



Literary Festival as a Space for Tourism Literature: An Analysis of the Borobudur Writers and Cultural Festival

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary cultural tourism increasingly emphasizes narrative- and knowledge-based experiences, thus literature plays a strategic role as a medium for shaping destination meaning. In this context, literary festivals have the potential to function as tourism literary practices that integrate texts, places, and cultural experiences. This article aims to examine the Borobudur Writers and Cultural Festival as a tourism literary practice through a literary festival and explain its role in building literary and cultural-based tourism experiences. This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive-interpretive design. Data collection tools are sourced from documentation of the Borobudur Writers and Cultural Festival for the 2017–2024 period, covering the festival's theme, location, core program, and value orientation. Analysis is conducted through identification, classification, and interpretation of data using the theoretical framework of tourism literature and literary festival theory. The results show that the Borobudur Writers and Cultural Festival consistently places literary themes as the main narrative of tourism, positions the place as a literary place, and builds a knowledge-based tourism experience. The festival's thematic evolution demonstrates a shift from a symbolic-textual approach to heritage-based tourism literature and destination networks through the concept of a moving festival. The festival also expands the literary experience through intellectual figures, artistic transformations, and public academic dialogue.

Keywords: literary festival, tourism literary space, Borobudur Writers, cultural festival

Festival Sastra sebagai Ruang Sastra Pariwisata: Analisis Borobudur Writers and Cultural Festival

ABSTRAK

Pariwisata budaya kontemporer semakin menekankan pengalaman berbasis narasi dan pengetahuan, sehingga sastra memperoleh peran strategis sebagai medium pembentuk makna destinasi. Dalam konteks ini, festival sastra berpotensi berfungsi sebagai praktik sastra pariwisata yang mengintegrasikan teks, tempat, dan pengalaman budaya. Artikel ini bertujuan mengkaji Borobudur Writers and Cultural Festival sebagai praktik sastra pariwisata melalui festival sastra serta menjelaskan perannya dalam membangun pengalaman wisata berbasis sastra dan budaya. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain deskriptif-interpretatif. Alat pengumpul data bersumber dari dokumentasi Borobudur Writers and Cultural Festival periode 2017–2024, meliputi tema festival, lokasi, program inti, dan orientasi nilai. Analisis dilakukan melalui identifikasi, klasifikasi, dan interpretasi data menggunakan kerangka teori sastra pariwisata dan teori festival sastra. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Borobudur Writers and Cultural Festival secara konsisten menempatkan tema sastra sebagai narasi utama pariwisata, memosisikan tempat sebagai *literary place*, dan membangun pengalaman wisata berbasis pengetahuan. Evolusi tematik festival memperlihatkan pergeseran dari pendekatan simbolik-tekstual menuju sastra pariwisata berbasis warisan budaya dan jaringan destinasi melalui konsep *moving festival*. Festival ini juga memperluas pengalaman sastra melalui figur intelektual, alih wahana seni, dan dialog akademik publik.

Keywords: festival sastra, ruang sastra pariwisata, Borobudur writers, cultural festival

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INTRODUCTION

Cultural tourism has undergone significant transformation in the past two decades, as tourists' orientation shifts from visual consumption to the pursuit of meaningful, reflective, and narrative-based experiences. Tourism is no longer understood simply as a spatial activity, but also as a symbolic interaction process between tourists, cultural texts, and the local social context (Saniro et al., 2023b; Saniro, 2024; Throsby et al., 2022). Within this dynamic, literature plays a strategic role as a medium capable of constructing destination imaginations, deepening emotional experiences, and connecting physical spaces with cultural meanings. This development has given rise to the literary tourism approach, an interdisciplinary study that examines the relationship between literary works, literary events, and tourism practices (Baleiro & Quinteiro, 2018; Busby, 2022; D. Herbert, 2001; Hoppen et al., 2014; Putra, 2019a).

The study of literary tourism positions literature not merely as an aesthetic product but as an active agent in shaping the tourism experience. Baleiro and Quinteiro explain that literary texts, author figures, and literary activities can construct what are known as literary places and literary destinations, spaces that acquire tourism value through their association with literary practices (Baleiro & Quinteiro, 2018). Herbert demonstrates that visits to places associated with literature can create deeper emotional attachments than conventional cultural tourism (D. Herbert, 2001). Thus, literature serves as a bridge between geographical space and the symbolic experience of tourists.

One of the most tangible manifestations of literary tourism is the literary festival. Literary festivals are performative spaces where literature is produced, performed, and experienced collectively by writers, readers, and tourists (Saniro, 2023; Saniro et al., 2023b). In the context of cultural tourism, literary festivals function not only as artistic events but also as special-interest tourism products with international appeal.

Research by Marcouiller and Westeren (2019) shows that literary festivals can strengthen destination identity while increasing local economic activity (Marcouiller & Westeren, 2019). Thus, literary festivals can be a strategic medium connecting literature, tourism, and the creative economy (Marcouiller & Westeren, 2019; Saniro et al., 2023a).

Several international studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of literary festivals in building destination image. The Ubud Writers and Readers Festival (UWRF), for example, has been empirically studied by Purnami, who found that this international literary festival can extend tourists' stays by around 25% and strengthen Ubud's branding as a global cultural hub (Made et al., 2022). Literary festivals also play a role in increasing tourist engagement through discussion programs, readings, and direct interactions with authors. These findings confirm that literary festivals are not merely temporary events, but sustainable destination promotion instruments.

