

Colorful Escapism: Spatial Narrative and Experiencing Space in YouTube Web Series *Mereka Yang Hidupkan Mimpi* Eskapisme Berwarna: Naratif Spasial dan Mengalami Ruang dalam Film Seri Web YouTube *Mereka Yang Hidupkan Mimpi*

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Abstract

Indonesian YouTube web series offer conventional spatial narratives yet different experiences of filmic space, particularly in tourism promotion themed series. Among the popular titles of Indonesian web series in 2018, *Mereka yang Hidupkan Mimpi (MYHM)* portrays young urban Indonesians traveling to Singapore as escapism. As a collaboration between Kumparan, Indonesia's digital news media platform, and the Singapore Tourism Board, *MYHM* presents themes and cinematic arrangements that highlight the contrast of spatial narratives of Jakarta and Singapore and juxtaposes Jakarta and Singapore as the urban centers in Southeast Asia. In this paper I discuss the spatial narrative of *MYHM* and how the urban centers and tourist destination space are experienced through contrast and juxtaposition of stories about and set in Singapore. I will examine the attributes of the urban spaces of both cities, the contrasting features of spatial color tone, and the significance of the tourism campaign in this web series in relation to the connectivity of Indonesia and Singapore and young urban Indonesian identities in filmic narratives. I argue that the spatial narrative of *MYHM* YouTube web series represents not only the depiction of young urban Indonesian's mobility in the Southeast Asia but also a contemporary representation of the socio-cultural connectivity between the two neighboring countries.

Film seri web YouTube Indonesia terus berkembang dalam industri film kontemporer. Film-film seri web ini menawarkan narasi spasial yang konvensional dengan tawaran pengalaman ruang filmis yang berbeda, khususnya dalam seri bertema promosi pariwisata. Salah satu seri web populer Indonesia tahun 2018, *Mereka yang Hidupkan Mimpi (MYHM)* menceritakan perjalanan kaum muda Indonesia ke Singapura sebagai sebuah eskapisme. Sebagai sebuah kolaborasi dari Kumparan, sebuah platform media berita digital Indonesia, dan Singapore Tourism Board, *MYHM* menyajikan tema dan penataan sinematik yang menegaskan kontras naratif spasial dari Jakarta dan Singapore dalam posisi mereka sebagai pusat urban Asia Tenggara. Dalam tulisan ini, saya mendiskusikan naratif spasial *MYHM* dan bagaimana ruang pusat urban dan tujuan wisata dialami melalui kontras dan penempatan cerita tentang dan bertempat di Singapura. Saya memeriksa atribut ruang urban pada kedua kota, fitur *tone* warna yang berlawanan, serta signifikansi

kampanye pariwisata dalam film seri web ini dalam hubungan mereka dengan konektivitas Indonesia dan Singapura serta identitas kaum muda urban Indonesia dalam naratif film. Saya berargumen bahwa naratif spasial *MYHM* tidak hanya merepresentasikan penggambaran mobilitas kaum muda urban Indonesia di Asia Tenggara tetapi juga menjadi sebuah representasi kontemporer konektivitas sosiokultural antara Indonesia dan Singapura.

Keywords: Indonesia-Singapore connectivity; spatial narrative; tourism campaign; YouTube web series | film seri web YouTube, kampanye pariwisata, konektivitas Indonesia-Singapura, naratif spasial

Introduction

For the last decade, web series continue to thrive despite their atypical characteristics in the Indonesian film industry. The popularity of the format as a film production medium on YouTube platforms especially has been growing in numbers. YouTube, which originally started as a grassroots video sharing platform, has now evolved into a convenient and favorable media distribution tool due to the increase and advancement of accessibility of the Internet. It is a dynamic ‘global’ platform, as highlighted by Jean Burgess and Joshua Green in their seminal overview of YouTube culture, which is “accessible from (almost) anywhere in the world” and a “more cosmopolitan media space or one comprised of a greater number of disconnected niche groups.” (Burgess and Green 2009: 83). YouTube has also become the most popular social media platform in Indonesia with 88% of Indonesian web users actively using YouTube and that up to 47% of Indonesians access YouTube every day for about 30 minutes on average. This rising trend has steadily boosted the growth of YouTube videos popularity and viewership, including the web series format.

Web series serves as an umbrella term for (all kinds of) series published on web platforms. The International Academy of Web Television (2015) defines web series as film work with seriality, inclusive of fictional and non-fictional content on the web as their original distribution platform. More practical definitions focus on their creative characteristics such as web series being “a transitional storytelling form bridging the production practices of broadcast television and Internet video” (Edgerton 2015: 13). They are shorter than a television series episode while also deviating from traditional TV storytelling strategies, and providing a new kind of entertainment “like small-screen Sundance all the time if you know the right URLs” (Syme 2013: 1). Nowadays, despite numerous emerging subscription-based streaming services and mobile television platforms also producing series on ‘web’ platforms, the definition of web series is still mostly associated and attributed to the series published on YouTube.

