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## **“It’s more fun in the Philippines”:**

### **Resemiotizing and commodifying the local in tourism discourse**

#### **Abstract**

Since globalization is characterized by mobility of resources, the tourism industry is considered as one potential area for those interested in language and globalization. While tourism can be attributed to the growing capitalist dream of exploration, it is replete with asymmetrical hierarchies that are motivated by consumption, exploitation and commodification. This paper examines the Philippines' campaign, *'It's more fun in the Philippines'*, a supposedly grassroots initiative which sought individual contributions from the public such as memes that could help promote the Philippines. The paper finds that the linguistic and multimodal resources of contributions chosen for the campaign showcase a pattern of *resemiotization*: the use of generic expressions and concepts to present the ‘local’. Whereas the original intention of the grassroots initiative was to solicit a diversity of ways to present the Philippines, we find that the official choice of campaign resources has affirmed resemiotization as a linguistic and semiotic strategy of commodification -- the repackaging of the local as a construct possessing material value. While much has been said about the use of the local for the global consumer, the paper describes through the lens of language use in the context of globalization how an avowedly ground up and empowering initiative eventually becomes enmeshed in the normalizing processes of globalization.

**Key words:** Discourse and Advertising, Discourse and Tourism, Philippine Tourism, Resemiotization, Tourism Campaign

## 1.0 Introduction

According to Blommaert (2010), language use and meaning-making practices in today's globalization are implicated in different forms of inequality. Languages as mobile resources are regulated resources and, as such, are deeply enmeshed in layers of structures of power and asymmetrical relationships. Tourism, for instance, is the most representative activity that captures these key dimensions of the sociolinguistics of globalization because, first, it entails mobility of people and fluid interactions between the global and local, and second, it is deeply semiotic in nature as it deploys linguistic and multimodal resources to regulate the creation and communication of meaning to reach out to as many tourist/consumers as possible (Georgakopoulou, 2015).

This paper works within these main assumptions about the role of language use in globalization by drawing on the recent dominant tourism discourse in the Philippines encapsulated by its global campaign, *'It's more fun in the Philippines'*. This campaign was envisioned as a grassroots initiative meant to encourage ordinary Filipinos to be part of the collective rebranding of the country through tourism (Baldacchino, 2015). The invitation solicited memes and linguistic expressions that could be used to promote and reinvigorate the Philippines as a key tourism destination in the world. While the intention was to deploy an inclusive and supposedly authentic approach to promoting the country through a diversity of representations using indigenous expressions and practices, the study finds that the normalization of the new tourism discourse shows tends to accrue toward the commodification of the local, and this could be seen concretely through the process of resemiotization of the campaign ads. The paper argues that resemiotization as a discursive strategy facilitates the commodification of 'local' places, people and practices as part of a broader economic and ideological agenda of state and global institutions.

This paper articulates current theoretical insights on the sociolinguistic dimensions of globalization mentioned above (Blommaert, 2010; Pennycook, 2012; Heller, 2010). With the advent of crowdsourcing campaigns that attempt to capture ground up indigenous contributions and

initiatives (Cabotaje & Alampay, 2013), much work is needed to capture how such local efforts become implicated in the use of linguistic and multimodal resources to mobilize new meanings for the purpose of converting existing resources into ones of material value for the global consumer. The desire to go ‘local’, in other words, must be interrogated alongside the desire to sell the ‘local’. There has also been considerable body of work on the commodification of place/space in tourism discourse (Urry, 2005; Burns, 2006; Jaworski and Thurlow, 2010), but there is also a need to examine the range of linguistic and multimodal resources deployed to enact practices of commodification, and for this paper it is the deployment of resemiotization in the service of commodification.

This paper has two main parts. First, it introduces the Philippine tourism industry, and describes how its grassroots campaign came to be. Second, it then describes resemiotization and commodification as complementary frameworks in the analysis of the campaign ads. To do this, the paper presents three interrelated stages of analysis: identifies dominant themes in the taglines of the memes, explains how resemiotization occurs when images and taglines are analysed together, and then deploys Hunter’s (2008) typology of representation of space and subject to show how the images commodify local people, places and practices represented in the memes. Overall, the analysis interrogates the use of memes as constitutive of a participatory culture that characterizes newer forms of language use today (Ross & Rivers, 2017; Georgakopoulou, 2015; Zhu, 2016), arguing that in the case of the Philippines’ global tourism campaign, memes become implicated in the normalizing processes of commodifying the local for global consumption.

## **2.0 Contextualizing the Philippine tourism industry**

The Philippine tourism industry is an integral part of the country’s economy as it contributes a large part of its GDP. Specifically, Gatdula (2014) reports that, with about 4.7 million foreigners visiting the country annually, the Philippine Tourism industry earned USD 4.4 billion in revenue. There has

been a steady rise of visitors to the country from all parts of the world, but mostly from the United States and neighboring ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries (Lagman, 2008).

The appointment of a new secretary of tourism in 2012 led to the grassroots campaign called, "*It's more fun in the Philippines*" which urged Filipinos to develop different internet ads (or memes) which showcase the country's many tourism sites. Philippine Secretary of Tourism and one of the country's leading advertising gurus, Ramon Reyes Jimenez Jr., calls the campaign a "people power campaign" (De Castro, 2012, p. 8) and an "instant hit" (p. 8) because of the spontaneity of the whole process. As Levine (2015) recounts, the campaign originated from David Guerrero, who previously worked on past tourism campaigns in the Philippines. The campaign, "it's more fun in the Philippines" employed a crowdsourcing approach allowing users of social media from the country (an estimated 27 million facebook users from the Philippines) to contribute to the campaign by including photographs with the title of the caption. Launched by the Department of Tourism (DOT) through events and the office website 'www.experiencephilippines.org', and social network sites, the new slogan was accompanied by three sample memes for the public to model and spread through the internet. Bosangit (2014) elaborates that the campaign website included a set of guidelines (font, layout and photo quality) and even app in preparing the memes. She further states that the campaign generated as much as 12,000 memes in less than a week as many Filipinos as well as celebrities abroad participated in the campaign.

