

Marvel Comics in The Context of Literary Tourism

Diana Budi Darma^{1*}, Nur Chakim¹, Fithriyah Inda Nur Abida¹

¹Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia

*Correspondence: dianabudi@unesa.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study aims at discussing Marvel comics as a part of literary tourism. Marvel comics play an important role in supporting tourism development. The worldwide popularity of Marvel comics has also increased the popularity of the places that used as the setting in the comics. This study used literature review with a qualitative descriptive approach. The data is identified, classified and then interpreted based on a literary tourism and literary events. The results of the study shows that the representation of places in comic books can pique readers' interest in visiting those places. This popularity has an effect on rising tourism-related factors, monetary gains, state income, and the promotion of regional culture.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Published December 31st 2022



KEYWORDS

Literary Tourism; Marvel comics; Tourism Development

ARTICLE LICENCE

© 2022 Universitas Hasanuddin
Under the license CC BY-SA
4.0



1. Introduction

Comic books in particular can be exploited as a sustainable tourist destination. This is because the traits of culture, society, and all phenomena are thoroughly documented in text and images (Keen, 2011). Comics are always related to the names of places, events, and characters. In addition to writing, all three are illustrated with attractive visuals (Susiaty, et.al, 2021). Comic books are not just entertaining graphic books; they also document cultural occurrences, scenic beauty, and the settings of important events. As a result, comic book characters, locations, and events are frequently employed as marketing and advertising tools for the travel industry (Bolan and Williams, 2008). Readers may feel compelled to travel to the site or other locations described in the comic book if the illustrations and content in the comic book allude to a current event that is occurring there. The current state of affairs is likely to negatively impact the number of people attending a certain place or area that is regularly featured in comic books (Macionis, 2004).

Creativity in the creation of characters and the choice of locations becomes a tourist attraction that offers advantages and benefits in the growth of tourism in general. According to (Watson, 2006), a compelling story can pique the reader's curiosity, which in turn inspires a desire to visit the locations mentioned. In order to fulfill their imaginations that arise when reading literary or humorous works, readers choose to take trips to specific locations in the story. Additionally, a connection to the plot and comprehension of the location's context enhances the tourism activity's enjoyment and memory (Charmaz, 2006). The effectiveness of technology in the most recent comic book releases also has a big impact on the rising number of contemporary comic readers. This circumstance subsequently triggers a surge of growing visitor numbers to specific locations that frequently appear in the comic's plots.

Marvel comics, often known as Marvel studio's comics, are the current comic trendsetters in the world as it is today. The superhero with a female lead is one of the most popular subgenres (Botzakis, 2009). In the Marvel comics, women are portrayed as having superhuman abilities and serving as the series' main protagonists. The portrayal of superheroes in comic books and comic book movies, which typically follow patriarchal reasoning, is beginning to change and offer women a larger role. Male subjects no longer view women as hypersexual objects and physical complements, but rather as equal business partners. Naturally, this changes also benefits reader diversification, which makes comics

popular across practically all demographics. The popularity of female protagonists has changed the audience, which was previously dominated by men and adolescents, but now comprises both men and women.

Women in Marvel comics are described as having extraordinary powers in attractive places and destinations (Babic, 2015). Various locations where events take place tangentially become tourist attractions in literary works. Even the primary female character, who depicts the circumstance in which the incident took place, played a part in the rise in the proportion of female tourists who are now more confident to travel alone or with other groups of women. This research is able to access cultural capital that shapes tourist identity by using a form of narrative storytelling that was methodologically developed in the wake of (Riessman, 1993), (Denzin, 2014), and (Foucault, 2014) to learn how visitors create experiences after visiting places where literary (comic) events took place as it is. Aside from helping to propagate comic literature itself, comedic literary works also help to draw tourists and the tourism industry (Putra, 2017). Comic works have been used as a tourist draw in a variety of ways, including as destination names, attractions with narrative themes, and other cultural items.

2. Method

In this study, a literature review is used to gather primary data from a variety of sources, such as online media and websites that provide information on literature, tourism, and tourist destinations. The strategy of literary tourism is by reading and observing literature (Flick, 2011). While many occurrences are observed in societies where literature is regarded as a tourist attraction, literature studies examine a variety of materials pertaining to literary tourism and literary events that are emerging in various regions of the world. The data were analyzed using a qualitative descriptive method, in which the data were identified, categorized, and then interpreted using a literary tourism approach by paying attention to literary works and literary events (Cresswell, 2003).

3. Result and Discussion

A story allows one to develop one's imagination and discover new emotions, based on how the story is told and the information that is disseminated. This form of communication and entertainment has become part of our culture (Duncan, 2009). Thus, for centuries, humans have been accustomed to developing imagination through stories and becoming a part of human life to relieve life's fatigue for a moment. Tourism and literature, according to (Cooper, 1994), are closely associated since both are concerned with "recreation" or emotional release to combat life's stresses. (Pearce, 2005) argues that the link between two fundamental components, namely people and places, is what creates tourism as a social phenomenon. From the viewpoint of "people," tourism is viewed as a demographic and psychological field in which visitor behavior and societal stereotypes are important factors that can affect the industry as a whole. In the development of modern literary works, comics have an increasingly significant role and fans. Even more so when the Marvel comic series is brought into the realm of cinema with modern technological effects. Marvel comics are increasingly getting a place in the hearts of the public and soaring high popularity.

