

THE EFFECTS OF INSTAGRAM, HISTORICAL VALUE, AND VISUAL APPEAL ON TOURIST SATISFACTION THROUGH VISITING DECISIONS

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis pengaruh *social media Instagram*, historis, dan daya tarik visual terhadap kepuasan wisatawan melalui keputusan berkunjung pada wisata Benteng Van Den Bosch Ngawi. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan metode survei. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner dan dianalisis menggunakan *path analysis*. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa seluruh variabel independen berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap keputusan berkunjung maupun kepuasan wisatawan. Keputusan berkunjung juga berperan sebagai variabel mediasi dalam meningkatkan kepuasan wisatawan. Temuan ini menunjukkan pentingnya promosi digital, penguatan nilai historis, dan peningkatan daya tarik visual untuk meningkatkan daya saing destinasi wisata *heritage*.

Kata Kunci: *Social Media Instagram, Historis, Daya Tarik Visual, Keputusan Berkunjung, Kepuasan Wisatawan.*

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the influence of social media, Instagram, historical sites, and visual appeal on tourist satisfaction through their decision to visit Fort Van Den Bosch in Ngawi. The study used a quantitative approach with a survey method. Data were collected through questionnaires and analyzed using path analysis. The results showed that all independent variables had a positive and significant influence on both the decision to visit and tourist satisfaction. The decision to visit also served as a mediating variable in increasing tourist satisfaction. These findings demonstrate the importance of digital promotion, strengthening

historical value, and enhancing visual appeal to enhance the competitiveness of heritage tourism destinations.

Keywords: *Instagram Social Media, Historical Value, Visual Appeal, Visiting Decision, Tourist Satisfaction*

A. INTRODUCTION

Tourism destinations today compete not only by offering attractive physical features but also by presenting relevant information, appealing visuals, and memorable experiences to prospective visitors. Social media has become an essential source of tourism information, enabling tourists to explore destination details, view visual content, compare different options, and develop expectations before making an actual visit. Consequently, digital marketing plays an increasingly important role in tourism promotion, especially in shaping tourists' perceptions and influencing their decisions regarding which destinations to visit (Baber & Baber, 2023; Ratnaningtyas & Rahmanita, 2023). Among various social media platforms, Instagram is particularly suitable for tourism promotion because its visual and interactive features enable destinations to share photographs, Reels, Stories, Highlights, and other types of content. Previous studies have likewise found that the use of Instagram and social media-based promotion can contribute to tourists' decisions to visit a destination (Cassandra & Soeprapto, 2025; Eksitasari & Rahmatin, 2023).

The effectiveness of digital communication also depends on the historical significance and physical appeal of a tourism destination. Historical value can give visitors cultural and educational insights while also contributing to the overall experience. At the same time, visual appeal can shape visitors' first impressions through aspects such as architectural design, cleanliness, spatial layout, maintenance, and the availability of attractive photography spots. Thus, heritage destinations can draw visitors not only due to their historical importance but also because of how their physical environment is viewed and experienced (Ram et al., 2016; Chen, 2023). This relationship between historical significance and visual appeal is especially important

for destinations whose identity is closely connected to heritage structures and distinctive architectural features.

Van Den Bosch Fortress, commonly referred to as Benteng Pendem Ngawi, is a historical tourism site located in Ngawi, Indonesia. The destination is characterized by its colonial-style architecture and strong historical identity. Following its revitalization, the surrounding environment has become more orderly and visually appealing. However, there is still room to improve the availability of digital information, the presentation of historical interpretation, and the consistency between visual promotional content and the actual conditions of the site. Tourists' decisions to visit represent an important link between their perceptions before the trip and the experience they gain at the destination. According to the Theory of Planned Behavior, behavioral intention is shaped by individuals' evaluations and perceived behavioral control, while information and perceptions of an object can help develop positive attitudes and intentions to act (Ajzen, 1991). In tourism studies, behavioral intention and destination selection are also considered important parts of the process tourists go through when choosing where to travel (Lam & Hsu, 2006). Once the visit has taken place, tourists compare their actual experiences with their previous expectations, which can determine their level of satisfaction. Therefore, Instagram, historical value, and visual appeal have the potential to affect tourist satisfaction directly, as well as indirectly through tourists' decisions to visit.

