

FROM CULTURE TO VIRALITY: THE SOCIAL MEDIA EFFECT ON TOURIST DESTINATION IN GREATER JAKARTA AREA

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ABSTRACT

Social media platforms such as Instagram or TikTok have shifted how tourists perceive architectural designs of both local and international destinations. The clickbait-driven content and algorithms used within these platforms expose users to see similar things repeatedly, which subconsciously change people's preferences. Builders used this opportunity to recreate "viral" places to repeat the glory of its predecessor. This research investigates how this phenomenon has shifted architectural typology, particularly within Greater Jakarta. Through a mixed method approach that blends architectural theory content analysis from social media posts, surveys, and statistical data, this study aims to investigate the rising trend of "copycat" design to attract a larger audience. Findings reveal a significant correlation between viral destinations and architectural development in greater Jakarta. While this trend potentially promotes tourism and potentially economic growth, it also sparks debate around the erosion of cultural identity and authenticity. This paper demonstrates that while the so-called "form follows Instagram" approach might work on a superficial level, it fails to embrace the deeper beauty and locality of architectural design. Furthermore, this paper aims to open a dialogue on the future of architectural expression in a media-saturated society, where likes and shares shape the built environment, where copying and pasting are seen as a mere habit.

Keywords: Social Media, Tourism, Architecture, Copycat Architecture, Jakarta

INTRODUCTION

In today's digital era, social media has become a powerful tool that shapes how people perceive and experience the world, and architecture is no exception. People use social media daily to share information, opinions, interests, activities, businesses, and many

more (Basco, Mejia and Irene, 2021). This information is shared and used by the local and international communities, expanding human interaction globally (López-Chao and Lopez-Pena, 2020). Architects and designers are now finding themselves influenced by professional discourse, local and cultural context, and global trends circulating online (Drobnjak, 2024). Among the different social media platforms, Instagram has revolutionized how people experience this information. Their picture and video-based format benefits visual content over textual content (López-Chao and Lopez-Pena, 2020). As Instagram is also used to share architectural-related content, architectural design is discovered, shared, and consumed in a slightly different way than before, prioritizing eye-catching and visually appealing pictures to increase engagement. The visual-centric nature has transformed architectural landmarks into shareable content. This phenomenon has led to the emergence of "viral destinations," where places gain popularity primarily through their visual representation on social media, sometimes at the expense of their authentic identity and *genius loci*.

Previous studies have explored social media's importance in users' decision-making ability. Social media bear significance in helping people to make decisions not only on an individual level but also at an organizational level, not only about politics or product purchasing but also about the purchase of services and the decision for a vacation destination (Basco, Mejia and Irene, 2021). Others have studies about the intersection of social media and urban experiences. For instance, Zhang and Zhang discussed the impact of platform affordances on the representation of iconic architecture, emphasizing how social media platforms influence architectural perception (Zhang and Zhang, 2025). These studies underscore the need to understand the implications of social media on architectural identity and urban tourism.

While some studies discuss the relationship between social media and architecture, there is a gap in analyzing what "viral destination" or, as Zhang and Zhang mentioned, "form follows Instagram" might bring to the architectural discourse and design (Zhang and Zhang, 2025). This study aims to re-visit how social media, particularly Instagram, influences the architectural identity of tourist destinations in the Greater Jakarta area. It seeks to understand how this influence affects user perceptions, architectural replication practices, and cultural authenticity. To address these questions, the study employs a mixed-methods approach, including content analysis of Instagram posts, surveys of users at key destinations, and visual comparisons with global architectural trends.

THEORY / RESEARCH METHODS

To better understand social media's impact on architectural design and tourism, this literature review explored three key conceptual relationships: the relationship between social media and tourism, between social media and *genius loci*, and between social media and the image of the city. These interconnected themes will help illuminate how digital culture reshaped spatial experience, architectural design, perception of place, and authenticity. The discussion will also consider how society and technology evolve together, shifting and redefining the relationship between culture and space.

