

## Storytelling to Support Agricultural-Based Tourism Villages

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<b>Keywords</b>	<b>Abstract</b>
storytelling, resources, agrarian, tourism village	Storytelling is a strategic instrument in supporting tourism villages based on agrarian resources, as happened in Pucung Village, Girisubo District, Gunungkidul Regency. The village faces challenges in promoting physical assets, such as karst landscapes and historical sites, into tourism products that have high economic value and educational meaning. Therefore, on November 25, 2025, in Pucung Village, an Agrarian Resource-Based Storytelling Making Training activity has been held. The research method used is a qualitative approach with data collection techniques through in-depth interviews with key informants, namely local narrators, tourism village managers, and the Pucung Village community. Secondary data was also obtained from documentation and reports related to storytelling training that had been carried out in the village. The data analysis technique used is thematic analysis, where data is categorized and linked to produce findings that are relevant to the research objectives. The results of the study show that: First, storytelling has a unique mechanism. Second, storytelling is intended to empower local narrators. Third, storytelling can reveal the soul of the people of Pucung Village. Fourth, storytelling is done by adhering to Truth Based Storytelling Principles. Fifth, storytelling can have a psychological and social impact. Sixth, storytelling can have an economic multiplier effect. Seventh, storytelling takes into account managerial strategy and sustainability.

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### Introduction

Tourism in the modern era has undergone a fundamental shift from mere visual consumption to the consumption of meaning (Sestino & Nasta, 2025). Contemporary tourists, often referred to as post-tourists, are no longer satisfied with just looking at natural scenery; they are looking for a narrative that gives context, history, and soul to a place. This phenomenon places storytelling in a central position as a bridge between the physical reality of a destination and the imagination and emotions of visitors. For villages that have limited modern infrastructure but are rich in natural and cultural heritage, storytelling skills are no longer just a complement but an intangible asset that determines global competitiveness.

Pucung Village is geographically located in the karst zone of the Sewu Mountains, a landscape that is traditionally considered marginal, arid, and challenging for human life. However, beneath the surface of the hard limestone lies a very deep layer of geological and sociological history. Since 2021, the National Land College (STPN), through the Center for Research and Community Service (PPPM), has assigned a team of experts to assist Pucung Village in realizing the vision of “Independent, Peaceful, and Prosperous Pucung.” Various empowerment activities have been carried out, ranging from the creation of a participatory master plan and land data collection to the establishment of tourism villages.

The designation of “Dewi Purbo” as a tourism village in 2023 and as a Cultural Pioneer Village in 2024 carries a logical consequence: human resources at the local level must have the ability to “sell” the uniqueness of their village. The problem is that agrarian and geological data are often technical and dry. Without storytelling, the potential of the Ancient Bengawan Solo or the Wotawati Legend becomes merely cold information that is difficult to digest. Therefore, on November 25, 2025, in Pucung Village, a storytelling training activity based on agrarian resources was conducted. This training is crucial to give “spirit” to the physical assets in the village, transforming them into a transformative and economically beneficial tourism experience for the local community (Nugroho, 2025a).

Previous research has shown that storytelling has a positive impact on the success of tourism destination promotion, especially in areas with limited infrastructure and resources (Suansri, 2003; Campbell, 2008). However, although many studies have highlighted the role of storytelling in tourism, most have focused on destinations with greater resources, and few have addressed its application in villages with limited agrarian resources. This research fills this gap by examining how storytelling based on agrarian resources can change tourists’ perceptions of villages that are geographically considered marginal and how it can serve as a tool of empowerment for local communities.

The novelty of this research lies in its approach, which combines storytelling with agrarian resources to develop tourist destinations in villages with natural potential that has not been fully explored. The study also highlights how storytelling training can empower local narrators so that they not only become links between information and tourists but also become agents of change who promote local cultural identity.

The purpose of this research is to analyze how storytelling based on agrarian resources in Pucung Village can transform the village’s physical assets into attractive and profitable tourism products. In addition, this study aims to assess the social and economic impacts of storytelling on local community empowerment and the sustainability of community-based tourism.

The benefits of this research are significant from both academic and practical perspectives. Academically, this research enriches the literature on storytelling in the context of village tourism with an agrarian resource-based approach. Practically, the results of this research can be used by tourism village managers to develop more effective and sustainable community empowerment programs, as well as a reference for managing narratives that can attract tourists, strengthen village identity, and improve the economic welfare of local communities.

## **Method**

This study employed qualitative research to examine the uniqueness of the phenomena under investigation (Nugroho, 2025b:27). A rationalistic approach was adopted to guide the interpretation of data through logical reasoning (Nugroho, 2025b:30–31). This approach enabled the researcher to obtain in-depth qualitative data from informants (Nugroho, 2025b:27).

The research was conducted in Pucung Village, Girisubo District, Gunungkidul Regency. The site was selected because the village government had implemented storytelling training for local residents to develop narratives related to the village’s tourism potential.

Pucung Village also possessed a range of local stories, including the story of Raden Joyo Sukmo and Nyai Arum Sukmawati, the Wotawati story, and the history of the Ancient Bengawan Solo.

Research subjects were determined based on their relevance to the research focus (Nugroho, 2025b:43). They included the Head of Pucung Village, community leaders, and members of the Wotawati community. Informants were selected based on their ability and willingness to provide relevant information regarding storytelling practices in the village (Nugroho, 2025b:44–45). A total of 12 informants were selected purposively to ensure the accuracy and relevance of the data collected (Nugroho, 2025b:43).