Similar to Adegoju's (2016) investigation on nation rebranding in Nigeria, the Philippines capitalized on the use of social media in e-governance as concretized by the campaign through inclusive participation of citizens in government initiatives (Cabotaje & Alampay, 2013). This became the basis for the government's more active marketing of the Philippine brand through grassroots participation as it tapped into other platforms of marketing such as mainstream media (e.g., CNN), international magazines, mobile advertising (campaign on fifty black cabs and twenty-five

double-decker buses in London), and travel trade shows. There is ample proof that the campaign has helped boost the tourism industry, for example in terms of visitor influx to the country since 2012 (De Castro, 2012; Levine, 2015; O'Connell & Vanoverbeke, 2015), as well as added revenues from the tourism sector (De Castro, 2012; Levine, 2015).

This highly effective campaign presents a fertile ground for understanding the complex relationship between language use and globalization. The campaign is essentially a profit-generating campaign meant to bolster the country's (still) struggling economy, but the use of memes for global reach and consumption betrays critical questions about what happens to ground-level initiatives when they begin to be regulated by institutions of power and mediated by the needs and biases of global tourism consumers. In other words, the campaign memes are fertile ground for an examination of how language use and meaning -- drawn from indigenous creative energies -- are normalized for the global consumer. As mentioned earlier, for these memes, this is accomplished through resemiotization and commodification. In keeping with previous investigations that link language and social processes, resemiotization and commodification collude to respond to the consumerist motivations of the global market (Hunter, 2008; Papen, 2005; Georgakopoulou, 2015; Culler, 1988). These strategies help us see how authenticity and localness are accorded material value for the purposes of consumption and profitability.

### **3.0 Theoretical Framework**

As a discursive strategy, Iedema (2003) defines resemiotization as a process of "how meaning making shifts from context to context, from practice to practice, or from one stage of a practice to the next" (p. 41). In other words, as meanings are transported through modalities (texts, videos, pictures or other resources) that encapsulate certain practices, they may be interpreted or translated differently in varying contexts. Mehan (1993), for example, details how a 'special' education' student has been

constructed progressively, beginning from informal talk with the teacher who then writes a referral letter recommending a particular battery of tests for the students, the results of which further formalize, reaffirm and reinterpret the student as a 'special student' in formal meetings. The different contexts of meaning-making -- informal talk, referral letter, battery of tests, formal written report, formal meetings, and the writing of the outcome of such meetings placed in an office file -- serve as platforms for the progressive resemiotization of the student as a special student. Iedema (2003) also gives as another example the emerging cross referencing of representational practices such as the inclusion of historical events in individual pages of the Dutch passport. This means that in terms of purpose, while the passport serves as a bureaucratic document, it also emblemizes the Netherlands' heritage. In another investigation, Prior, Hengst, Roozen and Shipka (2006) reports a resemiotized activity borne out of ethnographic work with a comedy skit group in a high school. They observed that the development of a play came from one member's poem and each member contributed to expanded lines, a range of gestures to accompany individual actors' parts as well as voicing and costumes to fully articulate the theme of the original text. Overall, as Iedema (2001) emphasizes, resemiotization is a means of understanding how "the community transposes and reifies its knowledges, techniques and technologies as well as its interpersonal, social and cultural practices and positionings" (p. 36). He adds that resemiotization raises questions of how meaning is accessed and produced by different actors, and how a particular practice and its value(s) are understood and reinterpreted when they are transported to other contexts or discursive platforms.

Hunter's typology of representation is of interest in the present investigation as it aligns itself with the goals of resemiotization. Hunter (2008) asserts that "photography makes tourism representations real in an immediate way, and makes them widely available in the form of tourism media: brochures, guidebooks and postcards" (p. 357). As such, analyzing representations -- thus resemiotization -- of tourism sites helps us explore and uncover "the developer's intentions, the consumers' interpretation and the interactions among them" (Herbert, 2001, p. 317). Ultimately,

representations of tourist spots do not only shape the potential tourist experience but also lead to “concomitant indexicalities pointing back to specific types of people, social groups, events, places, values, emotions, and so on” (Jaworski, 2014, p. 524). In other words, such representations construct people, places and spaces as commodities or into something of material value for the purpose of consumption (Hunter, 2008; Hunter & Suh, 2007; Heller, 2010). Consequently, Hunter provides a typology or analytical framework (to be discussed in the methodology section below) which helps classify such representations in terms of *space* (referring to the state of the tourist location being portrayed) and *subject* (referring to the actions done by locals portrayed), and which have been found to be the dominant ways to commodify places and people. Through this typology, it is then possible to see how resemiotized representations begin to commodify objects of tourism discourse such as places, people and cultural practices. In short, resemiotization becomes a linguistic and discursive strategy to help facilitate the process of commodification.

