Architecture
Image Studies

Vol.7, Issue 1, pp.1434-1446, 2026
DOI: https://doi.org/10.62754/ais.v7i1.1040

https://journals.ap2.pt/index.php/ais/index

Food Colonialism and Social Media: Multimodal Discourse Analysis of "Food Barter" Content on Instagram

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Abstract

The research analyzes food colonialism practices through the "food barter" content posted by @wikeafrilia on Instagram, using the multimodal discourse analysis approach of Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen. The method employed is qualitative interpretative, focusing on four communication strata: discourse, design, production, and distribution. The findings indicate that in the discourse, the minor impression and food colonialism towards the Papuan community are influenced not only by state policies but also by the "food barter" content that makes the community dependent on rice and instant noodles, rather than local food. In the design, the choice of genre highlighting poverty reinforces the minor impression of the local community, creating a classification between those deemed modern and primitive. In the production stage, the use of various semiotic modes such as text; titles, moving text, material resources, instrumental music, and colors; black and white, articulates food colonialism practices. For example, material resources like rice and instant noodles are consistently a vital part of every content, with their frequency surpassing local food items that are bartered, such as sago or tubers. In the final stage, distribution, Instagram is used for meaning dissemination. This is not only because Instagram offers various features that can be utilized, but also because it is the most widely used platform.

Keywords: *Food barter" Content, Food Colonialism, Multimodal Discourse Analysis.*

Introduction

Food has become an interesting discourse alongside climate crisis, deforestation, agrarian conflict, and population density. In *Berebut Makan: Politik Baru Pangan* (2017: 57-85), Paul McMahon provocatively predicts the phenomenon of food crises in the coming years. This phenomenon can be observed through various indicators such as the drumbeat of demand, the rise of biofuels, climate shocks, and natural constraints. As a result, many countries in the Americas, Europe, and Asia, which are key players in the food supply chain to international markets, are reassessing their export-import policies. This reassessment is undertaken as a mitigation strategy for the global food crisis. However, the discourse on food security, along with its four pillars—availability, access, utilization, and stability—does not sufficiently address the issue. It is also essential to include dimensions of agency and sustainability, which not only ensure food security but also food sovereignty (Clapp et al., 2022).

Food sovereignty is a serious issue beyond the mere discourse of food crises. The dominance of standardized food by states and food corporations renders local foods non-sovereign. Not only do these local foods fail to compete in international markets, but they are also marginalized within the very context of people's lives. For example, on a micro scale, there is a shift in consumption patterns from local foods to processed instant foods (Bandara et al., 2021). This phenomenon of changing consumption patterns is often referred to as a form of food colonialism or gastro-colonialism, as it encompasses economic and political dimensions. Conceptually, food colonialism was first popularized by Pacific Island poet Craig Santo Perez in response to an anthology of essays titled *Facing Hawai'i's Future: Essential Information About GMOs* (2013). He explained that the shift from local food consumption to instant processed foods in Hawai'i represents a "structural imposition" (Perez, 2013).

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This is not only due to the efforts of American food corporations, but also because Genetically Modified Organism (GMO) projects have begun to take root in the socio-cultural fabric of society.

The results of the corporate food and GMO revolution have latent impacts. Beyond destroying and colonizing local food products, it also alters the condition of society, the genetic structure of food, soil, and even animals that are vital for maintaining the ecosystem of the community itself (Hawai'i SEED, 2013). The dominant roles of the state and food corporations make it challenging for local foods to achieve sovereignty. The prevalence of GMOs and processed foods like fast food and junk food indicates the power of the food regime. The dramatic transformation of consumption patterns in Pacific nations is not only a direct consequence of processes like colonization, militarization, or neo-imperialism, but also reflects the struggle against dominant discourses that hinder the attainment of food sovereignty (Fresno-Calleja, 2017).

In Indonesia, food colonialism has been and continues to be conditioned by several factors such as the direction of national food policies, food corporations, and the discursive practices of both mass media and social media. Firstly, the direction of food policy in Indonesia, from the colonial era, through the New Order, to the post-reform period, has tended toward a pattern of homogenization of food. Since the colonial era (1955), for example, efforts for "basisization" were initiated with the establishment of rice companies in the Kurik District of Merauke (Arif et al., 2022). This was pursued not only for economic purposes but also for political ones. During the New Order era under Suharto's authority, the colonial agribusiness model continued to be emulated. This was manifested through Suharto's mission to maintain food security on the island of Java by developing rice field and food barn projects in "outer islands," such as the Mega Rice Project in Peat Land (1995-1999) in Kalimantan. However, this mega project was deemed a failure and had significant environmental impacts (Goldstein, 2016; Area et al. 2008). Similarly, the Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate (2006-2011) and other food barn projects outlined in the National Strategic Project during Joko Widodo's administration exemplify this trend (Sari, 2024)