Data in this study consisted of primary and secondary sources (Nugroho, 2025b:46–47). Primary data were obtained through interviews with informants, guided by an interview framework. Secondary data were collected from official documents provided by the Pucung Village Government.

Primary data collection was conducted using interview techniques supported by interview guides and recording devices (Nugroho, 2025b:49). Secondary data were collected through documentation techniques from relevant government sources.

Data were analyzed using qualitative (thematic) analysis techniques (Nugroho, 2025b:52–54). The process involved organizing and reviewing all collected data, reducing and selecting relevant information, categorizing key findings, and developing thematic interpretations to address the research questions.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Storytelling Mechanism**

Storytelling is an ancient art that is now gaining new relevance in the world of business and tourism. It is defined as the art of telling stories or experiences to entertain, teach, or inspire others. In the context of agrarian resource management, storytelling functions as a tool to communicate the mutual relationship between humans and their land (man-land relationship).

In the context of the storytelling training held in Pucung Village on November 25, 2025, the narrative input and structure of the creative process have been determined, as follows:

#### **Narrative Input**

The quality of a narrative depends heavily on the richness of its raw materials. Input in the preparation of storytelling applied in Pucung Village can be categorized into five main elements, namely:

- (1) Personal Experience: Authentic testimonies of local people regarding their adaptation to karst environments (such as farming techniques between rocks). It gives a real touch of humanity.
- (2) Research or Data: Hard facts about geology, land tenure history, and biodiversity. This data serves as a truth-based guarantor of truth.
- (3) Imagination: The ability to weave existing facts into a lively storyline, allowing tourists to imagine past events.
- (4) Observation: Eye sharpness in capturing small details in the village landscape that can be the entrance to an interesting story.
- (5) Other Source Information: Folklore that has been passed down orally from generation to generation.

The elements of personal experience and other source information are closely related to the Social Construction of Reality. Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann argue that reality is understood through inherited social and historical interactions (Berger, 1966). In Pucung Village, the narrative is not just data, but the way the community constructs their identity in karst land.

Meanwhile, the elements of imagination and research or data intersect with Walter Fisher's theory (Narrative Paradigm). He states that humans are more easily convinced by a good story (narrative probability) than by a logical argument. However, in order for the story to be believed, it requires narrative fidelity, when geological and historical data serve as a guarantor of truth so that the imagination remains grounded in facts (Fisher, 1987).

Relevant to the previous view, Alfred Schutz explained, that the elements of personal experience and observation are most appropriately discussed using a phenomenological approach. He emphasized the importance of the lifeworld, which is the daily experience that shapes human practical knowledge (Schutz, 1967). Farming techniques between the rocks in Pucung Village are a form of phenomenological adaptation of the community to its environmental structure.

For geological and biodiversity data elements as well as village landscapes, Bruno Latour's ANT (Actor Network Theory) is particularly relevant. This theory views that inanimate objects (such as karst rocks or research data) have an agency role in shaping social narratives (Latour, 2005). The physical environment of Pucung Village is not just a setting, but an actor who dictates how the story is constructed.

### **Creative Process Structure**

Transformation of an idea into a narrative product with economic value through the following stages:

- (6) Process: Includes the development of ideas, communicative manuscript writing, editing to maintain accuracy and ethics, direction of delivery style, to the final presentation.
- (7) Output: It can be in the form of oral stories by guides, written scripts, video content, to art performances.
- (8) Outcome: The expected long-term impact is increased visits, changes in tourist perception of villages, increased tourist spending (spending), and strengthening destination brands.

The process of transforming ideas into a narrative product with economic value is closely related to the management of the creative industry and storynomic tourism. The point is in the form of efforts to turn cultural capital or raw ideas into economic commodities that have tourist attraction. The stages of the process, output, and outcome reflect the Creative Value Chain. This theory explains how a creative idea is technically processed into a product that has economic value. The process stage is the production and editorial phase, then the output stage is dissemination, and the outcome stage is market impact. Thus, there is a transformation of values from cultural value to economic value (Howkins, 2001 and Pine, 2011).

In addition, in the context of storytelling in the world of tourism, there is the concept of storynomic tourism, which is a tourism approach that prioritizes narrative, creative content, and culture as the life of a destination. This approach explains that communicative scripts can produce outcomes in the form of strengthening brand destinations. In other words, there is a change from tacit knowledge, in the form of folklore or village history, to explicit knowledge,

in the form of narrative products (Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, 2020 and Throsby, 2001).

Meanwhile, the Experience Economy Theory initiated by Pine & Gilmore states that after the era of services, the economy is now moving into the era of experience. Tourists no longer just buy products, but buy stories and sensations. Scripts and content or outputs serve to create an immersive experience, which ultimately increases tourist spending or outcomes (Mossberg, 2007).

### **Empowering Local Narrators**

The approach used in activities in Pucung Village is in the form of competency-based participatory training. Participants consisted of Pokdarwis (Tourism Awareness Groups) and village officials, who were not only taught how to speak, but how to “find” stories in their daily lives. This training dissects eight strategic steps in compiling a narrative, namely:

- a. Idea Development: Participants are invited to map what is most unique from their own RT/RW or hamlet.
- b. Purpose Determination: Explain whether the narrative is intended purely for entertainment, historical education, or promotion of village MSME products.
- c. Character Creation: Identify characters (both historical and fictional characters who represent the character of the citizens) so that the story has a “face”.
- d. Plot Making: Structuring the conflict structure. In the context of Pucung, the main conflict is the struggle of humans against the harshness of nature (drought), which always attracts the attention of the audience because of its heroic nature.
- e. Script Writing: Train participants to write down the main points of thought so that the story does not expand without direction.
- f. Editing: Verify facts so that stories do not become hoaxes.
- g. Instruction: Practice gestures, intonation, and the use of props (such as ancient stones or agricultural products).
- h. Presentation: The hands-on practice of telling a story in front of an audience.

