CHAPTER FIVE

THE ETHNOGRAPHIC AND SOCIO-CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES OF WEB-MEDIATED TOURISM ADVERTORIALS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter reports on the findings from the ethnographic and socio-critical perspectives of web-mediated tourism advertorials based on the data gathered from the interviews with seven specialist informants.

Data on the ethnographic perspective of the genre were obtained from the specialist informants of the tourism industry discourse community or tourism advertisers and editors. They are considered to be able to provide information from the tourism disciplinary culture or ethnographic perspective of the web-mediated tourism advertorials. The ethnographic perspective describes and interprets the narrative accounts of active professionals, as in the practices, values, and/or beliefs of the tourism or main discourse community (Bhatia, 2004). This ethnographic perspective investigation focuses on the typical sites of interaction, which is highlighted by the understanding of the practitioner advice and guidance, social structure, interactions, beliefs, goals of the tourism professional community, physical circumstances influencing genre construction and the modes available for genre construction and communication (Bhatia, 2004; Scollon, 1998).

Other specialist informants are from the advertising industry discourse community, and they comprise of a website developer, copywriters and an audio-visual producer of online promotional genres. These advertising industry specialist informants who are engaged by the tourism professional community to produce tourism websites and write
advertorials, are considered to be able to provide information from the advertising disciplinary culture or socio-critical perspective of the web-mediated tourism advertorial genre. The advertising discourse community is able to creatively exploit the information supplied by the tourism professional community in producing effective tourism websites and advertorials. Hence, the advertising discourse community represents the socio-critical perspective of the genre in that it has gone beyond the typical professional or disciplinary practices to include more general social practices and motives (Bhatia, 2004:162) with the inclusion of the advertising institutional and discoursal practices in the texts’ construction.

The findings from the data gathered from the ethnographic and socio-critical perspectives are analysed to answer the first research question: What are the communicative purposes of tourism homepages and online tourism advertorials and whether these purposes are the factors that influence the shaping of the generic structure of the web genre?

The data obtained from the interviews with the seven specialist informants were transcribed (Appendix L) for ease of analysis. The findings from the interviews were then interpreted by the researcher and analysed in a qualitative manner. A summary of the results and interpretation of the findings based on the data are also included in this chapter.

5.1 Findings and Discussion
Views and comments from specialist informants, such as advertisers or communication and publicity officials 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 the aims of producing online advertorials as an emerging advertising genre and the processes involved in the production of such texts in the tourism industry and advertising profession. The transcriptions from the outcome of the interviews with the seven specialist informants have been included in Appendix L.

The findings from the data collected from the interviews are presented, analysed and discussed in the next two sub-sections – the ethnographic perspective and the socio-critical perspective.

5.1.1 The Ethnographic Perspective

This section of the thesis reports on the findings from the interviews with three tourism specialist informants – the head or chief editor, and an editor or writer from the communications and publicity division of the national tourism organisation (NTO) of Malaysia, *Tourism Malaysia*; and an online tourism travel writer. The editors from *Tourism Malaysia* also write the media releases which make up part of the textual data in the study. These three specialist informants represent the ethnographic perspective of the genre, as in the tourism industry discourse community or tourism advertisers. Hence, they are considered to be able to provide information from the tourism disciplinary culture or ethnographic perspective of the web-mediated tourism advertorials. This ethnographic perspective describes and interprets the practices, values, and/or beliefs of the tourism discourse community. The findings from the interviews with these tourism specialist informants are interpreted and analysed below.
5.1.1.1 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 on 10 June 2010 to get some relevant information about the promotional texts published on the website. She also functions as one of the editors of the unit.

As Head of the Editorial Unit, she disclosed that the unit’s main function is to generate editorial materials to promote Malaysia as a preferred holiday, and ‘Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions’ (MICE) destination internationally and domestically - i.e. media features, media releases, media information - for Malaysian media as well as Tourism Malaysia overseas offices to generate publicity on Malaysia in their respective market places.

