



## Storytelling of Destinations Through Travel Writing

I Dewa Gde Satrya<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Universitas Ciputra, Surabaya, Indonesia*

\*Corresponding author email: [dewa.gde@ciputra.ac.id](mailto:dewa.gde@ciputra.ac.id)

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### Abstract

Traveling is a pleasant experience. For marketers, the media to promote tourist destinations requires honest recognition from tourists who have visited. Currently, a tourism promotion tool can be carried out using a place storytelling approach that is packaged into a travel writing book. This article is the result of qualitative research using the primary data source of interviewing travel writers and studying travel writing works. Secondary data comes from literature studies. The formulation of the problem in this research is how to implement place storytelling through travel writing? The conclusion of this study is that originality is the main key to place storytelling and travel writing books are an effective promotional tool for marketing tourist destinations.

**Keyword:** Place storytelling, travel writing.

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### 1. Introduction

The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy is promoting tourist areas through storytelling that highlights local culture. This strategy, called storynomy, focuses on cultural wealth and presents interesting content to attract visitors (Pasaribu et al., 2022). Akgun et al. (2016) explored the idea of using storytelling as a tool for city branding, which has not been extensively researched before. It proposes a framework for creating a city's core story, which involves gathering information, distilling it, and formulating a story that meets certain criteria. The study highlights the importance of storytelling in branding and offers a framework that integrates storytelling principles with city marketing concepts. López Ropero (2003) The postcolonial travelogue is a highly productive and inventive form of travel writing that emerged in the latter part of the 20th century.

A travel writer from Indonesia, Andrea Hirata (Nasution, 2015), succeeded in popularizing Belitung through the novel Laskar Pelangi. Belitung's image as a tin mining island that is closely related to natural damage, will soon change as a tourist destination which is rich in attractive natural attractions for tourists to visit. This image is getting stronger with the success of the film Laskar Pelangi in society. In relation to tourism, it is necessary to further develop films with the nuances of promoting regional and Indonesian tourism in general. Film as a creative industry whose role is to lift a place (village, city, or country) as a background story becomes an effective promotional tool for various missions, whether it's fundraising, cultural and tourism missions, or other interests.

On the one hand, the lack and backwardness of a region which is the background for filmmaking is indeed an ironic fact that has been in plain sight to this day. But on the other hand, the 'exploitation' of places, local people's lives, and local wisdom and culture, when captured and packaged in a film with the touch of a reliable producer and director, becomes an extraordinary promotional package. Flowing with the illustrations and stories set by the producer and director, film audiences are introduced to every fact (good and bad) of the place that is the background of the film.

Basumatary (2018) stated, travel writing has been popular throughout history, with people being inspired by the accounts of others to embark on their own journeys and gain firsthand experience. Although the medium and style of travel writing have evolved over time, the genre has remained a consistent passion for writers. Sinangjoyo & Damasdino (2021) stated, travel writing can serve as a helpful tool for guiding travelers in planning their trips and can also encourage more people to visit various tourist destinations within the country.

Therefore, this research was conducted to observe the use of travel writing as a means of place storytelling, especially in relation to tourist destinations. The formulation of the problem in this research is how to implement place storytelling through travel writing?.

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1. Materials

I have a true traveler friend. At his young age, he has visited hundreds of countries on five continents. Moreover, his trip around the world was not at his own expense. Now, he still carries out the routine of pilgrimage to various countries amidst his busy schedule as a consultant for a tour and travel company. There is more value in that friend. And no wonder, a major publication forced him to write a book about tips and stories of his trips abroad. So the book is published. Now, the contract to write a book that is not only once it makes him dizzy because of time constraints in the middle of a routine work away from the world of writing.

At a glance, it can be captured that any profession and even experience can be recorded. Is it hindered by writing skills? The notion that writing and the author of a book is an absurdly difficult thing, doesn't seem to apply to my friend. Indeed, the weight of the book and its technical writing cannot be compared to that of an experienced novelist or book writer. However, isn't the essence of writing a book to train our thinking power and express those ideas in written language? It is the process of someone writing a book that is more important than the results achieved. Although it is unavoidable and undeniable, that not everyone with a non-writing background can record their ideas, the media of books can be used for interests outside the context and intent of the book itself.

