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TOURISM BROCHURES` IMAGES: A READING BY ACEHNESE

BY

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A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Human Sciences in Communication

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ABSTRACT

After the 2004 tsunami, the Aceh provincial government (APG) was given more opportunities to produce its own project, namely meaning-making which is in accordance with Aceh values and traditions. One such project was to construct the image of new Aceh via touristic brochures. However, do the citizens of Aceh or people of Banda Aceh in particular, agree or reject the produced construction of reality? Using the Stuart Hall`s theory of reading, this work investigates the convergence and divergence of reality on Aceh, in relation to the producer (APG) versus the readers (the people of Banda Aceh). Methodologically, vignettes in the form of the published touristic images were used as a device in the interviewing process to collect the data. A content analysis findings showed that the majority of readers were 'preferred' readers. Mosques as the preferred artifacts were clearly shown in the imagination and the fantasy of both the producer and the readers. Islam as a way of constructed reality is succinctly clear in Aceh.

خلصة البحث

بعد كارثة تسونامي عام 2004م، منحت الحكومة المحلية والمعروفة بآتشيه (Aceh) المزيد من الفرص لتنفيذ مشروعاتها الخاصة، بحيث تتفق السمعة مع القيم والتقاليد المحلية لحكومة الإقليم. وكانت إحدى هذه المشاريع إنتاج صورة جديدة لآتشيه عبر الكتولوجات أو الكتيبات السياحية. ومع ذلك فإنه ليس هناك موافقة أورفض خصوصًا بين مواطني آتشيه أنفسهم أو المواطنين من منطقة الباندا آتشيه في تنفيذ هذا المشروع، وذلك باستخدام نظرية ستيوارت (Hall's) للقراءة علمًا بأن هذا العمل سوف يحقق التقارب والاختلاف بين الواقع في آتشيه، والمتعلقة بالمنتج (APG) للحكومة المحلية مقابل القرَّاء من (مواطنين باندا آتشيه). منهجيًا، تم استخدام المقالات القصيرة على شكل صور سياحية نُشرت أداةً في عملية إجراء المقابلات لجمع البيانات. أوضحت نتائج تحليل البيانات أن غالبية القرَّاء هم من "المفضلين" للقراءة لهذا النوع. وأظهرت المساجد، والقطع الأثرية بشكل واضح أفضلية في مخيلة كلٍّ من المنتجين والقرَّاء. ويُعد الإسلام وسيلة من وسائل التشييد والإنجاز للمشاريع الواقعية التي يجب أن تشيد في آتشيه.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Human Sciences in Communication.

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In the Name of Allah, the Beneficient, the Merciful.

All the praises and thanks be to Allah (SWT), on whom ultimately we depend for sustenance, guidance and the creator who is the only source of knowledge and wisdoms endowed to mankind. The salutation upon Prophet Muhammad *Shallalhu`alaihi Was- salaam*. As seeking knowledge is one of your Sunnah (may I will be categorized as one of your ummah), Amen.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Aceh is a province in the northern part of Sumatra Island in Indonesia. The province had been involved in conflict with its government, the Republic of Republic of Indonesia. In 2004 a large part of Aceh was devastated by an incredible natural disaster of Tsunami. The calamity forced those warring parties to end their conflict. In 2005, Aceh was granted a special autonomy status by the central government. The event marked the end of war against the 'colonisation' of central government over Aceh. Prior to 2005, Aceh was painted as a dangerous place of living or an area of "disorder" (Robinson, 1996). Similarly, meanings on and about Aceh then were produced and expressed under the supervision or guidance, real or imagination, from the central authority based in Jakarta. Indeed, Aceh's reality before 2005 was largely dictated, shaped and coloured by 'outsider' namely the central military authorities (Miller (2009).

