. However, they must distinguish between charming stylistic errors, which build rapport through humanized communication, and fatal usability errors, which erode trust by obscuring essential transaction details.

While this research provides valuable insights, it also acknowledges several limitations that must be considered when interpreting the results. First,

the scope of the research relies on a qualitative case study of a single restaurant in Sumbawa, which implies that the findings are context-specific and cannot be statistically generalized to all tourism establishments. The qualitative nature of this study prioritizes the depth of interpretive meaning over the breadth of statistical representation, which may limit the immediate applicability of the conclusions to diverse environments. Secondly, the analysis focuses exclusively on the textual artifact without directly measuring tourist reactions or observing real-time customer behavior. Consequently, assessments of user experience are derived from linguistic analysis rather than from direct empirical feedback from users.

Future research should address these gaps by conducting comparative analyses across different regions to determine if these patterns of authenticity are consistent in other destinations. Furthermore, subsequent studies would benefit from employing quantitative methods, such as A/B testing or user surveys, to empirically measure how authentic errors influence tourist purchasing decisions and trust levels. By integrating these direct user perspectives, future scholars can provide a more holistic understanding of how linguistic imperfection operates as a psychological and commercial driver within the global tourism industry. Such investigations would be instrumental in refining the boundaries between charming stylistic deviations and fatal usability flaws in intercultural business communication.

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