

Destination Brand Storytelling in Thematic Villages Kampung Budaya Polowijen: The Power of Narrative Video

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ABSTRACT

Kampung Budaya Polowijen is a thematic village located in Malang, East Java, which represents local cultural heritage originating from Malang. One of the main challenges faced by this thematic village is the limited availability of promotional media that can effectively communicate its cultural richness to a wider audience. This study aims to develop narrative videos using storytelling techniques as a promotional medium to strengthen the destination brand of Kampung Budaya Polowijen. The research applied a design and development approach consisting of analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation stages. The resulting narrative videos were evaluated by respondents to assess their effectiveness as a promotional tool. The findings indicate that most respondents agreed and strongly agreed that the narrative videos were informative, engaging, and able to represent the identity of Kampung Budaya Polowijen clearly. The study concludes that the developed narrative videos are well accepted and beneficial in promoting Kampung Budaya Polowijen as a cultural tourism destination to both domestic and international audiences.

Keywords: Destination Branding, Narrative Video, Storytelling, Thematic Village, Tourism Village.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the concept of thematic villages has gained significant attention across various regions in Indonesia as a form of community-based social innovation. Thematic villages emphasize local identity by highlighting cultural heritage, historical values, environmental characteristics, and creative economic activities that distinguish one community from another (Kłoczko-Gajewska, 2014). This concept encourages active community participation, where local residents are involved in determining village themes, planning development strategies, and implementing tourism-related programs, making thematic villages a sustainable approach to local development.

In the context of Malang City, thematic villages play a dual role not only as tourism destinations but also as educational spaces. Malang is widely recognized as a city of education, which provides strong potential for thematic villages to function as learning

environments that integrate cultural preservation and community empowerment (Kamaludin, 2021). Through educational tourism, thematic villages offer experiential clarification for students, researchers, and visitors while simultaneously supporting local economic growth through creative and cultural industries.

One prominent example of a thematic village in Malang is Kampung Budaya Polowijen, which was officially inaugurated in 2017 by the Malang City Government. This village is strongly associated with the origin of Topeng Malangan and other traditional art forms that represent Malang's cultural identity. Kampung Budaya Polowijen is developed through strong community involvement and support from local stakeholders, promoting local craftsmanship such as traditional masks and batik. These activities contribute to cultural preservation, skill development, and economic empowerment of the local community (Hazin et al., 2024).

Despite its cultural richness and educational potential, Kampung Budaya Polowijen still faces challenges in promoting its identity to a broader audience, particularly international visitors. Preliminary interviews with the village founder and field observations indicate that current promotional media are mainly limited to text-based information, images, and basic video documentation, which are less effective in creating emotional engagement with modern tourists. The absence of storytelling-based promotional content represents a critical gap in communicating the village's cultural narrative and destination identity.

Previous studies have highlighted the effectiveness of storytelling in tourism promotion, as it allows destinations to convey emotional value and authenticity through engaging narratives (Agustina et al., 2024). Additionally, narrative video formats have been shown to enhance audience engagement by presenting well-structured storylines and relatable characters that draw viewers into the destination experience (Li et al., 2024). However, existing studies rarely focus on the application of narrative video storytelling specifically for thematic villages in Indonesia as a destination branding strategy.

Therefore, this study aims to develop narrative videos using storytelling techniques to promote Kampung Budaya Polowijen as a thematic cultural tourism destination. This research contributes to the field by integrating destination branding, storytelling, and narrative video development within the context of a community-based thematic village. The findings are expected to provide practical insights for cultural tourism promotion and offer a model for other thematic villages seeking effective and sustainable promotional strategies.

METHOD

This study employed a Design and Development Research approach focusing on the development of narrative video media as a promotional tool for Kampung Budaya Polowijen. This approach was selected because it allows systematic development and evaluation of media products based on real needs in the field (Richey & Klein, 2009). The research was conducted through five stages, namely analysis, design, development,

implementation, and evaluation, to ensure that the produced videos effectively represented the cultural identity of the thematic village.

The object of this research was bilingual narrative videos developed for destination branding purposes, while the research subjects included the village manager of Kampung Budaya Polowijen (Ki Demang), local artists involved in cultural activities, and respondents who participated in the video trial process. These subjects were selected to provide comprehensive input from both content providers and target audiences of the promotional media.

