CHAPTER FOUR
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.0 Introduction

This chapter states the methodology used to achieve the aims and to address the research questions of the study. It gives a detailed account of the processes involved in carrying out this research. First, the selection of corpus – the respondents and texts – for the study, and instruments used to obtain the data for the study are identified in Section 4.1. Then, the collection of data is explained in detail in Section 4.2. Next, the various stages involved in the analysis of data are laid out in Section 4.3. The analytical frameworks which form the basis for this research are also presented and explained in this section.

4.1 Description of the Data

It is hoped that the data collected for this study are able to provide findings on the different perspectives of the online tourism genre as proposed in the previous chapter of this thesis. The data can be divided into three main categories – information from specialist informants, opinions of potential tourists, and texts and discourses of the online tourism genre. The information obtained from specialist informants will provide findings on the ethnographic and socio-critical perspectives; the opinions of potential tourists will yield data for the socio-cognitive perspective; and the texts and discourses collected for analysis will be data for the textual perspective of the genre.

In order to obtain the relevant data mentioned above, certain research tools are employed in the study. These data are obtained via interviews with members of the
discourse community as in specialist informants related to tourism promotion and advertising, dissemination of a set of questionnaire that seeks responses from tourist respondents and the selection of tourism homepages and online tourismadvertorials. A more detailed account of the instruments used in the study, the subjects or respondents, and the sources of the textual data is provided in the following sub-sections.

4.1.1 Instruments

This study employed interviews and a questionnaire as its research instruments. These tools were employed to address the issue central to this thesis, as in how the online advertorial genre is constructed to convey the communicative purpose of persuading potential tourists to visit Malaysia, and to meet the needs of the target recipients of the genre. These research tools are described in more detail in the next two sub-sections that follow.

4.1.1.1 Interviews with Specialist Informants

In order to obtain relevant information from the ethnographic and socio-critical perspectives of the genre, the study employed semi-structured interviews (Appendix F) as a research tool. Interviews were conducted with specialist informants from the tourism industry and people related to the field of advertising to identify the principal moves and steps in the online advertorials. These specialist informants are practising members of the disciplinary culture in which “the genre is routinely used” (Bhatia, 1993). The specialist informants brought in relevant explanation and valid insights to the research analysis due to their familiarity of and expertise in the relevant areas. The questions for the interviews and issues for the discussion were based on Fairclough’s
(1995) dimensions of discourse and discourse analysis. The interview questions focused on the processes of production and interpretation of texts, and taking into consideration the discourse and socio-cultural practices. This semi-structured interview questions can be referred to in Appendix F. The information obtained from the interviews with the relevant specialist informants formed the first set of data in the study.

4.1.1.2 Questionnaire for Tourist Respondents

Knowledge of audience characteristics also helps a writer to use appropriate and effective communicative strategies to influence the reader, especially in the case of persuasive genres where various kinds of appeals are chosen depending upon the analysis of audience characteristics (Bhatia, 1999: 28). Thus, in order to obtain relevant information from the socio-cognitive perspective, this study has employed a set of questionnaire (Appendix G) as a research tool to find out the features and communicative strategies that can effectively influence the audiences’ preferences and acceptance of Malaysian online tourism advertorials. The questionnaire was created specifically to find out the respondents’ needs for, and preferences of, the types of information, elements and multimodal features of the official Malaysian tourism homepages and online tourism advertorials. The tourists’ responses to the questionnaire produced the second set of data in the study.

There are thirty questions altogether, with space for further relevant comments at the end of the questionnaire. The question forms of the questionnaire consist of Yes/No questions and items with a list of options available for the respondents to select. This is to ensure that the respondents will respond to the questionnaire willingly and not be put
off by too many open-ended questions which require laborious responses. However, at
the end of each item or question with a list of options, there is an *Others* option
followed by a space for respondents to provide any extended opinions regarding the
point being deliberated if they so choose to. The thirty questions are classified into four
domains:

**Part A: Demographic Information**

This part attempts to find out the types of tourists that read online tourism advertorials.
It is important to know the demographics of the tourism website visitors who are also
prospective tourists, in order to cater to their needs by ensuring that the information
presented in the websites are relevant for the audience.

It consists of six questions which mainly required respondents to tick the appropriate
boxes of information that are relevant to them, except for questions 3, 4, 5 and 6 which
required the respondents to provide extra or more specific information when they had
ticked the ‘Others’ option. The first question in the questionnaire required the
respondents to state their gender. The second question asks respondents to tick their age
range. The third question in this part of the questionnaire was to identify if the tourist-
respondent is a local tourist or foreign tourist, and their nationality if they are foreign
tourists. The next question of the questionnaire attempted to find out the race of the
tourist-respondents. Question 5 of the questionnaire tried to find out the respondents’
highest level of academic qualification. The last question in Part A of the questionnaire
required the respondents to specify their state of origin (if they are local tourists) or
country of origin (if they are foreign tourists).
Part B: Travel-Planning Experiences

This part of the questionnaire attempts to find out how the tourists plan their vacation. It consists of four questions (Questions 8 to 10) which required respondents to tick the relevant item(s). Respondents can tick as many items that are relevant to them and provide specific information when they choose the ‘Others’ option. The responses to these questions will reveal the potential tourists’ travel planning experiences and the various means of obtaining tourism information.

Part C: Online Experiences

The third part of this questionnaire, which consists of thirteen questions (Questions 11 to 23), attempts to find out the potential tourists’ online experiences and preferences in order to get more information on the places that they intend to visit. This part is divided into two sub-parts which seek to investigate tourists’ preferences and frequency of online usage in finding out more about a place or country; and the preferred website contents or information that they like to obtain online.

The five questions in the first sub-part required respondents to choose only one option, and a justification for their choice for Question 13. Five out of the eight questions (Questions 16, 17, 19, 21 and 22) in the second sub-part allowed respondents to opt for more than one item that are applicable to them, with an ‘Others’ option to provide other points not listed. This section of the questionnaire also attempts to find out the multimodal elements that attract tourists to visit the country and its places of interest.

Part D: Online Experiences of Malaysian Tourism Websites

Part D of this questionnaire attempts to obtain the tourists’ opinion of the official tourism websites of Malaysia and its states.
4.1.2 Subjects and Respondents

The first and second sets of data are derived from the information gathered via interviews with the discourse community and the responses from a questionnaire disseminated to tourists. Hence, there are two groups of subjects in this study, the specialist informants and tourist respondents comprising of foreign and domestic tourists to/in Malaysia. The sub-sections that follow will describe these subjects in more detail.

4.1.2.1 Specialist Informants

Views and comments from the discourse community, such as the advertisers, communication and publicity officials or editors from the tourism boards and website development companies, advertising agents, and copywriters were obtained via interviews. These specialist informants were interviewed in order to seek pertinent information on advertorials as an emerging advertising genre and the processes involved in the creation of, and probable collaboration in producing, such texts in the tourism industry and advertising profession to promote a destination. The specialist informants comprise of seven individuals working in the tourism and advertising industries. More details concerning these specialist informants can be found in the next seven sub-sections.

