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Cultural Memory and Narrative Voice: A Discourse Study of Folklore Transmission in Tourism Contexts

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Abstract This study looks at how folklore is created, shared, and changed in the context of tourism, with a focus on the Legenda Batu Kuwung in Serang, Indonesia. It uses narrative discourse analysis to understand how language helps shape cultural meanings, identities, and emotional connections through the retelling of local myths to different groups of people. Data was collected through interviews with local people and tourists, showing how the story's meaning is shaped in different ways. Responses showed how differently people understand the story. Local tourists felt a deep emotional and cultural connection, linking the story to their ancestors and community. International tourists saw the story as a way to understand Javanese beliefs and customs, often looking at it more carefully and thoughtfully. This difference shows how folklore acts as a bridge between cultures, helping people from different backgrounds communicate and share ideas. The study shows that folklore is not just about keeping traditions safe, but also about creating space for cultural conversations and shared identities in modern tourism settings.

Keywords: *Narrative discourse, Intercultural communication, Cultural identity, Language and folklore, Heritage storytelling*

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1. Introduction

Modern tourism is not limited to physical travel but increasingly focuses on the intangible aspects of a destination, including religion, tradition, and local narratives. Among them, folklore plays an important role. More than entertainment, folklore embodies the moral status, unforgettable memories, and cultural character of a society. In many cultural tourism contexts, folklore is not only a means of communication but also a means of communication that goes beyond logic, giving tourists a deeper and more personal perspective on the people and places they encounter (Chan et al., 2025; Leong et al., 2024). As destinations compete for uniqueness, integrating local mythology into tourism narratives has emerged as a strategic way to foster stronger emotional connections between visitors and host communities (Calvi & Hover, 2021; Yen et al., 2023). In this context,

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linguistic aspects play an important role as they can enhance the understanding of cultural meanings, strengthen local identity, and build authentic emotional connections between tourists and the local elements they encounter (Li & Wan, 2025; Machmury, 2023).

Language plays a key role in how folktales are constructed, transmitted, and reinterpreted. Through storytelling or narrative discourse, folktales are linguistically encoded and adapted to suit different cultural audiences, often blending traditional expressions with contemporary storytelling methods (Kasemsarn & Nickpour, 2025; Lyngdoh & Gautam, 2024). Previous studies, such as the one by Ivanovic (2014), have emphasized how discourse and narrative structures serve not only as tools for cultural preservation but also as mechanisms that shape tourist perceptions and expectations. Meanwhile, research by Wirza et al. (2025) highlights the strategic use of language in enabling emotional proximity between tourists and hosts, especially through multilingual or hybrid storytelling formats. This translanguaging process allows locals to co-create meaning with tourists and translate linguistic issues into viable means of cross-cultural communication (Lund et al., 2022; Wirza et al., 2025). At the same time, historical narratives influence the authenticity of the tourist experience and contribute to the construction of cultural identity through discourses (Tian et al., 2020). However, few studies have explicitly explored how linguistic strategies in folktale narration directly mediate emotional, cultural, and identity-based connections within the context of cultural tourism especially in community-based destinations. This leaves a significant research gap that this study aims to address.

This study investigates how the local story of Batu Kuwung in Banten, Indonesia, is mediated linguistically and culturally within tourism. The aim is to explore how folk narrative discourse functions as a site of cultural negotiation between local storytellers and diverse audiences. Using qualitative data collected from semi-structured interviews with domestic and international tourists, this study explores how language constructs cultural meaning and how folklore promotes intercultural understanding and identity formation in heritage tourism destinations.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Cultural Memory

2.1.1. Cultural Memory through Folklore Deconstruction

In the field of cultural tourism, the concept of cultural memory has undergone an epistemological transformation, from being perceived as a static heritage to a dynamic phenomenon that reproduces itself through narrative and symbolic practices. Bukenya (2025) argues that folk memory is a living and constantly evolving form of collective representation, where cultural practices such as myths, legends and local rituals are not only transmitted from generation to generation, but are also adapted by communities in response to social changes and the expectations of new audiences. This process of transformation involves paradoxes, as described by Derrida (1976), in which historical narratives are erased to make way for new forms of interpretation that are more socially, politically and economically productive. This is consistent with Fu et al. (2023) study the Shanghai Memory Project, showing how digital narratives, based on archives, can be used to create alternative materials for more inclusive and participatory cultural memory. Deconstruction in this context is not a disappearance, but rather an important process aimed at revealing hidden layers of meaning and reassembling them in a narrative structure that is acceptable to contemporary audiences.

