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Contribution of Social Media in Cultural Tourism Promotion: Case Study of The Tjong A Fie Museum in Medan

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Abstract

The Tjong A Fie Museum in Medan City is a *Peranakan-Chinese* destination, which holds a lot of cultural heritage from the past *Peranakan-Chinese* civilization. In addition, the existence of the museum is closely related to the history of the founding of Medan City. Currently, the Tjong A Fie Museum is one of the most popular destinations in Medan City with visitors consisting of various groups, one of which is social media activists related to the promotion of cultural heritage as a characteristic of the younger generation. This article uses a qualitative research method with a popular culture approach. The results of the study found that the tendency of the younger generation towards cultural heritage by utilizing technological sophistication is following sustainable development goals. So it can be concluded that the tendency of the younger generation towards cultural heritage is in line with the Cultural Tourism Paradigm which also mandates collaboration between the younger generation and technology to actively participate in introducing Indonesian cultural heritage to the world community, in this case the Tjong A Fie Museum in Medan. The younger generation is considered capable of carrying out the task of exploring cultural tourism destinations such as the Tjong A Fie Museum which is full of *Peranakan-Chinese* cultural heritage, through various platforms such as TikTok and Instagram.

Keywords: Cultural heritage; social media; The Tjong A Fie Museum; *peranakan-Chinese*

Abstrak

Museum Tjong A Fie di Kota Medan merupakan destinasi Tionghoa Peranakan yang menyimpan banyak peninggalan budaya peradaban Peranakan-Tionghoa masa lalu. Selain itu, keberadaan museum erat kaitannya dengan sejarah berdirinya Kota Medan. Saat ini Museum Tjong A Fie menjadi salah satu destinasi terpopuler di Kota Medan dengan pengunjung yang terdiri dari berbagai kalangan, salah satunya adalah penggiat media sosial terkait promosi warisan budaya sebagai ciri khas generasi muda. Metode yang digunakan adalah metode penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan budaya populer. Hasil penelitian menemukan bahwa kecenderungan generasi muda terhadap warisan budaya dengan memanfaatkan kecanggihan teknologi sesuai dengan tujuan pembangunan berkelanjutan. Jadi dapat disimpulkan bahwa kecenderungan generasi muda terhadap warisan budaya sejalan dengan Paradigma Pariwisata Budaya yang juga mengamanatkan kolaborasi antara generasi muda dengan teknologi untuk ikut aktif memperkenalkan warisan budaya Indonesia kepada masyarakat dunia, dalam hal ini adalah generasi muda. Museum Tjong A Fie di Medan. Generasi muda dinilai mampu mengemban tugas menjelajahi destinasi wisata budaya seperti Museum Tjong A Fie yang sarat akan warisan budaya Peranakan-Tionghoa, melalui berbagai platform seperti TikTok dan Instagram.

Kata kunci: Warisan budaya; media sosial; Museum Tjong A Fie; Cina peranakan

1. Introduction

The global is now widely integrated and focused on discovering new models of ideas and opportunities due to globalization and digitalization [1]. Because of that, the world community is currently experiencing disruption in various sectors of life, starting from politics, economics, socio-culture, and others. The disruption is interpreted as a form of further elaboration on the presence of the *Information Communication Technologies* (ICTs) era. The influence of ICTs on the world community including Indonesia, one of which is social media trends that target the millennial and Z generations [6]. This is because the millennial and Z generations are active internet users, prefer to every dynamic changes, and has become their social behavior standard [9]. This activity marks the expansion of user-generated content (UGC). The social behavior possessed by these young people allows for a spatial transformation that allows communication to take place freely [10]. Several social media are often used by young people as a place for self-existence, including TikTok and Instagram.

In the world of tourism, social media trends for the younger generation should also be empowered. Markham further explains that the internet and social media are interpreted as a 'social construction' that depends on interconnectivity between users [10]. This then led to efforts to change the trends contained in social media into a communication tool to increase the popularity of a tourist destination. Gabreel and Shuayb explain further that communication for a destination is important because information spreads more quickly so it becomes a 'trigger' to increase the curiosity of potential tourists to come and visit destinations they find interesting. ICT-era tourists learn everything about the destination that they want to visit through information and reviews that available and circulating on social media platforms. They prefer it this way because of explanations and feedback are obtained quickly and the language is also better understood. Another important reason is, with the advent of digital social media platforms, the spending on tours will be much more economically when compared to travelling by conventional tour operators [11].