The authenticity of book writing cannot be equated with the dominating orientation of individual interests. Indeed, a book writer himself is still rare in Indonesia, let alone best-seller and influential books. With that scarcity, the image of a new writer who penetrates the world of books is elevated. It's appropriate if the filtering returns to the readers to not only judge the cover and who the author is. Therefore, writing books is not solely the monopoly of popular book authors or those who like to write. Anyone and any profession can write a book. However, there are things that are non-negotiable, such as the noble value and meaning conveyed in the book, the integrity of the author, and grammar. Of these three things, it is the objectivity of the reader that will determine. Because it could be, when the author does not meet these three criteria, but has the money to pay for printing and publishing costs, then the book is not of good quality on the market. Precisely this is where the flying hours and intensity of reading in our society will determine the success of books in the market.

Indicators of a book's success, such as being a bestseller in the market, being referenced by many people, and becoming legendary. These three things can usually be fulfilled if the book sells well in the market. And it has become the conclusion of many readers that the book is indeed of good quality and the author has integrity, the writing does order quality values, and the style of language is indeed well-organized and easy to read.

The problem will be increasingly narrowed at the level of reading among our society. Any profession referred to above, will only be able to write a book if the author passes the level of strict reading discipline. Although, writing had not yet started and it was only stated at the time of writing the book. It's better if the writing movement is always inflamed in tandem with the reading movement. Because, without reading, any interesting profession and experience cannot be expressed in written language. The more of us who read books, the more our nation will produce writers.

Anshori & Satrya (2008) state, the city of Surabaya is on the right track by repositioning (transforming) the regional economy, from the industrial, trade, maritime and education sectors (or better known as 'indamardi') to the services and trade sector. Tourism is an important part and can be called as one of the pillars for the services and trade sectors. Surabaya, which has since 2005 formed the Surabaya Tourism Promotion Board, a private body whose job is to promote city tourism, with the tagline "Sparkling Surabaya", can be considered a strategic step for the government and the people of Surabaya in particular. The presence of the book "Tourism with the Letter L" is also a sign that what the Surabaya Tourism Promotion Board did a few years ago, its echoes are still being felt today.

Tourism event are held regularly, especially to coincide with the city's anniversary in May and Hero's Day which are synonymous with Surabaya, such as the Surabaya Shopping Festival, as well as revitalization of cultural heritage sites (such as the Peneleh Cemetery, Petekan Bridge, Peneleh area) and other facilities. public (including city parks, pedestrian). What stands out is, the presence of city parks is further enhanced by fountains and twinkling lights at night. Surabaya is completely different now.

The book "Tourism with the Letter L" is multifunctional, it can be an interesting smart tourist guide with illustrations of photos of tourist objects, it can also be an academic reference on how to build urban tourism with Surabaya as an example. Divided into 5 sections, each containing a collection of writings by 2 authors, most of which have been published in newspapers. Nonetheless, the writing feels like a timeless feature. Ideas that are made for a moment and problem are still actual, even able to open the eyes of ordinary people to the potential of modern tourism that Surabaya has. If all this time there was an assumption that Surabaya's tourist attractions were only places like Kenjeran and the Zoo, this book actually reveals the potential for other objects that are bigger than those two places. Modern tourism recognizes MICE (meeting, incentive, convention, exhibition). Accommodation in various hotels in Surabaya (non-star to five-star), enables Surabaya to host medium-scale international MICE. 5 golf courses in Surabaya and 2 on the outskirts of Surabaya, further complementing the international community's standards for staying in this city. Even though it was written by people who work on and promote Surabaya tourism, the written ideas look objective. The black and white, the criticism and praise, even the annoyance and concern, are clearly displayed. The first part, photographing the relationship and influence of Indonesian tourism as a whole, especially related to the dynamics of Indonesia's foreign relations with foreign countries, on the existence of Surabaya tourism.

Surabaya presents itself as a part of Indonesia's tourism strength. The second part contains a collection of public ideas about Surabaya tourism. The third part, photographing the revitalization of various tourist objects and public facilities. In part four, we can see the endless ups and downs process to develop Surabaya tourism.

