

## Original Research Article

# BETWEEN INSTAGRAMMABLE ATTRACTION AND SELFIE TOURIST: CHARACTERISTIC AND BEHAVIOR

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### ABSTRACT

**Aims:** This study aims to identify and analyze the characteristics of instagrammable attractions and selfie tourist behavior.

**Methodology:** The method used in this research is descriptive quantitative. The survey was conducted by adopting a non-probability sampling technique involving 104 respondents. The distribution of questionnaires and observations were carried out for two weeks at the Lembang Floating Market.

**Results:** The study found that most tourist attractions can be categorized as instagrammable attractions. While selfie tourists strongly consider the availability of unique and current attractions, for the purpose of documenting and sharing their experiences through photos or videos on their Instagram accounts. Therefore, this study concludes that instagrammable attraction has a positive and significant effect on attracting selfie tourists. Especially because the characteristics of instagrammable attractions that "perfectly impress" are able to attract selfie tourists who have travel motives and behavior to seek existence and recognition on social media, especially Instagram.

**Implication/Applications:** The results of this study are able to provide comprehensive information related to selfie tourist behavior that is beneficial for stakeholders, especially travel agents and tourist destination managers.

**The originality of the study:** The limitation of this research is the data collection method which is dominated by surveys. Therefore, further research is expected to conduct an in-depth study related to the reasons tourists are interested in selfie tourism.

*Keywords: instagrammable attraction, selfie tourism, tourist behavior, floating market*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Advances in technology have affected almost all aspects of human life, including tourism. Until now, there are still many questions whether technology influences changes in tourist destinations through tourists, or vice versa, tourist habits change because they are influenced by the destinations offered today. One phenomenon that is often highlighted is the behavior of millennial generation tourists who are accustomed to documenting and sharing their travel experiences through social media (1–6). Since the development of photography technology, documentation has become an inseparable activity for millennial tourists, especially to create memories in the future (7–10). Lo and McKercher's (11)

research found that at least more than 500 million photos per day are uploaded through social media. This generation will even find it strange to travel without carrying a camera on their cell phone or a special camera (12).

In order to identify and choose tourist attractions, Generation Z also often relies on friendship networks and is heavily influenced by social media content. In fact, the virality of a tourist destination greatly influences the travel decisions made, especially for the purpose of increasing their popularity on social media (13).

This phenomenon shows that tourists tend to enjoy tourist attractions based on visuals or virtual rather than directly through their five senses (9). Currently, tourists even tend to only choose photos that they deem “worthy” or even manipulate through photo editing before sharing them on their social media (11). As a result, many tourist destinations are required to promote more creatively and innovatively, especially when “selling” their products, both through photos and videos (7,10,14). Therefore, currently, most of the destinations or tourist attractions in Indonesia offer instagrammable spots for tourists to take selfies.

Selfies have even developed as a major tourist product, while destinations are only complementary (15). One indicator is that more and more destinations are focusing on developing selfie spots even if it is necessary to sacrifice the beauty of the destination itself. Therefore, it is not surprising that currently cafes or restaurants emphasize the design of the place or product packaging rather than the quality or taste of their food or beverage. In the context of tourist destinations, this phenomenon is demonstrated by the massive provision of instagrammable selfie spots, although sometimes ignoring the beauty of nature, culture, or even animal rights (16–18).

Although not widely studied, this phenomenon is increasingly getting attention from academics from various fields, including media and communication, environmental management, medicine, and even tourism (19,20). Therefore, this study aims to identify and analyze the characteristics of instagrammable attractions and selfie tourist behavior. This research was conducted at the Lembang Floating Market which, based on the promotional media it has, offers the main attraction of several selfie spots that meet the Instagrammable criteria. This place also went viral and attracted many tourists, especially the younger generation who like to take their own photos and share them via social media. The results of this study are able to provide comprehensive information related to self-tourist behavior and are beneficial for stakeholders, especially travel agents and tourist destination managers.

## **2. MATERIAL LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Instagrammable attraction**

(17) noted that Instagrammable comes from the words “Instagram” and “Able”. It means something worthy or shareable on social media. This terminology emerged along with the increasing popularity of social media Instagram. A tourism destination or attraction can be said to be instagrammable if it meets several visual criteria, including photogenic, artistic, and aesthetic. Another indicator that is often used is good photo quality based on lighting, color, and image composition. These criteria and indicators have led some to argue that shared photos tend to be unnatural and overly artificial. In fact, many of them doubt the suitability of the image in the photo with reality. But on the other hand, Instagrammable photos are also often more popular, interesting, unique, and considered to represent the personality of the owner of the social media account (21).

