INTEGRATING LOCAL IDENTITY INTO ENGLISH TEACHING MATERIALS FOR HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM STUDENTS IN MANDAILING NATAL, INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

The rapid transformation of the tourism industry requires English teaching materials that extend beyond linguistic competence to prepare graduates for increasingly complex professional communication. However, existing English for Specific Purposes (ESP) materials for hospitality and tourism remain largely dominated by transactional communication, with limited attention to local identity, destination interpretation, and contemporary tourism competencies. This limitation may leave students insufficiently prepared to communicate local cultural knowledge and represent their destinations to international visitors. This study aims to identify the English teaching material needs of hospitality and tourism students in the Language Education Program in Mandailing Natal, Indonesia, and to develop a conceptual framework integrating local identity into ESP instruction. Employing a sequential exploratory mixed-methods design, qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with lecturers, students, and tourism stakeholders, followed by quantitative validation using a structured five-point Likert-scale questionnaire administered to 30 hospitality and tourism students. The questionnaire was validated for content and assessed for internal consistency before administration. The findings reveal six interrelated competencies needed in English teaching materials: linguistic accuracy, destination explanation, customer interaction awareness, destination storytelling, digital communication, and sustainable tourism communication, grounded in local history, culture, and environmental heritage. Based on these findings, the study proposes the Identity-Driven English Teaching Materials Framework, which positions local identity as the organising principle for developing professional communicative competence. The framework extends

conventional ESP by integrating language learning with cultural interpretation, community knowledge, digital engagement, and destination sustainability, providing practical guidance for developing locally grounded yet internationally relevant English teaching materials.

Keywords: Hospitality and Tourism Education; Local Identity; English Teaching Materials; Destination Storytelling; Mandailing Natal.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism destinations no longer compete solely through the attractions they possess but increasingly through the stories they communicate. Over the past decade, the global tourism industry has undergone profound transformation driven by changing tourist expectations, digitalisation, sustainability agendas, and increasing intercultural mobility (Karimov et al., 2026). Contemporary tourists are no longer satisfied with simply visiting destinations or consuming standardised tourism products. Instead, they seek authentic experiences, meaningful interactions with local communities, opportunities to understand indigenous traditions, and narratives that explain the historical and cultural identity of destinations (He & Timothy, 2024; Irsyad & Iswanto, 2024). Consequently, destination competitiveness is increasingly determined not only by natural resources and tourism infrastructure but also by the ability to communicate distinctive destination identities that create memorable visitor experiences.

These developments have repositioned cultural heritage, authenticity, community participation, storytelling, and sustainable destination management as strategic assets in contemporary tourism development (Huang et al., 2024; Richards, 2021; Zhang & Ramayah, 2024). Moreover, destination storytelling has been shown to enhance destination image, visitor engagement, and destination loyalty, while digital storytelling enables destinations to communicate local identity effectively to global audiences (Bury, 2020; Ferdinand et al., 2024; Richards, 2021; Xu & Chen, 2023).

These transformations have inevitably reshaped the competencies expected of hospitality and tourism graduates. Beyond providing hospitality services, graduates are increasingly required to become destination ambassadors who can explain local history, interpret cultural heritage, promote community values, communicate sustainable tourism practices, and interact effectively with visitors from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Consequently, communication competence should be understood not merely as linguistic accuracy or conversational fluency but as an integrated professional capability combining language proficiency, destination knowledge, intercultural awareness,

storytelling, digital communication, and service excellence (Ennis, 2021; Ennis & Petrie, 2019; Richards, 2021c; Bury, 2020; Fonseca et al., 2024).

These developments have important implications for English language education, particularly within ESP programmes for hospitality and tourism. English has become the principal medium through which tourism destinations are interpreted, promoted, and experienced by international visitors (Darmayanti et al., 2024). Therefore, English instruction should prepare students not only to perform routine workplace communication but also to communicate local knowledge, explain cultural heritage, interpret destination identity, and engage confidently in intercultural interactions across face-to-face and digital communication contexts.

Previous studies on English for tourism and hospitality have predominantly focused on identifying learners' language needs and preparing students for workplace communication. Rahmani and Supardi (2021), for example, found that speaking and writing were highly needed by tourism stakeholders and students, while hotelier topics and relevant expressions were considered important for English for Tourism course materials. Similarly, Anam and Rachmadian (2020) reported that tourism students needed all English language skills to support communication and service provision in the tourism sector. Research by Tahang et al. (2024) also showed that tourism students expected English learning to support both spoken and written communication, workplace success, and travel and tourism-related tasks. These findings indicate that earlier research has established the importance of aligning English instruction with learners' target and workplace needs.