Mereka Yang Hidupkan Mimpi (hereafter, *MYHM*) is web series consisting of three episodes, each under 10 minutes. The web series was published on YouTube in November 2018 as a collaboration of Kumparan, an Indonesian online media platform, and the Singapore Tourism Board. Set in the two Southeast Asia urban centers, Jakarta and Singapore, the web series portrays the struggle of young urban Indonesians in their everyday life. The characters are in a state of *kegalauan* (a popular Indonesian term for the state of existentialist restlessness) about their mid-20s aspiration, idealistic dreams, or creative career development. As the title suggests, *Mereka Yang Hidupkan Mimpi* (literally They who are Keeping the Dream Alive) revolves around the dreams of the young urban Indonesian characters. The main protagonist, Vei, lives in Jakarta and aspires to open her own café and marry her partner. The story follows her in the first half of the story; things were not going well

in her life so she takes an impromptu trip to Singapore—she wants to get away from her mundane life and replenish her passion. She then meets two Indonesian friends in Singapore, Salma and Rai. In the last half of the series, the story switches its focus to Rai as he tries to confess his feelings to Vei.

In this paper, I aim to examine how the attributes of the urban spaces of Jakarta and Singapore are featured in *MYHM* and how the contrasting features of the presented space and color tone are portrayed. Jakarta and Singapore as urban places are used as the setting of the story. However, they not only become the backdrop of the story but also the significant spaces supporting the story. Through narrative and cinematic close reading, I investigate how Jakarta and Singapore are depicted in the web series. I also examine the spectrum of color tone for the three episodes to create a comprehensive color tone map. Through the findings, we will be able to look into how color tone, especially of places and spaces of the story, present the places and spaces in Jakarta and Singapore. Lastly, by examining the way young urban Indonesians experienced Jakarta and Singapore as their home and their getaway destination in *MYHM*, I will further discuss the significance of *MYHM* spatial narrative and cinematic experience as part of the socio-cultural connectivity of Indonesia and Singapore' urban identities representation on YouTube tourism campaign web series.

Literature Review

The concept of spatial narratives derives from the term narrative space as a story setting or backdrop to plot in narrative theories. It is in this vein that the narrative of space, according to Chatman (1978), is scenically presented in a theater, depicted in pictures and films and described in verbal narratives. The narrative of space is further characterized by complex parameters, such as spatial boundaries, the object it contained, the living conditions it provided, and the temporal dimension (Buchholz 2010). Borrowing Mieke Bal's narratology concept of space aspects in the narrative, space is regarded as "an important aspect of visuality in narrative", and emphasizes the sense of sight, hearing, and touch involved in the perceptual representation of space. In particular, there are *frames* as the space in which the character is situated, or is precisely not situated, and the way in which that space is filled can also be indicated (Bal 2017: 124-125). These senses further relate to the character's position in a particular setting or scene and in a relative sense, not only encourage but also, become dynamic development within the space. The significance of characters' mobility within the setting and experience within the space of the story has been examined to see "a clearer sense of the fabrication of space in fiction" (Phelan et al. 2012: 103) or investigate the "allusive, figurative, and connotative meaning in a given narrative" (Ryan et al. 2016: 4).

In films, the narrative is presented within the complex framings of the story, setting, and characters constructing a spatial narrative that is presented around the place depicted within the film. Particularly in location-specific films, space, as well as its narrative, becomes the center of interest not only for the characters but also for the viewers. In addition to being a referent with its attribute, the landscape or cityscape featured in film also serves as the context of the story and in extension constructs the representation of the space of the story (Baines 2003; Fraser 2007). Symbolically and dramatically, space is organized or becomes part of the film narrative. Lily Alexander (2007) offered the term film architectonics, which stands for the spatial organization in films such as films' semantic, dramatic, visual and narrative structures. She argues that there are "strategies of visual storytelling [that] integrate the time-space continuum in film content through the interaction of spatial elements with the physical actions, movements, and symbolic gestures of the characters" (Alexander 2007: 31).

This approach allows us to examine the spatial narrative by reading the characters' actions, movements, and gestures in the story space as a response to the location itself. In this vein, the significance of space or place in web series stories can be positioned and read as a location in which the characters in the story are positioned or inhabit the story space. Previous research about film background with city attributes and real locations has highlighted several films shot in cosmopolitan cities and its surroundings. Fraser (2007) discussed a park as an on-screen and off-screen pivotal location in the heart of Madrid and Carlos Saura's *Taxi* (1996). Employing Bergson's conceptualization of spaces and Lefebvre's linkage of spaces of representation and representation of space, Fraser took a closer look at the urban space portrayed in the film to see the extent to which *Taxi's* traditional metaphors fail to comment on the more recent production of urban inequalities across the city-spaces of post-dictatorial Spain (2007: 16). Meanwhile, Baines (2003) discussed Johannesburg as part of South Africa and its representation in 1940s-1950s films. He argued that the locations and the parts of the city featured in the film can be read as filmic spaces and not easily dismissed as only static backgrounds, since the spaces are where the characters live, interacts, develop their stories, and then taking a turn, making their homes (Baines 2003).

The mood difference for the main setting of the web series, however, calls for further examination of how the expressive quality of color becomes part of the frame and portrayal of place in the film. Color and tone, which have become significant attributes of film narrative, especially in contemporary works, have been discussed as part of the narrative structure and cinematic expressions. As one of the earliest overviews of color close reading in films, Cavell (1979: 82) proposed that color in film can create a "world of an immediate future" in addition to a world just past or a world of make-believe. Richard Misek (2010) explored further Hollywood's established color aesthetic—the chromatic versus monochrome—in the past two decades while Paul Coates (2010) delved deeper into the theory and history of the black-and-white and color film dialectic. Few other studies on the colors of the film have focused on their relation to the narrative strategies and ideologies and cinematic expressions. These studies examined how romance films employ color to emphasize the characterizations (Haralovich 1990); how color design becomes an important part of the film ideology by a woman of color about people of color (Pozo 2013); how color operated especially in relation to the film's temporality (Szczepaniak-Gillece 2012); and how the film's attention to the chromatic surface was argued to be an exploration of new cultural concerns. (Thompson 2015: 64).