After signing the peace agreement in Finland on 25 August, 2005, or more particularly after five years of post- tsunami era, Aceh started to embark on a new phase of development whereby building self-sufficient and sustainable economy has become the priority of Aceh provincial government (APG). In relation to the above, Aceh is being promoted as a peaceful place to visit. In other words, the APG is taking tourism industry as one of the drivers for development of new Aceh. The term tourism can be understood as the activity that occurs when tourists travel (Sebo, 1996).

According to World Tourism Organization (WTO), as cited in Elliott (1997), tourism can be defined as:

> "Activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year of leisure, business, and other purposes (p. 21).

A point to note is that Acehnese`s public life is deeply attached to Islam. Historically, Aceh province was the first place to accept the arrival of Islam in this part of the region. With the new status of governance, Aceh gained the liberty to rule the province according to local customs, interests and imaginations. The exclusivity of its autonomy status has allowed the APG to produce its own *Qanun* (law), this exclusivity did not apply for other provinces in Indonesia. In 2014, the (APG) introduced *Qanun Syariah* (Islamic Law) as part of its Islamization policies. Accordingly, Aceh province has a *qanun* issued for tourism which is the Aceh Provincial Government Act Number 8 *(Qanun Aceh no.8 Tahun 2013*). The *Qanun* consists of do`s and don`ts in tourism concern in Aceh province. Explicitly, tourism in Aceh must be accordance with the syariah law which is being practised in the *nanggroe (Aceh Nation).* Furthermore, in 2015, Banda Aceh (the capital of the province) was declared as an Islamic destination for tourists. In relation to the above, Acehnese (the public) everyday life were expected to be Islamic compliant.

The people of Aceh (the public) have always control and supervise that the implementation of syariah Islam in the province. Every act to weaken the syariah to be implemented will be a large issue for Acehnese (the public). If public find that the APG is not serious in managing the implementation of syariah or follow the Qanun they complaint and protest. Such action may lead to the 'divergence' between APG and the public. There were several demonstrations occurred in 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2015 regarding to the implementation of syariah in the province as featured in the

Serambiindonesia a largest newspaper in Aceh province (Anshar, 16 Feb, 2013, Bakri, 2013, Fatria, 2014), *theAtjehpost (16 oct, 2012, Nagan, 24 Sept, 2014), Hidayatullah.com (Kamil & Irwan, 17 Oct, 2012), Acehkita.com (Redaksi, 13 Feb, 2013), Aktual.com (6 March, 2015)* and few others local and national media. Such protest happened because that local government seems not serious to implement the syariah in the province; however, the APG is trying to make sure that syariah in adopted in everyday life.

With reference to Acehnese`s tourism, the Aceh Provincial Government (APG) is the main producer of tourism images on and about Aceh. Hence, the APG is the official meaning-maker of Aceh. However, not all meanings, signs or images produced and constructed by the APG are well received by or converse with the people of Aceh. A significant case in 2009, when the APG removed the nomenclature *Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam* (NAD) which was the name for the province since 2001 (Peraturan Gubernur 7 April, 2009). According to the APG such removal was justified on the ground of legality as NAD was not the nomenclature for the province in Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding 2005 and Indonesian Laws (UU) Number 11, 2006. Culturally the public of Aceh are proud to be known as people from *Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam*. Indeed, people of Aceh introduced themselves as *anuek nanggroe* (son of the nation). Darussalam is the name that is deeply rooted within the history of Aceh. Analytically, NAD has a significant meaning in the old meaning-making system of Aceh. NAD as a concept influences the character and mentality of the Acehnese. An insightful article on this issue of abrogation was published in Serambinews.com dated 30thSeptember, 2011. The author opined that the action is an act of 'de-spiritualization' by the APG elites. Accordingly, the above removal was seen as depriving the public Aceh from its Islamic soul. It seems meaning-making or

imagination of the APG is not necessarily similar or convergence with that of the public, the ordinary people of Aceh itself.

This study aims at examining the tourism images on and about Aceh as produced by APG. Does the public reading converge or diverge with meanings produced by the APG? Do tourism images produced by the APG portray *nanggroe* as an Islamic tourism destination as imagined by the public?