The objectives of producing such materials are in accordance with the national tourism organisations’ mission statement which is to:

- promote Malaysia as an outstanding tourist destination by showcasing Malaysia's unique wonders, attractions and cultures;
- develop domestic tourism; and
- enhance Malaysia's share of the market for meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions (MICE).

The organisation’s ultimate goal is to increase the number of foreign tourists to Malaysia via their promotional materials, and extend the average length of their stay, with the aim to increase Malaysia's tourism revenue by making the tourism industry a
major contributor to the socio-economic development of the country. It is also hoped that tourism and its related industries would help promote new investments in the country, and provide increased employment opportunities.

The online advertorials which *Tourism Malaysia* terms as media features, media information and releases, produced by their Editorial Unit can be viewed at their online media centre at [http://corporate.tourism.gov.my/mediacentre.asp](http://corporate.tourism.gov.my/mediacentre.asp). The textual data of this study comprise some of these online advertorials which were analysed for their generic moves or structural organisation. Other than those, the Editorial Unit also prepares speeches and interview answers for senior officers of *Tourism Malaysia* and the Malaysian Ministry of Tourism.

This informant also revealed that the editors in her unit at *Tourism Malaysia* are also involved in the writing of advertorials and advertisements to promote a tourism destination, and the selection of visuals/pictures for the promotional text which they are working on. The advertorial space is negotiated together with the advertisement commitment. In some cases, the advertorials are drafted by the publication based on the editors’ inputs. The purpose of publishing such promotional materials as press releases, editorials and advertorials in a tourism website is to inform the media and generate publicity on Malaysia as a preferred tourist destination. They are also produced to inform the public on new tourism products and events, and *Tourism Malaysia*’s promotional activities through *Tourism Malaysia*’s online media centre. According to this informant, the information that should be included as the content of online tourism advertorials are tourism products and events that would create people’s interest on Malaysia.
Specifically on the subject of who is responsible for writing the hardcopy brochure or booklet (e.g. the *Malaysia Travel Guide* – Sept. 2009 edition) produced by *Tourism Malaysia* for distribution at tourist information centres, hotels, etc; and the information articles (e.g. description of Activities / Diving, etc) and all the contents on the *Tourism Malaysia* website, she states that the Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board (MTPB) or popularly known as *Tourism Malaysia* has a special division, the Marketing Support Division which handles the production of the brochures. There are a pool of writers and a production team from that division that produces those brochures. They also select the pictures, which come together with the descriptions. Most of the materials on the website are taken from those brochures. The Information Technology Division then manages the overall *Tourism Malaysia* website.

Although much information and pictures can be obtained from the respective state tourism boards, the editors and writers actually go to those places that they are writing about to gather information and experience the places or activities. According to the editors of the Editorial Unit, they can write better “with feelings and passion upon visiting the respective places personally”. These editors are occasionally sent for courses to brush up on how to write the information articles, media releases, advertorials, etc. Nevertheless, almost all the writers in the unit have had experience working as writers/journalists in publishing companies and newspapers.

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

An editor or writer from the same Editorial Unit of the Communications and Publicity Division, Tourism Malaysia as the previous informant was also interviewed to seek
further information on the tourism advertorials published online in the corporate site of the official tourism website of *Tourism Malaysia*. This informant was also interviewed to validate the information and job specifications of the editors who write the advertorials gathered from the Tourism Malaysia corporate website which were analysed in the study.

This editor-informant verified that the job description of the editors at the Editorial Unit of the Communications and Publicity Division, Tourism Malaysia is to prepare and liaise the publishing of materials for Tourism Malaysia, such as media releases, media information, internal advisory speeches, talking points and interview notes, and question and answer (Q&A) notes. He revealed that his work as an editor at *Tourism Malaysia* partially involves the writing of advertorials to promote a tourism destination, and the selection of visuals/pictures for the promotional text that he is working on. Although sometimes the feature is written by the Advertising Agencies, the *Tourism Malaysia* editors check that it is parallel and in tandem with the objectives and policies of Tourism Malaysia.