I further argue that colors become more than an appearance while also "produced [sic] sight and significance—and to locate the remembered language or grammar that has been selected to push hues into patterns" (Branigan 2017: 287). They, thus, greatly contribute to the general form of the screen image, helping define certain areas as well as emphasizing or de-emphasizing some of them. High-energy warm colors will suggest a happier mood or a more forceful event than do low-energy cold colors; bright, highly saturated colors are well suited to enhance an external high-energy scene; and saturated colors can make such internal events, or inscapes, too external, luring the viewer into looking at rather than into the event (Zettl 2008). There are meanings in the color tone of a film. After all, color on film is a result of stylistic, affective, and aesthetic negotiations between the eye of the filmmaker-as-artist, the narrative in hand, and the emotional weight that a place and the atmosphere the filmmaker is seeking to create might bring to bear on the imagination of the audience (Donald et al 2008).

MYHM is set in two Southeast Asian urban centers; Jakarta as the ‘home’ and Singapore as the ‘destination’ of the characters. This juxtaposition attempts to portray connected similarities and contrasts, especially in tourism. Singapore has been actively establishing a two-way relationship between culture and tourism (Chang and Yeoh 1999) and refining its mode of tourism campaign to increase the attraction of tourists to cultural sites (Agiomirgianakis et al. 2017). The new Singapore destination brand, ‘Passion Made Possible’ was launched in 2017, focusing on “a fuller Singapore story beyond just tourism [and supporting] the telling of many stories about this destination and its people.” (Singapore Tourism Board 2017). It is under this destination brand that the socio-cultural connectivity between Indonesia and Singapore continues to flourish. Furthermore, the intersection of spatial narrative and film color aesthetics in the web series also creates multifocal spatial connections, particularly in relation to characters’ mobility within the story setting and their experience within the colorful cityscape.

Escape is a leisure activity and consumption of experience that heavily relates to the notion of escapism (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982; Cohen and Taylor 1992; Holmqvist et al. 2020). With film as a medium and YouTube as a platform, the act of consuming tourist destinations can be projected, featured, and promoted as long as there are offers of “extraordinary experiences to escape from banal and dull routines” (Scott et al. 2017). Tesser et al. (1988) proposed that film narratives offer the opportunity to momentarily immerse in a different world from the ordinary, which becomes an escape. In the context of televisual tourists, viewers “are constituted as wishing to temporarily displace their own conditions of existence, conditions otherwise more real and immediate. They are constructed as escapist viewers.” (Fish 2005: 127). Escape becomes “an explicit message”, and the getaway trip becomes “a quest in which a new self is fulfilled” and “the ‘adventurer’ often consciously sheds layers of his [or her] old self— posing in the anonymous free area of the holiday as someone else.” (Cohen and Taylor 1992: 136). Wearing et al. explicates that according to Cohen and Taylor (1976), overseas holidays are structurally similar to leisure because one of their chief purposes is identity establishment and the cultivation of consciousness. (Wearing 2010: 41). The construction of tourism, thus, can be read as personal (experience) and social (activity) and holidays also provide scope, or in this context ‘space’, for the nurturing of identity. Therefore, escape will be then discussed as a literal and metaphorical journey of traveling outside everyday reality, where the quest for finding a new self is fulfilled.

Methods

The focus of this paper is on the color tone of the web series and their depiction of space and place in relation to the escapism theme. In order to provide a color map of the discussed web series, I employ media visualization technique to provide an overall view of all the images in the collection for analysis (Manovich 2011; 2020). This media visualization technique involves a two-step process of automating screenshots taking at a fixed recording ratio, and then representing the results visually. First, all the captured frames of the web series are organized chronologically from left to right and top to bottom following the order of the shots in the web series on one page. After, the visualization will allow us to identify color tone patterns of specific space, place, or spatial qualities featured in the web series as well as the repetition and the deviation from it; situating all the screenshots in this way will allow a new visualization that will enable the “exploration of the temporal” (Grushka 2010) and the “embodied experience of moving” (Lyon 2016) against and through the Southeast Asian urban centers space in the web series. While this visualization “cannot reveal *every* pattern contained in an image collection, they can often show *some* pattern” (Manovich 2020: 230, emphasis added) and it can serve as a starting point for further color tone analysis in this paper.

Theoretically and analytically, this paper adopts a literary analysis approach that looks at how the narrative of space connects to the spatial experience in a film or web series and proposes an alternative approach to new media film and color tone analysis. Colors in cinema, after all, influences the relationship between the character emotions and colors pattern (Kim 2015) and becomes a part of our embodied experience (Pomerance 2022). In this context, I look at *MYHM* and analyze in close detail how its color tone presents Jakarta and Singapore as Southeast Asia urban centers and how young urban Indonesians experienced them. In examining the narrative space and the cinematic spatial experience, I look into the urban space attributes within the cityscape, including the recurring backdrop of the story both in Jakarta and Singapore, how these backdrops are colored, and how they depict the mood of a certain cityscape. Labels will be attached to the mood of scenes, where “a high-energy hot scene or a low-energy warm scene; there may be a high-energy cold scene or a low-energy hot scene or any combination thereof.” (Zettl 2008: 76). Lastly, the findings from *MYHM* will be analyzed in close detail to the issue of young urban Indonesian mobility, their access and experience within the cityscape, and their existential restlessness as part of their urban identities.

