

LITERARY TOURISM STUDIES IN FOLKLORE AT TOURIST ATTRACTIONS IN BANGKA ISLAND

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ABSTRACT

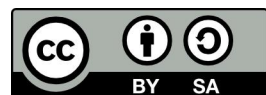
This study examines the role of Bangka Island's folklore as an element of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in shaping, promoting, and sustaining local tourist destinations. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the research integrates semi-structured interviews, field observations, and document analysis conducted across three folklore-associated sites: Batu Rusa, Dempu Awang, and Pantai Penyusuk. Narrative mapping and thematic analysis reveal that each site presents varying degrees of narrative richness and cultural embodiment. Batu Rusa demonstrates the strongest integration of folklore into cultural practices, featuring layered narratives, rituals, and community traditions that reinforce place identity. Dempu Awang, anchored by a single hero legend, shows strong symbolic potential but limited cultural activation, while Penyusuk Beach offers a thin narrative layer overshadowed by its natural scenic appeal. The findings indicate that folklore enhances destination identity, deepens visitor engagement, and serves as cultural capital for tourism development. However, institutional utilization remains limited due to the absence of structured storytelling programs and interpretive tourism infrastructure. This study concludes that Bangka Island holds significant potential for literary and folklore-based tourism, and greater integration of ICH within tourism planning could strengthen cultural preservation and support sustainable destination development.

1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of *literary tourism* bridges two seemingly distinct domains: literature and travel. Literature preserves cultural expression through written or oral texts, while tourism embodies the human desire to explore places and cultures. The fusion of these two domains creates an innovative field that allows literary narratives to become the foundation of tourism activities. The term *literary tourism* first appeared in England during the eighteenth century, when young travelers visited locations associated with writers and their works. Watson (2006) highlights that literary tourism occurs when the fame of an author or literary work inspires people to visit sites connected with the author's life, such as birthplaces, homes, or graves, or locations depicted in literary texts. Thus, literature and tourism are mutually enriching: literature endows places with meaning and identity, while tourism sustains and revives literary heritage.

Research in literary tourism has expanded considerably in recent decades. Putra, et. al. (2020) identifies four main domains of inquiry: (1) literary works that foreground tourism as their theme; (2) literary sites, figures, and events that become part of tourism promotion; (3) literary tourism

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activities where visitors experience attractions based on literary narratives or authors; and (4) transformations of literary works into other media, such as films, cultural festivals, or performances, that indirectly promote tourism. These perspectives highlight that literary tourism is not only about visiting sites but also about understanding the interplay between literature, culture, and the tourism industry.

In the Indonesian context, literary tourism plays a significant role in shaping cultural identity and economic development. A prominent example is the novel *Laskar Pelangi* (2005) by Andrea Hirata, which not only achieved international recognition but also inspired large-scale tourism in Belitung Island after its film adaptation in 2008. Similarly, Elizabeth Gilbert's *Eat Pray Love* (2006) and its 2010 film adaptation brought global attention to Ubud and Bali, reviving tourism in the aftermath of terrorist attacks in 2002 and 2005 (Hitchcock & Putra, 2007). These cases demonstrate that literature has the power to transform local narratives into global attractions, thereby strengthening both cultural pride and economic opportunities.

Bangka Island, located within the Bangka Belitung Archipelago, is one of Indonesia's regions with rich folklore traditions. Its folklore includes legends, myths, and oral traditions closely tied to geographical sites, landscapes, and cultural practices. For example, the legend of Pulau Kapal is linked to the tourist attraction of Parigi Kapal; the legend of Akek Antak is associated with Tuing Beach; the tale of Dempu Awang is tied to Batu Balai in Mentok; and the legend of Batu Rusa is found in Merawang. These stories not only reflect the island's cultural richness but also serve as a foundation for developing unique and locally rooted tourism experiences.

Folklore, as an element of intangible cultural heritage (ICH), plays a vital role in shaping community identity, transmitting cultural memory, and giving symbolic meaning to physical landscapes. According to UNESCO (2003), ICH includes oral traditions, performing arts, rituals, festive events, and knowledge systems that communities recognize as part of their cultural legacy. These living traditions are continually recreated across generations, making them essential cultural resources for understanding how people attach meaning to place. In the context of tourism, ICH offers narrative depth that strengthens visitor experience and reinforces place identity (Smith, 2012).