Training activities involving Tourism Awareness Groups and village officials are actively relevant to Community Participation, which is the core of rural development. This approach seeks to ensure that the narrative produced is not entrusted by parties outside the village, but comes from the original identity of the residents. Thus, the bottom-up approach and community empowerment can be implemented well (Campbell, 2008; Chambers, 1994; and Fog, 2010). As is known, the socio-cultural mapping of the uniqueness of each village is a form of local ownership of village promotional content.

In addition, this training is a form of implementation of Community-Based Tourism, which states that sustainable tourism must be managed by and for the local community. Therefore, capacity building is very necessary for Tourism Awareness Groups (Suansri, 2003). The reality on the ground shows that there has been a transformation of natural obstacles (drought) into tourist attractions, through heroic narratives in the form of creative adaptation strategies.

Strategic measures, such as: character creation, plot creation, and scriptwriting are in perfect harmony with the classical narrative structure introduced by Joseph Campbell. The conflict against nature in Pucung Village creates a story arc in which the community is a surviving “hero” or monomyth (The Hero’s Journey), which is complemented by a plot

structure, consisting of: orientation, complications, and resolution (Campbell, 2008). The reality in Pucung Village is seen in the use of the drought factor as the main plot element, which provides a very strong emotional value for the audience or tourists.

Pedagogically, the training method focuses on things that participants can do, in the form of hands-on practice, not just things they know. This method is called Competency Based Training, which is conceptually relevant to efforts to form skills, knowledge, and attitude (Suansri, 2003 and Tilden, 1977). This method was shown in Pucung Village in the form of direction and presentation steps, which showed a focus on technical competence in public communication, in the form of gestures and intonation.

### **Revealing the Soul of Pucung Village**

Pucung Village has three major narrative pillars that can be managed well, to become a tourism magnet at the national and even international levels, namely:

#### **The Legend of Wotawati: A Narrative of Equality and Sustainability**

Wotawati Hamlet is often referred to as the “village at the bottom of the valley”. Agrarianly, the soil here is the most fertile because it is an alluvial catchment area and deposits. However, its main selling point lies in the legends of Raden Joyo Sukmo and Nyai Arum Sukmawati. In the training, it was emphasized that the name “Wotawati” is not just a geographical label. He was born from the heroic action of saving Nyai Arum while climbing the bamboo bridge (ngwot). This narrative was developed to highlight sociological values, such as:

- (1) Parallel Partnership: Shows that the construction of settlements in the interior of Gunungkidul is carried out through the cooperation of men and women. This positions Pucung as a village with strong cultural roots of gender equality since the 15<sup>th</sup> century.
- (2) Environmental Ethics: How these figures maintain the source of spring water in Wotawati, which serves as a lesson for tourists about water conservation in karst areas.

Wotawati hamlet, which is located at the bottom of the Bengawan Solo Purba valley, Gunungkidul, is a geographical anomaly as well as a rich social laboratory. Agrarianly, this region is a blessing in the midst of the aridity of the thousand mountains because of its alluvial deposits. However, the main strength of Wotawati lies precisely in how its people reconstruct history through the legends of Raden Joyo Sukmo and Nyai Arum Sukmawati.

In the sociology of knowledge review, the identity of a region is not static. According to Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966), social reality is constructed through a process of externalization, objectification, and internalization, which is then called “social construction”. Furthermore, social construction is related or associated with a certain place or location, so the term “place branding” emerged (Berger, 1966). The name “Wotawati” which was born from the action of ngwot (climbing a bamboo bridge) is a form of objectification of a heroic action.

This narrative was deliberately developed in local trainings not just for historical romanticism, but as a form of “place making”. The people of Wotawati are branding their living space. They do not want Wotawati to be known only as a “village at the bottom of the valley” physically (geographically), but rather as a “space of values” where courage and rescue are the foundation of the establishment of a community. By pinning meaning to names, they give soul to the alluvial land on which they treble.

The most striking point in the narrative is the claim of equal partnerships between men and women since the 15<sup>th</sup> century. In the Perspective of Ecofeminism, pioneered by figures such as Vandana Shiva (1988) and Maria Mies (1993), there is a systemic relationship between the way society treats women and the way they treat nature. Wotawati's narrative challenges traditional patriarchal perceptions that often consider the development of rural areas to be the result of male hard work. By highlighting the role of Nyai Arum Sukmawati side by side with Raden Joyo Sukmo, the people of Wotawati are promoting "indigenous gender equality". This proves that local wisdom in Pucung Village has a mature concept of equality, long before modern gender terminology entered the countryside. Here, women are not only objects saved, but partners in opening up civilization in the middle of the valley.

Meanwhile, the karst area, which is hydrologically challenging, turns out to have a spring in Wotawati, so this area plays a role as the heart of life. The Theory of Cultural Ecology from Julian Steward (1955) explains that culture is a tool for human adaptation to the environment. Legends about figures who guard spring water sources serve as sacred ecology. When a water source is associated with a mythical figure, it automatically creates social norms that prohibit destruction in the area. Tourists who come to Wotawati not only consume the scenery, but are also exposed to ancient environmental ethics that remain relevant, that water is a deposit that must be maintained through respect for history. It is a form of culture-based conservation that is often more effective than formal legal rules.