Commodification, for its part, “is the process by which objects and activities come to be evaluated primarily in terms of their exchange value in the context of trade” (Watson & Kopachevsky, 1994, p. 380). In the case of tourism in an era of globalization, the goal of the tourist is to experience “novelty, the attainment of cultural capital, and intense thrill and spectacle” (Clope & Perkins, 2002, p. 523) that always comes at a cost. Tourism agents and stakeholders capitalize on this goal by offering so-called authentic or novel experiences drawn from local people, sites and practices through different platforms of marketing. Clope and Perkins (2002) argue that place “becomes a product of a way of living where individuals consume *a world made by others* rather than producing their own” (p. 526, italics supplied).

The processes of resemiotization and commodification appear to be parallel with Jansson’s (2002) notion of image culture which problematizes the link between consumption and media. He elaborates that media, in the case of tourism does not necessarily lead to consumption but rather is part of a wider construct called image culture-which is a transformative process that involves



mediatization. Mediatization in the realm of sociolinguistics and tourism studies emphasize that, 1) The tourist experience is socio-culturally constructed through the interplay of different actors. Specifically, tourists are not simply passive recipients but are active in decoding-re-encoding their experience of place and time; The prominence of technologies have facilitated the blurring distinction between producer and consumer and has given individuals reflexive opportunities to rapidly spread texts which intertextually link their experiences to co-construct a sense of place (.Jansson, 2002; Saraniemi & Kylanen, 2011; Mansson, 2011) 2) Mediatization is a systematic process of linking communicative acts with another through division of labor and is spread throughout different channels. Mediatization of objects can have material value depending on the receiving community and can have a tendency to be repetitive, stable across genres as it attempts to document social life for a particular community (Agha, 2003; Agha, 2012; Androtsopulous, 2016).

\_\_\_\_\_It is this world made by others that is constructed by tourism agents and stakeholders distributed across differentiated spaces of power through several linguistic and discursive means -- in the case of this study, the process of resemiotization -- for the purposes of addressing the needs of the tourist to maximize the economic gains of tourism. In the context of the analysis of memes in the *'It's more fun in the Philippines'* campaign, this paper aims to show how resemiotization and commodification as complementary strategies deployed in this campaign override the grassroots origins and agenda of the campaign.

#### **4.0 Memes as Data**

Since tourism (and tourism marketing) is a highly semiotic activity (Thurlow & Jaworski, 2010), the resources for analysis in this work are memes drawn from authentic travel photographs within the country. As stipulated in the guidelines for the preparation of the memes, the DOT emphasizes that the photos "should have been the taken in the Philippines, featuring a scenic view in the country, or

something of our culture,” fun and scenic and must be taken by the maker of the meme or permission must have been secured (DOT, 2012, p.13). Moreover, examining the memes from this campaign, which was mainly spread through social media, actualizes Georgakopoulou’s (2005) assertion that “the multi-semiotic resources of digital media are routinely drawn upon by communicators to jointly (re)create and negotiate [concepts] to strategic effects” (p. 3).

Memes are semiotic resources considered as “representational discourse that subverts dominant media messages to create new meaning” (Huntington, 2014, p.1). Memes are, first, visually rhetorical devices which do not only rely on linguistic texts but images as well; second, they are potentially subversive; and third, they create new meanings. The choice of memes for this study is driven by these dominant characteristics as well as the fact that the Philippine campaign initiated by the government initially capitalized on citizens’ contribution of memes. Thus, to what extent such grassroots-produced memes create supposedly subversive new meanings is a potent source of discussion.

The study utilized 62 memes sourced from the official Facebook and webpage of the Department of Tourism of the Philippines ([www.experiencephilippines.org](http://www.experiencephilippines.org)). These memes, collected from December 2014 to May 2015, were chosen by the department out of an undisclosed number of contributions from Filipinos from all over the world. During the conduct of the investigation, the 52 memes were the ones readily available for analysis. Labeled as “*It’s more fun in the Philippines,*” the two sites solicited and posted memes which utilized high-resolution images that should have been taken in the Philippines, depicting something fun and positive about Philippine culture. The grassroots nature of these memes is gleaned through the requirement that the images should be original (not taken from the internet or for those Filipinos living abroad, a photo may have been taken earlier was used for the meme), in addition to the fact that the contributions come from individual Filipinos. However, uniformity of style is a requirement set by the department such as the inclusion of the phrase “More fun in the Philippines” in Harabara font style and should be divided into two lines (with

the second line being just the word "Philippines").

## **5.0 Methodology**

Three stages of analysis were undertaken for this study. The first stage involves content analysis of keywords in taglines. The purpose of this is to find out the dominant choice of themes in these memes, and gain a general understanding of the kind of promotional language that the Philippine campaign used to capture the interests of potential tourists. There were no pre-set categories available, thus we undertook to do preliminary analysis of the keywords and worked from ground up to develop the categories. The second stage of the analysis involved describing the photographs accompanying each of the taglines. This would enable us to see the connection between the typical or expected denotations of the taglines and the specific meanings intended for these taglines by the individual photos themselves. The third stage of analysis focused on the representational aspects of the photographs, using Hunter's (2008) typology of representations of subject and space which have been found to be dominant ways of commodifying tourism landscapes and destinations. The first stage of the analysis gave us a general picture of the campaign's promotional language with the intention of finding out what it is -- 'products' -- that the campaign aims to 'sell'; the second stage allowed us to see possibilities of resemiotization, through new meanings of taglines when viewed within the images used; and the third stage enabled us to link resemiotization with practices of commodification by identifying the images' use of dominant representational devices which accomplish such commodification.

