

Constructing Indonesian Culinary Heritage through Indomie Packaging: A Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract

This study examines how Indonesian identity and everyday nationalism are constructed through the instant noodle packaging of Indomie local culinary variants. The study employs a Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) method to examine the linguistic and visual components of six different Indomie variants. The focus of the analysis is on the usage of language, local names, food imagery, color schemes, traditional patterns, and depictions of traditional housing and local landmarks. The results indicate that Indomie packaging presents local culinary diversity within the framework of national identity through the term "Kuliner Indonesia" (Indonesian Cuisine) and transforms traditional food into simplified, recognizable, and easily consumable forms. The integration of cohesive linguistic and visual elements subtly and repeatedly mirrors national identity in the everyday consumption habits of people. This research illustrates that instant noodle packaging acts as an important medium for sustaining banal nationalism, where national identity is depicted as something familiar, natural, and taken for granted.

Keywords: *MCDA, Food Packaging, National Identity, Banal Nationalism, Indomie*

INTRODUCTION

In everyday life, we encounter various consumer products that seem ordinary and oftentimes leave without questioning their meaning. Food packaging, for example, is often considered merely a wrapper or marketing tool to attract consumers' attention. In fact, packaging is a representation that contains various words, images, colors, and symbols chosen intentionally. Through packaging, a product can convey a message, values, and a particular perspective and be accepted as normal in everyday consumption behavior. In this context, packaging not simply serves economically but also plays a role as a medium for shaping meaning and identity (Machin & Mayr, 2023).

Indomie is a product closely tied to everyday life in Indonesia, making it an interesting example of how this meaning works. Indomie is not a neutral brand. Indomie is a popular instant noodle that people in Indonesia see everywhere, from homes to small shops to big stores. It is not just food; it is a part of everyday life for many Indonesians. Eating Indomie often can bring back memories and create a feeling of unity and pride in the country. Because of this, Indomie has become a symbol of Indonesian culture and identity in a simple and familiar way.

This comprehension corresponds with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which perceives text as a social practice inherently connected to ideology and power dynamics (Fairclough, 2015). Ideology within this context might not be explicitly shown but rather manifests as naturalized meanings that appear unquestionable. An ideology relevant to the context of consumption is banal nationalism, which is a form of nationalism that is routinely reproduced through everyday life without the need for conspicuous national symbols (Billig, 1995). Through the consumption of everyday products, such as instant food, national identity is subtly reproduced.

Along with the development of visual representations in public spaces, CDA began to shift towards a multimodal approach. This approach emphasizes that meaning is constructed not only through verbal language but also through visual elements such as images, colors, and layout (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). Thus, Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) was developed as a relevant approach for analyzing contemporary texts, including product packaging, which combines various semiotic sources to construct meaning.

Previous studies have shown that food is often used as a symbol of national and cultural identity (Ichijō & Ranta, 2016). For example, Bu et al. (2020) show that preferences for traditional foods in China are influenced by nationalism, while King (2020) asserts that the construction of "Chinese food" is the result of a social process that reinforces national identity. Hung (2022) even found that modern foods such as bubble tea can be elevated to new national icons through claims of authenticity.

On the other hand, Polese et al. (2020) highlight everyday food consumption in Estonia as an arena for negotiating national identity, while Andersson (2020) emphasizes that food packaging in Sweden reproduces national ideology in a banal way through representations of nature and the flag. These findings show that food and packaging can be media of ideology.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) studies in Indonesia have been widely conducted to uncover ideology in the realms of politics, media, education, gender, and digital discourse. For example, Afdholy et al. (2022) examined the ideology of nationalism in CNN Indonesia's discourse on the Omicron variant; Sariyatun et al. (2024) examined the representation of the G30S in history textbooks; Udasmoro et al. (2025) highlighted the practice of "flexing" and false solidarity among female officials in the media; Ngaji et al. (2025) analyze the digital discourse of demonstrations in Yogyakarta.

Moreover, Nurfazri et al. (2026), Suyitno et al. (2025), and Sueb & Wafa (2025) discuss political rhetoric and political debates; Lukman et al. (2025) reveal the deformation of radicalism terminology in the media; and Mahdalena et al. (2019) represent the semiotic analysis in the Pantene Shampoo advertisement. These studies show that CDA in Indonesia is widely used for political and media issues, but has not yet systematically touched on food packaging as a multimodal text that reproduces national ideology in everyday life.