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Currently, the APG and central government (the Republic of Indonesia) are promoting Banda Aceh as an Islamic destination. This promotion is being made with a roadmap of making Banda Aceh a showcase destination where *shari'ah* is at work in every daily or public activities. The Indonesian`s government believes that the harmonious combination between culture and Islamic religion in Acehnese society is worth to be promoted as Islamic tourism destination (Rahmawati, 2015). In this imagination, Banda Aceh is being considered as the microcosm of the Aceh province.

Tourism is very much attached and characterized by persuading the potential consumers, the tourists, to experience tourism destinations (McCabe, 2014). The touristic brochure is a medium for such persuasion, and it is a silent guide which contains pre-tour narratives (Bruner, 2005) about favourable destinations. A touristic brochure is a storage of data and it acts as a travel decision- making advocacy (Molovan& Molovan, 2015). A touristic brochure is a text. It is a signed work of imagination underpinned by a certain system of ideas, ideals, beliefs, principles, ethics and morals of its producer. In other words, a touristic brochure functions as a platform in which the meanings and signatures of its authors are produced. A touristic brochure is authored with preferred narratives (texts and signs) according to its producer. In a

similar vein, the producer marginalizes or deletes other narratives (texts and signs) of other destinations accordingly. A touristic brochure is meant to be read and interpreted. Different readers may interpret the same brochure differently. Therefore, a brochure might reveal something different, depending on the readers' way of reading (Edelheim, 2007).

Molovan and Molovan (2015) pointed that touristic brochure creates a concrete of a destination and it influences potential visitors` choice. Pritchard and Morgan (2000) share a similar point by saying that brochures are designed to persuade people to purchase the product. It is a store of knowledge and information (Mccabe, 2014). Hiipala (2007) described touristic brochure as a canvas on which language and image operate whereby it gives effect on tourists' mental representation and perception of a certain destination.

Bruner (2005) noted that most touristic brochures are produced with images for the foreign others as visitors in mind (Bruner, 2005). Salazar (2012) remarked that tourism is very much concerned with tourism imaginaries for the outsiders. On that note, brochures are creatively designed about the intended place, not the other places (Cook, 1994; Van Leuven, 2004; Ramachandran, 2005; Mancili, 2005; Ling, 2008; Patpong, 2009; Samani & Maliki, 2010; El-Daly, 2011; Xiong, 2012). Are these published images or imaginaries being accepted by the locals as a story about themselves? Contextually, are fantasies in the touristic brochures produced by the APG being accepted by the mass public as a story or narrative of convergence with their everyday life? Are these brochures portraying Islamic images that are in accordance with Banda Aceh as an Islamic destination? Are meanings produced by the APG in the state of divergence with the public? Simply, how do locals see

themselves being represented in the images and signs of the published brochures (Urry, 2011), and what is their response?

The producer of tourism brochures in this study is the Aceh provincial government (APG), namely the Aceh Tourism Board of Aceh Province (*Dinas kebudayaan dan pariwisata provinsi Aceh)*. Works on touristic communication on brochures are not many as the field of study is still new. The previous studies found that some researchers work on issues of interpretation of brochures by tourists (Urbain, 1989; Dann, 1999; Gruffud & Piccini, 2000; Jenkins, 2003). Edelheim (2007) studied touristic brochures in relation to views by business agencies, while Johnson (1995) studied the biasness of brochure producers. Research on brochures and their relationship with gender have been conducted by Kinnard, Kothari and Hall (1994), Pritchard and Morgan (2000), and Peterson and McQuitty (2001). Henderson (2003) studied brochures in relation to nation-building. Recently Molovan and Molovan (2015) studied the assignments performed by touristic brochures as a significant marketing tools in the business.

With reference to the above, it suffices to say that there is a research gap as far as studies on touristic brochures and local gazing on the published signs and images are concerned. The previous works have shown that there is no study found that examined the local interpretation towards tourism brochures produced by its government. It is worth to remember that the public of a destination is also the consumer of the place. Thus, it is important to understand the host people`s perception of the brochures produced by its authority.