In fieldwork, as Barreto and Da Costa Frias (2025) point out in their study of Goan folklore, there is a dynamic between preservation and reinvention. Folklore that originally contained local spiritual and moral elements is repackaged in an interpretive format that is more communicative and attractive to tourists. At this point, folklore is a hybrid entity, half traditional culture, half tourist cultural product, occupying the space between memory preservation and narrative commercialization. Therefore, cultural memory through deconstruction not only preserves heritage, but also ensures its survival in the contemporary context.

2.1.2. Cultural Memory through Identity Negotiation

In addition to being a means of preservation, folklore serves as a space for identity negotiation, especially in the context of intercultural encounters between local communities and tourists from all

over the world. Yang's (2012) study of ethnic tourism in Lugu Lake, Yunnan, shows how the Mosuo minority actively reinterprets their identity through storytelling and cultural performances to meet the expectations of tourists. In this process, cultural symbols are no longer considered sacred and closed, and become open means of communication, negotiated through dialogue. This type of identity negotiation requires symbolic flexibility. Traditional stories are not only transmitted in their original form, but they are adapted through word choice, linguistic style, and even visual codes to be understood by a global audience. This is what Chan et al. (2025) on cultural code-switching, a process in which storytellers navigate between two or more systems of meaning to bridge the perceptual gap between the "local" and the "global".

From the perspective of historical storytelling theory (Gee, 2014), stories not only convey historical content or traditions in this context, but also create a framework for a negotiated collective identity. Storytellers act as performance actors who reshape stories according to the context and audience, creating a shared cultural space in which the personal experiences of tourists can come together in conversation with local cultural values. Feldman and Skinner's (2018) study also highlighted the fact that, in the context of cultural intervention, storytellers often act as "gatekeepers", deciding which stories are most relevant and effective to present to a global audience. Therefore, cultural memory in the tourism sector refers not only to the preservation of stories, but also to a process of political representation in which community identities, values, and histories are actively negotiated in interactive and recurrent storytelling practices.

2.2 Narrative Voice Positioning

2.2.1. Narrative Voice as an Instrument of Emotional Resonance

Narrative in the context of cultural tourism is seen not only as a means of conveying information, but also as an affective instrument capable of creating emotional engagement between storytellers and tourists. Tan and Tan (2023) calls this a narrative shift a shift from informative narratives to performative and affective narratives that shape place-making and strengthen destination identity. In a study by Schachtner's (2020), it was found that delivering a narrative containing emotional elements, whether in storytelling style, word choice, or gestures, has the power to create a psychological connection between tourists and the places they visit. This is crucial in building an affective destination image, where tourists not only learn about a destination through its physical description or history, but also through emotional resonance they experience while listening to the story.

Yang et al. (2023) explain that emotional resonance is formed when narratives are delivered authentically and contextually. They emphasize the importance of performativity in storytelling, namely how the narrator's expression, tone of voice, and emotional involvement can trigger empathy in tourists. This aligns with Schachtner's (2020) theory that authenticity is not an inherent attribute of a story, but rather the result of a reciprocal relationship between the storyteller and the listener. A study by Chen and Rahman (2018) supports this, finding that tourist experiences become more profound and memorable when narratives are delivered in a personal and reflective manner. When tourists feel "emotionally connected" to the storyteller, they tend to remember the story longer and even share it in their personal digital narratives (such as reviews, vlogs, or social media). In other words, a strong narrative voice not only enhances the quality of the tourism experience but also extends its long-term impact through the digital dissemination of stories.