In fact, food packaging is a visual-linguistic medium that is present in everyday life and has the potential to become an arena of banal nationalism, where national ideology is reproduced through simple but continuous symbols (Billig, 1995). Products such as Indomie with regional culinary variants (Indomie Soto Lamongan flavor, Indomie Mie Goreng Aceh flavor) explicitly raise local culinary symbols into packaging media that are widely circulated in society. This packaging shows local flavors and tells stories about national pride, cultural diversity, and how local food fits into the modern identity of Indonesia.

Thus, there is a gap in research on understanding how Indonesian culinary identity and everyday nationalism are constructed through the packaging of popular products such as Indomie. Using a Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) approach, this study will expand the literature on banal nationalism by placing Indomie packaging as a multimodal text that reproduces national ideology.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) to investigate how Indonesian culinary identity and national belonging are constructed through Indomie packaging. MCDA is suitable for this study because it allows researchers to analyze meaning through various modes, not only text (language), but also images, colors, symbols, and other visual elements, taking into account the

social and cultural context. This research is significant because it goes beyond merely describing the packaging's appearance; it also uncovers the ideological meanings that are embedded within it.

The research data consist of six Indomie instant noodle packages. The packages were selected based on the same variant, particularly the Kuliner Indonesia (Indonesian Culinary) variant, and available in the same local retail stores. We found Rawon Pedas Mercon, Empal Gentong, Soto Lamongan, Mi Kocok Bandung, Mi Goreng Aceh, and Mi Goreng Rasa Rendang.

Each product packaging was documented through photographic documentation of the front side. The analysis focuses on the most salient semiotic elements that are easily visible to consumers when purchasing products. We also collected photos of the authentic food by searching for them on Google.

Data analysis follows the MCDA framework of Machin and Mayr (2023), which emphasizes how meaning is constructed through the interaction of linguistic and visual elements. The focus of the analysis includes linguistic elements, such as traditional food names, place names, and texts that refer to local culinary inspiration. Visual elements, such as food images, colors, decorative patterns, and local symbols or icons. In addition to examining how text and images support each other to create coherent meaning, we also analyzed how these representations contribute to the normalization of national identity in everyday consumption.

We conducted our analysis in several steps. First, the six Indomie packages were analyzed to identify patterns of text and visuals that were repeated. Then, we categorized these elements into discursive themes, such as the visualization of traditional foods, regional names, and local symbols. These findings were then critically interpreted by contextualizing them within a broader social concept, banal nationalism (Billig, 1995).

This analysis also looks at Van Leeuwen's (2008) idea of recontextualization to help us understand how traditional cooking practices are shown in commercial product packaging. We will explore how certain parts of local cooking are selected, simplified, or omitted when they are changed into instant noodle products.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This finding is presenting the analysis and interpretation of how food packagings are recontextualized as Indonesian cultural and regional identity. As Indomie brings up local culinaries and taste, it also uses several imageries to its package design to emphasize the strong pride of the local culture and people. They are specifically covering each regional uniqueness that can represent the identity of the food they are resembling. The aspects of design cover the packaging color choice, traditional textile pattern inclusion, traditional housing or local landmarks, the explicit information regarding the local inspiration and the picture of the traditional food itself.

Naming Strategy

One important finding about the packaging of local Indomie food is the way it uses a layered naming strategy. On the upper right side of the packaging, every product clearly shows the label "KULINER INDONESIA" (Indonesian Cuisine). This label acts as a general category for all the different flavors. It not only identifies the product but also helps people see all the flavor options as part of Indonesia's national identity (Andersson & Smith, 2023; Bardone & Kannike, 2022). By doing this, local food variety is first placed within a national context before showing the different flavors.

On the middle-left side of the packaging, each displays the name of the variant that refers to a specific traditional food, and some of them explicitly mention the name of the region. Names such as Aceh, Bandung, and Lamongan serve as the inspiration for the flavors (Zhu et al., 2023) and as discursive marks that represent locality and authenticity (Ekawati & Ayuningtiyas, 2024; Khairani et al., 2025; Sya'adah et al., 2025). Such naming practices are understood as ideological choices that position products within specific sociocultural meanings.



