

MANGKUNEGARAN TEMPLE AS A LEADING CULTURAL TOURISM ATTRACTION: AN ANALYSIS OF DIGITAL MARKETING INTEGRATION AND HERITAGE PRESERVATION IN SOLO CITY

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Abstract:

This research analyzes Pura Mangkunegaran as a leading cultural tourism attraction in Solo City with a focus on digital marketing integration and cultural heritage preservation. Using a qualitative approach with a case study method, data were collected through in-depth interviews with 15 informants, participatory observation, and Instagram social media analysis. The results showed that Pura Mangkunegaran has a very high cultural tourism potential with 268 years of historical value, a collection of 5,000 artifacts, and original Javanese-European architecture. The visitation rate reached 132,060 people in 2024, with a 300% growth from the previous year. A digital marketing strategy through Instagram @mangkunegaran with 65,000 followers proved effective in increasing awareness and visitation. Key challenges include limited digital infrastructure, content inconsistency, and a gap between tradition and millennial traveler expectations. This research recommends an integrated strategy that combines digitization of cultural heritage, interactive content development, and strengthening stakeholder partnerships to make Pura Mangkunegaran a major attraction for sustainable cultural tourism in Indonesia.

Keywords: Instagram, Sustainable Tourism, Cultural Heritage Tourism, Cultural Preservation, Digital Marketing

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has an extraordinary wealth of cultural heritage with more than 17,000 islands, 737 regional languages, and hundreds of ethnic groups spread across the archipelago. This wealth is the main capital in the development of sustainable cultural tourism. Cultural tourism in Indonesia contributes 11.8% to the total contribution of the tourism sector to national GDP, or equivalent to Rp 234 trillion in 2023.

Surakarta, or Solo, is one of the leading cultural tourism destinations in Indonesia, with the nickname "The Spirit of Java". The city has a very rich cultural heritage as the center of the Javanese kingdom, with two main palaces, namely Keraton Surakarta Hadiningrat and Pura Mangkunegaran. According to data from the Dinas Pariwisata Kota Surakarta (2023), the tourism sector contributes 15.2% to the city's GRDP, with the number of tourist visits reaching 8.7 million people per year.

Pura Mangkunegaran, founded in 1757 by Raden Mas Said, who was titled Mangkunegara I, is one of the unique royal palaces as it combines elements of traditional Javanese culture with a touch of European modernization. The temple has a distinctive architecture, a valuable collection of artifacts, living cultural traditions, and high historical value as the former seat of government of the Mangkunegaran Duchy.



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The digital age has fundamentally changed the tourism landscape, including in the management and promotion of cultural heritage destinations. Social media, particularly Instagram, has become a key platform in the digital marketing strategy of cultural tourism destinations (Richards, 2018). This visual platform allows cultural heritage destinations to present cultural treasures in a format that appeals to millennials and Generation Z.

Instagram, with over 2 billion monthly active users, has proven to be effective in increasing awareness and visitation of tourist destinations. Research shows that cultural heritage sites that use digital marketing strategies experience an average 35% increase in visits compared to those that use conventional promotional methods.

Despite its great potential, Pura Mangkunegaran faces several challenges in the digital era. First, the gap between millennial travelers' expectations and the presentation of traditional cultural heritage. Second, limitations in digital marketing and social media management. Third, inconsistency in digital promotion strategies. Fourth, the lack of integration between cultural preservation and modern tourism needs.

This research aims to analyze the potential of Pura Mangkunegaran as a leading cultural tourism attraction, evaluate the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies through Instagram, identify challenges and opportunities in the integration of cultural heritage preservation with digital tourism, and formulate an integrated development strategy for the optimization of sustainable cultural tourism.

Cultural Heritage Tourism Concept. Cultural heritage tourism is defined as a form of travel that involves visits to historical places, archaeological sites, museums, and cultural markers to understand the past and cultural heritage. Timothy & Boyd (2003) explain that cultural heritage tourism includes two main dimensions, namely the preservation dimension that focuses on preserving cultural heritage and the commercial dimension related to tourism activities that generate the economy.