4.1.2.1.1 Chief Executive Officer of a Website Development Company

The Chief Executive Officer of a leading local website development company was interviewed. The company, an Information Communication Technology-based company which was incorporated in January 2005 in Malaysia and is accredited with
the MSC Status, provides solutions in the field of management and marketing consultancy through the application of web marketing platforms. The company is a firm believer in the power of the Internet. Its various projects and portfolios have been ranked highly in the major search engines among millions of other listings. The company has provided expertise and services to over four hundred clients in the Northern region of Malaysia, making it the fastest growing web development company in the region. It is the 329440th largest site within .NET. The interview provided information regarding the definition of advertorial and the trend of using this genre in Internet advertising. Findings were also obtained regarding the cost for such online advertising services.

4.1.2.1.2 Senior Copywriter of an Advertising Company

The outcome of the interview with a senior copywriter of an international advertising company in Singapore provided information regarding the definition of advertorial in advertising terms; the purpose of using advertorials as a form of advertisement; the selection process and selection criteria of visuals/pictures for an advertising text; the processes involved in creating an advertorial; and the trend of online advertising as compared to traditional advertising. As this specialist informant has been working in the advertising industry in Singapore for more than ten years, she would also provide advertising information from a non-local perspective. A non-local perspective of such information is considered indispensable to this study as the promotion of tourist destinations and the publication of travel information is now global with the advent of the Internet. Such touristic information is after all for worldwide readership and to persuade potential tourists to visit the country and its destinations.
4.1.2.1.3 Copywriter of an Advertising Company

The purpose of the interview with a copywriter from another international advertising firm (at the time of the interview, but is now working at yet another international advertising company, both located in Malaysia) was to gain more insights into the production of online advertorials. She has worked as a copywriter for a number of years, and was involved in producing some website content for Tourism Malaysia’s Malaysia Truly Asia campaign.

4.1.2.1.4 Head of the Editorial Unit, Communications and Publicity Division, Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board (Tourism Malaysia)

The head of the Editorial Unit, Communications and Publicity Division of Tourism Malaysia, the official online tourism website of Malaysia was interviewed to get some relevant information about the promotional texts published on the official tourism website.

4.1.2.1.5 Editor of the Editorial Unit, Communications and Publicity Division, Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board (Tourism Malaysia)

An editor form the same Editorial Unit of the Communications and Publicity Division of Tourism Malaysia was also interviewed to seek further information and the processes of writing tourism advertorials published by Tourism Malaysia, the Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board, on their official corporate tourism website.
4.1.2.1.6 Travel Writer/Chief Executive Office of a Travel Information Website
A travel writer cum Chief Executive Office of a travel information website was also interviewed. This travel information website is managed by an avid traveller, who is a Malaysian, for the last twenty-three years from Malaysia, and a former copywriter. It is an independent online travel information site that reviews and shares information on places of interest for tourism around Malaysia and Southeast Asia. All places reviewed have been personally visited, photographed and articles written by him. Its focus is on eco-tourism, islands and beaches, nature, adventure, culture and heritage (UNESCO sites) and much more from around the region. Its website hit 204,000 page views in February 2011 since its inception in January 2008, and to date with more than 1700 tweeter followers. It was recently nominated for the "Award for Best Tourism Article and Documentary on Sabah" in the Online Media section of the Sabah Tourism Awards 2011 and went on to win the Best Online Media award. (http://blog.malaysia-asia.my).

4.1.2.1.7 Audio Visual Producer of an Advertising Agency
An interview with an advertising personnel from the creative department of another international advertising firm was carried out to gain more insights into the importance of multimodality in online marketing and branding aspect of a product, service or an industry.

The company’s Malaysian branch is part of an international advertising agency whose headquarters is in New York City, United States. The agency is a unit of Omnicom Group, the world's largest advertising agency holding company. It was founded in 1970 in Paris, France, by an American who specialises in Management, a French who specialises in Marketing, a Swiss who specializes in Creation, and an Italian who
specializes in Client Services. The name of the organisation is an acronym formed by the first letter of each founder's surname. The agency was later purchased by the Omnicom Group in 1993 (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/TBWA_Worldwide). This advertising company is ranked as a top-ten worldwide advertising agency, and was recognized by Advertising Age in 2010 as the “Best International Network of the Decade”.

4.1.2.2 Tourist Respondents

A total number of sixty tourist respondents, comprising of thirty local tourists and thirty foreign tourists, was targeted to respond to the questionnaire. In order ensure validity of the responses to the questionnaire, the respondents must have visited Malaysia or travelled out of their home states before.

The tourist respondents were approached at a few tourist destinations around Kuala Lumpur and Selangor, such as the National Museum, shopping malls, Malaysian Tourist Information Centre (MATIC), and hotels, etc. Past tourists who had visited Malaysia or travelled out of their home states were also contacted via email and social media platforms to be respondents for the questionnaire. A softcopy version of the questionnaire was sent to these tourists via email attachment.

The extensive sources of data collected for the study as described above are necessary to provide a comprehensive description of the findings of the study and to ensure their validity. Methodological triangulation which involved the use of more than one method to gather data, specifically documents, interviews, and a set of questionnaire, was
practised. The purpose of triangulation in such a qualitative research is to increase the credibility and validity of the findings and results.

4.1.3 Textual Data

This sub-section describes the textual data of the study. Two sets of textual data were collected for analysis. In order to understand the textual data collected in the study as well as the distribution of tourists’ visits, a brief explanation on the geographical composition of Malaysia is deemed appropriate at this juncture.

Malaysia is a country that consists of two distinct parts. Peninsula Malaysia or what is also known as West Malaysia constitutes the long fringe of land, extending down from Asia that borders Thailand and Singapore. The South China Sea separates West Malaysia from East Malaysia. Malaysia consists of thirteen states – eleven in West Malaysia and two in East Malaysia. Figure 4.1 on the next page is an illustration of the map of Malaysia.
In Peninsula Malaysia, the West Coast is the more developed side of Peninsular Malaysia, made up with the states of Perlis, Kedah, Penang, Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and Melaka. Kuala Lumpur is the capital city and main gateway into Malaysia with Putrajaya as the new administrative centre, are all located within this region. There are a few islands surrounding Peninsular Malaysia. In the upper north-west is the fabled island of Langkawi, and Pangkor on the west.