2.2.2. Narrative Voice as a Medium of Cultural Mediation

Amidst the multicultural reality of global tourism, storytellers at tourist destinations play a strategic role as cultural mediators. They not only tell stories but also adapt their narrative style to bridge understanding between their home culture and the culture of international audiences. Chan et al. (2025) explain that code-switching in storytelling allows local narratives to be conveyed using more inclusive symbols and language styles without losing their authentic value. In Mahendra (2024) study of Bali, storytellers and local cultural practitioners consciously reconstructed their cultural image to meet tourists' expectations of spirituality and exoticism, while still avoiding stereotyping. A similar point is

evident in Pariong's (2018) study, which critiques the notion of pure authenticity and emphasizes that authenticity should be understood as a symbolic negotiation process, not a fixed substance.

This practice of cultural mediation also enables cultural diplomacy. Feldman and Skinner (2018) points out that in the process of cultural storytelling, tour guides act as cultural brokers, shaping tourists' perceptions of the communities they visit. The narrative voice becomes a tool for shaping the tourism imaginary, or collective imagination of a place, which then determines how tourists evaluate and experience the destination. Thus, the position of the narrative voice not only determines the audience's emotional response but also shapes the structure of intercultural communication that underpins the success of the tourism experience. This makes storytelling not merely an artistic or educational activity, but also a symbolic strategy for strengthening identity, reproducing cultural memory, and building bridges of understanding between local communities and the global world.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

The study included 12 people, both local and international tourists, who had visited the Batu Kuwung site in Serang, Banten, Indonesia, between April and June 2024. Participants were chosen using a purposive sampling method (Creswell & Cresswell, 2023) to get a wide range of views and stories about the folklore. The group had the following characteristics:

- Age: Between 21 and 55 years old
- Gender: 7 males and 5 females
- Education: 5 students at university, 4 with undergraduate degrees, and 3 with postgraduate degrees
- Nationality: 8 Indonesian visitors and 4 international tourists from Germany, Japan, Malaysia, and the Netherlands.

All participants were visiting the site for the first time and chose to take part on their own. Ethical approval was obtained, and pseudonyms were used to keep their identities private.

3.2. Instrument

The main tool used to collect data was a semi-structured interview guide aimed at helping participants share their personal stories and reflections. The guide had some open-ended questions that encouraged people to talk about their experiences and what they thought about the Batu Kuwung legend. Some of the questions asked during the interviews were:

"Can you tell me about your experience of hearing the Batu Kuwung legend at the site?"
"What parts of the story did you find most interesting or meaningful? Why? "
"How do you think your culture affected how you understood the story?"
"Did the way the story was told help you connect with the place? If so, how? "
"Were there any parts of the story that you found hard to understand or interpret?"

Interviews were done in either Bahasa Indonesia or English, depending on what the participants were comfortable with.

3.3. Procedure

The study used a qualitative approach based on an interpretivist view of the world. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews at the Batu Kuwung site. Each interview lasted from 30 to 60 minutes and was recorded with the participants' permission.

The data was analyzed using these steps:

- Transcription and Coding: The interviews were written down exactly as they were spoken and then analyzed using themes with the help of NVivo software. Common themes like emotion,

memory, identity, and new interpretations of the story were found and labeled (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

- Discourse Analysis: These themes were studied using narrative discourse theory (Gee, 2014) and cultural semiotics. This helped understand how the folklore was structured in language, how it was framed with symbols, and how people felt about it.
- Comparative Interpretation: Responses from local and international participants were compared to find out how different cultures interpreted the story. This was done using frameworks from intercultural communication (Lund et al., 2022).

This approach helped researchers see how visitors create stories together and how language works as a way to pass on culture, and also as a place where people talk and agree on things.

4. Results

This study identified four main themes from the participants' responses regarding their experiences engaging with the folklore of Batu Kuwung. The themes reflect how cultural meaning is constructed, transmitted, and emotionally internalized by visitors through narrative discourse. The themes are: (1) Narrative Immersion, (2) Cultural Resonance, (3) Interpretive Flexibility, and (4) Emotional Place Attachment. Each theme is discussed below.