Data collection was carried out using multiple techniques to obtain comprehensive data. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the village manager and local artists to explore cultural narratives, historical background, and promotional needs of Kampung Budaya Polowijen. Direct observations were conducted during cultural activities and village events to document authentic cultural expressions and visual elements relevant to the video development process. In addition, online questionnaires were distributed to approximately 50 respondents to assess the effectiveness, attractiveness, and clarity of the narrative videos as promotional media (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive analysis techniques. Qualitative data obtained from interviews and observations were analyzed descriptively by identifying and interpreting themes related to cultural representation, storytelling elements, and destination identity. Quantitative data from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, such as percentages, to measure respondents' perceptions of the developed videos. The integration of qualitative and quantitative findings was used to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the narrative videos as a destination branding tool (Sugiyono, 2018).

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

RESEARCH RESULT

This chapter presents the findings and discussion derived from the research on developing narrative videos as destination brand storytelling tools for Kampung Budaya Polowijen (KBP). The findings indicate that KBP, inaugurated on April 2nd, 2017 by the Malang City Government, has a significant cultural and historical value rooted in traditional arts such as the Topeng Malangan dance and rituals associated with Mbah Reni or Mpu Topeng's legacy. Based on in-depth interviews with the founder, Ki Demang, and direct field observations, it was found that KBP has immense potential in becoming a cultural tourism icon. However, this potential has not been optimally promoted through digital media, especially YouTube, where existing promotional content lacks storytelling depth, structured narration, and visual quality. This gap encourages the development of narrative videos that not only serve as documentation but also function as emotional and persuasive promotional tools. The researcher applied the ADDIE model Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation to guide the product development process, with the initial stages involving interviews and on-site observation to gather authentic content.

The interview revealed the importance of showcasing KBP's cultural heritage such as Topeng Dance, Bantengan, Jaranan, and various community-based economic activities, while observations confirmed KBP's transformation into a dynamic space for cultural expression and community involvement. Furthermore, the design of the video was inspired by the narrative approach used by the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism's "Wonderful Indonesia" campaign, particularly employing the Hero's Journey structure to create an emotional engagement between the audience and the cultural experience. The video consists of three parts: the first highlights the identity and cultural assets of KBP, the second showcases KBP's involvement in Kartini Day celebration at Kayutangan Heritage area, and the third features KBP's performance in the Provincial Sports Week 2025, all of which emphasize the role of KBP in preserving local traditions through creative and performative means. This series of videos, completed with English subtitles to reach wider audiences, is expected to address the lack of comprehensive promotional materials and elevate KBP's identity through an emotionally driven narrative format.

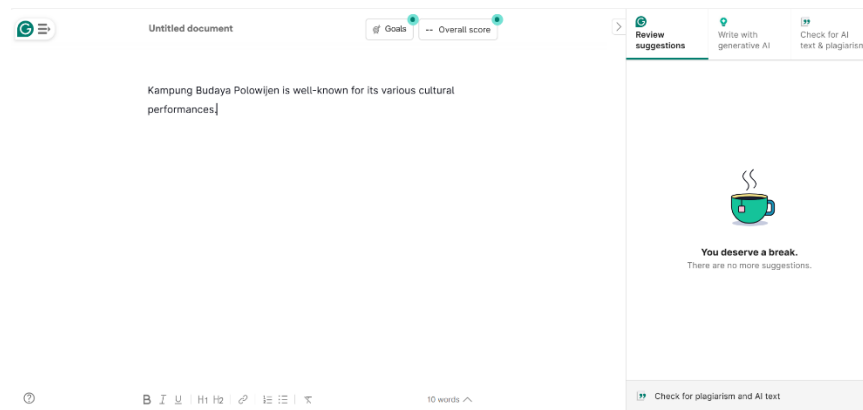
The findings and product developed in this study indicate that destination branding through storytelling not only enriches the representation of cultural heritage but also enhances its accessibility and appeal, especially for younger audiences and international tourists. The implementation of storytelling techniques through audio-visual narratives supports the theoretical framework discussed in Chapter II and proves to be a strategic method to communicate values, cultural significance, and identity in a persuasive and memorable way.

The development phase served as a crucial bridge between conceptual design and the realization of the final media product narrative videos promoting Kampung Budaya Polowijen (KBP) as a center of local culture in Malang. This stage was divided into two major activities: narrative video production and expert validation. Guided by the previously designed storyline and storyboard, the researcher carried out a shooting process at KBP, Kayutangan Heritage, and Malang City Hall, capturing cultural nuances, traditions, and key performances such as the *Grebeg Sabrang* and *Beskalan* dances. The videos employed the expository documentary style, involving talents for narration and integrating community scenes, shot using both stabilizers and handheld techniques to balance cinematic quality with authenticity. The first video emphasized the cultural uniqueness of KBP, while the second focused on KBP's participation in a heritage fashion parade during Kartini Day. The third video featured KBP's cultural performances during Porprov 2025, including aerial shots using drones for immersive storytelling.