Social Media and Tourism

The proliferation of social media has transformed tourism dynamics, with platforms like Instagram serving as primary sources of travel inspiration. Xiang and Gretzel highlighted the growing importance of social media in online travel information search, noting its role in shaping tourist behaviors (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010). Further, Abad emphasized that social media content promotes destinations and influences tourists' decision-making processes (Abad and Borbon, 2021). Recent research by Zhang and Zhang delved into how platform affordances impact the representation of iconic architecture, revealing that social media platforms can alter public perceptions of architectural landmarks (Zhang and Zhang, 2025).

Osei and Abeniyin pointed out that it is hard to determine information regarding experiential qualities before purchasing (Osei and Abeniyin, 2016). Thus, people rely on the experiences of others and their recommendations to fill the uncertainty gap. Instagram offers a "real-time" or actual preview of the destination, framed through the subjective perspective of the creator, forming a virtual connection between the potential visitor and the destination even before they arrive (Stepchenkova, Kim and Kirilenko, 2014). This virtual connection becomes the driving point for visitors to make the decision to visit the place (Hays, Page and Buhalis, 2013). This connection provides closeness and immediacy although at the same time it might retain subliminal message to the users that may change their perception regarding any topic presented (López-Chao and Lopez-Pena, 2020).

As destinations become visible online, their popularity often surges, creating what is known as "viral destinations." This virtual connection and increasing visibility present both opportunities and challenges. While it boosts visitor numbers and economic potential, it also motivates developers to design new attractions that mimic the aesthetics of already successful location-replicating what has been successful elsewhere in the home of reproduction digital engagement and economic gain.

Social Media and Genius Loci

The concept of *genius loci*, or the "spirit of place," emphasizes the unique character and identity inherent in specific locations. Norberg-Schulz argued that architecture should respond to the qualitative aspects of its environment, fostering a sense of place. The rise of social media has challenged this notion, as the pursuit of visually appealing content often leads to the replication of architectural styles devoid of contextual relevance (Norberg-Schulz, 1980). Modern architecture sometimes prioritizes aesthetics over the sensory and emotional experiences that define *genius loci*, raising concerns about the erosion of place identity in the digital age (Lokas, Petrović and Rakonjac, 2023). Social media further emphasize the desire of architects and designers to produce virtual space using pretty pictures that appear well online and can boost user engagement rather than providing a physical space to support human occupation and sensory engagement (Crisman, 2009).

While providing a visual narrative in the architectural design process is important, it is also important to note that architecture should also engage the natural and man-made environment surrounding its site to create a coherent sense of space

for its users (Hsu, Chang and Lin, 2015). Robert Passfield argues that the genius loci should communicate the pattern, meaning, and image that can bring together a space (Lokas, Petrović and Rakonjac, 2023). The genius loci brought by the physical characteristics, cultural resources, and dynamic activities happen on site. Thus, designing with genius loci requires a deep understanding of the function of the building or its form, and the contextual aspect in which the building will be placed. The transformation or design of space should not be viewed merely as a physical intervention. Rather, it involves engaging with the cultural, social, and historical fabric that give a place its initial identity (Perbawanti, Pratiwi and Samsirina, 2025). While social media broadens its users' knowledge about the world and architecture worldwide, understanding the genius loci means that each building should be treated as unique and specific to its surroundings. Thus, it eliminates the possibility of being copied and pasted into another new site, often thousands of miles across the globe, with a totally different culture and environmental terrain.

Social Media and the Image of the City

Kevin Lynch's seminal work, "The Image of the City," introduced key elements—paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks—that contribute to a city's legibility and identity (Lynch, 1964). To create the image of the city for its people, Lynch argues that these five elements should be intertwined not only with each other but should also engage the city dweller. These elements can be used as a key to enhance the sense of identity and create meaning between the city and the city dweller.