Table 1
Themes Found from Visitors' Experiences with Batu Kuwung Folklore

No	Theme	Definition	Analysis
1	Narrative Immersion	How many tourists get fully involved and engaged with the storytelling experience.	Looked at how visitors describe their level of involvement and imagination during the story.
2	Cultural Resonance	How visitors feel about the cultural values in the folklore and their emotional reactions.	Checked by looking at what tourists say about how the story connects to local culture and their identity.
3	Interpretive Flexibility	Different ways tourists understand the legend, depending on their own culture and background.	Studied by comparing how local and international tourists interpret the story differently.
4	Emotional Place Attachment	The emotional connection and meaningful feelings tourists develop with the site through stories.	Measured by looking at emotions like awe, nostalgia, and empathy that visitors show towards the place.

4.1. Narrative Immersion

Narrative immersion represents the extent to which visitors become profoundly engaged in the storytelling experience. Participants vividly described their immersive encounters with the folklore narrative surrounding Batu Kuwung. One local participant remarked, *"When the guide began to tell the legend, it felt like I was transported to another era, I could almost picture the scenes clearly. It was magical, like stepping inside a storybook."* Another local participant similarly emphasized, *"The details, the emotions, and how the story unfolded made me forget the outside world for a moment."* These reflections underscore the significant role of narrative discourse in shaping tourists' overall experiences at the site. Folklore thus functioned not merely as background context but as an active mediator in the visitors' engagement, effectively situating tourists within the mythical narrative itself. One Dutch visitor further illustrated this phenomenon by noting, *"I initially came for the hot springs, but the story about the prince and the sacred stone made it magical, it felt like I was in the middle of a legend."* These findings align with prior studies highlighting the immersive potential of narrative tourism, where storytelling actively fosters a multi-sensory and imaginative visitor experience (Chan et al., 2025; Leong et al., 2024).

4.2. Cultural Resonance

Cultural resonance refers to how visitors perceive, interpret, and relate to the cultural values embedded within folklore narratives. Participants demonstrated varied interpretations reflective of their cultural backgrounds. For instance, a local tourist emphasized a strong sense of identification, stating, *"This legend has been part of our village history. It reflects our ancestors' values of humility and respect toward nature."* Conversely, the international participant from Germany articulated a perspective of cultural curiosity and appreciation, remarking, *"For me, the legend was fascinating because it gave me insights into Javanese beliefs and cultural norms, something quite distinct from my culture. I felt a deep respect for the community through this story."* Such statements illustrate how folklore narratives serve as vehicles for intercultural communication, fostering mutual understanding and exchange between visitors of diverse backgrounds. Indeed, the Batu Kuwung legend evoked a strong sense of cultural familiarity among local visitors, while simultaneously offering a gateway to cultural exploration and discovery for international tourists. Elements within the narrative, particularly those relating to sacredness, nature, and royalty, were decoded differently depending on the tourists' cultural reference points. Locals primarily connected the story with ancestral reverence and moral teachings, whereas foreign tourists saw it as an intriguing entry point to understanding Javanese cosmology. These findings align with previous studies asserting that folklore narratives function effectively as semiotic bridges, enabling meaningful intercultural dialogue and identity reflection in tourism contexts (Lyngdoh & Gautam, 2024; Yen et al., 2023).

4.3. Interpretive Flexibility

Interpretive flexibility illustrates the varying ways in which participants constructed meanings around the Batu Kuwung legend, influenced by their personal backgrounds, cultural frameworks, and individual expectations. Although the narrative presented to tourists was uniform, interpretations diverged significantly, highlighting the dynamic and co-creative nature of folklore discourse in tourism. A participant from Malaysia highlighted this interpretive diversity by stating, *"I interpreted the Batu Kuwung legend as a cautionary tale about pride, but my Indonesian friend saw it more as a spiritual message about human connection with nature."* Similarly, the Dutch visitor expressed appreciation for the openness of the narrative, noting, *"The story was intriguing but open-ended, allowing me to think about it from an ecological perspective. I liked how it was flexible enough to incorporate my own ideas."* Such perspectives exemplify how narrative meaning in tourism contexts is actively co-constructed, involving both narrators and listeners in an ongoing interpretive dialogue. Participants interpreted the folklore through different lenses, romantic, spiritual, and ecological, highlighting the inherently polysemic nature of narratives when communicated across diverse audiences. These findings are consistent with recent scholarship, which emphasizes the collaborative and context-dependent character of narrative meaning-making processes in heritage and cultural tourism settings.