Hunter (2008) argues that tourism promotional language uses photographs which commodify places and people. In his study, he found dominant ways through which such commodification is accomplished, and he presents them in his typology of representations. In terms of representations of space, Hunter found that commodifying images use natural landscapes, cultivated landscapes,

heritage/material culture and tourism products. In terms of representations of subject, Hunter identified four sub-categories, namely No Human Subject, Host, Tourist and, Tourist and Host. These categories are used to analyze the images in the Philippine campaign.

## 6.0 Results and Discussion

To address the objectives of the paper, the succeeding sections describe the dominant themes observed (Stage 1), the resemiotized taglines in relation to the pictures used for the memes (Stage 2) and finally the dominant representational devices that commodify tourism discourse (Stage 3). For Table 1 provides a summary of findings related to Stage 1 and 3, while Table 2 provides a sample analysis of descriptions of images in the memes. Since Hunter's typology is instrumental in stage 3 of our analysis, table 1 shows an aggregated version of the two sets of representations for clarity.

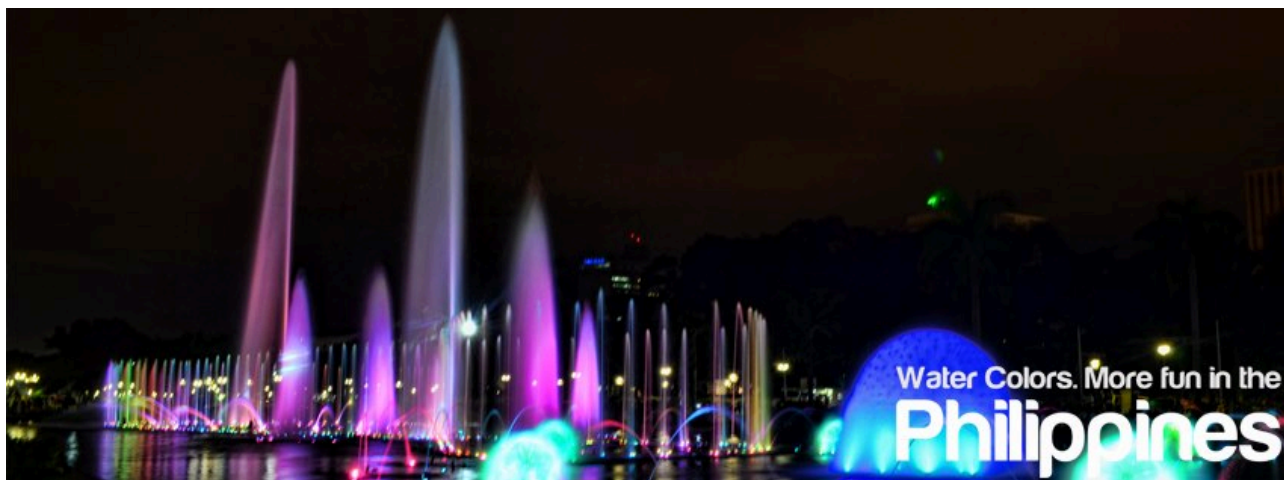
Dominant Themes	Frequency	Representation in terms of Space				Representation in terms of Subject			
		Natural	Cultivated	Heritage/Material	Tourism Products	No Human Subject	Host	Tourist	Host and Tourist
Activity	23	9	5	8	1	7	15	1	0
Events	6	1	1	4	0	3	0	1	2
Objects	15	2	2	2	8	10	3	1	1
Others	4	2	1	0	0	3	0	0	1
Persons	4	2	0	2	0	1	2	1	0
Places	3	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
References to Pop Culture	7	4	1	2	0	2	2	2	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>

*Table 1.* Summary of classification of memes in terms of dominant themes, and representational devices used in terms of space and subject

### *Dominant Themes*

In the sections that follow, the dominant themes, representations in terms of space and subject which are borne out of the content analysis of memes used in the investigation are discussed. As seen in Table 1, Activities (37%) and Objects (24%) are dominant themes in the collection of memes. This is followed by References to Pop culture (11%), Events (9%), Persons (6%) and Places (4%). The Others category (6%) includes taglines which have no clear classifications.

With these broad themes, there are several observations made. The broad themes that emerge may be attributed to the mediatization of the tourist experience as projected in the memes which in turn may also represent the culturally relevant material that indexes webs of significant practices for the potential tourist (Jansson, 2002). As seen in the samples, taglines employ terms and expressions that appear to be common terms of reference for concepts and activities. For instance, the following, sample memes analyzed in the paper appear to show the aforementioned characteristic:



1. Watercolor. More Fun in the Philippines (Object)





2. Summer. More fun in the Philippines (Events)



### 3. Stargazing. More fun in the Philippines (Activity)

A close examination of the taglines suggests that semiotically, they serve both as anchorage and relay (in Barthes' terms) to further disambiguate the image projected in the meme. Since the tagline is comprised of two parts, dominant theme and the phrase, "It's More Fun in the Philippines". The dominant theme appears to carry the relay function as meaning is either altered or advanced. In the 3 memes presented, the dominant themes provide connotative interpretations of the fountain, beach chairs and umbrella and a couple looking at Christmas decorations (*Parol in Filipino*). Second, the use of the phrase "More fun in the Philippines" in the memes serve as anchorage. Similar to Jaworski's (2010) use of interpretive frames in postcards, the modifier "It's More Fun" describes the Philippines directing readers specifically as to the concepts or practices associated to the country. In addition, the repetitive use of the phrase adds to the reinforcement of the ideological anchorage (Barthes, 1977) that the Philippines is a country worth visiting because of the many activities one can engage in.

