NARRATIVE TOURISM: A STUDY OF THE POTENTIAL OF FOLKLORE AS A SOURCE OF TOURISM IN PERAK AND SARAWAK

(*Pelancongan Naratif: Kajian Potensi Cerita Rakyat sebagai Sumber Pelancongan di Perak dan Sarawak*)

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Abstract

Nowadays, the tourism industry is seen to be growing, within which cultural tourism plays its own role in generating a country's income. The practice of tourists travelling to certain locations to experience and learn about cultural differences is known as cultural tourism. When it comes to cultural tourism, the narrative experience is a vital component for tourists to appreciate the main attraction, therefore, making it narrative tourism. In Malaysia, narrative tourism is still underutilised, and there

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is limited research in this area. Thus, this article discusses how narrative tourism can be explored in two tourist destinations in Malaysia, namely Pulau Pangkor in Perak and Gunung Santubong in Sarawak. The first finding shows that there is no constructive effort to recognise narrative as a tourism resource for Pulau Pangkor, particularly with regard to the story of the hero, Din Ketolok, as well as a few other monuments that are believed to embody their own meaning and event. Meanwhile, the finding on Gunung Santubong shows that it already has a significant narrative of the battle between the Princesses Santubong and Sejinjang, who were ultimately cursed by the King to become mountains. However, its jungle trek to the mountain peak is not a cultural route, which perhaps would be disappointing to tourists who are interested in cultural routes. Nonetheless, with due work and effort, it could become more exploratory and intriguing as a narrative tourism destination. This study shows how stories can transform both locations into suitable destinations for narrative tourism in order to flourish in cultural tourism. To achieve this, narrative tourism requires special attention from the tourism industry authorities.

Keywords: Narrative tourism, folklore, cultural tourism, Pulau Pangkor, Gunung Santubong, tourism industry

Abstrak

Pada masa kini industri pelancongan dilihat semakin berkembang dengan pelancongan budaya memainkan peranan tersendiri dalam menjana pendapatan sesebuah negara. Amalan pengunjung melancong ke lokasi tertentu untuk merasai dan mempelajari perbezaan budaya dikenali sebagai pelancongan budaya. Dalam pelancongan budaya, pengalaman naratif merupakan komponen penting bagi pelancong untuk menghargai tarikan utama, oleh itu, menjadikannya pelancongan naratif. Di Malaysia, pelancongan naratif masih kurang dikomersialkan, dan terdapat kajian yang terhad dalam bidang ini. Oleh itu, makalah ini membincangkan bagaimana pelancongan naratif boleh diterokai di dua destinasi pelancongan di Malaysia, iaitu Pulau Pangkor di Perak dan Gunung Santubong di Sarawak. Penelitian telah membuktikan bahawa tiada usaha membina untuk mengiktiraf naratif sebagai sumber pelancongan untuk Pulau Pangkor, khususnya, kisah pahlawan, Din Ketolok, dan beberapa monumen lain yang dipercayai membayangkan makna dan peristiwa tersendiri. Berbanding dengan Gunung Santubong, lokasi tersebut sudah pun mempunyai naratif yang signifikan dengan kisah pertempuran antara Puteri Santubong dengan Sejinjang, yang akhirnya disumpah oleh Raja untuk menjadi gunung. Walau bagaimanapun, perjalanan hutan ke puncak gunung bukanlah laluan budaya dan hal ini mungkin akan mengecewakan pelancong yang berminat dengan laluan budaya. Namun, dengan ikhtiar dan usaha, boleh membuatkan laluan tersebut menjadi lebih luas diterokai dan menarik sebagai

destinasi pelancongan naratif. Kajian ini menunjukkan bagaimana cerita boleh menjadikan kedua-dua lokasi destinasi tersebut sesuai untuk pelancongan naratif berkembang dalam pelancongan budaya, dan sewajarnyalah pelancongan naratif diberikan perhatian khusus oleh pihak berkuasa industri pelancongan.

Kata kunci: Pelancongan naratif, cerita rakyat, pelancongan budaya, Pulau Pangkor, Gunung Santubong, industri pelancongan

INTRODUCTION

Culture possesses multiple meanings depending on the perspective employed. For sociologists, culture is both created and preserved through a group's internal structure, and is acquired and transmitted from one generation to the next. Meanwhile, for anthropologists, culture is an integral facet of human existence, or a universal evolution. However, this perspective has faced criticism for overlooking the distinctiveness inherent in each culture.

Culture is generally perceived as the embodiment of human ways of life. Approaching culture from two perspectives aids in its comprehension. Firstly, culture is viewed as a dynamic process wherein it serves as a medium for generating meaning. Within this framework, culture involves the creation and utilisation of symbols that represent distinctive ways of life, which in turn distinguishes one group or era from another. Secondly, culture is regarded as an outcome of the artistic, intellectual, and collective endeavours of both individuals and groups (Ivanovic, 2008). Economists have established a connection between culture and monetary value, leading to the transformation of culture into a commodity. This process of attributing monetary value to culture is termed as the "commodification of culture," which has given rise to the growth of the cultural industry.