Although most food barn projects are "accepted" as part of the state's efforts to maintain food security, these mega projects inadvertently obscure the concept of food sovereignty. In Indonesia, food sovereignty is actually vital in Law No. 18 of 2012 on Food, which replaced Law No. 7 of 1996, alongside two other aspects: food independence and food security. The aspect of food sovereignty was newly included as a step toward ratifying the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights through Law No. 15 of 2005. The fundamental assumption behind this policy is that, based on the old law, the state had not fully recognized the rights of local communities to food (Syahyuti et al., 2016). Unfortunately, the dominance of the food security concept has led to Law No. 18 of 2012 being understood in a one-sided manner. This is due to the pervasive discourse from the state and food corporations, which frames indigenous consumption patterns based on local foods as backwardness and primitivism (Chao, 2022).

Secondly, the classification of indigenous consumption patterns with terms like "backward" and "primitive" implies a skewed socio-cultural condition. It also indicates how the ideal concept of food is perceived. For food corporations, the claims of being "modern" versus "primitive" serve as a primary weapon for business profit. These corporations not only offer their modern products, such as fast food and junk food, but also construct new cultural narratives (Sasongko, 2006). Baudrillard (1970) refers to this as a consumer society. He argues that consumption is a form of coercion, a moral construct created by society (Baudrillard, 2008: 90-91). The conditioning of active and collective behavior in this consumer society can be observed through the phenomenon of the "supermarket revolution," which occurred in two phases: "pre-liberalization/pre-globalization" (1950s and 1980s) and "liberalization/globalization" (from the early 1980s to the present) (Reardon et al., 2009).

The growth of consumer society is also happened in Indonesia. As a sample, there has been a shift in the consumption patterns of local foods like sago at the Marind Anim community in Merauke. The community has changed sago to instant noodle whereas it is not merely a consumer preference; they serve as a tool of corporate food hegemony. Instant noodle has long been a significant product within the global food system. The hegemony exerted by food corporations over instant noodles can be understood through the economic, political, cultural, and ecological trajectories that interact across three eras. *Early Era*: This is when the concept of instant noodle was first introduced through wheat imports from the United States and Australia starting in the 1960s. *Bulog Era*: Characterized by actors like the Logistics Agency (Bulog) and the Salim Group, which through PT Bogasari and PT Indofood, patented instant noodles via economic and political policies. *Liberalization Era*: This phase emphasizes

that instant noodles have secured a place in Indonesian culture since the liberalization of the market (Dewi, 2016).

Thirdly, the question of how processed foods like fast food and junk food are "accepted" by society certainly requires dissemination mediums, namely media—both mass media and social media. For instance, in Turkey during the 1950s and 1960s, the influence of American food advertising became ingrained in daily life. Advertisements on television, radio, newspapers, magazines, and billboards not only promoted modern products with values of health, success, and togetherness but also socially classified the populace (Erbay, 2025). While it may be naive to position media as passive consumers, various television programs, such as cooking shows, guide viewers to note down recipes, check labels on packaging, purchase items, prepare them, and ultimately consume them (Leer & Povlsen, 2016). This means that many of us are often influenced by what is reported in the media. On the other hand, media also conditions our behavior regarding food. This is linked to how we categorize food as "good" or "bad" (Goodman et al. 2017).

In the era of digitalization, content can serve a variety of purposes. Generally, the content produced is not just a medium of information. As Cristian Fuchs (2019) points out, content/information is a peculiar commodity. On one hand, it is a commodity that is freely accessible to anyone; on the other hand, it holds economic value. Information or news, particularly in the context of online media, can become a commodity because it is traded using various advertorial strategies, such as restricting content with copyright labels, offering paid information (subscriptions), and modifying audience engagement in advertisements (Fuchs, 2021: 43). Moreover, in the context of "food barter" content, it is not only understood from an economic perspective but also a political one. For example, the "food barter" content on Instagram by the account @wikeafrilia, which engages with local communities in Kampung Basman, Kabupaten Mappi, South Papua, illustrates how food colonialism is being reinforced.