Discussion

This section focuses on three points of discussion, including the attributes of Jakarta and Singapore’s urban space within the cityscapes portrayed in the web series, the web series color tone and its representation, as well as the escapism theme in *MYHM* in relation to the socio-cultural connectivity of Indonesia and Singapore.

Attributes of Referential Urban Space in Spatial Narratives

The Jakarta and Singapore cityscape become the main setting of *MYHM* web series, as the backdrop and dominating the scenery. Vei as the main protagonist lives in Jakarta. Both the supporting characters, Salma and Rai, also come from Jakarta despite residing in Singapore for their creative work. All the scenes in Jakarta are set indoors. Meanwhile, during their activities in Singapore, almost all of the scenes are set outdoors; in the streets of Singapore, around famous tourist spots, and/or inside buildings associated with the city. There are contrasts in how both cities are portrayed and presented. In this subsection, I examine how Jakarta at the beginning of the series is presented as Vei’s home while at the end of the series becomes a foreign space for Rai, and how Singapore is their colorful and important meeting point. In order to see beyond the dichotomies of home/away and self/other, an examination of the established urban space attributes in this web series is required.

The series opens with scenes in several non-descript spaces or spaces without any referential attributes to any place within the cityscape. The introduction sequence begins with the scene where Vei is having an argument with her fiancé in an unnamed café. Afterward, she heads home and settles in her room as she comes to the decision of making an impromptu trip to Singapore. There is no specific spatial attribute shown in these two scenes. This opening sequence revolves around Vei’s private spaces without any attributes to a referential place in Jakarta, only set in a secluded corner of a nondescript café (top left screenshot in Figure 1) and Vei’s room (bottom left screenshot in Figure 1). The only establishing attribute setting the story in Jakarta is a five-second bird-view dusk panorama shot of several buildings that can be referred to as Jakarta. (See top left screenshot in Figure 1). As seen in the top right screenshot in Figure 1 below, no other further spatial reference is provided to establish the initial setting of the story or its being the protagonist’s home in Jakarta.

In a relative sense, Jakarta's cityscape is not directly connected to the *MYHM* characters. Instead, it merely becomes the backdrop of the plot without demonstrating actual positions or directions. Jakarta is depicted as a place that is not friendly for Vei, portraying her as a resident of a nondescript space, a cityscape without any attributes or allusive meaning.

Toward the end of *MYHM*, the story focus shifts to Rai who returns to Jakarta after his encounter with Vei in Singapore. He stumbles upon a café. As Rai waits for his coffee, he catches a glimpse of Vei, but before he can step forward to greet Vei he sees the ring on her finger and her fiancé.



Fig. 1 Screenshots of scenes set in Jakarta (left to right and top to bottom) depicting Vei at a café, Jakarta establishing shot, Vei at home, and Rai walking away from the café. Source: *MYHM (Mereka yang Hidupkan Mimpi: Episode 1* [web series], 2018; *Mereka yang Hidupkan Mimpi: Episode 3* [web series], 2018).

The café is now Vei's and the shots at the café still present non-descript attributes. Since the café has been introduced at the beginning of the series, we as viewers are able to associate the space with the previous scenes. For Vei the café has become hers and the spatial evidence of her realizing her dream. However, from Rai's perspective, the café is just another non-descript space in Jakarta where he happens to meet Vei once again. Rai who returns to Jakarta to finally realize his dream to hold his own exhibition does not belong in the space. Just like for Vei in the beginning, Jakarta is not a friendly place for Rai in the closing scene. It might be his home, a place where he returns after traveling, but he experiences another heartbreak and does not find happiness in it.

Singapore, in sharp contrast, is presented with detailed attributes and various spatial associations. The establishing attributes of Singapore and its cityscape are numerous throughout the Singapore trip sequence. Almost all the places become backdrops of the plot while also providing what Ryan et al. (2016) called a "relative and absolute sense of space". Vei first meets Salma in Bugis Street, Salma takes Vei to explore Arab Street, and together with Rai Vei explores several tourist spots and ends up at the intersection of Joo Chiat Ter and Everitt Rd, and Vei and Rai sitting down in front of ArtScience Museum Singapore. Thus, these places emphasize the activity and interaction of *MYHM* characters and allow them to "develop their stories" (Baines 2003).