While modernist accounts suggest that tourism discourse draws its power of persuasion by highlighting the "authentic" "exotic" and "different", the present finding departs from this observation. Similar to Franklin and Crang (2001) in their critique of essentialist approaches to tourism theory, the use of common terms in tourism discourse is indicative of the 'extraordinary everyday'- "where [tourism is] no longer confined to the cosmopolitan sensibilities of the emergent modern capital cities, most people are now alerted to, and routinely excited by, the flows of global cultural materials all around them in a range of locations and settings" (p. 89). That is, while people become more mobilized through increased patterns of travel, cultural artefacts, practices "between the everyday and holiday [become] entirely blurred" (Franklin and Crang, 2001, p. 89). Salin, Ibrahim and Hasan (2012) note that tourism discourse indexes a range of concepts and activities since tourism denotes "spaces or venues of cultural, economic, and social live activities. Hence, as a venue of

experience creation, destination is endowed with a number of economic activities where tourists acquire additional consumption experience” (p. 139). As manifested in the dominant themes (textual) which advance meanings of the image using the relay function and the phrase, “It’s More fun in the Philippines” which serves as anchorage comprising the tagline, encodes the message that a variety of offerings for the potential tourist are there but is also reinforced through the repetition of the message that the country is an ideal tourist destination.

### *Resemiotizing Images*

The second stage of the analysis involves describing the images that accompany the taglines. As mentioned in the earlier section, the taglines refer generally to everyday activities which do not have specific denotative meanings. That is, these activities only describe potential typical engagements of tourists in their daily lives. However, when the images are described (see Table 2 for sample descriptions), we now see a much clearer relationship between them and the taglines.

Table 2. *Sample of Taglines and Descriptions of Images*

Tagline	Classification	Description
Mohawks	Persons	An exotic fish which can be found in the Philippines
High fives	References from Pop Culture	Churchgoers raising their hands at the Church
Summer	Event	Beach shore with an umbrella and sunbathing chairs
Eden	Others	Waterfalls
Banana	Object	Individuals having fun on a banana boat ride
Tour Buses	Object	Jeep at Rizal Park



Patrolling	Activity	Man on a small boat moving along the shore
Board games	Object	Boy surfing on the shore

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If individual taglines are now matched with descriptions of accompanying images, we see how these taglines take on different meanings which point specifically to places, people and practices associated with the Philippines. For example, with the tagline ‘Commuting’ (See Figure 1), the image that accompanies it is a ‘Man rowing a kayak in Palawan’ (see ‘What’s new in the Philippines?’, 2012). ‘Commuting’ is given new meaning as the photo shows a man rowing a small boat in a vast sea in a place called Palawan. The meaning of commuting now departs from its denotative meaning which is defined as “the travel between place of residence and workplace that many people undertake daily” (Preston, 2014, para. 1) - a routinary nature of movement from one place to another. With the case of the tagline, ‘Stretch Limo’ (See Figure 2), the image that accompanies it is the iconic *calesa* or carriage that Philippine tourism uses as a symbolic reference to the country’s nostalgic past -- the 333 years of Spanish colonization. The image resemiotizes the term by pulling it away from its meaning as a vehicle of “conspicuous consumption which is the hallmark of luxurious living” (Dunsmore & Haspel, 2014) to something locally available and was used for travel in the early years of the country. While the taglines carry both relay and anchorage functions, the images found in the meme acts as a relay that expands the terms’ respective meanings maximizing the promotional or expressive function (Barthes, 1977; Jaworski, 2010).

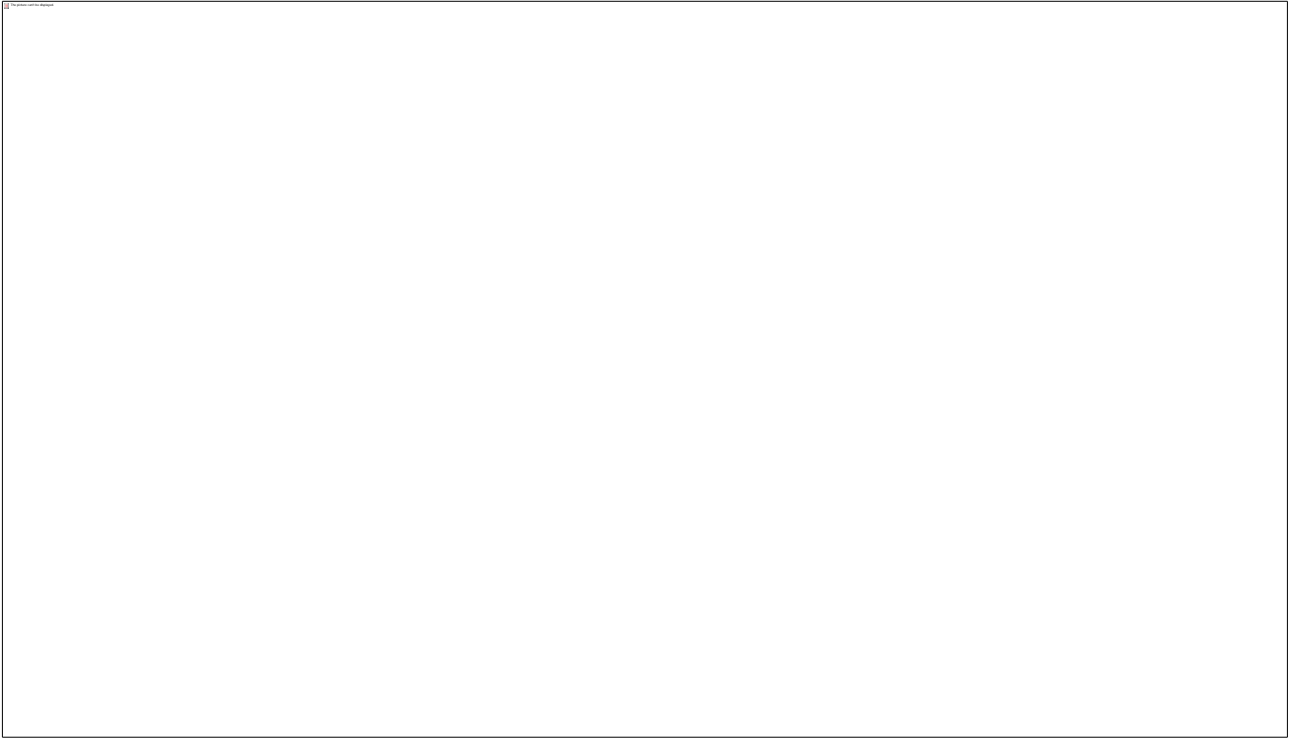
Moreover, mediatization can help explain the transformation of these memes from subversive to something promotional as the grassroots nature of this campaign tapped ordinary people to participate in the activity leading “to uptake and reinterpretations of a fragment of messages as a means of engagement” (Androutsopolous, 2016, p. 202). In addition, these observations can be explained from Varis and Blommaert’s (2015, p. 37) view of the rapid transformations of memes:

