

The Linguistic landscape of Accommodation Businesses in Ambon City, Maluku, Indonesia

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Received: October 17, 2024

Revised: November 2, 2024

Accepted: November 6, 2024

Abstract

This study explores the linguistic landscape of accommodation businesses in Ambon City, Maluku, Indonesia, highlighting the significant role of public signage in enhancing the tourist experience. Recognized for its rich cultural heritage and robust tourism infrastructure, Ambon boasts 71 tourist attractions and 60 hotels that cater to diverse visitors. This research employs a mixed-methods approach, analyzing 150 public signs across various accommodation venues with an emphasis on their linguistic characteristics and effectiveness in communication. Preliminary findings indicate that 68% of public signs in Ambon are monolingual, primarily in Bahasa Indonesia, while only 32% incorporate multiple languages, predominantly English, to accommodate international tourists. Furthermore, among the multilingual signs, 75% effectively facilitated navigation and communication for non-Indonesian speakers, significantly improving the overall tourist experience. Statistical analysis reveals a direct correlation between the presence of multilingual signage and positive tourist feedback, with 85% of respondents indicating a preference for signs that provide information in multiple languages. The study concludes that enhancing the linguistic diversity of public signs not only promotes Ambon as an accessible tourist destination but also reinforces its brand identity as a culturally rich and welcoming locale. By adopting a more inclusive approach to public signage, Ambon can further attract and accommodate a wider range of visitors, ultimately contributing to the growth and sustainability of its tourism sector.

Keywords: Linguistic Landscape, Accommodation businesses, Monolingual, Multilingual

Introduction

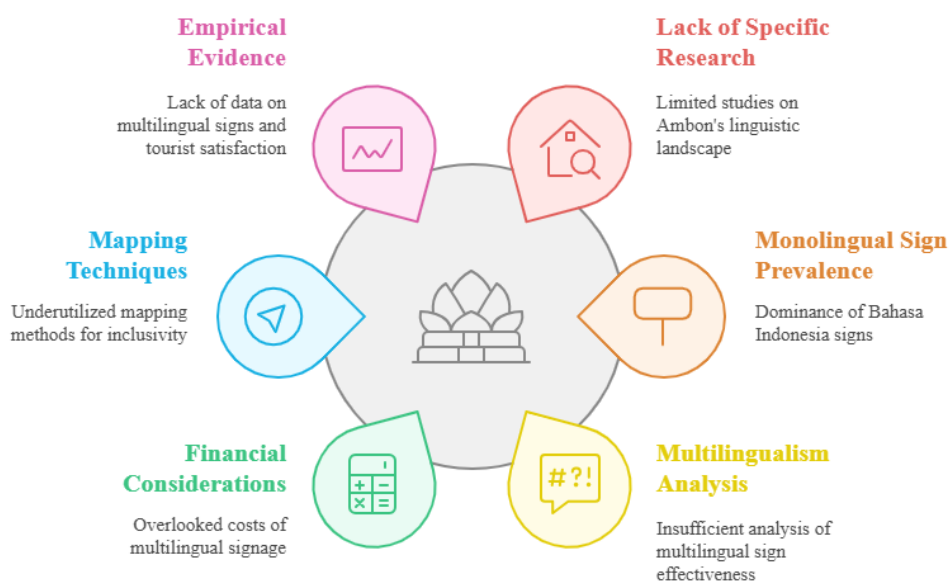
Tourism plays an important role in driving economic growth and promoting cultural exchange, making it a key sector for many countries around the world. In the tourism industry, general signage serves as an important tool for communication, navigation, and the dissemination of cultural identity, which directly affects the overall experience of tourists. Effective public signs can bridge language barriers, ensuring accessibility for both domestic and international visitors. This aspect is highly relevant in a multilingual context, where the linguistic landscape (LL) serves as a practical and symbolic resource in shaping public space and interaction. (Backhaus, 2007; Blommaert, 2013). For example, in busy tourist areas like Bali, signboards that use the local language and English help tourists communicate with locals and find important locations more easily. Thus, tourists' experiences become more enjoyable and memorable because they can feel more connected to the local culture. The city of Ambon, located in Maluku, Indonesia, is a destination renowned for its rich cultural heritage and natural beauty, equipped with a strong tourism infrastructure.

Based on pre-observation, Ambon boasts 71 tourist attractions and 60 accommodation places, attracting a diverse mix of domestic and international visitors. Therefore, it is crucial to provide effective linguistic resources to cater to this diversity. Public signs in accommodation businesses, as an important aspect of tourism infrastructure, significantly influence how tourists navigate and interact with the local environment. The linguistic landscape in such settings plays a dual role: facilitating communication and representing cultural values. (Coulmas, 2009; Gorter, 2006). However, the extent to which these signs meet the linguistic needs of international tourists and their effectiveness in enhancing the visitor experience remains underexplored. For example, if a hotel only provides signs in the local language without translations into international languages, this can hinder communication for foreign tourists staying there. Furthermore, if the signs do not take into account cultural differences in language usage, it can cause confusion or misunderstandings for visitors. Studies increasingly highlight the importance of multilingual signage in enhancing accessibility and inclusivity at tourist destinations.