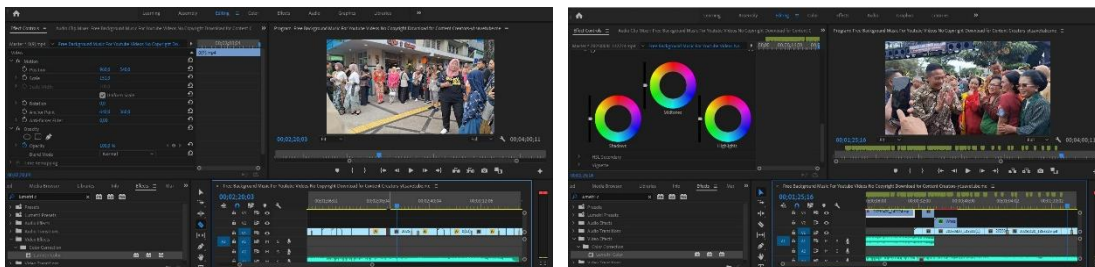
Shooting process

Following the shooting, the researcher developed a script based on the narrative structure, using simple language to complement the visual storytelling. The Indonesian version was prepared for voice-over and subtitles, while the English translation was intended for international viewers. The translation process involved semantic and contextual verification using DeepL for cultural terms and Grammarly for grammar accuracy, ensuring clarity and accessibility for diverse audiences. The finalized scripts were used to record voice-overs, which were done in a controlled setting for audio clarity and consistency.



Grammar Check by Using Grammarly

The editing stage, executed using Adobe Premiere Pro 2019 and CapCut, included organizing footage, trimming irrelevant parts, arranging clips based on the storyboard, applying color correction and grading to evoke emotional tones, and synchronizing voice-overs with appropriate scenes. After the main videos were structured, English and Indonesian subtitles were manually inserted in CapCut, with careful timing adjustments to enhance viewer comprehension and engagement. A thorough review was conducted to ensure subtitle accuracy and synchronization.



Editing process

To validate the media product, three experts were consulted Mr. Gilang Febrian for media production, Mr. Isa Wahyudi (Ki Demang) for cultural accuracy, and Dr. Hiqma Nur Agustina for English language validation. Each expert assessed the product using a five-point Likert scale, supplemented with constructive feedback. The validation process ensured that the final narrative videos were not only technically sound and visually compelling but also culturally accurate and linguistically accessible for both local and global audiences. This rigorous development stage underpinned the effectiveness of the narrative videos in promoting KBP through culturally enriched digital storytelling.

Table 1: Expert Validation Results on Media Production of Kampung Budaya Polowijen Narrative Videos

No.	Question	Score				
		1	2	3	4	5
1.	Does the narration effectively highlight the uniqueness and distinctive features of Kampung Budaya Polowijen?					✓
2.	Is the use of storytelling in the video engaging and effective in capturing the audience's attention?					✓
3.	Is the historical and cultural information presented in the video accurate and consistent with the facts or knowledge you are familiar with?					✓
4.	Is the substance (main message/content) delivered in the video is clear and accurate?					✓
5.	Do the cultural elements (dance, music, artifacts, oral traditions, etc.) portrayed in the video accurately represent the identity of KBP?					✓
6.	Are the important aspects of the local culture have been represented in the videos?					✓

7.	Are the videos effective in attracting visitors to Kampung Budaya Polowijen?	✓
8.	Do the visuals, music, and narration support the video's goal as a cultural tourism promotion tool?	✓
9.	Do the visuals, narration, or other technical aspects of the video need improvement?	✓
10.	Is the video is suitable to be used as an official promotional media?	✓
Expert Suggestion		The quality of the visual, storyline, and narration is already good. However, the researcher could add additional information so that the audience could know every footage which is displayed within the video.

The media production validation was conducted by Mr. Gilang Febrian, a videographer and content creator. He assessed ten aspects related to the quality of the videos and the storyline using a five-point Likert scale. All responses indicated "strongly agree," resulting in a perfect average score of 5. His feedback highlighted that the videos effectively reflect the uniqueness of KBP, with accurate cultural representation, clear messaging, and strong promotional appeal. As a suggestion, he recommended including more diverse footage in future projects to better showcase the variety of KBP's cultural activities.

For cultural validation, the researcher consulted Mr. Isa Wahyudi, S.Psi., M.Psi. (Ki Demang), the founder of Kampung Budaya Polowijen. With his extensive experience in cultural preservation, he was considered a suitable expert to verify the accuracy and authenticity of the cultural elements and narrative in the videos.

