

Village and Epic: Ramayana Literary Tourism Through Wayang Wong in Tejakula Village, Buleleng Regency, Bali

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the potential development of epic-based literary tourism centered on the Ramayana through the traditional performance art of Wayang Wong Ramayana in Tejakula Village, Buleleng Regency, Bali. Wayang Wong is understood not merely as a traditional performing art, but as a form of living classical literature integrated into the social, religious, and cultural practices of the local community. The objectives of this research are (1) to analyze the potential for developing literary tourism packages that involve tourist participation, and (2) to examine possible forms of training or workshops on Wayang Wong and the Ramayana narrative for visitors. This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, performance observations, documentation studies, and focus group discussions. Data analysis was conducted through data reduction, thematic categorization, interpretation based on literary tourism theory, and source triangulation to ensure validity. The findings indicate that Wayang Wong Ramayana in Tejakula Village possesses strong potential as a literary tourism attraction grounded in narrative, participatory, and educational experiences. Although no formally structured literary tourism package currently exists, limited participatory practices have emerged and may be further developed through thematic Ramayana tours and introductory workshops on the story, dance movements, masks, and the philosophical values of the Balinese version of the Ramayana. The study concludes that the development of literary tourism in Tejakula Village requires carefully designed tourism packages that are sensitive to sacred values, active involvement of the local community, and a sustainable tourism approach.



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INTRODUCTION

Bali is internationally recognized as a world tourism destination that offers not only natural beauty but also layered cultural richness deeply rooted in community life. In contemporary tourism studies, increasing attention has been given to culture- and narrative-based tourism, including literary tourism. Literary tourism connects visitors with literary works, authors, or cultural spaces associated with particular texts and narratives (Herbert, 2001; Watson, 2006).

Studies of literary tourism in Bali have largely focused on modern literary works or renowned authors, while the potential of classical literature and oral traditions has not been systematically explored (Putra, 2011; 2019). In fact, Bali possesses a rich epic literary heritage manifested in various performing arts traditions, one of which is Wayang Wong Ramayana. This art form functions not only as entertainment, but also as a medium for ritual practice, moral education, and the transmission of Balinese Hindu cultural values.

Tejakula Village, located in Buleleng Regency in North Bali, is one of the areas that continues to sustain the performance of Wayang Wong Ramayana within its socio-religious context. Unlike the mass tourism destinations of South Bali, Tejakula has developed as a community-based village with the potential to foster alternative tourism emphasizing depth of cultural experience.

Against this background, this study focuses on the potential of Wayang Wong Ramayana as a source of experience-based literary tourism that encourages visitor participation. The research addresses two primary questions: (1) What is the potential for developing participatory literary tourism packages in Tejakula Village? and (2) What forms of Wayang Wong and Ramayana workshops can be developed for visitors?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literary tourism constitutes a branch of cultural tourism that emphasizes visitors' narrative and emotional engagement with literary works and cultural spaces (Squire, 1994). Herbert (2001) argues that literary tourism is not limited to written texts but also encompasses performances, spaces, and experiences that bring stories to life.

Within the framework of experiential tourism, Pine and Gilmore (1999) emphasize the importance of active visitor involvement in cultural experiences. Tourists are no longer passive consumers of attractions but are emotionally and cognitively engaged participants. This concept is particularly relevant to the development of literary tourism based on traditional performing arts.

At the same time, theories of cultural commodification warn of the risk of reducing cultural meaning when traditions are transformed into tourism products (Richards, 2001). Therefore, the development of literary tourism must carefully balance the preservation of sacred values with the economic needs of local communities.

Epic literature such as the Ramayana holds an important place in Asian cultures, functioning not only as a literary text but also as a source of moral values and cultural identity. In the Balinese context, the Ramayana has undergone localization and is enlivened through performing arts traditions, including Wayang Wong, which operates as a form of living literature (Putra, 2019).

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to understand the relationship between epic literature, performing arts, and tourism. The research was conducted in Tejakula Village, Buleleng Regency, Bali, with the object of study being Wayang Wong Ramayana performances and the cultural practices surrounding them.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews with Wayang Wong artists, customary leaders, village tourism managers, and visitors; direct observation of performances; documentation studies; and focus group discussions. Data analysis involved data reduction, thematic categorization, interpretation grounded in literary tourism theory, and source triangulation to ensure data validity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Wayang Wong Ramayana as a Literary Tourism Practice

The findings indicate that Wayang Wong Ramayana in Tejakula Village represents a form of performative literature that embodies the Ramayana epic through body, space, and ritual. The performance serves as a medium for transmitting moral and spiritual values while simultaneously offering a narrative experience for visitors. Within the framework of literary tourism, Wayang Wong can be understood as a practice of living literature that allows visitors to "read" the epic through cultural performance.

Participatory Literary Tourism Packages

The study reveals that a formally structured Ramayana literary tourism package has not yet been established. However, limited participatory practices have already emerged. Potential developments include thematic Ramayana tours, cultural discussions on characters and performance symbolism, and integration of performances with local narratives of Tejakula Village. Such a model aligns with experience-based tourism and community-based tourism approaches, positioning the local community as the primary actor.

Wayang Wong Workshops as Cultural Literacy Media

Workshops on Wayang Wong and the Ramayana narrative have the potential to function as media for literary and cultural literacy. Basic training in dance movements, introduction to masks and costumes, and interpretation of Ramayana values enable visitors to gain deeper understanding. For the local community, these activities contribute to the preservation of traditional arts and the strengthening of culture-based creative economies.

Recommendations

First, the development of literary tourism in Tejakula Village should focus on designing structured, narrative-based Ramayana tourism packages while maintaining the sacred function of Wayang Wong Ramayana. A clear distinction should be made between ritual performances and educational-cultural performances for visitors to preserve religious values and symbolic meanings.

Second, active involvement of the local community—particularly Wayang Wong artists, customary leaders, and village youth—should constitute a primary principle in tourism management. The local community must be positioned as subjects and custodians of cultural practice rather than merely providers of attractions, ensuring that literary tourism contributes both to cultural preservation and community welfare.

Third, the development of educational activities such as Wayang Wong and Ramayana workshops for visitors should be considered a strategy for literary and cultural literacy. These activities may include introduction to the Balinese version of the Ramayana, the meanings of masks and costumes, and basic dance movement training. Such initiatives not only enrich visitor experiences but also reinforce Wayang Wong's role as a medium for transmitting moral and spiritual values.

Fourth, the management of literary tourism in Tejakula Village should adopt a sustainable tourism approach, emphasizing balance among cultural, social, and economic dimensions. This approach is essential to prevent excessive commodification of Wayang Wong performances and to safeguard the sustainability of this intangible cultural heritage tradition.

Fifth, further research is recommended to examine visitors' perceptions and experiences of Ramayana literary tourism in Tejakula Village, as well as to analyze its social and economic impacts on the local community. Comparative studies with other villages in Bali that maintain Ramayana traditions would also enrich models for developing culture-based literary tourism.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Tejakula Village possesses strong potential as a literary tourism destination centered on the Ramayana epic through Wayang Wong Ramayana performances. Wayang Wong functions as living classical literature, a marker of local cultural identity, and a medium for transmitting moral and spiritual values. The development of literary tourism in Tejakula Village requires carefully designed tourism packages sensitive to sacred values, active community involvement, and a sustainable tourism approach.

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