



# Batak Culture Tourism and Landscape Representation in Film Ngeri Ngeri Sedap

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**Abstract.** General Background: Film serves as a powerful medium for representing cultural identity and regional landscapes, shaping audience perceptions of tourism destinations. Specific Background: The film *Ngeri-Ngeri Sedap* portrays North Sumatra through visual depictions of natural scenery and Batak cultural practices, presenting the region as a distinctive cultural and tourism space. Knowledge Gap: However, limited studies examine how cinematic representation constructs regional identity and tourism imagery through semiotic analysis. Aims: This study aims to analyze how *Ngeri-Ngeri Sedap* represents Batak culture, tourism, and landscape, and how these representations shape viewers' interpretations of North Sumatra. Results: Using a qualitative approach based on Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, the findings reveal that the visual prominence of Lake Toba functions as a central attraction, while scenes depicting local traditions and daily cultural practices reinforce a distinct regional identity. Additionally, the emotional narrative embedded in the film contributes to a sense of attachment to place, guiding audience interpretation of the region. Novelty: This study applies Barthes' semiotic framework to examine the intersection of tourism representation, cultural identity, and cinematic narrative in an Indonesian film context. Implications: The findings provide insights into how film can represent regional identity and tourism imagery, offering a reference for cultural communication and destination representation in visual media.

**Keywords:** Film representation; Batak culture; Tourism imagery; Semiotic analysis; Lake Toba

## 1 Introduction

Film has the power to Film not only functions as a medium of entertainment, but also plays an important role in representing culture and shaping public perceptions. In the context of tourism, films can generate a unique appeal for the locations featured in them—known as film-induced tourism [1]

Several studies have shown the cultural relevance of Batak and the potential for local tourism explored through visual media. For example, research by Siahaan, Hutagalung, and Panjaitan discusses the importance of harmonizing Batak Toba culture and tourism in Sianjur Mulamula as a form of sustainable tourism that utilizes local wisdom. Another study by Sibagariang et al highlights the promotion of traditional Ragi Hotang ulos cloth as a tourist attraction in Meat Village, Toba Ifrel Research

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Regency. Both studies emphasize that cultural representation and local visual promotion play a significant role in shaping the positive image of Batak-Toba destinations[2] .

Within this framework, the film *Ngeri-Ngeri Sedap* by Bene Dion Rajagukguk is an interesting object because it presents Batak culture and the beauty of Lake Toba in an authentic and emotional way. Although several studies have explored the representation of Batak culture in this film, very few studies have examined the relationship between visual and cultural representations in films and tourist interest in visiting North Sumatra. Based on this gap, this study aims to fill the void in studies linking cultural signs and landscapes in the film *Ngeri-Ngeri Sedap* with tourism statistics to see whether these representations influence viewers' perceptions and decisions regarding North Sumatra as a tourist destination.

Based on the latest data from the North Sumatra Central Statistics Agency (BPS), the number of foreign tourists visiting North Sumatra in 2024 reached 250,413 visits. This figure increased by 26.32% compared to the same period in 2023 (198,240 visits). This increase shows the potential for media, including films, to play a role in attracting tourists. This data is an important basis for this study to see if there is a relationship between the increase in the number of tourists and the popularity of the film *Ngeri-Ngeri Sedap*[3] . In this study, the author seeks to understand how the film *Ngeri-Ngeri Sedap* can influence tourists' interest in visiting North Sumatra. This study also examines various elements in the film—both visually and in terms of the storyline—which are considered to have a strong appeal to viewers and are capable of encouraging them to visit the region. Thus, this study is expected to provide a more comprehensive picture of how films play a role in promoting tourism, as well as to show the extent to which visual media can be used to support regional tourism development.[4] .

Several previous studies have also reviewed various aspects of the film *Ngeri-Ngeri Sedap*. For example, research by Ramadhan , *Semiotic Analysis of Moral Messages in the Film Ngeri Sedap*, through research entitled *Semiotic Analysis of Moral Messages in the Film Ngeri-Ngeri Sedap*, focuses its study on the moral messages conveyed, particularly the family values that are at the core of the story. Pratiwi , *Representation of Batak Toba Culture in the Film Ngeri Ngeri Sedap by Bene Dion Rajagukguk*, examines the representation of Batak Toba culture in the film, exploring how local culture is depicted through characters and settings. Meanwhile, Nurmeida analyzes the patriarchal culture in this film using Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic approach, which discusses how gender roles are portrayed in the film's narrative. However, unlike the previous studies mentioned in , this study will focus on how this film contributes to attracting tourists, which has rarely been discussed in previous studies. [5]

