058-040

A Review of Literary Tourism and its Sustainability in Southeast ASIA

[1]Nur Hidayah Abd Rahman *, [2]Julaina Nopiah, [3]Mawar Shafie, [1]Nurul Nadirah Abu Hasan, [1]Afiqah Mior Kamarulbaid

nhidayah.ar@usim.edu.my
[1]Faculty of Leadership and Management, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, Malaysia
[2]Kulliyyah of Sustainable Tourism and Contemporary Language, IIUM, Malaysia
[3]Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia
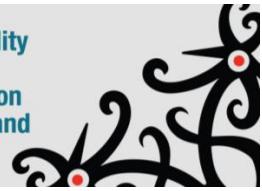
ABSTRACT

Literary tourism has emerged significantly due to the integration of traditional literature and the new media and film industry, such as Harry Potter and The Lord of the Rings. Similarly, literary tourism has become an essential niche in the tourism sector, especially in Southeast Asia, which is known for its rich cultural and literary heritage. This review explores the potential and sustainability of literary tourism and how literary tourism is emerging in Southeast Asia. By exploring this literary tourism, it was discovered that it has economic advantages and preservation strategies associated with Southeast Asian tourism sites, which are vital for sustainable tourism. Literary tourism can be associated with heritage or creative tourism, bringing significant visitor numbers and economic benefits, such as increased revenue and job opportunities for local communities. For instance, in heritage tourism, the key preservation strategies involve stakeholder collaboration, empowerment, and adaptive reuse of heritage sites. These approaches help maintain cultural value while meeting contemporary tourism needs. Hence, the involvement and empowerment of local stakeholders foster a sense of ownership and responsibility, while adaptive reuse, despite its challenges, preserves the authenticity and cultural significance of sites, making them appealing to tourists. In summary, literary tourism in Southeast Asia presents considerable potential for sustainable development. By capitalizing on literary events and applying effective preservation strategies, the region can enrich its cultural tourism offerings, stimulate economic growth, and safeguard its literary and cultural heritage for the future.

Keywords: Literary Tourism in Southeast Asia, Literary Tourism, Literature Tourism, Sustainable Tourism**.**

INTRODUCTION

Literary tourism, a niche yet increasingly significant dimension within cultural tourism, involves travel to destinations associated with literary texts, authors, and narratives. Traditionally rooted in the West, this form of tourism has expanded globally, catalyzed by the synergistic integration of literature, media, and heritage. Notably, Southeast Asia—with its rich oral traditions, diverse literary heritages, and emerging tourism markets—presents an under-explored yet fertile landscape for literary tourism.

This extended abstract reviews the conceptual foundations, typological developments, motivational constructs, and regional applications of literary tourism in Southeast Asia. It critically examines the

15-17 April 2025
The Waterfront Hotel,
Kuching, Sarawak,
Malaysia

Empowering sustainability
through creative,
innovative & digitalization
for societal well-being and
economic growth

potential of literary tourism to contribute to sustainable tourism, local economic development, and cultural preservation.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative thematic review methodology. It synthesizes extant academic literature and case-based evidence from Southeast Asian countries including Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam. The analysis is organized around three key themes: typologies of literary tourism, motivational drivers, and strategic frameworks for sustainable development. Primary sources include academic articles, tourism-related media, and grey literatures.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Typologies of Literary Tourism

Drawing upon existing literature (Busby & Klug, 2001; Hoppen et al., 2014), this study delineates six typologies of literary tourism:

i.   Respect for Actual Locations – Real-world locations connected to authors' lives and creative inspiration, such as Fowey in Cornwall, UK, inspired many of Daphne du Maurier's works.
ii. Fictional Site Reverence – Destinations that reflect fictional settings, such as Forks, Washington, made famous by the Twilight series.
iii. Association with Literary Works or Authors – Tourism driven by literary fame, exemplified by Prince Edward Island's association with Anne of Green Gables.
iv. Destination-Driven Literary Promotion – Locations marketed via literature to bolster tourism, often initiated by public or private stakeholders.
v.   Travel Writing as a Tool of Promotion – Destinations popularized through travel literature, offering first-person narratives that encourage exploration.
vi. Film-Induced Literary Tourism – Places made iconic through adaptations, such as Maya Bay in Thailand (from The Beach) and Livraria Lello in Portugal (associated with Harry Potter).
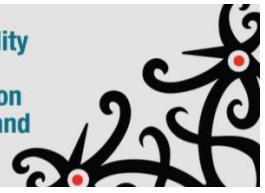
Motivational Factors