James Danandjaja (1984) stated that one of the main functions of folklore is as a tool to enforce social norms. The narrative of Nyai Arum's rescue on a bamboo bridge became a metaphor for mutual cooperation. Bridges are not just a physical means of crossing, but a symbol of the transition from disorder to an organized civilization. This legend provides legitimacy for the social structure in Pucung Village. By claiming cultural roots from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the community built collective confidence. They are not a society that is "left behind" at the bottom of the valley, but rather the heirs of highly developed values of partnership and environmental ethics.

### **Geology of Bengawan Solo Purba: "The Great Tragedy of Nature"**

It is a narrative that combines the splendor of science with poetic beauty. The training material invites tourists to "time travel" to millions of years ago. Geological facts show that Bengawan Solo used to flow southward to the Indian Ocean through Sadeng Beach. The narrative dramatization is focused on the tectonic lifting event of the Indo-Australian plate which forced this large river to stop flowing south and turn 180 degrees north towards the Java Sea. The dry valleys in Pucung are depicted as a silent but majestic river fossil. This story changes the perception of tourists from seeing arid land to seeing earth's historical monuments. Tourists no longer see limestone as inanimate objects, but as a silent witness to the powerful forces of nature that form the island of Java.

The narrative about Bengawan Solo Purba is not just a presentation of spatial data about past water flows. It is a dramatic reconstruction of the catastrophic events that formed the backbone of the island of Java. It has happened, "The Great Tragedy of Nature", that is, scientific facts no longer stand as a series of cold millions of years, but as an emotional fragment of earthly life. To understand the depth of this narrative, it is necessary to dissect it

through the integration between structural geology, paleohydrology, and the theory of interpretation of natural heritage.

Scientifically, this narrative is rooted in plate tectonic dynamics. In the Oligo-Miocene to Pleistocene period, there was intensive subduction of the Indo-Australian Plate that sloped down to the Eurasian Plate. This subduction process not only creates volcanic activity, but also causes a massive uplift, which is massive in the southern part of Java known as the Southern Mountains.

Based on a fundamental study in Van Bemmelen (1949), the lifting of this fault block creates a gentle slope against the direction of the river flow. Bengawan Solo, which originally flowed calmly towards its estuary on Sadeng Beach (Indian Ocean), suddenly faced a row of rising karst walls. This event in paleohydrology is referred to as Stream Reversal. Dramatically, the narrative refers to it as the “Great Tragedy”, which is a metaphor for the failure of water to break through the growing soil barrier. This large river was forced to stop, stagnate, and finally find a new way out by turning 180 degrees towards the Java Sea in the north.

The dramatization of the narrative is focused on the dry valleys in the Pucung and Sadeng areas, which in geomorphological terms are referred to as “Abandoned Valleys”. The narration calls it in the words, “a silent but majestic river fossil”. This is a very effective use of language to change perceptions. To the untrained eye, this valley may only appear as dry, arid, and unproductive land. However, with the lens of geo-storytelling, the valley is turned into a monument. Tourists are invited to imagine the rumbling of water millions of years ago in a place that is now inhabited only by the silence of limestone. References from Pannekoek (1949) provide a morphological basis that the remnants of these streams can still be traced through the patterns of ancient river crustal deposits found on the surface of today’s karst hills.

This narrative is so powerful, because it applies the Heritage Interpretation Principles, developed by Freeman Tilden (1957). Tilden states that interpretation is not just the imparting of information, but a revelation based on experience. When the narration mentions that tourists no longer see limestone as inanimate objects, but as silent witnesses, then he is performing geological personification techniques. The limestone of the Wonosari Formation was transferred from just a geological material to an archive of planetary history. This creates what is called in environmental psychology as a Sense of Place, which is an emotional bond between humans and the landscape. Tourists feel part of the great history of the earth, a sensation that is much more memorable than just seeing beautiful scenery.

The use of poetic narratives in geology aims to improve geoliteracy. Hose (2012) stated that the biggest challenge of geoconservation is the public’s inability to understand the important value of a rock outcrop. By wrapping up the geological process in the story of “Natural Tragedy”, complex information becomes more accessible. This narrative gives life to the karst landscape of Gunungkidul. As a practical impact, awareness to protect the area increased as people no longer saw it as useless land, but rather as priceless world heritage. Geotourism is no longer just a sightseeing, but a tribute to the powerful forces of nature that shape our lives today.

### **The Beach Trilogy: A Symphony Between Land and Sea**

Pucung has a unique coastline, and each requires a different approach to storytelling:

(3) Sadeng Beach (Economic Transformation): The narrative focuses on the transition of an ancient river estuary into a modern fishery center. It is the story of how humans harnessed the geological heritage for economic prosperity.

(4) Srakung Beach (Natural Spirituality): Positioned as a place to seek inner peace. The narrative is built emphasizing silence, beautiful alienation, and dialogue between man and his creator on the edge of a steep cliff.

(5) Ngungap Beach (Epic of Courage): Focus on the tradition of harvesting swallow's nests. It is a narrative about the guts and high risks taken by local citizens as a form of agrarian-maritime adaptation. Tourists are invited to appreciate every drop of sweat of residents in scavenging for sustenance on the ocean cliffs.