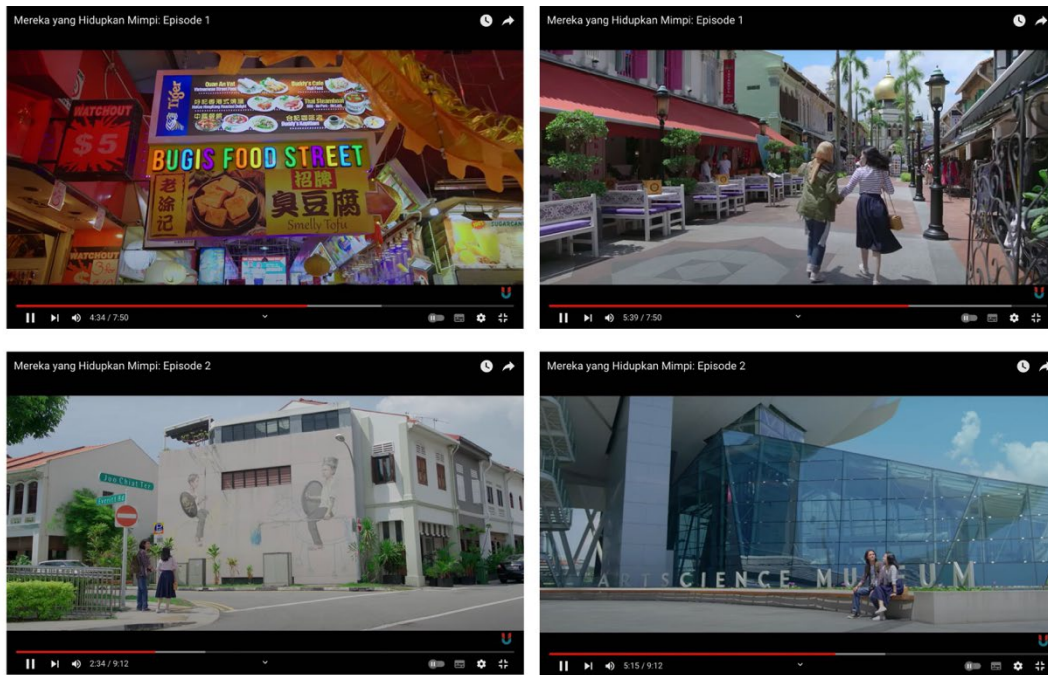


Fig. 2 Screenshots of scenes set in Singapore (left to right and top to bottom) depicting Bugis Street sign, Salma and Vei in Arab Street, Rai and Vei at the corner of Joo Chiat Ter and Everitt Rd., and Vei and Rai sitting in front of ArtScience Museum Singapore. Source: MYHM (*Mereka yang Hidupkan Mimpi: Episode 1* [web series], 2018; *Mereka yang Hidupkan Mimpi: Episode 2* [web series], 2018).

For Bugis Street, a fixed shot of the entrance sign is interlaced with the short sequence of Vei and Salma walking through the crowd as they decide to buy snacks (top left screenshot in Figure 2). The sequence of Vei and Salma in Arab Street is longer, almost 30 seconds of a follow-shot of them strolling down the street and trying out scarves from the line-up shops and ending with the camera seeing them walking away toward the Sultan Mosque (top right screenshot in Figure 2).

With Rai, Vei then wanders the streets of Singapore. The camera follows them strolling from one Singapore spot to another, constantly putting them in the center of the frame against the detailed colorful spatial attributes. Rai even provides commentary on how Singapore has been inspiring him, explaining spatial details and history and acting as their journey narrator for both Vei and the viewers. Most of the scenes from this sequence are shot from behind Vei and Rai, using over-the-shoulder shots or follow-shots. This treatment sets them in the center of the frame as they experience the place they visited, placing them in the foreground of the setting. At the corner of Joo Chiat Ter and Everitt Rd, a long shot shows Rai and Vei standing at the intersection, overlooking murals on the building across the street. (bottom left screenshot in Figure 2). This scene particularly portrays Rai and Vei being in the center of Singapore cityscape even if they are only a small part of what is shown in the overall frame since the mural ends up being the focal point of the frame. Similar framing is also used to show the end of their visit to the ArtScience Museum Singapore. (bottom right screenshot in Figure 2). The front sign of the museum as the place attributes is right in the frame, with Rai and Vei sitting on the right side of the frame.

The establishing attributes of Singapore's cityscape, unlike Jakarta, are detailed. They are presented as construction of connotative meaning to the series' narrative, as a place where the characters' dreams are 'alive'. They are colorful, fun, and, in extension, just like Rai mentioned, inspiring and

sparkling creativity. Singapore also serves as a destination, a space that allows these characters to escape from their muted colors home into the colorful cityscape. Vei wants to sort out her thoughts before deciding the best way to keep pursuing her dream. Salma is living her dream, being in Singapore and working as a food blogger. Meanwhile, Rai is currently struggling to reach his dream of holding his own exhibition by featuring Singapore's cityscape in his photographs.

Salma and Rai's roles as narrators for Vei and the viewers also add a narrative layer to the story. Vei's trip to Singapore was not planned, and since she has no knowledge of Singapore space, she asked Salma's help. Salma then acts as a guide, not a native resident but a traveler who possesses sufficient knowledge about Singapore spaces. When Salma has other commitments and can no longer guide Vei, she asks for Rai's help. Then with Rai, Vei continues her wandering around Singapore, relying on his directions and recommendations. When the story shifts to Rai in the middle of the series, Vei, and also the viewers, have already obtained knowledge about Singapore cityscape. She, along with the series' viewers, has visited several tourist spots, listened to Salma and Rai's description of the space/place she visited, and experienced Singapore cityscape.

The description of *MYHM* last episode highlights how the characters regard Singapore as "one of the places that keeps their dream alive". Their journey was "inspired by Rai's dream as '*penikmat kebudayaan*' (literally translated, culture enthusiast) and had "renewed Vei's passion to keep her dreams alive" (*Mereka yang Hidupkan Mimpi: Episode 3* [web series], 2018). The tagline for Singapore tourism campaign "Passion made possible" is repeated in each of the episode opening sequences and become one of the main characters' motivations in the story. Certainly, this depiction of the tagline is part of the tourism campaign strategy, but it is worth noting that *MYHM* spatial narratives and experience have played up this portrayal. Singapore is holding the role of a producer, providing space where dreams can be kept alive; this applies, particularly, to Vei, Salma and Rai. On the contrary, in *MYHM* Jakarta, the home of these young urban Indonesian, is the space of the consumers, the young urban Indonesians who seek "extraordinary experiences to escape from banal and dull routines" (Scott et al. 2017) and find comfort in the spatial experience offered by Singapore.