Tourism, which encompasses travel for experiential, educational, or recreational purposes, has evolved into a substantial sector generating billions of dollars in revenue. As a result, the cultural tourism industry is experiencing rapid growth worldwide. One catalyst that drives tourists to embark on journeys is the narrative experience. This narrative experience, a crucial component of cultural tourism, finds expression through diverse forms, such as heritage tourism, art tourism, urban cultural tourism, village-based cultural tourism, indigenous cultural tourism, and contemporary cultural tourism. In essence, the escalating popularity of cultural tourism can be attributed to its powerful allure, which prompts tourists to seek knowledge and immersive cultural encounters in unfamiliar locales.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The tourist experience has garnered substantial attention in the context of the "experience economy". In the present landscape, the tourist experience holds paramount importance, with a dedicated focus and a strong association with narrative storytelling. These narratives are intricately linked with institutions situated within tourist destinations, encompassing museums, art galleries, science centres, historical sites, archaeology sites, zoos, aquariums, and cultural legacy sites. Additionally, folktales form a wellspring of potential narratives that are often deeply ingrained in local communities and have gained international recognition through publications, social media, and cultural events. Among the various segments of cultural tourism, narrative tourism emerges as a pivotal domain that demands particular attention from tourism authorities. Remarkably, there exists a research gap in the exploration of this facet. Reviews of critical literature conducted on Malaysian tourism reveal a predominant focus on topics such as marketing and promotion, growth, planning and development, tourism products, tourist arrivals, domestic tourism, environmental considerations, ecotourism, sustainability, island tourism, sports tourism, health tourism, and urban and rural tourism (Ghazali, 2000; Kadir & Jabil, 2010). Consequently, a void exists in the investigation of narrative tourism in Malaysia. This paper addresses this gap by delving into the potential for narrative tourism in two Malaysia tourist destinations: Pulau Pangkor (Pangkor Island) in Perak and Gunung Santubong (Mount Santubong) in Sarawak.

The influence of the narrative experience resonates deeply with tourists, prompting them to either revisit a destination or share their experiences with prospective tourists. Tourists seek not only encounters but also memories that forge a meaningful connection with a place. They embody a "narrative attitude," craving stories that fulfil their yearning for satisfaction. This narrative-rich tourism begins with a "pre-tour narrative" that sets the expectations for the destination. While on the journey, the personalisation of this narrative occurs through storytelling, along with the creation of individual narratives through activities such as capturing photographs and purchasing souvenirs. Upon their return ("post-tour"), the narrative experience takes on a more personal dimension by centring on the tourists themselves. Essentially, through this narrative-driven tourism, the bond between tourists and destination deepens, evoking sentiment and significantly increasing the likelihood of return visits.

Cultural Industry

In accordance with Ivanovic's interpretation of the report "Our Creative Diversity" by UNESCO and the World Commission on Culture and Development" (2008:3), the cultural industry is divided into three distinct categories:

1. **Creative Expression**: This category encompasses various forms of creative expression, including oral history, language, literature, performing arts, fine arts, and crafts.
2. **Community Practices**: These practices involve communal activities that contribute to both group and individual welfare and identity. Examples include traditional healing methods, management of natural resources, celebrations, and patterns of social interaction.
3. **Material or Built Forms**: This category encompasses both tangible and intangible aspects of man-made creations, such as sites, buildings, historic city centres, landscapes, arts, and objects.

Ivanovic's interpretation suggests that the cultural industry consists of these three categories, each contributing to the rich tapestry of cultural expression. As previously mentioned, economists have transformed culture, comprising these categories, into commodities. This transformation is evident in the realm of the cultural tourism industry.

When culture becomes intertwined with monetary values, a host of complex issues arise. One prevalent viewpoint suggests that associating cultural elements with monetary worth diminishes their inherent value by rendering them as commodities. This commodification of culture implies that cultural elements are tailored to meet the demands of tourists, with their consumption becoming the central focus of cultural tourism. Such an approach raises concerns about the authenticity of these cultural experiences. This dilemma is an overarching theme within cultural tourism and subsequently narrows the scope of culture's acceptance within the realm of the cultural industry.

The challenge lies in the generalisation of cultural tourism, which stems from the inescapable fusion of cultural and economic realms in the modern era and is determined by capitalist principles. This integration is glaringly evident in the landscape of cultural tourism, where culture has transitioned into a marketable commodity and, as a result, is effectively transformed into a tourist attraction. In essence, the foundation of the cultural industry rests upon the interplay of artistry,

creativity, and economic incentives, all of which have played pivotal roles in shaping the evolution of cultural tourism.

