IDENTIFICATION OF POTENTIAL AND DEVELOPMENT OF INSTA TOURISM IN KOTAGEDE YOGYAKARTA

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Abstract:
Instagram is a social media platform that is quite popular, its existence has changed the way people communicate and connect. The popularity and ease of using social media have placed it in various roles, including as a means of promotion. As one of the most popular platforms on social media, the post of attractive photos and videos on Instagram has increased the number of tourist visits to many destinations. This then gave rise to the term Insta Tourism, which motivates someone to visit Instagramable tourist destinations because they want to get interesting content to post on their social media account. Kotagede is a cultural tourism area that offers the landscape and architecture of the Mataram kingdom that is still authentic and unique. Several tourist spots in Kotagede are one of the tourist destinations for Insta Tourism. This research aims to analyze the potential of Insta Tourism in Kotagede so that in the future, it can be used as a recommendation for the development and diversification of tourism products. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method by conducting observations and field interviews with tourists, as well as analyzing a number of posts on Instagram about Kotagede tourism.
Keywords: Identification, Potential, Tourism, Kotagede, Insta Tourism

INTRODUCTION

Instagram is one of the most popular social media platforms, both nationally and globally. According to data released by WeAreSocial, there were approximately 1.68 billion Instagram users worldwide in 2024 (WeAreSocial.com, 2024). In Indonesia, Instagram is one of the most popular social media platforms and ranks fourth globally in terms of the largest number of Instagram users (garuda.website, 2024). Over time, Instagram has evolved beyond a platform for social interaction and has transformed into a promotional medium, including in the tourism sector. This phenomenon has given rise to the term "Insta Tourism." Insta Tourism refers to a tourism trend driven by the use of social media, particularly the Instagram platform. It focuses on travel experiences that can be shared on Instagram, which serves as a space to post photos and videos of beautiful scenery, attractive tourist spots, and enjoyable holiday activities. Nowadays, many tourist destinations and travel companies use Instagram as their primary marketing tool by creating official Instagram accounts and producing engaging content to attract users and boost their popularity on the platform. Some destinations even offer "Instagram tours" or specially designed travel packages that provide visitors with Instagram-worthy experiences.

Various factors drive the emergence of Insta Tourism. One of the main factors is the influence of social media in today's popular culture. Instagram has become a highly popular digital platform for sharing photos and videos, with more than one billion monthly users. Instagram users often seek out unique and engaging experiences to share on the platform, and tourism has become one of the most popular forms of such experiences. In addition, many tourist destinations and travel companies have recognized the marketing potential of Instagram and have begun to utilize it to attract potential travelers. By posting appealing photos and videos of their destinations, they can

capture the attention of Instagram users and promote their locations to a wider audience. Technology also plays a crucial role in the growth of Insta Tourism. Smartphone cameras, along with built-in editing features, allow users to produce high-quality photos and videos easily. Additionally, drone technology has enabled the capture of images from previously inaccessible angles, resulting in more compelling visual content.

Kotagede is a historic district located in the southern part of Yogyakarta, falling under the administrative jurisdiction of both Yogyakarta City and Bantul Regency. As the former capital of the Islamic Mataram Kingdom, which was established in 1532 AD, Kotagede still preserves many ancient structures and architectural remnants from that era. The area was developed based on the Javanese-Islamic cosmological concept (Yogyakarta City Cultural Office, 2018), a worldview rooted in harmony, balance, and alignment—between the microcosm (the human-built environment) and the macrocosm (the universe) between human awareness of their vulnerability and their autonomous responsibility, and between individual interests and communal well-being. The traditional Javanese spatial layout concept in Kotagede applies four key elements (catur gatra): the royal palace, market, public square (alun-alun), and mosque, which formed the foundation of the early settlement design (Yogyakarta City Cultural Office, 2018). Today, the remaining core elements include the mosque—Masjid Ageng—and the market, known as Pasar Gede Kotagede. Now commonly referred to simply as Kotagede Market, this site has served as an economic hub since the era of the Islamic Mataram Kingdom and continues to do so today. The market is accessible via three main roads: Jalan Mondorakan, Jalan Kemasan, and Jalan Karang Lo. A number of buildings and unique landscapes in the area remain well-preserved, contributing to the distinctiveness and charm that attract tourists. Visitors to Kotagede can experience the atmosphere of the ancient Mataram Kingdom at various spots while also taking selfies or group photos against the backdrop of its historical architecture. The authenticity and uniqueness of Kotagede have made it an appealing destination for many tourists who seek to document and share their travel experiences on social media.