Color Tone and Experiencing Space

The mapping of *MYHM* color tone provides insight into its color and hues patterns. The visualization provides us with a map of *MYHM* color tone (Figure 3). There are two main sets of color tones throughout the series, in relation to the setting of the scenes: first is the muted cold colors sequence of Jakarta and second is the vivid warm colors sequence of Singapore.

Jakarta is mainly presented in muted and cold color tones in *MYHM*. The Jakarta sequence (I) occurs when the main characters (Vei at first and Rai in the later part of the series) are in Jakarta: at the beginning of the series, in the narration of memory about Jakarta, and at the end. In the first part of the web series when Vei is struggling against the humdrum existence and not yet achieving her dream(s) the scenes are presented in muted color tone. This muted, soft and cold, color tone dominates most of Vei's Jakarta scenes. At the beginning of the series and during the opening sequence (labeled *Jakarta, Vei* in the Figure 3 visualization map), the colors emphasize Vei's weariness and indecisiveness. She is weary of her daily routine and unable to settle in the spaces that are familiar to her, including in her home and the café she frequented. The opening scene in Vei's room, in particular, places Vei against a pale blue backdrop with soft lighting; this two-minute scene focuses on Vei trying to sort out her thoughts, finding Salma's Instagram post, before finally making the decision to arrange her impromptu trip to Singapore. The sequence is shot at a

fixed angle with no significant camera movement, fully focusing on Vei's gesture and the insert graphic of her conversation with Salma.

Similarly, the same color tone pattern is used to portray Rai's time in Jakarta (labeled *Jakarta, Rai* in the Figure 3 visualization map). Set in the café we encountered Vei at the beginning of the series, the last sequence tells the resolution of *MYHM*. Rai returns to Jakarta to hold his exhibition. When he sees Vei at a café, the café is a random and non-descript café, but the viewers, who have seen the café at the beginning of the series, know that they are in the same place. To some extent, once it was Vei and now it is Rai, the café again becomes a backdrop for another weary young urban Indonesian. Like Vei at the beginning of the story, at the end of the story, Rai is unhappy being at home and unable to make his 'dream' of being with Vei come true. When the series ends with Rai's reflective narration, stating that "this ending might be the best for me, and also for her" (*Mereka yang Hidupkan Mimpi: Episode 3* [web series], 2018), we can see him walking away from the café and, metaphorically, from Jakarta.

At the other end of the spectrum, the Singapore sequence (II) dominates the series, not only having its narrative setting mainly in Singapore but also making a point to highlight the vivid warm color tone for Singapore where Vei encounters Salma and Rai and is in the colorful cityscape where they all are currently living their dreams. Right after she arrives in Singapore, Vei meets with Salma in Bugis Street. Their day continues as they wander around the streets of Singapore, exploring tourist spots and becoming the center of the frame against the colorful cityscape. This exploration is portrayed as a spontaneous and joyful experience. Vei is constantly smiling when she is with Salma and swinging their joined hands as they wander around colorful alleys. Even when the focus of the story shifts to Rai's perspective, the joyful impression remains. Despite Vei becoming more pensive toward the end of the series, Rai's narration still emphasizes how the spaces they visited have provided inspiration for his creativity.

We can also see a memory-theme sequence within the Singapore sequence (II) in the middle of Vei and Rai's journey around Singapore (labeled *Memory of Jakarta in Singapore* in the Figure 3 visualization map). This pattern provides another comparison. The muted cold color sequence happens near the end of the story. The "exploration of the temporal" (Grushka 2010) of *MYHM* shows a drastic change at the end of episode 2 after featuring Singapore vivid warm colors in the beginning. In this sequence Vei and Rai are sitting in a restaurant for dinner: he attempted to profess his love for Vei but she was distracted by her fiancé calling from Jakarta. Rai is looking back in the nostalgia of his feelings for Vei back in his university days presumably in Jakarta. Once again, like Vei at the beginning of the series, Rai begins to show uneasiness being around Vei; and despite being set in Singapore, this sequence (III) utilizes a similar color tone as the Jakarta scenes in sequence (I).