In the context of social media, these elements are often reinterpreted through user-generated content, influencing how urban spaces are perceived and navigated to create a collective image of a city. This underscores the need to consider digital representations when assessing urban identity and planning. While social media could benefit the urban planner to better understand the city, it may also disrupt this process by prioritizing aesthetics over coherence or lived experience. Zhang and Zhang noted that social media content was created using personal interpretation, commercial interests, and artistic expression, which sometimes "detached from the reality of physical architectural space" (Zhang and Zhang, 2025). Urban planners should be aware that such content is not neutral. Although diverse interpretations give more data that can enrich analysis, a similar stream of representation does not necessarily mean a true collective consciousness. Without critical analysis, the representation risks erasing cultural significance and undermining the uniqueness of its original places (Sufyan, Prajnawrdhi and Agusintadewi, 2020). Subconsciously, these new representations change people's understanding and experience of architecture. A visually iconic building may achieve virality online but fail to contribute meaningfully to the city's collective identity or sense of place.

Lynch's theory provides a framework to evaluate how architecture can strengthen or devalue the urban image. While contextually appropriate viral buildings might support the city's identity, copying and pasting building design without considering its context will lead to the disappearance of the city's image and social identity. Thus, the relationship between the building, its social media representation,

and its urban context should be highly localized and specific, enhancing the characteristics and authenticity of the city and the city dweller.

Synthesis

These studies highlight the complex interplay between social media, tourism, architectural identity, and urban perception. While social media offers opportunities for promoting destinations and engaging audiences, it also poses challenges to preserving architectural spaces' authenticity and contextual integrity. This research seeks to bridge these discussions by examining how Instagram influences the architectural identity of tourist destinations in Greater Jakarta, considering both user perceptions and the implications for urban design and cultural sustainability.

Study Area

This study focuses on the Greater Jakarta area, a metropolitan region comprising Jakarta and its surrounding cities, including Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi. As Indonesia's capital city and economic hub, Jakarta attracts a substantial number of domestic and international tourists annually. Popular leisure destinations in this region range from cultural heritage sites and urban parks to contemporary lifestyle and entertainment hubs. Among these destinations, a new trend appears as developers start to create destinations that appear to look like other “viral destinations” and advertise it through social media with clickbait as “places that looks like other places” or “places that have similar vibe as other places” as shown in Figure 1. This phenomenon along with Jakarta’s dynamic tourism landscape, diverse urban fabric, and active domestic travel culture make it an ideal context for examining the interaction between social media, tourism, and architectural identity.



Figure 1. Examples of Social Media Clickbait

Source: Compiled from sources

As mentioned, social media, particularly Instagram, has become a crucial platform for promoting and representing these destinations. Instagram, one of the most popular social networking platforms globally, facilitates information exchange by sharing images and videos. Indonesia, the largest Instagram user in Asia-Pacific, accounts for 45 million active users, or 6.5% of all Instagram users worldwide (Kosasih and Sangaras, 2022). This platform established itself as a key medium influencing travel-related decisions, making it a suitable choice for this study.

Research Methods

This study adopts a primarily qualitative, mixed-methods approach, combining visual content analysis of Instagram posts with quantitative support from survey responses. This approach enables a comprehensive understanding of how tourist destinations are portrayed and perceived through social media dynamics.

Instagram Data Collection

Data was collected through a sampling of Instagram posts identified using a combination of specific captions and geotags related to popular destinations within the Greater Jakarta area. As examples shown in Figure 1 some of the captions included phrases such as “Broadway in Alam Sutera” (Alam Sutera being a region in Tangerang, Greater Jakarta Area), “Amsterdam Vibe,” and “Sudirman Transformed into Europe,” among others.

The selection criteria focused on posts that explicitly compared local destinations to viral locations, either internationally or nationally. Comparisons to national destinations were also included, recognizing Indonesia’s rich cultural and environmental diversity. This approach aimed to capture places that featured distinctive architectural elements or emphasized strong visual similarities to attractions both abroad and within Indonesia.