Insta-tourism is a form of tourism influenced by social media, particularly Instagram, which relies heavily on visual appeal as the main factor in attracting visitors. Modern travelers are not only looking for direct experiences at a destination but also seek moments that can be aesthetically shared through social media. According to Glover (2010), social media has transformed how travelers plan their trips and choose their destinations. They tend to be more interested in destinations that can produce visually attractive photos, especially those featuring artistic, unique, or iconic elements. This aligns with Urry's (1991) concept of the "tourist gaze," where tourists seek out distinctive and compelling visuals in the places they visit.

Instagram has become a leading platform for destination promotion due to its strong visual capabilities. According to Mariani et al. (2016), strong destination visualizations can enhance the destination's appeal and shape tourists' positive perceptions of a place. Photos and posts shared by tourists can create new narratives about a destination and influence potential visitors in making travel decisions. This makes Instagram a vital tool in content-based tourism marketing strategies. Visual appeal is a crucial aspect of capturing the interest of modern tourists. Iconic photo spots, art installations, murals, and other aesthetic elements are commonly used by many destinations as strategies to attract tourists through visual culture. According to Sanchez et al. (2020), strengthening destination visualization through spatial design and aesthetic features can enhance the marketability of a destination on social media.

Generations Y and Z, who have grown up with technology, view social media and internet use as integral to their daily lives. These generations are especially inclined to share personal information across various social media and online platforms throughout their travel journey—from the planning stage to the decision-making process (Unger & Grassl, 2020). Moreover, user-generated content holds considerable influence in shaping how travelers seek information, as they are increasingly turning away from official company sources and placing greater trust in the individuals and influencers they follow online. As Abrantes et al. (2014) assert, influencers have the potential to drive sales simply by posting content about their vacations on Instagram. Consequently, the use of social media platforms has evolved beyond personal interaction and now plays a key role in marketing and product development. Through their active engagement in creating and sharing content, users help generate both "exchange value" and "use value," highlighting the significance of modern word-of-mouth promotion (Bettiga, Lamberti, & Noci, 2017).

Regarding the motivation to use Instagram as part of the holiday planning process, various studies have been conducted focusing on Generations Y and Z (Haddouche & Salomone, 2018). However, a gap still exists in understanding their behavior when visiting "Instagrammable" destinations or "Insta-spots," which may influence their travel motivations and experiences. Therefore, it is important to examine the relationship between Instagram and travel motivation, as well as the extent to which Instagram content affects user behavior. Instagram is a social media platform commonly accessed via smartphone apps, enabling users to share their lives with others through photos and videos (Unger & Grassl, 2020). Launched in 2010, Instagram provides a platform for individuals to share personal experiences and transform visual content into cherished memories through photo editing and storytelling (Lee et al., 2015). The platform not only allows users to post textual content but also supports photos and videos arranged chronologically on individual profiles. Unger and Grassl (2020) argue that Instagram is more than just a photo- and video-sharing app; it also serves as a space for visual and social communication that reflects user behavior.

In the context of tourism, today's travelers often document and share their travel activities and experiences, with Instagram serving as one of the most commonly used platforms for this purpose. Tourists are increasingly drawn to destinations and attractions that are trending on Instagram, making the platform both a reference point and a source of information when choosing where to travel. There are several reasons why travelers today are particularly attracted to Instagrammable tourist spots, such as:

1. Viral potential, tourists can take photos at Instagrammable locations and share them on their social media, particularly Instagram. This can boost the visibility and popularity of a place by generating buzz, potentially inspiring others to visit the same destination.
2. Appealing visual content, Instagrammable spots typically offer aesthetically pleasing and visually captivating backdrops, such as stunning natural landscapes, historic architecture, or eye-catching street art. These settings leave a strong impression on visitors, who are then eager to capture and share their experiences online.
3. Social prestige: Posting photos from trendy or visually striking locations on social media can enhance a user's social image, particularly for those who wish to portray a lifestyle of adventure and exploration.
4. Free promotion for tourism operators or destination managers, having an Instagrammable backdrop can serve as a powerful promotional tool at no additional cost. A high volume of user-generated content in the form of photos and stories shared online helps increase a location's popularity and attract more visitors.

Therefore, Instagrammable tourist destinations can offer significant benefits not only to travelers but also to destination managers and the surrounding communities. However, it is essential to remember that while visiting these visually appealing locations, visitors should remain mindful of their environmental and cultural impact—by maintaining cleanliness, avoiding damage to the surroundings, and showing respect for local customs and traditions.