In the Indonesian context, the study of tourism literature is beginning to develop along with the increasing number of literary and cultural festivals. Putra emphasized that tourism literature is a relevant interdisciplinary approach for understanding the relationship between texts, spaces, and tourism practices in Indonesia (Putra, 2019a). Saniro et al.'s study of the Southeast Asian Poets Gathering Festival in Padang Panjang demonstrated that literary festivals contribute to increased destination visibility, local community engagement, and opportunities for a culture-based creative economy (Saniro et al., 2023b, 2023a). This demonstrates that literary festivals in Indonesia have significant potential as a vehicle for cultural tourism development.

Despite this, most studies and practices of literary festivals still position literature as event content, rather than as a primary conceptual framework for tourism development. Many studies focus on the economic impact or destination promotion, while the experiential dimension of literature as a tourism practice has yet to be



thoroughly explored. Hoppen et al. emphasize that the success of cultural tourism depends heavily on a destination's ability to build emotional bonds and meaningful experiences, which can be facilitated through literary narratives and practices (Hoppen et al., 2014). This limitation of studies that position literary festivals as experiential tourism spaces opens up space for further research.

The Borobudur Writers and Cultural Festival (BWCF) exists within this context as a literary and cultural festival held in the Borobudur area, a world heritage destination with global appeal. BWCF seeks to combine literature, art, and cultural discourse in a single platform open to both national and international audiences. However, to date, BWCF has been more often understood as a cultural agenda, while its potential as a literary tourism instrument has not been systematically studied. In fact, the presence of literary festivals in strategic tourist areas like Borobudur opens up significant opportunities to develop literature- and culture-based tourism experiences.

A research problem that arises is the lack of empirical studies specifically examining how literary festivals, such as the BWCF, function as a medium for literary tourism. Most previous studies have positioned literary festivals as objects of study for events or destination promotions without delving deeply into the role of literature and literary practices in shaping tourist experiences (Made et al., 2022; Saniro, 2023). As a result, the literary dimension of tourism experience has yet to receive proportionate attention in academic studies.

Relevant research indicates that previous studies have focused more on the general relationship between literature and tourism (Baleiro & Quinteiro, 2018; Putra, 2019b) and the economic and branding impacts of literary festivals (Comunian, 2016; Lee & Jan, 2022; Made et al., 2022). Furthermore, other studies using a similar approach, specifically tourism literature through literary festivals, have been conducted by Saniro et al. (Saniro et al., 2023b). However, Saniro et al.'s (2023b) study examined a different topic than

this study, namely the Southeast Asian Poets Gathering.

However, previous research has not specifically positioned literary festivals as the primary space for tourism literary experiences at the BWCF. Based on this literature review, a research gap can be identified in the lack of studies that position literary festivals as the primary space for tourism literature, particularly in the Indonesian context. Previous research tends to discuss the relationship between literature and tourism in general (Baleiro & Quinteiro, 2018; Putra, 2019b) or highlight the economic impact and branding of festivals (Comunian, 2016; Lee & Jan, 2022; Made et al., 2022), without integrating the two within a coherent analytical framework. This gap underscores the importance of studies that focus on literary festivals as tourism literary practices.

Thus, the research problem is formulated as "How does the Borobudur Writers and Cultural Festival function as a literary tourism medium in building literary and cultural-based tourism experiences in the Borobudur area?" Furthermore, the purpose of this research is to examine the Borobudur Writers and Cultural Festival as a literary tourism practice, specifically in building literary-based tourism experiences, strengthening Borobudur's image as a cultural destination, and positioning literary festivals as an integral part of cultural tourism development. Furthermore, the benefits of this research include theoretical benefits in the form of strengthening the conceptual framework of literary tourism, as well as practical benefits as a reference for festival managers, policymakers, and cultural tourism practitioners in developing literary festivals as sustainable tourism products.

Therefore, this article aims to examine the Borobudur Writers and Cultural Festival as a literary tourism practice through literary festivals. This research analyzes how the BWCF plays a role in building literary-based tourism experiences, strengthening Borobudur's image as a cultural destination, and broadening the understanding of literary festivals as cultural tourism products. The

contribution of this study lies in strengthening the theoretical framework of literary tourism and providing an empirical perspective on the role of literary festivals in the development of cultural tourism in Indonesia.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive-interpretive design to examine the Borobudur Writers and Cultural Festival (BWCF) as a literary tourism practice through a literary festival. The qualitative approach was chosen because the purpose of this study was to understand the meaning, construction, and role of literary festivals in shaping cultural and tourism experiences, which cannot be reduced to quantitative measurements alone. In the study of literary tourism, a qualitative approach allows researchers to interpret literary practices, cultural discourses, and the social context surrounding literary festivals in depth (Baleiro & Quinteiro, 2018; Putra, 2019a) (Baleiro & Quinteiro, 2018; Putra, 2019).

The data for this study comes from the Borobudur Writers and Cultural Festival between 2017 and 2024 (Admin, 2025). This time period was chosen because it represents a relatively consistent phase in the development of BWCF as a literary and cultural festival, and is supported by the availability of systematically documented data on the official BWCF website and related publications. The data studied included the festival theme, program and activity agenda, types of literary activities, forms of author and audience participation, and the festival's promotional narrative related to Borobudur's position as a cultural destination.