As we know that The The Tjong A Fie Museum is one of the Medan City icons, which is full of history and cultural values resulting from the acculturation of Indonesian-Chinese Malays. This cultural wealth has made the Tjong A Fie museum a typical tourist destination for *Peranakan-Chinese* (the name for the Indonesian-Chinese mixed nation) which can still be found in the city of Medan. Currently, there is a tendency for the Tjong A Fie museum to become a tourist destination that is of interest to young people, especially social media activists. As WTO said in the world of tourism, social interaction goes hand in hand with cultural and economic aspects because there has been a shift in information needs targeting tourists, especially the younger generation [12]. The Indonesian social media activists such as *youtubers*, *tiktokers*, and so on uses the museum area as a backdrop for their work content, both from and outside the city of Medan. Utilizing various 'challenges' that exist on social media platforms, the resulting content becomes a "free advertisement" for museums, as well as expanding information about *Peranakan-Chinese* culture and its relation to the history of Medan to the public. This proves the role of Indonesia's younger generation and social media in making the tourism sector live in dynamics so that it can follow the world's globalization phenomenon.

2. Objectives

There are two objective points in this article, the *first* is what *Peranakan-Chinese* heritage is, and then how Tjong A Fie Museum becomes a *Peranakan-Chinese* destination in Medan. *Second*, the role of social media in promoting the majesty of *Peranakan-Chinese* culture typical of the city of Medan through the Tjong A Fie Museum. As well as, how social media involvement is able to influence market tastes so that it has an impact on increasing the number of tourist visits to a destination.

3. Theoretical Review

This article uses five theoretical reviews classified into two main subject, social media in tourism area and *Peranakan-Chinese* culture as a tourist attraction. For social media in tourism area, there are two sources *first*, an article by Gebreel and Shuayb in *Sinomics Journal* Vol. 1 (2) June 2022 with title "Contribution Of Social Media Platforms in Tourism Promotion". This article help to identify the role of social media in tourism marketing. In this articel Gebreel and Shuayb describes the effectiveness of social media in helping potential tourists obtain information about destinations, so that they ultimately decide to come directly to visit these destinations. *Second*, an article by Hvas and Munar in *Journal of Vacation Marketing* by Sage Publications Vol. 18 (2) April 2012 with title "The takeoff of social media in tourism". This article discusses about the important role of online marketing in the tourism industry, and how it has become popular in recent years.

For the *Peranakan-Chinese* culture research, there are three sources, *first*, a book by Gayle Jennings (2010) entitled *Tourism Research 2nd Edition*. In this book, Jennings explains about theoretical paradigms underpinning tourism research, that help people to identify the topic and also the specific roles of tourism research. *Second*, a book by Santoso (2012) with title *Peranakan Tionghoa di Nusantara: Catatan Perjalanan dari Barat ke Timur*. Through this book, Santoso assists in the development of articles, especially topics about various art products and cultural objects originating from the acculturation of Chinese and Indonesian cultures. *Third*, a book by Salmon (1985) with title *Literature in Malay by the Chinese of Indonesia*. The data obtained from this book helps the author understand the Chinese perspective on Indonesia through the literature.

4. Methods

This research used a qualitative research method. The qualitative approach is carried out by following the phenomenological philosophy of thought in which phenomena and consciousness are dialectically interrelated. It also has some synergies with critical theory. Jennings said that research has become an important tool for the tourism industry, because of its ability to present information or data [5]. The tourism phenomenon as an empirical reality are gathered, interpreted, and then (re)generated with theoretical construction. As Jennings also says, qualitative research enable researchers to highlight detailed the participants under study, but also provides the other side of their life [5]. This article is also a research output that contains a description of the role of Indonesian youngster and their social media life keep the tourist sector as a dynamic one. They follow popular and ever-changing world trends, however, at the same time maintaining the existence of cultural arts products inherited from the past through social media content.

5. Findings & Discussion

5.1. The Tjong A Fie Museum as Peranakan-Chinese Prodigy in Medan

Initially, *Peranakan-Chinese* were the names or terms used to refer to the descendants of Chinese immigrants domiciled in the archipelago at the end of the 15th and 16th centuries. The term *Peranakan-Chinese* refers to descendants who have experienced a process of assimilation with the natives or residents. The Chinese immigrants generally came to southern China and married local women who in the end they called "Baba (male)" and "Nyonya (female)". These immigrants then leave their original culture and enter their wife's culture. So it can be said that, the *Peranakan-Chinese* are descendants of mixed race between Chinese and Malays [3]. The purpose of immigrants coming to the archipelago in general is to trade. For observers of *Peranakan-Chinese* in Indonesia, it was found that there are still many *Peranakan-Chinese* who still maintain their culture in several places. There is a tendency to weaken the popularity of *Peranakan-Chinese* culture which is very diverse and is experiencing degradation and instead prefers Western culture. Yet according to Santoso, *Peranakan-Chinese* are a form of diversity in a heterogeneous group of people within the various ethnic groups in Indonesia [7].

