

Department of Digital Business

Journal of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Business (RIGGS)

Homepage: https://journal.ilmudata.co.id/index.php/RIGGS

Vol. 4 No. 2 (2025) pp: 2434-2440

P-ISSN: 2963-9298, e-ISSN: 2963-914X

Heritage Trails and Cycling Tourism in City Branding: Exploring the Nexus of Experiences and Expectations

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Abstrak

This paper delves into the intricate relationship between heritage trails and cycling tourism, specifically focusing on the case study of the heritage-rich city of Surakarta. The convergence of heritage trails and cycling tourism forms a dynamic nexus that influences both the experiences of tourists and their expectations. The notion of the "tourist gaze" serves as a foundational framework, shedding light on tourists' perceptions and anticipations of Surakarta's cultural heritage, culinary offerings, and local populace. Rooted in socially constructed constructs, the tourist gaze significantly shapes how tourists interpret and emotionally engage with Surakarta as a destination. Through a qualitative exploratory approach, this study delves into the multifaceted interplay between heritage trails, cycling experiences, and the tourist gaze. Data is derived from in-depth interviews with tourists engaging in heritage cycling trails, capturing their subjective accounts of experiences and expectations. The findings unveil a range of themes, including the influence of heritage sites on cyclists' emotional connection with the city, the role of the tourist gaze in framing their encounters, and the impact of well-designed heritage trails on overall satisfaction. The study not only advances our understanding of the complex interrelationship between heritage trails, cycling tourism, and the tourist gaze, but also offers practical insights for heritage site management, urban planning, and tourism experience enhancement in Surakarta and beyond. By delving into the nuances of tourists' engagement with both tangible and intangible cultural heritage through cycling, this research contributes to the broader discourse on sustainable tourism development and the creation of meaningful tourist experiences within heritage-rich urban contexts.

KeyWords: Heritage Trails; Cycling Torism; City Branding; Economics; Social

1. Introduction

The concept of the "tourist gaze" is central to understanding the experiences of tourists in a destination. The tourist gaze refers to a tourist's expectations and perceptions of a destination, including its food, heritage, and people (Kunasegaran et al., 2019). It is argued that the tourist gaze shapes the way tourists see, feel, and visualize a destination, as it is influenced by their socially constructed ideas and expectations (Kunasegaran et al., 2019). This theory, known as the tourist gaze, has been widely discussed in various fields such as tourism marketing, tourism city branding, culinary tourism, and heritage tourism (Kunasegaran et al., 2019). The tourist gaze theory has been extended to include factors such as performative, embodied, and digitalization aspects of tourist behavior (Kunasegaran et al., 2019). These factors contribute to the change in a tourist's feelings and experiences based on the places they visit, the food they consume, and the social exchanges they have (Kunasegaran et al., 2019). The tourist gaze theory has also been applied to analyze tourism experiences reflected in photographs, using concepts such as the "romantic gaze" and "collective gaze" (Cilkin & Çizel, 2021). Through qualitative analysis of tourist photographs, researchers have identified various categories of tourism experiences, including tangible and intangible cultural heritage, natural heritage, atmosphere, authenticity, emotion, and sensory perception (Cilkin & Çizel, 2021).

Heritage trails are a popular tourism product that allows tourists to explore the cultural heritage of a destination. These trails serve as a unifying mechanism within the urban cultural tourism landscape (Hayes & Taylor, 2007). However, there is still room for improvement in terms of the positioning and presentational format of heritage trails to maximize their potential (Hayes & Taylor, 2007). The design of heritage trails should consider the principles of experience design to enhance visitor engagement (Hayes & MacLeod, 2007). Cycling tourism is closely linked to heritage tourism, as cycling routes often intersect with heritage infrastructure (Ramshaw & Bottelberghe, 2014). The Tour of Flanders, a century-old cycling race in Belgium, has been recognized as a

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heritage sport tourism event (Ramshaw & Bottelberghe, 2014). The race has a strong connection to the traditions and identities of nations, communities, and individuals (Ramshaw & Bottelberghe, 2014). The development of cycling trails that incorporate heritage sites can offer unique heritage and cycle tourism possibilities (Ramshaw & Bottelberghe, 2014).