Cultural and Narrative Tourism

The current tourism industry has shifted its focus towards emphasising on cultural tourism. The symbiotic relationship between culture and tourism has been extensively explored, with a significant milestone occurring in 2009 when the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) released its report titled "The Impact of Culture on Tourism." This report unveiled a compelling insight—cultural tourism products influence nearly 40% of global international trips. It also identifies demand and supply factors as the driving forces behind the growing fusion of culture and tourism.

One significant reason for cultural tourism is the intrinsic desire for immersive experiences, coined as "life seeing" rather than mere sightseeing (Raj et al., 2013:5–6). This yearning for genuine experiences fuels the tourist's quest to find expression in various forms, with narrative tourism standing out as a notable supplier of this demand. Curiously, while the OECD report outlines demand factors, it regrettably overlooks narrative tourism's role as a supply factor. This paper endeavours to bridge this gap by presenting a comprehensive conceptual and case-based discussion to underscore the pivotal role of narrative tourism within the realm of cultural tourism.

In cultural tourism, the spotlight is on the diverse cultural encounters that stem from various cultural products that include historical sites, festivals, museums, galleries, and craftsmanship. While cultural tourism traces its origins back to antiquity, its potential garnered significant attention among researchers in the 1970s. The recognition of cultural tourism's allure led to a concerted effort to plan and fortify this form of tourism.

According to McKercher and du Cros (2002), cultural tourism is categorised as a subtype of special interest tourism, in which the foundation for attracting tourists or inspiring travel lies in culture itself. In 1991, the Association for Tourism and Leisure Education (ATLAS) offered two distinct definitions of cultural tourism, as cited by Ivanovic (2008:77):

1. The technical definition of cultural tourism: "All movements of individuals to specific cultural attractions, such as heritage sites, artistic and cultural events, arts and performances, outside their usual place of residence."

2. The conceptual definition of cultural tourism: "The movement of individuals to cultural attractions beyond their typical residence, with the intention of acquiring new information and experiences to fulfil their cultural needs."

The above definitions by ATLAS can be concretely comprehended by intertwining both technical and conceptual approaches. Cultural tourism commences with the movement of individuals or groups from their place of origin to a destination, driven by the desire for new insights and cultural experiences. Within the realm of cultural tourism studies, fundamental queries arise, including the interpretation of "cultural attraction," the significance of a "cultural experience" for tourists, the public's perception of tourism, and the role of cultural tourism. These queries can be dissected through two lenses: the technical approach, often referred to as the "sites-monuments" perspective, which centres on the nature of attractions and cultural products; and the "conceptual activeness" or "process-based" approach, which delves into the motivations and engagements of individuals in cultural tourism (Ivanovic, 2008:78).

Beyond the economic interests associated with cultural attractions, cultural tourism also places strong emphasis on the conservation and preservation of cultural resources. Culture holds immense intrinsic value for communities, so its commercialisation must neither jeopardize nor compromise these values. In essence, supporting cultural tourism equates to supporting the safeguarding of cultural resources.

According to Smith (2003), cultural tourism encompasses six distinct categories:

i. Heritage tourism
ii. Art tourism
iii. Urban cultural tourism
iv. Cultural tourism of the village
v. Tourism of indigenous culture
vi. Contemporary cultural tourism (popular)

These six categories of cultural tourism share a common and fundamental element, which is the narrative. It serves as a versatile medium that enriches each category and imbues tourism with deeper meaning through the tourist's engagement with stories. These stories hold a magnetic appeal for tourists as they offer narrative experiences that become intricately woven into the destinations explored.

Narrative tourism traverses the landscape of the six cultural tourism categories, acting as a bridge between tourists and cultural products. It serves as an experiential industry, in which the essence of experience is distilled through stories. Cultural products function as the very destinations where these narratives come to life and satisfy the quests of curious travellers. Within cultural tourism, travel is interpreted as the pursuit of authentic, novel, and exhilarating experiences. Authenticity, in this context, pertains to the attainment of genuine and real encounters with people and places (Zeppel, 1997:119).

The role of stories and storytelling is pivotal in fulfilling the traveller's quest. Consequently, narrative tourism may even be considered as an additional category within the realm of cultural tourism.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF NARRATIVE TOURISM

Narrative tourism is an emerging paradigm within the broader realm of cultural tourism and centres on the profound impact of stories and storytelling on the tourist experience. This conceptual framework aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of narrative tourism by elucidating on its key components, mechanisms, and implications. Drawing from interdisciplinary perspectives such as cultural studies, psychology, and tourism management, this framework establishes a foundation for exploring the intricate interplay between narratives, destinations, and tourists.