The East Coast, made up of the states of Kelantan, Pahang and Terengganu, is more rural, traditional and conservatively Muslim. The cluster islands off the coast here are the Perhentian, Redang and Kapas islands. In the South is the state of Johor and the idyllic island of Tioman.
Some 800 kilometres to the east is East Malaysia, and the states of Sabah and Sarawak, which occupies the northern third of the island of Borneo, shared with Indonesia and the small kingdom of Brunei. Covered with tropical rain forests, it offers a variety of wildlife. It is populated by various native tribes that still practice a cultural lifestyle that remains unchanged especially in the interior regions. Off the upper western coast is the island of Labuan. On the north of Sabah is Layang-layang Island, and off the south eastern coast of Sabah is the world famous dive island of Sipadan.

The main focus of this research was initially to find out the generic structure of online Malaysian tourism advertorials. However, due to the nature of the existence of such texts, it is difficult to ignore the medium of how this online genre is available. It is also deemed necessary to look at the websites where these online tourism advertorials are located. In order to do so, this research also analysed the websites at a macro-textual level, specifically the homepages or main pages where the tourism advertorials are published. Hence, there are two sets of corpus collected for analysis on the textual perspective in this study. The first set of the textual data comprised of the homepages of the official Malaysian tourism organisations, and the online tourism advertorials form the second set of the textual data.

4.1.3.1 Homepages of Official Malaysian Tourism Organisations’ Websites

As mentioned earlier in the Chapter Three, in order to account for the characteristics of digital genres or web-mediated texts, it is essential to incorporate the notion of ‘medium’ into the notion of ‘genre’. The characteristics of the genre mediated on the Internet cannot be accurately accounted for if we simply analyse ‘print-outs’ of the web text and treat it as a static product and neglect the fact that the Internet as a medium has
characteristics that influence and contribute to the way web-mediated genres look and are used. Therefore, in addition to a traditional genre model that analyses the structural organisation of texts, the notion of ‘medium’ should be incorporated into the notion of ‘genre’ when accounting for genres mediated on the Internet. This is because the Internet, as a medium, has a number of characteristics which significantly influence and contribute to the way web-mediated genres are presented and viewed.

In relation to this study which looks at online or web-mediated promotional texts, it is thus important to first understand the significance of the web-genre as an organisational principle. A website as a whole has generic features as well as comprises many more specific genres. The analysis of homepages should be carried out because the homepage is a functional component within the larger-scale structure of the website. The homepage is the starting point or front page of a website. Moreover, the homepage is the most important page of any website, getting more views than any other web page (Nielson & Tahir, 2002). It also has “the characteristics of a superordinate genre in its own right at the same time that many of its component parts are themselves distinctive mini-genres”, such as linguistic, visual, musical and so on (Baldry and Thibault, 2005: 113).

Thus, in order to describe the online tourism advertorials, the researcher also analysed the homepages or main pages of Tourism Malaysia, Malaysia’s official tourism organisation’s website; its corporate website; and the websites of the official tourism boards’ capital city and thirteen states of the country. This analysis seeks to identify the elements or contents (as in the components of the main pages, including the graphics, internal or external links, etc.) that are characteristic of tourism homepages, their functions and communicative purposes.
The homepage corpus collected for this research is gathered from tourism websites. Due to the large volume of tourism websites available on the Internet, this study only focuses on the homepages of Malaysia’s official tourism organisations’ websites. The homepages include those from the websites of:

i. the Malaysian government tourism portal, Tourism Malaysia;

ii. Tourism Malaysia’s corporate website (linked mirror website);

iii. Malaysia’s capital city, Kuala Lumpur; and

iv. all the thirteen states in Malaysia.

The sixteen homepages can be viewed in Appendix H.

4.1.3.2 Malaysian Online Tourism Advertorials

The main corpus for this research is advertorials gathered from the official Malaysian tourism websites identified above. Due to the large volume of web pages of tourism websites, this study only focuses on advertorials related to the tourist attractions and main selling points of the top four most visited states in the country (in 2009 and 2010) as reported by Tourism Malaysia for travel arrivals. The four states or city, with their respective number of tourist arrivals for 2009, are:

1. Kuala Lumpur - 15.7 million

2. Pahang - 9.7 million

3. Penang - 6.0 million

4. Sabah - 5.4 million

The tourism advertorials collected for this study are forty-nine relevant advertorials found in the web pages of six of the sixteen official Malaysian tourism organisations’
websites mentioned in the sub-section above, namely the websites of *Tourism Malaysia*, *Tourism Malaysia Corporate* website, and the official state tourism websites of the identified top four most visited city/states in Malaysia. The advertorials, which are arranged according to the tourist attractions or five tourism themes (A, C, F, N, S – the alphabets denote the themes), have been included in Appendix I. The advertorials were selected based on the capital and states’ main attractions or selling points as given by *Tourism Malaysia*. The selling points are:

1. Kuala Lumpur - shopping;
2. Pahang – nature and adventure;
3. Penang – food and beaches;

The tourist attractions and selling points, as in adventure, culture, food and beaches, nature, and shopping of the four destinations, are also the main attractions of Malaysia. In other words, those tourist attractions are also synonymous to what Malaysia is globally known for. A brief description of the four destinations is given below and in the next few pages that follows.

**Kuala Lumpur**

Internationally, Kuala Lumpur has been ranked fourth in *Euromonitor International's* report on Top City Destination Ranking 2009, recording a total of 9,400,000 tourist arrivals in 2009, ahead of such popular destinations such as Paris, Hong, Kong, New York City and Dubai; while the *New York Times* has placed Kuala Lumpur as one of thirty-one places to visit in 2010.
Situated at the juncture of two rivers, Kuala Lumpur which means ‘muddy confluence’ in Malay, was founded in 1857. With its looming skyscrapers, stellar cuisine and thumping night life, the Malaysian capital has emerged as one of Southeast Asia’s most alluring metropolitan cities, offering all the amenities of a major. Kuala Lumpur is full of odd juxtapositions. Old cafes are tucked under gleaming expressways, towers of steel and glass, glitzy malls and leafy parks, all of which gives this city a cosmopolitan flair unrivalled in the region.

Pahang

Pahang is the largest state in Peninsular Malaysia. Nearly two-thirds of the state is enveloped in lush rainforest, making it a magnificent enclave of verdant greenery, exotic wildlife and natural treasures. Its magnificent natural attractions include the National Park or famously known as Taman Negara, a 130 million year-old rainforest as well as animal sanctuaries, parks, lakes and waterfalls. Other natural gems include Endau-Rompin State Park and Tioman, an idyllic island (Tourism Malaysia, 2009).

Penang

Penang was founded as a free port by the British in 1786. Occupying a position between India and East Asia, the island drew merchants and middlemen keen to make their fortunes. Chinese, Indians, Armenians, Arabs and more all traded alongside each other. With its racial and religious mix, and dedication to the pursuit of free trade, Penang was in many ways the first custom-made city of globalisation. The federal government has also spent liberally on bridges and the airport, making Penang better connected to the rest of Asia. The old George Town has been restored and refurbished, and this helped to bring in foreigners to live and work there (http://www.economist.com/node/21525968?frsc=dg%7Ca).
The state consists of Penang Island, and a strip of the mainland known as Seberang Prai. Georgetown, its capital, is a fascinating metropolitan city with historical building and cultural landmarks. It is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage City. Besides her interesting heritage, Penang is also well known for her multi-ethnic and multi-cultural richness. The state is also famous for its beautiful beaches. Penang's northern shoreline characterised by expansive stretches of golden sand and glittering waters, is a vacation spot for foreign and local visitors alike. Visitors will enjoy the tropical sunshine, beautiful scenic views and the great varieties of delicious food.