A number of previous studies have explored the connection between social media and tourists' visiting decisions, destination attractiveness and visiting decisions, heritage value and tourist satisfaction, as well as destination characteristics and satisfaction. However, studies that bring Instagram, historical value, and visual appeal together within one research model, while considering the visiting decision as an intervening variable, are still relatively scarce, especially in research on colonial fortress heritage tourism. This study seeks to fill this gap by investigating these relationships at Van Den Bosch Fortress in Ngawi. More specifically, the study aims to determine how Instagram, historical value, and visual appeal affect tourists' visiting decisions

and satisfaction, as well as to assess the mediating role of visiting decisions in these relationships. The findings are expected to enrich the tourism marketing literature while also offering useful insights for managers in developing and promoting heritage tourism destinations.

Based on the background, theoretical framework, and previous studies, the hypotheses are formulated as follows:

- H1: Instagram has a positive and significant effect on visiting decisions.
- H2: Historical value has a positive and significant effect on visiting decisions.
- H3: Visual appeal has a positive and significant effect on visiting decisions.
- H4: Instagram has a positive and significant effect on tourist satisfaction.
- H5: Historical value has a positive and significant effect on tourist satisfaction.
- H6: Visual appeal has a positive and significant effect on tourist satisfaction.
- H7: Visiting decisions have a positive and significant effect on tourist satisfaction.
- H8: Visiting decisions mediate the effect of Instagram on tourist satisfaction.
- H9: Visiting decisions mediate the effect of historical value on tourist satisfaction.
- H10: Visiting decisions mediate the effect of visual appeal on tourist satisfaction.

B. METHOD

Research Design

This research used a quantitative approach with a survey as the main method of data collection. A causal-associative research design was applied to investigate the relationships among Instagram, historical value, visual appeal, visiting decisions, and tourist satisfaction. The study was conducted at Van Den Bosch Fortress in Ngawi, Indonesia, with domestic tourists who had visited the site following its revitalization serving as the respondents. The analysis specifically examined the influence of the three independent variables on the intervening variable and the dependent variable, including the role of visiting decisions within these relationships.

Population and Sample

The study population included domestic tourists who had visited Van Den Bosch Fortress following its revitalization. Since the exact number of visitors in the population was not known, the study applied an approach intended for an unknown population size. The sample comprised 384 respondents who were chosen using non-probability purposive sampling. To be included in the study, respondents had to be domestic tourists who had visited Van Den Bosch Fortress at least once after the revitalization and fulfilled the predetermined research criteria.

Variables and Measurement

The data were obtained using a questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale. The Instagram variable was assessed based on the ease of accessing information, available Instagram features, content quality, and user interaction. Historical value was evaluated through historical significance, architectural characteristics, available information, educational experiences, and authenticity. Visual appeal was assessed from the destination's physical condition, cleanliness, spatial layout, photography opportunities, architectural design, decorative elements, and maintenance. Visiting decisions were measured by tourists' considerations in deciding to visit and their visit frequency. Meanwhile, tourist satisfaction was assessed based on whether the experience met their expectations and their intention to revisit or recommend the destination to others.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed with SPSS. The analysis involved several stages, including validity and reliability assessments, classical assumption testing, path analysis, partial hypothesis testing, the coefficient of determination, and the Sobel Test. The procedures for analyzing the quantitative data were based on the principles of quantitative research and statistical analysis outlined by Sugiyono (2022) and Ghozali (2021). Two path models were used in the analysis. The first model evaluated the effects of X1, X2, and X3 on Z, whereas the second

model examined the effects of X1, X2, X3, and Z on Y. The mediating effect of the visiting decision was subsequently evaluated using the Sobel Test.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Respondent Characteristics

The study involved 384 respondents. The respondents were predominantly young visitors, with the 17–25 age group representing 79.4% of the sample. The respondent profile indicates that the destination attracts a substantial young visitor segment, for whom digital information and social media can be relevant in the destination-selection process.

Path Analysis Results

Table 1. Path Analysis of Visiting Decisions

Variable	B	Beta	t	Sig.
Instagram	0.197	0.215	4.822	0.000
Historical Value	0.200	0.235	4.562	0.000
Visual Appeal	0.410	0.481	9.945	0.000

Source: Primary data processed by the researcher (2026).