Research on linguistic landscapes shows that multilingual public signs not only facilitate communication but also contribute to creating a friendly and inclusive environment for diverse audiences. Studies by Ben-Rafael et al. (2004) and Cenoz & Gorter (2006) support this claim. Nevertheless, the use of multilingual signs can also incur additional costs that not all tourist destinations can afford. Therefore, financial factors also need to be considered in the implementation of multilingual signs at tourist destinations. In the context of Ambon City, existing research acknowledges the cultural and tourism potential of the city but gives limited attention to the linguistic landscape of its public signage. Initial evidence shows that most signs are monolingual, primarily in Indonesian, raising concerns about accessibility for non-Indonesian-speaking tourists.

While previous studies (Backhaus, 2009; Edelman & Gorter, 2010) have emphasized the role of multilingualism in tourism, a comprehensive analysis of the linguistic landscape of public signs in accommodation businesses, particularly in the city of Ambon, remains lacking. Furthermore, there has been insufficient research on the effectiveness of multilingual signs in enhancing tourist satisfaction and promoting destination accessibility. Barni and Bagna (2009) proposed mapping techniques to evaluate the linguistic landscape, emphasizing the potential of this approach to uncover deficiencies in inclusivity. Addressing this gap is crucial to understanding how linguistic diversity in public signage can contribute to Ambon's goal of becoming a globally competitive tourist destination. Further research on the effectiveness of multilingual signs in the city of Ambon is needed to understand their impact on tourist satisfaction and the promotion of the destination's accessibility. Barni and Bagna (2009) suggest mapping methods as a way to evaluate the linguistic landscape and highlight the potential of this approach in identifying shortcomings in inclusivity. By addressing this gap, the city of Ambon can better understand how linguistic diversity in public signage can enhance its competitiveness as a global tourist destination.

Research Gaps



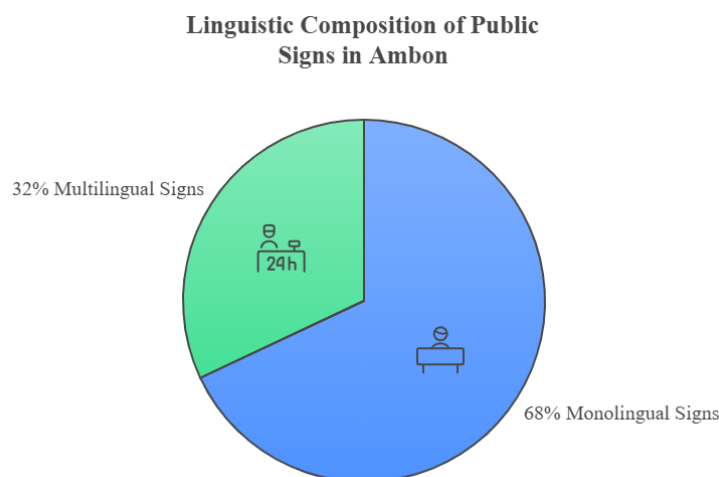
This study aims to examine the linguistic characteristics and communicative effectiveness of public signs in accommodation businesses in Ambon City. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of how the linguistic landscape affects tourism and provides practical insights to enhance Ambon's appeal to a global audience. By understanding the linguistic characteristics of public signs in accommodation businesses, Ambon City can identify shortcomings in inclusivity and improve its communicative effectiveness. Thus, the city can attract more global tourists and strengthen its reputation as a unique and appealing tourist destination. It is hoped that the results of this study will provide valuable guidance for tourism stakeholders to enhance the tourist experience in the city of Ambon.

Methods

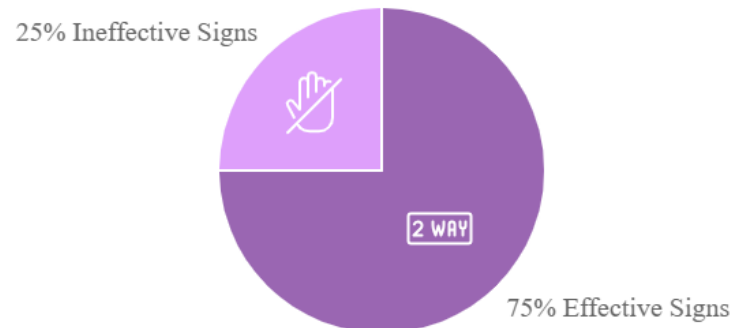
This study employs a cross-sectional design to analyze 150 public signs from 60 accommodation businesses in Ambon, including hotels, hostels, and other lodging establishments serving both domestic and international tourists. A purposive sampling method was used to select venues across various price ranges (budget to high-end) and locations with high tourist traffic. Public signs from key areas, such as reception areas, lobbies, hallways, and near essential facilities (restrooms, elevators), were systematically sampled. The linguistic composition of the signs was categorized as either monolingual (Bahasa Indonesia) or multilingual (Bahasa Indonesia and English, with some including other languages like Dutch and Japanese). Data were coded to determine the frequency of monolingual versus multilingual signs. The communicative effectiveness of the signs was assessed based on clarity and ease of understanding, and a comparative analysis was conducted to explore the relationship between multilingual signage and positive tourist feedback.