According to this informant, people in the tourism or communications and publicity industry such as himself, understand an advertorial as an advertisement-based feature, article or report (hard copy or soft copy) either in print or electronic (video/radio). He further states that the purpose of publishing press releases, editorials and advertorials in a tourism website are mainly for the following reasons:

a) Policy (for official websites)

b) Wider publicity and network (Internet users can access)

c) Convenience (for media to download past archives of Press Releases, etc).
An important source of information that this interviewee thinks should be included as the content of online tourism advertorials is an active web link, also known as hyperlink. The hyperlinks will enable Internet users to navigate or browse the hypertext, which consists of hyperlinks, in order to make references that the readers can directly follow. The hyperlinks could directly provide the prospective tourists the convenience of gathering further relevant information regarding the destination with just a click of the mouse.

The online characteristics that need to be considered in order to produce an effective online tourism advertorial are the interactive online helpdesk to answer any queries that online readers or potential tourists may have, and the pageview “must be in full colour and where possible, use video footages” so that the advertorial is not only textually informative but also dynamic.

This informant also provided a brief guideline when writing a promotional text such as advertorials in that there should be a catchy headline or title; as well as clear fonts and font size, citing the Vernada font as quite acceptable, which is used by many of the official tourism websites analysed in this study. The first paragraph of the advertorial should capture the reader’s attention. The advertorials and features that they write are also not very long which is about two A4 size pages in length. They may also update the description and information on events from time to time. As for selecting the accompanying visuals and layouts, etc., the most current images which do not exaggerate the message must be ensured.

The following are the processes involved in writing and creating an online tourism advertorial before it is published by Tourism Malaysia:
1. Draft by Agency
2. Vetting through by unit concerned and send for approval
3. Approval by Head of Unit
4. Back to unit for Agency work
5. Agency receives and completes the advertorial and sends it back to the client.
6. Client re-checks / re-confirms with Unit Head
7. Job is published
8. Monitoring by Unit responsible.

5.1.1.3 Travel Writer and Chief Executive Officer of a Travel Information Website

Another tourism specialist informant who is a travel writer-photographer cum Chief Executive Office of a travel information website was also interviewed on 29 April 2010. This travel information website is managed by a Malaysian who is an avid traveller for the last 23 years, and a former copywriter. The website is an independent online travel information site that reviews and shares information on places of interest for tourism around Malaysia and Southeast Asia; and the writer’s personal favourite is the main Island of Borneo, namely Sabah and Sarawak. This informant basically travels around and documents his experiences on the Internet for everyone to read. All places reviewed have been personally visited, photographed and the 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. The 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).

This informant’s work as a writer involves the writing of advertorials to promote a tourism destination, and the selection of visuals/pictures for the promotional text he is working on. At the time of the interview, he was working with one of the tourism boards of Malaysia and was writing a number of reviews for selected hotels, resorts and travel companies.

He personally thinks that many people, including the tourism advertiser and consumer, are still unaware on how advertorials can benefit them in the long run. The purpose of publishing editorials and/or advertorials in a tourism website is to educate and promote the particular place to the world, not just the region.

The information that should be included as the content of online tourism advertorials, especially by the main tourism body of the country, Tourism Malaysia, are content that are overlooked which in his opinion are nature and eco-tourism. He explains that there should be more promotion on the niche tourism areas, and in the case of Malaysia, more descriptions about nature tourism and eco-tourism in Malaysia should be included.

This informant stipulates that the main characteristic to be considered in order to produce an effective online tourism advertorial is that generally, the writer has to be knowledgeable in what he/she is writing about. One way of being knowledgeable is to experience the destination. He has seen many articles poorly written for local magazines that put him to shame when he reads them. So, some form of education on travel writing should be given to these new writers. Information can simply be cut and
paste, but experiencing and then writing it is a different story altogether. This view concurs with the information given by the Head of the Editorial Unit, Communications and Publicity Division of *Tourism Malaysia*, in that her editors write better after visiting the respective places personally. These editors are also occasionally sent for refresher writing courses to improve their tourism writing skills.