Recent developments in literary tourism demonstrate how narratives, whether written, oral, or adapted, can motivate travel, shape destination branding, and construct emotional or symbolic connections between visitors and places. Watson (2006) notes that literary tourism originally centered on author-related sites, but contemporary scholarship includes literary landscapes, oral traditions, and community storytelling. Busby and Klug (2001) further argue that literary narratives function as "cultural anchors," providing interpretive frameworks that allow visitors to connect stories with physical locations.

In Indonesia, scholars have shown strong links between folklore and cultural tourism. Harsono (2017) documents how Jepara incorporates folklore into ritual performances, while Baruadi and Eraku (2018) explain how Gorontalo folklore enhances cultural tourism and community-based heritage engagement. However, these studies mainly examine folklore as cultural tourism material rather than as *literary heritage* that actively constructs place identity and visitor motivation.



Although Bangka Island possesses diverse folklore, such as the legends of Batu Rusa, Dempu Awang, and Penyusuk, little research has examined these narratives using a literary tourism framework integrated with intangible cultural heritage theory. Existing works on Bangka primarily document folklore for cultural preservation or anthropological interest, but they do not analyze how these narratives contribute to destination meaning, narrative-based tourism development, or the cultural identity of tourist sites.

The problem addressed in this research lies in the need to uncover the extent to which folklore contributes to shaping and popularizing Bangka Island's tourist destinations. The study formulates the following research questions: (1) How are folklore narratives of Bangka Island depicted in relation to existing tourist destinations? (2) What role does folklore play in promoting and sustaining these destinations?

The objectives of this study are two. First, to describe the representation of Bangka Island folklore in connection with its tourist attractions. Second, to analyze the role of folklore in popularizing and enhancing the appeal of these destinations. This study is significant both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it contributes to the growing body of scholarship on literary tourism by situating folklore as a crucial medium for interpreting cultural landscapes. It also enriches literary and cultural studies by examining folklore in relation to tourism development. Practically, the research offers valuable insights for policymakers, tourism developers, and local communities in utilizing folklore as a resource for sustainable tourism. By documenting and analyzing Bangka's folklore, this study also contributes to cultural preservation and provides a written reference for future generations.

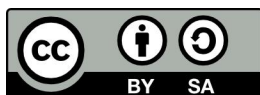
2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Literary Tourism

Literary tourism has emerged as a dynamic interdisciplinary field that examines how literary works, authors, and narrative settings stimulate travel motivations and shape cultural experiences. Watson (2006) defines literary tourism as the practice in which literary fame, through authors, characters, or settings, inspires individuals to visit associated locations. This phenomenon is well-established in Europe and North America, where sites such as Shakespeare's birthplace in Stratford-upon-Avon and the Brontë Parsonage in Haworth exemplify the transformation of literary heritage into tourist attractions (Herbert, 2001). Similarly, the Mark Twain House in Hartford and Ernest Hemingway's home in Key West reflect how literary authorship becomes embedded in cultural tourism branding in the United States (Smith, 2012).

Scholars argue that literary tourism engages visitors not only through nostalgia but also through the imaginative reconstruction of narrative spaces. Busby and Klug (2001) highlight that literary tourism deepens tourists' sense of place by linking physical environments with fictional or historical narratives. Recent studies emphasize its economic and cultural significance, noting that literary tourism contributes to regional development, cultural preservation, and identity strengthening (MacLeod, 2023).

In Indonesia, literary tourism has gained traction following the success of Andrea Hirata's *Laskar Pelangi*. The novel and its film adaptation transformed Belitung Island into a nationally renowned tourist destination, demonstrating the power of narrative to brand



geographical spaces (Putra, Hitchcock, & Rindrasih, 2020). Literature-driven tourism is also evident in Bali, where *Eat Pray Love* enhanced Ubud's cultural profile (Hitchcock & Putra, 2007). These cases show that narratives can mobilize new forms of cultural tourism and influence destination development in the Indonesian archipelago.