Kaunang (2009) wrote about her travel experience abroad. Indonesia's 3 neighboring countries (namely Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore) are flooded with Indonesian citizens with various tourist destinations to their countries. Traveling abroad, especially in the context of recreation, for most Indonesians is something exclusive. Image for those who often travel abroad as rich people, successful people, and so on. Of course, this kind of stereotype gives clear boundaries that traveling abroad is limited to wealthy people. Not to mention if it is associated with foreign language skills which are automatically required, not all people are able to do it. So, in conclusion, going abroad is only a necessity for those who are economically capable and speak foreign languages. In another sense, the difficulty of traveling abroad, which in the end only becomes a dream, is related to a lack of funds and an inability to speak a foreign language. With this condition, our society is stuck with a monotonous and boring routine.

The travel writing book by Kaunang (2009) instills in everyone the dream of traveling abroad, especially to Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore. By overcoming the two obstacles above, the author has proven that there is nothing that is impossible to achieve if it is our dream. Quoting Albert Einstein's wise words, "imagination is more important than knowledge", the author would like to invite us to take concrete steps to realize the dream of traveling to our 3 neighboring countries. Indeed, we are often limited by various logical things that limit our thinking power. That if we want to see the world, then we must have a lot of money to finance the trip. We must be able to get out of thinking like that in order to achieve freedom, that is the first step built by the author.

This has been proven by the writer who is domiciled in Jakarta and Singapore. With a total cost of IDR 2,122,831 for ten days of travel in ten cities, the author traveled to Thailand (at a cost of IDR 896,100), Malaysia (at a cost of IDR 859,931) and Singapore (at a cost of IDR 366,800). The travel route taken is as follows: Jakarta-Bangkok by plane, Bangkok-Phuket-Krabi-Hat Yai-Penang-Ipoh-Kuala Lumpur-Genting Highlands-Melaka-Singapore by road by bus or minivan, and Singapore-Jakarta by plane.

In principle, there are three categories of people who travel. The first category is the so-called tourists. Tourists usually have abundant money, and when they travel they can take part in tour groups organized by travel agencies. They move from one place to another using luxury bus facilities or airplanes or cruise ships, sleeping in star hotels with fully arranged dining and drinking facilities according to the schedule of events prepared by the travel agency. Most high-end travelers from Indonesia fall into this category. The second category is travelers. The characteristics of this group are traveling without participating in tourist groups, planning their own trips by always being frugal, like making friends with local residents and learning local culture through experience. They like the freedom to do what they want without being bound by the schedule made by the travel agency. The third group is called adventurers. This group is willing to face the 'bubbles and thorns' and get involved in even dangerous situations in order to achieve its goals, whether it is money, knowledge, fame or experience. Among these three categories, the mutual intellect of man and the gift of freedom he has, can be accommodated by being a traveler. Kaunang's book (2009) contains a practical guide from the first steps to its implementation in Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore. Equipped with an example of an itinerary plan, it seems sincere and total to help readers realize traveling to the 3 countries in ASEAN.

## 2.2. Method

The research was conducted with a qualitative approach. Primary data was obtained through interview. Secondary data was obtained through relevant literature. After obtaining the data and information obtained from the informants, data analysis will then be carried out. The data analysis technique used in this study uses analysis of qualitative data with stages: 1. data collection; 2. data reduction; 3. data presentation; 4. conclusion.

## 3. Result and Discussion

### 3.1. Fixed Rate Mortgage

The film of Laskar Pelangi, produced by producer Mira Lesmana and director Riri Reza, has captured the public's attention. The film, which is based on a book with the same title written by Andrea Hirata, tells the story of the struggles of a group (ten people) of poor elementary school children from various ethnicities at Muhammadiyah Belitung Elementary School accompanied by a loyal teacher, Mrs. Muslimah. Close friendship, high ideals, and a strong desire, became the distinctive features of this educative film. Without realizing it, the film raised the degree and dignity of Belitung as the setting and background of novels and films. Flowing with the illustrations and stories set by the producer and director, film audiences are introduced to every fact of the place that is the background of the film. There are important points that we can pick up from the film that has received support from the Pertamina Foundation. From a moral point of view or the values raised in the novel and film are contextual and relevant to our lives in this country. The first thing that is explicitly seen in the film is the friendly brotherhood among poor children who consist of various ethnicities.