Data collection was conducted through library and document-based research. The literature study guidelines were compiled in the form of a list of criteria and analysis categories used to select relevant scientific sources, including (1) the concept and definition of literary tourism; (2) theories and approaches to literary festivals and cultural tourism; (3) previous research findings

related to the role of literary festivals in shaping tourist experiences and destination image; and (4) a conceptual framework explaining the relationship between literature, space, and tourism practices. These guidelines helped researchers ensure that the literature sources used had thematic relevance, academic credibility, and theoretical contribution to the research objectives. Furthermore, the documentation guidelines were used to collect and review written and visual data related to the implementation of the Borobudur Writers and Cultural Festival. Aspects documented included (1) the profile and objectives of the festival; (2) the types and forms of literary and cultural activities presented; (3) the involvement of writers, communities, and tourists; (4) promotional narratives and representation of the festival in official and online media; and (5) the relationship between the festival's location and activities with the context of Borobudur tourism as a cultural destination. These guidelines allow for focused and consistent analysis of documentary data as a representation of literary tourism practices.

Data sources include the official Borobudur Writers and Cultural Festival website, digital festival archives, online media articles, activity reports, and reputable books and journal articles discussing literary festivals, literary tourism, and cultural tourism. Literature review is used to build a theoretical foundation and serve as a basis for analysis of literary festival practices in the tourism context. This approach aligns with literary and cultural research, which places texts, events, and discourses as the primary objects of study.

The primary theoretical framework in this research is literary festival theory, which views literary festivals as spaces of cultural production and literary experiences that are performative and temporary. This theory refers to the idea that literary festivals are arenas for interaction between writers, readers, and cultural institutions, and Getz, who positions festivals as part of cultural tourism and event tourism (Getz et al., 2010). Furthermore, Baleiro and Quinteiro's concept of literary tourism was used to understand the literary festival as a



literacy-based tourism practice that utilizes literature and literary activities as attractions and tourist experiences (Baleiro, 2025; Baleiro & Quinteiro, 2018).

Data analysis was conducted in several stages. The first stage was data identification and classification, which grouped festival data based on themes, types of literary activities, and their relationship to the Borobudur tourism context. The second stage was descriptive analysis, which aimed to describe the characteristics of BWCF as a literary festival, including its organization patterns, program curation, and the cultural narratives it constructs. The third stage was interpretive analysis, which was conducted to interpret the

meaning of the literary festival within the framework of literary tourism, specifically how BWCF positions literature as a cultural experience and tourist attraction.

RESULTS

This study presents empirical findings regarding the Borobudur Writers and Cultural Festival (BWCF) as a literary festival-based tourism practice. The results are based on an analysis of bibliographic data and documentation, covering the themes, locations, activity formats, and value orientations of the BWCF for the 2017–2024 period, as shown in Tables 1 through 8 below.

Table 1
 Identification of BWCF Activities in 2017-2018 (Admin, 2025)

Year/Edition	Main Theme	Time and Location	Scientific Focus and Main Ideas	Main Program	Value Orientation and Impact
2017 (BWCF ke-6)	Gandawyuha	Nov 2017, Borobudur	Mahayana spirituality; the search for truth; interfaith tolerance through the Borobudur reliefs.	Interfaith seminar; book release; exhibition and performing arts; Sanghyang Kamahayanikan Award	Strengthening pluralism and religious dialogue in the archipelago.
2018 (BWCF ke-7)	Strengthening pluralism and religious dialogue in the archipelago. Diary & Traveling: After 1300 Years of I-Tsing's Diary	Nov 2018, Borobudur	Strengthening pluralism and religious dialogue in the archipelago. Diary & Traveling: After 1300 Years of I-Tsing's Diary	International symposium; cultural speech; book launch; book exhibition.	Integration of literature, history, and heritage tourism

The 6th Borobudur Writers and Cultural Festival (BWCF) in 2017 adopted the theme "Gandawyuha," based on Mahayana spiritual values ??represented in the reliefs of Borobudur Temple. This theme emphasized the search for spiritual truth while also emphasizing the spirit of interfaith tolerance as part of the Indonesian archipelago's cultural heritage. Festival activities included interfaith seminars, book launches, art exhibitions, and various cultural performances, including the Sanghyang Kamahayanikan Award. Through these themes and activities, BWCF 2017 contributed to strengthening pluralism and fostering inclusive religious dialogue within Indonesia's multicultural society.

The 7th Borobudur Writers and Cultural Festival (BWCF), held in November 2018, adopted the theme "Diary & Traveling: After 1300 Years of I-Tsing's Diary," and took place in the Borobudur area. This theme emphasized travel literature as a medium for Indonesian historiography, read through the perspective of foreign travelers, particularly I-Tsing's travelogue. This festival positions literature as a bridge between history, mobility, and cultural tourism. The series of activities includes an international symposium, cultural speeches, book launches, and a book exhibition. Through the integration of literary discourse, history, and heritage tourism, BWCF 2018 plays a role in broadening understanding of Borobudur as both a literary space and a cultural destination steeped in historical significance.