2.2 Place Identity

Place identity refers to the emotional, cultural, and symbolic attachments individuals form with specific locations. Proshansky et. al. (1983) describe place identity as an integral component of self-identity shaped by experiences, cultural meanings, and spatial relationships. Relph (2008) asserts that narratives, whether folklore, literary fiction, or oral histories, play a crucial role in producing a sense of place by embedding stories within landscapes.

In tourism contexts, literary and folkloric narratives become mediators that shape how tourists interpret local environments. Urry and Larsen (2011) note that tourists engage with places not only visually but through symbolic and narrative-based expectations. In Indonesian culture, place identity is often connected to myths and legends associated with physical landmarks, such as Malin Kundang's stone in West Sumatra or Tangkuban Perahu Mountain in West Java. These narrative-place linkages enable communities to express cultural memory and heritage through landscape interpretation.

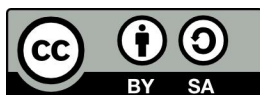
For Bangka Island, place identity is strongly rooted in maritime folklore, sacred stones, and coastal legends. These stories, tied to natural landmarks such as Batu Rusa or Tuing Beach, serve as symbolic markers that reinforce cultural attachment and guide visitor perceptions. Understanding how folklore constructs place identity is essential for developing culturally grounded tourism strategies.

2.3 Heritage Commodification

Heritage commodification refers to the transformation of cultural elements into marketable products or experiences within tourism economies. Greenwood (1989) describes commodification as the process through which cultural practices and narratives are packaged for consumption, raising questions about authenticity and cultural integrity. Cohen (1988) cautions that commodification may result in superficial representations of culture, although more recent scholarship recognizes its potential to support heritage preservation and community empowerment when managed ethically (Smith, 2006).

In the context of literary and folklore tourism, commodification occurs when narratives are converted into storytelling tours, museums, festivals, or heritage trails. Globally, examples include the commodification of the Sherlock Holmes narrative in London and the transformation of Murakami's literary spaces into tourist routes in Japan (Sasaki, 2010). In Indonesia, Harsono (2017) demonstrates how Jepara's Lompan Festival integrates ritual elements and folklore into tourism products, balancing cultural education with economic opportunity.

Nevertheless, challenges persist, especially when destinations emphasize natural beauty over the cultural narratives that define them. This issue is common in Indonesian tourism, where folklore sites often lack interpretive storytelling that highlights their narrative significance. For Bangka Island, heritage commodification presents both opportunities and risks, necessitating strategies that protect narrative authenticity while supporting sustainable tourism.



2.4 Narrative Mapping

Narrative mapping is an analytical approach that traces how stories, myths, and literary representations are spatially anchored to specific locations. Ryan (2016) describes narrative mapping as the alignment of textual geographies with physical landscapes, enabling researchers and policymakers to visualize how narratives shape spatial meaning. In literary tourism, narrative mapping serves as the foundation for developing literary trails, heritage routes, and interpretive tourism experiences.

Internationally, narrative mapping has been applied to destinations such as James Joyce's Dublin, Sherlock Holmes's London, and the Brontë countryside (Busch, 2020). These mappings reveal how narratives generate symbolic value for places and guide visitor movements through story-infused landscapes.

Applied to the Indonesian context, narrative mapping can reveal how folklore constructs spatial identities linked to mountains, rivers, beaches, and sacred stones. On Bangka Island, mapping sites associated with maritime legends, such as Batu Rusa and Pulau Kapal, provides a framework for designing folklore-based tourism routes. By visualizing narrative-place connections, narrative mapping contributes to cultural interpretation, destination branding, and heritage education.

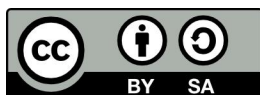
2.5 Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)

Intangible cultural heritage (ICH) encompasses oral traditions, performing arts, rituals, social practices, and traditional knowledge that communities transmit across generations (UNESCO, 2003). Folklore, comprising myths, legends, and oral narratives, is one of the most significant components of ICH. Dundes (1965) emphasizes that folklore functions as a cultural repository that conveys communal values, moral lessons, and worldviews.