Narrative tourism is predicated on the notion that stories serve as a transformative conduit for tourists to shape their encounters with cultural destinations (Urry, 2002; Cohen, 2010). Narratives are the threads that connect heritage, history, and imagination, enabling tourists to engage with a place on a deeper emotional level (Bruner, 1991; Volo, 2019). This framework encapsulates narrative tourism as an experiential journey wherein stories act as a medium that transports tourists across time and space to foster a sense of connection, authenticity, and exploration.

Components of Narrative Tourism

Just as any other form of tourism, narrative tourism has its own components. According to Bruner (1991:2), narrative tourism comprises three basic components as follows:

1. **Narratives as Cultural Capital**: Narratives embody the cultural capital of a destination through its history, traditions, and identity. These narratives can encompass mythologies, historical events, local legends, and personal

anecdotes, all of which collectively construct a multi-dimensional cultural tapestry.

2. **Tourists and Narratives**: Tourists are both consumers and co-creators of narratives. As consumers, they engage with stories offered by destinations to seek experiential authenticity and emotional resonance. As co-creators, they contribute to the narrative through their interpretations, interactions, and personal experiences.
3. **Storytellers and Storytelling**: Professional storytellers, such as tourist guides, hold the key to unlocking the narrative potential of a destination. Their skilful storytelling infuses life into narratives, making them relatable, engaging, and immersive for tourists.

Mechanism of Narrative Tourism

The mechanism of narrative tourism is divided into three important elements, as described below (Volo, 2019:32):

1. **Phenomenological Experience**: Narrative tourism engenders a phenomenological experience, wherein tourists transcend the ordinary and immerse themselves in a story-induced reality. This immersive encounter heightens the tourists' sensory perceptions so they can live the narrative and not merely hear it.
2. **Emotional Connection**: Narratives evoke emotions by tapping into universal themes of human experiences, such as love, conflict, heroism, and transformation. Emotional resonance deepens the connection between tourists and destinations, leading to enduring memories and loyalty.
3. **Authenticity and Identity**: Narratives enhance the authenticity of cultural destinations by providing insights into local traditions and values. Tourists identify with these narratives, from which they construct their understanding of a place's identity and history.

Implications of Narrative Tourism

Narrative tourism has many positive implications, the following of which are outlined by Pearce (2011:18):

1. **Enhanced Tourist Experience**: Narrative tourism elevates the tourist experience from passive observation to active engagement. Tourists become participants in the narrative, thereby fostering a sense of belonging and personal investment.
2. **Sustainability and Conservation**: Narratives contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage by instilling a sense of responsibility and connection in tourists. The emotional attachment cultivated through narratives encourages sustainable practices and respect for local cultures.
3. **Destination Competitiveness**: Destinations that harness the potential of narrative tourism distinguish themselves in a competitive tourism landscape. Compelling narratives differentiate one destination from another and attract culturally curious tourists who are seeking authentic and transformative experiences.

The conceptual framework of narrative tourism delineates the intricate interplay between narratives, cultural destinations, and tourists. It highlights the narratives' role as cultural capital, tourists' immersion in phenomenological experiences, and the consequential emotional connections that fuel enduring loyalty. The implications span from enhanced tourist experiences to destination competitiveness and sustainability (Pearce, 2011). As narrative tourism takes centre stage, it offers a transformative journey that transcends mere sightseeing and invites tourists to become co-authors of their own stories within the narratives of cultural destinations.

DISCUSSION

The following discussion in the study is focused on Pulau Pangkor and Gunung Santubong and their respective potential in narrative tourism.

Pulau Pangkor, Perak

Pulau Pangkor, also known as Pangkor Island, is situated within the Perak state and has long held the status of a tourist hotspot. Nevertheless, the focus of its tourism has predominantly been centred on the hospitality industry and activities at its beaches and the sea, particularly in Teluk Nipah and Pantai Pasir Bogak (Khirun, 2011; Tan, 2010). However, the current experiences and memories of tourists in Pulau Pangkor fall short in enabling them to fully appreciate and immerse in the island's natural beauty.

To elevate the allure of the landscape, the introduction of narrative tourism holds immense potential.

Narrative tourism stands as a promising avenue for the Perak state government to bolster its cultural tourism landscape. The study undertaken underscores a striking void in purposeful initiatives to harness the power of narrative as a pivotal tourism asset in Pulau Pangkor. While Rehman (1990) has contributed valuable insights into various dimensions of tourism on the island—encompassing its historical background, resort facilities, economic activities, and noteworthy sites—there is a remarkable story embedded within its pages. The chapter dedicated to Din Ketolok (or Din the Peerless) illuminates a folktale that reverberates with heroic deeds and was reverentially passed down by the island's venerable elder, Pak Said Tinggi, who lived to a remarkable age of 103. This narrative serves as a poignant reminder of the cultural richness intrinsic to Pulau Pangkor.