The concept of the tourist gaze plays a significant role in understanding the experiences of tourists in a destination. It influences their perceptions and expectations of a destination's food, heritage, and people. The tourist gaze theory has been extended to include factors such as performative, embodied, and digitalization aspects of tourist behavior. Heritage trails are a popular tourism product that can be enhanced through the principles of experience design. Cycling tourism, particularly events like the Tour of Flanders, offers opportunities for heritage sport tourism development. The research question of this paper seeks to delve into the influential role of the "tourist gaze" in shaping tourists' perceptions and expectations of cultural heritage, cuisine, and local life within the context of the heritage-rich city of Surakarta.

2. Theory Framework

The papers suggest that heritage trails can shape the experience of tourists by cycling in various ways. Hayes (2007) argues that heritage trails need to be designed as experiences rather than just products to maximize visitor engagement (Hayes & MacLeod, 2007). Macleod (2017) explores the role of trails in creating tourist space and argues that they can promote a more engaged, multi-vocal, and sensory experience of place (MacLeod, 2016). Chiu (2017) analyzes tourists' experiences of cycling tours in Singapore and finds that tourists have a favorable impression of their cycling experience, but that well-maintained bicycles and knowledgeable tour guides are important for their satisfaction (Chiu & Leng, 2017). Boyd (2017) presents a review of research on cultural and heritage trails and routes, emphasizing the need for further theory and conceptual thinking in research on linear resource settings, operationalizing trail and route development models, and understanding the impacts of trails and routes and the role of communities in their development and management (Boyd, 2017). Overall, the papers suggest that heritage trails can enhance the experience of tourists by cycling, but that careful design and management are necessary to maximize their potential.

What are the economic benefits of heritage trails and cycling tourism?

The papers suggest that heritage trails and cycling tourism can have positive economic impacts. Buning (2020) found that mountain bike tourism can have economic benefits, but there is a need for more rigorous and consistent research. Lukoseviciute (2022) reviewed economic impact studies on recreational trails and found that investment in infrastructure and touristic services can lead to higher visitor expenditure and contribute to economic development. Ramshaw (2014) discussed the potential of sport heritage, specifically the Tour of Flanders cycling race, as a catalyst for tourism development. Finally, Silberberg (1995) argued that cultural tourism can provide significant economic benefits to museums and heritage sites, and that these facilities should explore entrepreneurial approaches to increase attendance and self-generated revenues.

What are the environmental impacts of heritage trails and cycling tourism?

The papers suggest that heritage trails and cycling tourism can have negative environmental impacts. Leung (1996) notes that trail development and use can cause extensive degradation of natural resources, including alteration of natural drainage patterns, erosion and deposition of soil, introduction of exotic vegetation, and increasing human-wildlife conflicts. Ciascai (2022) highlights the need to examine the economic, social, and environmental impacts of cycle tourism at destinations, including the potential drawbacks for local communities. However, Lin (2020) suggests that recreation experiences can positively affect visitors' environmentally responsible behavior, and that place attachment has a greater mediation effect than environmental attitudes between recreation experience and environmentally responsible behavior. Boyd (2017) emphasizes the need for further research on cultural and heritage trails and routes, including understanding trail and route impacts and the role that communities can play in their development and management. Overall, the papers suggest that heritage trails and cycling tourism can have both positive and negative environmental impacts, and that further research is needed to better understand and manage these impacts.

What are the social impacts of heritage trails and cycling tourism?

The papers suggest that heritage trails and cycling tourism can have both positive and negative social impacts. Stoffelen (2018) found that cycling tourism trails can contribute to cross-border integration and social cohesion, but border-related barriers remain. Ciascai (2022) identified both positive and negative economic and social impacts of cycle tourism, including benefits for local communities and potential drawbacks. Buning (2020) found that there is a fragmented body of knowledge pertaining to economic impacts of mountain bike tourism, and recommended improved rigor and consistency in future research. Ramshaw (2014) argued that sport heritage, such

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as the Tour of Flanders cycling race, could be a potentially important avenue for tourism development, but may need to be combined with other forms of local non-sport heritage to reach a broader, international audience. Overall, the papers suggest that heritage trails and cycling tourism can have significant social impacts, but more research is needed to fully understand these impacts and how to maximize their benefits while minimizing negative effects.