ICH plays a vital role in shaping cultural identity and enriching tourism experiences. Endraswara (2019) notes that Indonesian folklore remains a living and adaptive tradition that maintains its social relevance. In tourism settings, ICH enhances destination appeal by providing cultural depth and interpretive context (Timothy, 2020). Priyanto and Dewi (2020) argue that folklore helps tourists better understand local history, beliefs, and symbolic landscapes, thereby deepening cultural appreciation.

However, challenges persist, including limited documentation, minimal integration of folklore in tourism promotion, and inadequate policy support for ICH-based tourism. These issues are especially evident in Bangka Island, where folklore-rich landscapes often lack interpretive materials that articulate their cultural narratives. Strengthening ICH within tourism requires sustained collaboration among cultural experts, local communities, and tourism stakeholders.

Existing scholarship demonstrates strong connections between literary tourism, place identity, intangible heritage, and cultural tourism development. Studies in Indonesia often highlight folklore's role in cultural preservation and tourism, such as in Jepara (Harsono, 2017), Gorontalo (Baruadi & Eraku, 2018), and the Karo highlands (Sinulingga & Tampubolon, 2021). However, research rarely examines Bangka Island's folklore within the theoretical framework of literary tourism and intangible cultural heritage. Most studies focus on ritual practices,



documentation, or general cultural tourism, leaving unexplored the role of folklore as a literary text, one that constructs place identity, motivates travel, narrates landscapes, and shapes cultural meaning.

By integrating literary tourism, narrative mapping, and intangible heritage perspectives, this study addresses a critical gap in understanding how Bangka Island's folklore can support cultural preservation and sustainable tourism development.

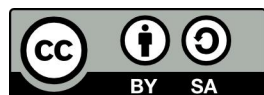
3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design to document and interpret local folklore as intangible cultural heritage (ICH) within tourism contexts. Descriptive qualitative research aims to provide a comprehensive, straight description of phenomena in everyday language and is particularly appropriate when researchers seek an accurate account without the prolonged immersion or participant observation characteristic of ethnography (Sandelowski, 2000). The study therefore clarified from the outset that it did not adopt an ethnographic framework; instead, it combined semi-structured interviews, focused field observations, and document analysis to gather rich, contextualized data about narrative practices and tourism uses of folklore (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Fieldwork took place from June to August 2024, allowing for seasonal observation of ritual activities and visitor flows while enabling timely data collection for analysis. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure inclusion of individuals with specialized knowledge or direct involvement in folklore transmission, heritage management, and tourist interactions (Patton, 2015). Three participant categories were targeted: (1) community elders and cultural bearers who act as custodians of oral narratives; (2) local tourism officers and cultural stakeholders responsible for planning or promotion; and (3) tourists who could reflect on narrative-based motivations and experiences. Selecting respondents across these categories facilitated triangulation of perspectives and helped capture both emic (insider) and etic (outsider) meanings (Denzin, 1978; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data collection focused on three research sites chosen for their strong folkloric associations and tourism potential: Batu Rusa (Merawang), Dempu Awang (Mentok, West Bangka), and Pantai Penyusuk (Belinyu). A total of 20 participants contributed to the study. At Batu Rusa, six participants (two elders/cultural bearers, two tourism officers, two tourists) were interviewed; Dempu Awang included six participants (three elders, one cultural activist, two tourists); and Pantai Penyusuk involved five participants (three cultural communicators/elders, two tourists). This distribution reflected the narrative richness and active cultural practice present at each site and supported cross-site comparison of themes and practices.

Primary data were collected via semi-structured interviews, guided by a consistent protocol that allowed participants to elaborate on stories, cultural meanings, tourism relevance, and preservation efforts. Core thematic sections addressed: (a) folklore narratives (origin stories, narrative transmission), (b) cultural meaning and associated traditions (rituals, values), (c) tourism relevance (visitor engagement, interpretive practices), and (d) preservation and change (documentation efforts, narrative transformation). Semi-structured interviewing is widely



recommended for cultural and heritage research because it balances comparability with openness to emergent topics (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Patton, 2015).