The modern concept of cultural heritage tourism is not only limited to physical visits to historical sites, but also includes in-depth experiences about culture and history that can provide learning and appreciation to tourists. UNWTO (2018) developed an understanding of cultural heritage tourism into two main categories: tangible cultural heritage, which includes historic buildings, artifacts, and archaeological sites, and intangible cultural heritage, which includes traditions, rituals, performing arts, and cuisine that are still alive in society.

Domínguez-Quintero et al. (2019) emphasized that a quality heritage tourism experience is highly dependent on the authenticity of the destination, the quality of the experience provided, the emotional response of tourists, and the level of satisfaction felt. These factors interact with each other in creating a memorable tourism experience that can encourage repeat visits and positive recommendations.

Digital Marketing in Cultural Heritage Tourism. Digital transformation has fundamentally changed the landscape of destination marketing. Social media platforms, especially Instagram, have become a highly effective tool in promoting cultural heritage destinations due to their strong visual storytelling capabilities, wide audience reach, high engagement rates, and various interactive features such as Stories, Reels, and Videos that allow for more dynamic and engaging content presentation.

Research by Liu et al. (2019) shows that social media envy arising from sharing experiences on social networking sites significantly drives aspirational tourism consumption in millennials. This



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phenomenon is particularly relevant for cultural heritage tourism, where visual appeal and storytelling are key differentiators in attracting the attention of potential visitors.

Mele et al. (2021), in a cross-cultural analysis of cultural tourism promotion on Instagram, found that the cultural values and communication style of the destination strongly influence promotional strategies. This finding underscores the importance of cultural sensitivity in digital marketing strategies for cultural heritage sites, where authentic representation of local culture is crucial to maintain credibility and avoid cultural misappropriation.

Armutcu et al. (2023) identified that digital marketing and social media play a significant role in shaping tourist behavior, particularly in online travel destination choice and e-recommendation intentions. Digital marketing interactions proved to be an important determinant in visit intentions and willingness to recommend destinations to others.

Instagram as a Cultural Heritage Marketing Platform. Instagram, as a visual platform, proves to be very effective for cultural heritage tourism marketing as its visual-centric nature perfectly matches the characteristics of cultural heritage sites that are rich in visual elements. Capolupo et al. (2020) analyzed the prospects and threats of Instagram for tourism organizations, identifying that the platform offers significant opportunities for destination branding but also presents challenges in maintaining authentic representations.

Chen et al. (2024), in a study of user-generated ads for heritage tourism marketing, found that graphics with human elements were more effective when paired with subjective experience reviews, while graphics without human elements were better suited for cultural attribute reviews. This matching effect positively influenced potential tourists' online interactive behavior through the mediating role of psychological distance and admiration.

Kasemsarn & Nickpour (2025) developed an integrated digital storytelling framework for social media specifically designed for cultural heritage tourism, including four additional elements: social media platform integration, multimedia engagement, community participation, and interactive narrative development. The framework was particularly effective in engaging younger demographics, who are the core users of Instagram.

Sustainable Cultural Tourism in the Digital Age. The development of sustainable cultural tourism in the digital age requires a balance between cultural preservation and leveraging technology for a better visitor experience and wider reach. Cultural authenticity is the main foundation that requires heritage destinations to maintain cultural authenticity without experiencing excessive commodification that can damage traditional values.

Community engagement is a crucial aspect that ensures local communities are actively involved in the planning, development and management of digital marketing initiatives so that they can experience direct economic benefits while maintaining ownership of the cultural narrative. Ahmad et al. (2024) identified digital marketing as a resilience factor in cultural heritage tourism, particularly in the face of disruptions such as a pandemic or economic crisis.