3. Method

The research methodology for this study aims to delve into the dynamic intersection of heritage trails, cycling tourism, and city branding in the context of Surakarta. To capture the multifaceted perspectives of local stakeholders and tourists, we employ qualitative research methods, primarily focusing on in-depth interviews. This approach enables us to explore the intricate web of experiences and expectations associated with heritage trails and cycling tourism, contributing valuable insights to the city branding discourse.

3.1 Sampling Strategy and Participant Selection

Our research employs purposive sampling to select a diverse range of participants, including city officials, tourism authorities, heritage preservationists, cyclists, and tourists. The goal is to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. Potential interviewees will be identified based on their expertise, involvement in city branding initiatives, or their role as active participants in cycling tourism and heritage trail activities within Surakarta.

3.2 Data Collection Process

In-depth interviews will serve as the primary method for data collection. Semi-structured interview guides will be developed to facilitate conversations with participants. These guides will encompass questions related to their experiences, perceptions, and expectations concerning heritage trails, cycling tourism, and the city's branding efforts. Interviews will be conducted in-person or remotely, depending on the availability and preferences of the participants.

3.3 Data Analysis

Qualitative content analysis will be employed to analyze the interview data. This approach involves identifying recurring themes, patterns, and meaningful insights from the interview transcripts. By employing open coding and thematic coding techniques, we aim to uncover the rich narratives and connections between heritage trails, cycling tourism, and city branding in Surakarta.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

We are committed to upholding ethical standards throughout this research. Informed consent will be obtained from all interview participants, ensuring their privacy and anonymity. Any identifiable information will be anonymized in the final analysis. Additionally, we will respect the cultural and ethical norms of Surakarta, maintaining sensitivity to local perspectives and traditions.

3.5 Research Validity and Reliability

To enhance the validity and reliability of our findings, we will employ member-checking techniques, allowing participants to review and validate the interpretations of their responses. Peer debriefing and inter-rater reliability checks will also be conducted to ensure the robustness of the research process and outcomes.

4. Result and Discussion

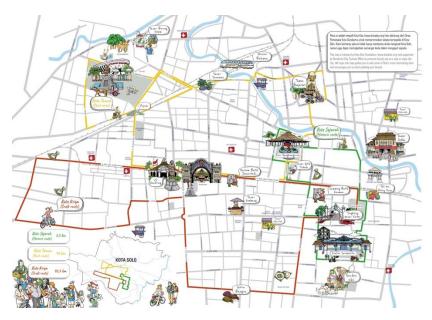
4.1 Tourist gaze and city branding in Surakarta heritage city

City branding is a strategic process that involves managing the city's image and developing a brand that resonates with both tourists and residents (Kavaratzis, 2004). It is an effective way to describe and implement city marketing, as it focuses on the construction, communication, and management of the city's image (Kavaratzis, 2004). The concept of city branding recognizes that encounters with the city take place through perceptions and images, making the city's image the starting point for developing its brand (Kavaratzis, 2004). The tourist gaze, as discussed by Urry (2002), plays a crucial role in shaping tourists' experiences and perceptions of a destination (Kunasegaran et al., 2019). The tourist gaze refers to a tourist's expectations of a destination and how they see, feel, and visualize it based on their socially constructed ideas and expectations (Kunasegaran et al., 2019). This concept has been frequently discussed in the context of tourism marketing, tourism city branding, culinary tourism, and heritage tourism (Kunasegaran et al., 2019).

City branding can be a powerful tool in constructing a positive and trustful tourist gaze by providing an experience that aligns with the images used in the city's branding (Yu et al., 2012). By effectively managing the

city's image and brand, city branding can contribute to economic development, attract investment and tourism, and foster a sense of identity and pride among city residents (Kavaratzis, 2004). The development of a city brand involves various components, including brand awareness, brand loyalty, unique image, positive perceived quality, and revisit (Miftahuddin et al., 2021). These variables are essential in building city brand equity, which refers to the value of a city that becomes the preference of tourists to visit (Miftahuddin et al., 2021). The attractiveness of a city brand and the tourism experience it offers are crucial factors in building city brand equity (Miftahuddin et al., 2021).