Marvel comics are able to visualize super hero travel stories in various iconic destinations. This makes the reader more interested in the contents of the story as well as transmits the identity of a region or country to the minds of the readers. Projected images of landscapes, buildings, and places where incidents happen can pique readers' interest in visiting the setting or site for themselves. (Busby and Shetliffe, 2013) say that tourism through literary works (comics) is generally included in cultural tourism, which is a type of tourism related to the location where the work was made. This experience is able to persuade readers to travel to a certain destination, so that it has an impact on the image of that destination. The presence of destinations in comics is a resource that can help diversify the tourism offer of a site or overcome seasonality, based on the creation of experiences, monuments related to places in the comics (ibid). To recreate the emotions and experiences they get when reading comics, many people take trips to famous locations in comics. Individual differences in personality, history, and the capacity to understand comic book plots and imagery make these experiences and sensations unquestionably very personal and particular to each person (Kork, 2013). But nonetheless, it's undeniable that the portrayal of places in comics can pique people's curiosity in visiting those places. This popularity will promote tourism-related activities, financial gains, state revenue, as well as the promotion of regional cultures, in addition to the destinations themselves.

Some of the iconic places that appear in Marvel comics and become popular destinations for the public include the Daily Planet building which is a well-known broadcasting and publication place in the United States. This place is also the office of Clark Kent who is the main character of Superman. The image of the creator of the Marvel comics himself is part of the daily planet construction, which also depicts the efforts of journalists and scriptwriters.



Figure 1. Daily Planet

This iconic structure is well-known and well-visited by people all over the world thanks to the popularity of Marvel comics and the availability of super hero figurines (Kompas.com). Some individuals are even prepared to wait in line to take pictures in front of this transmitting facility. In contrast to the past, when this structure was merely a regular office building without any tourist attractions. But when Marvel comics gained popularity and began to be seen on television, an increasing number of tourists began to stop and snap pictures of or simply observe this edifice to fulfill their dreams about the emotions and feelings that come with reading comic books. The next iconic place also carries elements of tradition and culture, such as an icon of a temple which is full of aspects of tradition and belief.



Figure 2. Temple

Both of the locations in this comic are holy sites and well-known tourist attractions in Indonesia. It's possible that many tourists from throughout the world used to know about and patronize this tourist attraction. However, the promotion of these two tourist hotspots to the global audience expanded when they were later included in a comic adaption. People increasingly throng to see areas in their favorite comic books as a result of Marvel comic heroes appearing with the backdrop of these tourist spots. The character who plays this fictional character even directly visits Bali and Yogyakarta to directly enjoy the beautiful panorama that is presented (Permana, 2018). A very successful method of promoting travel, particularly in the areas of Bali and Yogyakarta, is to use popular tourist attractions as a backdrop or tale setting. Comic book readers and the general public are very interested in visiting the location because of the temple backdrop in the comics that are being displayed, which naturally boosts the amount of tourists entering Indonesia.



Figure 3. Urban Setting

The urban setting in Jakarta is another location that is a popular travel destination. High-rise buildings combined with lower-class areas are the right setting to describe evil and good in the context of superhero resistance in eradicating crime. In order to give the reader a new perspective on the capital's side, the location is also altered by adopting an intriguing viewpoint. When presented through a consistent plot with lovely site depictions, places that were previously merely thought of as mundane can take on greater significance. The flow of the drawn comics in Marvel comics encouraged angles that weren't previously employed as photo locations to become popular ones. This condition indirectly benefits the growth of tourist attractions and the inventiveness of local governments in redesigning and rearranging place settings to make them more inviting for tourists to visit.



Figure 4. Madripoor City

The imaginary city of Madripoor that appears in comics is actually a representation of a city situated between Singapore and Indonesia. While some of the picture's elements were undoubtedly inspired by the author's imagination, the cityscape and general vibe were taken directly from the local culture (Pitana, 2009). The similarity of the city situation due to the real depiction of the original city also provides a strong stimulus to be able to visit the city and compares with the depiction of the city of Madripoor which is depicted in Marvel comics.