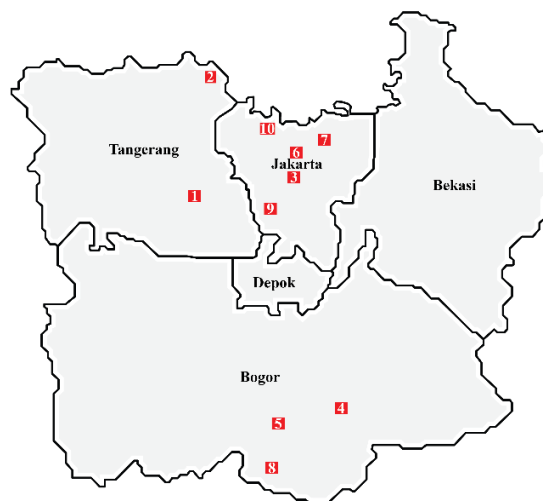


Figure 2. Map of Greater Jakarta Area

From the Instagram data collected and analyzed, ten representative samples were selected based on the strength of their visual similarities, narrative framing, and references to international or national locations as shown in Figure 2 with number in a red box. These were further categorized into two groups: one based on architectural resemblance, and another based on natural similarities. This categorization enabled the identification of recurring patterns in how destinations are framed and perceived through social media.

Survey Distribution

Questionnaires were distributed at three distinct destinations, with a total of 100 participants representing various age groups. The questionnaire was structured into two sections. The first section collected demographic and habitual information, including participants' backgrounds and patterns of social media usage. The second section focused on gathering quantitative data regarding participants' perceptions of the relationship between social media and architectural design. The survey responses were then analyzed and organized to identify patterns and trends, with the results presented using simplified statistical graphics to facilitate interpretation and discussion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-Demographic Result

Table 1 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the social media users who participated in the study. Out of one hundred participants, a greater proportion were female, accounting for 67% of the respondents, compared to 33% who were male. In terms of age distribution, most participants belonged to the productive age groups of 18–24 years old and 25–34 years old. The 18–24-year-old participants are commonly referred to as Generation Z (Gen Z), while those aged 25–34 years old are categorized as Millennials.

Table 1. Participant Socio-demographic Distribution

Category	Percentage
Gender	
Male	33
Female	67
Age	
18-24	54
25-34	27
35-44	9
45-54	5
55+	5

Note: The survey was conducted in Bahasa Indonesia and was translated into English.

Table 2 presents information regarding Instagram usage among the participants described earlier. Out of 100 participants, 80% reported using Instagram daily, while

approximately 4% used it infrequently. Upon further examination, two out of the three participants who seldom used Instagram belonged to the same demographic group 55+ year-old women. When participants were asked whether they used Instagram to discover new places or destinations, the distribution of responses varied. Only 12% reported using Instagram specifically when looking for new places to visit, while 27% and 33% stated that they occasionally used the platform for this purpose. Meanwhile, 24% indicated that they rarely used Instagram to search for new destinations. Among the 4% who reported never use Instagram as a source for finding new places, were male and fell within the 18–24-year-old age group.

Table 2. Instagram Usage Distribution

Category	Percentage
Frequency of Using Instagram Generally	
Everyday	80
Weekly	16
Monthly	1
Seldom	3
Frequency of Using Instagram to Find New Places	
Every time	12
Often (7 out of 10 new places)	27
Seldom (4 out of 10 new places)	33
<10 new places	24
Never	4

Note: The survey was conducted in Bahasa Indonesia and was translated into English.

Social Media Analytic Result

Table 3 presents several examples of destinations in the Greater Jakarta Area that have been portrayed on social media as resembling other local or overseas viral destinations. All the examples were sourced from specific public Instagram accounts, with each post receiving tens of thousands of engagements, whether through shares, views, or likes. The approximate location of those ten destinations is also visually supported in Figure 2.

Most of the featured locations fall under commercial and hospitality building typologies, although a few originate from other types, such as religious buildings. For example,

Figure 3 showcases a commercial development in Jakarta that mimics the architectural appearance of buildings in Amsterdam, Netherlands. This project referred to on the social media as “*Jakarta Rasa Amsterdam*” (Jakarta that feels like Amsterdam). The building was designed as a row of commercial shopfronts with façade that replicate the distinctive stepped gables and narrow vertical rhythm typically associated with traditional building found near a canal in Amsterdam. Through visual cues and staged similarities, the destination is marketed as a local alternative to European travel experiences-highlighting how visual resemblance is strategically used to attract engagement and visitors.



Figure 3. Jakarta-Amsterdam Comparison

Source: (Panuka Travel, no date; Instagram enjoywith.pik2, 2022)

During the study, it was also observed that several destinations resemble original buildings that are typologically different. For example, residential buildings were repurposed into commercial spaces, and in another case, a mausoleum was transformed into a religious building.