All interviews were audio-recorded with informed consent and transcribed verbatim to maintain accuracy of participants' accounts. Transcription practices followed established quality considerations, including verbatim rendering, iterative checking against recordings, and anonymization to protect confidentiality (Poland, 1995; Wiles et al., 2008). The transcript management sequence comprised (1) verbatim transcription, (2) cleaning and anonymization to remove identifying details, and (3) verification through re-listening and spot checks to ensure fidelity.

Data analysis combined Miles and Huberman's (1994) interactive model of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification with thematic analysis techniques described by Braun and Clarke (2006). The multi-stage coding procedure began with initial coding to identify narrative elements (e.g., origin stories, motifs), cultural practices, and tourism perceptions. This was followed by focused (axial) coding to group similar codes into higher-order themes (e.g., cultural continuity, narrative commodification, visitor interpretation). Finally, a cross-site comparison examined convergences and divergences across the three locations. Data were organized in matrices and thematic charts to visualize patterns and support analytic transparency (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

To enhance trustworthiness, the study applied Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria. Credibility was pursued through methodological triangulation (interviews, observations, document analysis), member checking of preliminary findings with selected participants, and prolonged engagement at sites sufficient for contextual understanding (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Birt et al., 2016). Transferability was supported by providing thick descriptions of the settings, narratives, and community practices so readers can assess applicability to other contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Dependability was addressed by maintaining an audit trail that recorded research decisions, data handling, and coding notes; confirmability was strengthened via reflective field notes and peer debriefing to limit researcher bias (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Ethical procedures, such as obtaining informed consent, offering anonymity, and allowing participants to decline questions, followed accepted social research norms (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Wiles et al., 2008).

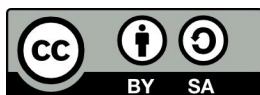
4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Representation of Folklore in Tourist Destinations

Analysis using narrative mapping, thematic coding, and symbolic interpretation reveals that folklore is represented differently across the three studied locations, Batu Rusa, Dempu Awang, and Pantai Penyusuk, depending on the richness of narratives, their connection to physical landscape, and their embodiment in cultural practices.

4.1.1 Batu Rusa: Dense Narrative Landscape and Cultural Embodiment

Batu Rusa presents the richest narrative complexity among the examined sites, with multiple interwoven tales such as *The Origin of Batu Rusa*, *Perigi Lap Ampol*, *Pulau Sang Benyawu*, and *The Crocodile Spirit*. Narrative mapping conducted in this study shows that each of these stories maintains a direct spatial connection with physical features in the environment: rivers, ancient



trees, coastal rock formations, and nearby historic structures. This relationship reflects Herbert's (2001) view that literary and folklore narratives derive their interpretive power when anchored to identifiable locations that stimulate imagination and cultural memory.

Symbolic interpretation of the Batu Rusa corpus reveals several recurring motifs that shape local meaning-making. Themes related to ancestral protection, ecological morality, and maritime cosmology appear repeatedly across the stories and echo broader Indonesian folklore patterns discussed by Braginsky (2004) and Danandjaja (2012). These symbolic elements do more than enrich the narrative content; they offer insight into community values concerning respect for nature, social ethics, and the spiritual significance of the sea.

Beyond the narrative level, Batu Rusa's cultural embodiment further reinforces its identity as a literary tourism site. Rituals such as *Ratib Saman*, village torch parades, and culinary traditions like *ayam anam* strengthen the site's cultural atmosphere and provide tangible expressions of the stories embedded in the landscape. This corresponds with Smith's (2006) concept of heritage as a "cultural performance," where intangible practices such as festivals, rituals, and everyday traditions, as dynamic representations of collective identity. Through these layers of narrative, symbolism, and lived tradition, Batu Rusa stands out as a site where folklore actively shapes cultural meaning and enriches the visitor experience.