Environmental protection in the context of cultural heritage tourism relates not only to the preservation of the physical environment but also to the preservation of the digital cultural environment that includes authentic representation, respectful storytelling, and sustainable digital practices. Economic viability ensures that digital marketing initiatives can be sustainable in the long term by generating sufficient revenue to fund preservation activities and continuous digital innovation.

METHODS



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This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. This approach was chosen because it allows in-depth exploration of complex phenomena related to the integration of digital marketing and heritage preservation in Pura Mangkunegaran. The research was conducted at Pura Mangkunegaran, Jalan Ronggowarsito No. 1, Keprabon Village, Banjarsari District, Surakarta City, Central Java, during the period May 2024 to January 2025. The research subjects consisted of 15 informants who were selected using a purposive sampling technique: Pura Mangkunegaran managers (4 people), domestic and foreign tourists (6 people), tour guides (2 people), academics and heritage experts (2 people) and local government stakeholders (1 person)

Data collection techniques consisted of semi-structured in-depth interviews with a duration of 60-90 minutes, participatory observation by observing tourism activities and management, document analysis (such as visit data, promotional materials, and management reports), and content analysis on Instagram @mangkunegaran social media for the 2019-2024 period. After that, the data was analyzed using the interactive analysis model of Miles et al. (2018) through the stages of data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was ensured through triangulation of sources, methods, and member checking.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Pura Mangkunegaran Profile. Pura Mangkunegaran was established in 1757 based on the Salatiga Agreement between Raden Mas Said, Sunan Pakubuwono III and the VOC. The 9-hectare temple complex has a spatial layout that reflects Javanese cosmology, with the main building:

- a. Pendapa Ageng: a 30x40 meter pendapa with 36 soko (poles) without nails.
- b. Dalem Ageng: Javanese-European style main building
- c. Radya Pustaka Museum: the oldest museum in Indonesia (1890)
- d. Sriwedari Park: a park with a Javanese harmonious concept

The heritage collection includes more than 5,000 items: antique gamelan (Kyai Kanyut Mesem, Kyai Guntur Sari), traditional weapons, ancient hand-written batik textiles, and lontar manuscripts.

Analysis of Tourist Visits. Tourist visit data shows a positive trend, especially after the implementation of digital marketing strategies:

Table 1. Tourist Visit Data of Pura Mangkunegaran 2019-2024

Year	Domestic Tourists	Foreign Tourists	Total Visits	Growth
2019	38.500	4.200	42.700	-
2020	15.200	800	16.000	-62,5%
2021	22.100	1.200	23.300	+45,6%
2022	35.800	3.400	39.200	+68,2%
2023	41.200	3.800	45.000	+14,8%
2024	124.460	7.600	132.060	+193,5%

The significant spike in 2024 shows the effectiveness of the digital marketing strategy implemented consistently since 2022.

Analysis of Digital Marketing through Instagram. The @mangkunegaran Instagram account, created in 2016, has shown very significant growth, especially in the last two years. With more than 65,000 followers and 150% growth in the period 2022-2024, this account has become the main communication channel between Pura Mangkunegaran and its audience. A total of 305 content



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uploads consisting of photos and videos show consistency in content production, although there is still room for improvement in terms of frequency and scheduling.

The engagement rate, reaching an average of 8.5% is impressive considering the industry average is only 1.3%, indicating that the audience has a genuine interest in the content presented and illustrating a quality over quantity approach to follower acquisition. Analysis of Instagram content for the 2019-2024 period shows an interesting evolution in Pura Mangkunegaran's digital marketing strategy. The year 2019, with 13 total uploads and 3,683 likes, shows the early stages of platform exploration with still limited engagement.

A breakthrough occurred in 2020 with 15 posts generating 41,175 likes, showing an increase in average likes per post to 2,745, likely due to the pandemic period encouraging people to be more active on social media and seek out virtual cultural experiences. 2021 saw a drastic decline with only 5 posts and 7,162 likes, reflecting a challenging period when restrictions and uncertainty heavily impacted the tourism sector.