The first model shows that Instagram, historical value, and visual appeal have positive and significant effects on visiting decisions. Visual appeal has the largest standardized coefficient (0.481), indicating that it is the most dominant predictor of visiting decisions. The R^2 value is 0.767, meaning that the three variables explain 76.7% of the variation in visiting decisions.

Table 2. Path Analysis of Tourist Satisfaction

Variable	B	Beta	t	Sig.
Instagram	0.104	0.151	3.590	0.000
Historical Value	0.109	0.170	3.521	0.000
Visual Appeal	0.058	0.091	2.831	0.000
Visiting Decision	0.408	0.543	11.579	0.000

Source: Primary data processed by the researcher (2026).

The second model shows positive and significant effects of all four predictors on tourist satisfaction. Visiting decision has the largest standardized coefficient (0.543), indicating that it is the most dominant predictor of satisfaction. The R^2 value is 0.806, meaning that Instagram, historical value, visual appeal, and visiting decision explain 80.6% of the variation in tourist satisfaction.

Hypothesis Testing and Mediation

Table 3. Hypothesis Testing Summary

Hypothesis	Relationship	Result
H1	Instagram → Visiting Decision	Accepted
H2	Historical Value → Visiting Decision	Accepted
H3	Visual Appeal → Visiting Decision	Accepted
H4	Instagram → Tourist Satisfaction	Accepted
H5	Historical Value → Tourist Satisfaction	Accepted
H6	Visual Appeal → Tourist Satisfaction	Accepted
H7	Visiting Decision → Tourist Satisfaction	Accepted
H8	Instagram → Visiting Decision → Satisfaction	Accepted
H9	Historical Value → Visiting Decision → Satisfaction	Accepted
H10	Visual Appeal → Visiting Decision → Satisfaction	Accepted

Source: Primary data processed by the researcher (2026).

The Sobel Test confirms the mediating role of visiting decisions. The calculated t-values were 4.442 for Instagram, 4.234 for historical value, and 7.589 for visual appeal, all exceeding the critical value of 1.966. Thus, visiting decisions significantly mediate the three indirect relationships.

Discussion

Instagram was found to have a positive and significant influence on tourists' visiting decisions. This finding suggests that information presented through Instagram becomes more

effective in encouraging visits when it is easy to access, informative, and visually appealing. The result also supports earlier research indicating that social media marketing and tourism promotion through Instagram can affect how tourists make decisions about their destination choices (Baber & Baber, 2023; Cassandra & Soeprapto, 2025; Eksitasari & Rahmatin, 2023). In the case of Van Den Bosch Fortress, features such as Instagram Highlights can make important and practical destination information easier for potential visitors to find before their trip. Therefore, Instagram serves a broader purpose than simply promoting attractive visuals, as it also provides accessible information that can assist tourists in making their visiting decisions.

Historical value was found to have a positive and significant effect on tourists' visiting decisions. The fortress's historical identity can become a distinctive factor that encourages tourists to select it as a destination. Elements such as colonial architecture, information about its historical background, educational value, and authenticity can contribute to a meaningful image of the destination and increase tourists' interest in heritage tourism. This result is in line with Chen (2023), who emphasizes the role of perceived heritage value in shaping tourists' experiences and their evaluations of architectural heritage. It is also consistent with Ram et al. (2016), who explain that authenticity and historical meaning are important aspects of heritage tourism because they differentiate heritage sites from conventional recreational destinations. At Van Den Bosch Fortress, therefore, the colonial architecture and historical features should be understood not only as physical characteristics but also as meaningful factors that can influence tourists when deciding to visit.

Visual appeal emerged as the most influential factor in determining tourists' visiting decisions, as indicated by its standardized coefficient of 0.481. This finding shows that tourists pay considerable attention to the fortress's physical condition, cleanliness, architectural features, spatial arrangement, and overall visual appearance when deciding whether to visit. The result supports the view that tourists' visual perceptions can shape their responses toward a tourism destination. This finding is especially relevant to Van Den Bosch Fortress following its

revitalization, as improvements to the site's physical appearance can create a stronger first impression and increase tourists' interest in visiting. However, efforts to enhance the visual quality of the destination should still preserve its historical identity and authenticity as a heritage site.