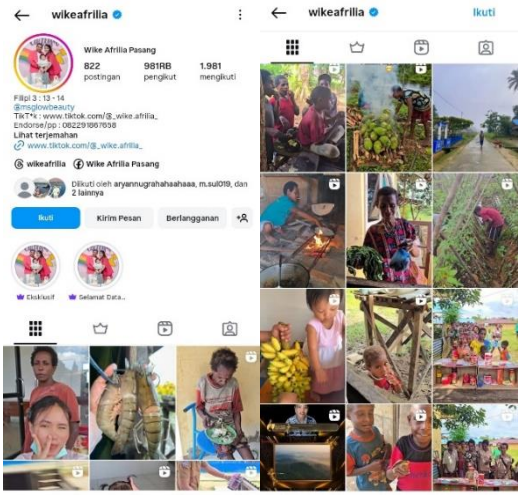

Figure 1. Screenshot acount @wikeafrilia

Source: https://www.instagram.com/wikeafrilia/

The effort to reinforce food colonialism occurs when @wikeafrilia engages in the exchange of local foods for processed food products (see Image 1). This activity clearly aims to shift the consumption patterns of indigenous communities away from local foods that represent their identity (Suroto et al. 2023; Chao, 2021). The "food barter" content on social media also reveals how communities associate sago, corn, cassava, and sweet potatoes with being backward and primitive, while rice, instant noodles, biscuits, and flavored drinks are viewed as superior products (Arif et al., 2023). The categorization of food into "modern" and "primitive," as well as "good" and "bad," indicates the power of dominant discourses over the concept of food itself. In reality, the utilization of local foods in much of Papua is not a sign of "primitiveness." Rather, ecological zones such as swamps and coastal areas serve as domains for sago, while mountainous regions support the sustainability of tubers and game animals, facilitating these practices (Salosa, 2016).

Based on the phenomena described earlier, the researcher will analyze how the "food barter" content on Instagram by the account @wikeafrilia reinforces food colonialism through a multimodal discourse analysis by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen. This theory is utilized to examine the contributions of various semiotic modes constructed from diverse texts such as words, images, sounds,

and more (Screti, 2020). Moreover, there has yet to be a study that attempts to analyze this practice of food colonialism from the perspective of media studies using multimodal discourse analysis. This research aims to uncover the role of dominant ideologies that underlie @wikeafrilia's activities related to "food barter" content. Thus, this study hopes to make a significant contribution to media studies focused on marginalized communities often overlooked by media practices, both in mass media and social media.

Concept Review

Literature on food security and food sovereignty is relatively easy to find. This contrasts with the more nuanced issues within the discourse surrounding food itself, particularly food colonialism. The term "food colonialism" or gastrocolonialism is used by various researchers to describe the shift from local foods to standardized food products and other processed foods imposed by states and food corporations. According to Fresno-Callejo (2017), food colonialism in the Pacific region has prompted Indigenous researchers to resist by rejecting Western culinary products. This resistance is fueled by findings that span various sectors, including health issues such as diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular diseases, and the imposition of Western socio-cultural values. Similarly, in Tonga, even without a colonial history, the diets of Tongans are now dominated by neo-colonial food products from corporate regimes (Cottino, 2024).

In Canada and Peru, food colonialism is deeply entrenched. This stands in stark contrast to multicultural policies that, rather than honoring food diversity, neglect food sovereignty, commodification, and the exploitation of Indigenous communities (Grey & Newman, 2018). Alongside state and corporate control of food, migrants also play a role in the shift away from local foods. This implies that the social dynamics between migrants and Indigenous populations are closely tied to issues of land and power (Veracini, 2024). According to Chao (2022), among the Marind Anim community in Merauke, South Papua, migrants not only contribute to food colonialism but also maintain a strained relationship with local communities. This relationship is often rooted in the racial attitudes of migrants towards the Papuan people. Consequently, these racial attitudes lead to discriminatory practices, such as avoiding physical contact and excessive evaluations of the local population.

The consequences of food colonialism reveal a complex landscape. It not only disrupts the connectivity between local communities and their food and socio-cultural practices but also affects other sectors. For example, the Māori tradition of hāngī, which involves cooking with earth ovens, is now rarely practiced due to the demands of modern culinary systems (Richardson, 2025). In another sector, legal frameworks also play a role in obstructing sovereign food practices. This phenomenon was evident among the Chippewa/Ojibwe community following the White Pine Treaty (1837) with colonial powers, namely the United States. Local communities faced penalties for asserting their rights related to land, food, and water as stipulated in the treaty (Hansell, 2025). Literature on food colonialism remains relevant today, contributing significantly to understanding how states and food corporations monopolize food systems, serving as evaluative material for food advocates. However, this phenomenon also warrants examination through a media studies lens, considering the role of media in reinforcing dominant discourses that impact everyday life.

Multimodality Discourse Theory

Multimodal discourse is an extension by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen of the principles of systemic functional linguistics or Halliday's language function (Ledin & Machin, 2019). Simply put, for Halliday, language serves functions in social reality. However, the functions of language can be categorized into three types, known as metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. For the ideational category, language organizes, understands, and expresses our worldview, both for ourselves and for others. The interpersonal function involves participating in our interactions with others. The textual function aims to organize text in relation to other texts as a whole (Sihura, 2019). Halliday's language functions condition Kress and Leeuwen's ideas regarding social semiotics and multimodal discourse.