Table 2. Expert Validation Results on Cultural Accuracy of Kampung Budaya Polowijen Narrative Videos

No.	Question	Score				
		1	2	3	4	5
1.	Does the narrative presented in the video align with the cultural values and historical background of Kampung Budaya Polowijen?					✓

2.	In your view, are cultural elements such as Topeng Malangan, rituals, or local traditions portrayed accurately and appropriately?	✓
3.	Is the content of the video accurate and free from misleading information?	✓
4.	Does the depiction of characters, symbols, and atmosphere in the video still reflect the true spirit and identity of KBP?	✓
5.	Are all essential cultural elements of Kampung Budaya Polowijen represented in the videos?	✓
6.	Does the content of the narrative video strongly reflect the cultural elements in Kampung Budaya Polowijen?	✓
7.	In your opinion, can the video contribute to the preservation and promotion of KBP's cultural heritage among younger generations and the broader public?	✓
8.	Do the visuals, music, and audio elements in the video effectively and engagingly support the delivery of cultural values?	✓
9.	Does the narration in the video, both in terms of tone and script, effectively convey the cultural messages of Kampung Budaya Polowijen?	✓
10.	Would you support the video being used officially for the cultural promotion and education of KBP?	✓
Expert Suggestion		The video is too long and dance activities outside the KBP are not covered.

Cultural validation was conducted by Mr. Isa Wahyudi (Ki Demang), founder of Kampung Budaya Polowijen, through a ten-question assessment on the accuracy and cultural representation within the videos. All responses received the highest score (5), indicating strong agreement. He affirmed that the narrative aligns with KBP's cultural values, traditions, and identity, and that the videos contribute to cultural preservation and promotion. As a suggestion, he recommended reducing the video duration and including additional cultural performances beyond KBP to enhance variety. The average score was 5, confirming the content's cultural validity.

For English validation, Dr. Hiqma Nur Agustina, S.S., M.Si., M.Hum., an English lecturer at State Polytechnic of Malang, reviewed the language accuracy of the bilingual content. Her role was essential in ensuring the English subtitles were grammatically correct, contextually appropriate, and accessible for both local and international audiences.

Table 3. Expert Validation Results on English Subtitles of Kampung Budaya Polowijen Narrative Videos

No.	Question	Score				
		1	2	3	4	5
1.	Are the English subtitles in the video accurate and faithful to the original meaning in Indonesian?				✓	
2.	Has the translation considered the local cultural context to avoid potential misinterpretation in English?				✓	
3.	Are the subtitles easy to read and understand for both native and non-native English speakers?					✓
4.	Are the word choices and sentence structures appropriate according to standard English usage?				✓	
5.	Are local cultural terms (e.g., <i>Topeng Malangan</i> , <i>arak-arakan</i> , <i>grebeg sabrang</i> , etc.) translated or explained accurately for international viewers?				✓	
6.	Do the subtitles in the video help explain local cultural terms clearly?				✓	
7.	Is the language style used in the subtitles (formal, semi-formal, narrative, descriptive) consistent and appropriate for the videos' purpose as a cultural narrative?				✓	
8.	Does the tone and nuance of the subtitles match the content and atmosphere of the videos?					✓
9.	Are the subtitles in the videos free from grammar, spelling, or sentence structure errors?					✓
10.	Overall, do you think the English subtitles enhance the viewer's understanding and appreciation of the cultural content presented in the videos?				✓	
Expert Suggestion		The subtitle gap is too far so that it seems empty or				

no information is given. Subtitle should be placed continuously throughout the video so that they can provide detailed information to the audience.

The English subtitle validation was conducted by Dr. Hiqma Nur Agustina, S.S., M.Si., M.Hum., using a ten-question survey assessing accuracy, cultural appropriateness, readability, language style, and grammar. The average score was 4.3 out of 5, indicating overall agreement that the subtitles effectively support viewers' understanding of the cultural content. She suggested improving subtitle timing by reducing gaps and ensuring continuous display for better information delivery. Thus, the subtitles are considered acceptable.

In the implementation stage, the researcher distributed a field-testing questionnaire via social media and with assistance from Kampung Budaya Polowijen internship students to gather feedback from both local and international audiences. The questionnaire, consisting of ten questions, was answered by 51 respondents from Indonesia and several other countries, providing diverse insights into the videos' clarity and appeal. This data helped assess whether the narrative videos are ready for public release and effectively convey the destination branding to various audiences.