The Pudung area, which is located at the southern tip of Gunungkidul, is not just an arid and desolate karst landscape. It is a large canvas on which nature and man paint a story of adaptation, spirituality, and economic transformation. Through the concept of the "Beach Trilogy", tourists are invited to see the coastline not only as a geographical boundary between land and water, but as a dynamic living space. Each beach in Pucung has a unique identity that requires a different storytelling approach to uncover its deepest layers of meaning.

Sadeng Beach is a point, when the ancient past meets maritime modernity. Theoretically, Sadeng's narrative is closely related to the concept of path dependency in economic geography, when the history of a location determines the direction of its development in the future. Millions of years ago, Sadeng was the estuary of the Ancient Solo Bengawan River that flowed south, before finally tectonic plates lifted the land and reversed the flow of the river to the north.

The narrative built in Sadeng is a story of human victory over geological change. The river valley that used to die is now being revived, as the largest fishing port in the Special Region of Yogyakarta. Here, visitors not only see fishing boats docked, but also witness the geological heritage being harnessed for economic prosperity. Storytelling in Sadeng is able to connect the sound of the waves with the echoes of ancient river history, thus creating a sense of awe for the way humans adapted to the remnants of the natural ruins of the past, to build a productive future.

Moving away from the economic hustle and bustle of Sadeng, Srakung Beach offers a sharp contrast. Referring to the Sense of Place Theory and the concept of topophilia from Yi-Fu Tuan (1974), Srakung is the embodiment of human emotional attachment to a quiet space. This beach is sandwiched between two high cliffs that provide a sense of security as well as beautiful isolation (sublime isolation).

The Srakung narrative is positioned as a place to seek inner peace. In the midst of an increasingly noisy and digitally connected world, Srakung offers luxury in the form of silence. Here, the dialogue does not take place between humans, but between humans and their creators, mediated by the crashing waves that hit the corals. The right narrative approach for Srakung is: meditative and contemplative. Tourists are invited to enter the sacral space, when nature functions as a mirror for self-reflection. Srakung proves that beauty doesn't always have to be grandiose, because sometimes, it comes in the simplicity of a quiet corner of the beach.

Meanwhile, Ngungap Beach presents the most heroic narrative in this trilogy. When viewed through the lens of Cultural Ecology by Julian Steward (1972), the tradition of harvesting swallow nests on the Ngungap cliffs is a form of extraordinary cultural adaptation

to the extreme karst environment. The local people, who are traditionally farmers (agrarian), are forced to go to sea vertically, by descending steep cliffs to scavenge for sustenance between the ocean rocks.

Ngungap's narrative is about guts and high risk. It is an epic of courage in which every strand of a swallow's nest is a symbol of a drop of sweat and a stake of life. The storytelling approach here should be empathetic and educational. Tourists are not only invited to see the scenery, but also to appreciate human resilience in facing natural violence. Ngungap shows that the relationship between land and sea is often mediated by hard struggle, a unique maritime agrarian adaptation not found in other coastal areas.

These three beaches (Sadeng, Srakung, and Ngungap) form a complete symphony. Sadeng represents intellect (transformation and progress), Srakung represents the soul (spirituality and peace), while Ngungap represents raga (courage and hard work). By understanding these three dimensions, tourism management in Pucung can shift from just a selfie tour to a meaningful tour.

Through a strong narrative, visitors are no longer passive spectators. They are witnesses to the history of the earth, participants in spiritual contemplation, and reverence for local traditions. This is the essence of story-based destination development, which transforms physical landscapes into emotional landscapes, to make a deep impression on anyone who visits.

### **Truth Based Storytelling**

When Pucung Village decided to develop a tourist village, there was a dilemma between reality and imagination. There is a temptation to pursue the title of "instagenic" or to attract the curiosity of tourists, a destination is forced to apply the use of fiction. Forced legends or "beautified" history become shortcuts to create instant appeal. However, in Pudung Tourism Village, a bold and fundamental step has been taken, namely: rejecting fiction and embracing the truth.

There is a temptation that tourist destinations are not enough, if they are only based on reality. There are fears that the unpretentious village life will be considered too "ordinary" for tourists. As a result, fictitious narratives are often inserted to cover up the shortcomings of tourist destinations. In fact, narrative lies (no matter how small) have great risks, in the form of loss of trust of visitors and uprooting the roots of local people's identities.

Therefore, the Pucung Tourism Village Manager agrees that true attraction does not need to be created. They apply the principle of Truth-Based Storytelling, where every story told to tourists must stick to facts. There are three reasons used as considerations, namely: First, Authenticity: Today's travelers are getting smarter. They are no longer looking for a theatrical stage; they are looking for real connections; Second, Cultural Sustainability: Keeping the narrative honest means keeping ancestral heritage pure for future generations; Third, Community Integrity: Villagers do not need to pretend to be someone else. They are proud of what they have.

Pudung Tourism Village, exposing the details of humanity and nature, to attract tourists' visits. This is done, because the beauty in Pucung Tourism Village is not created with the polish of lies. Instead, beauty is found by magnifying the lens on real details that are often overlooked, including:

- a. Real Natural Wonders: Instead of making up mystical myths about a hill or river, Pucung highlights how ecosystems work in harmony and how nature provides life for its citizens.
- b. Humanitarian Details: Stories about farmers' sweat, local wisdom in managing resources, and hospitality born from sincerity of heart are the real "magic".

An honest narrative is the strongest bridge between hosts and guests. In Pucung, it has been established that reality packaged with the right appreciation is far more alluring, than even the most beautiful fiction. Pucung Tourism Village proves that tourism is not about who is the smartest at making up stories, but about who is the most daring to show their identity. With truth-based storytelling, every step of tourists in Pucung is not just a physical journey, but a discovery of the meaning of honesty.