Figure 4 compares a hospitality and dining complex in Bogor, Indonesia, with the iconic Torii Gate of Itsukushima, Japan. In Japanese culture, Torii gates serve as a symbolic threshold between the profane and the sacred, typically marking the entrance to Shinto shrines (Nadeau, 1997). Their religious and cultural significance is deeply rooted in Japan's Shinto beliefs, where they are regarded with spiritual reverence.

In contrast, the replication of the Torii gate in the Indonesian context, particularly within a commercial hospitality setting, suggest a superficial use of the symbol. Given that the majority of Indonesia's population practices Islam and other religion, and there is minimal presence of Shintoism in the country, the use of the Torii gate in this context is unlikely to carry its original religious meaning. Instead, it appears to function purely as a decorative and thematic element intended to evoke a "Japanese" ambience.

This illustrates a broader trend observed throughout this study where cultural symbols and architectural forms are often replicated for their visual appeal, purely physical, and neglecting a deeper understanding of the original cultural, spiritual, or

functional significance. Such appropriation reduces complex cultural symbols to aesthetic commodities. The examples presented in Table 3, along with Figure 1, Figure 3, Figure 4 are included to illustrate patterns in the portrayal of cush destination on social media. These visual comparisons serve as case references to contextualize the research and are not intended to criticize or target any specific groups, organizations, or location.



Figure 4. Bogor-Itsukushima Comparison
(Japan RailPass, 2024; Instagram Dimzw, 2025)

Table 3. Categories of Instagram Posts Linking Local and Overseas Destination

Typology and Local Destination	Overseas Reference	Hashtag/Caption Used
Architectural Similarities		
1. Commercial Area in Alam Sutera	NYC Broadway	#BroadwayinAlamSutera
2. Commercial Area in PIK	Amsterdam	Amsterdam Vibe
3. Commercial Area Sudirman	Europe	Sudirman transformed into Europe
4. Villa in Bogor	Bali	Bogor rasa Bali
5. Park in Bogor	Europe	Bogor rasa Eropa
6. Restaurant in Jakarta	Farmhouse	Farmhouse America
7. Religious Building Sunter	Taj Mahal	
8. Café and Villa in Bogor	Japan	Bogor rasa Jepang
Natural Similarities		
9. Rooftop Area Commercial Area in Pondok Indah	Singapore	Feels in Garden by The Bay Jakarta rasa Dubai
10. Commercial Area in Jakarta	Dubai	

Note: Some hashtags and captions have been translated into English

Quantitative Survey Result

Table 4 through Table 6 present the quantitative results regarding participants' perceptions and feelings about Instagram postings, particularly related to exploring new places, viral destinations, and discovering locations similar to popular spots. Among the total respondents, the majority (around 68%) reported encountering posts that claim a local place resembles another well-known destination. When asked whether these posts influenced their decision to visit the featured location, approximately 62% agreed that they were influenced, 19% felt neutral, and only 8% indicated that they were not influenced. These results suggest that such postings do have a significant impact on consumers and users. Most respondents frequently encounter similar content during their daily Instagram use and often find the information interesting and influential in their decision-making processes.

Table 4. Instagram Posting Influence on Participants

Category	Percentage
From Scale 1-5, How Often Participant Encounter Postings of a Place Which Claim to be Similar with Other Places? (Most Often: 5)	
0	7
1	14
2	11
3	34
4	25
5	9
How Do Those Postings Influence Participant's Urge to Visit the Place Posted?	
Very Influential	15
Moderately Influential	47
Neutral	19
Slightly Influential	11
Not Influential	8

Note: The survey was conducted in Bahasa Indonesia and was translated into English

Table 5 reveals an interesting phenomenon related to the destinations themselves. Among the respondents who indicated that social media postings influenced their decision to visit a place, many reported feelings disappointed by the actual destinations. These viral local spots, which resemble other destinations both within Indonesia and internationally, initially sparked strong interest—up to 68% of respondents expressed enthusiasm about visiting such places.