In the context of tourist attraction, Instagrammable is often associated with places that are contemporary, anti-mainstream, interactive, and attractive to tourists, especially the younger

generation (22). This attraction also needs to have the ability to give an impression when shared through social media and create hype (23,24). Therefore, instagrammable attractions are usually designed in such a way according to the latest trends and provide several contemporary nuanced spots that are suitable for tourists to take selfie photos (18).

## **2.2 Selfie tourist**

Selfie is a 21st century modern cultural phenomenon that first appeared in literature in 2002 (20). The Oxford English Dictionary (2020) notes that a selfie is "a photo taken of oneself, usually with a smartphone or webcam, and shared via social media". This phenomenon has introduced a new concept of "Selfie Tourism" (25), and is often used as a tourism marketing strategy (26).

In the context of tourism, selfie is an activity of taking photos of oneself as an object which is carried out individually or in groups. Selfie is a behavior that arises due to technological developments (Axelsson, 2018). Basically, this activity has been carried out by tourists for a long time by using conventional cameras with limited photo capacity. However, technological developments have provided smartphones or other devices that allow taking photos at any time, without limits, and without any consideration. This phenomenon also transforms the behavior of tourists who used to like sightseeing into selfie tourism (13,25). Or even those who used to like to show "this place is beautiful", now seem more narcissistic with the tendency of "look, I'm here." Therefore, nowadays, tourists no longer only see the attraction through the screen, but rather see themselves (15).

## **2.3 Tourist behavior**

Tourist behavior can be illustrated based on tourist activities when planning to end a trip. Factors that influence tourist behavior include internal factors and external factors. This means that internal factors are more determined from within tourists, such as health conditions, free time, to financial resources. While psychological factors can be seen from the motivation of the trip. On the other hand, external factors are generally influenced by the tourist attraction itself. This means how the tourism potential of a destination can attract tourists to visit. This behavior can be grouped into at least three groups, pre-trip, during-trip, and post-trip (27). The first phase is a pre-trip which is marked by stimulation and an introduction to motivation and continues on planning and organizing the trip. While during-trip is the behavior of tourists while enjoying a trip in a tourist destination. The post-trip is a condition when tourists have returned to their origin place with all their experiences and begin to readjust to their normal lives (28,29).