More recent studies have extended this needs-oriented perspective toward the development of authentic and industry-relevant English materials. Alhusna and Suparmi (2025), for instance, identified oral and written communication tasks such as greeting guests, handling complaints, managing reservations, and producing service-related documents, while also highlighting the need for authentic resources such as reservation forms, brochures, guest-service videos, and business emails. Similarly, Al-Jufri et al. (2024) examined the English needs of hotel receptionists, while Nazira and Syafei (2023) investigated spoken-language topics needed in English for Hotel and Tourism courses. In the context of material development, Utami and

Widiastuti (2025) developed 4C-based supplementary English materials for tourism students in Bali, demonstrating the growing attention to pedagogically structured and context-relevant materials.

Despite these developments, an important research gap remains. While previous studies have established the importance of workplace-oriented English, authentic resources, tourism-related topics, and context-relevant learning materials, their primary emphasis has remained on what English language skills, communicative functions, and workplace tasks tourism and hospitality learners need to perform. Comparatively less attention has been given to what tourism students need to communicate about their own destinations and how destination identity, local knowledge, cultural narratives, and storytelling can be systematically integrated into English teaching materials. Thus, the gap is not simply the absence of authentic or local materials, but the lack of an integrated framework that connects English communication needs with the representation of destination identity and local cultural knowledge, particularly in emerging tourism destinations such as Mandailing Natal.

This issue is particularly relevant in Mandailing Natal, North Sumatra, one of Indonesia's emerging tourism destinations, whose competitiveness depends on the integration of natural landscapes, cultural heritage, local wisdom, and community life. The region possesses abundant tourism resources, including ecotourism attractions, Islamic heritage, Mandailing coffee, Gordang Sambilan, traditional ceremonies, local gastronomy, and community-based tourism initiatives. However, these locally grounded resources remain inadequately represented in existing English teaching materials, which continue to rely predominantly on generic hospitality communication contexts. As a result, students have limited opportunities to develop English communication skills that enable them to represent the unique identity of their own region to international visitors. Rather than positioning Mandailing Natal merely as the geographical setting of this study, the present research considers the region as an illustrative case of emerging tourism destinations throughout the Global South that possess abundant cultural resources but continue to rely on English teaching materials dominated by generic workplace communication.

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To address this gap, the present study aims to **identify** the English communication competencies required by hospitality and tourism students, **examine** the destination-specific content that should be incorporated into English teaching materials, and **propose** an Identity-Driven English Teaching Materials Framework. Based on the integrated qualitative and quantitative findings, the study proposes an Identity-Driven English Teaching Materials Framework that positions local identity as the organising principle for integrating professional English, destination storytelling, intercultural communication, digital communication, and sustainable tourism into English language instruction. The framework is intended to provide a context-sensitive foundation for developing locally grounded yet internationally relevant English teaching materials for hospitality and tourism education.

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REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURES

Global Tourism Transformation and the Changing Nature of Tourism Competence

The tourism industry has undergone significant transformation driven by globalization, digital innovation, sustainability agendas, and changing tourist expectations. Contemporary tourists increasingly seek authentic experiences, cultural immersion, and meaningful interaction with local communities rather than merely consuming tourism products. Consequently, destination competitiveness is increasingly shaped not only by physical attractions and service infrastructure but also by how effectively destinations communicate their distinctive identities and create meaningful visitor experiences (Richards, 2021; Zhang & Ramayah, 2024).

Recent research on destination storytelling further demonstrates that stories can influence tourists' experiences and responses, while digital storytelling provides destinations with new ways to communicate narratives through immersive technologies (Li et al., 2024; Xu & Chen, 2023). These developments suggest that cultural heritage, local knowledge, community participation, authenticity, and storytelling should be regarded not merely as tourism resources but as communicative resources through which destinations construct and convey their identities.

Consequently, the transformation of tourism broadens the competencies expected of hospitality and tourism professionals. Graduates need to communicate effectively

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with international visitors while also interpreting local culture, explaining heritage, presenting destination-specific information, and mediating meanings across cultural boundaries (Chan et al., 2025; Lee et al., 2026). Recent empirical research supports this broader understanding. Trang and Phuong (2023), for example, found that tourism students had substantial needs for intercultural communication competence and preferred authentic, real-life intercultural learning activities, indicating that linguistic competence alone is insufficient for future tourism professionals. Similarly, contemporary tourism communication increasingly takes place through digital platforms, where destination stories can shape visitor engagement and destination-related responses (Li et al., 2024). Accordingly, tourism competence can be conceptualised as an integrated capability involving English proficiency, destination knowledge, local cultural awareness, intercultural communication, storytelling, digital communication, and responsible representation of tourism resources. This broader conceptualisation provides the basis for reconsidering how English for Tourism should prepare students to communicate not only as service providers but also as representatives of the destinations and communities they serve.

