

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

In the midst of the ever-evolving digital era, the world of tourism is experiencing a significant shift in promotional strategies. According to Utama (2017), digital promotion allows for two-way contact and user-generated content that enhances destination branding, it has changed the paradigm of marketing communication in Indonesia's tourism industry. This trend has prompted tourism players to rethink their promotional approaches, especially in conveying the attractiveness of destinations through media that can evoke emotion and imagination (Hudson & Ritchie, 2006). One approach that is increasingly receiving attention is the utilization of film as a medium for tourism promotion. Movies have the power to shape perceptions, build images, and create emotional attachments between the audience and the locations shown (Beeton, 2016). More than just visualization, films can bring a place to life through narrative, characters, and atmosphere. Therefore, movies become a strategic tool in promoting destinations in a deep and meaningful way (Connell, 2012).

Promoting tourism is essential for affecting the opinions and choices of tourists. It describes deliberate attempts to position and communicate a place in order to draw tourists, develop destination branding, and promote economic development (Morrison, 2013). Film has emerged as one of the most successful mediums for promoting tourism in Indonesia. In this context, Films have proven to be an effective tool for tourism promotion by inspiring real-world travel through emotional narratives and captivating visuals. The example film “*Laskar Pelangi*” significantly increased tourist arrivals to Belitung Island, demonstrating the power of “movie-induced tourism” as a strategic branding method (Wijaya & Rosikha, 2020).

Semarang, as one of Indonesia historical and cultural centers, is a destination that has tremendous potential to be used as a story setting in a film. Semarang is not only geographically significant as the capital of Central Java Province, but also rich in historical heritage, cultural diversity, and strong local values (Pratiwo, 2010). The city represents a hub between past and present, between local and colonial culture, and between memories and modern transformation (Sari, 2024). The choice of Semarang in this film is not without reason. The city has many layers of stories that have yet to be fully explored. Behind its old buildings and distinctive city atmosphere, there are narratives about people, encounters, separation, and history that still resonate in the lives of its citizens. The historical value of the *Kota Lama* and its buildings, which display unique splendor and beauty, have attracted many parties to develop it as a cultural tourism asset (Yuliati, 2019). Through its blend of architectural heritage and dynamic urban life, Semarang offers a unique cinematic landscape that holds potential for storytelling grounded in cultural emotion and historical depth.

This final project produced a short film titled “Whispers of Semarang: A Reunion Tale Set in Semarang's Soul,” which raises the idea that Semarang is not only worth seeing but also worth hearing, like whispers of the past echoing in the city's old spaces. The word “Whispers” is used to describe vague but lasting memories; small voices from history and human relationships that are revived through emotional encounters. On the other hand, the phrase “Semarang's Soul” indicates that this film presents Semarang as a character with feelings and personality, not just as a place. The film's story focuses on a group of friends who spent their youth in Semarang. Each of them brings their own stories, internal conflicts, and thoughts about life when they meet. The theme of reunion carries emotions, nostalgia, regret, happiness, and hope.

According to Hudson and Ritchie (2009), the emotional appeal derived from narrative experiences can trigger long-term loyalty to a place. This shows that effective tourism promotion strategies not only provide information but also create lasting experiences for the audience. The goal is to showcase the location and make the audience feel like they are there. The decision to use short films as a medium is

influenced by other creative and technical factors. Short films allow for concise and focused narratives, and they can reach a wide digital audience. Short films spread quickly on social media and online platforms such as YouTube and Instagram. They are also flexible and artistic, allowing you to see the cinematic side of a city in a more intimate and personal way.

The short film “Whispers of Semarang: A Reunion Tale Set in Semarang’s Soul” will be produced using Research and Development by Borg and Gall (1983) for tourism promotion. By applying this method, the film production follows a research-informed approach starting from preliminary research, development, expert validation, and limited trials. Research will be conducted to explore in depth the various tourist destinations in Semarang City, including *Kota Lama*, Blenduk church, Spiegel, *Titik Nol KM Semarang*, and Tirang Beach. Each of these locations holds significant historical and cultural value, which will be carefully analyzed to highlight their unique characteristics. One of the areas focused on in this film is *Kota Lama*, known as “Little Netherlands” for its colonial architecture. This place is perfect for films because of its cobblestone streets, European-style buildings, and tranquil atmosphere. The *Kota Lama* not only has aesthetic value, but also symbolizes a past that has not been lost. It is a place for memories, reflection, and gathering.

The project does not simply aim to produce a movie as a work of art, but also to be part of a more sensitive, humane, and meaningful tourism promotion effort. This short film wants to make Semarang a destination to be remembered, not just visited. In addition, the movie is also a form of participation in the city's historical and cultural preservation efforts. By featuring the *Kota Lama* as an important part of the narrative, the film helps revive people's collective memory of the importance of heritage spaces. Instead of making the city a passive object, the film revives it as a space that holds sounds, memories, and flavors. This creative work becomes a medium to reconnect audiences with the city through a more reflective and affective lens. Through a story-based and emotion-driven approach, this film seeks to invite audiences to listen to the city not just see it.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

1. How is the process producing short film “Whispers of Semarang: A Reunion Tale Set in Semarang's Soul” can be used as an emotional tourism promotion strategy for Semarang City?
2. How is the stakeholder’s feedback regarding the short film “Whispers of Semarang: A Reunion Tale Set In Semarang’s Soul” for Semarang City?

## **1.3 Research Objectives**

1. To design and produce a short film “Whispers of Semarang: A Reunion Tale Set in Semarang’s Soul” as an emotional-based tourism promotion media that elevates the attractiveness of Semarang City.
2. To evaluate the potential of storytelling in film as an alternative promotional strategy that is more humanistic and impactful to the image of Semarang tourist destination.

## **1.4 Significance of the Study**

1. Academically, this research contributes to the study of tourism promotion through a creative approach based on audio-visual media and emotional narrative.
2. Practically, the results of this research can be a reference for local governments, creative industry players, and tourism agencies in developing more innovative and emotionally touching tourism promotion strategies.
3. Socio-culturally, this film is expected to revive Semarang's local narrative and raise public awareness of the importance of preserving historical spaces such as the *Kota Lama*.

### **1.5 Output of the Research**

The result of this study is in the form of a short movie that will be uploaded via YouTube. The short film, titled “Whispers of Semarang: A Reunion Tale Set in Semarang’s Soul”, has a duration of 11 minutes 23 seconds and tells the story of four close friends from their college years in Semarang who reunite in the city showcasing significant places such as *Kota Lama*, Blenduk Church, Spiegel, *Titik Nol KM Semarang*, and Tirang Beach that reflect the city’s historical charm. Through their reunion and nostalgic flashbacks, the film highlights both personal memories and the cultural beauty of Semarang.