However, the social semiotics in question differs from Saussurean or Peircean semiotics, which are limited to visible signs. Social semiotics emphasizes how signs are created and how the relationship between the signifier and the signified is arranged by the sign maker to connect with one another, thereby generating meaning (Novianti, 2018: 107-133). According to Theo van Leeuwen, by the late 1980s, social semiotics viewed language as just one mode among many others (Leeuwen, 2021). This diversity of modes beyond language can be found in Kress and Leeuwen's first work, *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* (1996/2006). In this book, Kress and Leeuwen focus on grammar and

syntax, where the grammar referenced is visual grammar, illustrating how various elements (semiotic modes) are conditioned to form a visual "statement" (Kress & Leeuwen 2006).

Various elements that accumulate and intertwine to create potential meanings are referred to as multimodality. Machin and Mayr (2012) (as cited in Jancsary et al. 2016) state that the general meaning of multimodal discourse is expressed not only using language in its literal sense but also through various other semiotic modes. Inspired by Halliday's social semiotics, multimodal discourse must also interpret how complex multimodalities are constructed and understand how each integrated mode influences one another (Höllerer et al., 2019). The relationship between these modes can be understood at the multimodal level, borrowing Halliday's concepts of "elaboration" and "extension." Elaboration manifests in various modes to express one another, while extension refers to one mode, such as an image, being related to another expressed mode (Leeuwen, 2005).

In addition, multimodality involves stages in the formation of meaning known as strata. These strata can be divided into discourse, design, production, and distribution (Leeuwen, 2001). Discourse, viewed through a Foucauldian lens, suggests that power is knowledge, and knowledge always has power effects (Michel Foucault, 1980). This means that the use of various semiotic modes often represents specific interests. Design refers to the mental activity of how choices for each semiotic mode will be utilized. The production stage is the execution process of the design outcomes. Finally, the distribution stage involves disseminating meaning through the chosen media. Given that the "food barter" content encompasses various semiotic modes, the theory of multimodal discourse is considered appropriate for this research, as it will examine how these semiotic modes reinforce the ongoing practices of food colonialism.

Research Methods

The research method used to analyze the "food barter" content is qualitative interpretive methodology. This research process is supported by qualitative data analysis software, MAXQDA. Using MAXQDA, the researcher conducts data coding to analyze how the reinforcement of food colonialism in the multimodal discourse of Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen is executed through the use of various semiotic modes in the "food barter" content on Instagram by @wikeafrilia. The analytical framework employed is the communication strata, which includes discourse, design, production, and distribution. However, MAXQDA is utilized only in the production stage, as the purpose of data coding is to highlight each semiotic mode used in reinforcing the practices of food colonialism. The data sources consist of five relevant "food barter" contents selected based on criteria established by the researcher through purposive sampling. First, these contents feature the activity of "food barter" between local foods and rice or processed foods. Second, they exhibit a diversity of semiotic modes. Data collection is conducted through documentation methods, with documents gathered in the form of screenshots of the downloaded content.

Result and Discussion

In multimodal discourse, each use of a semiotic mode carries different meanings and influences one another. However, the interpretation of these various semiotic modes cannot be understood in isolation but should be viewed as a whole. In the "food barter" content created by @wikeafrilia, whether consciously or unconsciously, the content conveys a dominant discourse regarding food. This phenomenon is latently present through a discourse that has been significantly conditioned by social and cultural factors. The dominant discourse surrounding food creates stark classifications between what is considered 'modern' and 'primitive.' Instant noodles, rice, and other processed food products are often associated with modernity, while sago and other local foods are deemed primitive. To explore how the practices of food colonialism are reinforced through the "food barter" content, the discussion will be divided into four parts based on the communication strata: discourse, design, production, and distribution.

Communication Strata

Discourse

If viewed critically (see Image 2), the two local children visiting @wikeafrilia highlight two contrasting positions between subject and object. In the "food barter" content, these children are positioned as objects, alongside the local food, sago. This subject-object positioning correlates with the long history of how Papuans are perceived. In various research literature regarding Papua, the minor impressions—such as being backward, underdeveloped, and uncivilized—place the perspective of

those writing about Papua in a position of perceived superiority over the Papuans themselves (Suryawan, 2015). This illustrates that racial discrimination against Papuans is deeply rooted in daily life, whether from non-Papuan communities, state institutions, legal systems, or regulations (Harsono, 2024). Consequently, Papuan communities are often understood as objects rather than as subjects.