In sum, the main problem statement of this work is whether the Aceh Provincial Government's (APG) and the public`s narratives are in the state of convergence or divergence on meaning-making about images of *nanggroe* (the nation

of Aceh) in promoting Islamic tourism? Specifically, what meanings can be derived from the brochure produced by the APG? Are the published images *shari'ah* compliant? How do the masses and APG interpret and make-meaning narratives over Islamic images? It is important to find out the above mentioned questions because if there is a huge gap of divergence between APG and citizens of tourism images meaning making then disharmonies might be occurred, which then will bring the negative impact to the development of tourism in the province.

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Theoretically, this study attempts to provide inroads for greater understanding on narratives of meaning- making process that relates to tourism brochures. Practically, this study shall enrich the literature and research on under-represented area of touristic communication and Islamic tourism. Hopefully, findings of this study will be worthy information for the APG in developing the tourism industry for the province. Similarly, findings can be utilized by other Muslims interested in this service industry too.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study attempts to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How does the APG as the producer portray images of Banda Aceh published in the touristic brochures?

RQ2: How do the public of Banda Aceh read and interpret the signs and images about *nanggroe* in touristic brochures as part of their everyday life?

RQ3: What are the convergence and divergence of meanings made by the producer and the Acehnese public on signs and images of Banda Aceh?

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study are to:

RO1: To identify the presented and under-presented tourism images of Banda Aceh which are being constructed by the APG as the producer of Banda Aceh tourism brochures.

RO2: To explore how reading about images in the Banda Aceh tourism brochures by public of Banda Aceh.

RO3: To examine the convergence and divergence on meaning-making and narratives of Banda Aceh tourism images made by both sides namely the APG as the producer and the public of Banda Aceh as the reader.

1.6 OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF CONCEPTUAL TERMS USED IN THE STUDY

There are several concepts used in study. Thus, this section explains the definitions of several terms used in this study as follows:

Aceh

Aceh refers to Aceh as a place of post-tsunami period (2004). In 2005, Aceh was granted the special autonomy status by the central government, the Republic of Indonesia. Since then, Aceh province has been governed by *Partai* (Party) Aceh, a party closely associated with Aceh Freedom Movement (GAM). The provincial

government of Aceh is known throughout the thesis as the APG. Today the APG takes *shari'ah* as its form of governance.

APG (Aceh Provincial Government)

The Aceh Provincial Government is being represented by Tourism Board of Aceh Province (*Dinas Kebudayaan dan Pariwisata Aceh*) because in terms of tourism industry concern in the province, the responsibility is held by the tourism board.

Nanggroe

The term refers to the idea of a nation of Aceh. *Nanggroe* is the Acehnese word means *negara* (nation), namely the Province of Aceh. It has a strong cultural and ideological significance on Acehnese`s everyday life. *Aneuk nanggroe* refers to the son of a nation which literally means the citizen of the nation. However, the word *nanggroe* to this work limitedly refers to Banda Aceh city and the public of the city is regarded as *aneuk nanggroe.*

Qanun

The word Qanun comes from Arabic which in English means "measure or measurement" or can also be interpreted as law. Usually, Qanun is a product of law which is derived from the Islamic law (sharia). In Aceh, Qanun reflects the spirit of Islamic values and local tradition of the local society. It is like a "local law" based on Islamic law. Nowadays, Qanun that is being applied in Aceh is more related to *aqidah, syaria,* and *akhlaq*. So far Qanun is exclusively applied in Aceh province only, while other provinces in Indonesia do not.

Narratives

Narratives are a series of events in cause-effect relationships occurring in time and space (Bordwell & Thompson, 1993, cited in Real, 1996, p. 125). This is a common term used for a story in a qualitative inquiry. It is argued that each narrative has two

parts, the actual story and how it is communicated. Narrative in communication mode extends around telling, relating and its narrating a story and at the end “it’s make meaning” of it all (Bruner, 2005, p. 20). The narrative of a touristic brochure is both the description and images contain on it. A tourist brochure tells reader a story via words and images displayed in it.