METHODS

This study was conducted using a descriptive method, which is a type of research aimed at describing or illustrating the phenomena or relationships between phenomena from the subjects under investigation in a systematic, factual, and accurate manner based on empirical data (Hidayatulah & Alfiana, 2023). This method was chosen to gather in-depth information and provide a comprehensive description of the real conditions based on the research problem that has been formulated. The data collection techniques used in this study include Field Surveys, Interviews, Document Study, and Literature Review. The research subject is the Kotagede area. Data analysis was conducted to understand the issues being discussed by synthesizing the information and details obtained, explaining the relationships between this information, and linking it to theories on how and why these relationships occur.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the observations and data collection conducted during the research, the author identified several Instagrammable spots within the Kotagede area in Yogyakarta. Six spots, in particular, are frequently visited by tourists:

1. Omah Pesik. Omah Pesik is a heritage building that blends European and Javanese architecture. The house stands out with its bright green wall paint, decorated with typical Javanese ornaments and European cultural touches along its sides. Before it was opened to the public, tourists would typically take photos in the narrow alleyway with the green wall as a backdrop. Today, Rumah Pesik is open to the public; visitors can enter the house to view a collection of unique and valuable art pieces. Rumah Pesik also offers accommodations for tourists who wish to stay.

2. Langgar Dhuwur Boharen. Langgar Dhuwur Boharen is one of the oldest Langgar (small mosques) located in the Boharen village, Purbayan subdistrict, Kotagede. In the past, this place served as a place of worship for Muslims. Langgar Dhuwur features a combination of Islamic and Hindu architectural styles. The mosque is constructed with wood and supported by walls made of stone. Langgar Dhuwur Boharen is currently owned and managed by the family of KH Ahmad Charris Zubair, who is the fourth generation of the building's owners. The mosque has been designated as a cultural heritage site. The unique front façade of the mosque attracts tourists, who often stop to take photos in front of the building.

3. Gang Soka. Gang Soka is a narrow alley located in the Purboyo village, Kotagede. This alley is a semi-closed residential area, as two gates frame it at either end. Several houses are lined up in a row, connecting to form an alley stretching from east to west. Gang Soka is the smallest residential area in a semi-closed environment, as two gates enclose it at both ends. This area is composed of several Joglo-style buildings, which are aligned in a single row. These buildings face each other, oriented north-south, and are separated by a narrow passageway. The residential area is owned by a single person, with the main house located in the north, facing south. Within this area, there are also several interesting tourist spots that visitors can explore, such as Rumah Pesik, Omah UGM,

and Omah Indishe. Additionally, this area is home to local craft and culinary centers managed by the local community.

4. The Kotagedhe Royal Tomb Complex. The Kotagede Royal Tomb Complex is the burial site of the kings of the first Islamic Mataram Kingdom. Here, the tomb of the first Mataram Islamic king, Panembahan Senopati, is located. The complex is surrounded by brick walls, with the eastern wall connected to the wall of the Kotagede Grand Mosque. To reach the tomb the entrance is located to the south of the mosque courtyard.

The gateway to the Kotagede tomb complex features Hindu cultural architecture, known as the Paduraksa Gate, with intricately carved wooden frames. To the south of the tomb, there is the Gedhe Mataram Mosque. Each gate has a thick wooden door adorned with beautiful carvings and is guarded by royal attendants dressed in traditional Javanese attire. There are three gates that visitors must pass through before entering the tomb building. Next to the tomb complex, there is also a bathing place or "sendang" built by Ki Ageng Pemanahan and Panembahan Senopati. The gateway to the tomb is a popular spot for tourists to take photos.

5. Gang Rukunan or Between Two Gates. Gang Rukunan, also known as "Between Two Gates," is a residential area with a unique landscape that is highly popular with tourists. Gang Rukunan is located to the south of Kotagede Market, about 350 meters from the market. This village is situated in the Alun-Alun KG III/770 area, RT 37, RW 09, Purbayan Village, Kotagede Subdistrict, Yogyakarta City. Gang Rukunan can be recognized by the small walls and gates that allow visitors to walk through narrow alleys leading into the village. Within the village, there are old buildings and Joglo-style houses.

The name "Between Two Gates" was given by a research team from the UGM Architecture Department in 1986, which refers to the space between two gates, or in Javanese, it is called "Lawang Pethuk." The village has narrow lanes that separate the houses, ranging from 1 to 2.5 meters wide. The existence of these alleys has created a social impact on its residents, where social interaction along the alley reflects kinship and harmony among the community members. Currently, Between Two Gates has been designated as a cultural heritage building based on the Decree of the Mayor of Yogyakarta No. 435 of 2018, which lists it as part of the local cultural heritage of Yogyakarta City.