This online travel writer also provided some processes involved in writing and creating an online tourism advertorial before it is published. He lists them as in the sequence of experiencing the place personally, finding out about unique interests and such, having a clear mind when writing the advertorial, and assuring the client that his/her article will be well received in various media platforms besides a website.

### 5.1.2 The Socio-critical Perspective

This section of the thesis reports on the findings from the interviews with four specialist informants – an advertising website developer, two copywriters, and an audio-visual producer of an advertising agency. These specialist informants represent the advertising industry discourse community who are the developers, writers or producers of the online promotional text. They are considered to be able to provide information from the advertising disciplinary culture or socio-critical perspective of the web-mediated tourism advertorials. The findings from the interviews with these socio-critical specialist informants are interpreted and analysed below.
5.1.2.1 Chief Executive Officer of a Website Development Company

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of a leading local website development company was interviewed on the 8 January 2010. According to this specialist informant, the company’s website development products and services include the following:

- Website Structure Design, Development & Consultation
- Web Hosting & Server Transfer
- Domain Name Registration
- Web Maintenance
- Global Trade Business Matching
- Online Advertisement & Marketing
- Email Management & Marketing
- Keyword Optimization
- Directory Listing Submission
- Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
- Link Exchange
- Web Statistics Monthly Report & Analysis
- Email Account Creation & Set Up
- Payment Gateway Set Up
- Database/Membership Module Development
- Online Reservation
- Portal Development & Management

An important aspect of their services is providing monthly activity reports to give the advertiser an accurate account of the website traffic and make regular updates after the website gets underway.
The company was involved in the development of a web portal for Penang food lovers and fun seekers (www.oomph.com.my) which was endorsed by the Penang Tourism Action Council. It was the first attempt by a web company to provide a portal to help boost tourism in Penang, Malaysia via the Internet. It is also linked to the official Penang Tourism website and recorded 3.65 million hits in the first seven months of its launch. This web portal, according to this informant, was the answer to food lovers and party seekers wishing to check out the latest promotions in town. The company was commended by the state Tourism Development and Environment Committee for enlisting a host of food and entertainment outlets in Penang to join the portal and provide information at the fingertips to potential visitors worldwide. The portal also featured virtual games and opportunities to win great prizes and free meals.

The interview with the CEO of this website development company 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. The information gathered from the interview with this specialist informant also contributed to a guideline for producing promotional materials, specifically advertorials that are effective in achieving the objectives of promoting, advertising, and marketing or selling a product, brand or service which is presented in Chapter Nine of this thesis.

When the interviewee was asked how people in the advertising or online industry would define advertorial as opposed to advertisement, he explained that advertisements are anything that uses any tool or medium to promote a certain product, brand or service (PBS). He considers advertorial as a subset of advertising because its main objective is to also eventually promote a PBS, but through a different approach - an editorial. The
The common medium of advertorials would be in printed mediums, or these days online platforms can also be considered as a medium too. In the case of advertorials, the approach would be like writing an article that is related to a certain topic and industry of which the PBS is also mentioned as a “solution provider” to the problems or issues discussed in the topic or industry.

The CEO said that many companies were still doing business the conventional way because they fear change due to a lack of ICT knowledge. There are also those who think that website marketing is only useful for global trading. However, he says, this is a wrong mindset. The website can also reach out to local customers as many locals have now resorted to the Internet as a form of entertainment and when seeking information.

The interviewee also noticed that some entrepreneurs were unwilling to invest in ICT marketing, or already had a website which failed to bring in revenue due to wrong focus. He explained that a beautiful web design is useless when there are few visitors, or if download time is slow. He revealed that a successful website must include good design, applications and marketing. On the cost of hiring a web designer, he said it varied depending on content and web features.

Regarding the contents and visuals, he says that they should be provided by the client with the website development company doing the editing, cropping and designing. However, most of the time the website developers would help to do the entire scope of work, meaning that they have to try and understand what business the client/advertiser is actually doing and then come up with the entire content for the client. The
promotional text would also be suggested and proposed by the website developers if the clients do not have their own original promotional text or taglines in the very first place.