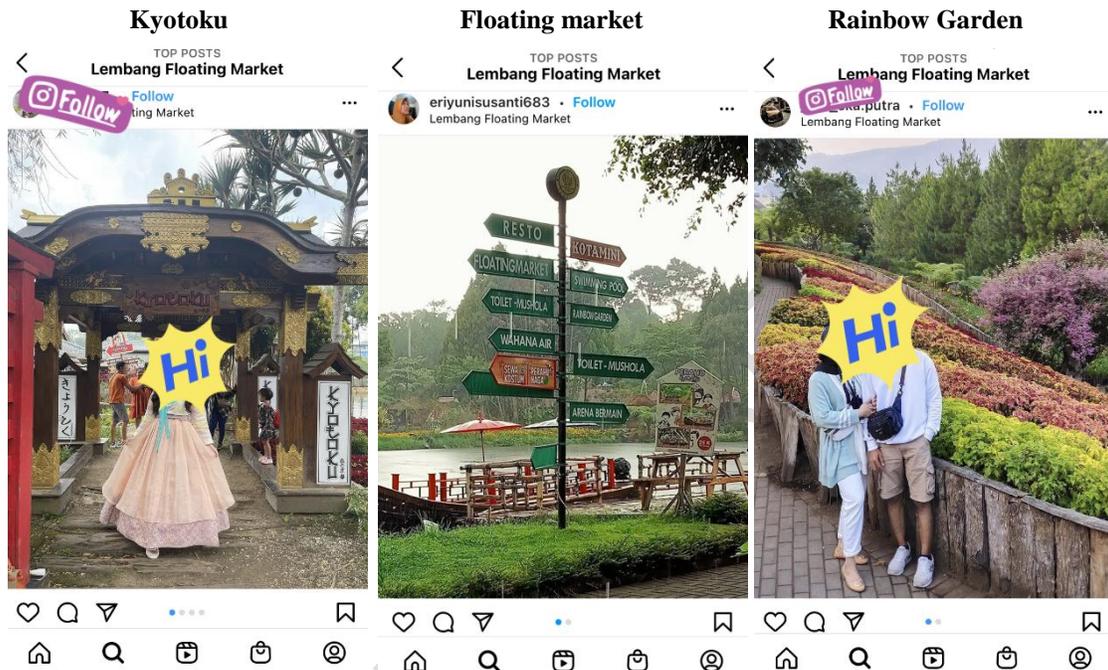
## **3. METHODOLOGY**

A quantitative descriptive approach (30) is used to answer research questions, especially related to the characteristics of instagrammable attractions and selfie tourist behavior at the Lembang Floating Market. The sampling technique used is non-probability sampling (31) involving 104 respondents. The distribution of questionnaires and observations were carried out at the Floating Market Lembang, West Java Province, within two weeks. In addition to primary data, this study also utilizes secondary data from various references related to instagrammable attractions and selfie tourism. Furthermore, the data that has been collected is processed and presented through descriptive statistical data, where the numerical data will be narrated according to the interpretation of the phenomena that occur in the object of research.

## **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **3.1 Floating market as an Instagrammable attraction**

Floating Market Lembang, located at the foot of Mount Tangkuban Perahu, is managed by The Big Price Cut Group. This tourist attraction was originally a natural lake called "Situ Umar" which is also a fishing pond. In early December 2012 this place was opened with a floating market concept with an area of 7.2 hectares which was expanded to 11 hectares in 2015. In addition, Floating Market Lembang has also developed several attractions such as Kyotoku, Mini City, Rainbow Garden, Mini City, water rides, rabbit garden, and floating market (32).



**Fig. 1. Instagrammable attraction at Floating Market Lembang**  
**Source:** Lembang floating market Instagram account, 2021

Kyotoku is a tourist attraction with the characteristics of Japanese culture. Tourists can rent a typical Japanese kimono as part of the property's photo. While the Rainbow Garden is a flower garden that is arranged in an attractive and aesthetically pleasing manner. The manager also provides an Adventure Park or outbound arena that offers several activities such as flying fox, ATV, archery arena, and paint ball, intended for tourists who like physical activities.

Mini City

Mini City

Restaurant



**Fig. 2. Instagrammable attraction at Floating Market Lembang**

**Source:** Lembang floating market Instagram account, 2021

In addition, this location is also developing a Mini City which is an artificial attraction with the concept of a miniature building with European architecture. The manager also provides a Rabbit Park which is a rabbit breeding place which is often used as a photo object for tourists. The floating market also has one of the natural attractions such as water rides that take advantage of the potential of the lake. At the same location, tourists can also enjoy culinary delights of various types of traditional foods.

Based on the products offered by Floating Market Lembang and analysis on social media, researchers found that most tourist attractions can be categorized as instagrammable attractions (17,21). Some of the reasons that support this argument include the fulfillment of most of the instagrammable indicators, such as photogenic, artistic, and aesthetic appeal. In addition, based on the results of visual analysis on photos uploaded by tourists' Instagram accounts, most of the images show good photo quality, such as lighting, color, and image composition (22,23,26). This means that the concept designed by the manager to attract selfie tourists, including the younger generation, is quite successful. Based on observations, tourists seem quite easy to find photo spots that are considered to increase popularity, are interesting, unique, and are considered to represent the personality of visitors (18).

### 3.2 Selfie tourist characteristic and behavior

#### 3.2.1 Tourist Descriptor

Although the Floating Market is designed as a family destination, its appeal is even more favored by the millennial generation, especially because there are selfie photo spots available in most locations. The survey illustrates that most tourists are between the ages of 20-30 years. This finding is also because most of the tourists involved in the survey are students or the younger generation who voluntarily take their time to answer questions. Most of them also come from cities that are close to tourist sites or have a distance of about 2-3 hours away, including Jakarta, Bogor, Bekasi, Tangerang, and Bandung. While the furthest tourists come from Batam. These characteristics are considered in accordance with the

products offered, especially from the aspect of unique and instagrammable attractiveness, strategic location, and affordable prices.

**Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics**

No.	Characteristic	Options	Sample (n)	Percentage (%)
1	Gender	Male	20	19
		Female	84	81
2	Age (years old)	< 20	13	13
		20-25	76	73
		26-30	10	10
		30<	5	5
3	Occupation	Private sector	28	27
		Student	70	67
		Others	6	6
4	Income	< IDR 1.000K	33	32
		IDR 1.000K-2.500K	33	32
		IDR 2.500K-5.000K	14	13
		IDR 5.000K-2.500K	24	23
5	Origin	Jakarta	66	63
		Batam	10	10
		Solo	5	5
		West java (Bogor, Bandung, Bekasi, Depok, Cirebon)	22	22
6	Personal status	Single	55	53
		Married	6	6
		Couple (not married)	43	41
7	Education background	Senior high school	82	79
		Diploma	5	5
		Bachelor's degree	17	16

**Source:** The author's own study, 2021

Meanwhile, from the aspect of psychographic characteristics, the survey results show that most Floating Market tourists use gadgets and access the internet in their daily lives. Like the characteristics of other millennials (33–35), most respondents also have more than one type of social media, such as Instagram (97%) and WhatsApp (92%) In addition, the number of social media owned also affects the duration of time spent using gadgets with an average of 1-10 hours per day.