However, these captivating tales are not singular in their existence. Instead, they represent fragments of a larger tapestry of narratives dispersed across Pulau Pangkor. Regrettably, the absence of a comprehensive effort to unite these stories into cohesive and immersive cultural narratives has inadvertently led to a lack of recognition for narrative tourism's potential. The island's cultural treasures, preserved through the ages, remain as untapped resources yearning to be woven into experiential journeys that could enrich the island's cultural tourism offerings. Embracing narrative tourism presents the opportunity not only to celebrate the island's heritage but also to provide tourists with a deeper and more meaningful engagement that transcends mere sightseeing, thus elevating Pulau Pangkor to a truly captivating cultural destination.

Pulau Pangkor harbours a collection of captivating oral narratives that are intricately tied to specific monuments. One such example is the story titled *Kubur Pendekar Kulup Ali* (The Tomb of Kulup Ali, the Warrior), which finds its corresponding monument in Kampung Teluk Gedung, a mere 100 metres from the Dutch Fort. At this location, an intriguing tomb believed to be that of Pendekar Kulup Ali was unearthed, which adds a tangible dimension to the narrative.

In Pulau Pangkor, the intrinsic connection between narratives and monuments holds the potential to create profound, authentic, and immersive experiences for tourists. This dynamic interaction between stories and physical markers not only offers a sense of historical resonance but also infuses the tourist journey with a deeper layer of meaning. The juxtaposition of narratives against tangible sites engenders a multidimensional engagement that transcends mere observation, enabling tourists to forge an emotional and intellectual connection with the island's heritage.



Figure 1 Alleged tomb of Panglima Kulup Ali in Kampung Teluk Gedung.

These narratives, however, do not exist in isolation. Instead, they often form an intricate web of intertwined and interlinked stories, creating a tapestry of historical and cultural narratives that reveal the island's essence. A prime illustration can be found in stories such as *Harimau di Batu Bersurat* (The Tiger on the Historical Rock), *Kubur Pendekar Kulup Ali* (The Tomb of Kulup Ali, the Warrior), and *Lagenda Pulau Tengkorak* (The Legend of Pulau Tengkorak), all of which collectively revolve around a central figure named Pendekar Kulup Ali. Revered as a local hero for his resolute stance against the Dutch colonisation, Pendekar Kulup Ali's legacy resonates across these stories and unites them through a shared historical thread.

Interestingly, amidst this narrative richness, a captivating contrast emerges, which is the Dutch colonisers' endeavour to subvert the spirit of Pendekar Kulup Ali through their counter-narrative. This intricate interplay of stories and counter-stories contributes to the island's cultural mosaic and creates a multifaceted narrative tapestry that encapsulates not only the island's history but also the diverse perspectives that have shaped it.

Upon delving deeper into the rich cultural tapestry of Pulau Pangkor, another layer of narrative interconnection emerges, seamlessly weaving stories, symbols,



Figure 2 Signage for the Historical Rock of Pulau Pangkor.

and historical sites into a captivating mosaic. The story of Pendekar Kulup Ali finds an intriguing resonance in a profound drawing etched onto the Historical Rock at Teluk Gedung, locally known as Batu Bersurat. This imposing rock bears intricate depictions of a tiger engaged in a dramatic encounter with a child. Rooted in local folklore, this tale is intertwined with the vanishing of the son of a Dutch dignitary, a mysterious incident that is believed to have involved a tiger's intervention. However, as with many narratives, alternate versions of this tale come to light, each offering its own divergent perspective.

Within the Dutch rendition, the drawing serves as a sombre memorial to the Dutch dignitary's lost son, whose fate was presumed to be sealed by a fatal encounter with a tiger. In sharp contrast, the Malay narrative imbues this event with a deeper layer of historical context—it presents the Dutch boy's abduction by the Malays as a potent form of protest against the Dutch colonial rule. This act of resistance and the