Web portal Yahoo! ran an interesting story of one-of-a-kind islands entitled 10 Islands to Explore Before You Die written by Gary McKechnie, a Yahoo! Travel writer. He ranks Penang, eighth on the list of the "must visit" places. The article featured Malaysia's unique fusion of cultures and flavours, especially Penang's popularity as a gastronomic haven with affordable Asian and European food choices. Penang is famous for delicious food, especially for its hawker and street food. The writer even tagged Penang as "Malaysia's food capital" (http://travel.yahoo.com/p-interests-37926474).

Sabah

Sabah presents a wonderland of natural scenery, lush primary rainforest, vibrant coral reefs, and mysterious indigenous cultures. It is a playground for adventure seekers,

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4 For a view of Penang’s attractions and world famous hawker food, watch the videos I Love Penang Hawker Food 檳城美食 by YUFOO at (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fad6HxXM4), and I Love Penang Hawker Food Take 2 檳城美食續集 by YUFOO at (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kh1-C6Zdv0E). The videos were produced by Dr Stanley Yu - a tourist originally from Hong Kong and now living in London, United Kingdom; who “fell in love with Penang, Malaysia”. He uploaded the two videos on YouTube “just to show the world how great Penang is”. The researcher came across the videos when reviewing the readers’ comments section in response to an article, 36 Hours: Penang, Malaysia, by Robyn Eckhardt, which was published online on 9 February 2012 in The New York Times’ Travel section (http://travel.nytimes.com/2012/02/12/travel/36-hours-penang-malaysia.html). The videos and commentary were also cited here for an impartial opinion on the destination and its attractions as Dr. Yu is not a Malaysian.
extreme sports enthusiasts, and those in search of the ultimate natural landscape. Sabah rewards those who venture here with a holiday in an unspoiled paradise.

Covering 73,711 sq. km (28,747 sq. miles) of the northern part of Borneo, the world's third-largest island, Sabah stretches from the South China Sea in the west to the Sulu Sea in the east, both seas containing an abundance of uninhabited islands, beaches, and pristine coral reefs bubbling with marine life. In between, more than half of the state is covered in ancient primary rainforest that's protected in national parks and forest reserves. In these forests, some rare species of mammals like the Sumatran rhino and herds of Asian pygmy elephant, the orangutan, proboscis monkey, gibbon, lemur, civet, Malaysian sun bear, and a host of other animals which can be seen on jungle treks. There are hundreds of bird species here, including the hornbills and herons that are only found in this part of the world.

Sabah's tallest peak is one of the highest mountains between the Himalayas and Irian Jaya. At 4,095m (13,432 ft.), it's the tallest in Malaysia, and a challenge to trek or climb. The state's interior has endless opportunities for jungle trekking, river rafting, mountain biking and four wheel drive exploration for every level of excitement, from soft adventure to extreme sports. This state holds not only mysterious wildlife and geography, but people as well. Sabahans count among their many ethnic groups some thirty-two different peoples whose cultures and traditions are vastly different from the rest of the world.
4.2 Data Collection Procedures

This section will describe how the various data for this study specifically from the interviews, questionnaire, tourism homepages and online tourism advertorials were collected.

The procedure which the researcher went through in order to collect the relevant data was firstly by carrying out a survey to establish the uses of advertorials in promoting a product, service or brand. The outcome of the survey has been reported in Chapter Three of this thesis.

4.2.1 Interviews with Specialist Informants

Interviews with specialist informants were firstly carried out to find out the discourse community’s practices. The views and comments from specialist informants, such as the advertisers or public relations officials from the tourism boards and website development companies, advertising agents, and copywriters were obtained via interviews. Before the interviews commenced, a letter which states the researchers’ identity and research purpose as well as to seek cooperation from the relevant division of the tourism organisation from the Postgraduate Office to the relevant officials were obtained (Appendix J).

These specialist informants were then interviewed in order to seek pertinent information on online advertorials as a promotional genre and the processes involved in the production of such texts in the advertising profession and tourism industry. The interviews were carried out between 16 October 2009 and 30 April 2012. The interviews with the specialist informants were recorded, and the comments and
explanations were noted down. The interviews with the seven specialist informants were then transcribed for analysis (Appendix L).

4.2.2 Dissemination of Questionnaire to Tourist Respondents

A questionnaire was also formulated (Appendix G) and administered to foreign and domestic tourist respondents to collect data on the socio-cognitive perspective of the genre which concerns information on the preferences of potential tourists that influences and shapes the construction of the tourism websites and online advertorials as a genre. A total of 117 copies of the questionnaire were disseminated, in both hardcopy as well as softcopy forms.

The hardcopy version of the questionnaire was given to tourists who were approached at a few tourist destinations around Kuala Lumpur and Selangor, such as the National Museum, shopping malls, Malaysian Tourist Information Centre (MATIC), and hotels, etc. The tourists were given a couple of days to respond to the questionnaire, and their responses were later collected from their hotels or received via self-addressed stamped envelopes. The softcopy version of the questionnaire was sent to tourists who have visited the country or different states of Malaysia, via email attachment. The softcopy version was sent to those tourists so as to give them the opportunity to view the official Tourism Malaysia website or any of the official state tourism websites of Malaysia, as mentioned in the questionnaire.

Although sixty-five responses were received, only the first sixty responses (from thirty foreign tourists and thirty domestic tourists) were used because the target number of responses was initially set at sixty. Moreover, two questionnaire responses were not
considered as valid because the two respondents had not visited Malaysia or any of its states before.

4.2.3 Selection of Textual Data

In collecting the textual data, the researcher identified all the relevant official Malaysian tourism organisations’ websites and downloaded screenshots of the main pages or homepages of these websites. Next, online tourism advertorials that are related to the top four most visited states in Malaysia were identified and collected for generic structure analysis. These advertorials pertain to the main tourist attractions of the respective states that were revealed by Tourism Malaysia, the Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board. A detailed description of the textual data collection of the tourism homepages and online tourism advertorials is given in the following sub-sections.

4.2.3.1 Homepages of Official Malaysian Tourism Organisations’ Websites

First, the researcher collected the macro genre of the tourism websites by downloading and printing the homepages of the sixteen official Malaysian tourism organisations’ websites, comprising of the country’s official tourism portal Tourism Malaysia, the corporate website of that tourism portal, as well as the official government tourism websites of the capital city and thirteen states of the country (Appendix H).