The recovery period began in 2022 with a significant increase in content production to 59 posts and a total of 167,278 likes, indicating a strategic decision to be more aggressive in digital marketing efforts. This momentum continued in 2023 with 77 posts and 258,224 likes, indicating growing confidence and capability in digital content creation. The year 2024 showed maturity in digital strategy with 136 posts and 412,500 total likes, although the average likes per post dropped slightly to 3,033, possibly due to algorithm changes or increased competition in the social media space.

The digital content strategy implemented shows a holistic approach to utilizing the various features of Instagram. Visual content forms the backbone with high-quality photos that maintain a consistent visual identity, creating a recognizable brand aesthetic that is instantly identifiable as Pura Mangkunegaran content. Instagram Stories are optimally utilized for real-time updates of activities and operational information, providing valuable, timely information for potential visitors.

Reels, as the newest feature, are utilized to showcase cultural and architectural activities in a more engaging and shareable short video format, helping to reach a wider audience beyond existing followers. The hashtag strategy used a combination of branded hashtags such as #puramangkunegaran and #wisatamangkunegaran with broader cultural heritage-related hashtags, optimizing discoverability. User-generated content strategy through re-uploading visitor content with mentions creates a sense of community and authentic testimonials that are more credible than branded content.

Managers use various Instagram features strategically to maximize reach and engagement. Photo and video features become the main foundation with high-quality visual content that pays attention to aesthetics and storytelling aspects. Every uploaded photo always uses the Pura Mangkunegaran logo at the top as brand consistency and a watermark to protect intellectual property. Photo quality is considered in detail, from lighting, composition, to color gradation, to create a recognizable and professional visual identity.

Descriptions or captions are used optimally to provide context and educational value to each visual content. Captions not only serve as simple descriptions but also as a storytelling medium that explains the historical background, cultural significance, and practical information such as event schedules or operating hours. The use of language that is easily understood by various age groups, with occasional insertion of Javanese language or Javanese script to strengthen cultural identity, shows a thoughtful approach to audience communication.

Instagram Stories is utilized for real-time communication and behind-the-scenes content that provides an intimate look at Pura Mangkunegaran's daily operations. This feature is particularly



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effective for announcing sudden events, weather updates, special exhibitions, or maintenance schedules that require immediate communication with the audience. The 24-hour duration of the Stories content creates a sense of urgency that encourages audiences to check for updates regularly.

The hashtag strategy combines branded hashtags specific to Pura Mangkunegaran with broader cultural heritage tourism hashtags to maximize discoverability. Mentions or tagging features were strategically used for cross-promotion with other stakeholders and encouraging user-generated content from visitors. Video Reels were utilized to showcase performing arts, architectural details, and cultural ceremonies in an engaging and shareable format, leveraging Instagram's algorithm preference for video content.

The user-generated content strategy of re-uploading visitor photos with proper credit and encouragement to tag official accounts creates authentic testimonials that are more credible than branded content. This approach also helps build a community around the Pura Mangkunegaran brand and provides recognition to visitors that can encourage repeat visits and word-of-mouth marketing. To showcase cultural and architectural activities in short video formats that are more engaging and shareable, helping to reach a wider audience beyond existing followers. Hashtag strategy using a combination of branded hashtags such as #puramangkunegaran and #wisatamangkunegaran with broader heritage-related tags, optimizing discoverability. User-generated content strategy through reposting visitor content with mentions creates a sense of community and authentic testimonials that are more credible than branded content.

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brand and provides recognition to visitors that can encourage repeat visits and word-of-mouth marketing.

Potential and Competitive Advantage. Pura Mangkunegaran has a very strong tangible potential in the form of unique architecture that is a fusion of Javanese-European styles, a characteristic rarely found in other cultural heritage sites in Indonesia. This architectural uniqueness creates a strong and original visual appeal, providing a different experience for tourists who generally only see pure Javanese or pure colonial architecture. The museum's collection of 5,000 well-preserved artifacts with high historical value is a valuable asset that provides depth to the tourist experience, ranging from antique gamelan, traditional weapons, to ancient manuscripts that tell the long history of Kadipaten Mangkunegaran.