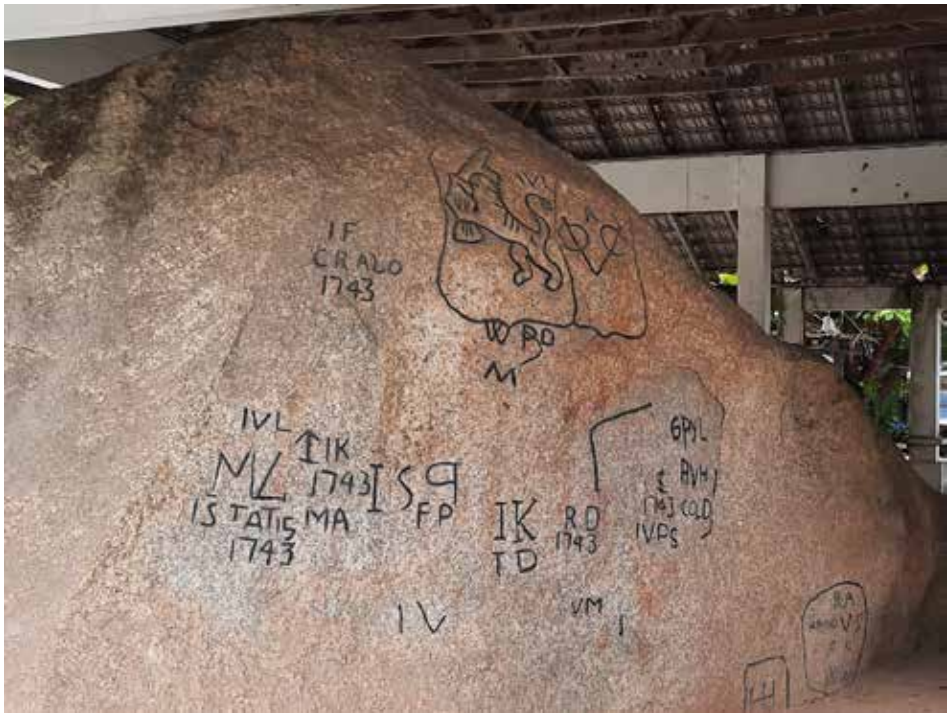


Figure 3 The Historical Rock of Pulau Pangkor.

subsequent portrayal of Pendekar Kulup Ali as a heroic figure signify the enduring spirit of the local community against colonization.

These intricately linked and purposefully intertwined narratives form the groundwork for the creation of a cultural route as an endeavour of paramount importance in nurturing immersive narrative experiences. By forging such a route, Pulau Pangkor could magnify the potential of its narrative tourism. A poignant starting point for this transformative journey is what is now known as the Dutch Fort, which was originally constructed in 1670 and dismantled by the Malays in the same year, and subsequently rebuilt in 1743. The remnants of this fort now stand as a testament to history and as a stage for the story of Pendekar Kulup Ali, one of courage and resistance against colonial forces.

It is noteworthy that the Dutch sought to reshape the narrative of Pendekar Kulup Ali by casting a more favourable light on their own role. However, beneath the layers of manipulation lies the steadfast undercurrents of Malay resilience and the power of storytelling. This intricate web of narratives, symbols, and historical sites speaks of



Figure 4 The Dutch Fort of Pulau Pangkor.
Source: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.

the island's heritage in profound ways, underscoring the significance of establishing cultural routes as conduits that bridge the past with the present. These routes do more than transport tourists; they transcend time, enabling tourists to step into a living narrative that unfurls across Pulau Pangkor's landscapes.

Indeed, the cultural route of Pulau Pangkor offers a captivating journey through a web of interconnected stories, each thoughtfully linked to a corresponding monument. This integration holds immense potential by transforming disparate tales into a cohesive and compelling narrative that has the power to deeply engage tourists through the lens of narrative tourism.

This cultural route serves as a conduit that threads together individual stories like pearls on a necklace, each endowed with its unique significance. The monuments themselves become touchstones of these narratives by breathing life into the tales they represent. As tourists traverse this route, they are seamlessly immersed in a larger tapestry of history, culture, and heritage, which allows them to foster a profound connection that mere sightseeing cannot achieve.

Undoubtedly, the creation of a major narrative through these interwoven stories enhances the overall tourist experience. With each step, tourists are drawn into a captivating chronicle that unfolds across the island's landscapes and monuments. This comprehensive narrative approach not only provides depth and context to individual stories but also creates a richer and more memorable encounter for the

tourists.

The urgency to seize upon this narrative potential cannot be overstated. The cultural route possesses the capacity to reshape Pulau Pangkor's tourism landscape as a destination that does not merely offer attractions but immerses tourists in a living and breathing story. The development of such a route requires thoughtful planning, collaboration, and a commitment to preserving the authenticity of the narratives. By embarking on this endeavour, Pulau Pangkor has the opportunity to elevate its cultural tourism to new heights as a way to establish a legacy that resonates with both current and future generations of tourists.

In summary, the time is ripe to explore and nurture this narrative potential by harnessing the rich tapestry of interconnected stories and monuments to craft an immersive cultural route. By doing so, Pulau Pangkor can stake its claim as a destination that does not merely host tourists but offers them a transformative journey through the heart of its history and culture, thereby setting the stage for an unforgettable narrative tourism experience.

Gunung Santubong, Sarawak

The tourism sector in Sarawak is undergoing significant expansion on multiple fronts. Robust promotional efforts have been undertaken to position Sarawak as an essential destination on every tourist's itinerary. The region has played host to a variety of local and international events, each of which is meticulously crafted to entice tourists to explore and linger within Sarawak's diverse landscapes. Among these pursuits, cultural tourism has emerged as a key focus for the Sarawak state government. This emphasis is notably evident in the concerted attention directed towards cultural events that are centred on longhouses, Iban heritage, and various other ethnic cultures.