This study offers new and important contributions by comparing its approach to relevant previous studies. One example can be seen in the research by Siahaan, Hutagalung, & Panjaitan , which explains that tourism in the Sianjur Mulamula area can develop if it is able to harmonize tourism promotion with the preservation of Batak Toba culture, especially through a sustainable approach that respects local values. The study emphasizes the importance of media as a means of promotion, although it does not specifically examine visual forms such as films. Another study by Sibagariang et al. also supports the importance of Batak culture as a tourist attraction, especially in terms of promoting traditional Ragi Hotang ulos cloth as a local cultural icon in Meat Village, Toba Regency. They highlight how cultural symbols such as ulos can be used

as a force to attract tourists, but their study is more contextual and based on village tourism activities, not through film media. [6]

Meanwhile, the Study of Cultural Representation in the Film *Ngeri-Ngeri Sedap Ramadhan* analyzes the moral messages in this film, while Pratiwi focuses on the representation of Batak Toba culture from the perspective of characters and settings. However, neither study discusses the impact of this representation on tourist interest. This study goes further by linking these elements to the increase in tourist visits to North Sumatra based on the latest statistical data [3]. These various studies provide unique and new contributions by using Roland Barthes' semiotic approach to analyze the visual and narrative elements in films and showing that the combination of natural beauty and local cultural narratives can be an effective strategy for visual media-based tourism promotion in Indonesia.

Using Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, this study attempts to examine how visual and narrative signs in films are interpreted by audiences, both denotatively and connotatively, thereby shaping the image of North Sumatra tourism[7] . In addition, this study attempts to examine how the combination of natural landscapes and cultural elements presented in films can be used as a tourism promotion strategy. By examining the relationship between cultural representations in films and the interests of potential tourists, this study is expected to contribute to the development of more targeted tourism promotion strategies and enrich the study of *film-induced tourism* in Indonesia[8]

## 2 Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis method to examine cultural representations and landscapes in the film *Ngeri-Ngeri Sedap*. Data collection techniques were carried out through observation of the film, analysis of documentation, and literature study[9] . The focus of the analysis is on visual signs in the film that are relevant to cultural and tourism aspects, which are then interpreted through Barthes' three layers of meaning: denotative, connotative, and mythical[10] . Stuart Hall's framework of thought on representation further reinforces the understanding that film is not a neutral medium, but rather one that is laden with cultural and ideological meaning[11] .

## 3 Results and Discussion

### 3.1 Results

This study aims to understand how the visual and narrative elements in the film *Ngeri-Ngeri Sedap* can shape the tourist appeal of North Sumatra, particularly Lake Toba and its surroundings. Using Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, this analysis highlights the denotative and connotative meanings of key scenes in the film, which can indirectly influence the perceptions and interests of tourists [5].

In a film, scenes play an important role in conveying messages, building emotions, and describing the setting and culture that the film wants to highlight. Scenes can be used to reinforce the main theme, showcase visual beauty, and communicate meaning both

explicitly and implicitly to the audience[12]. In the context of this study, the scenes in the film *Ngeri-Ngeri Sedap* were analyzed to see how the representation of the culture and landscape of North Sumatra could influence the tourist appeal of the region. The following is a complete analysis of each of these scenes.

### 3.2 Panorama of Lake Toba

**Denotative Meaning.** The film presents the view of Lake Toba with a wide-angle shot, showing the natural beauty of the vast waters, green hills, and clear skies. This landscape explicitly shows the natural attractions that are characteristic of North Sumatra as a tourist destination [10].

**Connotative Meaning.** The depiction of Lake Toba in the film creates an impression of tranquility and peace, as if the place is a symbol of harmony that can provide a spiritual experience for tourists. This representation can shape emotional perceptions that encourage viewers to visit the location (Manik, 2012).