Figure 2. Screenshot of counten from January 3, 2025 edition

Source https://www.instagram.com/reel/DEXRa7aqE9x/

Furthermore, the subject-object positioning is deeply patterned when examining the historical context of the New York Agreement (1962) between Indonesia and the Netherlands concerning the Papuan people, particularly in West Papua, which was 'voluntarily' integrated into Indonesia (Chauvel, 2005). However, this integration process was not universally accepted as a final decision, as the Papuan community viewed the policy as arbitrary and not representative of their voices regarding sovereignty over their own land. The state's efforts to control the agreement imply that Papua is not literally an autonomous region. As a unitary state, Indonesia claims the right to dictate the direction of a region based on centralized interests, including consumption patterns. For instance, the "rice-centric" policies in Papua reflect the state's and food capitalists' mission to solidify rice as a national commodity. Various policies have emerged, such as the food estate initiatives (Ito et al. 2011; Rahman et al. 2025).

This means that rice, as a national commodity, serves as a tool of hegemony. For instance, rice is not only framed as a neutral commodity; it frequently becomes a campaign medium in every election in Indonesia (Nasution et al., 2023). Furthermore, the promotion of rice reflects the state's arrogance in establishing it as a 'superior' and 'modern' commodity. In addition to rice, processed foods such as instant noodles are also intensively distributed within Papuan communities. The distribution chain for instant noodles occurs not only through the establishment of minimarkets but also through interactions between Papuans and non-Papuan migrants (Arif & Yunus, 2022). This form of interaction clearly benefits the migrants, who, with sufficient capital to open kiosks, are also technologically savvy. For example, migrants like @wike.afrilia seize opportunities with "food barter" content, which impacts the shifting consumption patterns from local foods like sago to rice and instant processed foods (Krisdamarjati, 2022).

The dominant discourse conditioned here can also be observed in various comments on the "food barter" content from January 3, 2025 (see Image 2). For instance, a comment by the account rully_sitinurlatifah states: "*I think it's okay for them to eat noodles sometimes; it's a luxury for them who encounter yams, sago, cassava, and even fish every day, which are actually healthier... We in the city may not be able to consume those alternately every day; we also want to treat ourselves occasionally, even just to have meatballs, but for them, instant noodles might not even be weekly*." This comment implies the reinforcement of the dominant discourse regarding food, with a stark classification between modern and primitive. The phrase "a luxury" when consuming instant noodles serves as an apologia for the conditions of Papuan society, which are perceived as backward, underdeveloped, and uncivilized. Consequently, this minor impression clarifies who is positioned as the subject and who as the object.

Design

In general, each type of content often features a combination of visual and verbal modes. This is evident in the "food barter" content. The dialogues constructed within the content are important as they

demonstrate the intended message; however, dialogue is not the only multimodal text rich in meaning. Other semiotic modes, such as titles, moving text, spatial arrangement, typography choices, music types, and color usage, also play crucial roles in 'locking' the overall meaning of the content. Kress and van Leeuwen (2001: 56) state that the choice of semiotic modes is influenced by a negotiation process with the existing context. The perception of Papua as backward, underdeveloped, and uncivilized undoubtedly affects the selection of semiotic modes deemed appropriate to reinforce this constructed impression. For example, the choice of genre minimally influences the use of visual modes, such as text and images, which can evoke emotional responses in the audience, prompting them to feel sympathy for what is being consumed.

In the phenomenon of poverty porn, this genre of poverty attracts the attention of many viewers because it evokes anger, scandal, and concern, which can impact media careers supported by ratings, comment columns, and hashtags (Jensen, 2014). The term "genre" generally refers to a "type of text." This type of text characterizes genres based on content, form, and function (Leeuwen, 2005: 122-123). In the context of the "food barter" video, the poverty genre is characterized by social activities that seem trivial, contrasting sharply with urban activities. Functionalist-structuralists view poverty as part of social reality. Although there is resistance when poverty is politicized, it serves alternative functions within the social structure. Poverty helps expand professional job areas such as policing and social work, legitimizes dominant norms, stimulates empathy, facilitates social mobility, and contributes to political stability (Gans, 1972). Thus, the poverty genre has social, economic, and political functions.

In design, genre becomes one of the semiotic modes alongside text, images, material resources, color, music, and space. Without these various semiotic modes, design does not offer a unique appeal, whether from an aesthetic or emotional perspective. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2001: 57), color functions not only as an aesthetic element but also as an organized semiotic mode. Color contributes uniquely through design. In the "food barter" content, the color white is used and integrated into the title text and moving text, such as in dialogues. However, white does not stand alone; it is complemented by black as a text shadow. The use of shadow adds emphasis and depth to what is occurring. This means that visual elements and text work together to create an engaging reading experience. Each use of semiotic modes is certainly considered within the context of who creates the video and where it is made (Kress & Leeuwen, 2002).

Additionally, the choice of music must be relevant to the existing genre. Just like in film, the musical score is a crucial element for the overall experience, as it enhances the visual presentation, making it more engaging. The musical score represents the soul of the film, accompanying it until the end and adding layers of meaning to the visual display (Phetorant, 2020). In the "food barter" content, the combination of visuals and music creates a perfect synergy that supports the poverty genre. Here, the musical score serves as an emotional expression (Shaleha, 2019). The choice of music is a significant factor in how the "food barter" content can influence the mood of media consumers. However, there is a paradox in the use of music, whether in films or social media content. While music articulates meaning, it can also serve to limit perspectives.