Some activities while using gadgets include social media, entertainments, searching information, shopping, games, education, and holidays purposes. Most of the millennial generation's gadget activities tend to be related to entertainment compared to productive activities such as learning and enriching information (1,3,6,36). Although traveling is one of the activities favored by the millennial generation, some of these entertainment activities are relatively easy to do, instant, and inexpensive, such as listening to music and watching streaming movies, which are still the main choices. This argument is quite reasonable considering most of them are students with a travel budget between IDR 500K to IDR 2,500K. Some other psychographic characteristics can be seen in the following table.

**Table 2: Psychographic characteristics**

No.	Characteristic	Options	Sample (n)	Percentage (%)
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1	<b>Electronic device &amp; internet usage</b>	Yes	104	100
		Female	84	81
2	<b>Social media account</b>	Instagram	101	97
		WhatsApp	96	92
		YouTube	65	63
3	<b>Gadget usage duration</b>	1-5 hours	25	24
		6-10 hours	59	57
		>11 hours	20	19
4	<b>Activity</b>	Social media	103	99
		Searching information	70	67
		Holidays purposes	46	44
		Shopping	55	53
		Game	54	52
		Education purposes	59	57
		Entertainments	70	67
5	<b>Holiday budget</b>	< IDR 500K	11	11
		IDR 500K-2.500K	64	62
		IDR 2.500K-5.000K	22	21
		IDR 5.000K<	7	7
5	<b>Source of budget</b>	Savings	64	62
		Salary (fulltime & parttime)	47	17
		Parents	55	53
6	<b>Holiday frequency</b>	Once a month	61	59
		Once a year	16	15
		Twice a year	14	13
7	<b>Motivation</b>	Refreshing	96	92
		Nature	53	51
		Culinary	47	45
		Experience	43	41

**Source:** The author's own study, 2021

Table 2 shows that the financial sources for traveling most of the respondents came from savings and parental gifts. They also travel one to two times per month, with selected travel partners including friends and family, mainly to save on the budget. Considering that most tourists come from busy big cities, their main travel motivation is to freshen up and get out of the routine of everyday life. While 51% of respondents aim to enjoy nature, which is the advantage of the Lembang area.

### **3.2.2 Trip Descriptor**

The survey shows that several factors that influence respondents to determine tourist destinations include curiosity (63%) about the latest viral attractions. In addition, most of the millennial generation are also often influenced by the social media status of their friends (55%) who share their experiences when traveling to a destination. This phenomenon then makes social media, especially Instagram, one of the effective and influential promotional media. Selfie tourist behavior to selectively take and publish their travel experience, was able to influence other selfie-tourists. In fact, only a small proportion of respondents (46%) are influenced by suggestions from relatives or friends, or through conventional marketing techniques (Mouth of mouth). This survey confirms that electronic mouth of mouth (e-MoM) is more effective in reaching the current generation, who are familiar with digitalization (1,3,37,38).

Most of the respondents are also more likely to choose to travel with friends and relatives (79%) or even travel alone (60%). In addition, it took them less than a week to plan their trip (63%). The millennial generation also often reviews the tourist destinations they want to visit, especially by looking at the ratings or comments of netizens. The most used media are Instagram (66%) and Traveloka (58%). Therefore, the term "instagrammable" seems appropriate to describe the selfie tourist travel behavior which is strongly influenced by audio-visual content on Instagram.

Even social media has also been very commonly used to find information, including tourism. The survey describes that most respondents (83%) seek information through social media, even ignoring the Google search engine or other sources of information such as TV, websites, blogs, and books. On the other hand, the most considered internal factor for the millennial generation is financial (92%) compared to health and leisure time factors.

