

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Study

The rapid development of digital technology has driven innovation in tourism promotion, particularly through short film, which are considered more effective as they deliver information while creating emotional experiences. Bakti and Marpaung (2024) state that short film marketing strategies significantly increase public interest and expand the reach of destination information through digital platforms. In line with this, film as an audiovisual medium (Effendy, 1986) plays an important role in promotion through engaging visual storytelling. Wardana, Satria, & Yasa (2025) also explain that cinematic promotional videos can build positive perceptions through visual quality, composition, and narrative, allowing audiences to experience destinations virtually. Therefore, short films are a promising promotional strategy in the digital era.

The implementation of audiovisual promotion through short films is particularly relevant for areas with strong tourism potential, such as Semarang Regency, which offers diverse attractions including natural tourism, tourist villages, and historical and cultural sites. Based on official data from Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Semarang (2025), domestic tourist visits from January to December 2025 reached more than 6.3 million trips (Tourism Development of Semarang Regency, December 2025), indicating continuous growth and a significant contribution to the local economy. However, this increase in tourist visits has not been matched by the optimal development of digital promotion across all tourist destinations. Several studies indicate that tourism promotion development in Semarang Regency still faces various challenges. Gulo and Pranoto (2025) reveal that digital promotion strategies in the Bukit Cinta Rawa Pening area are still not optimal due to limitations in human resources, budget constraints, and the insufficient utilization of digital media to reach a wider audience. In addition, Widadijo and Therry (2024) state that the promotion of historical tourism in the

Semarang region still largely relies on conventional media, highlighting the need for innovation in visual promotional media that better aligns with the media consumption habits of audiences in the digital era. This condition indicates a gap between the strong tourism potential and the effectiveness of the promotional media used, particularly in the utilization of audiovisual media that is more communicative and engaging.

Based on these conditions, there is a need for promotional media that not only delivers destination information but also builds emotional engagement with the audience through an engaging narrative approach. Budiarto (2011) defines tourism promotion as a marketing activity aimed at providing information, influencing, persuading audiences, and expanding market reach to encourage visits. Therefore, the short film *Leave* is developed as a digital promotional medium featuring two tourist destinations in Semarang Regency, namely Fort Willem I Ambarawa and Rawa Pening. The film uses a narrative-driven storytelling approach that depicts the journey of an individual seeking new experiences to escape the pressure of urban life and eventually discovering meaningful experiences through tourism exploration.

In selecting tourism destinations for the development of the short film “Leave”, Fort Willem I Ambarawa, and Rawa Pening were specifically chosen because both destinations represent two different tourism categories in Semarang Regency, namely historical tourism and natural tourism, which provide strong visual potential for audiovisual promotion. Fort Willem I Ambarawa was selected due to its historical significance as one of the Dutch colonial heritage sites in Central Java and its distinctive colonial architecture, which offers educational value while creating a visually unique setting that supports cinematic storytelling (Nurmala & Arafat, 2024). Meanwhile, Rawa Pening was chosen because it is one of the major natural tourism attractions in Semarang Regency, recognized for its panoramic lake landscape surrounded by mountains and its ecological as well as economic importance for the surrounding communities. Research by Prawesti, Paramita, Wardana, and Sarja (2022) explains that Rawa Pening possesses strong potential to

be continuously developed as a nature-based tourism destination due to its landscape attractiveness and tourism value. The combination of these two destinations allows *Leave* to present a more diverse representation of tourism in Semarang Regency while strengthening the visual narrative through the integration of historical and natural elements within a single promotional medium.

In promotional strategy, identifying the target audience is an important aspect to ensure that messages are effectively delivered. According to Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan (2017), audience segmentation is a fundamental element of marketing communication as it allows messages to be tailored according to the characteristics and needs of the target market. The short film *Leave* targets a broad audience, particularly young adults and working individuals who are interested in travel experiences and destination exploration. The storyline, which portrays an individual experiencing exhaustion due to a stressful work environment, is designed to build emotional engagement and relatability with audiences who share similar experiences. Therefore, the promotion of Fort Willem I Ambarawa and Rawa Pening is expected to be more effective in increasing tourist interest.

As a reinforcement of the promotional message delivery, the short film *Leave* is also designed with English subtitles to expand its audience reach, particularly to international viewers. The use of subtitles allows information about tourist destinations in Semarang Regency to be accessed by a wider audience without language barriers, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of international promotion. In addition, for local audiences, subtitles also provide additional benefits by improving dialogue comprehension, clarifying messages, and enhancing the overall viewing experience. Thus, subtitles function not only as a language translation tool but also as a supporting element in strengthening audiovisual communication and expanding the impact of tourism promotion.

1.2 Research Question

The following discussion of research problems is necessary so that the implementation of this research has a clear direction and structured focus:

1. How is the pre-production process of creating the short film “Leave” to promote tourist destinations in Semarang?
2. How is the stakeholder feedback on the short film “Leave” as promotional media for tourist destinations in Semarang?

1.3 Research Objectives

The purpose of this research is intended to guide the research process methodically with reference to the problem formulation. The following are the objectives of this research:

1. To describe the pre-production process in creating the short film “Leave” as a promotional media for tourist destinations in Semarang.
2. To identify stakeholder feedback on the short film “Leave” as promotional media for tourist destinations in Semarang.

1.4.1 Significance of the Study

In order to have specific objectives, this research is expected to make a significant contribution both theoretically and practically. The following are some of the benefits of this research:

Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of knowledge related to audiovisual media production, particularly in understanding the pre-production process of short film development using the Research and Development (R&D) method for tourism promotion purposes. In addition, this study expands academic discussion regarding the use of narrative-driven storytelling as an approach in digital tourism promotion, especially in integrating promotional objectives with cinematic elements to create emotional engagement with audiences. The findings of this research are also expected to

serve as a reference for future studies related to film production, digital marketing communication, and audiovisual-based tourism promotion.

Practically, this research provides an example of creative promotional media that can be utilized to introduce tourism destinations through short films as an alternative to conventional promotional strategies. The development of the short film *Leave* demonstrates how audiovisual storytelling can effectively promote tourism destinations, increase public awareness, and attract audience interest through more engaging visual communication. Furthermore, the feedback obtained from stakeholders and respondents throughout the product testing process can serve as evaluation material for improving future tourism promotional media, particularly in the development of more innovative and audience-oriented audiovisual content.

1.5 Output of the Research

The output of this research is a 17-minute short film titled “Leave”, which showcases tourist destinations in Semarang Regency, specifically Fort Willem I Ambarawa and Rawa Pening Lake. The attractions are presented through a combination of narrative storytelling and visual representations. The film were uploaded to YouTube as promotional material to increase awareness and encourage more tourists to visit these destinations.