Fig. 1. Visual representation of Mi Kocok Bandung in Indomie packaging and its traditional culinary reference

Using popular local food names, such as rendang, rawon, and soto, awakens cultural knowledge among Indonesian consumers (Tyas, 2017). These labels activate collective memory and a sense of cultural closeness, allowing products to be instantly recognized as part of Indonesia's culinary heritage (Fatimah et al., 2021; Rahman, 2020; Santoso et al., 2024; Yudhistira & Fatmawati, 2020).

Besides the main variant name, below it also displays additional text that explicitly associates the product with the particular regional identity. For example, the Mi Kocok Bandung (Fig. 1) and Empal Gentong (Fig. 2) variants have descriptions emphasizing their connection to "Khas Jawa Barat" ("West Java Specialty") cuisine, Soto Lamongan (Fig. 3) and Rawon Pedas Mercon (Fig. 4) variants with "Khas Jawa Timur" ("East Java Specialty").

On the other hand, Mi Goreng Rasa Rendang (Fig. 5) refers to the specialty of Sumatera Barat (West Sumatra), while the Mi Goreng Aceh (Fig. 6) variant refers to the specialty flavor associated with Aceh. These texts reinforce the claim of authenticity by emphasizing that the flavors presented are not just variations of instant noodles but representations of specific local cuisines (Ulfiana et al., 2025).

The Imagery of the Traditional Food

As well as linguistic strategies, the packaging of Indomie's local cuisine variants also strongly relies on visual representation to build meaning. Through imagery of food, color choices, and specific visual details, the packaging presents the narration that the

instant noodles offered are a representation of traditional Indonesian cuisine (Agung Sutrisno et al., 2023; Aulia et al., 2025; Hartanti & Nurviana, 2020; Murwonugroho, 2019).

The food imagery for each variant is illustrated with noodles and toppings that resemble local culinary cuisine. For example, the Mi Goreng Rendang (Fig. 5) flavor illustrates fried noodles topped with rendang and garnished with tomatoes, salad, and pickles. In the Mi Goreng Aceh (Fig. 6) flavor, the noodles are illustrated with visual elements that emphasize the rich taste and strong spices. The noodles, mixed with shrimp and meat, are topped with a generous amount of onions, a slice of lime, cucumber slices, salad, and crackers.



Fig. 2. Visual representation of Empal Gentong in Indomie packaging and its traditional culinary reference

In the Empal Gentong and Mi Kocok Bandung flavors, the visual representation of the food emphasizes the soup, meat cuts, and garnishes generally associated with West Javanese cuisine. Empal Gentong (Fig. 2) flavor shows soup noodles sprinkled with chili and onion, topped with lots of small pieces of beef, a half-boiled egg, two slices of lime, and celery. Whereas, the Mi Kocok Bandung (Fig. 1) flavor serves flat soup noodles sprinkled with chili and onions, along with plenty of beef tendon, fresh chili, bean sprouts, celery, and sliced tomatoes.

Moreover, the Soto Lamongan (Fig. 3) flavor features soup noodles with koya, shredded chicken, quartered boiled eggs, sliced chili peppers, cucumber, celery, and a little bowl of chili sauce on the side. The spicy rawon flavor (Fig. 4), noodle with meat

that has a dark color associated with rawon soup, combined with visual elements that emphasize the spicy sensation.



Fig. 3. Visual representation of Soto Lamongan in Indomie packaging and its traditional culinary reference

The color choices on the packaging also strengthen this representation. The six examined Indomie Nusantara edition brings up the colors resembling the locality of the foods and culture. Each packaging usually does not use the same color without depicting its own uniqueness. Indomie with Spicy Rawon Mercon flavor (Fig. 4) uses dark brown color resembling the color of the traditional Rawon soup, and the orange color represents spicy chili.



Fig. 4. Visual representation of Rawon Pedas in Indomie packaging and its traditional culinary reference

The same thing applied to the Indomie Soto Lamongan flavor (Fig. 3), which uses yellow exactly like the soto soup color, with a touch of green on the sides to resemble condiments like celery leaf and lime to bring a fresh hint (Lin et al., 2018). Meanwhile, other shades of yellow are used for the Indomie variants, namely Indomie Mie Kocok Bandung flavor (Fig. 1) and Indomie Empal Gentong flavor (Fig. 2). Lighter yellow is used in Indomie Mi Kocok Bandung flavor to represent the traditional Mi Kocok Bandung's light and fresh soup, while deep yellow is used in Indomie Empal Gentong flavor to resemble the Empal Gentong's soup that is richer in spices.