**Myth.** This is where folklore comes in. Lake Toba is not just water and scenery, but a cultural space with a collective narrative that lives in the memory of the Batak people. The legend of Lake Toba about the marriage of a human to a fish incarnation, a broken promise, and the flood that formed the lake contains a message: Human life is always connected to promises, responsibilities, and consequences[13]

### 3.3 Traditional Bolon House

**Denotative Meaning.** The Bolon traditional house is depicted as the center of family interaction in several scenes of the film. Its distinctive architecture reinforces the Batak cultural identity as part of local uniqueness[14]

**Connotative Meaning.** This traditional house is not just a place to live, but also a symbol of strong cultural roots and local wisdom. In the context of tourism, the Bolon traditional house can be a special attraction for tourists who want to get to know the traditional life of the Batak people more closely[15]

**Myth.** The Bolon Traditional House in this film is depicted not only as a physical building but also as a symbol representing the continuity of ancestral heritage. Its denotation is a distinctive Batak architectural structure, but in the realm of myth, this traditional house symbolizes the continuity of traditional values that must be preserved by future generations. In the modern world, many young people leave their hometowns and choose to live in cities, creating tension between preserving cultural roots and adapting to the changing times. By featuring the Bolon Traditional House in the film, the mythical meaning that emerges is that traditional houses are not just places to live, but also representations of emotional and cultural ties that must not fade[16]

### 3.4 Discussion

The film *Ngeri-Ngeri Sedap* successfully depicts more than just a story about a Batak family, but also provides an overview of Batak culture and the tourism potential that

exists in North Sumatra, especially Lake Toba. This film tells the story of a Batak family facing various emotional and social problems, where family dynamics and generational differences are at the heart of the story. However, in addition to the conflicts built into the narrative, the film also delivers a powerful message about family values, traditions, and natural beauty, which are an integral part of Batak cultural identity.

The analysis in this article shows that *Ngeri-Ngeri Sedap* does not only rely on its storyline, but also utilizes visual and narrative power to emphasize the tourist appeal of North Sumatra. One of the notable findings of the analysis is the way the film depicts the beauty of Lake Toba. Through shots taken from high angles—such as the view of the Bukit Holbung area—the film successfully highlights the grandeur and vastness of the lake's panorama. This representation is in line with the idea of *film-induced tourism*, which explains that the way a place is visualized in a film can influence the audience's interest in visiting it in person, as discussed by Huppatz . In addition to highlighting natural beauty, the film also presents Batak culture as an important part of the story's appeal. Various cultural symbols—such as ulos and Bolon traditional houses—help build emotional depth and help viewers understand local characters and identities more fully.

In addition to highlighting natural beauty, this film also presents Batak culture as an important part of the story's appeal. Various cultural symbols—such as ulos and Bolon traditional houses—help build emotional depth and help viewers understand local characters and identities more fully. This is in line with the findings of Situmorang & Sibarani (2021), which emphasize that local culture has great potential to attract tourists who want to experience authentic culture. In this case, the film not only highlights culture but also presents Batak traditions in a broader context, which can encourage tourists to visit North Sumatra to experience these traditions firsthand.

Furthermore, these findings are also supported by tourism statistics showing an increase in the number of tourists visiting North Sumatra. According to goodstats data, from January to August 2024, the number of domestic tourist trips to Lake Toba reached 6,317,303, an increase of 6.69% compared to the same period the previous year[17] . Tourists' perceptions of traditional houses in the Lake Toba area are quite high, at 60.8%, while their satisfaction level with their travel experience reaches 45.7%[18] . This data shows that the film *Ngeri-Ngeri Sedap* has a positive impact on tourism in the region. Thus, the film not only serves as a form of entertainment but also acts as an effective promotional tool in encouraging tourist interest.

Overall, the results of this analysis show that the film *Ngeri-Ngeri Sedap* has successfully combined the representation of Batak culture with the natural beauty of North Sumatra, creating a strong attraction for tourists to visit the area. This is in line with the concept of film-induced tourism that has been discussed in various previous studies, and contributes positively to the potential of local tourism. Furthermore, these findings also open up opportunities for further research on the influence of films on cultural tourism in Indonesia, especially in regions rich in culture such as Batak[19] .

## 4 Conclusion

This study reveals that the film *Ngeri-Ngeri Sedap* plays a role in shaping the image of North Sumatra as a tourist destination through its representation of the natural beauty and culture of the Batak people. The stunning visuals of Lake Toba are a major attraction, while the depiction of traditions such as traditional ceremonies reinforce the unique cultural identity [20]. Through emotional narratives and family conflicts, the film also creates a myth about attachment to one's hometown, which can build emotional closeness between the audience and Batak culture. Overall, this film shows how the media can function as an effective tourism promotion tool, although this study has not measured its direct impact on the number of tourists.

Furthermore, it is recommended that a more comprehensive approach be taken by conducting surveys or interviews with tourists to gain a deeper understanding of how films influence their decisions in choosing tourist destinations. Thus, this study not only provides insight into cultural representation in films but also opens further discussion on how the film industry can be optimized as a medium for sustainable tourism promotion.

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