According to the interviewee, some of the things that website developers should consider or look out for in writing the text/advertorial and selecting or creating visuals or images would be first, to find out the answers to the following questions from the client:

- What is their target market segment?
- What kinds of advertisements have they used before?
- Which audience are they targeting?
- What worked for them previously and what did not, and why?
- What is their PBS price range?
- What is the PBS's Unique Selling Point (USP) or Proposition) ?, and
- What is their budget to have the work done?

The next process would be to research on or be familiar with the client’s industry in order to identify the client’s competitor(s), and what the competitors did to promote their PBS et cetera because it is crucial to know what the PBS is all about.

In preparing the text, it is important to use words which are easily understandable and understood by the target market segment. Even though a certain jargon may be commonly used by the consumers, the website developers cannot take this for granted but have to ensure that the target market understands them. It has to be done this way and not presume that the audience of the promotional text will understand those terminologies.
On the subject of visuals, this specialist informant says that it is best to use colour coordination that can attract the market segments which are aimed at, and yet still ensure that it is consistent with the brand’s image or PBS's image which the client may have already carried previously, for instance the font or colour of Coca-Cola cannot be simply changed just to make it more attractive. It has to be spoken in the “lingo which the market segment speaks” and “hit a vein” to ensure that the advertisement, advertorial or the PBS is instilled in the minds of the viewers or potential consumers. He further gives this as an example, “If you do not consume enough of ABC nutrition you may be susceptible to contracting this disease ... (then show a horrible picture of a diseased organ)

It is also important to have a catchy tagline which people can remember and feel fashionable repeating it, like Nike's ‘Just Do It’ - provided of course the client does not have one yet. If the client already has a tagline and if the advertising agency feels that it is truly unsuitable, then they may need to come up with some creative phrases which could “stick in the minds” but these phrases can be changed through time to fit the occasion. This change must be agreed upon by the client who is prepared to re-do his tagline and change the brand image in totality. The CEO went on to provide examples of some catchy accompanying creative phrases, such as “Great Minds Think Alike ... Why Should You Differ?” and “If You're Not In, You're Out!”

According to this specialist informant, one very important thing to do for any form of advertisement is to highlight the unique selling point (USP) of the product, brand or service because that will position it away from its competitors and give the PBS an advantage over the rest. The USP has to be one of the first things which the promotional text viewers or potential consumers notice.
Same with visual or image selections, website developers have to look for those that are easily identified and associated with the lifestyles, needs or wants of the target market audience. The interviewee elaborated this by explaining that they would not choose a picture for an advertorial selling wheelchairs, for instance, with the background scene of people dancing or skating, but they need to choose a background scene where everything is depicted as serene, comfortable, et cetera.

5.1.2.2 Senior Copywriter of an Advertising Firm

An interview with a senior copywriter of an advertising firm was carried out on the 16 October 2009. This specialist informant has vast experience in copywriting having written for all kinds of media, including television commercials, print advertisements including advertorials, direct mail, e-Direct Mail, radio commercials, et cetera for more than ten years. Prior to working at the present firm, this senior copywriter worked at two other advertising companies, which are all international advertising firms.

The outcome of the interview with this senior copywriter of an advertising company in Singapore provided information regarding the definition of advertorial in the field of advertising; 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.

According to this interviewee, those in the advertising industry define *advertorial* as an advertisement made to look like an editorial piece. The hope is that the reader will
mistake it for an article and read on, as “people are getting more and more resistant to advertisements”. They also do advertorials when the product a company is advertising needs more detailed explanation, such as in the case of technology. Advertorials tend to be factual and “hardworking”, and does not allow the copywriter to be very creative as it mostly consists of facts.