However, this study did not further investigate the reasons behind their disappointment. Future research could explore whether this dissatisfaction stems from physical aspects, such as the architectural design failing to meet expectations, or from psychological factors, such as the atmosphere, services, or other experiential elements that did not align with what was portrayed online.

Table 5. Participants Experience in Local Viral Destination

Category	Percentage
Participants Visiting Local Viral Destination	
Have Visited	67
Have Never Visited	33
Participant Disappointment over Local Viral Destination	
Encountered Disappointment	80
Never Encounter Disappointment	20

Note: The survey was conducted in Bahasa Indonesia and was translated into English

Table 6 presents the participants' varied opinions regarding local destinations and their architectural design. As previously mentioned, most participants expressed interest in visiting viral destinations in the Greater Jakarta area that resemble overseas locations. Although a number of respondents acknowledged that social media's influence on viral destinations contributes to the loss of authenticity in local architectural design, 20% disagreed with this statement, and 34% remained neutral. Responses were also mixed when participants were asked whether local destinations should emphasize local architectural identity rather than imitate overseas viral destinations. While 42% agreed with the statement, 40% disagreed, and 18% felt neutral. Similarly, when asked whether creating local destinations that imitate overseas viral destinations is a positive action, 59% of respondents felt neutral, 26% agreed, and 15% viewed it negatively.

This mixed response invites several important discussions. First, the diversity of opinions may reflect Indonesia's broader cultural and societal diversity. As one of the most diverse nations in the world, Indonesia's population is accustomed to cultural variety. Jakarta, being the capital and one of the country's busiest cities, exposes its residents to a more globalized lifestyle. Consequently, some residents may feel neutral or even positive about local destinations mimicking overseas viral attractions.

Second, the mixed views may stem from an assumption that Indonesia's strong cultural heritage will not be significantly affected by the existence of such imitative projects. Additionally, the general lack of widespread architectural knowledge within the community might contribute to a limited appreciation of the importance of

contextual and culturally rooted design. Instead, judgments may be based primarily on tangible, visual factors. With social media increasing exposure to global trends, many people might perceive the incorporation of elements from overseas viral destinations into local settings as harmless or even desirable.

Table 6. Participants' Quantitative Opinion on Local Destination and Its Design

Category	Percentage
Participants' Interest in Visiting Viral Destination in Greater Jakarta Area That Has Similar Design with Overseas Destination (Most Interested: 5)	
0	3
1	10
2	19
3	32
4	25
5	11
Participant Opinion on the Statement "The Influence of Social Media on Viral Destination Has Caused the Loss of Authenticity of Local Architectural Designs"	
Agree	46
Disagree	20
Neutral	34
Participant Opinion on the Statement "The Influence of Social Media on Viral Destination Has Caused the Loss of Authenticity of Local Architectural Designs"	
Agree	Agree
Disagree	Disagree
Neutral	Neutral
Participant Opinion on the Statement "Local Destination Should Show Local Architectural Identity and Not Imitating Overseas Viral Destination"	
Agree	Agree
Disagree	Disagree
Neutral	Neutral

Note: The survey was conducted in Bahasa Indonesia and was translated into English

Discussion

The findings highlight a tension between social media's capacity to promote tourism and its potential consequence of diluting local architectural identity. As users consume social media daily, visually appealing posts of built environments increasingly shape public perceptions of architecture, a phenomenon supported by earlier studies by Zhang and Zhang which emphasizes how media influences the way people "see" and "consume" places (Zhang and Zhang, 2025). On the surface, these posts serve as enticing invitations to explore new destinations; however, at a deeper level, they contribute to a shift in how architecture is interpreted. Rather than being understood as holistic responses to specific cultural and environmental contexts, architectural works are increasingly consumed and valued primarily for their visual appeal, aligning with the critiques raised by Phoebe Crisman about architects who empathize on visual wellness of a project. From the perspective of users and the broader community, this phenomenon has blurred the understanding of what architecture represents. Architecture is no longer universally perceived as an integrative discipline

that reflects context, culture, and environment—an observation supported by the respondents' mixed reactions regarding the replication of overseas destinations in local settings. Some respondents accepted or remained neutral about the imitation of viral places, illustrating the changing priorities in how architectural authenticity is valued today.