However, the color used for Indomie Mie Goreng Aceh and Indomie Rendang flavor is quite different. The Indomie Rendang flavor (Fig. 5) uses purple color, which is, in fact, not actually resembling the color of the food. The reason why this flavor uses purple is that it represents the natural condition of beef after being slaughtered. The myoglobin pigment gives meat its purple color (Ruedt et al., 2023). It is used as a symbol of the authenticity of the raw materials. Purple color has also been long associated with richness, uniqueness, and royal characteristics (Hartanti & Nurviana, 2020) that, in this case, match the characteristics of Rendang as a food with high cultural reference.



Fig. 5. Visual representation of Rendang in Indomie packaging and its traditional culinary reference

On the other hand, Indomie Mie Goreng Aceh flavor (Fig. 6) uses green, which is a bit contrary to the traditional food color. Based on the writer's investigation and interpretation, the green color can be linked to the Islamic color (Herlambang &

Parwanto, 2023; Pastoureau, 2014), resembling Aceh's strong identity as a specialized sharia-law-based area (Djawas et al., 2024).

Traditional Textile Pattern, Traditional Housing, and Local Landmarks

The two main traditional textile patterns used in these six Indomie Nusantara packaging can be referred to as Batik and Songket. The Batik or Songket patterns are imprinted on the top and bottom sides of the main package cover. The use of these patterns resembles the locality of each flavor they introduce. The Indomie Mie Aceh and Indomie Rendang flavors are adopting Sumatran songket, respectively resembling the textiles from their own areas, namely Aceh and Minangkabau songket.

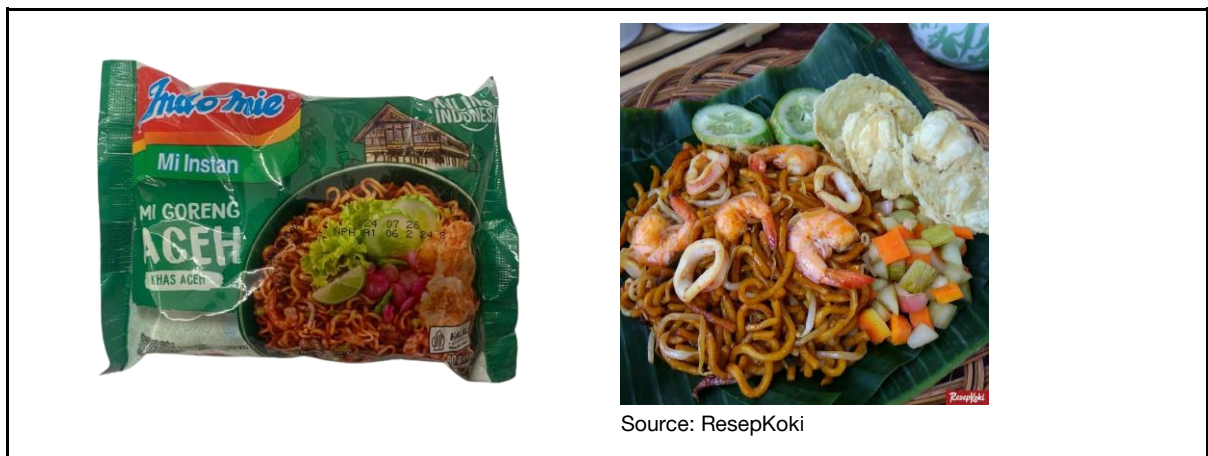


Fig. 6. Visual representation of Mi Goreng Aceh in Indomie packaging and its traditional culinary reference

The same batik pattern may appear on the packages of Indomie flavors coming from the same area, in this case, Indomie Mie Kocok Bandung and Empal Gentong, which both originated from West Java province. However, each Indomie Soto Lamongan and Spicy Rawon Mercon flavor shows a distinct batik pattern specifically resembling the diverse pattern of Javanese batik.