A Uniform Resource Locator (URL) is a Uniform Resource Identifier (URI) that specifies where an identified resource is available and the mechanism for retrieving it (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uniform_Resource_Locator). It is the “address” of a web page on the World Wide Web. The homepages or main pages of Malaysia’s official
tourism website, *Tourism Malaysia*, its corporate website, *Kuala Lumpur* which is the capital of Malaysia, and the thirteen Malaysian states’ official tourism websites were downloaded for analysis. The URL of the sixteen official Malaysian tourism organisation websites that were downloaded in order to analyse their main pages are:


The empirical study of homepages from a genre perspective is made difficult by the ephemeral nature of the pages on the Web. Web pages seem to change and disappear unpredictably. They change very often in order to be current and to incorporate the ever-changing information and latest news, although the general layout and facts may be more permanent. Thus, the researcher had to collect screenshots of the homepages of
the official Malaysian tourism organisations’ website before they are changed and removed forever from the World Wide Web. The official Malaysian tourism organisations’ main pages or homepages were downloaded from the Internet between July 2010 and November 2010.

4.2.3.2 Malaysian Online Tourism Advertorials

The researcher then randomly selected forty-nine relevant advertorials found in the web pages of Tourism Malaysia’s official website, its corporate website and the identified top four most visited city or states in Malaysia, based on the country’s main tourist attractions (e.g. activities, etc.,) as well as the capital’s and respective states’ selling points as revealed by Tourism Malaysia, the Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board. The online tourism advertorials collected for generic structure analysis, which were retrieved from the above mentioned official Malaysian tourism organisations’ websites, are those which appeared on the Internet from 29 April 2009 to 28 January 2011 (Appendix I). Only online tourism advertorials that relate to Malaysia’s tourist attractions, such as the tourism themes of adventure, culture, food, nature and shopping; which also concern the top four most visited destinations in Malaysia, as in Kuala Lumpur, Pahang, Penang and Sabah, were collected for analysis. An example of a screenshot of one of the advertorials as how it appeared on the computer screen is given in Appendix K. In addition to downloading these forty-nine online advertorials, they were printed out for ease of analysis.
4.3 Methods of Data Analysis

This research employed qualitative and quantitative research methods in analysing the interviews, questionnaire and textual data. This study includes a field survey which employs semi-structured interviews, a self-administered questionnaire and the analysis of homepages and online promotional texts. Although the approach to the study is mainly qualitative, the findings from the questionnaire and textual data are also presented in a quantitative manner using frequency counts and percentages to report on the options which have been selected by the respondents of the questionnaire, and the elements and structural organisation of the textual data.

4.3.1 Interviews – Ethnographic and Socio-critical Perspectives Analysis

The interview questions and responses from the specialist informants were transcribed for analysis. The analysis of responses to the interview questions is based on a qualitative approach. The findings from the interviews with the specialist informants were then interpreted and analysed in a qualitative manner.

4.3.2 Questionnaire – Socio-cognitive Perspective Analysis

Although the approach to the study is mainly qualitative, the findings from the questionnaire are presented in a quantitative manner using frequency counts and percentages to report on the options in the questionnaire which have been selected by the respondents. The findings from the questionnaire were then manually tabulated on a spreadsheet using Microsoft Excel for analysis. In analysing the data obtained from the questionnaire, the responses to the options of the questions are regarded as practically significant if the options have been selected by more than 50% of the respondents. This
figure will indicate that the factor or feature that has obtained an outcome of 50% and above will be significant in having an effect on the issue being investigated, and vice versa. Finally, the results of the findings from the questionnaire were then analysed and discussed in a qualitative manner.

4.3.3 Textual and Visual Data Analysis

The study primarily attempted to find out the move structure and steps of the relevant tourism advertorials related to the main attractions of the four states with the highest tourist arrivals which are gathered from the webpages of the official Malaysian tourism websites. Due to the placement of these online advertorials, this study also analysed the elements found in the homepages of these official Malaysian tourism websites, and their functions in realising the communicative purposes of the genre at the macro-textual level.

In this section, the analytical models used for analysing the generic features of the textual and visual data from the tourism homepages and online advertorials are discussed in detail. The textual data was first analysed to identify the elements and features of the homepages of the official Malaysian tourism websites and their functions. This was followed by analysing the rhetorical structures or moves of the online tourism advertorials and identifying their communicative purposes. Both the textual data were then analysed for their compositional structure and on the visual elements of the promotional genre, although references will only be made to audio and graphic elements where applicable.
4.3.3.1 Functions of the Official Malaysian Tourism Homepages

The sixteen homepages or main pages of Malaysia’s official tourism website, Tourism Malaysia, its corporate website, the capital’s and thirteen states’ tourism websites as identified in section 4.2.3.1, and which can be viewed in Appendix H, were firstly analysed to identify the elements (as in the components of the main pages, such as graphics, internal or external links, etc.) that are characteristic of tourism homepages and their functions.

In order to analyse the homepages methodically and systematically, the analysis was done according to grid sections starting from the top (left to right) to the bottom (left to right) of the webpage. The diagram in Figure 4.2 on the next page illustrates an example of the sequence of grid sections (from 1 to 10) that were analysed for the homepage of Tourism Malaysia’s official website.
Figure 4.2
Sequence of Grid Sections for Analysis
To decompose the elements of the homepages, all content was identified and analysed according to the grid sections based on form, functionality and purpose. Figure 4.3, on the next page, shows an example of the identification of the elements and forms in the tourism homepages, i.e. Tourism Malaysia’s homepage. The communicative purposes based on those elements and forms identified in the tourism homepage genre (i.e. Tourism Malaysia’s homepage) are explained and exemplified in Figure 4.4 on the page that follows.

The elements or contents found in the Malaysian tourism homepages that were analysed were classified according to their functions and communicative purposes. The analytical model used for the classification of the elements and contents of the Malaysian tourism homepages is the one proposed by Marco (2002), which was based on her study of corporate homepages and taking into consideration Dillon & Gushrowski’s (2000) analysis of personal homepages. Marco’s (2002) model was selected for this study because she also examined corporate homepages in her study, which was similar to the homepage data of the present study. This model classifies elements that occurred in corporate homepages into four groups according to the following functions:

- Creating a positive image
- Introducing and offering products and services
- Strengthening the relationship with the potential customers
- Giving information about the webpage/website
Figure 4.3

Elements and Forms in Tourism Organisation Homepages
Communicative Purposes of the Tourism Homepage Genre

- Disseminating news & information
- Targeting the market; Catering to potential tourists
- Attracting Attention - Current promotion/event
- Endorsement
- Introducing and describing the products/services
- Introducing & describing the events, celebrations and destinations
- Describing the products/services; Creating a positive image
- Establishing Contact; Strengthening the relation with potential tourists
- Introducing & describing products, and services
- Establishing contact
- Introducing the destination
- Creating a positive image
- Acquiring supplies & services
- Describing the destination (in multimedia format)
4.3.3.2 Move Structure of the Malaysian Online Tourism Advertorials

At the micro-textual level, this study also analysed the moves and steps of the advertorials found in the national tourism website of Malaysia, *Tourism Malaysia*, *Tourism Malaysia Corporate* website and the four official tourism websites of the capital and states identified earlier, which describes the main selling points or tourist attractions of the country. It also analysed the visual elements of the promotional genre although references are only made to audio and graphic elements where applicable. The socio-cultural context in the production of these advertorials was considered so as to identify and contrast them in producing effective online tourism advertorials.