4.4. Emotional Place Attachment

Emotional place attachment underscores the profound emotional responses elicited by folklore narratives, contributing significantly to visitors' meaningful connections with the site. Participants consistently described experiencing strong emotional impacts through their engagement with the Batu Kuwung legend. For example, Germany participant reflected, *"After hearing the legend, I felt connected emotionally to Batu Kuwung. It's no longer just a beautiful place; it's somewhere special with deep significance."* Similarly, another participant emphasized the lingering emotional resonance, stating, *"The narrative stayed with me even after leaving, I felt a genuine sense of nostalgia and attachment to this place."* These testimonies illustrate the powerful role storytelling plays in deepening visitors' affective bonds with destinations. Further, repeated exposure to the legend through various interpretive formats, including tour guides, informational signage, and local community performances, strengthened participants' emotional engagement. One Japan visitor notably expressed, *"I didn't expect to feel so moved. The story stayed with me even after I left it's more than a tourist spot now."* Such responses affirm that emotionally rich narratives, particularly within heritage contexts, enhance the depth of place attachment and augment the cultural significance of tourist sites. These findings resonate with prior studies that emphasize narrative-driven emotional engagement as critical to fostering

profound visitor connections and enhancing the perceived authenticity and value of cultural tourism experiences (Lund et al., 2022).

4.5. A Comparison of Local and International Tourist Perceptions

The Batu Kuwung folklore demonstrates its strength as a narrative tool that captures the attention of both national and international tourists. Local visitors often express a deep immersion, stating that the legend transported them to another era, evoking vivid imagery and emotional connection. For international tourists, the storytelling becomes an imaginative gateway, turning a visit to the hot springs into an experience embedded in local legend. While both groups felt a sense of enchantment, national tourists associated the story with familiar historical and cultural contexts, while international visitors were drawn to the novelty and fantasy of the narrative (see Table 2).

Table 2
Summary Comparison of Local and International Tourist Perceptions on Batu Kuwung Folklore

Theme	National Tourist Statements	International Tourist Statements	Comparative Insight
1. Narrative Immersion	– "When the guide began to tell the legend, it felt like I was transported to another era. I could almost picture the scenes clearly. It was magical, like stepping inside a storybook." – "The details, the emotions, and how the story unfolded made me forget the outside world for a moment."	– "When the guide started telling the story, I felt like I was in the past." – I initially came for the hot springs, but the story about the prince and the sacred stone made it magical; it felt like I was in the middle of a legend."	Both groups experienced strong immersion, but national tourists tended to associate the story with collective memory, while international visitors focused on imaginative engagement.
2. Cultural Resonance	– "This legend is part of our history and reflects the values of our ancestors." – "I felt proud because the story has been passed down through generations."	– "For me, the legend was fascinating because it gave me insights into Javanese beliefs and cultural norms, something quite distinct from my culture. I felt a deep respect for the community through this story." –"I appreciated the harmony between humans and nature."	National tourists saw the story as a mirror of identity and moral values, while international tourists approached it as a gateway to cultural learning.
3. Interpretive Flexibility	– "I interpreted the story as a spiritual message about human humility." – "For me, it's a reminder not to go against nature's will."	– "I interpreted the Batu Kuwung legend as a cautionary tale about pride, but my Indonesian friend saw it more as a spiritual message about human connection with nature." – "The story was intriguing but open-ended, allowing me to think about it from an ecological perspective. I liked how it was flexible enough to incorporate my own ideas."	Interpretations varied depending on cultural backgrounds. Locals emphasized moral or religious meaning, while international visitors explored ecological or philosophical views.