The advertising agency follows guidelines when provided by the client or advertiser. Otherwise, they use their own judgement when creating a promotional text. The following is the general processes involved in creating an advertorial for a client or advertiser:

1. An Account Executive servicing an advertiser (known as the Account servicing in the advertising profession) takes briefing or instructions from the client.
2. The Account servicing (and sometimes strategic planners) writes the creative brief, which states the strategy and main message that the client or advertiser wants the public to know about the brand.
3. The Creative team or writer and Art Director are briefed by the account servicing the client. Media space is booked by the Media department.
4. The Copywriter and Art Director come up with concepts (such as headline and layout only).
5. The Creative team shows the concepts to the Creative Director to approve and shortlist.
6. Shortlisted concepts are shown to Account servicing to ensure that they answer the brief, or in accordance with the brief.
7. The Account servicing presents concepts to the client.
8. If one of the concepts is picked, the Creative team proceeds. The Copywriter will write the actual bodycopy, whilst the Art Director will either work with an illustrator or a photographer to shoot photos, or ask the Production Department to check prices of photographs from a photo stock library.

9. The new layout with copy is once again approved by the Creative Director, and then presented to the client.

10. The client might want minor changes made to the copy or want another photo, etc.

11. The Account servicing will brief the creative team on the changes.

12. When the advertorial is almost finalised, the layout goes to the Interactive Department. This is where web designers resize the layout to the actual dimensions of the publication booked, and place high resolution photos into the layout (Art directors only use low resolution versions of photos as high resolution photos slow down their computer).

13. The Creative team, Creative Director and Account Servicing Executive check and proofread the advertorial carefully, and validate before presenting it to the client for the last time.

14. The final advertorial is sent out to the client’s database as an electronic direct mail or loaded onto the client's website by the Interactive staff.

In the selection or creation of visuals or images, the advertising agency tries to find photos or create illustrations that best compliment their concept and the message the client wants to put across. Other elements that are considered are using a colour that represents the client, like their logo colour, and overall brand image. She adds that a serious business like say, banking, cannot look too playful. A copywriter is also involved in the creation and selection of visuals or pictures for the promotional text that they are working on. Copywriters work closely with the art director to come up with an
advertorial concept, just like any other piece of advertising that they do. They always work as a team, and sometimes copywriters also help to source for photos; but ultimately, the art director will decide on the best pictures to use and layout.

This specialist informant’s very rough guess of the percentage of online advertising at the moment of the interview is about thirty percent as compared to traditional advertising. However, she believes that in recent years, the amount of online work is much greater. Budgets are getting cut drastically for traditional media and more advertisements are being placed in online work, such as websites, microsites and electronic direct mail, and especially in social media like Facebook and iphone applications. She affirms that almost all advertising campaigns now include an online element.

5.1.2.3 Copywriter of an Advertising Firm

An interview with another copywriter of an advertising firm was carried out on the 25 March 2010. The purpose of the interview with this copywriter from another international advertising and marketing agency (at the time of the interview, but has since worked at another advertising company, both of which are the international companies’ branch located in Malaysia) was to gain more insights into the production of advertorials. It was to the benefit of this present study when it was found out that this informant had produced some website content for the ‘Malaysia Truly Asia’ campaign of Tourism Malaysia. That advertising work basically involved explaining the different facets of the country's main attractions or unique selling points. This contributed to some invaluable input to this research.
As with the previous two specialist informants interviewed in the study, this informant states that an advertorial functions similarly to an advertisement as it ultimately promotes a product/brand/service (PBS). However, advertorials are information-heavy and include more details of the product. To explain this point, she takes an example of an advertisement for toothpaste which will paint a brand image and the main benefits of that toothpaste “in an impactful and memorable way”. An advertorial for a toothpaste on the other hand, will go into details of teeth problems, the functions of certain ingredients, and perhaps even customer testimonials.

According to her experience, not all brands will utilise advertorials. It all depends on the communication requirements of the advertiser. However, some newspapers and magazines offer advertorial placements at cheap monthly or yearly rates, so companies sometimes take advantage of that offer especially if they feel that there is a lot of information that needs to be communicated to their consumers.

Most copywriters will have written a few advertorial in their career span. Sometimes, they may not write an advertorial entirely on their own, but they may be given the write-up from the client and asked to restructure certain parts or improve it to enhance its market appeal. In many cases, the advertorial writer is advised against making too many changes as some information must be approved by the authorities. In that case, the copywriter will mostly do proofreading and making sure that the content flows well, etc.