6. Omah Kalang. Omah Kalang is a heritage building located in the Kotagede area, Yogyakarta, specifically in Tegal Gendu. As the former capital of the Islamic Mataram Kingdom, Omah Kalang symbolizes the unique Javanese architecture, rich in local cultural nuances. Omah Kalang combines classical Javanese elements with modern touches in its design. The house is built using natural materials such as wood and red brick and is adorned with various ornaments characteristic of Javanese aesthetics, such as carvings on doors and windows and the use of large, sturdy columns (Ungkai, 2023).

Moreover, Omah Kalang reflects the philosophy of Javanese life with a layout that prioritizes harmony and balance between open and closed spaces. The spacious front yard is often used for family gatherings or as a space for social interactions with neighbors, strengthening community bonds. Omah Kalang in Kotagede is not only a residence but also a cultural heritage that reflects the history and traditions of the local people, which continue to be preserved to this day. This house is an important example in the long journey of architectural and cultural development in Yogyakarta. Many Omah Kalang buildings are still well-maintained today and are used as cafes and museums.

Development of Insta Tourism-based Attractions in Kotagede. The impression of a destination gained by tourists can come from tour operators, references from family and friends, books, films, and so on, as well as directly created during the travel experience. According to Galí

and Donaire (2005), audiovisual materials produced by operators and other interacting parties will create an image and brand of a destination. The use of User-Generated Content (UGC) by Instagram users will strengthen the destination's brand through specific experiences gained at the destination and motivate them to travel there. This means that tourist spots are also captured in the same way, which aligns with the statement by Sanchez et al. (2020). UGC is related to the ability of Instagram users to create more trust, which has a strong effect on expectations regarding a destination and can explain how their posts have a broader reach.

User Generated Content can ensure positive activities and trends in creating experiences at tourism destinations (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). Tourist participation has a significant influence on enhancing the image and brand of a destination. Photos posted on Instagram by an official account are projected based on objectives. Thus, Instagram becomes a new channel for promoting the destination's brand. According to Urry (1991), tourists will seek photos that match the most attractive and famous spots at the destination. The development of tourism attractions in the context of Insta tourism focuses on creating highly visual, unique experiences that are ideal for sharing on social media platforms. Based on the potential of the tourism spots in the area, here are some ideas for developing tourism attractions that could enhance Insta tourism appeal in Kotagede:

1. Interactive Art and Visual Installations: Develop interactive art and visually captivating installations for visitors to take photos and interact with. This can include murals, light installations, sculptures, and other outdoor art pieces. The event could utilize several iconic tourist spots in Kotagede that attract many visitors.
2. Wall Art: Wall art can be developed in several areas to create "photo walls" with attractive backgrounds or artistic elements. Visitors can take photos here to document their visits. The development of wall art could be centered around the Soka Alley, as there are unique and authentic spots, such as the entrance gate at Rumah Pesik, Langgar Boharen, and Omah UGM.
3. Panoramic View: identify stunning panoramic views that can serve as perfect backdrops for spectacular photos, such as the landscape of the royal tomb complex and the unique corners of residential areas in Kotagede.
4. Development of Themed Photo Routes: Develop themed photo routes by creating photo paths that guide tourists to take photos with backgrounds and elements that match specific themes. This can be done in Soka Alley and other residential areas in Kotagede.
5. Instagram-Specific Activities: Organize activities specifically designed to be shared on Instagram and other social media platforms, such as classes and competitions for photography and videography.
6. Art Gallery Events and Special Exhibitions hold regular art exhibitions with local artworks, photography, or other visual elements at several tourist spots in Kotagede, such as Rumah Pesik.

CONCLUSION

The uniqueness and authenticity of several tourist spots in Kotagede have become key factors in attracting tourists to visit the area. In addition to learning about the history and local culture, tourists often take selfies at places considered to be Instagrammable. The active role of social media users, such as on Instagram, plays a crucial part in attracting and motivating tourist visits. Therefore, travel agents and destination managers need to take this into account. Instagram is a popular platform for tourists to share experiences, which can influence destination branding through the sharing of captivating photos or images. The visual content displayed on Instagram can contribute

to creating the brand of a destination and highlighting the area's attractions, which can increase tourist interest in visiting. A comprehensive content management strategy on Instagram will yield better results, which can be measured through the number of followers, engagement, impact, and reach of posts. To enhance destination marketing activities, it is not enough to manage the official account, even with increased followers and participation from tourists on social media. It is also necessary to develop unique and creative innovations in content to support the implementation of Insta tourism-based attractions.

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