Only the advertorials, excluding the mastheads and menus on the top, sides and bottom of the advertorials, were extracted for analysis. An example of an advertorial that was extracted for analysis, which was taken from a webpage of *Tourism Malaysia*’s website, is shown in the Figure 4.5 on the next page. This advertorial is the same one given in Appendix K, which is the screenshot of the webpage as how it appeared on the computer screen.

Similarly to the tourism homepages, the analysis of the online tourism advertorials was done according to grid sections starting from the top (left to right) to the bottom (left to right) of the advertorials. The diagram in Figure 4.5 also illustrates an example of the sequence of grid sections (from 1 to 5) that were analysed for the online advertorial.
ACTIVITIES

Diving

Malaysia is fast becoming one of the leading dive destinations of the world with one of the healthiest marine environments in the Indo-Pacific Basin. The incredible bio-diversity of marine life, coupled with beautiful landscapes, Shakespearean and tear drop reefs, keeps divers coming back time and again.

Top dive sites around Malaysia include diverse underwater geography such as drop-offs, coral reefs, wall dives, egg drop reefs, drift dives and muck dives. Malaysia has something for every diver. First timers will get an astounding experience with a concentration of vibrant and exotic marine life rarely found anywhere else in the world.

From schools of Hammerhead Sharks, to huge schools of barracuda and various species of turtles, the famous Crocodile Fish and Ghost Pipefish, there is always something fascinating awaiting you. This is an expedition to stay that almost every time a marine bio-diversity survey is conducted in Malaysia’s tropical waters, the species list increases.

Dive centres in Malaysia are numerous, well equipped and certified by all the internationally recognized dive agencies like PADI, SSI and SSAI for maintaining their standards of safety and professionalism. Consequently, all scuba diving centres in Malaysian waters are also endorsed by these certifying agencies.

After completing your scuba courses, get certified with the latest scuba equipment and enjoy a spectacular underwater world. The joy of diving is a lifetime experience - it is easy, shallow drift diving, to advanced wide diving or technical diving.

Located in the heart of the Indo-Pacific basin, the heart of the world’s healthiest marine biodiversity area, Malaysia also offers pristine beaches and professional dive centres for the pleasure and safety of the advanced and novice diver. For a most memorable diving holiday, the time is now, the place is Malaysia.

KEY TIPS:

If you plan to do some diving out here, you should try to book a package with an operator that would include diving, food and accommodation. It’s a good way to save money. Also, the seas get rough and murky during the wet coast’s monsoon (November to March), so try to time your visit outside of this period.

Figure 4.5

An Advertorial Extracted from a Webpage in Tourism Malaysia’s Website
After ascertaining the corpus based on the top four most visited states in Malaysia and their tourist attractions, the researcher proceeded to identify the move structure of the advertorials in accordance to the move structure frameworks employed in the study. The analysis is based on a combination of Kathpalia’s (1992) nine-move and Bhatia’s (1993 & 2004) seven-move analytical models of the cognitive structures for advertising discourse of advertisements and promotional letters as presented in Chapter Two. A comparison of the two models is provided in the table below.

Table 4.1
Comparison of Rhetorical Moves Structure Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Headlines (for reader attraction)</td>
<td>Move 1</td>
<td>Move 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Targeting the market</td>
<td>Move 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Justifying the product/service</td>
<td>Move 3</td>
<td>Move 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(a) Indicating importance or need of the product/service, and/or</td>
<td>Sub-move 3(a)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Establishing a niche</td>
<td>Sub-move 3(a)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Detailing/Introducing the product/service</td>
<td>Move 4</td>
<td>Move 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(a) Identifying/Offering the product/service</td>
<td>Sub-move 4(a)</td>
<td>Sub-move 2(i)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Describing/Detailing the product/service/offer</td>
<td>Sub-move 4(b)</td>
<td>Sub-move 2(ii)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(c) Indicating value of the product/service/offer</td>
<td>Sub-move 4(c)</td>
<td>Sub-move 2(iii)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Establishing credentials</td>
<td>Move 5</td>
<td>Move 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Celebrity or typical user endorsements</td>
<td>Move 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Offering incentives</td>
<td>Move 7</td>
<td>Move 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Using pressure tactics</td>
<td>Move 8</td>
<td>Move 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Soliciting response</td>
<td>Move 9</td>
<td>Move 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Enclosing documents</td>
<td>Move 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Ending politely</td>
<td>Move 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The two models have used a slightly different labelling or description of some of the moves and sub-moves. The sequencing or numbering of the moves also differs. An explanation of the moves and sub-moves listed in the table above is provided below.
1. **Headlines (for reader attraction)**

The use of headlines functions to grab the attention of the reader in order to prod them to read further. This move can be realised in terms of lexico-grammatical resources and in recent years, the use of multimodality has become increasingly obvious.

2. **Targeting the market**

In business communication, a message is written with a particular target market in mind (Kothler et al, 1999). Kathpalia (1992) states that this move can be fulfilled by directly addressing the target market identified by sex, age, education, degree of specialisation, profession, social roles, interest and others. In short, it addresses the sort of customers who need the product or service, and to whom the product or service is important.

3. **Justifying the product or service**

This move functions to influence the potential customers into believing that the product or service being promoted is specifically for them. According to Kathpalia (1992), there are two strategies for accomplishing this purpose:

(a) **By indicating the importance or need of the product or service**

This sub-move refers to the individual needs of the potential customer. It is accomplished by means of reasoning out the need for possessing the product. It states why the product or service is important for the potential customer, and what they will gain if they were to purchase the product or service.
(b) Establishing a niche

This sub-move presents real-life problems and the answer to them is the product or service advertised. The solution to these problems is the niche or strength of the product or service, which advertisers term as the Unique Selling Point (USP).

4. Detailing/Introducing the product or service/offer

Kathpalia (1992) and Bhatia (1993) have identified this move and the first two sub-moves slightly differently although they have a similar description of the move and its sub-moves. They indicated that this move can be realised by:

(a) identifying/offering the product or service
(b) describing/detailed the product or service/offer
(c) indicating value of the product or service/offer

(a) Identifying/Offering the product or service

The function of this sub-move is to introduce the product, and this can be done by simply naming the product.