Table 4. Field-Testing Results of Kampung Budaya Polowijen Narrative Videos

No.	Question	Score										Average
		1		2		3		4		5		
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
1.	The content aligns with the theme of Kampung Budaya Polowijen.	1	2%	1	2%	1	2%	4	8%	43	86%	4.6/5
2.	The videos clearly convey local cultural values.	1	2%			3	6%	4	14%	39	78%	4.3/5

3.	The narration in the videos are easy to understand and engaging.	1	2%	1	2%	2	4%	6	12%	40	80%	4.6/5
4.	The storylines in the videos are well-structured.	1	2%			1	2%	9	18%	39	78%	4.6/5
5.	The visual quality (images, lighting, composition) is good.	1	2%	1	2%	3	6%	12	24%	33	66%	4.4/5
6.	The audio quality (narrator's voice, background music) is clear and supports the atmosphere.	1	2%			1	2%	11	22%	37	74%	4.6/5
7.	The videos are interesting and not boring to watch.	1	2%	1	2%	2	4%	8	16%	38	76%	4.5/5
8.	The videos successfully build a positive image of Kampung	1	2%			2	4%	6	12%	41	82%	4.6/5

	Budaya Polowijen.											
9.	Those videos are suitable to be used as the promotional tool on social media or YouTube.	1	2%			2	4%	7	14%	40	80%	4.6/5
10.	After watching the videos, I became more interested in visiting Kampung Budaya Polowijen.	1	2%	1	2%	1	2%	10	20%	37	74%	4.5/5
Total score:											45.3/5	

The field-testing results show strong positive responses from 51 respondents regarding the narrative videos for Kampung Budaya Polowijen. The overall average score was 4.53 out of 5, with the majority strongly agreeing that the videos accurately represent local culture, have clear narration and storyline, possess good visual and audio quality, and effectively build a positive image that attracts viewers to visit KBP. Respondents also praised the videos for creatively promoting cultural heritage, while suggesting improvements such as adding more visual variety and cultural details. These suggestions were acknowledged for future enhancements.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the narrative videos developed for Kampung Budaya Polowijen (KBP) effectively enhance audience interest and emotional connection with the village's cultural heritage. Over 80% of respondents reported increased motivation to visit KBP after viewing the videos. This suggests that storytelling through audio-visual media is a powerful tool for communicating cultural identity, as the videos successfully combine coherent narrative structure, visual aesthetics, and authentic cultural performances such as Topeng Malangan, Grebeg Sabrang, and Beskalan dances. The use of bilingual subtitles further broadens the accessibility of the content, allowing both local and international audiences to engage with KBP's cultural narratives.

These results are consistent with previous studies that highlight the effectiveness of storytelling in destination branding and cultural tourism promotion (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014; Kim & Jamal, 2007). Similar to the “Wonderful Indonesia” campaign, integrating narrative structures such as the Hero’s Journey fosters emotional engagement and strengthens the audience’s perception of cultural uniqueness (Hudson et al., 2011). Additionally, the findings align with research suggesting that audiovisual media can increase memorability and attractiveness of cultural destinations, particularly when authentic local elements are emphasized (Borges-Tiago et al., 2017).

Despite the positive outcomes, this study has several limitations. First, the field-testing sample consisted of 51 respondents, which may not fully represent the broader target audience, particularly international tourists. Second, some cultural activities outside KBP were not covered in the videos, limiting the comprehensiveness of the cultural portrayal. Third, technical constraints such as video duration and subtitle timing may affect viewer engagement. Finally, the study focused solely on narrative videos and did not compare other media formats, which may provide different levels of audience interaction and engagement.

The study provides both practical and theoretical implications. Practically, the narrative videos can be used by Kampung Budaya Polowijen as an official promotional tool to attract visitors and raise awareness of local cultural heritage. For future research, it is recommended to explore interactive or immersive video formats, such as 360-degree or virtual reality experiences, to further engage audiences. Additionally, expanding the scope to include other cultural villages could provide comparative insights on the effectiveness of storytelling in destination branding. Continuous evaluation and updating of video content are also suggested to maintain relevance and audience engagement over time.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research and development of narrative videos for Kampung Budaya Polowijen (KBP) on YouTube, the videos successfully achieved their main goals as effective and engaging promotional media. They clearly convey KBP’s identity, cultural values, and potential. Evaluation results show a high average score of 4.53 out of 5, with respondents expressing increased interest to visit KBP. The videos are deemed suitable for promotion on YouTube and other social media, representing an innovative approach to strengthening KBP’s brand as a unique cultural tourism destination.

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