Repositioning English for Tourism: From Workplace Communication to Destination Representation

English for Tourism has traditionally been grounded in ESP, which emphasises learners' needs and the communicative purposes of particular professional contexts (Dudley-Evans & John, 1998; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Recent studies have increasingly explored the use of local culture and destination-specific knowledge as resources for English for Tourism instruction. Evenddy et al. (2022) developed English-for-Tourism materials based on Banten local wisdom, while Nusi et al. (2022) incorporated a local folktale from Larike Village into a speaking module for tourism students. In a Minangkabau context, Zulhermindra (2023) developed local-wisdom-based instructional materials that integrated cultural knowledge into tourism-related communication, and Yosintha et al. (2023) developed a digital English-for-Tourism module incorporating local wisdom values from Magelang and Foncesa et al. (2024) in Portugal.

Those previous studies demonstrate that local culture can provide meaningful

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and context-specific resources for tourism English learning. However, their contributions have mainly focused on developing specific modules, materials, or learning resources based on local cultural content, rather than establishing a broader framework for how destination identity can systematically shape the selection, organisation, and communication of English-learning content.

Building on this existing literature, the present study conceptualises local identity not simply as content to be added to tourism English materials, but as an organising principle for material development. This perspective is supported by recent studies showing that local wisdom can be integrated into English for Tourism materials to provide contextualised language functions, cultural knowledge, and tourism-related communication (Prayudha, 2023).

More recent work has also demonstrated the potential of combining local wisdom with digital resources and tour-guiding materials, suggesting that destination-specific content can be developed across different modes of tourism communication (Fadilla & Arief, 2024; Risadi et al., 2024). Building on these findings, the present framework conceptualises destination identity as the organising dimension, with storytelling, intercultural communication, and digital communication functioning as complementary means through which local knowledge can be communicated to diverse visitors. This conceptualisation provides the basis for the proposed Identity-Driven English Teaching Materials Framework, which brings these dimensions together rather than treating local culture as merely supplementary content.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a sequential exploratory mixed-methods design (Creswell, 2009). This design was selected because the study first sought to explore stakeholders' perspectives and identify context-specific English communication needs and destination-related competencies, which were then examined quantitatively to determine their perceived importance among students. The qualitative phase explored stakeholders' perspectives on English communication needs, existing teaching materials, destination representation, local identity, storytelling, digital communication, and sustainable

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tourism. The quantitative phase subsequently used a structured questionnaire to *quantify and prioritise* the competencies identified from the qualitative findings. The questionnaire items were derived from the competency themes emerging from the qualitative phase and were further informed by the relevant literature. The qualitative findings and quantitative priorities were then compared and synthesised to determine the core components and organising principle of the proposed framework. The integration of both datasets informed the development of the Identity-Driven English Teaching Materials Framework.

Setting of the Study

This study was conducted in Mandailing Natal, North Sumatra, Indonesia, an emerging tourism destination with diverse cultural, natural, gastronomic, and community-based tourism resources. The study was situated within the context of English for Tourism and Hotel education at STAIN Mandailing Natal, where English is taught to students preparing for careers in hospitality and tourism. The setting was selected because of its relevance to the study's focus on integrating local destination identity into English teaching materials for tourism education.

Participants of the Study

Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in English language education and tourism in Mandailing Natal, North Sumatra, Indonesia. The qualitative phase involved nine interview participants, comprising two English lecturers, two hospitality and tourism lecturers, and five tourism stakeholders, including hotel managers, tour guides, tourism entrepreneurs, community tourism leaders, and representatives of the local tourism office. Participants in the qualitative phase were included if they had relevant professional or educational experience in English for tourism, hospitality and tourism education, tourism industry practice, community-based tourism, or local tourism development and were willing to participate in the interview. The nine participants were selected to provide complementary perspectives from educational, industry, community, and tourism-governance contexts relevant to the development of English teaching materials.

The quantitative phase involved 30 undergraduate students enrolled in the

English for Tourism and Hotel course at STAIN Mandailing Natal. The students were included because they were the intended users of the proposed teaching materials and had direct experience with English for Tourism and Hotel instruction. The sample of 30 students was used to obtain an initial quantitative assessment of the perceived importance of the competencies identified during the qualitative phase. Thus, the qualitative participants provided stakeholder-based perspectives for identifying relevant competencies and content, while the students provided learner-based evidence regarding the perceived importance of those competencies.