Formal education from an early age has become a space for appreciation as well as education for ethnic diversity in Indonesia. Precisely through recognizing and ultimately accepting and loving diversity, the young people of the next

generation of the Indonesian nation are better prepared to build this nation with anyone. Understanding of cultural differences, flexibility in association, and openness of mindset, are clearly important assets for our students and scholars so that they can exist in their own country and city. The spirituality of the children of Laskar Pelangi is to break away from the cocoon of self-doubt, poverty, and the rigidity of customs and traditions, to see the outside world, the world of the future, which promises many hopes. As long as we are ready to accept the various facts that exist in the country and on this earth.

In addition to the Laskar Pelangi novel, the novel "Eat, Pray, Love" is also included in travel writing which tells about Bali. The novel was filmed with one of the players, the Hollywood superstar, Julia Roberts. This film tells the true story of Elizabeth Gilbert in her memoir. The image of Gilbert's stable life, marked by the presence of a loyal husband, wealth, and a successful career, is not the end point of his life's search. At a crossroads, he changed the course of his life drastically. He travels to find the authenticity of life. He discovered the joy of eating in Italy, the power of prayer in India, and the peace and balance of love in Bali. The shooting of the film Julia Roberts in Indonesia has clearly benefited Indonesia's image in general in the eyes of the world, especially its impact on tourism. The uniqueness and attractiveness of Ubud is also convenient for holding international MICE (meeting, incentive, conference, exhibition) events. Among them, Ubud Writers & Readers Festival, Bali Institute for Renewal (Global Healing Conference), Bali Spirit Festival, Humanitat Foundation, and many more. This section is discussed in the eighth chapter, From Ubud for the World.

Ubud is increasingly known when the world's famous painters live there. Among them, Walter Spies (Germany), Rudolf Bonnet (Netherlands), Antonio Blanco (Italy), and Aris Smith (USA). In October 2009, Ubud was also the setting for the film "Eat, Pray, Love" starring Hollywood superstars Julia Roberts and Javier Bardem. The film, which is based on the true story (memoirs) of Elizabeth Gilbert, has sold more than 5 million copies worldwide and received a New York Times best seller award for the book version. About the last thing, it is a free promotional tool for Ubud tourism in particular and Indonesia in general.

Travel writing works also appear in marketing books. Book entitled "Ubud the spirit of Bali" (Kartajaya & Indrio, 2009) being a reference for the application of marketing science 3.0 which is contextual at present and applicable in the future, this book is also an important reference for the development of regional tourism, especially on a rural tourism basis. This book features Ubud, which is known as an international art village, builds its tourism successfully by combining modern and traditional elements that embed (preserve) local customs (religiosity, philosophy, rituals), provide benefits for the welfare of local communities and conserve the environment where they live. Overall, the book, written in English by marketing experts and equipped with interesting photo documents, contains ten chapters. The first part, Welcome Ubud, describes tourist destination spots in Ubud. Not only that, this section also describes the core excellence of Ubud which was pioneered for several years and became the determination of Ubud's sustainable tourism development in the future. The application of the Tri Hita Karana and taksu philosophies in the daily lives of Ubud residents is an inspiration for development that is not only profit oriented, but also creates positive values for human life, the environment and local culture. The second part, The Virtues of Leadership, describes the history of Ubud's leadership, which until now still has a king. The pioneering of Ubud was started by a saint named Rsi Markandya. Ubud progressed further under the leadership of King Tjokorda Gde Agung Sukawati, and now it is being continued by his three children. It was during the reign of King Cok Sukawati that Ubud began to open up to the arrival of foreigners. The fourth section, Treasures in Museums, describes several painting museums in Ubud. Such as the Puri Painting Museum, the Blanco Museum, the Rudana Museum, the Neka Museum, and the ARMA Museum. Each museum is a legacy of a foreign artist (painter) who once lived in Ubud and legendary local painters such as I Gusti Nyoman Lempad. About these great painters is discussed in the third chapter, Home of the Legendary Artists. The fifth part, Religious and Spiritual Life, describes the spiritual life of Ubud residents. It also explains the oldest temple in Ubud, Gunung Lebah Temple, the Banjar philosophy as the core of the local community, and the Ngaben and Odalan ceremonies. The sixth part, The Food Paradise, describes culinary tours (modern restaurants and traditional stalls) that are famous and legendary in Ubud. For example, Murni's Warung, Ibu Oka's Babi Guling Warung, Ibu Mangku's Nasi Ayam Kedewatan, Café Wayan, Bebek Bengil, Indus Restaurant, Casa Luna, Mozaic, Naughty Nuri's, Jazz Café, Café Lotus, Terazo, and many more. The seventh section, Natural and Societal Attractions, describes the philosophy of Tri Hita Karana and its application to the environment and society in several places and institutions. This section also explores Ubud Market, Jalan Kajeng, Penestanan Village, the Monkey Forest, Desa Kokokan, Bali Bird Walks, the Tjampuhan Hills, Ubud Botanic Garden, Ubud Organic Market, Pondok Pekak, Pelangi School, and the IDEP Foundation.

