

## Legend of Batu Parsidangan Huta Siallagan: Story-Driven Marketing Strategy, Samosir Tourism, Lake Toba North Sumatra

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**Abstract:** This study aims to explore the storytelling of Huta Siallagan as a tourist attraction at Samosir Regency, North Sumatra. Marketing techniques using storytelling are considered to have the opportunity to increase the number of tourist visits. Huta Siallagan, as a tourism object, has the opportunity to be developed because it has historical value and uniqueness as well as folklore. The research method used is a qualitative method, which can use to explore and understand the meaning that comes from social or humanitarian issues. This activity was carried out using discussions with Chairman Huta Siallagan to gain an increased understanding of how the legend of the Parsidangan Stone became a tourist attraction that functions as a criminal court. King Siallagan's Stone Chair is a historical relic and ancient object in the form of a stone chair and table. The stones are believed to be more than 200 years old, which reveals cruel practices on Samosir in the past, namely stories about cannibalism of the Batak tribe. With lengthy discussions and interviews, one can understand the importance of storytelling in increasing the number of visitors to tourism objects, especially at Huta Siallagan.

**Keywords:** Story-driven marketing, Storytelling, Legend of the Parsidangan Stone, Huta Siallagan, Lake Toba, North Sumatra.

### INTRODUCTION

Almost all regions in Indonesia have attractive tourism potential, but not all of them are well conveyed to tourists (Ibo, 2020). It is necessary to apply story-driven marketing to promote tourism by spreading stories and impressions by applying storytelling (Huang, *et al.*, 2019; Yulianti, *et al.*, 2021). According to Alam in Bakti, *et al.*, (2019), storytelling makes a tourist attraction more interesting and makes potential tourists curious. Therefore, marketing techniques using tourism storytelling are considered to have the opportunity to increase the number of tourist visits. On the other hand, the development of digital media is increasing.

This study aims to explore the storytelling of tourist destinations in the Lake Toba area, specifically in Huta Siallagan, Samosir Regency, North Sumatra. This tourist area has the opportunity to be developed because it has historical value and uniqueness as well as folklore. There is history, origin, and development from time to time, and folklore legends from the Batak tribe, especially one of the folklore from Huta Siallagan. "The legend of the Parsidangan stone is a form of local wisdom because it is one of the actual knowledge of a society which originates from the noble values of cultural traditions in regulating the way of life of the community" (Sibarani, 2010; Siregar, *et al.*, 2022). Several articles have been written about the legend of the parsidangan stone, including by Debora, *et al.*, (2019), Syahfitri, *et al.*, (2021), and Sinamo, *et al.*, (2021). If you want to visit Samosir Island,

remember to visit this historical and cultural site of Huta Siallagan (Zizydmk, 2021).

### LITERATURE REVIEWS

Storytelling activity, done manually or by using technological tools and the internet. According to Serrat, (2008), "Storytelling is an art that describes real events in fictional form and can be conveyed using pictures or sound" (Susianti, 2022). Apart from being useful as a medium for tourism promotion, "Storytelling is an effective method for exploring a tourist destination's unique and attractive values or even creative economic products. With good Storytelling, tourists will get a different experience in traveling. An interesting story will make a tourist destination not only a place but a more lively space to find various information. Indirectly, the experience of traveling with Storytelling will bring meaning to each destination. Everything can be interesting storytelling material, from fictional to legendary historical stories (Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, 2021)." (Kennedy, *et al.*, 2022)

Storytelling can make a tourist attraction more interesting and make tourists curious. However, a story that is too long will saturate tourists, so the story is quite short but deep. "Storytelling is one way to make tourist destinations more interesting. Storytelling makes tourist destinations more attractive to domestic tourists because they can discover something new in the area. Tourist destinations will become more interesting because storytelling has packaged stories that have never been heard or told to other people. Storytelling

makes tourist destinations more interesting and can even make them seem new. Storytelling allows people to interact with their area. When tourists meet people at tourist destinations, story experiences can be formed, such as experiencing stories about healing, survival, and resilience. The storytelling-based tourism promotion strategy is very positive. Storytelling is an important step for tourists to find out the background of events and tourist destinations they will visit. Through storytelling, tourism, and the creative economy, actors can introduce products or works based on their philosophical values. It will create a positive emotional impression between a product and its buyers. Can use storytelling techniques in tourist destinations and various promotional attractions because oral stories are one of the many cultures that developed hundreds of years ago (Susianti, 2022)." (Kennedy, *et al.*, 2022)

