

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Studies

Tourism is one of the sectors that has an important role in encouraging economic growth while strengthening the cultural identity of a nation. Based on the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 10 of 2009 concerning Tourism, tourism is defined as a variety of tourism activities supported by facilities and services provided by the community, entrepreneurs, government, and local governments. This definition confirms that tourism is not just an ordinary tourist activity, but a system that involves many parties and has a broad impact on the social, cultural, and economic life of the community. On a global scale, UNWTO (2020) notes that the tourism sector contributes about 10% of world GDP and is one of the sectors with the most significant growth. Indonesia as an archipelagic country with a wealth of culture, history, and spiritual values that are very diverse has a great opportunity to develop various forms of thematic tourism, one of which is religious tourism.

Given this broad tourism landscape in Indonesia, religious tourism has emerged as one of the most promising and rapidly growing sectors worth examining more closely. Religious tourism is a form of tourism that focuses on visits to places of religious, historical, and spiritual value, both for the purpose of worship and to obtain meaningful cultural experiences. Shinde and Olsen (2023) explained that religious tourism is not only related to trips driven by spiritual motivation, but also relates to the sacredness of place and the cultural heritage attached to the destination. In Indonesia, religious tourism destinations account for 20% of total cultural tourism, while religious tourism interest has reached 12% of total national tourism interest (GMTI, 2022). This growing trend signals that religious tourism deserves more systematic attention, particularly in terms of audiovisual promotion and documentation.

Building on this national context, one area that exemplifies the richness and complexity of religious tourism in Indonesia is Greater Semarang. Greater Semarang, which encompasses Semarang City and its surrounding region including

Semarang Regency, presents a particularly compelling case for religious tourism development due to its well-established history of multicultural coexistence. According to Afif A Pigawati (2015), the multiethnic historical conditions of Greater Semarang have encouraged the formation of cultural acculturation, resulting in numerous places of worship and cultural heritage sites with significant tourism potential. This unique characteristic makes Greater Semarang a living reflection of the national value of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* unity in diversity.

Despite Greater Semarang's remarkable multicultural heritage, there remains a significant gap in how its diverse religious tourism landscape has been promoted through audiovisual media. In the context of audiovisual-based religious tourism promotion, prior research has explored this approach through a single-religion lens. Pamungkas (2023) produced a short film as a means of branding Pura Agung Giri Natha Semarang, a Hindu temple, demonstrating that short films are effective in promoting a religious tourism destination and preserving its cultural pluralism. However, that study was limited to a single destination representing one religion, leaving a significant gap in how audiovisual media can represent the broader interfaith landscape of a city. In Semarang, where places of worship from Islam, Buddhism, and Catholicism coexist in close geographic and cultural proximity, a single-religion approach does not fully capture the intercultural values that make the city's religious tourism distinctive.

It is worth noting that the selection of three faiths in this study, namely Islam, Buddhism, and Catholicism, is the result of a series of deliberate academic considerations rather than arbitrary exclusion. Indonesia officially recognizes six religions, Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Of these, Hinduism has already been addressed by Pamungkas (2023), who produced a short film promoting a Hindu religious site in Semarang. Including a Hindu destination in this study would therefore result in unnecessary duplication of existing work. As for Protestantism and Confucianism, while both are recognized faiths in Indonesia, their religious sites within the Greater Semarang area do not yet possess the level of established tourism infrastructure, historical

prominence, and architectural distinctiveness comparable to the four destinations selected in this study. The selected destinations, namely Avalokitesvara Pagoda, As-Safinatun Najah Mosque, Achmad bin Adenan Mosque, and Maria Kerep Ambarawa Cave, were identified as having strong visual, cultural, and spiritual appeal that is well-suited for short film promotion. Furthermore, from a production standpoint, incorporating all six religions within a single short film would significantly expand the scope and duration of the project beyond what is feasible within the constraints of an undergraduate thesis production. Limiting the scope to three faiths allows the researcher to maintain the depth, narrative coherence, and audiovisual quality of the film. This decision therefore reflects both the availability of tourism-worthy religious sites in the region and the practical boundaries of a focused research production.

This study therefore addresses that gap by producing a short film that encompasses four religious tourism destinations across multiple faiths, the Achmad bin Adenan Mosque (Container Mosque) and As-Safinatun Najah Mosque representing Islam, the Avalokitesvara Pagoda representing Buddhism, and Maria Kerep Ambarawa Cave representing Catholicism. These four destinations were selected based on the criteria of religious diversity, historical significance, and architectural uniqueness. Beyond individual religious identity, they collectively embody the universal value of compassion *karuna* in Buddhism, *rahmah* in Islam, and love in Christianity which serves as the thematic foundation of this research.

In today's digital era, short films have emerged as an effective communication instrument for conveying messages both informatively and emotionally to a wide audience. According to Mulia et al (2026), short films are narrative, persuasive, and effective tourism promotion media that are capable of influencing tourists' perception and motivation to visit featured destinations. The short film produced in this study, entitled "*Welas Asih Di Tengah Perbedaan*" (Compassion Amidst Difference), is equipped with English subtitles to extend its reach to international tourists, in line with findings by Vulchanova and Lervåg (2021) that subtitles support audience comprehension and accessibility. This work is expected not only

to serve as visual documentation, but also as an educational and promotional medium that introduces Semarang's spiritual wealth and tolerant values to both national and international audiences.

1.2 Statement of Problems

Based on the background described above, the researcher has identified the research question as follows:

1. How is the process of post-producing the short film "*Welas Asih Di Tengah Perbedaan*" as a promotional tool for religious tourism in Greater Semarang?
2. How did the audience and related parties respond to the short film "*Welas Asih Di Tengah Perbedaan*" as a medium for promotion and education of religious tourism in Greater Semarang?

1.3. Research Objectives

Based on the research question above, the objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To examine the post-production process of the short film "*Welas Asih Di Tengah Perbedaan*" as a promotional tool for religious tourism in Semarang.
2. To examine and evaluate the perceptions, responses, and feedback of stakeholders, audiences, and other relevant parties.

1.4. Significance of the Study

This research is expected to provide practical benefits for various parties. For students, this research can be a reference in making audiovisual-based tourism promotion media, especially short films with story concepts. For the Applied Foreign Language Undergraduate Study Program, this study can add academic references related to the application of English language skills in creative media and tourism promotion. For religious tourism destination managers and tourism stakeholders in Semarang, this short film can be used as a promotional medium to increase destination exposure to the wider community. For the community and audience, this short film is expected to provide insight into the potential of religious tourism in Semarang as well as instill the values of tolerance, diversity, and compassion that are reflected in the destinations displayed.

1.5 Output

The output of this study is a promotional short film entitled “*Welas Asih Di Tengah Perbedaan*” which introduces four religious tourist destinations, namely Achmad bin Adenan Mosque, As-Safinatun Najah Mosque, Avalokitesvara Pagoda, and Maria Kerep Ambarawa Cave. With a total duration of approximately 14 minutes and 32 seconds, this short film is packed with the concept of storytelling and English subtitles in order to reach a wider audience, especially foreign tourists.