Not infrequently films and books set in a certain place are able to touch and invite human attention and admiration. Therefore, novels that are included in travel writing have the potential to be made into films. The same goes for regional missions to develop their tourism, films have become market instruments that can be said to be more accessible and effective as 'promotion tools'. The role of the creative industry, especially film, elevates regional attractiveness as a background story which becomes increasingly important for the tourism sector in Indonesia in general. Films can be based on local wisdom, real history, novels (fiction), or the attractiveness of the people. When synergized with elements and touches of tourism, surely a film based on a work of travel writing will not only have an economic meaning, but also form an image and become an attraction to invite tourists to visit. The public is tired of films that indulge in violence and are not educational. We long for Indonesian films that are of high quality, competitive for export, and in particular explore the richness of domestic culture and tourism.

Julia Roberts' films are examples of the power of storynomics (McKee & Gerace, 2018) in building image and destination marketing. This is part of the proof of how Bali in particular and Indonesia in general have become a 'paradise', a comfortable place for everyone and an inspiration for creative economy actors in the film industry in the United States in particular to make high-quality films. The attractiveness of Bali as a destination that has natural and cultural beauty that is second to none as well as human friendliness and food that suits international tastes, has made various citizens of the nation come to visit and repeat their visits. The shooting of Julia Roberts' film in Indonesia has clearly benefited Indonesia's image in the US market and in general in the eyes of the world, especially its impact on tourism, because film is an easily accessible and effective market instrument as a promotional tools.

McKee & Gerace (2018) stated, marketers who master storytelling techniques will plant and harvest eternal gifts when they create the future. Today's shoppers are more drawn to engaging story formats, just as people have always been drawn to stories. Storytelling is also a marketing opportunity as a substitute for consumer saturation with advertising. Producers must be able to attract public attention not only with ordinary stories, but must be impressive and able to produce action, story listeners must be immediately motivated to buy what is presented in the story. Tourism destination marketing is no exception. Storynomics is nothing but a marketing method using storytelling methods about the background of an object or tourist attraction in destinations around us. Bassano et al. (2019) stated, the creativity of local residents and related stakeholders is urgently needed to package, manage, market and sell villages with the power of place storytelling.

In early August 2019 in Jakarta, the Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs, Luhut Binsar Panjaitan told the press that to develop tourism in super priority destinations namely Lake Toba, Borobudur, Mandalika, Labuan Bajo Likupang, President Jokowi has directed storynomics tourism (Kemenparekraf/Baparekraf, 2021). The strategy implemented is by prioritizing narrative, creative content and living culture and using the power of culture as the 'Destination DNA'. The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy has formulated narratives in 5 Super Priority Destinations to be widely introduced to tourists and packaged into creative promotional tools. First, the legend of Lake Toba, tells of a young Toba who fished in the river and caught a goldfish which turned into a beautiful woman whom he later married. They were blessed with a son named Samosir. Second, Borobudur, the largest Buddhist temple in the world that has existed since 750 AD, has 2,672 relief panels 4 kilometers long which makes it the 'Longest Temple Relief in the World'. According to Buddhist cosmological concepts, Borobudur Temple is likened to a mountain that connects heaven and earth. This 'mountain' is surrounded by mountains, seas and rivers. Third, Mandalika, according to legend, Princess Mandalika's beauty made many men want to marry her. Confused, Princess Mandalika meditated for clues. He invited all the princes to gather on the 20th of the 10th month of the Sasak calendar at Seger Beach. Fourth, Likupang, the stunning underwater beauty, is said to be the place where nine angels from heaven descend to bathe. The angels came down to Likupang to bathe in a pond owned by a farmer named Mamanua. Fifth, Labuan Bajo, is the main gate to Komodo Island. Local people call the Komodo dragon by the name of Orah, daughter of Putri Naga. Thus, storynomics becomes an important element that must be developed to become a force in attracting tourists.