Folklore is "Oral literature that is told through aesthetic principles that contain cultural and moral elements in society and needs to be preserved. Oral literature is still found in regions that are usually purer because they are unfamiliar with technology" (Endaswara, 2020). Legend is folklore about a person or several figures related to something or figures believed to exist or already exist in people's lives. One of the legendary stories is the Parsidangan stone in Huta Siallagan Samosir. This legend is a local wisdom that needs to be preserved. "Local wisdom is human intelligence possessed by certain ethnic groups which are obtained through community experience (Rahyono, 2020). Local wisdom results from certain communities' experiences and may not necessarily be experienced by other communities. These values will be very strongly attached to certain communities, and these values have gone through a long journey of time throughout the existence of that society. Local wisdom is the original wisdom and knowledge of a society that originates from the noble values of cultural traditions to regulate people's lives (Sibarani, 2010)." (Siregar, *et al.*, 2022)

## METHOD

The method used in this writing is qualitative. "Moleong, (2007) defines qualitative methods are research strategies to produce descriptive data. The results are in the form of written or spoken words from people and observed behavior." Qualitative methods can be used "to explore and understand the meaning that originates from social or human problems" (Creswell, 2010) — related to interpreting the data found in the field (Sugiyono, 2008). (Siregar, *et al.*, 2022) Focus group discussions were carried out using discussions with Chairperson Huta Siallagan to gain an increased understanding of how the legend of the Batu Parsidangan became a tourist attraction that functions as a criminal court. A series of studies were carried out in the Lake Toba tourist area, one of the tourist areas prioritized for development in Indonesia.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Huta Siallagan and King Siallagan's Stone Chair

Huta Siallagan "is located in Ambarita Village, Simanindo District, Samosir Regency, in the Lake Toba Region (Figure 1a). The 2,400 square meter village is surrounded by smooth walls 1.5 to 2 meters high. In its time, this wall was also equipped with pointed bamboo forts, which functioned to protect the village from attacks by wild animals and others. Huta Siallagan is an ancient village hundreds of years old, built during the reign of the first Huta, King Laga Siallagan. Siallagan is a descendant of Raja Naimbaton, who follows the lineage of Raja Isumbaon, the second son of Raja Batak. Huta means village, while Siallagan is the name of King Siallagan, the leader of the Siallagan clan (Siregar, *et al.*, 2022)." Huta means village, and Siallagan is taken from the surname Siallagan and named Huta Siallagan because this village was created by the Batak people from the Siallagan clan led by King Siallagan. Rows of traditional Batak houses or bolon houses can be found as soon as you step inside (see Figure 1b).



**Figure 1a.** Location of Huta Siallagan on *Google Map*  
Source: zizydmk, 2020



**Figure 1b.** Huta Siallagan  
Source: Own photo

If we look in more detail, in front of the bolon house, there are several distinctive ornaments, namely masks with scary expressions, lion head statues, lizard statues, and chest symbols. These ornaments are not just ordinary displays but have their function, which is believed by the village community. Its function is to expel evil spirits. Then the symbol of the lizard as an animal that can live anywhere symbolizes the Batak people, who can live anywhere and are strong and tough. At the same time, the breast symbolizes the rich and generous. The door is very low when entering the house, so you have to look down. It is meant as a sign of respect to the homeowner. The low door is also believed to drive away one's evil intentions. In ancient times, magical things were very thick, so protection against black magic was very common. However, some of these bolon houses are used as places to make handicrafts. After passing through a row of bolon houses, you will find a large tree that shaded stone chairs. Kings, shamans, and village elders determine one's fate in this seat. If the person is guilty and beheaded, he will be imprisoned first by being shackled under the King's house, waiting for the execution date. (Zizydmk, 2021; Afrillia, 2018)

Raja Siallagan's Stone Chair (locally known as Batu Parsidangan) is a historical relic and ancient object in the form of a stone chair and table. They are located right in the middle of Huta Siallagan under the Hariara Tree, considered a sacred tree by the Batak (See Picture 2). The stones are believed to be over 200 years old. King Siallagan's Stone Chair reveals cruel practices on Samosir in the past. There are two sets of chairs that are located differently. The first was used as a place for official meetings, while the other as a place for executions. The first set consists of neatly arranged

stone chairs specifically reserved for kings, queens, clan elders, neighboring village leaders, invitees, and datu or spiritual leaders. In court cases, the King would preside over a meeting to decide on various types of punishment, including the execution of criminals. The second set featured a similar setup but with the addition of the Long Stone Table, where the executions took place. (Zakaria, 2022)

Huta Siallagan Village is famous for its story of being a village of cannibals. Huta Siallagan is a Batak tribal village that has a tradition of cannibals, aka eating human flesh. The custom of eating human flesh was done for obvious reasons at that time. The story goes that, in the days of the old kings, if someone were sentenced to customary punishment for being found guilty of a crime, he would be subject to two types of punishment: beheading or chain punishment. Those guilty of beheading were those who abused or took other people's wives, killed, raped, and spied for the enemy. The King would immediately sentence him to be beheaded.