Santoso also said that *Peranakan-Chinese* culture is a marriage of several cultures in the archipelago of Indonesia with the culture of a country, namely China, which existed before the 6th century AD [7]. This *Peranakan-Chinese* culture spread across the archipelago to Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, Australia, Vietnam and other Southeast Asian countries. In Indonesia alone, *Peranakan-Chinese* spread, for example in Bali, Padang, Betawi, Banten, Jakarta, Kalimantan, Semarang, Palembang, Medan City and other cities. History also records that the arrival of *Peranakan-Chinese* ancestors to North Sumatra (formerly East Sumatra) took place in the 15th century. Their main goal is to trade. The next arrival occurred in the 19th century, when in East Sumatra there were already plantations with various plantation commodities. The goals of the Chinese immigrants scattered in East Sumatra were different. Some came from China intending to try their luck and work as traders and some were brought in from Malaysia and worked as contract laborers on colonial-era plantations belonging to the Dutch East Indies Government.

Tjong A Fie Museum, build in 1895 is registered as a cultural heritage building. This building has Chinese and Malay style architectural outside, also a little bit Europe style inside. At first, this building was named Tjong A Fie Mansion, because the initial intention of the construction was as a residential house for Major Tjong A Fie along with his post-migrant family from mainland China who decided to settle in Medan City. In 2008, Fon Prawira (grandson of Major Tjong A Fie) took the initiative to turn the Tjong A Fie Mansion into the Tjong A Fie Museum. This change was intended as a tribute from Tjong A Fie's descendants to a wide audience to share information about the figure of Major Tjong A Fie and the pre-colonial era of Medan City.

Besides the tourism potential of the building, there are also objects used and Tjong A Fie's collection. Such as household furniture, kitchen utensils, wall/floor decoration motifs, to wall displays. These used objects and potential history are part of the cultural values of *Peranakan-Chinese* which are obtained by paying attention to or imitating the use of language, ways and tastes of eating, cooking methods, ways of sitting, manners, speech, values, beliefs/religiousness, outlook on life, skills, and habits from parents, family, friends, leaders, and past kings.



Figure 1. Tjong A Fie Museum interior (Surbakti, 2023)

The Tjong A Fie Museum can be said to be a typical *Peranakan-Chinese* destination in Medan City which has various attractions that can be seen, done, and purchased. Accessibility to destinations is considered quite good and can be reached using various modes of transportation with not too long a trip duration. The condition of the museum is quite good and very well maintained. The tourist attractions of *Peranakan-Chinese* in the museum are also quite numerous and well-maintained. These attractions include typical *Peranakan-Chinese* ornaments in museums, furniture and household items, as well as typical *Peranakan-Chinese* kebaya, called "kebaya nyonya", which can be purchased as souvenirs.

One of the important thing is the fact that museums are still lacking in attractions. In the tourism industry, tourist attractions have an important role to play in attracting or holding tourists from visiting longer, even to the point where they have the desire to visit again. Of course, the potential for history and used objects will be even more complete if the museum also provides *Peranakan-Chinese* art performances as tourist attractions. This still needs to be a concern in the future so that the Tjong A Fie Museum is even more perfect to serve as a typical *Peranakan-Chinese* destination in Medan City. For example, one form of art and culture that can still be found in Medan today is *wayang orang* and *wayang potehi* (puppet show) performances.

5.2. *The Role of Social Media and Communication behavior in Cultural Tourism: Tjong A Fie Museum Case*

The ICT era has made travel trips generally divided into 3 stages: (1) *Planning* (the pre-trip stage) which relies on online search and reservation, (2) *OTR* (the travel stage) which relies on a mobile phone as a navigator in search for accommodation and facilities or the closest infrastructure, and (3) *Sharing* (the post-trip stage) which requires tourists to provide testimonials regarding the travel tips that have just been completed [14]. So it can be concluded that the younger generation makes tourism activities more dynamic because they are lives closely related to information technology. Social media content regarding the cultural tourism experience at the Tjong A Fie museum is considered capable of helping other potential tourists prepare for the pre-trip stages which is also known as the “web-search process”. Previous posts provide an overview of interesting points about *Peranakan-Chinese* art and culture found in the museum area. Social media allows potential tourists to get information earlier so they can prepare for their trips while minimizing the wrong decisions on the way. Tourists can also ensure the ‘authenticity’ and ‘originality’ of posts through the users review column. This makes the pre-trip stages even more complex. After completing a tour of the Tjong A Fie Museum, other cultural tourism experience contents will be created. This cycle continues so that the transfer of information about the rich history art and culture of *Peranakan-Chinese* is widely disseminated to an audience of social media users.