Data collection procedures

Data were collected in two consecutive phases using two main instruments: a semi-structured interview guide and a structured questionnaire. The interview guide was developed based on English for ESP principles (Dudley-Evans & John, 1998; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987), particularly needs analysis, professional communication, and context-specific language use, and was further informed by concepts of destination storytelling, local identity (Richards, 2021), intercultural communication (Deardorff, 2006), digital communication (Bury, 2020), and sustainable tourism (UNESCO, 2025). The nine participants were interviewed for approximately 45–60 minutes, and the interviews were audio-recorded with informed consent and transcribed verbatim. Relevant documents, including course syllabi, lesson plans, teaching materials, and tourism promotion materials, were also examined to complement the interview data.

The questionnaire was developed from the supporting literature and the themes emerging from the qualitative phase. It consisted of 30 five-point Likert-scale items representing the identified competency dimensions. Specifically, recurring themes and competencies from the interviews were translated into questionnaire statements. Before administration, the questionnaire was reviewed by two experts in English language education and tourism education, and content validity was assessed using Aiken's V, with an overall coefficient of 0.85, indicating satisfactory content validity. The questionnaire was also pilot-tested to examine internal consistency, yielding a satisfactory Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.81$). The questionnaire was subsequently administered to 30 students enrolled in the English for Tourism and Hotel course at

STAIN Madina. The quantitative data were collected after the qualitative phase to provide further evidence of the perceived importance of the competencies identified qualitatively.

Data analysis

Qualitative data from the interviews were analysed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (Braun & Clarke, 2021), involving familiarisation with the data, initial coding, theme development, and review of themes, to identify recurring themes and patterns related to English communication needs, existing teaching materials, local identity, destination storytelling, intercultural communication, digital communication, and sustainable tourism. Quantitative data from the questionnaire were analysed using descriptive statistics, including mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage. Competencies were ranked from the highest to the lowest mean score to indicate their relative priority. The qualitative and quantitative findings were then compared and integrated, with the identified themes and prioritised competencies synthesised into the components of the Identity-Driven English Teaching Materials Framework.

Trustworthiness and Research Quality

Several procedures were employed to enhance the quality and credibility of the study. Credibility was strengthened through methodological triangulation, combining interviews, document analysis, and questionnaire data. Data triangulation was achieved by involving participants from higher education, the tourism industry, and local tourism governance. Member checking was conducted by returning interview summaries to selected participants to confirm accuracy. Peer discussion was also undertaken to refine coding decisions and minimise individual interpretation bias.

Within the quantitative phase, content validity was established through expert review, while reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficients. Detailed descriptions of the research context, participant characteristics, analytical procedures, and coding strategies were provided to improve transparency and facilitate the transferability of findings to other emerging tourism destinations (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Ethical Consideration

Written informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. Participation was voluntary, and participants

were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. Interview recordings and research data were securely handled, and participants' identities were kept confidential throughout the study and reporting process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Finding

English teaching material needs of hospitality and tourism students in Mandailing Natal

Across all participant groups, there was broad agreement that current instructional materials continue to emphasise transactional communication, such as greeting guests, taking reservations, serving food and beverages, or handling routine customer enquiries. Participants reported that these materials provide limited coverage of communication related to local destinations, culture, history, and tourism resources.

A lecturer explained:

"Students can perform hotel conversations quite well, but many struggle when foreign visitors ask about Mandailing culture or the history of local tourism destinations." (Lecturer 1)

Similarly, a tourism practitioner observed:

"International visitors are interested in our stories, traditions, coffee, and local wisdom. Unfortunately, students often do not know how to explain these aspects in English." (Tourism Practitioner 1)

The interview data therefore identified limited coverage of destination-related content, particularly local culture, history, traditions, and tourism resources, in existing English teaching materials.

The questionnaire findings from the 30 undergraduate students provided quantitative support for this pattern. Students reported a high overall need for English communication competencies (M = 4.34, SD = 0.43). Among the assessed competencies, destination explanation received the highest mean (M = 4.53, SD = 0.51), followed by destination storytelling (M = 4.47, SD = 0.51) and customer interaction awareness (M = 4.43, SD = 0.50). Intercultural communication, sustainable tourism communication, digital communication, and linguistic accuracy also received high ratings.

Table 1. Students' Perceived Importance of English Communication Competencies (N = 30)

Competency	Mean	SD	Rank
Destination explanation	4.53	0.51	1
Destination storytelling	4.47	0.53	2
Customer interaction awareness	4.43	0.50	3
Intercultural communication	4.37	0.56	4
Sustainable tourism communication	4.30	0.53	5
Digital communication	4.23	0.57	6
Linguistic accuracy	4.17	0.59	7
Overall	4.34	0.43	

The quantitative results indicate that destination-related competencies were among the highest-rated areas. Destination explanation (M = 4.53) and destination storytelling (M = 4.47) were ranked first and second, respectively, while linguistic accuracy received the lowest mean among the seven competencies (M = 4.17)..