Figure 5. Natural Setting

In addition to the urban atmosphere, the beauty of natural nuances also often appears in the Marvel comic series. This location is often used as the main character's base or a place to gather energy after a terrible battle. Natural nuances that provide calm and peace make this location setting suitable for a place of rest and contemplation after a prolonged conflict. Several scenes also show the main character running away from the pursuit of the enemy and temporarily taking shelter while recovering energy to then win the big battle which is the ending in every Marvel comic series. The presence of these places prompts readers to inquire about their whereabouts, and many Marvel comic book or movie fans subsequently travel to the site of the action. Throughout the phenomenon it is clear that the importance of literary works, in this case Marvel comics, has a big influence on the growth of tourists to Marvel Comics locations. Comic book depictions of places serve as an efficient kind of advertising for drawing large crowds there frequently. The location of a place in a well-known work, in this case Marvel Comics, inspires readers to travel there and see the locations mentioned in the narrative (Robinson et al, 2011). Thus, it can be inferred that the representation of travel destinations in Marvel comics indirectly results in a considerable rise in tourism and the number of travelers

4. Conclusion

A strong connection exists between travel and literature. A place's ability to attract more tourists and visitors is greatly influenced by the way that locations are described in literary works. Comics are literary works that incorporate both language and drawing. Marvel comics dominate the global comic book market in the second decade of the twenty-first century, particularly when these comic book tales are adapted for the big screen. Marvel comics are superhero stories with rich local settings and become the main background during the storyline process. The location that serves as the plot's destination has also finally gained notoriety thanks to the success of this Marvel comic. Projected images of landscapes, buildings, and places where events take place can stimulate readers to want to see directly the setting or location of the place. This encounter has the power to influence readers' travel decisions and hence, the perception of a certain destination. The advantages of an increased number of visitors visiting famous locations from Marvel comics include not only the benefits to the destination itself but also an increase in the tourism sector, financial gains, and national income, as well as the promotion of regional culture.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to express gratitude to the Institute for Research and Community Service (LPPM) Universitas Negeri Surabaya for the support funding and resources so that this research can be completed.

References

- Babic, Annessa Ann. (2015). *Wonder Woman as Patriotic Icon: The Amazon Princess for the Nation and Femininity*. In *Comics as History, Comics as Literature: Roles of the Comic Book in Scholarship, Society, and Entertainment*, Cranbury: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.
- Bolan, P., & Williams, L. (2008). The Role of Image in Service Promotion. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 32(4), 382–390.
- Botzakis, Stergios. (2009). Adult Fans of Comic Books: What They Get out of Reading. *International Literacy Association and Wiley*, Vol. 53.
- Busby, G. & Shetliffe, E. (2013). Literary Tourism in Context: Byron and Newstead Abbey' *European Journal of Tourism, Hospitality and Recreation* 4(3) 5-45.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*, London, Sage.
- Cooper, P. J., Collins, R., & Saxby, H. M. (1994). *The power of story*. Australia, AU: Macmillan Education.
- Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches (2nd edition)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- David, Peter. (2006). *Writing for Comics with Peter David*: North Light Books
- Denzin, N. (2014). *Interpretive Autoethnography*, Thousand Oaks, Sage
- Dittmer, Jason. (2009). "Captain America and Captain Britain: Geopolitical Identity And 'the Special Relationship.'" In *Captain America and the Struggle of the Superhero: Critical Essays*, edited by Robert G. Weiner, 135–46. Jefferson: McFarland.
- Duncan, Randy, & Matthew J. Smith. (2009). *The Power of Comics: History, Form and Culture*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Dunne, G., Flanagan, S. & Buckley, J. (2011). Towards a decision making model for city break travel. *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 5(2) 158-172.
- Flick, U. (2011). *Introducing Research Methodology. A Beginner's Guide to Doing a Research Project*. London, UK: Sage Publications.
- Foucault, M. (2014). *Wrong-Doing, Truth-Telling, The Function of Avowal in Justice*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Herbert, D. (2001) Literary places, tourism and the heritage experience, *Annals of Tourism Research*, 28 (2) 312-333.
- Keen, Suzzane. (2011). *Fast Tracks to Narrative Empathy: Anthropomorphism and Dehumanization in Graphic Narratives*. The Johns Hopkins University Press, 40 (2), 130-145.
- Pearce, D. G. (2005). *Tourist Behaviour: Themes and Conceptual Schemes*. Clevedon, UK: Channel View Publications.
- Permana, Bayu Galih. (2018). *Gedung Ikonik Marvel dan DC Universe Ini Terinspirasi Bangunan Nyata*. Hai-Online.com. 16 November 2018
- Pitana, I. G., & Gayatri G., P. (2009). *Sosiologi pariwisata [The sociology of tourism]*. Yogyakarta: Penerbit Andi.
- Putra, D. I. N. (2017). Pariwisata Sastra: Kombinasi kajian sastra dan kajian pariwisata [Literary tourism: A combination of literature and tourism studies]. *Paper presenter at the Seminar Nasional pada Prodi Bahasa Inggris-FIB, Universitas Diponegoro*. Semarang
- Riessman, C. (1993). *Narrative Analysis*, Los Angeles & London, Sage.
- Robinson, P., Heitmann, S., & Dieke, P. U. (2011). *Research themes for tourism*. Oxfordshire, UK: CAB International.
- Susiati, S., Tenriawali, A. Y., Nursin, N., Nacikit, J., & Mukadar, S. (2020). Nilai Edukasi dalam Novel Partikel Karya Dewi Lestari:(The Value of Education in Particle Novels by Dewi Lestari). *Uniqbu Journal of Social Sciences*, 1(3), 176-183.
- Watson, N. (2006) *The Literary Tourist*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.