Production

Kress and van Leeuwen (2001: 65) state that the production stage plays a unique role in multimodal discourse because it can be unpredictable compared to the design stage. What has been planned during the design phase—such as text, images, objects, colors, genre, and music—can sometimes change depending on the context of the material. The production stage is where the design comes to life materially. In the case of the "food barter" content, the use of music can add an emotional dimension for the audience through auditory senses. Just as in films, music serves as a psychological transport for viewers (Costabile & Terman, 2013). It can dictate approval regarding the truth of the content while simultaneously limiting perspectives. In the context of the "food barter" content, music is used temporally. This indicates that the absence of music does not automatically distort the minor impressions and practices of food colonialism occurring, as these can also be reinforced through the emphasis on material resources and other semiotic modes.

Figure 3. Screenshot of counten from February 15, 2025 edition

Source: https://www.instagram.com/reel/DGF9PciJxUb/

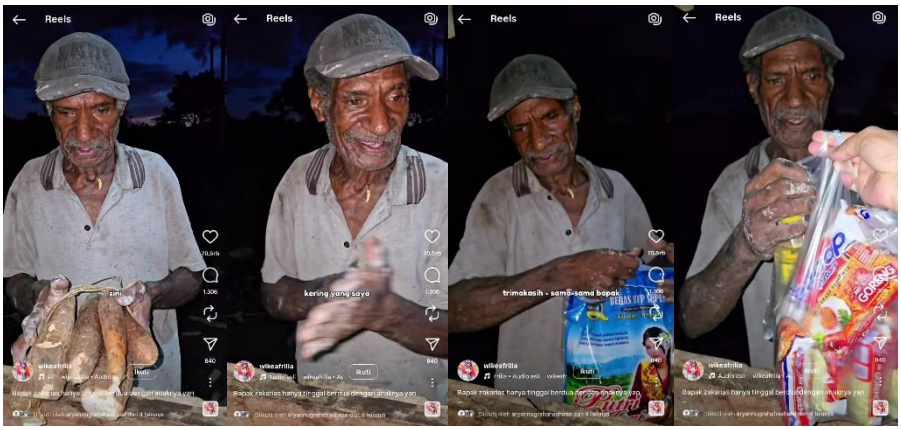

Figure 4. Screenshot of counten from April 3, 2025 edition

Source: https://www.instagram.com/reel/DH--_J9pOmv/

For example, in images 3 and 4, the music used to support the "food barter" content is instrumental. Each piece of content employs a different instrumental track. In image 3, the instrumental used in the February 15 edition is based on a song popularized by the pop band Vierra, titled "Rasa Ini" from the album *My First Love*, released in 2009. In contrast, the April 3 edition in image 4 features the instrumental “Sampai Menutup Mata” (2006) performed by Acha Septriasa, which also serves as the original soundtrack for the romantic film *Heart*. While at first glance, the two pieces of music used in these different contents do not directly relate to the denotative meanings of the songs, both instrumental tracks can limit perspectives, creating the impression that what @wikeafrilia is doing is legitimized by evoking a sense of sympathy.

In contrast to other content, such as that in images 5 and 6, which do not include music, emphasis is placed on other elements, like verbal modes—specifically, dialogue. Through dialogue encompassing speech, face-to-face interaction, eye contact, body language, scent, distance, time, and objects, the effort to solidify practices of food colonialism through the "food barter" activity becomes pronounced. In the dialogues constructed, @wikeafrilia often employs persuasive communication with conversation partners. This persuasive communication is tailored to align with the local community's accent. For example, in the January 23 edition (image 5), the phrase "pelee besar sekali" from @wikeafrilia demonstrates a process of cross-cultural adaptation (Kim, 2017). This adaptation is achieved by mimicking the local accent. Connotatively, the use of the local accent in the dialogue not only reflects an image of intimacy between the parties but also positions @wikeafrilia as part of the local community.