Meanwhile, mistakes such as stealing will only get a fine. What makes this village known as a cannibal village is that when executed, body parts such as heart and blood are taken to be eaten and drunk by the King and commander. People believed that this could increase the King's power and increase immunity. If you hear the story, you will get goosebumps just imagining it. However, the lesson from this story of traditional ordinances passed down from generation to generation is that all evil deeds must be punished with severe punishment, such as the death penalty. (Zizydmk, 2021)



Source: Own photo



Source: Zakaria, (2022)

**Figure 2:** Huta Siallagan's Parsidangan Stone

The story of Huta Siallagan, which was told orally, “has uniqueness and values that can be utilized. The legend of Huta Siallagan still needs to exist as a story script (written)” (Siregar, *et al.*, 2022). The following is the legend of Huta Siallagan's Parsidangan Stone.

### **The Legend of Huta Siallagan's Parsidangan Stone**

(Siregar, *et al.*, Gurky, 2020; 2022; Zizydmk, 2021; Zakaria, 2022) In ancient times, exactly 700 years ago, “There lived a Batak king named Siallagan. King Siallagan lived in a village called Huta Siallagan. Huta Siallagan is an old village that has existed for hundreds of years, built during the reign of the first leader Huta Siallagan. Huta Siallagan is surrounded by a 1.5-meter-high protective wall with a very small entrance and an upright statue of Pangulubalang (a guard statue protecting residents from attacks by evil spirits who want to enter the village). King Siallagan was known as a just and wise king. King Siallagan always pays attention to his people by meeting and greeting them (Siregar, *et al.*, 2022).” The King smiled and greeted back when his people passed by and greeted him. Not only are the people polite to the King, but the King is also polite to all his people. The friendly nature of the King reflects that he is a polite person.

Everything that is going to be done at Huta Siallagan must be held beforehand at Parsidangan Stone, for example, such as planning a traditional party that will be held, burying a dead body, holding a wedding party, and so on. “The parsidangan stone is always used as a place for deliberations, listening to opinions and suggestions, as well as considerations from

traditional elders who are invited to attend and then make decisions related to conflicts, wedding planning, and preparations for funerals. Parsidangan stones in Huta Siallagan are placed in two locations with different rules and functions (Siregar, *et al.*, 2022).” The first Parsidangan stone in front of Rumah Bolon is the residence of the King with his wife and concubines, which functions as a palace, and under the Hariara Tree, a sacred tree for the Batak people (Figure 3a). The second Parsidangan stone is located outside as a place of execution (Figure 3b).

In the story, “One day, the royal commander made a mistake by betraying the kingdom. Through the prerogative of the King, because of this mistake, the King decided to hold a meeting at Batu Parsidangan, which he led, which was attended by advisers, the King's wife, shamans, executioners, and defendants and witnessed by all the people. The mistakes made by the commander were included in serious crimes whose punishment was beheading. To carry out beheadings, the King left the shaman to determine an auspicious day called manitiari. The shaman meditated under an ara tree until he found an auspicious day for the beheading. The Hariara tree is a sacred tree which is located next to the chair stone. It is said that the Huta Siallagan people believe that the spirits of Batak people who have died reside on this sacred tree. After getting a good day, the beheading was carried out at the execution stone. Beheading may only be carried out once, if the executioner does not succeed in carrying out the beheading at once, the executioner will replace the accused. The ritual begins with classical gondang Batak music, before being beheaded the shaman will blindfold the accused and give him potions and recite spells so

that the defendant's strength or invulnerability will disappear, when the shaman recites spells the executioner begins to beat the defendant's body using single stick panaluan until the defendant screams, if the defendant has screamed it means the power and invulnerability he has is gone. Then the execution was carried out, and the defendant was face down with his neck on a rock. If the

beheading was successful, the King would ask all who witnessed "who wants to eat it?" the heart and liver will be eaten by the King entrusted with increasing the King's strength. His head will be hung above the entrance of Huta Siallagan as a warning to all the people of Huta Siallagan not to make the same mistake." (Gurky, 2020)