Notably, the quest for authenticity in cultural experiences has sparked scholarly interest. Research endeavours, such as the study conducted by Zeppell in 1997, have diligently probed the responses of tourists to the genuineness of cultural encounters. Investigations have been carried out along the Lemanak and Engkari Rivers in order to shed light on the intricate interplay between tourism and cultural authenticity, particularly concerning longhouses and the Iban people.

However, amid these commendable endeavours, there exists a conspicuous gap in the realm of narrative tourism within Sarawak's tourism offerings. While the state has admirably showcased its cultural treasures and harnessed their appeal to tourists, the potential of narrative tourism remains largely untapped. This oversight is a missed opportunity to enhance the immersive nature of tourism experiences and

to foster a deeper connection between tourists and the region's rich history, legends, and heritage.

Sarawak, a captivating Malaysian state, offers a compelling narrative that holds the potential to be harnessed for narrative tourism. One narrative in particular is the realm of Gunung Santubong (Mount Santubong), a district that is steeped in heritage. This narrative revolves around the legendary figures of Puteri Santubong (Princess Santubong) and Puteri Sejinjang (Princess Sejinjang) and is interwoven with the enigmatic presence of Gunung Santubong and Gunung Serapi. Rooted in origins, this tale seeks to provide an explanation for the creation of these iconic mountains, ultimately forming a master narrative that resonates within the heart of Sarawak.

Gunung Santubong, an illustrious mountain situated 35 kilometres north of Kuching, Sarawak, emerges as a symbolic landmark, with its lofty peak soaring 810 meters (approximately 2,658 feet) above sea level. Its tranquil presence, often shrouded in mist and clouds, lends an aura of serenity to its surroundings on the Buntal Peninsula. Similarly, Gunung Serapi, another legendary summit, stands 911 meters (about 2,986 feet) above sea level. Nestled 20 kilometres west of Kuching, it rests within the embrace of the Gunung Matang range.

Originating as a folktale, the saga of Puteri Santubong and Puteri Sejinjang found its voice through oral tradition. Given its oral nature, this narrative has evolved over time by adapting to the varying preferences of its storytellers and audiences. Consequently, multiple versions of the tale exist, yet a widely embraced iteration asserts that these princesses hailed from *kayangan* (heaven), diverging from the lineage of the 18th-century Sultan of Brunei.

Santubong and Sejinjang, both celestial princesses, were dispatched by their King to Earth and tasked with fostering peace in two distinct villages. Initially, camaraderie bound their friendship, but the emergence of a dashing prince prompted a transformation in their relationship. Both princesses were captivated by him, but fate decreed that only one could be his bride. This romantic entanglement ignited a bitter rivalry between them.

As passions escalated, violence ensued, leading to a confrontation where blows were exchanged. Sejinjang wielded a *punder* (a traditional tool), striking Santubong's cheek with force, causing it to crack. In retaliation, Santubong employed her *belidak*, shattering Sejinjang's head into countless fragments that dispersed across the sea, giving birth to islands such as Pulau Kera, Pulau Satang, Pulau Talang-Talang, and Pulau Lakir. Tragically, Santubong succumbed to her injuries.

The King of Kayangan, incensed by the discord between these ethereal beauties, unleashed his divine wrath upon them. Their love-fuelled strife elicited his curse,



Figure 5 Gunung Santubong resembling the reclining Puteri Santubong.
Source: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka Cawangan Sarawak.

transforming Puteri Santubong into Gunung Santubong and Puteri Sejinjang into Gunung Sejinjang. The enduring crack on Santubong's cheek remains a poignant reminder of this pivotal event. Meanwhile, Sejinjang's essence transmuted into a hill, with her upper form, including her head, scattered by the might of the *belidak* (Alynn, 2009).

Crucially, the physical embodiment of these mountains exists, inviting tourists to not only witness their imposing forms but to also delve into the story that precipitated their creation. This narrative experience enriches the tourists' perception of Gunung Santubong, imparting a connection that bridges history, nature, and imagination.

Furthermore, the captivating tale of Puteri Santubong and Puteri Sejinjang has transcended its folkloric roots to become a marketable commodity that bolsters

cultural tourism. The narrative has been adapted into various forms, including film, literature, and animation, increasing its popularity among tourists. However, a challenge arises in retaining the story's spirit within the tourism context. Although a cultural village exists at the mountain's base, it falls short in fully embracing the storytelling potential of Gunung Santubong. The essence of the story demands a skilled professional storyteller to breathe life into it.