4. Emotional Place Attachment	– "The narrative stayed with me even after leaving. I felt a genuine sense of nostalgia and attachment to this place." – "The legend reminded me of my hometown, it felt nostalgic and personal."	– "After hearing the story, I felt emotionally attached to this place." – After hearing the legend, I felt connected emotionally to Batu Kuwung. It's no longer just a beautiful place; it's somewhere special with deep significance	Locals connected emotionally through heritage and identity, while international tourists developed affective bonds through the emotional power of the narrative.

In terms of cultural resonance, local tourists viewed the legend as an embodiment of ancestral values and historical pride. The narrative is seen as a living heritage that connects them to their cultural identity. In contrast, international tourists approached the story as a valuable opportunity for cultural learning. They appreciated the insight into Javanese beliefs and the underlying messages of harmony between humans and nature. This distinction shows that folklore functions both as a reaffirmation of identity for locals and a cultural bridge for outsiders.

The interpretive flexibility of the Batu Kuwung legend further illustrates its cross-cultural appeal. While local visitors interpreted the story through spiritual and moral frameworks, emphasizing humility and respect for nature, international tourists offered more philosophical and ecological readings. Some saw it as a cautionary tale about pride, while others appreciated the open-endedness that allowed for personal interpretation. This difference reflects the influence of cultural background on meaning-making processes, demonstrating how the same story can resonate differently across audiences.

Emotional place attachment emerged as another shared theme among both tourist groups, though the sources of emotional connection differed. Local visitors expressed nostalgia, relating the story to memories of their hometowns or family traditions. The legend seemed to reawaken a sense of belonging and cultural continuity. For international tourists, the emotional connection stemmed from the affective power of the story itself. They described how the narrative transformed Batu Kuwung from a picturesque destination into a site of personal and emotional significance.

This comparative insight reveals that folklore does more than entertain; it becomes a multi-layered cultural experience. It evokes memory, emotion, and reflection, allowing different audiences to engage with the story in personally meaningful ways. For local audiences, the story reinforces cultural continuity and identity. For international tourists, it opens up a path of cultural exploration and empathy. Despite their different interpretations, both groups reported a strong attachment to the place, validating the emotional efficacy of cultural storytelling in tourism contexts. Overall, the Batu Kuwung case illustrates the power of narrative heritage as a tourism asset. Folklore, when presented effectively, enhances the visitor experience by engaging cognitive, emotional, and cultural dimensions. It creates not only entertainment but also a meaningful connection between people and place. As destinations seek to promote sustainable and authentic tourism, leveraging local legends like Batu Kuwung can help foster both pride in local communities and deeper intercultural understanding among global travelers. This underscores the importance of storytelling as a strategic element in cultural tourism development.

5. Discussion

The analysis confirms that the Batu Kuwung folklore can indeed be reimagined for cultural tourism through deliberate deconstruction. In this study, we set out to explore how the local legend's narrative is reconstructed and reinterpreted for tourism development under a cultural-deconstruction lens. The goal was to bridge the traditional tale with contemporary tourist expectations by breaking down its plot, characters, and symbols (a Derridean approach) and then reassembling them into new storylines. By doing so, we explicitly aimed to create tourism narratives that are both meaningful and rooted in community values while meeting the needs of modern visitors. In short, the study's purpose was to show how Legenda Batu Kuwung can be reframed, "deconstructed" so that its cultural heritage informs innovative tourism marketing without losing its original identity.

Our main findings reveal that deconstruction yields a layered narrative discourse that strongly resonates with current tourism trends. In practice, dismantling the legend's story structure allowed the emergence of more inclusive interpretations that appealed to diverse audiences. For example, reinterpreting the legend to emphasize its moral lessons (rather than only its mystical aspects) boosted tourists' sense of narrative authenticity. In fact, Lyngdoh and Gautam (2024) similarly found that revitalizing folk narratives significantly increased perceptions of authenticity and destination appeal. Our qualitative data mirror this: tourists reported that hearing the complete, contextualized tale made the experience feel more genuine and unique. Involving community members in storytelling also proved important. As Kasemsarn and Nickpour (2025) note, integrating indigenous voices is instrumental in enhancing narrative authenticity and cultural relevance. In our case, the inclusion of local interpretations (e.g., a village elder's moral reading of the Batu Kuwung story) strengthened the authenticity of the reinterpretation. Concurrently, we observed enhanced emotional place attachment: our tourists formed a stronger bond with the site once they understood its cultural context. In other words, the deconstructed narrative not only felt truer to the community but also moved visitors emotionally, confirming that carefully crafted storytelling fosters both authenticity and affective engagement.