People are extraordinarily creative in reorganizing, redirecting, and applying memic resources over a vast range of thematic domains, addressing a vast range of audiences while all the same retaining clear and recognizable intertextual links to the original memic sources.

With this in mind, as seen in the data, the taglines, images and slogan *It's more fun in the Philippines* which form the memes, are open to possibilities of resemiotization as “they provide memic-intertextual recognisability, while the textual adjustments redirect the meme *towards more specific audiences and reset it in different frames of meaning and use*” (Varis and Blommaert, 2015, p. 37, italics supplied). Intertextually, the use of dominant themes that act as a common frame of reference direct readers to examine the meme further leading to the image which features different cultural ‘products’ or ‘services’ offered in the Philippines. In turn, the combined use of these multimodal resources reinforces the message that the country is “more fun” as it has several things to offer for the potential tourist.



Figure 4. *Commuting: It's More Fun in the Philippines.*



*Figure 5. Stretch Limos: It's More Fun in the Philippines*

*Stage Three: Commodifying images*

Stage 2 allows us to see ways of resemiotization. As discussed above, the use of the term

According to Hunter, however, such image-text relationship do not simply resemiotize contexts; more importantly, they commodify specific places, events and people by deploying particular forms of representation found to be dominant in tourism discourse. In other words, the pictures remiotize the taglines while, at the same time, commodify particular Philippine places, people, events, objects and other concepts. As discussed earlier, the two categories of representation are representations according to space and subject, with specific sub-categories for each. As a form of representation, for example, the horse carriage used in ‘Stretch Limo’ is an example of a picture image with no human subject the absence of which presents “a pristine space that is waiting to be enjoyed, to be consumed as a tourism experience” (Hunter, 2008, p. 360). In the case of ‘Commuting’, what is represented in the meme is natural landscapes -- one that features “pure and unspoiled mountains, oceans, forests, lakes, wild animals, fields or sky” (Hunter, p. 360).

As summarized in Table 1, the picture images in the memes take on dominant commodifying representations as articulated by Hunter, namely representation of *space* - natural landscapes (36%) and heritage/material culture (29%) - and representation of *subject* - no human subject (43%) and host (35%). Since the taglines and photos contained in the memes function as anchorage and relay-encoding an alteration of meaning, the representations of space and subject project groomed spaces which are fit for consumption. As can be seen in figures 4 and 5 (commuting and stretch limos), what is presented are pristine objects or places that have no traces of pollution, violence or chaos which often are result in struggles in daily life activities. The same can be said with representation of subject . In figure 6 for instance, the meme “casual wear” portrays a man, presumably a tourist, on casual attire surrounded by locals wearing traditional Filipino festival attire. While the tagline may denotatively direct readers to the man in casual attire, the photo alters the meaning of the term by showing the man as one with the locals naturalizing interactions between tourists and hosts as unproblematic and ideal for the tourist.



Figure 6. *Casual Wear. It's More Fun in the Philippines.*

These observations from the memes in terms of representations suggest that aside from projecting groomed spaces, these effectively freeze cultural products which name, frame and enshrine objects, places, people, activities (MacCannell, 1992). That is, the taglines of the meme presents a denotative representation which in turn, are resemiotized through the images through an alteration of meaning resulting highlighting characteristics of the cultural site or product (naming). Framing then occurs as both image and text project an unproblematic representation of the sites fit for tourist consumption which eventually leads to enshrinement as the phrase, "It's more fun in the Philippines" is repeatedly used to reinforce the message of importance and veneration. These findings suggest that the resemiotized representations of space and the subject project enactments of exploration and consumption which are aligned with the overall objectives of global tourism - one that entails the pursuance of adventure, the exotic and the unknown (Cloke & Perkins, 2002; Salin, Ibrahim and Hasan, 2012). From a language and globalization perspective, several insights can be drawn. As manifested in the investigation, the use of terms which reference so-called 'ordinary' everyday life

resemiotizes the vast visual representations of the tourism experience reveal the emerging blurring distinctions between the familiar and unfamiliar. The use of taglines to communicate an image of global tourist destinations may, on the one hand, be interpreted as a demonstration of the agency of the locals in their deliberate appropriation and deft manipulation of language, essentially “describing” the local and playfully presenting it as ‘global’ with the purpose of luring the global audience to the country. Moreover, the campaign has allowed participants (contributors of the memes) to resemiotize their semiotic resources (e.g. travel experiences and photographs, knowledge of English colloquialisms, cultural humor, Internet platform, meme generators, etc.) within the larger framework of tourism discourse. As Franklin and Crang (2001) explain, the increased mobility of agents and artefacts of tourism “generate(s) new social relations, new ways of living, new ties to space, new places, new forms of consumption and leisure and new aesthetic sensibilities” (p. 12).