From the perspective of developers, the influence of social media incentivizes the replication of viral architectural aesthetics to attract engagement, visitors, and ultimately, revenue. In many instances observed in this study, the imitations remained superficial—focused purely on visual similarities—while overlooking typological, locational, and cultural differences from the original inspirations. Notably, although this approach may result in short-term success, it also generates dissatisfaction, as reflected in the responses from participants who reported disappointment after visiting these locations.

Viral destinations often sacrifice originality for broader global appeal, raising critical questions about cultural sustainability. As mentioned in the literature review, a core principle of creating resilient and meaningful cities is the preservation and enhancement of place-specific characteristics—elements deeply rooted in the local culture and environment (Lynch, 1964; Norberg-Schulz, 1980). The concept of *genius loci* is central to this, emphasizing the importance of designing in harmony with the spirit of the place. When projects neglect their local context in favor of globalized imagery, they risk eroding both the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of a site.

The diminishing emphasis on place-specific identity could lead to long-term consequences, including the erosion of local cultures and a community's diminished sensitivity to authenticity. Instead, people increasingly assess places based purely on their visual and photogenic qualities. However, the mixed responses found in this study suggest there is an opportunity: public awareness can still be shaped. Education around architectural authenticity, context, and the value of local culture is essential. Jakarta's unique and diverse cultural backdrop provides a fertile ground for developing a balanced architectural identity—one that blends global influence with strong local character. By re-emphasizing *genius loci* and contextual sensitivity, architects, planners, and developers can craft places that resonate not only with global trends but also maintain and strengthen local narratives. This balance would allow architecture to move beyond mere visual virality toward deeper cultural relevance and sustainable identity.

CONCLUSIONS

The interplay between social media and architectural identity in the Greater Jakarta area reveals a complex dynamic that influences both tourism trends and the built environment. Social media platforms, particularly Instagram, have become instrumental in shaping perceptions of architectural design, prioritizing visual appeal and virality. This trend has led to an increasing prevalence of local destinations emulating iconic international landmarks, fostering economic opportunities while simultaneously raising concerns about cultural authenticity and the *genius loci* of spaces.

Our findings underscore the dual-edged impact of this phenomenon. On the one hand, viral destinations drive tourism and economic growth by captivating audiences with visually engaging designs. On the other hand, they often compromise the integrity of local architectural identity, forgetting the contextual and cultural factors that define the *genius loci*. The mixed reactions from respondents also reflect a broader societal confusion. While many appreciate the accessibility of global architectural aesthetics, others find it disappointing and strive to still see the locality of a project.

This demonstrates that while the so-called “form follows Instagram” approach might work on a superficial level, it fails to embrace the deeper beauty and locality of architectural design. Although this shortcut might bring momentary captivation to audiences, it falls short in delivering the enduring uniqueness of local beauty. The challenge moving forward lies in reconciling these tensions. By embracing the principles of the *genius loci* and Kevin Lynch's concept of the “Image of the City,” architects and developers in Jakarta can create spaces that harmonize global appeal while still appreciating local culture and context. This approach ensures that Jakarta’s architectural evolution remains inclusive, sustainable, and reflective of its rich heritage.

This study offers valuable insights but is not without limitations. First, this study focuses solely on Greater Jakarta and uses Instagram as the primary social media platform. Future studies could explore other regions in Indonesia and explore platforms such as TikTok, Facebook, or YouTube to assess whether similar trends are observed across different digital ecosystems. Second, this study centered primarily on the perceptions of users and the local community. A deeper investigation into the perspective of the developer, architects, and policymakers would enrich the understanding of the motivation behind design decisions and how social media influences professional practice. Such research is important because it could reveal whether this trend has an optimistic future or a deeper systemic issue that can hurt the authenticity of cultural heritage in Indonesia. Third, more profound research can also be performed to further investigate the reasons behind the respondents. The questionnaire was administered to show a quantitative measure of the topic, while the qualitative measure behind respondents' decisions was not captured. Further research can help the architects and developers see what is happening within their consumers.

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