The information contents of an advertorial really depend on the product itself. Traditionally, advertorials were used for PBS that are heavy on function or technical information, such as for a technologically enhanced sports shoes. It was not conventionally used to promote a perfume, although advertorials have been used
nowadays for advertising and promoting cosmetics. Most of the time the content is provided by the client and the copywriters will “craft the copy, restructure or summarise the info while adding an element of consumer appeal”. Advertorials should preferably be written with a certain type of target audience in mind, especially for magazines which have a certain theme. Since advertorials are composed of about eighty to ninety percent text, the copy should be tailored to have reader appeal. Sometimes if celebrity ambassadors are being utilised, the “hook” could be in the celebrity him/herself and how his/her life or usage of the product relates to the average user.

This informant verifies the information given by the senior copywriter interviewed about multimodality, whereby a copywriter can make suggestions on the visuals and layout, but remarks that this part of the advertorial is really the Art Director’s responsibility. She further defends that a writer is not responsible for an ugly layout or a picture not being in sync with the content.

This informant also informed on the processes involved in writing and creating an advertorial before it is published. Unlike a standard advertisement where the creative team works based on a concept or direction, brand identity and the desired outcome; for advertorials, the client needs to provide the advertising agency with a lot more ‘meat’ or information – even if not the information itself, then at least a “detailed outline of the communications”, like what are all the areas the advertorial should cover, etc - without that, the copy will be full of “fluff or filler”. Once the creative team has the information to work with, the writer will structure it into a copy that will appeal to the target readers, while the art director or designer will decide on the layout. Some newspapers have their own guidelines on advertorials placed in their publications -- The Star, for example,
allows the use of only certain fonts. So these are the external factors that one has to consider too.

She also asserted that many big companies have their own in-house writers and marketing communication people. These individuals may be in charge of corporate brochures, annual reports, organising market research data into an attractive booklet and so forth. The in-house writers may also compose the occasional leaflet or business-to-business invitation to their partners and investors, etc. This information added to the researcher’s purpose of interviewing the editors attached to their Communication and Publicity Division, Tourism Malaysia of the Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board which is an entity under the Malaysian Ministry of Tourism.

When this informant was queried about why some business organisations still need to seek services from an advertising agency when they have a pool of writers and editors attached to their companies, she opined that the big companies may have their in-house writers, however when it comes to a brand identity and direction, a focused and creatively executed advertising campaign is essential to bring an impactful message to consumers. This is where the expertise of advertising firms is needed because “we are talking about the big picture -- what people see and think when they consider the brand”. Merely having a decent writer or designer cobble together a few advertisements or leaflets is not enough.

The brand strategists of advertising and marketing firms will decide on the positioning of the company’s brand and marketing message. The creative team will figure out how to make that message into a great campaign idea and then turn that idea into engaging and attractive advertising. She believes that the "Malaysia, Truly Asia" campaign of Tourism Malaysia would not be a success were it not for the minds of the advertising
agency that combined creative expression with a clear marketing strategy. She does not deny that the client or company also plays an important role, as they must furnish the agency with the right information and market research because that information will be translated into the big brand positioning, which is translated into a big idea, and in turn translated into an engaging publicity.

5.1.2.4 Audio Visual Producer of an Advertising Agency

An interview with an Audio Visual Producer of an international advertising agency was carried out on the 30 April 2012. The interview with this advertising personnel from the creative department of another global advertising firm, with a branch in Malaysia was carried out to gain further insights into the importance of multimodality in online marketing and branding of a product, service or an industry.

This informant defines advertorial as a much more detailed explanation of the service or product that the client would like to advertise, as opposed to just an advertisement which will only feature certain benefits to attract the consumer to find out more about the product or services.

In order to show credibility of this specialist informant, she was first asked to explain what an Audio Visual (AV) Producer at her advertising company actually does. She states that anything related to audio-visual, including filmed content and digital media, will come to her to be produced and distributed. She takes charge from the level of execution stage - from costing, scheduling up to the finished production of the video/radio/television. In short she is the bridge between the clients and the Creatives
(who include the graphic designer and copywriter) at her advertising agency, to the suppliers.