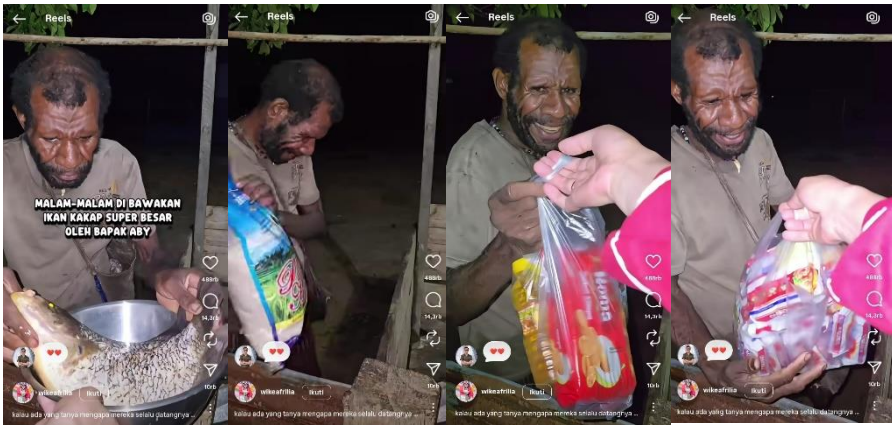

Figure 5. Screenshot of counten from January 23, 2025 edition

Source: https://www.instagram.com/reel/DFKvzE0JnF5/

Figure 6. Screenshot of counten from December 20, 2024 edition

Source: https://www.instagram.com/reel/DFKvzE0JnF5/

According to Kress and van Leeuwen (in Novianti, 2018: 109-110), language has three metafunctions: representational, interpersonal, and textual. The representational metafunction is further divided into two categories: represented participants and interactive participants. In the "food barter" content, the represented participants can be seen in how the Papuan community (images 5 and 6) is presented as objects within the content, while @wikeafrilia is positioned as the subject. This classification becomes clearer when examining the arranged spatial dynamics (proximity) during the dialogue between the two parties. The presence of certain individuals in the frame and the absence or partial presence of others reflects the dominant discourse, much like a film producer who may not appear in the film but retains control over the entire production. On the other hand, the interactive participants are directed to view the activity as a heroic act towards the Papuan community.

In the interpersonal metafunction, the social relationship between @wikeafrilia and the Papuan community is portrayed unevenly. The Papuan people are depicted as objects within the "food barter" content, positioned perfectly within the frame, while @wikeafrilia is only partially visible, with just a portion of their right hand shown. The portrayal of the objects is presented naturally, without lighting effects: cheerful faces, tattered clothing, dirty pants, and muddy feet. In addition to who is included or excluded from the frame, other semiotic modes, such as sago, rice, instant noodles, and cooking oil, are also positioned precisely as objects. The displayed material resources constitute meaningful semiotic modes that significantly influence visual representation. However, one could argue that the relationship between the objects is hierarchical, as some are highlighted more intensively. For instance,

instant noodles, rice, and cooking oil are shown in the frame for several minutes longer than sago, bananas, yams, cassava leaves, and gourami fish.

In terms of the textual metafunction, the semiotic modes used in the "food barter" content explicitly construct a meaning of generosity. This denotative meaning is based on the activities conducted by @wikeafrilia with the Papuan community, involving the exchange of local food products like sago for rice, instant noodles, and other items. The interpretation of this meaning occurs through various efforts by @wikeafrilia to create significance using different semiotic modes, aiming to provide an emotional dimension for viewers. In image 6, one can observe how @wikeafrilia reinforces the practice of food colonialism by showcasing the diversity of local food exchanged for limited and homogeneous material resources. This is further supported by the analysis of five "food barter" contents using MAXQDA software, as detailed below.

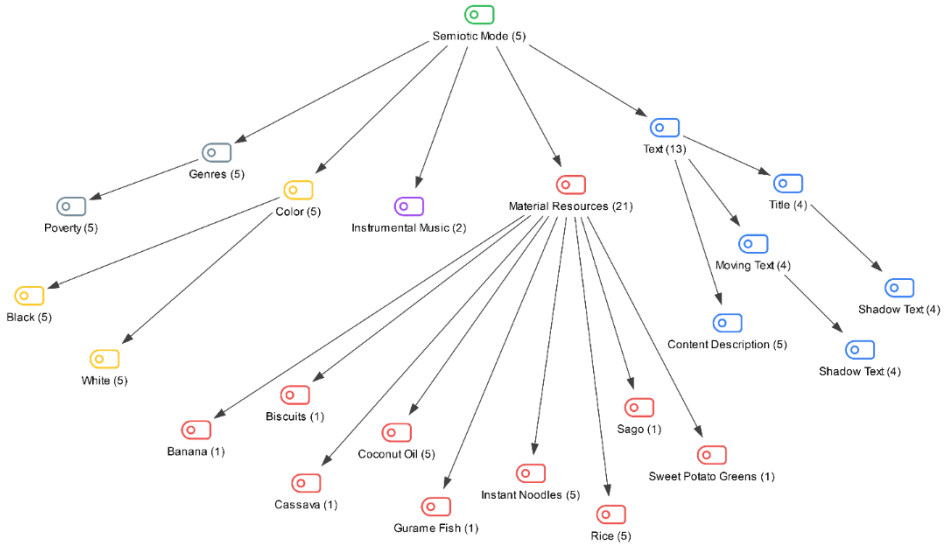

Figure 7.