(b) Describing/Essential detailing of the product or service/offer

According to Bhatia (2004), offering a product description that is good, positive and favourable is one of the most important moves in an advertising discourse or a promotional discourse. This is often achieved through the generic values of description and evaluation. Product description is realised by giving a description of the features of the product or service. This sub-move will further persuade the potential customer to purchase the product, service or offer.
(c) Indicating value of the product or service/offer

This sub-move may be achieved in two ways, “by a straightforward evaluation or by translating the chief features of the product or service into concrete consumer benefits” (Kathpalia, 1992: 187 – 188). This move can be accomplished by creating a positive image of the product, service or offer, and giving “an adequately relevant, positive and a good indication of its value to its intended audience (Bhatia, 1993: 66), such as emphasizing the thoroughness, flexibility and that the product/service can be tailored to suit the customer’s requirements.

5. Establishing credentials

This move promotes the company in order to gain potential customers’ trust in the products and services. This can be achieved by referring to the expertise of the company in meeting the needs of the potential customer (Bhatia, 1993). Kathpalia (1992) has identified three strategies or sub-moves, all of which are relevant for the present study to establish credentials.

(a) Identification of the company, product or service

This is a further positive information about the company, product or service. This sub-move can also be realised by the use of a positive and well-established track record of the company in the market (Bhatia, 2004).

(b) Product/service guarantee/warranty

The guarantee or warranty includes the after-sales service and the guarantee of quality on related services rendered.
(c) **Provision of company profile**

This refers to the long-established reputation of the company in providing the product or service (Bhatia, 2004).

6. **Celebrity or typical user endorsements**

Kathpalia (1992) states that the function of this move is to make the advertising message more convincing. This is achieved by making use of a third person to support the idea presented in the text, which includes:

- acknowledgement by celebrities or public figures,
- testimonies of satisfied consumers and positive reviews,
- acceptance, support or approval of authorities,
- official or public citation of achievements and seals of approval.

This move may be realised by using images of the celebrity, public figure or satisfied consumers to gain the potential tourists’ positive view of the product and service.

7. **Offering incentives**

This move attempts to tempt or further attract the potential customer into purchasing the product or service by making the offer more attractive by offering an incentive, such as:

- promotions
- free gifts
- discounts
- special offers
- rebates
- trial offer
• other benefits

These incentives are included in order to persuade the prospective customer to seriously consider purchasing the product or service being offered.

8. Using pressure tactics

This move aims to speed up the potential customer’s decision by imposing certain constraints on the product or service being described. This move gives the cause and negative effects to pressure the potential customer if he/she does not purchase the product or service. Its function is to prompt the already inclined or half-inclined customer to expedite his/her decision about the product or service being promoted. This is generally realised in the form of an offer of some additional savings or gains if the customer decides to buy the product or use the service before a specific deadline (e.g. only limited units left, on a first-come-first-served basis).

This move can be realised by imposing certain constraints on the product or service being promoted, which may be presented in the following forms:

(a) Time constraints on the offer or availability of the product or service,
(b) Quantity constraints on the limited availability of the stocks or service,
(c) Emotional blackmail on a particular market segment,
(d) Terms and conditions of the offer or package.

9. Soliciting response

Promotional texts are never considered complete without soliciting response (Bhatia, 2004). The communicative purpose of this move is to persuade the potential customer
to take action or engage the service by encouraging them to continue further communication. The inclusion of this move can be as follows:

(a) Contact information of advertiser, such as

- address
- specific telephone and/or fax number
- email
- website (and more recently, the creative new technological use of a QR Code which potential consumers can scan with a smartphone or tablet and they will be linked to the company’s website and view it online)
- name of the person who will be willing to answer any queries that the reader may have about the product or service

The above methods function to invite the potential customer to get in touch with the advertiser or to participate in the communication.

This move of ‘establishing contact’ provides contact information (i.e. address, telephone, fax and email) of the company, with the purpose of selling the company’s name, attracting more customers, generating more business leads, promoting the company’s products and services, and ultimately, helping to gain more returns on investment (Lepcha, 2006: 1). Readers may look for someone who claims accountability and responsibility for the content. In addition, the provision of the organisation’s e-mail address, telephone, fax and physical address can enhance the readers’ confidence in the company’s product and service as a source of relevant and valid information.
10. Enclosing document

Bhatia (2004) notices that promotional genres especially typical promotional letters enclose supporting documents, such as in the form of supporting brochures and leaflets. Even the job application letter, which is a form of self-promotion, encloses the applicant’s curriculum vitae or résumé with the letter.

11. Ending politely

It is a formality of ending communication on a pleasant note, especially in letters. The writer ends the advertisement or promotional letter politely, pleasantly and courteously as business can flourish by maintaining friendly, courteous and pleasant relations.

4.3.3.3 Multimodality of the Textual Data

The main focus of this study is to examine the organisational patterns of the advertorials found in the official Malaysian tourism web pages, at the micro-textual level. However, due to the context in which the discourse is presented, the multimodal and semiotic characteristics of the discourse cannot be ignored. Building on Bhatia, Flowerdew and Jones’s (2008) approaches to discourse analysis, other than Bhatia’s (2004) multidimensional and multi-perspective approach in critical genre analysis that examines the generic structures of the promotional web genre, Kress and van Leeuwen’s (1996, 2006) multimodal framework for analysing compositional structure and visual images is also adopted to investigate the macro structure and multimodal features of tourism homepages and online tourism advertorials. This is because the layout and visual images also create meaning in communication.
Thus, in addition to examining the contents of the tourism homepages and the rhetorical structures of the online tourism advertorials, this study also attempts to investigate the non-linguistic features of the texts at the macro and micro-textual levels by looking at how the layout and pictures used in the homepages and online advertorials serve to realise the persuasive communicative purposes, based on a multimodal analysis. Both the genre and multimodal analyses allow the study to reveal a more comprehensive finding that can give a more accurate and reliable account for the web-mediated genre.

A multimodal discourse can be examined for its ‘representational’, ‘interpersonal’ and ‘compositional’ meanings (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996). The representational meanings concern the representation of the world. They are revealed through narrative and conceptual images. Interpersonal meanings refer to the social relationship between the represented participants, as well as between the participants and the viewer. Contact, distance, point of view and modality contribute to the realization of interpersonal meanings. Compositional meanings are the relations of the representational and interactive meanings of an image to each other. They are realized through the interrelated systems of information value, framing and salience.

Although a text can be analysed from the three metafunctions, the present study only concentrates on analysing the textual data from the textual metafunction or compositional meaning of the genre. This metafunction is selected as the focus of analysis because it brings together the individual parts of the representational and interactional meanings into a recognisable whole of the communicative event. The interrelated systems of the compositional metafunction can be used to characterise the representational and interactive meanings of spatial composition. These systems can apply to individual visual images or to combinations of elements such as in the case of
the present study where a homepage consists of textual information, logos, photographs, headings and content indicators; and the advertorials which contain product descriptions, photographs, colours, etc. The ways that the elements are made to attract attention, the way they are arranged, and the way they are connected or separated from each other give the overall meaning of those elements and of the composition as a whole.