4.1.2 Dempu Awang: Hero Legend Anchored to Coastal Geography

Dempu Awang is shaped by a single yet symbolically powerful legend centered on themes of betrayal and cosmic justice. The story is closely tied to Batu Balai Beach, where the natural rock formations are interpreted by locals as physical traces of the mythical event. This spatial anchoring gives the narrative a strong sense of place, allowing visitors to connect the story directly with the landscape.

From a thematic perspective, the legend carries core values of loyalty, morality, and divine punishment, elements that reflect wider Southeast Asian maritime storytelling traditions, as noted by Braginsky (2004). These values also illustrate how communities use folklore as a way to communicate ethical lessons and reinforce shared cultural norms. Despite this richness, the narrative remains largely symbolic rather than performative.

Unlike Batu Rusa, Dempu Awang does not feature active rituals, festivals, or cultural practices that keep the story alive in everyday community life. This situation is similar to Timothy's (2020) observation that some destinations hold strong "narrative capital" but struggle to convert it into meaningful heritage-based tourism experiences. As a result, the site carries significant mythological value but has yet to develop cultural activities or storytelling programs that could enhance its tourism potential.

4.1.3 Pantai Penyusuk: Scenic Attraction with Thin Narrative Layer

The Origin of Penyusuk narrative provides a mythical explanation for the beach's name and its distinctive boulder formations, offering visitors a cultural lens through which to interpret the landscape. Narrative mapping indicates that tourists often connect the story with prominent visual landmarks such as Pulau Putri and Pulau Lampu, which strengthens the sense of place and helps anchor the folklore within the physical environment. This connection allows the site to function not only as a scenic destination but also as a space where myth and geography intersect.



However, beyond the naming legend, Penyusuk lacks reinforcing cultural elements such as rituals, performances, or local culinary traditions that could deepen the storytelling experience.

As a result, the folklore functions as what Hearn and Foth (2007) call a “thin narrative layer”, a story that enriches visitors’ cultural understanding but remains secondary to the beach’s natural beauty. The site’s strong visual appeal thus tends to overshadow its narrative potential, indicating an opportunity for future cultural development to give the folklore greater presence in tourism activities.

4.2 The Role of Folklore in Promoting and Sustaining Tourism

4.2.1 Folklore as the Core of Destination Identity

Thematic coding in this study produced categories such as origin myths, hero legends, maritime cosmology, and moral storytelling. These cultural themes help build destination identities, confirming Watson’s (2006) argument that narratives function as symbolic markers that shape tourists’ emotional connections to places.

4.2.1 Table summarize how each folklore contributes to identity formation.

| Site | Dominant Narrative Themes | Symbolic Values | Tourism Identity Contribution |
|-------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| Batu Rusa | Origin myths, Guardian Spirit | Harmony, Spiritual, Ecology | Strong cultural identity and Ritual Tourism |
| Dempu Awang | Hero Legend | Justice, Loyalty | Moderate identity; potential for legend-based tourism |
| Penyusuk | Naming Myth | Natural respect, Cosmology | Weak identity, overshadowed by scenery |

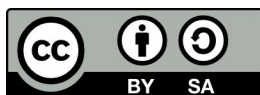
These findings echo Park’s (2014) claim that heritage narratives shape “destination storytelling,” influencing tourists’ sense-making and motivation.

4.2.2 Folklore as Cultural Capital for Tourism Promotion

Elders and tourism officers consistently emphasized that local folklore serves as an important medium for communicating local wisdom and moral teachings. Their explanations reflect wider observations in Indonesian folklore scholarship, where narratives are seen as carriers of ethical guidance, social norms, and collective memory (Endraswara, 2019). In this sense, folklore becomes more than entertainment, it functions as a cultural framework that shapes how communities understand their environment and heritage.

Tourists also reported that learning about the stories behind each site increased their curiosity and deepened their emotional connection to the destination. Many visitors felt that the narratives added meaning to the landscape, allowing them to view beaches, rocks, and islands not merely as scenery but as cultural symbols with historical resonance. This emotional dimension aligns with Kirillova, Lehto, and Cai’s (2017) argument that memorable tourism experiences depend heavily on affective engagement, particularly when destinations offer storytelling elements that evoke imagination and personal reflection.