The infrastructure that is already available is quite complete with modern facilities, but still maintains the atmosphere of cultural heritage, providing comfort for modern tourists without reducing the authenticity of the cultural experience. The intangible potential of Pura Mangkunegaran lies in the living cultural heritage in the form of traditions and rituals that are still actively implemented, such as the Wilujengan and Sekaten ceremonies, which provide a spiritual experience and cultural authenticity that cannot be found in ordinary museums.

Performing arts through regular dance and gamelan performances provide entertainment value as well as educational value for visitors. The cultural experiences offered through royal dinners, batik workshops, and Javanese cultural learning create immersive and memorable experiential tourism, addressing the trend of modern travelers who want genuine local experiences rather than passive sightseeing.

Challenges and Constraints. The internal challenges faced by Pura Mangkunegaran reflect the general condition of cultural heritage sites in Indonesia that are still in transition towards digitalization. Limited digital human resources are a fundamental obstacle, as the existing social media team does not have a professional digital marketing background, so the strategies implemented are still intuitive rather than data-driven. It has resulted in inconsistent content where uploads are only made when there are certain events, without a planned content calendar strategy, even though social media algorithms require consistency for optimal reach.

Limited technological equipment for high-quality content production is a barrier to creating visual content that can compete with other destinations that use professional equipment. Limited promotional budgets also limit the ability to conduct paid advertising that can significantly expand reach. External challenges in the form of competition with other cultural heritage destinations, especially Keraton Surakarta, which is more established in digital marketing, require a clear differentiation strategy.

The changing behavior of tourists who want instant gratification versus immersive cultural experiences creates a tension in content strategy, where Pura Mangkunegaran must find ways to present the complexity of Javanese culture in a digestible format for modern audiences. The digital literacy gap between generations is also a challenge in determining a content strategy that can appeal to various age segments.

Integrated Development Strategy. Recommended digital marketing enhancements include optimizing the content strategy through scheduling thrice-weekly uploads with diverse content, developing storytelling that integrates history with compelling visuals, and collaborating with content creators and heritage influencers to expand reach. Technology upgrades are prioritized with investments in professional photography and videography equipment, implementation of



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augmented reality or virtual reality technologies for virtual tour experiences, and development of a website integrated with a booking system to ease the visitor journey.

Community engagement is enhanced through user-generated content campaigns with customized hashtags such as #CeritaMangkunegaranSaya, holding Instagram contests and challenges that actively engage visitors, and live-streaming cultural events and workshops to provide real-time experiences to online audiences (Heykal et al., 2024). Integration of cultural heritage preservation is done through digitization of collections and archives for virtual access, development of special educational content for school programs, and creation of original and immersive experiential tourism packages.

Sustainable tourism development is implemented through capacity management with an online booking system to manage visitor flow and prevent over-tourism, community engagement by involving local micro, small and medium enterprises in the tourism value chain for a more equitable distribution of economic benefits, and environmental sustainability through green practices in operations and promotions in line with global sustainable tourism trends.

Impact and Effectiveness of Digital Strategy. The implementation of the digital marketing strategy showed a very significant positive impact on awareness and visitation of Pura Mangkunegaran. The increase in awareness is reflected in the 400% increase in mentions and tags of Pura Mangkunegaran on social media, indicating that the destination is increasingly recognized and talked about by the public. Visitor demographics changed significantly, with 60% of new visitors learning about Pura Mangkunegaran through Instagram, proving the effectiveness of this platform as a discovery channel for heritage destinations.