The following compositional meaning framework by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, 2006) which describes the aspects of the spatial organisation of information and pictures is adopted for analysing the multimodal nature of the tourism homepages and advertorials in this study.

(a) Informational Value

The approach to genre analysis has been designed mostly for linear texts. However, online texts are not necessarily linear. There is also a spatial element to their organisation, through the use of layout. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) term ‘information value’ as the placement of elements in the particular areas in the visual space that endows them with particular meanings. This notion suggests that specific semiotic values are realised by particular configurational and locational properties of the elements that carry those values. Figure 4.6 on the next page illustrates the ‘zones’ of information layout which “accords specific values to the elements placed within it” (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996) that are distributed across the page.
Kress and van Leeuwen (1990 & 1996) provide rules governing the use of horizontal and vertical axes to distribute visual information. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) recognise three key principles, which can combine in various ways. The information may be organised:

1. along a horizontal axis, with one element (e.g. a picture) on the left, and another (e.g. text) on the right. The left element is then presented as ‘Given’, that is positioned as something already known to the reader or viewer, while the information on the right is presented as ‘New’, as something not yet known to the reader or viewer, and hence as something to which attention must be paid, and which is at least in principle negotiable or contestable in the larger communicative context.

2. vertically, with two different elements positioned one above the other. The information on top is presented as ‘Ideal’, that is the more abstract, idealized or generalised essence of the message, and the information below as ‘Real’, that is the more realistic (e.g. photographs as evidence) and practical (e.g. consequences), and/or more detailed and specific information (e.g. details).
3. concentrically. In this case, the ‘Centre’ contains the information that is presented as the core, and the ‘Margins’ contain information that is presented as, in some sense, subservient or complimentary to the ‘Centre’, and deriving its identity and meaning from it.

Combinations of the three principles are also possible. **Triptych** is when an element is placed centrally with information on a vertical axis, or horizontally; whereby the central element has a mediating role or can be a central focus of the information before and after it; or the sequence of activity or frames. They also suggested that the most ‘salient’ information tends to be in the top right and the least ‘salient’ in the bottom left.

(b) **Framing**

The term ‘framing’ indicates that different elements in a visual composition can either be represented as belonging together, or given separate identities. How the elements are framed affects the degree they are meant to be read as whether they are connected or separated. Frames can show boundaries or segregation, but also create integration between the elements within the boundary, while their absence can show natural connections.

Connection can be created in many ways through similarities and rhymes of colour and form, through vectors that connect elements, or through the absence of frame lines or empty spaces. Detachment can be achieved through frame lines and empty spaces between the elements (i.e. edges of photographs), through contrast or discontinuity of colour, form (i.e. size, shape and regularity), or any visual feature. Framing can also be realised by the use of colour which can either make distinct elements cohere (e.g.
through recurring colours) or contrast (e.g. through contrastive colours). Hence, the broad meaning potential and hierarchy of salience can be made more specific through the context and methods of framing selected.

Van Leeuwen (2005) suggests that it is possible to create an inventory of terms to describe different types of framing and connectivity, and suggested some categories of describing the semiotic potential for different kinds of framing or linking. However, the semiotic meaning potentials are not fixed as they are dependent on the use of other semiotic tools too. The categories of association for describing the various types of framing are segregation, separation, integration, overlap, rhyme and contrast (van Leewen, 2005).

(c) Salience

This term indicates that some elements can be made to stand out or be more noticeable than others. It refers to the ability of elements in capturing the viewers’ attention, and indicates the most important elements in the visual composition. Salience can be achieved through many different ways through symbols, size, colour, tone, focus, foregrounding, overlap, repetition, etc. A hierarchy of salience can be created by the different degrees of the factors that interact. The larger the element, the greater the salience; strong, saturated and conspicuous colours have greater salience than faint colours; a high tonal contrast has greater salience; an element that is well-defined or sharp has more salience than a blurred element; an element in the foreground has greater salience than an element in the background; and the element that overlaps other elements in the composition is the most salient. In short, it identifies the most important elements in the composition.
(d) Modality

Modality is the social semiotic approach to the question of truth. The term ‘modality’ refers to the semiotic resources for indicating how true or how real communication content is to be taken. It refers to the reliability of the visual. Images with higher modality appear more real than those with lower modality. The modality markers or visual cues indicate the “realness” of a visual, and they comprise of colour saturation, differentiation and modulation; contextualisation; depth; and illumination. A full colour image denotes high modality, while a black and white image suggests low modality. Images that have a fully conceived background indicate high modality compared to images with the background completely absent. When an image has depth, it has high modality compared to an image without any perspective of depth. An image that has illumination or representation of light and shade, it indicates high modality, as opposed to a picture absent of light and shade which conveys low modality.

In order to ensure reliability, analytical triangulation on the textual and visual data was also conducted by two lecturers cum researchers who are involved in the area of genre analysis to double check or cross examine the findings of the textual data. This inter-rater reliability was carried out on the textual and multimodal data analysis in order to verify that the elements and moves identified from the textual data, and the features and functions recognised from the visuals are consistent with expectations. This is also to ensure that the findings of this study are accurate and more reliable.

After the analysis on the sixteen tourism homepages and the selected forty-nine online tourism advertorials were carried out, the findings from both the textual data were
manually tabulated on a spreadsheet using the Microsoft Excel software for quantitative analysis of frequency counts and percentages for the homepage elements and advertorial move structure occurrences. The frequencies of the homepage elements and individual moves in the advertorials were recorded to determine whether a particular move occurred frequently enough to be considered ‘obligatory’. In this regard, a cut-off frequency of 50% was established as a measure of move stability. This means that an element or a move must occur in 50% of the homepages or advertorials under study before it was labelled as a significant element or an ‘obligatory’ move. Alternatively, an element or a move is considered ‘optional’ if the frequency of a move fell below 50% of the total homepages or advertorials.

4.4 Summary

This chapter has provided detailed information on how the present research has determined the data for collection, collected the relevant data and analysed the data to obtain significant findings related to the various perspectives of the online tourism genre as outlined in the conceptual framework presented in Chapter Two of this thesis. This chapter has also provided an explicit picture of how the findings as reported and presented in the following chapters were obtained.

The findings of the four perspectives based on the online tourism genre are reported according to the sequence of the data obtained and analysed in the study, beginning with the ethnographic and socio-critical perspectives which reflect the relevant discourse communities’ efforts in producing effective promotional genres for tourism promotion and advertising. This is followed by the report on the findings from the socio-cognitive perspective of the genre, and ends with the reportage of the findings from the textual
perspective of the generic structure and multimodality of the tourism homepages and web-mediated tourism advertorial genre.