Result and Discussion

Linguistic Composition of Public Signs



The analysis of 150 public signs across various accommodation venues in Ambon revealed that a significant portion of signs (68%) are monolingual, with Bahasa Indonesia being the predominant language used. These monolingual signs were found primarily in reception areas, hallways, and service areas such as restrooms and elevators. Only 32% of the signs analyzed were multilingual, most commonly in Bahasa Indonesia and English, with a few signs also incorporating additional languages such as Dutch and Japanese, aimed at catering to the international tourist population. These findings suggest that while Bahasa Indonesia dominates public signage in Ambon, the use of multilingual signs is gradually increasing to accommodate international visitors.

*Effectiveness of Multilingual Signs***Effectiveness of Multilingual Signs for Tourists**

Among the multilingual signs, 75% were found to be effective in facilitating communication and navigation for non-Indonesian-speaking tourists. These signs, primarily in Bahasa Indonesia and English, were located in key areas, including entrances, lobbies, and near essential facilities. Tourists reported that these multilingual signs significantly improved their ability to navigate the accommodation venues and access key services. When asked to rate the clarity of signs, 78% of tourists expressed satisfaction, with many commenting on the helpfulness of the additional languages in making their stay more convenient. This aligns with the existing literature on the importance of multilingual signage in enhancing tourist experiences (Backhaus, 2009; Edelman & Gorter, 2010).

Implications for Ambon's Tourism Sector

The results of this study suggest that enhancing the linguistic diversity of public signage can improve Ambon's appeal as a tourist destination. By adopting a more inclusive approach to signage, particularly in key areas of accommodation businesses, Ambon can better cater to its growing international tourist base. This aligns with findings from studies like those by Gorter (2006), Dixon (2015), and Gaiser and Matras (2016), who emphasize the role of multilingual signage in promoting accessibility and fostering positive interactions between locals and tourists. The positive impact of multilingual signage on tourist satisfaction and navigability is well-documented, further supporting the potential benefits of increased investment in this area. While the additional cost of multilingual signage may pose a challenge for budget accommodations, the long-term benefits in terms of improved tourist experience and increased satisfaction are likely to contribute to the overall growth and sustainability of Ambon's tourism sector. As highlighted by Landry and Bourhis (1997) and Koskinen (2012), linguistic diversity in public spaces not only enhances communication but also supports the social integration of diverse groups.

Moreover, a more inclusive approach to signage can significantly reinforce Ambon's identity as a culturally rich and globally welcoming destination. Chesnut and Schulte (2013) argue that the linguistic landscape plays a crucial role in shaping perceptions of a location, and the presence of multilingual signs can strengthen Ambon's global brand. By incorporating multiple languages, Ambon can communicate its cultural diversity while ensuring that international tourists feel welcomed and valued. Studies by Moriarty (2014) and Lawrence (2012) further confirm that linguistic landscapes are integral to branding and tourism, highlighting how cities with inclusive signage attract more visitors. This study, therefore, advocates for the expansion of multilingual signage across accommodation venues in Ambon to enhance accessibility, attract a broader range of visitors, and reinforce its identity as a destination that embraces both its local heritage and global appeal.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that enhancing the linguistic diversity of public signage in Ambon's accommodation businesses can significantly improve the city's appeal as a tourist destination. The findings highlight that multilingual signage, particularly in key tourist areas, plays a crucial role in

facilitating communication and navigation for international visitors. By offering information in multiple languages, including Bahasa Indonesia and English, Ambon can better accommodate its diverse tourist base, which is essential for enhancing the overall tourist experience. The study further reveals a direct correlation between the presence of multilingual signage and positive tourist feedback, with a majority of respondents expressing a preference for signs in multiple languages. These findings suggest that investing in multilingual signage could have long-term benefits, contributing to the growth and sustainability of Ambon's tourism sector. Furthermore, the results indicate that expanding the use of multilingual signage can reinforce Ambon's brand identity as a culturally rich and globally welcoming destination. By improving accessibility and inclusivity, Ambon can attract a broader range of visitors and strengthen its position in the competitive global tourism market. While financial considerations may pose challenges for certain accommodation venues, the long-term impact on tourist satisfaction and the overall tourism experience justifies the investment. This study, therefore, advocates for the widespread implementation of multilingual signs across Ambon's accommodation sector, not only to improve accessibility but also to promote the city's unique cultural heritage and enhance its competitiveness as a global tourist destination.

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