Across the three sites studied, the role of folklore in promoting tourism varies significantly. Batu Rusa demonstrates the strongest integration of narrative, cultural performance,



and community involvement, creating a multidimensional tourism environment. The combination of multiple legends, active rituals like Ratib Saman, torch parades, culinary traditions, and historical landmarks positions Batu Rusa close to what may be called “full narrative activation,” where stories, practices, and place identity reinforce one another.

In contrast, Dempu Awang possesses a powerful and symbolically rich legend, yet this narrative capital has not been fully translated into tourism practice. Although the story is strongly associated with Batu Balai Beach, there are no regular rituals, performances, or interpretive programs that bring the narrative to life for visitors. As a result, the site’s tourism impact is limited, despite its strong mythological foundation.

Penyusuk Beach, meanwhile, presents an even thinner integration of folklore and tourism. While the naming myth offers cultural meaning to the beach and its surrounding islands, the absence of supporting cultural activities, such as storytelling events, guided tours, or traditional practices, results in minimal narrative utilization. The site’s strong natural beauty tends to overshadow its narrative potential, leaving folklore as a secondary layer rather than a central attraction.

Taken together, these findings show that the role of folklore in tourism depends not only on the strength of the narrative itself but also on how actively the community and tourism stakeholders integrate the story into cultural programming. Sites with rituals, performances, and interpretive activities gain richer visitor engagement, while those with passive or undeveloped storytelling remain underutilized.

4.2.3 Limited Institutional Utilization of Folklore

FGD data show that the tourism office’s focus remains on tangible heritage, historic buildings, culinary festivals, and religious architecture, rather than storytelling-based tourism. This supports findings by Su & Wall (2014) that many Southeast Asian regions underutilize intangible cultural heritage in tourism planning.

Participants emphasized the absence of:

- interpretive signage explaining folklore,
- storytelling guides,
- narrative-based tour routes,
- digital story archives,
- folklore integration into festivals.

This gap reflects the global pattern described by Park (2010): cultural narratives often remain “invisible heritage” unless intentionally curated for tourism.

4.2.4 Unused Potential for Literary Tourism Development

Using insights from literary tourism theory (Herbert, 2001; Watson, 2006), it becomes clear that Bangka Island actually holds all the essential components needed to develop narrative-driven tourism. The island’s folklore is culturally rich, its landscapes are easily linked to specific stories, and local communities continue to show enthusiasm for preserving and sharing their oral traditions. These elements position Bangka as a strong potential site for literary and folklore-based tourism.

However, the findings also show that this potential has not yet been fully activated. Without structured storytelling programs, interpretive facilities, or cultural performances,



folklore remains dormant, functioning as latent cultural capital rather than an integrated tourism product. The narratives exist and are valued locally, but they have not been translated into visitor experiences that could enhance destination identity or generate sustained tourism appeal.

A useful comparison can be seen in Belitung, where *Laskar Pelangi* transformed a literary work into a major tourism catalyst. The success of Belitung demonstrates the power of narrative in shaping destination branding, supporting Putra's (2020) argument that textual and folkloric.

5. CONCLUSION

This study shows that folklore in Bangka Island's tourist destinations is represented through storytelling traditions, symbolic site markers, and the cultural interpretations shared by local elders and community members. At Batu Rusa, Dempu Awang, and Pantai Penyusuk, the stories attached to each place help visitors understand how local people view their history, values, and environment. Folklore becomes a narrative layer that gives meaning to the landscape, turning ordinary sites into culturally charged destinations. In this way, the representation of folklore is not only embedded in oral narratives but also reflected in how communities present and interpret these places to visitors.

The findings also reveal that folklore plays an important role in promoting and sustaining tourism. Stories make destinations more attractive by offering visitors a deeper, more memorable experience, especially when the narrative is directly linked to the physical setting. Folklore adds authenticity, helps strengthen community involvement, and supports the preservation of local identity within tourism activities. By integrating folklore into tourism development, whether through guided storytelling, cultural events, or interpretation materials, destinations can build unique cultural appeal while contributing to the long-term safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage.

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