Second, the resemiotization of these memes as commodities shows the normalizing effects of discursive practices as they travel from one to scale to another. While memes are considered “subversive and/or countercultural elaborations of spreadable media” (Wiggins & Bowers, 2014, p. 13), the findings in our study of the “*It’s more fun in the Philippines*” show memes of a different nature. Rather, the use of memes supports a higher scaled initiative (that of the government) that intends to promote the country through a diverse set of contributions from its citizenry which indexes an agenda of commodification of the tourism experience. This repackaging of the local (as a commodity) can be seen as ironic. Given its ‘grassroots’ nature, with the entries culled from varied contributors, the campaign has still produced a seemingly simplified representation of the Philippines: unspoiled tropical paradise or quaint/traditional heritage sites filled with natives who proudly showcase their ‘crude’ but creative art/efacts. For Hall and Tucker (2004), this repackaging of the local shows that tourism reinforces the asymmetrical relations between the visitor and visited (Colonizer vis-a-vis Colonized) - pointing out how former colonies become today’s preferred tourist destinations and how many colonial debris (e.g. artefacts, architecture, ‘exotic’ peoples and their

customs, heritage and histories) have become popular and profitable tourist sites. As mentioned earlier, since the campaign was able to record increased revenues and visits from tourists abroad (De Castro, 2012; Levine, 2015), these resemiotized, commodified memes proliferate in an ever unequal globalized industry where tourists are enticed to experience the grand spectacle of the country at the expense of the local's loss of cultural meaning as space and place become reduced to mere products for consumption (Culler, 1988).

## **7.0 Conclusion**

This paper examined the ways how tourism discourse is commodified through resemiotization. Initially framed as a crowdsourced campaign, The Philippine Department of Tourism solicited contributions from the public to promote tourism through memes which enact the campaign, *It's More Fun in the Philippines*. Based on the findings, dominant themes such as activities and objects provide the potential tourist concrete representations for consumption. Moreover, taglines which denote common concepts relatable to the potential tourist are resemiotized when photos are included to form the memes. With these resemiotized memes, the photographs become commodities as these dominantly represent space with natural landscapes and heritage and material products with very little human representations or with hosts in sites in terms of representation of subject. Considering these findings, it can be said that the campaign is an example of the workings of unequal hierarchies that results in normalizing the effects of globalization. That is, while the generation of these memes should have capitalized on diversity of contributions from the populace to promote the Philippines, the locality of place and subject becomes part of the global supermarket for wider consumption. While this investigation examined the relationship between resemiotization and commodification in one domain, it raises questions for future work. First, with the advent of crowdsourcing campaigns in a social media environment, it is interesting to see the deployment of different modalities and its impact on domains and social practices. Second, it is interesting to examine the other ways tourism discourse

is commodified through different sociolinguistic processes such as resemiotization. In the case of our paper, resemiotization, commodification and memes work together to give us a picture of how language use operates in profit-driven global projects.

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## Appendix A

### Summary of Descriptions of Taglines and Photos

Tagline	Classification	Description	Representation in terms of Space	Representation in terms of Subject
Peek-a-Boos	Activity	Striped fish going out of a coral	Natural Landscapes	No Human Object
Coming together	Activity	School of fish swimming	Natural Landscapes	No Human Object
Eyeballing	Activity	Closeup of Philippine Tarsier	Natural Landscapes	No Human Object
Dating	Activity	A Couple talking things over while seated in a chair made of rock with a bicycle beside them	Heritage/Material Culture	Host
Going upstairs	Activity	Two people walking forward along the rice terraces	Cultivated Landscapes	Host
Hanging out (2 occurrences one is surfing)	Activity	Fruit bat hanging from a tree	Natural Landscapes	No Human Subject
Line Dancing	Activity	Indigenous boys dancing	Heritage/Material Culture	Host
Meetings	Activity	People raising hands during a procession	Heritage and Material Culture	Host
Naptime	Activity	Woman lying on her back while floating on water using a lifebuoy	Heritage and Material Culture	Tourist
Patrolling	Activity	Man on a small boat moving along the shore	Cultivated Landscapes	Host

Popping the Question	Activity	Man kneels in front of a woman with sailboats spelling out “will you marry me”	Cultivated Landscapes	Host
Stargazing (2 occurrences)	Activity	Man and Woman looking at a display of Parols or “star ornaments”	Heritage and Material Culture	Host
Staring Contest	Activity	Philippine Tarsier sitting on a tree branch	Natural Landscapes	No Human Object
Volunteering	Activity	People painting a school building	Material/Heritage Culture	Host
Free ride	Activity	Teenage boys skateboarding	Material/Heritage Culture	Host
Eating	Activity	Hand is shown to get food from a boodlefight inspired meal	Tourism products	Host
Food Sharing	Activity	hand feeds a school of fish	Cultivated Landscapes	Host
Commuting	Activity	Man rowing a Kayak in the sea	Natural Landscapes	Host
Convoy	Activity	Sailboats moving forward	Natural Landscapes	Host
Flocking Together	Activity	Birds flying	Natural Landscapes	No human subject
Parties	Activities	Firedancers	Cultivated Landscapes	Host