The document analysis also indicated that existing course syllabi, lesson plans, teaching materials, and tourism promotion materials contained substantially more content related to routine service communication than to local destination representation. This pattern was consistent with the interview findings.

Shortcomings Exist in the Current English Teaching Materials for Hospitality and Tourism Students in Mandailing Natal

Participants consistently emphasised that English teaching materials should prepare students for a broader range of professional communication tasks than those traditionally addressed in English for Tourism courses. Besides speaking accurately, graduates are expected to explain destinations, provide recommendations, respond to visitor enquiries, resolve service problems, communicate across cultures, and engage with tourists through various digital platforms. The interviews revealed that communication competence is increasingly viewed as multidimensional, integrating language proficiency with destination

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knowledge, customer service, intercultural awareness, and professional judgement.



Figure 2. Components of Professional Communication Competence in Hospitality and Tourism

The figure illustrates the competency areas identified in the interviews, including destination explanation, customer interaction, intercultural communication, digital engagement, and problem-solving capabilities.

Local Identity as the Core of English Teaching Materials to Support Authentic Tourism Communication

The interview findings identified the role of local identity in English language education. Participants consistently argued that local identity should become the central content around which English teaching materials are organised rather than functioning as supplementary content. The local resources identified included Mandailing coffee, Gordang Sambilan, Batang Gadis National Park, Sorik Marapi, Muara Mais, local culinary traditions, Islamic heritage, folklore such as Sampuraga, and community-based tourism initiatives. Collectively, these resources represent the cultural and environmental identity of Mandailing Natal.

Table 2. Local Tourism Resources Identified by Participants

Category	Examples
Natural Attractions	Batang Gadis National Park, Sorik Marapi, Sopotinjak, Natal Beach
Cultural Heritage	Gordang Sambilan, traditional ceremonies, Mandailing architecture
Gastronomy	Mandailing coffee, traditional cuisine
Religious Heritage	Islamic history, historic mosques
Community Tourism	Village tourism, handicrafts, Kayulaut local markets
Folklore	Sampuraga and other Mandailing legends

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The questionnaire findings were consistent with the interview results. The overall mean for local-identity content was 4.45 (SD = 0.53). The highest-rated item concerned the inclusion of local tourism resources (M = 4.53), followed by local cultural heritage (M = 4.50) and explaining local culture to visitors (M = 4.47). Overall, 28 students (92.1%) reported agreement or strong agreement that English teaching materials should incorporate local tourism resources.

Table 3. Students' Perceptions of Local Identity in English Materials (N = 30)

Local-Identity Element	M	SD	Strongly Agree
Include local tourism resources	4.53	0.51	93.3%
Include local cultural heritage	4.50	0.50	93.3%
Explain local culture to visitors	4.47	0.53	94.0%
Make English learning more meaningful	4.43	0.50	90.0%
Support destination promotion	4.40	0.56	90.0%
Connect learning with local community	4.37	0.56	92.0%
Overall	4.45	0.53	92.1%

Taken together, the interview and questionnaire findings identified local identity as a recurring content dimension. The local resources identified qualitatively corresponded with the high ratings assigned to local tourism resources and cultural heritage in the questionnaire.

Destination Storytelling as a Core Competency for Authentic Tourism Communication English teaching materials

The qualitative findings consistently revealed that destination storytelling represented one of the competencies identified by participants as important for hospitality and tourism graduates. While participants acknowledged that English language proficiency remains fundamental for professional communication, they emphasised the need for students to communicate information about local history, cultural values, traditions, and tourism resources.

Across interviews, participants repeatedly highlighted that many students could communicate basic information in English but encountered difficulties when asked to explain the cultural significance of

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tourism attractions or narrate the stories underlying local heritage.

A tourism practitioner described this challenge:

"Students know the names of the tourist attractions, but they often cannot explain why these places are important to our community or what makes them unique for international visitors." (Tourism Practitioner 2)

Similarly, a lecturer explained:

"Our students can introduce themselves and describe hotel services, but when foreign tourists ask about Mandailing traditions, Islamic heritage, or the history of local coffee, many students hesitate because these topics are rarely included in English learning materials." (Lecturer 2)

These interview responses indicate that destination-related storytelling was less represented in existing English teaching materials than routine service communication.