Text

Text is a communication space between a producer of text, the author and its consumer, the reader. It is an organized collection of signs including words, images and sounds by which potential meanings are produced (Berger, 2004). Media scholars agree that any kind of readable work such as television programs, newspapers, websites, billboard advertisements, and songs are considered as texts. It is a coherent system which is mediated between author/encoder and decoder/reader.

Image

Image in this study refers to touristic photographic image that produced by Aceh Provincial Government in touristic brochures. Image is a text and it is a form of sign. Words, images, sounds, odours, flavours, and acts or object are among elements of sign construction. An image is representation rather than a reality; it is the human construct through their senses while the real meaning of something is represented behind it (Pierce, 1984 in Berger, 2004, p.5).

Brochures

Brochures utilized in the current study refer to touristic brochures. It is a medium that combines both textual and visual images and is designed interestingly so that it attracts tourists` attention and make them pick it up (Samani & Maliki, 2010). Brochures are produced with the aim to inform and persuade people about things that

are described in it. Typically, a tourist brochure is a small multiple-sided leaflet containing a brief description and attractive images of a tourist attraction.

Ideology

Ideology consists of ideas, thoughts and beliefs that are produced consciously in order to explain reality and it affects our views of the world (Braham, 2012). Thus, each image in a brochure may carry a certain ideology of its producer.

Meaning-making

Meaning is defined as something which can be 'transmitted' from a sender to be read by a passive receiver (Chandler, 2002). It is justified that meaning making is an active and a dynamic process. In Bressler`s word, meaning is “context-dependent and intricately associated with the reading process” (Cited in Lobo, p.21). The meaning making activity involves the process of interaction between the reader and the message of a text before the meaning is created of it. It is produced by readers after the text is read and understood. Establishment of meaning happens as the reader selects and reflects on his or her own responses. In other words, meaning is the result of text consumption. The meaning-making process is influenced by the cultures and social environment, education and experience or family background as well as time and moment associated with the process of meaning- making (Shajrawi, 2013).

Reading

Reading is the process of text consumption. It is a dealing process between a reader and a writer in which the former serves as his own author and the later his/her own reader. Hence, this complex cognitive process occurs when a reader takes action in order to generate and construct meaning of the text (Seidel, Perencevich & Kett, 2006).

Imagination

According to Larson (1977), imagination can be defined as a human ability to convey and control the ideal and universal character of reality by representing it more completely and truly than it looks to the senses (Larson, 1977). Another definition of narrative is “an instrument of hegemony resulted from a political and cultural projects, realized through the media that becomes common sense and frame to think about the reality” (Bellentani, 2015, p. 7). Imagination is definitely working in the process of narratives.

1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The study will be written in five chapters.

Chapter 1 is the background of the study. It consists the statement of the problem, the research questions, the research objectives, and the significance of the study as well as the conceptual terms used in this study. Chapter 2 starts with the underpinning theory that govern the study, and is followed by the literature review of the topic proposed. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology used for the study. It includes the study design, research approach used and the data collection procedure. Chapter 4 is allocated for data analysis and discussion of the finding. Chapter 5 will be the last chapter for this study where the researcher presents the conclusion of the study as well as recommendations for further studies.

1.8 SUMMARY

This chapter introduces the background of the study namely the introduction of the study, problem statement, research questions, research objectives, purpose of the study and the organization of the study. It emphasizes that the image presented in tourism

brochures is the reality constructed by the local government namely the APG. This study examines the intended tourism images in the mind of Banda Aceh public through their narratives reading of the brochures. The study provides a better understanding of how the citizens want to construct the tourism images as the reality of the city. Thus, the study asserts the convergence and divergence meaning made by both sides of tourism images construction. Chapter 2 will provide the underpinning theory that guides the study and the literature review available and related to the study is given.