The results also highlight intercultural and branding dynamics inherent in narrative deconstruction. By recasting the legend's discourse, the new storyline became accessible to outsiders and facilitated cultural exchange. International visitors in particular responded strongly, supporting the idea that folklore-based interpretation can be an intercultural bridge. In line with this, recent work on heritage storytelling emphasizes marketing potential; for example, a Malaysian study found that heritage narratives increased destination appeal and emotional connection by weaving local lore into tourism experiences (Lee, 2024). Our findings parallel this: when the Batu Kuwung legend was retold with contemporary relevance, it not only preserved local identity but also enhanced the destination's image. Moreover, engaging local stakeholders proved key. As Andrianti and Lailam (2019) argue, collaborative storytelling (including via social media) can activate local community participation and showcase indigenous wisdom, making tourists feel more at home. In our case, storytelling workshops with residents enriched the narrative, and visitors sensed that they were part of a shared cultural dialogue. Overall, the study confirms that heritage storytelling as an interplay of narrative discourse and community voice both strengthens destination branding and promotes intercultural understanding.

Figure 1

Narrative Deconstruction Framework for Folklore-Based Tourism Development

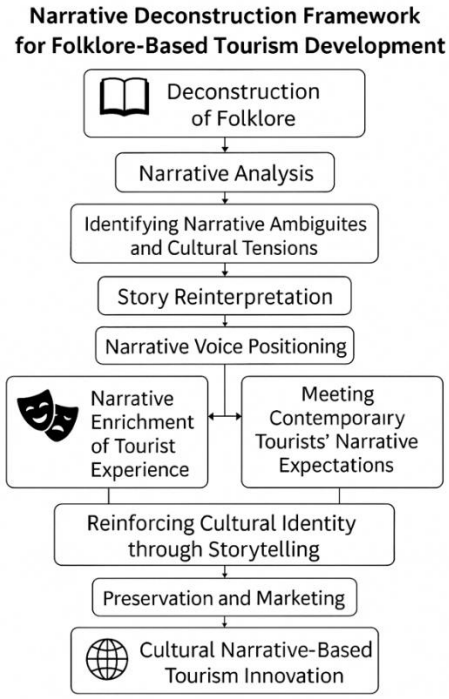

Figure 1 summarizes our conceptual model and exemplifies these processes. The flowchart begins with "Deconstruction of Folklore" and proceeds through "Narrative Analysis" and "Identification of Ambiguities," culminating in "Story Reinterpretation" which serves as a pivotal element in shaping how stories are conveyed to tourists, ultimately guiding the trajectory of their engagement and response to the narrative experience. Notably, this is followed by "Narrative Voice Positioning," which subsequently splits into two parallel streams: one leading to "Enrichment of Tourism Experience" and the other to "Responding to Modern Tourists' Needs." This bifurcation visually underscores a key finding that reframed narratives must simultaneously deliver emotional authenticity and meet contemporary expectations. The final steps, "Supporting Cultural Preservation" and "Destination Marketing," show how the reworked legend is leveraged: arrows from the new narrative toward marketing strategies indicate that each element of the story (for example, its moral lessons and symbols) becomes a tool for branding the destination. In effect, the figure embodies our argument that deconstructed folklore can both preserve heritage and drive sustainable tourism. For example, the dual arrows reflect the insight that reinterpretation bridges the gap between tradition and the demands of today's tourists, producing an immersive and authentic visitor experience. By mapping the steps from analysis to promotion, the image concretely links our textual analysis to practical strategy, reinforcing calls in the literature for structured narrative tourism frameworks.