The questionnaire provided further evidence of the perceived importance of destination storytelling. Destination storytelling received a high overall mean of 4.47 (SD = 0.45), with 92.1% of students strongly agreeing with its importance. The highest-rated competency was telling stories about local destinations (M = 4.53, SD = 0.51; 93.3%), followed by explaining cultural meanings (M = 4.50, SD = 0.51; 95.5%) and explaining local history and traditions (M = 4.47, SD = 0.51; 93.3%). These findings reinforce the qualitative evidence that students need to communicate local cultural meanings and destination narratives in English.

Table 4. Students' Perceived Importance of Destination Storytelling Competencies (N = 30)

Story Telling Competencies	M	SD	Strongly Agree
Tell stories about local destinations	4.53	0.51	93.3%
Explain cultural meanings	4.50	0.51	95.5%
Explain local history and traditions	4.47	0.51	93.3%
Use stories to promote destinations	0.43	0.50	90.09
Develop engaging narratives	4.25	0.41	88.8%
Overall	4.47	0.45	92.1%

The interviews generated numerous examples of local narratives that participants considered valuable learning resources. Respondents referred to Mandailing Coffee,

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Gordang Sambilan, Batang Gadis National Park, Sorik Marapi Geothermal Area, Sopotinjak, Natal Beach, and the legend of Sampuraga as potential local content for destination storytelling activities.

Table 5. Representative Local Narratives Identified for Destination Storytelling

Tourism Resource	Narrative Focus	Potential English Learning Context
Mandailing Coffee	History, cultivation, international recognition	Destination promotion and cultural interpretation
Gordang Sambilan	Traditional music and ceremonial functions	Cultural heritage communication
Sampuraga Legend	Local folklore and moral values	Narrative speaking and storytelling
Batang Gadis National Park	Biodiversity and conservation	Ecotourism interpretation
Sorik Marapi	Geothermal tourism and environmental education	Sustainable tourism communication
Traditional Culinary Heritage	Local food culture and hospitality	Gastronomy tourism communication

The findings further suggest that storytelling contributes not only to communication competence but also to students' confidence in representing their communities. Participants believed that students become more motivated to learn English when instructional activities incorporate familiar places, local traditions, and community experiences. This contextualised approach enables learners to connect classroom knowledge with their everyday social environment while simultaneously strengthening their awareness of local cultural identity. Rather than viewing English as a foreign academic subject, students begin to perceive it as a practical medium for introducing their own region to international visitors.

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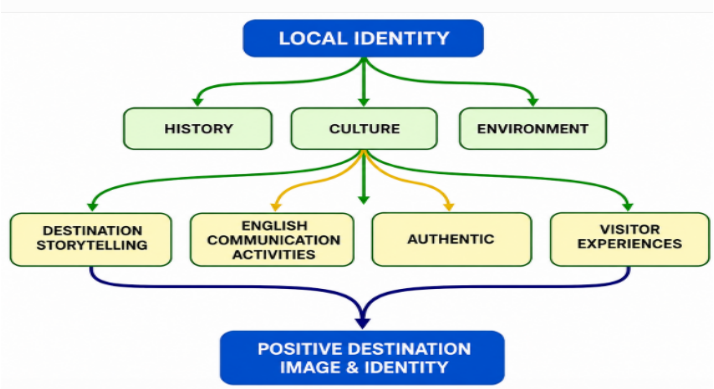


Figure 4. Destination Storytelling as a Bridge between Local Identity and International Tourism Communication

Figure 4 summarises the relationship identified in the findings between local identity, destination storytelling, and tourism-related English communication. Overall, destination storytelling emerged as a recurring competency in both the qualitative findings and the questionnaire results, particularly for communicating local history, cultural meanings, and destination narratives.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings into the Identity-Driven English Teaching Materials Framework

The quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated through narrative comparison of areas of convergence. The qualitative phase identified the competencies, local resources, and communication contexts that should be represented in English teaching materials, while the questionnaire provided quantitative evidence of their perceived importance among the 30 students.

Competencies were included as framework components when they were identified in the qualitative data and received corresponding support in the quantitative findings. Local identity was treated as the organising principle because local tourism resources, cultural heritage, and destination-related content repeatedly appeared in the interview and document data and received high ratings in the questionnaire. The resulting competencies were then grouped into six instructional components: linguistic accuracy, destination explanation, customer interaction awareness, destination storytelling, digital communication, and sustainable tourism communication.