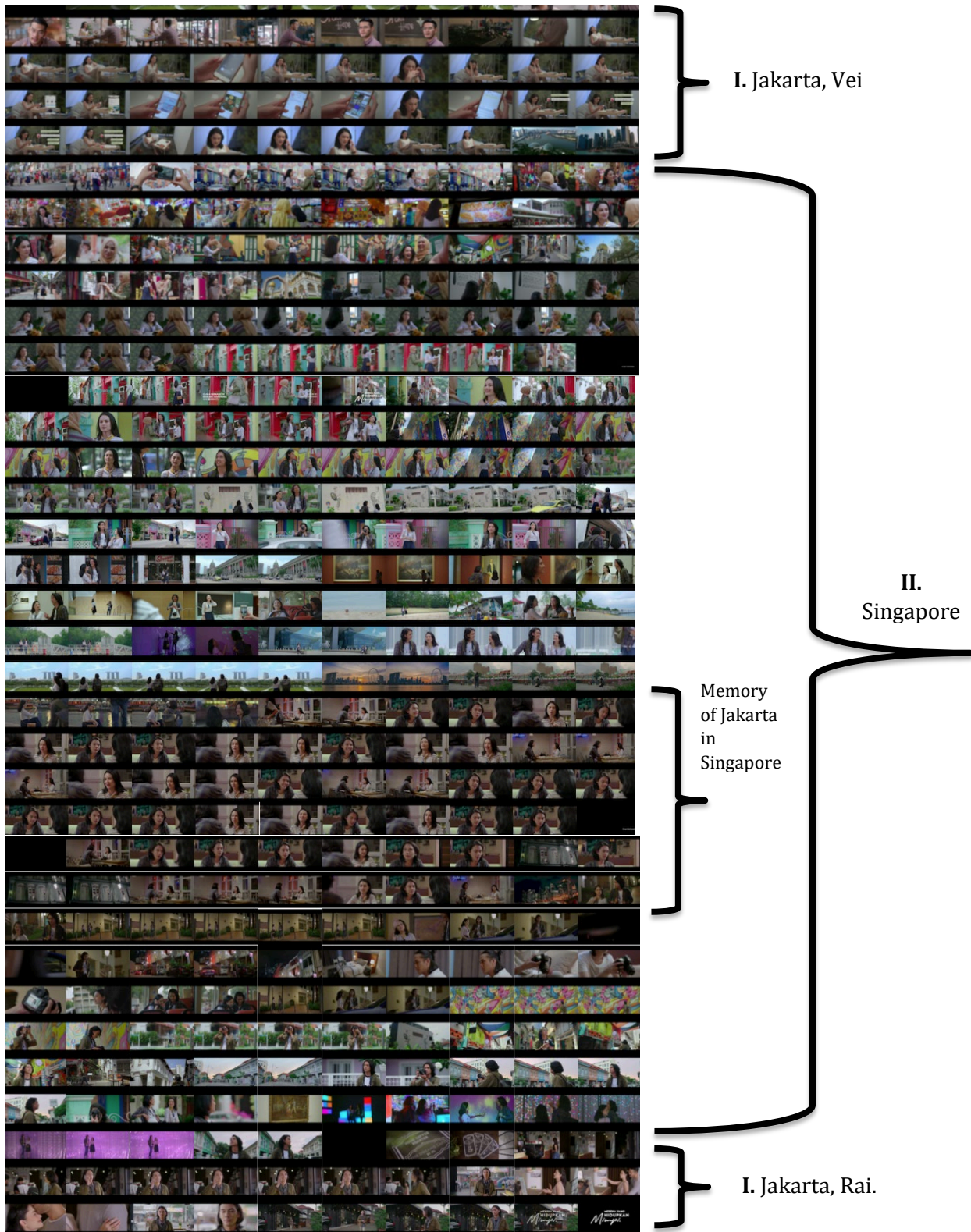


Fig. 3 Visualization of MYHM (2018) web series color tone. Frames are organized chronologically from left to right and top to bottom following the order of the shots in the film. Sequences are categorized based on story location and setting, and the character focus of the story. Source: MYHM (*Mereka yang Hidupkan Mimpi: Episode 1* [web series], 2018; *Mereka yang Hidupkan Mimpi: Episode 2* [web series], 2018; *Mereka yang Hidupkan Mimpi: Episode 3* [web series], 2018).

This memory-theme sequence is also a point of the protagonist's shift. After this sequence, the story no longer focuses on Vei and her restlessness, it then shifts to tell Rai's story. Vei is no longer the center of the colorful cityscape, her mind being at home in Jakarta and not in Singapore. Her attention to Rai continues to lessen as her quest to escape Jakarta and experience colorful Singapore is gradually 'fulfilled'. By the beginning of episode 3, she is already on her way to making a decision and to a certain extent on the verge of realizing her dreams. On the other hand, Rai is still in Singapore. He is still struggling with his dreams; of being a photographer of Singapore cityscape and of being with Vei, which was already foreshadowed to be unsuccessful at the end of the series.

Color tone patterns also correlate with spatial experiences encountered by the characters *and* the web series viewers. When *MYHM* characters experience Jakarta as their nondescript home with its harsh reality, the viewers are watching their story with the muted cold color tone. Having this representation of a nondescript home allows viewers to associate themselves with it. There is no fixed and narrow definition of home for the young urban web series viewers; home is in muted cold color bordering gloom, part of their *kegalauan* (the state of existentialist restlessness) about their mid-20s dreams. Meanwhile, Singapore is experienced in detail and just like the *MYHM* characters, web series viewers can enjoy the vivid warm colorful Singapore through a journey within the cityscape. They can be in the center of the vividly colored space, wandering around the specific places, and be inspired by the colorful cityscape.

Escapism Theme in MYHM

The escapism theme in *MYHM* operates in two kinds of journeys of traveling outside everyday reality and each of the journeys involves a quest for fulfillment of a new self. First, as a literal journey, escapism is presented in the narrative of the story through the characters' interaction with each other and with the space around them. The colorful cityscape of Singapore and the characters' escape into them provide a space for the characters to nurture their identities (see Wearing et al. 2010). Through its spatial narrative, *MYHM* offers representations of escape from the characters' lives toward the colorful spaces in Singapore. The characters of the web series are all portrayed as young Indonesian who found the inspiration, or to apply the web series tagline, found "their passion", by escaping their everyday lives and traveling to Singapore. The young urban Indonesian characters of *MYHM*, represented by Vei, Rai, and Salma, are experiencing the colorful cityscape in Singapore as they aim to displace their own conditions while embarking on "a quest in which [their] new self is fulfilled" et al. 2010).