Instagram, historical value, and visual appeal were found to have positive and significant effects on tourist satisfaction. These direct relationships suggest that tourists' satisfaction is shaped not only by their decision to visit but also by the information they receive, the historical meaning they perceive, and the physical conditions they experience at the destination. When the information provided online corresponds with the actual situation at the site, the historical aspects are presented clearly, and the environment is attractive and properly maintained, tourists are more likely to have a favorable evaluation of their visit. This finding supports previous research emphasizing the importance of destination characteristics, tourist experiences, and perceived destination value in forming tourist satisfaction (Chen, 2023; Dayrobi & Raharjo, 2020).

Among the variables examined, visiting decisions had the strongest influence on tourist satisfaction, with a standardized coefficient of 0.543. A firm decision to visit may indicate that tourists have already developed positive perceptions of the destination's information, attractiveness, and expected experience before arriving. Following the visit, tourists tend to compare what they actually experienced with what they had expected beforehand. If the experience fulfills or even surpasses those expectations, their satisfaction is likely to increase. This finding is consistent with tourism studies that associate destination choice and behavioral intention with tourists' subsequent evaluations and levels of satisfaction (Dayrobi & Raharjo, 2020; Lam & Hsu, 2006).

The mediation analysis indicates that visiting decisions serve as a link between factors experienced or perceived before the trip and tourists' satisfaction after the visit. Instagram offers information and visual content that can shape tourists' initial perceptions, while historical value

provides cultural and educational significance. At the same time, visual appeal helps create an attractive image of the destination. Together, these factors can encourage tourists to decide to visit, and the experience that follows can influence their level of satisfaction. The significant Sobel Test results confirm that visiting decisions mediate the relationships between Instagram, historical value, visual appeal, and tourist satisfaction. This finding highlights the need to consider the tourist decision-making process when studying how destination marketing factors contribute to satisfaction.

Overall, the findings suggest that heritage destinations should be managed through an integrated approach. Digital promotional content needs to represent the actual conditions of the destination accurately, historical information should be easy to access and provide meaningful understanding, and the physical appearance of the site should be maintained while preserving its historical authenticity. These aspects are interconnected throughout the tourist journey, beginning with the search for information and destination selection and continuing through tourists' evaluation of their actual experience.

D. CONCLUSIONS

The findings indicate that Instagram, historical value, and visual appeal play important roles in influencing tourists' visiting decisions and satisfaction at Van Den Bosch Fortress, Ngawi. Each of these factors contributes positively to how tourists decide to visit and how they assess their experience afterward. Among the three factors, visual appeal has the strongest influence on visiting decisions, whereas visiting decisions themselves have the greatest contribution to tourist satisfaction. The results further indicate that visiting decisions act as an intervening variable through which Instagram, historical value, and visual appeal influence tourist satisfaction.

This study is limited to a single heritage tourism destination and the variables included in the proposed research model. Future research could extend the investigation to other tourism destinations and consider additional factors, including destination image, service quality, accessibility, perceived value, tourism experience, loyalty, and revisit intention. Research

comparing several heritage destinations could also provide a wider understanding of the factors that shape tourists' decisions and satisfaction.

E. SUGGESTIONS

Destination managers are encouraged to maximize the use of Instagram by ensuring that information related to operating hours, ticket prices, facilities, location, available activities, and current destination conditions is regularly updated, well organized, and accurate. Efforts to enhance historical interpretation should also be prioritized through the use of information boards, QR codes, digital storytelling, and educational programs that help visitors gain a deeper understanding of the fortress's historical significance. In addition, the physical condition of the destination should be consistently maintained through routine cleaning, proper building conservation, effective spatial management, and the provision of suitable photography spots, while ensuring that the historical character and authenticity of the site remain preserved.

Future researchers may consider developing a broader research model by examining several heritage tourism destinations and incorporating additional variables that could help explain tourist satisfaction and their intention to revisit. Comparative research across different heritage sites may provide a more comprehensive perspective on these relationships. Further investigation could also offer deeper insight into how digital communication, heritage value, destination aesthetics, and tourists' behavioral responses are connected throughout the tourism experience.

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