Table 2
Identification of BWCF Activities in 2019-2020 (Admin, 2025)

Year/Edition	Main Theme	Time and Location	Scientific Focus and Main Ideas	Main Program	Value Orientation and Impact
2019 (BWCF ke-8 / Sewindu)	God & Nature: Rereading Pantheism–Tantrayana in Kakawin and Ancient Nusantara Manuscripts	21–23 Nov 2019, Yogyakarta & Magelang	Tantrayana Nusantara; pantheism; Javanese–Balinese–Malay kakawin & manuscripts; Hindu–Buddhist–Islamic cross-section.	International symposium; book launch; workshop; performing arts; Sanghyang Kamahayanikan Award.	Reactualization of ancient manuscripts as sources of spiritual philosophy.
2020 (BWCF ke-9)	Bhūmīsodhana: Ecology and Disaster in Reflections on Indonesian Culture	Nov 2020, Borobudur	Cultural ecology; human–nature relations; disaster mitigation in Nusantara manuscripts; sustainability.	Interdisciplinary scientific forum; manuscript review; cultural reflection; program books & papers.	Strengthening ecological awareness based on local wisdom

The 8th Borobudur Writers and Cultural Festival (BWCF), marking the festival's eighth anniversary, was held on November 21–23, 2019, in Yogyakarta and Magelang. The festival's theme, "God & Nature: Rereading Pantheism–Tantrayana in Kakawin and Ancient Nusantara Manuscripts," focused on the study of Nusantara Tantrayana and pantheism as manifested in kakawin and ancient Javanese, Balinese,



and Malay manuscripts. This theme represents a dialogue across religious traditions—Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam—that serves as the spiritual and cultural foundation of the Nusantara archipelago. The 2019 BWCF series of activities included an international symposium, book launches, workshops, art performances, and the awarding of the Sanghyang Kamahayanikan Award. Through this approach, the festival played a role in re-actualizing ancient manuscripts as sources of spiritual philosophy relevant to cultural understanding and intellectual heritage-based tourism.

The 9th Borobudur Writers and Cultural Festival (BWCF), held in 2020, adopted the theme "Bhumisodhana: Ecology and Disaster in Reflections on Indonesian Culture." This theme emphasized the study of cultural ecology, focusing on the relationship between humans and nature, as well as the interpretation of disaster mitigation as reflected in Indonesian manuscripts. The festival positioned literature and textual heritage as a medium for critical reflection on sustainability issues and contemporary ecological challenges. BWCF 2020 activities included interdisciplinary scientific forums, manuscript studies, cultural reflections, and the publication of a program book and a collection of papers. Through this approach, BWCF 2020 contributed to strengthening ecological awareness based on local wisdom as part of the discourse on culture and sustainable tourism.

Table 3
 Identification of BWCF Activities in 2021-2022 (Admin, 2025)

Year/Edition	Main Theme	Time and Location	Scientific Focus and Main Ideas	Main Program	Value Orientation and Impact
2021 (BWCF ke-10)	Rereading Claire Holt: Nusantara Aesthetics – Continuity & Change	2021	The history of Nusantara aesthetics from prehistory to modernity; continuity and rupture of art; cultural osmosis	Symposium; cultural speech; book launch; Borobudur lecture; workshop; performing arts.	Reactualization of historical thinking on Nusantara art.
2022 (BWCF ke-11)	Durga in Java, Bali, and India: Rereading the Thought of Hariani Santiko (1940–2021)	2022	Hindu–Buddhist archaeology; the cult of Durga; iconography, inscriptions, literature, ritual; comparison of Java–Bali–India.	Durga Symposium; thematic performing arts; lecture; book & relief review; meditation.	Strengthening archaeological heritage awareness & intellectual memory.

The 10th Borobudur Writers and Cultural Festival (BWCF), held in 2021, carried the theme "Rereading Claire Holt: Nusantara Aesthetics – Continuity & Change." This theme focused on exploring the history of Nusantara aesthetics from prehistoric times to the modern period, emphasizing the dynamics between continuity and rupture in artistic development. The festival positioned aesthetics as the result

of an ongoing process of cultural osmosis throughout history. The 2021 BWCF series of activities included a symposium, cultural speeches, book launches, Borobudur lectures, workshops, and various art performances. Through this approach, BWCF 2021 played a role in reactualizing the historical thinking of Nusantara art as a foundation for cultural understanding and strengthening Indonesia's aesthetic identity.

The 11th Borobudur Writers and Cultural Festival (BWCF), held in 2022, carried the theme "Durga in Java, Bali, and India: Rereading the Thought of Hariani Santiko (1940–2021). This theme focuses on Hindu-Buddhist archaeological studies, with an emphasis on the cult of the goddess Durga, examined through iconography, inscriptions, literature, and ritual practices, and analyzed comparatively across Javanese, Balinese, and Indian contexts. The festival positions Hariani Santiko's thought as an intellectual foundation for understanding the dynamics of the archipelago's cultural and religious heritage. The 2022 BWCF series of activities includes a thematic symposium on Durga, themed art performances, lectures, book and relief reviews, and meditation practices. Through this interdisciplinary approach, BWCF 2022 contributes to strengthening awareness of archaeological heritage and intellectual memory as a crucial component of developing knowledge-based cultural tourism.