Measurable revenue impact shows revenue from admission and merchandise up 180% by 2024 compared to the previous year, showing that increased awareness is converting into actual visits and spending. Pura Mangkunegaran's brand recognition also increased with its inclusion in the top 10 most popular heritage destinations in Central Java, demonstrating that the digital marketing strategy not only increased visitor numbers but also improved the destination's position in the competitive landscape of regional heritage tourism.

The results of this study show that the integration between cultural heritage preservation and digital marketing is not a conflicting dichotomy, but rather can reinforce each other in creating authentic and engaging sustainable cultural tourism. Pura Mangkunegaran managed to maintain cultural authenticity while increasing accessibility through digital platforms, an achievement that is in line with the concept of digital cultural heritage that emphasizes preservation through documentation and sharing with a wider audience.

The effectiveness of Instagram in the promotion of Pura Mangkunegaran proves the power of visual storytelling in heritage tourism. The platform enables the presentation of the complexity of Javanese culture in a digestible format for modern audiences, without compromising the substance of the cultural values contained in each piece of content. It is particularly important given that a key challenge for heritage destinations is how to communicate the depth of culture in the fast-paced era of the attention economy.

The model developed by Pura Mangkunegaran reflects the principles of sustainable cultural tourism by combining economic viability, cultural authenticity, and community engagement through an inclusive digital approach. Economic viability is evident through a 180% increase in revenue, showing that digital marketing strategies can generate sustainable income to support preservation activities. Cultural authenticity is maintained through the presentation of content that focuses on living cultural heritage and traditional practices, not just historical artifacts. Community



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engagement is evident from the involvement of local courtiers and artists in content creation, ensuring that the narratives presented are authentic and not constructs from an outside perspective.

The findings of this study also confirm that Instagram can serve as a democratic platform that allows heritage sites with limited budgets to compete with destinations that have large marketing budgets. User-generated content and organic reach through hashtag strategies prove that authenticity and consistency are more important than paid advertising in building a sustainable online presence for cultural heritage destinations.

CONCLUSION

Pura Mangkunegaran has a very high cultural tourism potential with its unique Javanese-European fusion architecture, comprehensive cultural heritage collection, and authentic living culture. The Instagram marketing strategy implemented proved effective with a 193.5% increase in visits by 2024, proving that digital platforms can be a powerful tool for cultural heritage promotion when used with the right strategy.

Pura Mangkunegaran's success in integrating cultural heritage preservation with digital marketing provides a blueprint that other cultural heritage sites in Indonesia can replicate. This model demonstrates that digital transformation does not have to come at the expense of cultural authenticity and can even strengthen preservation efforts through increased awareness and revenue generation. However, systemic challenges such as limited digital human resources, content inconsistency and budget constraints still need to be addressed through capacity building and strategic partnerships.

For the managers of Pura Mangkunegaran, immediate actions that need to be taken include hiring social media specialists with an understanding of cultural heritage content, developing a consistent content calendar, and investing in basic equipment for content production. Mid-term strategies include developing augmented reality features to enhance visitor experiences, forming strategic partnerships with travel influencers aligned with cultural heritage values, and implementing advanced analytical tools for data-driven decision-making. The long-term vision positions Pura Mangkunegaran as a pioneer in digital cultural heritage in Indonesia, with international recognition and sustainable tourism certification.

Government stakeholders need to provide policy support through regulations that support digital cultural heritage tourism, improve digital infrastructure in cultural heritage areas, and integrate Pura Mangkunegaran into a more strategic marketing strategy for the city of Solo. Further recommended research includes visitor experience studies for a deeper understanding of visitor satisfaction, economic impact assessments to analyze the effects of digital marketing on communities, and comparative studies for benchmarking against similar cultural heritage sites in Southeast Asia.

The contribution of this research lies in the development of an integrated digital cultural heritage marketing model that other cultural heritage sites in Indonesia can replicate. This model shows that cultural heritage preservation and digital marketing can reinforce each other in creating authentic and attractive sustainable cultural tourism, providing a solution to the dilemma often faced by cultural heritage destinations between commercialization and preservation.

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