In terms of the visuals or pictures for the promotional text that the agency is working on, she revealed that the main idea or creation comes from the creative department. However, AV Producers also provide input in terms of selecting the right supplier to execute the idea best, within the given time frame and budget provided. Sometimes they do get involved on the development stage but it depends if they have the time to participate or not. The factors that would be considered in the selection and creation of visual and images would be based on the schedule, availability, costing and suitability of the supplier for the job. She personally thinks that there is no general guideline that can be followed when creating a promotional text or when selecting/creating the accompanying visuals. It depends on the individual client's requirements and also the format that they want to advertise on. Thus, different advertisers will require different formats of the promotional text and accompanying visuals. It will also depend on the advertiser’s purpose and choice of media platforms.

The informant also gave the processes involved in creating an advertorial or a promotional material for the client. The process usually starts from the instructions, or what is termed as ‘a brief’ in the field of advertising, from the client. This includes what they would like to do, and intend for it to do (i.e. what is the product or service for, which target market they would like to reach out to, etc). From there, they look at the budget available, and deadline given by the advertiser. Then, the agency will come up with the overall idea or campaign if it is a big project. Once all that is approved, it will go to the respective departments to execute the idea. The approximate range that a client has to pay for such services is from as little as RM10,000 to over a million.
5.2 Summary

The discourse and social practices of this research is chiefly related to the state or Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board (MTPB) as it is the main producer of the genre. It should be noted that although advertising firms and professional copywriters are engaged to produce the texts or genre, its production should conform to the standards and requirements of the tourism board(s) which is the main discourse community and gatekeeper of the discourse and the sponsor of the texts/genre. In other words, the text/genre is produced and consumed within the same domain, i.e. tourism. Hence the findings from the interviews are presented and analysed together in this chapter as both the ethnographic and socio-critical perspectives complement each other in the production of the online tourism genre.

This chapter has provided answers to the first research question which is to identifying the communicative purposes of the genre of tourism homepages and online tourism advertorials from the ethnographic and socio-critical perspectives of the tourism and advertising discourse communities. The overall findings of the ethnographic and socio-critical perspectives of the online tourism advertorial genre reveal that the tourism and advertising discourse communities do not follow a specific rhetorical moves structure when using and producing tourism advertorials. They are more concerned with how best to promote the various tourism destinations by describing the places and tourism activities positively and persuasively in attracting potential tourists. This concurs with Zhou (2012: 337) in that advertorials persuade in the interest of the sponsors and never present any negative comments as editorials do. In producing the advertorials, the ethnographic and socio-critical discourse communities avoid the inclusion of negative opinions and express only positive evaluations of the products or services.
The findings gathered from the specialist informants have revealed that the main communicative purpose of the web genre, specifically the online tourism advertorials, is to promote the destinations. In their promotion of the destinations, the NTOs also hope to provide relevant, valid and up-to-date information to potential tourists. These communicative purposes are therefore the motivating factors in shaping the generic structure of the web-mediated tourism genre.

The findings presented in this chapter have also shown that there are certain actions and procedures that need to be followed by the tourism advertisers and online tourism material producers and writers in publishing promotional information or advertorials on tourism websites. This corresponds with Bhatia (2004: 162) in that there are typical roles and patterns of composing processes involved which include an initiating event, information gathering and analysis, writing and rewriting of text, collaborative tasks, and culminating in the technological production of the text. However, their main objective is to ensure that the information and advertorials published in the tourism organisations’ websites meet the needs of the tourism industry consumers by including and enhancing the kinds of information required by potential tourists, in their attempt to promote and attract tourists to the country. The findings concerning tourists’ informative needs are presented and discussed in detail in Chapter Eight of this thesis.

Having reported and discussed the findings from the ethnographic and socio-critical perspectives, the next chapter presents and discusses the findings from the textual analysis of the web-mediated tourism genre.