Tourist motivations in literary tourism are best understood through the push-pull theoretical framework (Dann, 1977; Crompton, 1979). Push factors include internal desires for cultural enrichment, escapism, and identity formation. Pull factors, conversely, pertain to the tangible appeal of destinations—authenticity, aesthetic landscapes, and narrative associations. Recent research in film tourism provides a useful analog. Macionis (2004) identifies place, personality, and performance as central to tourist decision-making. However, specific empirical evidence on motivations in Southeast Asian literary tourism remains limited, necessitating further research to understand regional patterns, especially those rooted in local cultural and religious narratives.

Literary Tourism in Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia's literary tourism is still in nascent stages but demonstrates significant promise (as in Figure 1). Notable examples include:

i. Thailand: The Beach (Garland, 1998) transformed Maya Bay into a global tourist hotspot, although unsustainable tourism necessitated conservation efforts.
ii. Indonesia: Laskar Pelangi (Hirata, 2005) spurred transformative tourism growth in Belitung, rebranding it as a literary landmark.

15-17 April 2025
The Waterfront Hotel,
Kuching, Sarawak,
Malaysia

Empowering sustainability
through creative,
innovative & digitalization
for societal well-being and
economic growth

iii.	Vietnam: The Beauty of Humanity Movement (Gibb, 2012) highlights cultural and culinary narratives, offering an alternative thematic route for literary tourism.
iv.	Malaysia: Cultural legends like Puteri Gunung Ledang and sites like Teratak Za'aba underscore Malaysia's potential in heritage-driven literary tourism.

Figure 1: The Literary Tourism within Southeast Asia

These examples illustrate how literary tourism intersects with economic development, environmental sustainability, and heritage preservation. Yet, institutional support, policy integration, and community participation remain critical to its sustainable evolution.

Strategic Development for Sustainable Literary Tourism

The future of literary tourism in Southeast Asia hinges on strategic innovation and sustainable management. Five core strategies are proposed:

i.	Transition from Niche to Mass Tourism – Scaling operations to attract global literary enthusiasts while maintaining site integrity.
ii.	Global Integration of Literary Themes – Promoting Southeast Asian literature to international markets via translation, adaptation, and collaboration.
iii.	Product Development and Experience Design – Enhancing visitor engagement through immersive storytelling, interactive tours, and cultural performances.
iv.	Destination Branding and Marketing – Creating recognizable literary brands linked to regional identities and narratives.
v.	Policy Formulation and Visitor Management – Establishing frameworks to control tourist flow, preserve heritage sites, and involve local communities in tourism governance.

Figure 2: The Strategic Perspective in Literary Tourism Development

By adopting a sustainability-oriented approach, literary tourism can contribute not only to economic upliftment but also to the safeguarding of cultural memory and identity.

CONCLUSION

This review underscores the emerging relevance of literary tourism in Southeast Asia and its potential to evolve into a major cultural and economic asset. The typological diversity and complex motivations behind literary tourism reflect a multidimensional field that, if properly managed, can enrich both tourists and host communities. Strategic integration with sustainability frameworks, heritage management, and community engagement is imperative to ensure that literary tourism supports long-term regional development and cultural preservation.

REFERENCES

Busby, G., & Klug, J. 2001. Movie-induced tourism: The challenge of measurement and other issues. *Journal of Vacation Marketing, 7* (4), 316-332.

Crompton, J. 1979. Motivations for pleasure vacation. *Annals of Tourism Research, 6* (4), 408-24.

Dann, G. M. S. 1977. Anomie, ego-enhancement and tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research, 4,* 184–194.

Garland, A. 1996. *The Beach*. Riverhead Books: New York.

Gibb, C. 2012. *The Beauty of Humanity Movement: A Novel*. Doubleday Canada: Toronto.

Hirata, A. 2005. *Laskar Pelangi*. Bentang Pustaka: Indonesia.

Hoppen, A., Brown, L., & Fyall, A. 2014. Literary Tourism: Opportunities and Challenges for the Marketing and Branding of Destinations? *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management, 3*, 37-47.

Macionis, N. 2004. Understanding the Film-Induced Tourist. In Frost, Warwick, Croy, Glenand Beeton, Sue (Ed.). *International Tourism and Media Conference Proceedings.24th-26th November 2004. Melbourne: Tourism Research Unit, Monash University.* 86-97.