Research on place storytelling has been carried out before, including the use of place storytelling in the digital marketing era (Bassano et al., 2019), storytelling can enrich and enhance the tourist experience by creating a unique place identity and strengthening attachment to the place visited (Cao, 2019). The stories and histories of a place can offer insight into its diverse and evolving characteristics, helping us comprehend its intricate and exceptional nature (Lichrou et al., 2010). Storytelling is an important aspect of cultural tourism, as it helps to promote the tourism potential of a destination, preserve local traditions, and foster a closer relationship between tourists and the community. Memorable experiences also encourage tourists to return and share their own stories, further promoting the destination (Pereira, 2019). Yousaf et al. (2018) stated, according to Maslow, people have a need for self-esteem, which leads them to travel to impress others and gain higher status. This is particularly true for young travelers, who seek validation through social media likes. This desire for recognition also applies to flashpackers. Floch & Jiang (2015) discusses how digital storytelling can be used for exploring cultural heritage in a landscape, and evaluates the effectiveness of this approach.

Motala & Musungu (2013) stated, when students are involved in researching and sharing their own stories, they display all levels of Bloom's taxonomy. Personal narratives are helpful in making students retain the knowledge better. Serrat (2008) stated, storytelling is the art of sharing personal experiences, beliefs, and life lessons through narratives that evoke strong emotions and provide valuable insights. Stoica et al. (2021) stated, using storytelling as a technique in corporate marketing can encourage brand stakeholders to participate and help co-create the brand's image through shared stories about the brand's place. Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier (2016) stated, destination marketing organizations can use storytelling to promote tourist destinations through digital word of mouth, which can be an effective marketing strategy.

Stoica et al. (2021) stated, co-creation in place branding refers to the development of a brand identity through the participation and collaboration of stakeholders in place-related activities. It is a desired approach for promoting a place's brand collectively. Storytelling, a traditional marketing technique, is used to encourage stakeholder involvement in creating shared stories about a place, which helps facilitate co-creation of the place brand. Tarvainen (2020) stated, storytelling can boost all aspects of brand equity by providing captivating content, fostering emotional ties, and improving recall and recognition. Erkas & Baron (2007) stated, the use of storytelling can help an organization communicate effectively both internally and externally. Stories can serve as a connection between the

organization and the world outside, and can also make it easier to explain complex ideas and processes. Carbaché Mora et al. (2019) stated, the use of storytelling is an effective method to establish an emotional connection between the producer and consumer. de Beer et al. (2022) stated, the importance of storytelling in tourism is becoming increasingly recognized, particularly in terms of promoting and marketing destinations.

Sinangjoyo & Damasdino (2021) stated, readers expect travel writing to possess five qualities including uncomplicated language, understandable vocabulary, visual aids, accuracy, and practical usefulness. Englert & Vlasta (2020) stated, Bernard McGrane believes that traveling allows one to see new things, and writing about those experiences helps to understand and convey them through words or visuals. Travel literature encompasses both written and visual elements, including maps, pictures, and other media.

## 4. Conclusion

The conclusions of this study are as follows: (1) The implementation of place storytelling in travel writing is based on the author's personal experience. The originality aspect is the main key that must be upheld, because it tells about a place based on the impressions and experiences gained. (2) Travel writing that is poured into a book, or other media, is an effective promotional tool for tourist destinations to attract tourists to visit based on the experiences of travel book writers.

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