Table 3
Identification of BWCF Activities in 2023-2024 (Admin, 2025)

Year/Edition	Main Theme	Time and Location	Scientific Focus and Main Ideas	Main Program	Value Orientation and Impact
2023 (BWCF ke-12)	Gaṇeśa, Performing Arts and the Repatriation of Indonesian Antiquities: Rereading the Thoughts of Prof. Dr. Edi Sedyawati (1938–2022)	2023, State University of Malang (Moving Festival)	Hindu–Buddhist archaeology; Gaṇeśa iconography; performing arts and dance; Shiva–Buddhist theology; artifact repatriation.	International symposium; cultural speech; archaeology–dance workshop; exhibition; performing arts; repatriation discussion.	Strengthening cultural diplomacy, archaeological literacy, and awareness of the repatriation of cultural heritage.
2024 (BWCF ke-13)	Rereading the Muarajambi–Nalanda Connection & Sumatran Statues: Remembering Satyawati Suleiman (1920–1988)	2024, Muarajambi Temple Area (Moving Festival)	Archaeology of Srivijaya & Sumatra; intellectual relations of Muarajambi–Nalanda; inscriptions, statues, ceramics & ancient ports; maritime archaeology.	Cultural speeches; international symposiums; public lectures; arts & literature; film screenings; public meditations.	Strengthening Muarajambi as a world heritage center of Buddhism & strategy towards UNESCO World Heritage



The 12th Borobudur Writers and Cultural Festival (BWCF), held in 2023, carried the theme "Ga?esa, Performing Arts & Repatriation of Indonesian Antiquities: Rereading the Thoughts of Prof. Dr. Edi Sedyawati (1938–2022). Different from previous editions, BWCF 2023 was held in a moving festival format and took place at the State University of Malang. This theme focused on the study of Hindu-Buddhist archaeology with an emphasis on Ga?esa iconography, its relationship to performing arts and dance, and the meaning of Shiva-Buddhist theology in the context of Indonesian culture. In addition, this festival raised the strategic issue of artifact repatriation as part of the responsibility for preserving cultural heritage. The series of BWCF 2023 activities included an international symposium, cultural speeches, archaeological and dance workshops, exhibitions, art performances, and special discussions on the repatriation of Indonesian antiquities. Through this interdisciplinary and cross-practice approach, BWCF 2023 contributes to strengthening cultural diplomacy, increasing archaeological literacy, and raising public awareness of the importance of repatriating and protecting cultural heritage as part of national identity and the development of sustainable cultural tourism.

The 13th Borobudur Writers and Cultural Festival (BWCF), held in 2024, carries the theme "Rereading the Muarajambi–Nalanda Relationship & Sumatran Statues: Remembering Satyawati Suleiman (1920–1988). The festival is held as a moving festival and takes place at the Muarajambi Temple Complex. This theme emphasizes the study of Srivijaya and Sumatran archaeology, with a focus on the intellectual relationship between Muarajambi and Nalanda as centers of global Buddhist learning. Analysis of inscriptions, statues, ceramics, and traces of ancient ports is placed within a maritime archaeological framework, highlighting Sumatra's strategic role in past international intellectual and trade networks. The BWCF 2024 series of activities includes cultural talks, an international symposium, public lectures,

art and literary performances, film screenings, and public meditation. Through this interdisciplinary approach, BWCF 2024 contributes to strengthening Muarajambi's position as a center of global Buddhist heritage, while also serving as part of the cultural and academic strategy toward the Muarajambi Temple Area's nomination as a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Consistently, all editions of the Borobudur Writers and Cultural Festival (BWCF) have positioned literary themes as the primary tourism narrative, not merely as a marker or event label. The themes promoted by BWCF consistently serve as a conceptual framework that guides how tourists understand the destination, festival activities, and the cultural context in which the event takes place. In the context of tourism literature, this practice demonstrates that BWCF positions literature not as entertainment or supplementary content, but rather as a narrative medium that frames the overall tourism experience. Through the chosen themes, tourists are invited to "read" the destination as a cultural text rich in meaning, whether through literature, history, or intellectual thought.

Another striking similarity is the interpretive and reflective nature of the BWCF themes. Each theme is not presented merely descriptively or informatively, but rather opens up space for interpretation and dialogue. Themes such as *Gandawyuha* (2017), *Diary & Traveling* (2018), or *Bhumisodhana* (2020) not only address specific topics but also contain layers of philosophical and symbolic meaning that demand the audience's intellectual engagement. Within the framework of tourism literature, this reinforces literature's function as a means of creating immersive tourism experiences, where tourists not only observe objects but also reflect on their values. Literature, thus, functions as a narrative bridge between physical space and the traveler's inner experience.

Furthermore, all editions of the BWCF demonstrate the use of literature as a flexible narrative medium, capable of framing various types of tourism experiences. Through its themes, literature addresses spiritual experiences (for

example, in themes of Buddhism and Tantrayana), intellectual experiences (through the study of manuscripts and historiography), ecological experiences (in reflections on disasters and sustainability), and even historical and archaeological experiences. This uniformity of function demonstrates that tourism literature in the context of the BWCF is multidimensional, bridging various aspects of the tourism experience without being tied to a single narrative type.

Despite similarities in its narrative function, the BWCF exhibits significant differences in thematic orientation between periods, reflecting the dynamics and evolution of tourism literature. In the 2017–2019 period, BWCF themes tended to focus on textual and spiritual dimensions, as seen in Gandawyuha (2017) and *God & Nature: Rereading Pantheism–Tantrayana* (2019). During this phase, tourism literature operated primarily through classical texts, kakawin (traditional poems), and ancient manuscripts, which were interpreted as sources of Indonesian spirituality and philosophy. Tourism destinations were framed as contemplative spaces, where the tourism experience was directed toward the search for meaning and inner reflection.