Tagline	Classification	Description	Representation in terms of Space	Representation in terms of Subject
New Friends	Persons	lady engaging in	natural landscapes	tourist

		scuba diving on top of a whale shark		
Tour Guides	Persons	Indigenous women in a welcoming pose	Heritage and Material culture	Host
Late Bloomers	Persons	Old woman's face appearing to be superimposed at the center of a sunflower	Heritage and Material culture	Host
Mohawks	Persons	An exotic fish	Natural Landscapes	No human subject

Tagline	Classification	Description	Representation in terms of Space	Representation in terms of Subject
New Friends	Persons	lady engaging in scuba diving on top of a whale shark	natural landscapes	tourist
Tour Guides	Persons	Indigenous women in a welcoming pose	Heritage and Material culture	Host
Late Bloomers	Persons	Old woman's face appearing to be superimposed at the center of a sunflower	Heritage and Material culture	Host
Mohawks	Persons	An exotic fish	Natural Landscapes	No human subject

Tagline	Classification	Description	Representation in terms of Space	Representation in terms of subject
White Christmas	References from Pop Culture	Kids making a snowman from sand	Cultivated Landscapes	Tourist

Smiley faces	References from Pop Culture	Several individuals wearing masks	Heritage and Material Culture	Host
My humps	References from Pop Culture	Chocolate Hills	Natural Landscapes	No human subject
High fives	References from Pop Culture	Churchgoers raising their hands at the Church	Heritage and Material Culture	Host and Tourist
Twitter	References from Pop Culture	An exotic bird	Natural Landscapes	No Human Subject
You tube	References from Pop Culture	A man surfing the waves	Natural Landscapes	Host
Rock n Roll	References from Pop Culture	A Man raising his hands while standing on a rock formation	Natural Landscapes	Tourist

Tagline	Classification	Description	Representation in terms of Space	Representation in Terms of Subject
Easter	Event	Easter eggs on a nest	Heritage and Material Culture	No Human Subject
Festival (2 occurrences)	Event	A foreigner in ordinary clothes celebrates a Philippine Festival with local dressed in costume	Heritage and Material Culture	Host and Tourist
Summer	Event	Beach shore with an Umbrella and sunbathing chairs	Cultivated Landscape	No Human Subject
Sunrise	Event	Church with guests	Heritage and Material Culture	Tourist

Twister	Event	School of Fish	Natural Landscapes	No Human Subject
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Tagline	Classification	Description	Representation in Terms of Space	Representation in Terms of Subject
Heritage	Others	Heritage City of Vigan is Depicted with Horse Carriages in sight	Heritage and Material Culture	Host
Colors	Others	Several pieces of woven cloth	Tourism products	No human subject
Eden	Others	Waterfalls	natural landscapes	No Human Subject
Fleets	Others	Boats on a body of water	cultivated landscapes	No Human Subject
Triangles	Others	Mounatin	natural landscapes	No Human Subject

Tagline	Classification	Description	Representation in Terms of Space	Representation in Terms of Subject
Heritage	Others	Heritage City of Vigan is Depicted with Horse Carriages in sight	Heritage and Material Culture	Host
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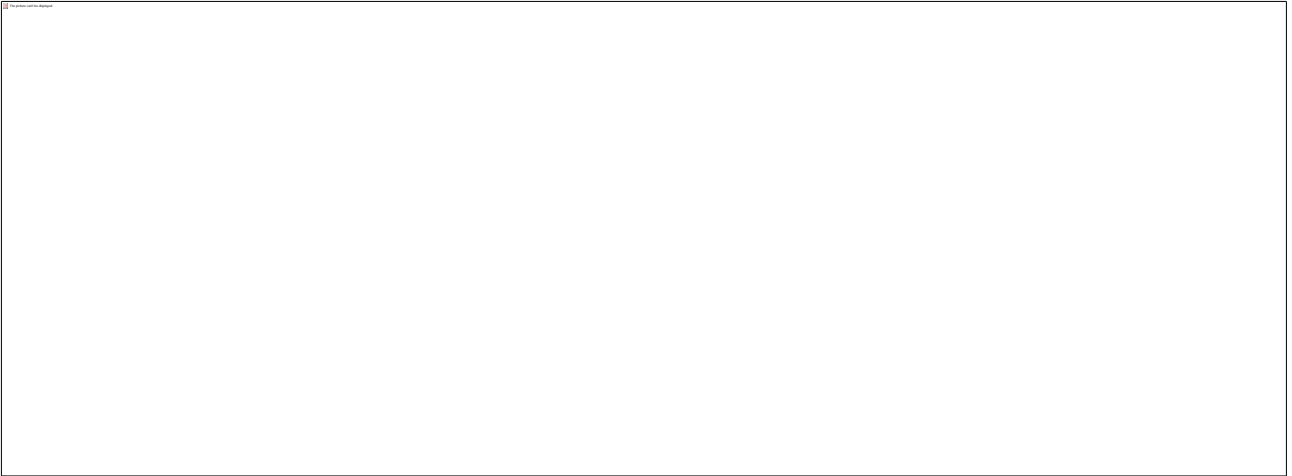


## Appendix B

## Other Sample Memes Analyzed



Figure 3. *Heritage and Material Culture with Host and Tourist depicted in the Photo*



*Figure 4. Natural Landscapes with No Human Subject*



*Figure 5. Cultivated Landscapes. No Human Subject*