Source: Author's Preparation, 2025

Based on the analysis, the "food barter" content contains five main indicators or codes of semiotic modes: genre, color, instrumental music, material resources, and the text itself. Each indicator has sub-codes; for example, the genre includes sub-codes for poverty, while color features sub-codes for red and white. The material resources sub-code includes items like snapper, sago, biscuits, bananas, cassava leaves, rice, coconut oil, instant noodles, and cassava. The text sub-codes include title, shadow text, moving text, and descriptions. However, each indicator or code of semiotic modes has different frequencies. In the "food barter" content, the material resources indicator features nine different sub-codes, totaling 21 material resources. Notably, this demonstrates that local food tends to be diverse, with each represented by a count of 1, while items like rice, coconut oil, and instant noodles are represented by a count of 5, indicating a tendency toward homogeneity.

This means that in the five analyzed contents regarding the "food barter" activity, certain material resources are repeatedly featured. Rice, coconut oil, and instant noodles are the semiotic modes most frequently exchanged. This indicates that what @wikeafrilia does in the content not only conditions the Papuan community to depend on standardized and instant processed foods, as noted by Perez, but also promotes a form of "structural coercion" similar to the patterns employed by states and food corporations during food colonialism. This coercion classifies food as 'modern' and 'primitive,' dictating what should be consumed and what should not. Such practices not only alienate and exploit the Papuan community regarding their local food but also construct an image of the Papuan people as backward, underdeveloped, and uncivilized through the "food barter" content.

Distribution

The distribution stage is a crucial part of multimodal discourse for transferring messages or meanings. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2001: 87), there are two aspects of distribution: message encoding (recording) and transmission. However, these two aspects are limited to specific media, such as CDs for recording and radio for linear transmission. In the digital era, these two aspects of distribution can merge. This is due to the nature of new media, which is more multimodal and

sophisticated. Additionally, the processes of production and distribution in new media have advantages, as they are not constrained by spatial or temporal boundaries. Thus, these two aspects of distribution can be multiplied in large quantities with targets that can be reached simultaneously (Habibah & Irwansyah, 2021). However, as Kress and van Leeuwen (2001: 89) also note, the consequence of this is that media consumers may experience dissatisfaction due to a sense of loss—loss of body, presence, 'aura,' and context.

In new media, distribution can occur through various available channels via the internet, such as social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, YouTube, and Twitter. In the context of the "food barter" content, social media serves as a medium for distributing meaning. Instagram, for example, is chosen not only for its appealing features but also because it is the most popular media platform worldwide. As of 2025, Instagram has approximately 1.74 billion users (Kemp, 2025). In the tradition of social semiotics, the choice of Instagram as a platform for meaning distribution is not arbitrary; it is based on specific motivations such as its popularity and the availability of various semiotic modes like music, images, and videos, which enhance its appeal. Furthermore, what @wikeafrilia distributes through the "food barter" content on Instagram not only depicts interactions with the local Papuan community but also reinforces practices of food colonialism.

Conclusion

Food colonialism is a critical issue amid the proliferation of standardized food by states and food corporations. Essentially, food colonialism has serious consequences for food sovereignty. The research findings outlined how the dynamics of food colonialism in Papua are reinforced through the "food barter" content on Instagram by @wikeafrilia. Utilizing multimodal discourse analysis, this study emphasizes that the content serves not only as mere information but also as a tool for state hegemony to control food itself by classifying food as 'modern' or 'primitive.' Moreover, the "food barter" content frequently positions the local Papuan community as objects alienated from their own food identity. This is evident in the shift in consumption patterns from local foods to standardized products, such as rice and instant noodles.

Additionally, the "food barter" content on social media not only demonstrates social change but also reveals how government policies and food corporations operate and dominate. Furthermore, this research indicates that the selection of semiotic modes in the "food barter" content is made with consideration of social and cultural contexts. Visual, verbal, and musical elements work together to create complex meanings. Unfortunately, the "food barter" narrative seems to "dictate" media consumers, much like the patterns of states and food corporations in defining food itself, leading them to associate standardized products with modernity. In contrast, local foods such as sago and tubers are associated with backwardness. This clearly reflects a serious imbalance between urban centers and rural areas.

The conclusion of the above research highlights the importance of understanding how media plays a role in shaping and reinforcing consumption practices that may threaten the welfare of local food systems, particularly among indigenous communities. Therefore, a keen critical eye is necessary to assess the media's work that can impact local populations. This research aims to provide a new perspective on how media defines food and food sovereignty in Papua. Ultimately, it encourages readers to better understand and question how the dominant discourses of the state and food corporations circulate in media, influencing consumption patterns among communities. A deeper understanding of the interactions between media, food policies, and local communities can aid in the journey toward improved food sovereignty for indigenous peoples, especially in Papua.

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