The use of traditional house architecture images shown in four per six Indomie Nusantara packages. These images are situated atop of the food images. Indomie Mie Goreng Aceh depicts the traditional house of Aceh known as 'rumoh aceh' (Kevin et al., 2021; Poerwaningtias & Suwarto, 2017) as well as how Indomie Rendang flavor depicts the traditional Minangkabau 'rumah gadang' (Poerwaningtias & Suwarto, 2017; Pranata

et al., 2025) on its package. In addition, Indomie Rawon and Indomie Soto Lamongan flavors share the same traditional Joglo house (Idham, 2021; Poerwaningtias & Suwanto, 2017), reflecting the Javanese culture.

On the other hand, two more packages, Indomie Mie Kocok Bandung and Empal Gentong flavor, are portraying the local landmarks, namely Gedung Sate Bandung (Septianto et al., 2023) for the mie kocok variant and Keraton Kasepuhan Cirebon (Bochari, 2001) for the empal gentong variant.

Multimodal Meaning-Making and Everyday Nationalism

The packaging of Indomie's local cuisine flavors has a special meaning created not by just one thing, but by many different elements coming together. These include words, images of food, colors, patterns, and local symbols. All of these work together to create a clear and complete message for buyers. This means the packaging is a mixed space where everything fits together to show a specific meaning.

At the top of the package is the label "Kuliner Indonesia," which is very important. This label shows consumers right away that all the flavors belong to Indonesian food. The flavors are also named after specific regions and traditional foods, such as Mi Goreng Aceh, Mi Kocok Bandung, or Soto Lamongan. This way, the packaging links local identities to the larger idea of national identity.

The message from the words is made stronger by the pictures. Images of food that look like traditional dishes, warm colors that remind people of spices, and patterns like batik and songket at the top and bottom of the packaging all create a sense of authenticity and local flavor. There are pictures of famous places and traditional houses, such as Rumoh Aceh, Gedung Sate, Rumah Gadang, Keraton Kasepuhan, and Joglo houses. These pictures help people easily recognize "region" and "Indonesia" without needing a lot of explanations.

The way these elements fit together makes the packaging's message easy to understand. The words and images support each other: the regional names are highlighted by the pictures, the pictures are made richer with traditional patterns, and the whole design is consistent across different flavors. Because of this harmony, the idea that instant noodles can represent traditional Indonesian food seems very reasonable.

This process can be understood through the idea of recontextualization (Van Leeuwen, 2008). This means taking social practices and placing them into a new

situation by choosing and simplifying certain parts. Traditional cooking, which originally involves a long process, social interactions, and important cultural values, is changed into a simple and easy-to-understand picture and description. What we usually see is just the tasty final dish, while the details of how it was made and the social side of it are omitted.

Indomie packaging plays a role in everyday nationalism, which is a way of promoting national identity without using strong or official symbols (Billig, 1995). Instead of using flags or government images, it shows different types of food from various regions. When people see this packaging repeatedly while enjoying Indomie, it helps them see Indonesia as a diverse country that is still connected and welcoming. In this way, nationalism is presented not as a big political message, but as part of normal daily experiences, making it feel simple and familiar.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This research shows that Indomie's local culinary variant packaging cannot be understood as a neutral medium. The packaging plays a role in constructing representations of Indonesian culinary identity and reproducing national meanings for everyday consumption through a combination of linguistic and visual elements. Texts such as "Kuliner Indonesia" regional names, food imagery, traditional patterns, and local icons collaboratively showcase the rich diversity of local cuisines while situating them within a cohesive national framework.

This study applies Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) to investigate how Indonesian culinary identity and national belonging are constructed through Indomie packaging. The findings confirm that nationalism is not always present through political discourse or explicit state symbols. In the context of Indomie packaging, nationalism operates in a banal manner, present routinely and unobtrusively through seemingly ordinary consumption practices. Thus, this research contributes to CDA and MCDA studies by demonstrating how nationalist ideology can be reproduced through popular consumer texts that often escape critical attention.

However, the study focuses on a limited number of packaging variants from a single retail context. Thus, future investigations could enlarge the dataset or pursue cross-brand or cross-national comparisons to probe further the interconnections among food, discourse, and identity. Additionally, researchers could include interviews

and surveys from both packaging designers and consumers. This would help to understand more clearly what the packaging designers intend to communicate and how consumers perceive these different visual messages.

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