The subsequent period, particularly 2020–2021, saw a shift in themes toward reflective contemporary issues, such as ecology, disasters, and Indonesian aesthetics. The theme of *Bhumisodhana* (2020) marks literature's involvement in the discourse on the relationship between humans and nature, while Claire Holt's *Rereading* (2021) invites audiences to reflect on the history and aesthetic transformation of the Indonesian archipelago. In this phase, tourism literature no longer focuses solely on the spiritual or textual dimension, but functions as a vehicle for critical reflection on social and environmental issues, while simultaneously expanding the relevance of cultural tourism in the contemporary context.

The most significant change was seen in the 2022–2024 period, when BWCF themes shifted toward archaeology, materialism, and cultural

geopolitics. Themes of Durga, Ga?esa, the repatriation of ancient objects, and the relationship between Muarajambi and Nalanda mark tourism literature's engagement with material artifacts, archaeological sites, and global cultural heritage issues. At this stage, literature interacts not only with texts but also with material objects such as statues, inscriptions, and cultural landscapes. Tourism literature is evolving into heritage-based tourism, where literary narratives are used to interpret and contextualize cultural heritage on a national and international scale.

Overall, the similarities and differences in the themes of literature and tourism narratives indicate that BWCF represents a paradigm shift in tourism literature, from a symbolic and textual approach to a more material and heritage-based approach. This shift does not eliminate literature's role as a primary narrative, but rather expands its function as a tool for cultural interpretation capable of bridging texts, objects, and tourism spaces. Thus, BWCF demonstrates how a literary festival can be a dynamic medium that adapts its narrative orientation to developments in cultural discourse and contemporary tourism needs.

DISCUSSION

1. Borobudur Writers and Cultural Festival as a Tourism Literature Practice through a Literary Festival

The discussion regarding the Writers and Cultural Festival's position as a tourism literature practice can be seen through several points, namely the thematic evolution, themes, and intellectual figures, as outlined below.

1.1 BWCF Thematic Evolution and Tourism Literature Curatorial Consistency

Analysis of data from the Borobudur Writers and Cultural Festival (BWCF) for the 2017–2024 period shows that the festival has a consistent and focused curatorial approach to developing literature as a cultural tourism practice. BWCF does not position literature solely as an aesthetic product or literacy activity, but rather as a medium



for transmitting knowledge, historical reflection, and cultural experiences directly connected to the destinations where the festival is held. The BWCF's thematic evolution ranges from Buddhist spirituality, travel literature, ancient manuscripts, cultural ecology, Indonesian aesthetics, to maritime archeology and world heritage diplomacy, demonstrating a knowledge-based literary tourism orientation.

These findings reinforce the theoretical framework of tourism literature proposed by Baleiro and Quinteiro, who emphasize that tourism literature is not limited to visits to locations associated with specific authors or works, but also encompasses literary events that produce discourse-based tourism experiences and cultural reflections (Baleiro & Quinteiro, 2018). In the Indonesian context, the BWCF curatorial model expands Putra's notion of tourism literature by demonstrating that literary festivals can function as a nexus between literature, cultural tourism, and intellectual diplomacy (Putra, 2019a).

1.2 Festival Themes as Knowledge-Based Tourism Narratives

Thematic analysis indicates that BWCF themes function as primary narratives guiding the literary tourism experience. Furthermore, the data in the table demonstrates that BWCF themes are explicitly designed to construct knowledge-based tourism narratives. The Gandawyuha theme (2017), which refers to the Borobudur reliefs about Sudhana's spiritual journey, directly links Buddhist texts, world heritage sites, and tourists' reflective experiences. Within the framework of tourism literature, this theme serves as a narrative anchor that strengthens the symbolic relationship between literature and space.

The theme "Diary & Traveling: After 1300 Years of I-Tsing's Diary" (2018) explicitly positions travel literature as the foundation of cultural tourism. Travel literature in the BWCF is not treated solely as a narrative genre, but as an alternative historiographic medium that opens up a global perspective on the Indonesian archipelago.

This finding aligns with Jiang and Xu (2016), who demonstrated that travel literature and classical poetry can enhance the depth of the tourist experience through the interpretation of meaning across time and space.

The development of the theme up to BWCF 2024—Rereading the Muarajambi–Nalanda Relationship—demonstrates a shift toward tourism literature based on academic research and world heritage. The festival attracts not only cultural tourists but also international academics and researchers, thus strengthening BWCF's position as a space for the intersection of tourism, knowledge production, and cultural diplomacy. This supports Marcouiller and Western's findings that literary festivals can serve as drivers of intellectual tourism (Marcouiller & Western, 2019). Furthermore, this theme demonstrates the transformation of literary festivals into platforms for the production of public knowledge, as Marcouiller and Western (2019) argue.

1.3 Intellectual Figures and the Formation of Literary Places

The research also shows that BWCF consistently builds the appeal of tourism literature through the intellectual and literary figures presented and awarded with the Sang Hyang Kamahayanikan Award. Figures such as S.H. Mintardja, A.B. Lopian, Peter Carey, Kartono Kamajaya, and Noerhadi Magetsari are positioned not merely as award recipients, but as narrative nodes connecting literature, history, and place.

From a tourism literature perspective, literary figures function as symbolic mediators that strengthen the meaning of a destination (Baleiro, 2025; Baleiro & Quinteiro, 2018). Herbert also emphasized that the connection between figures and places can build strong place attachment in tourists (D. Herbert, 2001; D. T. Herbert, 1996). BWCF operationalizes this concept by linking intellectual figures to the sites of Borobudur, Muarajambi, and other cultural locations that serve as festival venues.