In an increasingly competitive global tourism ecosystem, it is common to find destinations that are trapped in an effort to beautify themselves excessively. Often, local realities are filtered, polished, or even replaced by fiction that is considered to be more selling in order to satisfy tourists' artificial expectations. This phenomenon in the study of the sociology of tourism is often referred to as staged authenticity, that is: a theatrical stage in which locals play the role of actors for the sake of pleasing guests. However, the narrative that develops in Pucung offers a fresh and fundamental antithesis, that the strongest bridge between host and guest is not artificial splendor, but narrative honesty.

Pucung builds a bold premise, that reality packed with the right appreciation is far more alluring than even the most beautiful fiction. This is closely related to the concept of existential authenticity (Wang, 1999). Modern travelers, especially those who live in the hustle and bustle of urban and filtered digital worlds, are now experiencing an end to artificial things. They are no longer just looking for beautiful landscapes to photograph, but rather looking for moments when they can feel the pulse of real life, even if it is simple or even challenging (Pine, 2007).

In Pucung, tourism is not positioned as a place for who is the smartest at making up stories. Instead, it becomes a stage for those who are most daring to show their identity. This courage is very expensive social capital. When a community dares to display its daily life, from traditional farming methods, distinctive local dialects, to the values of mutual cooperation that are still maintained, they are actually building integrity. Trusts cannot be bought with expensive advertising, they can only be built when there is no gap between what is promised in the promotion, and what tourists find on the ground.

The use of truth-based storytelling in Pucung radically changed the position of tourists. They are no longer just passive spectators or consumers of a tourist commodity. They are positioned as witnesses to a reality of life. Every tourist's footstep in the land of Pucung is not just a physical journey across the geographical landscape, but a discovery of the meaning of honesty that is often lost in modern social interaction.

Strategically, this approach is very effective for mitigating the risk of dissatisfaction. In Service Quality Theory, disappointment often arises due to excessively high expectations triggered by fictitious promotions. With an honest narrative, Pucung shows the harmony between hope and reality. Tourists who come already have a proper initial understanding of what they will encounter. The effect is not a decrease in interest, but rather an improvement in the quality of interaction. Guests come with respect, and the host welcomes with pride in his own identity.

Interestingly, honest storytelling proves that a reality that is appropriately appreciated has a stronger allure than fiction. This is a crucial point in destination management. Often, tourism village managers feel inferior to the simplicity of their area, so they feel the need to invent certain greatness. Pucung proves the opposite, namely: simplicity, if narrated well, actually becomes an unparalleled uniqueness (unique selling point).

For example, a laborious process of tillage or a local tradition that may seem mundane to the locals, if explained through the lens of history and philosophical value, will be valuable knowledge for tourists. This is what is called reality packaging with the right appreciation. The reality is not changed, but the meaning is brought to the surface, so that guests or tourists are able to capture the essence behind what they see.

This honesty-based tourism development model is very relevant to the spirit of sustainable growth. By not forcing himself to be someone else or blindly imitating popular destinations, Pucung maintains its cultural and social integrity. The villagers don't feel burdened to pretend to be actors in their own homes, they simply be themselves with professional standards of hospitality.

This sustainability is not only about the environment, but also about the psychological sustainability of the local community. When they are rewarded for being themselves, their collective confidence will grow. Tourism then no longer is exploitative, but becomes a means of empowerment where identity becomes the most valuable asset. In the end, Pucung provided a valuable lesson for the Indonesian tourism world: that honesty is not just a moral policy, but the most efficient and soul-touching communication strategy. In the midst of a world full of artificial narratives, honesty is the new luxury sought by every traveler hungry for meaning. In Pucung, every trip is not just an outing, but a return to one's authenticity.

### **Psychological and Social Impact**

Good storytelling creates a sense of belonging for tourists. When tourists feel they "know" the history of Wotawati, they will not have the heart to litter or damage the environment. It is a subtle form of environmental conservation education. In addition, for local residents, storytelling skills increase self-esteem. They feel proud to be part of the great history of Ancient Bengawan Solo, which in turn reduces the desire for urbanization as they see the economic potential in their own homeland.

In the contemporary rural development discourse, the greatest challenge often lies not in the limitations of physical infrastructure, but in the fading of the emotional and intellectual bond between human beings and their homeland. The phenomenon of massive urbanization and environmental degradation at the local level is often rooted in the loss of the spirit of place. However, through a structured storytelling strategy based on historical truth, a community like Wotawati, located at the bottom of an ancient valley in Gunungkidul, is able to re-knit these relationships. Storytelling here is not just a superficial tourism marketing tool, but a sociological instrument that is able to radically change the behavior of tourists and fundamentally strengthen the social structure of local communities.

Academically, the effectiveness of storytelling in environmental conservation can be explained through the concept of place attachment, developed by Yi-Fu Tuan (1977) and Edward Relph (1976). Tuan distinguishes between spaces that are abstract and anonymous and places that have meaning and value. Without a narrative, Wotawati is just a geographical point

at the bottom of the valley that may seem barren to the untrained eye. However, with the narrative of the geological phenomenon of Ancient Bengawan Solo that turned millions of years ago, the space was transformed into a place that has historical depth.

When tourists are exposed to a strong narrative, they experience a soft education process. Gianna Moscardo (1996) in her theory of Mindful Visitors explains that good interpretation triggers tourists to think more deeply about the impact of their presence. Tourists who feel familiar with the history of Wotawati will develop respect for the locus. As a result, there are internal barriers to carrying out destructive actions, such as littering or damaging the natural order. They no longer see the tourist village as just a photo background, but as a historical heritage that they have emotionally. This is what is called pro-environmental behavior that is born out of inner awareness, not from regulatory coercion.