In comparison to Pulau Pangkor, Gunung Santubong presents a substantial narrative that is ripe for exploration through narrative tourism. The ascent to the mountain's peak is itself an experiential journey, yet Gunung Santubong's narrative stands strong independently. While the mountain may not necessitate a cultural route, the desire for a more exploratory and immersive cultural experience could spark innovation in the narrative tourism landscape and offer tourists a richer encounter with the enchanting story of Gunung Santubong.

Story, Storytelling, and Tourist Experience: Building Bridges

The master narratives of both Pulau Pangkor and Santubong hold immense potential to captivate tourists by offering them a unique blend of authenticity, novelty, and excitement. The distinction, however, lies in the art of storytelling, the conduit through which these stories are brought to life and etched into the hearts and minds of tourists.

The connection between cultural narratives and tourists is not solely intellectual; it also holds a sentimental aspect that transcends reality and ventures into the realm of imagination. This profound relationship thrives through storytelling, as the interaction between the storyteller and the audience breathes life into the tales. This interaction is particularly potent when facilitated by professional storytellers who have honed their craft to expertly weave narratives that engage, evoke emotions, and immerse listeners in the story's essence.

In the context of cultural and narrative tourism, tourist guides serve as the conduit between the stories and the tourists. Their ability to transform historical and cultural information into compelling narratives can greatly enhance the overall tourist experience. Mastery in the art of storytelling allows tourist guides to not only convey facts but also create a sensory experience. By employing vivid descriptions and evocative language, guides can stimulate the senses of tourists, enabling them to mentally step into the world of the story and experience the atmosphere, scents, and sounds of the narrative.

To optimize the potential of narrative tourism, tourist guides should undergo specialised training to become professional storytellers. As emphasised by Mario

Vargas Llosa (Zipes, 2004), the renowned Latin American writer, the art of storytelling entails embodying the essence of a culture by delving into its history, mythology, and taboos. In the context of narrative tourism, tourist guides who possess such storytelling skills can transform a simple historical account into a captivating journey, allowing tourists to connect with the culture and history on a deeper level.

By investing in training programs that focus on storytelling techniques, tourist guides can become true custodians of the stories, breathing life into the narratives and guiding tourists through a sensory-rich experience. As tourists immerse themselves in the narratives, they forge a connection that transcends time and space, leaving them with lasting memories and a more profound appreciation for the cultural heritage they have encountered.

The master narratives of Pulau Pangkor and Gunung Santubong are valuable cultural assets that can be enriched through the art of storytelling. By cultivating a cadre of skilled tourist guides who are also proficient storytellers, destinations can evoke an environment where stories come to life and tourists gain an unforgettable experience that resonates long after their visit. Through storytelling, the stories themselves are given a voice and the immersive power of narrative tourism is fully realised.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the realm of cultural tourism is characterised by its blend of tangible and intangible goods that are enriched by substantial creative elements. Within this intricate tapestry, narrative tourism is a component that possesses immense potential yet has remained overlooked and even neglected. This research has brought to light the transformative power of stories in shaping the cultural tourism landscape of Pulau Pangkor in Perak and Gunung Santubong in Sarawak, culminating in a heightened cultural experience for tourists in both states. Moreover, it underscores how narrative tourism, once harnessed effectively, has the capacity to flourish within the broader context of cultural tourism.

Narrative tourism finds its foundation in stories, which are the threads that weave together the tapestry of cultural heritage. These stories, coupled with skilful storytelling, hold the power to serve as a wellspring of tourist experience. When stories are artfully crafted and delivered, the phenomenon of phenomenological narrative experience unfolds, satisfying the tourists' innate quest for authentic encounters. In addition to being an informative exchange, the act of storytelling forges a profound connection between destinations and their tourists. This bond transcends the intellectual and penetrates the emotional, creating a loyalty that rests

on the bedrock of shared emotions and experiences.

This research has illuminated the potential of narrative tourism to not only enhance cultural tourism but also fortify the relationship between tourists and destinations. By channelling the narrative potential of places such as Pulau Pangkor and Gunung Santubong, the unique stories embedded within these locales can be leveraged to shape meaningful and memorable encounters for tourists. As tourists become enveloped in the narratives, their emotional investment deepens, resulting in a more enduring connection with the destination.

In essence, storytelling stands as a bridge between the past and the present, local culture and tourist, and imagination and reality. As destinations carry the potency of narrative tourism, storytellers embark on a journey to enrich their cultural offerings, cultivate tourists' lasting emotional bonds, and safeguard their heritage for generations to come. Just as the threads of a story are interwoven to create a captivating narrative, so too are the stories of cultural destinations interwoven with the stories of those who experience them. Through the medium of storytelling, cultural tourism not only thrives but flourishes to imbue each encounter with the magic of narratives that transcend time and space.

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