All editions of the BWCF explicitly link literary practices to specific geographical and cultural locations, such as Borobudur, Yogyakarta, Magelang, Malang, and the Muarajambi Temple Area. In the context of tourism literature, this engagement demonstrates that the BWCF consciously constructs what scholars call a literary place, a place that acquires meaning and tourist appeal through its association with literary texts, discourses, and practices. Places are not treated as passive settings, but rather as integral parts of the literary narratives presented at the festival.

Another striking similarity is the way the BWCF positions place as a narrative space. Each festival location functions not only as a technical venue for the event but also as a field for cultural interpretation. Borobudur, for example, is treated as a visual and symbolic text that can be "read" through themes of Mahayana spirituality, kakawin, and ancient manuscripts. Similarly, Muarajambi is presented as a narrative space containing intellectual traces of Southeast Asian Buddhism and historical connections with Nalanda. This practice is consistent with the concept of literary place in tourism literature, which emphasizes that the meaning of a place is constructed through literary narratives and experiences, not solely through its visual or architectural value.

The literature-place relationship in BWCF also demonstrates the continuity between text, context, and the tourist experience. Through symposia, text readings, cultural speeches, and performance art tied to specific locations, literature is presented as a medium for interpreting space. Within the framework of tourism literature, this practice strengthens tourists' place attachment, as their experience of place is mediated by narratives, symbols, and cultural knowledge. Thus, BWCF operationalizes literature as a means of transforming a destination from a physical space into a space of meaning.

Despite similarities in positioning places as literary places, there are significant differences in BWCF's spatial orientation across periods. In the 2017–2022 period, Borobudur still serves as the

main symbolic center of the festival. Most themes and activities are designed with Borobudur as a narrative reference point, both directly and indirectly. Borobudur is positioned as a spiritual, historical, and intellectual center that serves as the axis of literary and tourism meaning. In this phase, BWCF tourism literature can be categorized as destination-centered literary tourism, where one main destination becomes the focus of experience and narrative.

A significant change occurred in the 2023–2024 period with the implementation of the moving festival concept. The BWCF, held at Malang State University (2023) and the Muarajambi Temple Area (2024), marked a strategic shift in the literature-place relationship. The festival was no longer tied to a single symbolic destination, but instead moved and built a network of narratively interconnected locations. In this context, literature served as a common thread connecting various places, allowing tourists and festival audiences to experience tourism literature as an intellectual journey across space.

This shift toward a moving festival signified a transformation from destination-centered literary tourism to networked literary tourism. Rather than concentrating meaning on a single location, the BWCF built a network of complementary literary places, each with its own unique history, archaeology, and cultural narratives. This model broadened the scope of tourism literature while reducing dependence on a single primary destination. Theoretically, this approach enriched the concept of tourism literature by adding dimensions of mobility and connectivity between places.

Overall, the analysis of the literature-place relationship within the Borobudur Writers and Cultural Festival (BWCF) shows that the festival not only utilizes the location as a setting for its events, but actively constructs and transforms the place into a meaningful literary place. The evolution of Borobudur from a symbolic center to a destination network through a moving festival reflects the adaptive and innovative dynamics of



tourism literature. Thus, the BWCF makes a significant contribution to the development of a tourism literature model that emphasizes the dynamic relationship between literature, space, and the tourism experience.

Thus, the Borobudur Writers and Cultural Festival (BWCF) can be understood as a tourism literature practice operationalized through a literary festival format. The research findings indicate that the BWCF does not position literature as a stand-alone literary activity, but as a primary medium connecting knowledge production, cultural practices, and tourism experiences. In the context of tourism literature, the BWCF represents a literary event that produces tourism experiences based on discourse, reflection, and cultural interpretation.

This framework aligns with Baleiro and Quinteiro's perspective, which asserts that tourism literature is not limited to visits to locations associated with specific authors or works, but also encompasses literary events such as festivals, symposia, and readings that construct destination meaning through narrative and cultural discourse (Baleiro & Quinteiro, 2018). BWCF operationalizes this concept through curating themes based on literary texts, ancient manuscripts, travel historiography, and Indonesian intellectual thought, consistently linked to the festival's locations.

The thematic evolution of BWCF from 2017 to 2024 demonstrates the consistent curatorial approach to knowledge-based tourism literature. The themes serve not only as event labels but also as conceptual frameworks that guide the entire series of festival activities, from international symposia and cultural speeches to book launches and performance art. Thus, BWCF establishes literature as the primary narrative connecting text, space, and the tourism experience.

Furthermore, the selection of venues, such as Borobudur, Yogyakarta, Magelang, Malang, and the Muarajambi Temple Area, demonstrates that BWCF consciously links literary practices with strategic cultural destinations. From a literary

tourism perspective, this connection demonstrates that literary festivals function as a medium for transforming geographical spaces into literary places, places that acquire meaning and tourist appeal through their association with literary texts, discourses, and practices. Therefore, BWCF can be positioned as a model literary festival that simultaneously integrates literature, cultural tourism, and knowledge production.