**Table 3. Characteristics of tourists travel initiation**

No.	Characteristic	Options	Sample (n)	Percentage (%)
1	<b>The main factor in determining tourist destinations</b>	Curiosity	66	53
		Friends' social media status	57	55
2	<b>Travel partner</b>	Alone/Selfies	62	60
		Friends and relatives	82	79
		Travel agent	13	13
3	<b>Information search</b>	Social media	86	83
		Friends experience	64	62
		Vlog	48	46
4	<b>Factors to consider before traveling</b>	Finance	96	92
		Health	53	51
		Leisure time	79	76
5	<b>Mode of reservation (ticket, accommodation, transportation, etc.)</b>	Traveloka	97	93
		Ticket.com	45	43
5	<b>Influence of destination rating in determining destination</b>	Instagram	69	66
		Traveloka	60	58
		TripAdvisor	17	16
6	<b>Travel preparation</b>	< a week	66	63
		2-4 weeks	18	17
		1 month<	20	19
7	<b>Destination factors that influence decisions</b>	Attraction	73	70
		Culinary	65	63
		Photo spot	71	68

**Source:** The author's own study, 2021

Table 3 shows that external factors that influence tourists to choose a destination include tourist attraction (70%), availability of photo spots (68%), and culinary (63%). This survey shows that selfie tourists strongly consider the availability of unique and current attractions, for the purpose of documenting and sharing their experiences through photos or videos on their Instagram accounts. This factor even overrides the conventional basic needs of tourists, namely food and beverage.

Tourists who visit floating markets can also be categorized as explorers (39) or prefer to travel to places that have been visited by others by using local facilities (transportation and accommodation) and interacting with the local community. Meanwhile, as many as 31% of respondents can be categorized as drifters or prefer to travel as a backpacker and visit places that have not been visited by many others and do not have tourism facilities. On the other hand, only a small proportion (8%) of respondents like to travel to familiar places and submit their travel plans to travel agents. This means that selfie tourists tend to want something new and have not been visited by many tourists. This phenomenon may also be because the main purpose of their journey is to seek self-actualization or gain recognition, especially by increasing likes or comments on social media.

**Table 4: Characteristics of tourists during-travel**

No.	Characteristic	Options	Sample (n)	Percentage (%)
1	Accommodation	Homestay	52	50
		Villa	50	48
		Hotel	43	41
2	Attraction favorite	Floating market	94	90
		Rainbow garden	55	53
		Kota mini and Kyotoku	42	40
		Arena outbound	32	31
3	Activities	Culinary	87	84
		Selfie	76	73
		Feed the animals	23	22

**Source:** The author's own study, 2021

Therefore, table 4 describes that while visiting floating markets, the most popular attractions are floating markets (90%), rainbow gardens (53%), mini cities and Kyotoku (40%), and outbound arenas (31%). Meanwhile, the favorite activities carried out by tourists at Floating Market Lembang include culinary tours at floating markets and restaurants (84%) and documenting travel activities by recording videos or taking pictures in the corners of 'instagramable' photo spots (73%).

The results of this study show how instagrammable attraction has a positive and significant effect on attracting selfie tourist interest. The characteristics of instagrammable attraction that "perfectly impress", seem to be able to attract selfie tourists who have the behavior and motivation to seek existence and recognition on social media, especially Instagram.

This argument is supported by survey results which show that after carrying out tourism activities, almost all respondents share their travel experiences through social media, especially Instagram and WhatsApp.

**Table 5: Characteristics of tourist's post-travel**

No.	Characteristic	Options	Sample (n)	Percentage (%)
1	Social media to share experience	Instagram	87	84
		WhatsApp	63	61
		Facebook	34	33
2	Feedback media	Social media	61	59
		Website	16	15
		Official website	29	28

**Source:** The author's own study, 2021

Table 5 also illustrates that the majority of respondents provide feedback or impressions on destinations that have been visited by uploading via social media (59%), giving a rating on the website (28%), and writing comments on the destination's official website (15 %).

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Data analysis found that most tourist attractions can be categorized as instagrammable attractions. On the other hand, this study found that selfie tourists really consider the availability of unique and contemporary attractions, the goal is that they can document and share their experiences through photos or videos on their Instagram accounts.

This study concludes that instagrammable attraction has a positive and significant effect on attracting selfie tourists. Mainly because of the characteristics of instagrammable attraction, which "perfectly impresses", succeeded in attracting selfie tourists who have the behavior and motivation to travel to seek existence and recognition on social media, especially Instagram. This phenomenon illustrates that today's tourists, especially the younger generation, tend to "consume" tourism through digital media. This means that the satisfaction of traveling is no longer only determined by the destination (products and services) or the tourist attraction itself but is largely determined by how the destination or attraction affects their looks on social media.

#### **5. LIMITATIONS AND STUDY FORWARD**

The results of this study are able to provide comprehensive information related to self-tourist behavior and are beneficial for stakeholders, especially travel agents and tourist destination managers. The limitation of this research is the data collection method which is dominated by surveys. Therefore, further research is expected to conduct an in-depth study related to the reasons tourists are interested in selfie tourism.

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