Table 6. Integration of Empirical Findings and Framework Components

Empirical Finding	Quantitative Evidence	Qualitative Evidence	Resulting Framework Component
Students need to explain tourism destinations	M = 4.53; Rank 1	Participants identified destination explanation as a major professional task	Destination Explanation
Students need accurate professional English	M = 4.17	Participants maintained that linguistic competence remains fundamental	Linguistic Accuracy
Students need effective visitor interaction	M = 4.43	Participants highlighted customer interaction and visitor enquiries	Customer Interaction Awareness
Students need to tell destination stories	M = 4.47; Rank 2	Participants identified local narratives and storytelling as critical	Destination Storytelling
Students need contemporary communication skills	M = 4.23	Participants identified digital tourism platforms and online communication	Digital Communication
Students need to communicate tourism responsibility	M = 4.30	Participants identified conservation, community participation, and cultural preservation	Sustainable Tourism Communication
Students need locally grounded content	M = 4.45	Participants identified Mandailing culture, heritage, gastronomy, folklore, and natural resources	Local Identity as Organising Principle

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings showed that students' English learning needs included destination explanation (M = 4.53), destination storytelling (M = 4.47), customer interaction awareness (M = 4.43), sustainable tourism communication (M = 4.30), digital communication (M = 4.23), and linguistic accuracy (M = 4.17). The qualitative data further identified local culture, heritage, gastronomy, folklore, and natural resources as relevant content areas, while local-identity content received an overall mean of 4.45 in the questionnaire.

Based on these convergent findings, the framework was structured with local

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identity as the organising principle and six competency components: linguistic accuracy, destination explanation, customer interaction awareness, destination storytelling, digital communication, and sustainable tourism communication. Thus, the framework components were derived from the recurring qualitative themes and their corresponding quantitative priority ratings rather than from the quantitative data alone.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that English teaching materials for hospitality and tourism should be reoriented to reflect the changing nature of tourism. While ESP has traditionally emphasised workplace communication and occupational language skills, tourism professionals are increasingly expected to communicate the identity, history, and cultural values of the communities they represent. Accordingly, English learning should move beyond linguistic competence to prepare students as cultural interpreters capable of connecting local communities with international visitors.

This finding is consistent with recent developments in ESP, which emphasise context-sensitive professional communication and the relationship between language use and specific professional contexts (Basturkmen, 2021, 2025). It also supports previous studies showing that tourism English materials benefit from authentic, context-relevant, and locally grounded content (Alhusna & Suparmi, 2025; Utami & Widiastuti, 2025). In the present study, this broader orientation was reflected in students' high perceived need for destination explanation, destination storytelling, customer interaction, intercultural communication, digital communication, and sustainable tourism communication. Thus, the findings suggest that the scope of tourism-related English instruction needs to encompass both occupational communication and destination-specific communication.

One of the most important findings is the mismatch between existing English teaching materials and the realities of tourism practice. Current materials continue to emphasise routine service interactions, such as welcoming guests, making reservations, and responding to customer requests. Although these functions remain essential, tourism professionals are increasingly expected to explain local history, traditional ceremonies, religious practices, landscapes, food, and community life to international visitors. This finding is in line with previous

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needs-analysis studies showing that English for tourism learners require communication skills that extend beyond routine workplace exchanges and reflect the specific demands of tourism contexts (Hastuti & Malihah, 2024; Latifah et al., 2025; Munisa, 2012). The present findings extend these studies by showing that, in an emerging destination such as Mandailing Natal, destination-specific knowledge constitutes an important part of students' perceived English communication needs

Another significant finding is that local identity should become the organising principle of English teaching materials. Participants viewed Mandailing history, Islamic traditions, coffee heritage, folklore, local cuisine, natural landscapes, and community hospitality not merely as tourist attractions but as locally relevant content through which English communication can be practised. Rather than functioning as supplementary cultural content, these local resources can serve as the content foundation for developing destination-related English communication. This finding extends ESP scholarship by demonstrating that tourism-related communicative needs are closely connected to the socio-cultural context in which professional communication occurs. It also supports studies suggesting that authentic visitor experiences are shaped by meaningful engagement with local communities rather than standardised tourism services alone (Juliana et al., 2024).

The findings further indicate that preserving local identity complements, rather than contradicts, internationalisation. Students who understand the cultural significance of their communities may be better positioned to explain local traditions and communicate cultural meanings to international visitors. In this context, English functions not only as a medium of communication but also as a bridge connecting local wisdom with global audiences. This interpretation is consistent with previous research such as Munezane (2025), Cruz (2024), emphasising intercultural competence and the ability to communicate across cultural contexts. Therefore, tourism English materials may benefit from integrating intercultural communication with locally grounded content rather than treating cultural knowledge as separate from language learning.