Figure 1 shows the conceptual flow of Cultural Deconstruction-Based Tourism Development developed in this study. The model shows how the deconstruction of folklore, in this case, the Legend of Batu Kuwung, can produce a new tourism narrative that enriches the tourist experience, strengthens the destination identity, responds to the needs of modern tourists, and supports cultural preservation, all of which lead to destination marketing strategies and sustainable tourism development. The following is an explanation of each component in the conceptual model. This study introduces a new concept in tourism development based on cultural deconstruction, illustrated through the "Legend of Batu Kuwung." By employing a deconstructive approach, this study examines and reinterprets folklore to uncover new dimensions and perspectives that can enrich the tourism narrative. This not only broadens the understanding of folklore but also offers a more authentic and meaningful experience for tourists. This concept shows how tourism can contribute to cultural preservation while meeting the needs of modern tourists for an immersive and reflective experience. The Cultural Deconstruction-Based Tourism Development Model, as illustrated, demonstrates the flow from reinterpreting folklore, forming a destination's identity and image, responding to tourist needs, to supporting cultural preservation. In conclusion, this study offers new insights into how folklore and tourism can be mutually beneficial, with a focus on diversity of interpretations and cultural preservation at the center of sustainable and ethical tourism development.

These findings have clear implications for culture-based tourism development and local heritage preservation. First, they suggest that destinations should treat local legends as co-creatable assets: by systematically analyzing and reimagining folklore, tourism planners can craft unique offerings that still root visitors in genuine culture. In practice, this means training guides to tell the Batu Kuwung story in its fuller form (including its moral and historical context) and designing interpretive media that highlight local values. Such narrative enrichment makes the tourism experience more meaningful (as Dorling and Rees (2003) observe, a deeper cultural context enriches visitor engagement). Second, our model implies a roadmap for marketing strategy: by embedding heritage elements into promotional narratives, destinations can attract interest while also educating tourists. For example, integrating the legend into signage and media rather than leaving it as a standalone tale ensures that the folklore supports cultural preservation as shown in Figure 1. This aligns with sustainable tourism goals, since it turns storytelling into a form of intangible heritage protection: tourists become indirect custodians of the legend's meaning. As our model shows, the same narrative elements that captivate visitors can reinforce local identity (through the "Supporting Cultural Preservation" branch) and enhance competitiveness (through targeted "Destination Marketing"). In sum, the research implies that a deconstruction-based storytelling strategy allows folklore to function as both an educational resource and a marketable attraction, thereby advancing cultural tourism without eroding authenticity.

Future research should build on this model in several ways. Empirical testing is a priority; for example, intervention studies or surveys could measure whether telling the deconstructed legend actually

increases tourist satisfaction, loyalty, or understanding. Marques et al. (2025) note that their findings require further exploration and testing within the international Generation Z market, and similarly, we recommend piloting the model with different demographic and cultural groups (e.g., youth travelers, foreign visitors). It would also be valuable to compare the Batu Kuwung case with other local legends to assess generality. In line with Kasemsarn and Nickpour (2025), we further suggest involving key stakeholders such as community leaders, tour operators, and digital content creators in future studies. Participatory research could refine the framework and examine how technology (e.g., digital storytelling apps or VR experiences) might extend narrative deconstruction. Finally, scholars might quantitatively investigate the role of narrative discourse: for instance, experiments could vary how a story is told (the discourse form) to see effects on intercultural communication and emotional attachment. Such work would deepen our understanding of heritage storytelling as a dynamic, co-creative process that sustains local culture even as it innovates for tourism.

For the further development of cultural deconstruction-based tourism, it is recommended that tourism stakeholders, including the government, destination managers, and local communities, collaborate more closely to preserve and promote folklore as a cultural asset. It is essential to ensure that the interpretation and presentation of folklore in the tourism context are done in a manner that respects its origins and original meaning and involves local communities in this process. This suggestion also emphasizes the need for Education and training for tour guides and tourism workers on the importance of cultural preservation and how to communicate it to tourists. Finally, it is hoped that further research will examine the potential for other cultural deconstructions in the context of tourism, exploring more deeply how narratives and folklore can be practical tools in cultural preservation and sustainable, responsible tourism development.

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