**Figure 3a:** Harira tree  
**Source:** Own photo



**Figure 3b:** Stone Parsidangan is Second as a place of execution  
**Source:** Priatna in Afrillia (2018)

Another story at that time, "The Parsidangan Stone, was used by the King for a meeting with traditional elders. They were talking about the problem of a man who was punished for disturbing the King's wife. Then the convict was shackled in front of the King's house. Psychics determine the execution date through Parhalaan (Batak calendar) and Manitiari (book of the Batak people). After the day of execution arrived, the convict was brought first to Parsidangan rock to be tried. The Kings gathered at the Test Stone, and the first seat was where the King and Empress sat. The other Raja Huta, or the Raja's brothers, occupy the second seat. The third seat is the seat of the Datu/Owner of Mysticism, and the fourth chair is the royal executioner's chair. The fifth chair is called the detention chair, and the sixth is for victim advocates. The seventh seat is the Defendant's Legal Counsel. Moreover, the eighth seat is the King's adviser. Before being executed, convicts are given food containing psychic potions to weaken black magic. Before execution, the convict's clothing was removed to ensure that no amulets were left behind. His eyes were closed with an ulos and then laid on one of the biggest stones behind the execution area." (Siregar, *et al.*, 2022)

During execution, "The convict was beaten using a king's stick called the Tunggal Panaluan stick (a

magic stick carved on the heads of humans and animals) until the convict's body went limp and all the black magic on the convict's body disappeared. Next, the convict's body was sliced and slashed and then doused with potions and acid. Until the convict can no longer scream in pain and finally limp and helpless. Then, the convict was transferred to the execution stone to be beheaded by the royal executioner. The executioner had to do his job properly, namely cutting the convict's throat in one decapitation. If in one gulp the convict's throat is not severed and dies, then the royal executioner gets the punishment from King Siallagan. After the beheading was finished, a servant of the King took a Batak plate to put the fresh blood and head of the convict on the plate and then placed it on the table. The convict's body was put back on the rock when he was beaten with a stick. The convict's lifeless body was then split into two. The heart and liver were removed, the convict's limbs were sliced thin and mixed with the blood that was in the Batak dishes. Then given the spices, seasonings, liver mixture, liver to be presented to the King. King Siallagan did not enjoy the offering alone. In the view of the King and his people, Huta Siallagan, those who were sentenced to death were no longer humans but animals. Raja and Datu/owner of mysticism, other

Raja Huta, advisors eat and drink blood with the aim of increasing the power of black magic. King Siallagan greeted the people in a friendly manner, asked questions, and distributed offerings to the people who were present at the beheading procession. The people present could refuse the King's request and King Siallagan was never angry with the refusal. After the decapitation process was complete, the convict's corpse was thrown into the lake and his head was hung at the entrance to Huta Siallagan. The purpose of hanging the head is so that everyone who sees the head can learn and not do anything (Reinmah, 2018)." (Siregar, et al., 2022)

In resolving legal issues, "Huta Siallagan has three types of punishments at trial. The first is a fine given to the accused caught stealing. King Siallagan grants freedom with conditions. The condition given was to replace four times what the thieves stole. If the thief cannot replace him, he must become enslaved. Second, prison sentences are given to perpetrators who commit murder, rape, and fights that have nothing to do with the kingdom. The prison sentence length depends on the results of discussions between the King's advisers, the defendant's advisers, and the victim's advisers. They will see and consider the values that exist in Batak law. The decision will be notified to the King, and the King will ratify the decision. Third, the death penalty, aka beheading, is the final and most severe punishment. The death penalty was given to royal traitors. It did not matter if that person was the King's son, the King's younger brother, or had a special relationship with the King. Then the enemy commander caught during the war, and the person caught having an affair with one of the King's wives to maintain the King's authority would be put to death. The people of Huta Siallagan live by just laws, abide by the rules, and obey the King's orders. The King hopes that the justice and wisdom he applies will make the Siallagan Kingdom more advanced and respected by other kingdoms because the authority of the King and the kingdom is most important. The beheading and eating of convicts in Huta Siallagan ended in the early 19th century when a German priest named Ingwer Ludwig Nommensen from the Nordstrand island in Schleswig, a prominent German evangelist, introduced Christianity to the Huta Siallagan people. After the King converted to Christianity, the legal practice of beheading those who committed crimes was stopped and replaced with other punishments. Now Huta Siallagan has been opened as a tourist destination so everyone

can know the Siallagan kingdom." (Siregar, et al., 2022)

## CONCLUSION

Storytelling combines facts and stories to convey to tourists so that they are more interested in what they see. For a tourist destination, storytelling is part of product marketing. Many famous destinations in Indonesia already have strong storytelling. The legend of the Parsidangan stone in Huta Siallagan has local wisdom values passed down from generation to generation by the local community. Some of the younger generations still maintain the values of local wisdom, but some have begun to be abandoned. These various local pearls of wisdom have a certain beauty, uniqueness, and meaning that have the potential to be developed. The story of the Parsidangan Stone at the Huta Siallagan tourist destination gives color to Lake Toba tourism and can be used as storytelling to become an attraction.

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