A much more fundamental impact of storytelling occurs on the internal side of society. In the perspective of Identity Theory from Henri Tajfel and John Turner (1979), a person's social identity is highly dependent on how they perceive their group. Rural communities often experience a crisis of confidence in the face of a narrative of urban modernity that is considered superior, which then triggers an inferiority complex.

The narrative about Bengawan Solo Purba provides extraordinary symbolic capital for the people of Wotawati. Knowing that the land on which they stand is part of the world's great geological history increases collective self-esteem. They feel proud to be part of this prestigious identity. Sociologically, this increase in self-esteem reinforces what Emile Durkheim called Mechanical Solidarity, as collective consciousness emerges from historical commonality and noble values. Residents who are proud of their identity tend to be more cooperative in maintaining the beauty of their village, because they feel that the physical condition of the village is a reflection of their own dignity and self-esteem.

Meanwhile, when reviewing storytelling from the perspective of Structuring Theory from Anthony Giddens, storytelling acts as a bridge between agents (individual citizens) and structures (traditions and village rules). If all this time, protecting the environment is only considered as a meaningless routine, then with a big narrative about the history of the village, residents begin to reflect on their daily actions.

The narrative provides a discursive resource for residents to legitimize conservation actions. For example, when a citizen chooses not to urbanize and instead manages local potential, he is acting as an agency driven by a new value structure instilled through storytelling. The actions of these individuals will collectively form a new social structure in Wotawati, which is an independent, historically-conscious, and resilient society to the destructive penetration of outside cultures.

One of the most tangible impacts of strengthening local identity is in the form of a reduction in the desire to urbanize large cities. So far, urbanization has been driven by attractive factors in cities and driving factors in villages in the form of economic and psychological poverty. Through storytelling, the local economic potential that has been hidden can be brought to the surface and converted into prosperity.

With good storytelling skills, simple commodities such as rural fresh tea dishes, local agricultural products, or tour guide services can be packaged with high added value. Tourists no longer pay only for physical products, but for the meaning and intellectual experiences they acquire. This is in line with the concept of Community Based Tourism (CBT) which

emphasizes the importance of local people's control over their own narratives and resources. When the village youth see that the history of their homeland can be converted into a decent and respectable livelihood, the pseudo-big-city charm will fade. They choose to stay, innovate, and build villages, not because they can't afford to leave, but because they see the potential for a more dignified future on their own land.

Storytelling in Wotawati has proven that sustainable village development doesn't always have to start with massive concrete and cement projects. The power of words, the authenticity of the narrative, and the respect for history are able to create a healthy and balanced tourism ecosystem. It educates tourists to be morally responsible guests, while empowering locals to become independent and sovereign hosts of their identity.

Through the integration of environmental conservation, strengthening social psychology, and economic independence, Wotawati succeeds in showing that storytelling is a socio-political action that is able to maintain the beauty of nature while prospering its humans. It is the embodiment of a strategy of self-reliance, peace, and prosperity on one's own land.

### **Economic Multiplier Effect**

Economically, the narrative increases the perceived value of village products. For example, cassava sold on the side of the road may only be priced cheaply. However, cassava sold with the story "planted in the limestone crevices with the struggle of waiting for rain in the ancient valley" will have a much higher selling value. This is the essence of the creative economy: selling ideas and stories that are attached to physical objects.

The presence of the creative economy is a perfect illustration of the paradigm shift from the commodity economy to the narrative and experiential economy. In the creative economy landscape, physical products (such as cassava) are simply a medium or messenger, while the true economic value lies in the stories, identities, and emotions attached to them.

In economic sociology, Pierre Bourdieu (1984) introduced the concept of symbolic capital. Cassava that is sold without a story only has a use value as a food. However, when the narrative of the struggle waiting for rain in the ancient valley is embedded, the cassava gains symbolic capital. Consumers are no longer just buying carbohydrates, but buying the courage, rarity, and authenticity of the region. In this condition, the narrative serves as a distinction that elevates the status of village products from general goods to exclusive premium products.

Meanwhile, Robert Shiller (2019) in, "Narrative Economics," explains that stories have contagious power that is able to move the market. In the context of village products, a strong narrative creates emotional truth for buyers. The phrase "planted in the limestone gap" creates a visualization of the resilience of nature and local wisdom. Psychologically, this triggers a higher appreciation of farmers' hard work. As a result, the willingness to pay from consumers can increase dramatically. The price difference between ordinary cassava and narrated cassava is called a creative added value.

Jean Baudrillard (1998) in *Theory of Consumer Society* argues that modern humans consume signs or symbols. Village products often carry signs of nostalgia, about pure nature and slow living. By selling the ancient valley narrative, producers are actually selling an escape from the hustle and bustle of urbanization. The cassava becomes a bridge for the city community to reconnect with geology and history (archaeology) that have long been lost from their daily lives.

The creative economy is not just about digital technology or graphic design, at its core, it is about the capitalization of ideas. The ability to package an extreme geographical background (limestone) into a unique value is a form of intellectual creativity. This is in line with the concept of The Experience Economy from Pine & Gilmore (2011), when businesses position themselves as experience providers. The story behind the cassava gives shoppers an inner experience as they enjoy it. This strategy provides great opportunities for village development. Through the right narrative, local products can compete in the global market without having to get caught up in commodity price wars that harm smallholder farmers. Narrative is a tool of empowerment, as it transforms physical limitations (dry soil and limestone) into narrative selling powers.