Singapore as an urban center and tourist destination is welcoming and shown as a familiar ground for young urban Indonesians in the web series instead of being a foreign and distant place. It is also critical to note that none of the characters in the web series interact directly with the locals in Singapore. Vei goes to Singapore and meets with her Indonesian friends; they all interact with each other but none of them talk about or socialize with any local characters. All the wandering scenes are done with their own knowledge without even once consulting the locals. They explore Singapore cityscape freely and construct their personal and private experiences in Singapore. This freedom, as a form of escape, then allows the characters of the web series to nurture their identity and by being tourists in Singapore as a familiar space, they are able to rediscover their passion.

Second, as a metaphorical journey, escapism operates within the connection between the YouTube web series and the viewers. Throughout *MYHM*, viewers become "escapist viewers." (Fish 2005: 127) who are able to visually 'escape' their own daily life and experience colorful Singapore

through this web series. Young urban Indonesian as the intended web series viewers are the targets of the tourism campaign, and in extension become the consumers of the space. Despite the indirect experience of the inspiration or passion, the escapism narrative provides a space where web series viewers are able to share the inspiration and relate to the passion brought by young urban Indonesian portrayals. In the context of the tourism campaign, viewers of *MYHM* web series are not only presented with the story of young urban Indonesian trying to keep their dream alive but also the colorful cityscape of Singapore. This enticing experience is offered to the viewers of web series as both a promoted space for future personal escape and also as a space they experienced as watching. The cityscape of Singapore then also becomes the space for the viewers to relive the inspiration or passion through the characters in the web series, and in extension to escape from their everyday lives.

Conclusion

This paper has expanded on close reading about referential attributes of Jakarta and Singapore's urban space in *MYHM*, in which Singapore and Jakarta become "filmic spaces" (Baines 2003). These cities are not only the static backgrounds of *MYHM*. Singapore, in particular, is strongly depicted as a colorful cityscape of "many stories" (Singapore Tourism Board 2017). This depiction is, on one end, connected with the Singapore tourism campaign tagline "Passion Made Possible" and the role of its cityscape as a producer of space where passion is made possible and dreams can be kept alive. It is also, on the other end, connected with Jakarta as the city's representation of home for young urban Indonesian and its role as the space of the consumers, the young urban Indonesians who seek "extraordinary experiences to escape from banal and dull routines" (Scott et al. 2017), and the viewers of *MYHM*.

Further, vivid Singapore becomes a colorful escape from gloomy Jakarta in *MYHM*. As demonstrated, visualization of *MYHM* color tone provides an overall view of all the images from the web series and allows further analysis of the colored cityscape. By positioning the pattern of color tone as part of the narrative structure and cinematic expression, this paper has further discussed how the depiction of cityscape can be constructed by colors, moods of sequences, and warm or cold color tone and proposed an alternative approach of new media film and color tone analysis. The high-energy warm color tone that characterized Singapore also represents an oasis, an open and welcoming space for those seeking a quick escape from places with a low-energy cold color tone. Color tone also becomes the visual highlight in *MYHM*, operating as an emphasis on the characterization (Haralovich 1990) of the main characters and the two Southeast Asia urban centers, as well as an exploration of new cultural concerns (Thompson 2015: 64) and connectivity. True to its tourism campaign visualization intention, Singapore's vivid warm color tone in *MYHM* stands out in comparison to the muted cold color tone of Jakarta's urban everydayness. For the viewers and the target of this web series campaign, Jakarta serves as a representation of their urban home. In parallel, Singapore becomes the representation of that accessible oasis.

In *MYHM*, Singapore is actively advertising the openness of its cityscape and its welcoming space throughout the web series. Meanwhile, Indonesia—represented by the young urban viewers in this case—continues to become a potential market and consumer of the space; the term 'young urban viewers' has been applied to underline the relation between the target of the tourism campaign and YouTube web series viewers. With easier access to visit Singapore, only two hours plus flights from Jakarta, and a visa-exemption policy, young urban Indonesians find Singapore as the closest 'international' oasis; the easiest and most practical (and cheaper) way to travel abroad would be to Singapore. They are also conscious of having their mid-20s aspiration, idealistic dreams, or creative

career development as part of their “identity establishment” (Wearing 2010: 41) as young urban Indonesian.

At a glance, this connectivity between the two neighboring countries in *MYHM* may seem unidirectional, with Singapore being its colorful focus. However, there is an underlying mutualistic relation in this contemporary Indonesia and Singapore connectivity. Their relationship is bi-directional, being one between the producer and the consumer of the tourism space. Experiencing colorful Singapore to escape their daily life is not the sole reason for young urban Indonesian to travel to Singapore. The trip is also part of them realizing their dream and “nurturing their identity” (Wearing et al. 2010). Finally, YouTube as a platform, especially, is instrumental in propagating this connectivity. It has highlighted the connection between the restless young urban Indonesian, represented by Vei, Rai, and Salma, and the colorful space of Singapore. Being a YouTube web series has also enabled *MYHM* to open wider access for these spatial narratives and escapism experiences reaching its viewers, many of them young urban Indonesian. The socio-cultural connectivity portrayed by *MYHM* then is not only a depiction of young urban Indonesian’s mobility in the Southeast Asia region but also a contemporary representation of the socio-cultural connectivity between the two neighboring countries.

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