2. The Role of the Borobudur Writers and Cultural Festival in Building Literature and Culture-Based Tourism Experiences

The role of the Borobudur Writers and Cultural Festival (BWCF) in building literature and culture-based tourism experiences can be understood through three interrelated aspects: the festival's character as a moving literary festival, its strategy for transforming literary venues, and its contribution to the development of a global tourism literature framework. These three aspects demonstrate that the tourism experience produced by BWCF is dynamic, multisensory, and knowledge-based.

2.1 BWCF as a Moving Literary Festival and Destination Strengthening

One significant finding is the character of BWCF as a moving literary festival, particularly since 2023, when the festival has been held outside Borobudur, such as at Malang State University and the Muarajambi Temple Area. This model expands the concept of tourism literature from a single destination to a network of interconnected cultural locations. Furthermore, this strategy expands tourism literature from a single destination (Borobudur) to a network of cultural destinations.

Within the framework of event tourism, Getz refers to these types of festivals as planned cultural events capable of creating temporary experiences with long-term impacts on the destination's image (Getz et al., 2010). Data from the 2024 BWCF shows that the festival in Muarajambi contributed to strengthening the region's narrative as a center of Buddhist heritage and a UNESCO World

Heritage site candidate. This finding is consistent with Mteti et al., who emphasized the role of knowledge-based events in raising awareness and the value of cultural heritage tourism (Mteti et al., 2025).

2.2 Literary Transformation and Expanding Tourism Audiences

Other findings indicate that the BWCF does not limit literature to written texts, but actively encourages literary transformation through performing arts, film, and digital media. Film screenings on Sumatran archaeology, art performances based on classical texts, and the management of the BWCF website as a knowledge archive expand the reach of literature to a broader and more diverse audience.

In tourism literature studies, transformation is understood as a crucial strategy for bridging literature with popular tourism (Baleiro, 2025). This finding aligns with Ryan et al. which demonstrates that visualizing cultural narratives increases tourist engagement and strengthens destination image (Ryan et al., 2008). Thus, BWCF successfully positions literature as a multisensory experience relevant to contemporary tourism.

2.3 Theoretical Discussion: BWCF's Contribution to Global Tourism Literature

Theoretically, the findings of this study confirm that BWCF represents a form of literary tourism that goes beyond the classic model of literary pilgrimage. BWCF integrates literature, archaeology, philology, performing arts, and academic research within a single festival ecosystem. This expands the concept of literary tourism from text-based visits to knowledge-based experiences and cultural dialogue (Baleiro, 2025; Baleiro & Quinteiro, 2018).

Compared to international literary festivals such as the Ubud Writers and Readers Festival, which emphasizes creative industries and popular culture tourism (Made et al., 2022), BWCF emphasizes reflective and intellectual dimensions. This distinction demonstrates the diversity of

literary tourism models and affirms BWCF's position as a uniquely Indonesian contribution to the global literary festival landscape.

These three findings, namely BWCF as a mobile literary festival (2.1), the practice of transforming literary platforms (2.2), and its contribution to the development of the concept of global tourism literature (2.3), integrally explain how BWCF builds a reflective, educational, and multidimensional literary and cultural tourism experience. BWCF's character as a mobile literary festival allows the tourism experience to evolve spatially, not tied to a single destination, but forming a network of interconnected cultural sites. This expands the tourism experience from a mere physical visit to an intellectual journey across space, as seen in the events in Malang and the Muarajambi Temple Area.

At the same time, the strategy of transforming literary platforms deepens the quality of the tourism experience by presenting literature as a multisensory practice. The transformation of literary texts into films, performing arts, and digital media enables tourists to engage emotionally and cognitively, so that the tourism experience does not stop at visual consumption of the destination, but rather at the active process of cultural interpretation. In this context, tourists are positioned as participants engaged in a dialogue between literature, history, and culture, in line with the paradigm of knowledge-based tourism.

The correlation between these two empirical findings is reinforced through theoretical discussions, which demonstrate that the Borobudur Writers and Cultural Festival (BWCF) goes beyond the classic model of literary pilgrimage. The integration of literature, philology, archaeology, performing arts, and academic research makes the BWCF a reflective and intellectually oriented tourism literature ecosystem. The BWCF's thematic development, from spiritual and contemplative reflection in the initial period to social, ecological, and cultural sustainability reflection in the later period, demonstrates the dynamics of tourism experiences that continue to



transform with the changing context.

Thus, these three points correlate with each other, affirming the role of the BWCF as a cultural agent actively constructing and transforming tourism experiences based on literature and culture. The BWCF not only expands the definition of tourism literature in Indonesia but also offers an alternative model for a global literary festival that places aesthetic, reflective, and educational experiences at the heart of sustainable cultural tourism development.

The research findings show that the BWCF themes serve as tourism narratives that shape how tourists interpret the destination's space, history, and culture. The festival's thematic evolution, from spirituality and classical texts to issues of ecology, aesthetics, archaeology, and cultural heritage, demonstrates a shift in tourism literature from a symbolic approach to a heritage- and knowledge-based approach. The relationship between literature and place is a key element, with locations positioned as active narrative spaces through academic and artistic activities bound by spatial context. Furthermore, the implementation of the "moving festival" concept since 2023 has expanded the practice of tourism literature from a destination-centered model to a network of cultural spaces. Theoretically, this research strengthens the understanding that literary festivals can serve as primary spaces for tourism literary production. Practically, BWCF demonstrates the potential of literary festivals as high-value cultural tourism instruments that support the strengthening of destination identity and sustainable tourism.

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