### **Managerial Strategy and Sustainability**

In order for this storytelling strategy not to stop after the training is completed, a continuous managerial framework is needed, namely:

- a. **Standardization and Pocket Book:** Compile the main narratives into a module or pocket book as a guide for all local tour guides. This is important to maintain the consistency of information and prevent historical distortions.
- b. **Digitizing Stories:** Utilizing social media platforms. Short narratives about the “Mystery of Ancient Solo Bengawan Mystery” in the form of vertical videos (TikTok/Reels) can be a very viral and effective marketing tool.
- c. **Integration into Local Institutions:** Making local storytelling as a local content material in elementary schools in Pudung Village. The goal is that from an early age village children have become “guardians of stories” for their own land.
- d. **Periodic Evaluation:** Conducting refreshment or refreshing training for Pokdarwis, considering that tourism trends and scientific data can continue to develop.

The storytelling sustainability strategy is a manifestation of contemporary integrative tourism management. This strategy goes beyond just a tour guide technique, because it touches on sociological roots, cross-generational education, and the adaptation of digital technology that is the new face of global tourism. The sustainability of a tourist destination does not only depend on the beauty of the physical landscape, but on the power of the narrative that accompanies it. A story is the life of a place, because without a story, a geological site is just a pile of rocks, and a river is just a stream of water. Storytelling aims to turn data into meaning, and subsequently meaning will become an experience for travelers.

Storytelling needs to be standardized through the creation of pocket books, this was expressed by Freeman Tilden (1977) in Heritage Interpretation Theory, which was later developed in a modern way by Sam Ham (2013). Ham emphasized that effective interpretation must be thematic. The standardization of storytelling narratives through pocket books does not aim to shackle the creativity of tour guides, but rather to build a consistent main message (Thematic Communication).

Meanwhile, in the context of the history of Bengawan Solo Purba, there is the biggest risk that is likely to occur, namely information distortion due to uncontrolled oral transmission. Without valid written references, scientific facts about tectonic shifts and ancient river flows can shift into mere inaccurate myths. Pocket books serve as an anchor of truth (facts), and at the same time as a canvas of creativity (storytelling style). With this guide, every tour guide in

Pucung Village has the same data foundation, so that the credibility of the destination in the eyes of tourists (especially researchers and students) is maintained. Managerially, this is a form of quality control of tourism service products.

Therefore, incorporating narratives into digital platforms such as TikTok and Reels is an implementation of the Transmedia Storytelling Theory popularized by Henry Jenkins (2006). Digitizing stories is not just about moving the text of a book to a mobile screen, but creating a cross-platform narrative that invites public participation. In the attention economy as it is happening today, short-form videos are the most effective marketing tools to reach Generation Z and Millennials.

The narrative about ancient geology has a high visual and intellectual appeal, so by packaging it into aesthetic, mysterious, but informative content, there will be opportunities for Pucung Village to do emotional branding. Tourists no longer come just to see the physical sights, but to experience the stories they previously consumed in the digital space. This creates an organic marketing cycle, i.e.: digital content triggers physical visits, and physical visits generate new content from tourists. In other words, a scheme: User to Generated Content is created, when the story of Pucung Village is continuously amplified globally without large advertising costs.

In addition, steps are also needed to integrate storytelling into the local content curriculum at Pudung Village Elementary School, as a very strategic sociological breakthrough. Based on the principles of Community Based Tourism (CBT) by Peter Murphy (1985), it is known that the success of tourism is highly dependent on the support and involvement of local communities as the rightful owners of these assets. Theoretically, this is an effort to build a sense of place and place attachment. When children in Pucung Village learn about the geological history and culture of their land from an early age, they are being prepared to become story keepers. The process of internalizing local values is part of the process of cultural inheritance, so that the storytelling that has been built will not become extinct, even though the older generation is gone. Tourism is no longer seen as an exploitative external disturbance, but rather as part of the identity of the local community. In the long term, this will create social resilience, when local communities become the main fortress in environmental and historical preservation in the Pucung area and its surroundings.

Another important thing is in the form of periodic evaluations for the Tourism Awareness Group, which reflects the principles of adaptive management. As is known, the tourism sector is very dynamic. Scientific data on the geology of Bengawan Solo Purba or tourist preference trends can continue to develop along with the latest research findings in the future. Thus, refreshment functions as a means of dialogue between field practitioners (guides) and academics or researchers. This will try to ensure that the narrative conveyed to tourists does not become obsolete. Adaptive management allows destinations to adapt their communication strategies to the times, for example by adopting future augmented reality technology to visualize ancient river flows on site. Evaluation is not just about checking for mistakes, but a momentum for narrative innovation so that tourists who visit again always get a new perspective.

## CONCLUSION

The Agrarian Resource-Based Storytelling Training demonstrated that storytelling operates through a distinct mechanism aimed at empowering local narrators, revealing the community's identity, and adhering to truth-based principles while generating psychological, social, and economic benefits, including multiplier effects for local development; it also emphasized the importance of managerial strategy and sustainability in its implementation. Overall, storytelling in Pucung Village functioned not only as a communication tool but also as a means of community empowerment and tourism development. Future research should focus on developing and evaluating standardized storytelling modules, integrating digital media strategies to broaden audience reach, and assessing the long-term impacts of storytelling on community resilience, youth engagement, and sustainable tourism outcomes.

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