Destination storytelling also emerged as a core professional competency. Participants consistently emphasised the importance of being able to explain local destinations, cultural meanings, history, and traditions through English. Storytelling therefore

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provides a pedagogical means of connecting language use with destination-specific knowledge. This finding supports previous studies showing the relevance of storytelling in tourism and destination communication (Bury, 2020; Xu & Chen, 2023, Zhang & Ramayah, 2024). Recent research also highlights the potential of digital and narrative-based approaches for communicating cultural heritage and destination identity (Fonseca et al., 2024; Chan et al., 2025; Lee et al., 2026). Taken together, these studies and the present findings suggest that tourism English materials should provide opportunities for students to construct destination narratives, explain cultural meanings, and communicate locally grounded information in English (Hasumi & Chiu, 2024).

Another important finding concerns digital transformation. Tourism communication now extends beyond face-to-face interaction to include social media, websites, digital travel content, online reviews, promotional videos, and other digital platforms (Fadilla & Arief, 2024; Kasemsarn & Nickpour, 2025). The present findings indicate that digital communication was perceived as an important component of students' English communication needs, although it was ranked below destination explanation and storytelling. This finding suggests that digital communication can be integrated with language learning and destination interpretation rather than treated as an isolated competency (Hasumi & Chiu, 2024). Such integration is particularly relevant because destination representation increasingly takes place through digital media and narrative formats (Fonseca et al., 2024; Lee et al., 2026).

Sustainability also emerged as a central dimension of future English teaching materials. Participants viewed sustainable tourism not only as environmental conservation but also as preserving cultural heritage, strengthening community participation, supporting local livelihoods, and encouraging responsible visitor behaviour. Accordingly, sustainability can be incorporated into authentic tourism communication tasks rather than introduced only as a separate thematic topic. This interpretation is consistent with UNESCO's (2025) vision of education for sustainable development. In the context of the present study, sustainable tourism communication therefore represents one of the content areas that can be incorporated into locally grounded English materials.

Collectively, these findings provide the foundation for the proposed Identity-Driven English Teaching Materials Framework. Unlike conventional ESP approaches that

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organise learning around occupational communication, the proposed framework positions local identity as the conceptual core connecting language competence, destination storytelling, digital communication, professional communication, and sustainable tourism. The framework was derived from the convergence between the qualitative themes and the quantitative priorities identified in this study. Specifically, the competencies that received high quantitative ratings and were also supported by stakeholder accounts were incorporated as major components, while the locally identified cultural, natural, gastronomic, and community resources informed the content dimension of the framework.

This framework represents a theoretical contribution of the study because it extends the scope of tourism-related needs analysis from workplace communication to the relationship between language, destination identity, and local knowledge (Basturkmen, 2025; Dinu et al., 2025; Nadales-Gallego et al., 2025). Rather than claiming to establish the effectiveness of the framework, the study proposes it as an empirically informed model for organising locally grounded English teaching materials. From a practical perspective, the proposed framework offers implications for curriculum developers, English lecturers, tourism educators, and tourism stakeholders. It provides a basis for selecting local content and aligning it with the English communication competencies required in hospitality and tourism contexts.

Additionally, universities may collaborate with tourism practitioners, local governments, cultural leaders, and community organisations to develop authentic teaching materials reflecting local destinations. However, the potential effects of such materials on graduate employability, cultural preservation, or tourism development require empirical investigation in future implementation studies. Although this study focuses on Mandailing Natal, the framework may provide a transferable conceptual basis for other emerging tourism destinations where local identity and destination-specific knowledge are important components of tourism communication. Its applicability and effectiveness, however, remain to be examined through classroom implementation and empirical evaluation.

CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrates that English teaching materials for hospitality and tourism should extend beyond routine workplace communication by incorporating destination-specific knowledge and local identity. The findings show that students need English competencies related to linguistic accuracy, destination explanation, customer interaction, destination storytelling, digital communication, and sustainable tourism communication, while local cultural heritage, natural resources, gastronomy, folklore, and community-based tourism provide meaningful content for developing these competencies. These findings directly address the study objectives by identifying students' English communication needs and the destination-specific content required for locally relevant teaching materials.

The main theoretical contribution is the proposed Identity-Driven English Teaching Materials Framework, which positions local identity as the organising principle for integrating professional English, destination storytelling, and authentic local knowledge. In this respect, the framework extends conventional ESP perspectives by connecting workplace communication with destination representation. Practically, the framework provides a basis for English lecturers, tourism educators, and curriculum developers to design teaching materials that are locally grounded while remaining relevant to international tourism communication.

The study is limited to 30 hospitality and tourism students and selected English, tourism, and industry stakeholders in Mandailing Natal, North Sumatra, and therefore its findings should not be generalised to other tourism contexts without further investigation. Importantly, the proposed framework has not yet been implemented or empirically tested in classroom practice. Future studies should therefore implement and evaluate the framework with larger and more diverse samples and across different tourism destinations to examine its effectiveness for students' English communication and destination-representation competencies.

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