Figure 2. Tiktok content about Tjong A Fie Museum by: @xanashh



Figure 3. Instagram Reels Content about Tjong A Fie Museum by: @vanesiamelia

Before, in 2014 UNESCO said that heritage tourism or cultural tourism is one of the most competitive tourism, but the results of the study concluded that sharing tourism experiences in heritage or cultural context are lacking [13]. And then the dynamic changes has made people's desire for quality of life and escape from the 'pluralization of lifeworlds', and 'rationalization of contemporary urban life', as major push factors and motivators for travel to somewhere or something new [2]. Nowadays, research has found that post-pandemic syndrome made heritage tourism or cultural tourism chosen, as it is a fast-growing and influential tourism segment that satisfies tourists' desire and curiosity for cultural identities especially for our young people. Lin and Rasoolimanesh said that this happens due to the younger generation always be influenced by their close relative's tourism experiences post [13].

Regarding the tendency of the younger generation towards cultural heritage, this also occurs at the Tjong A Fie Museum in Medan. Some of the examples of content produced by the younger generation that have been described previously are mandated by the concept of multi-stakeholder collaboration in the world of tourism called *Pentahelix*. Based on the *Pentahelix* concept, the younger generation of social media activists belongs to 'the mass media' or 'social entrepreneurs' group. The enthusiasm of the younger generation in creating content about *Peranakan-Chinese* art and culture at the Tjong A Fie Museum is following the main objective of *Pentahelix*, namely "proactive citizenship" to support sustainable tourism development. Leung et.al said that social media play an important role not only for consumers in travel information search but also as a tourism marketing tool. All the reviews and stories create by social media users have making up destination's reputation. All that reviews has reflect consumer's opinions for the destinations and the information help the destination management or organizations to correct deficiencies or even improve the quality of destinations and attractions [4].

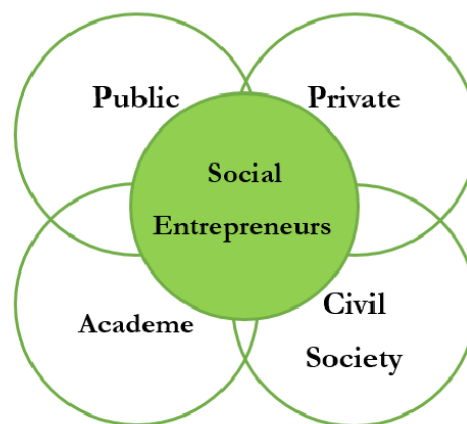


Figure 4. "Social Entrepreneurs" in Pentahelix model (Calzada in Halibas et.al, 2017: 162)

Utilizing social media to disseminate cultural tourism experiences will certainly be different from other tourist experiences. Sharing travel experiences using social media, is a manifestation of multi-dimensional communication [8]. But, certain rules must be understood so as not to damage the noble value and meaning of cultural tourism destinations and attractions. This of course also applies to the Tjong A Fie museum in Medan as a *Peranakan-Chinese* cultural destination. Young tourists must have a 'behavior control' to continue a positive impact regarding sharing heritage tourism experiences on social media. Lin and Rasoolimanesh explain that there is some tourist intention for young tourist, which is (1) perceived usefulness; (2) perceived ease of use; (3) attitude; (4) subjective norm; (5) perceived behavioral control, and (6) 'experience-industry' [13]. When producing 'experience-sharing' content, tourists are required to protect the environment, and customs that apply at the destination, to maintain the comfort of other tourists who are also enjoying their tour-time. It is a joint obligation between users of social media to maintain public trust in the use of social media in the world of cultural tourism. It is understandable to share tourist experiences following various trends on social media, however, User-Generated Content (UGC) tourists still have to respect the nobility of ancestral culture.

6. Conclusion

Tourism will never be able to classified into any disciplinary status. Tourism has involved by other disciplines frameworks, so that it becomes a "field of studies" itself. Tourism has develoas an area of study and research, is a multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary field of study. Tourism research, offers studies on the tourist's motivations, needs, expectations and levels of satisfaction [5]. Market identification, as well as the development of the sociodemographic profile of Indonesian youngsters.

In Cultural Tourism, the participation of the young generation in introducing Indonesian cultural heritage to the world through social media platforms is an absolute human right. The use of social media by the younger generation in disseminating interesting content from the Tjong A Fie Museum plays an important role in increasing public understanding of the *Peranakan-Chinese* history and culture in Medan City. The social media content is also an encouragement for the people of Medan City, especially to appreciate the origins and identity of the past.

Competing Interest Statement

This article is free from any conflict of interest regarding the data collection, analysis, and the publication process itself. Either replicate or modify the previous sentence for this part.

Author's Contributions

V.A.S carried out the social media issues and Indonesian youngsters way of life. Also participated in the thick correlation between User-Generated Content (UGC) and social media challenges in order to increase potential tourist motivation of one destination. While A.S. participated in *Peranakan-Chinese* heritage and T.L participated in the tourism main concepts and cases. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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