To effectively implement city branding, it is important to consider the relationship between the city brand and its residents (Yu et al., 2012). City branding should not only focus on attracting tourists but also on engaging and involving residents in the branding process (Yu et al., 2012). The support and involvement of the local community can significantly contribute to the success of city branding efforts (Yu et al., 2012). In conclusion, city branding is a strategic process that involves managing the city's image and developing a brand that resonates with both tourists and residents. By effectively implementing city branding, cities can attract tourists, stimulate economic development, and foster a sense of identity and pride among residents. The tourist gaze plays a crucial role in shaping tourists' experiences and perceptions of a destination, and city branding can be a powerful tool in constructing a positive and trustful tourist gaze.



4.2 Cycling tourism heritage trail: the future of power past heritage

Cycling tourism heritage trails have become popular attractions in many destinations, offering visitors the opportunity to explore the cultural and historical heritage of a place while enjoying outdoor activities. These trails are designed to engage visitors and provide them with a unique and immersive experience (Hayes & Taylor, 2007). The impacts of World Heritage status on tourism can vary depending on the site. While internationally renowned sites with a long history of tourism may not experience a significant increase in visitor numbers, less established sites may see a surge in tourism (Su & Wall, 2012). However, the intrinsic qualities of the site itself, rather than its World Heritage status, are often the major factor influencing tourist visitation. World Heritage status may have only a marginal effect on visitor numbers and attractiveness, particularly if the place is remote and difficult to access (Su & Wall, 2012).

Heritage trails are seen as flexible and multi-faceted products that can bring various benefits to the destination, including social, physical, environmental, cultural, and economic benefits. They can contribute to environmental conservation, visitor management, economic development, and a deeper sense of place and community (Hayes & Taylor, 2007). Engaging local communities in heritage tourism is crucial to minimize negative impacts and ensure the proper distribution of benefits. Local communities often possess rich local knowledge and experience of the site, making their involvement essential (Su & Wall, 2012). Community participation is considered crucial for successful heritage tourism and community development. The level and nature of community participation may vary depending on the nature and context of the heritage site (Su & Wall, 2012).

In the case of cycling tourism heritage trails, the development of urban cycling trails that intersect with heritage infrastructure, such as former railway lines, can offer interesting possibilities for heritage and cycle

tourism (Ramshaw & Bottelberghe, 2014). These trails can provide a unique way for visitors to experience the heritage of a place while engaging in physical activity. Overall, cycling tourism heritage trails have the potential to attract visitors, provide them with an immersive experience of the destination's cultural and historical heritage, and contribute to the economic and social development of the local community. However, careful planning and community involvement are necessary to ensure that the trails are designed and managed in a sustainable and inclusive manner (Su & Wall, 2012). Further research is needed to explore the impacts of cycling tourism heritage trails on local communities and to develop effective management practices in different contexts (Su & Wall, 2012).



4.3 Impact tourist gaze cycling: the future strategies

The impact of the tourist gaze on cycling tourism can be analyzed from various perspectives. Firstly, the tourist gaze refers to the way tourists observe and perceive their surroundings, including the landscapes, attractions, and local communities (Stone & Nyaupane, 2018). The tourist gaze is often associated with power dynamics, as Western tourists are seen as having control and agency over the places they visit (Stone & Nyaupane, 2018). However, recent studies have highlighted the existence of a mutual gaze, where locals also construct their own gaze based on their encounters with tourists (Stone & Nyaupane, 2018). This mutual gaze can influence the behavior and attitudes of both tourists and locals towards each other (Lin & Fu, 2020). In the context of cycling tourism, the tourist gaze can have both positive and negative impacts. On one hand, the tourist gaze can contribute to the promotion and development of cycling tourism destinations. Tourists may be attracted to scenic routes, cultural landmarks, and natural landscapes, which can enhance the visibility and appeal of cycling destinations (Yu et al., 2022). The tourist gaze can also create economic opportunities for local communities, as tourists may spend money on accommodations, food, and other services during their cycling trips (Yu et al., 2022).

On the other hand, the tourist gaze can also have negative consequences for local communities. Living under the constant gaze of tourists can create feelings of being constantly watched and objectified (Larsen & Urry, 2011). In some cases, locals may feel that their privacy and tranquility are compromised by the presence of tourists (Stone & Nyaupane, 2018). Additionally, the tourist gaze can contribute to the commodification and commercialization of local cultures and traditions, leading to concerns about authenticity and staged experiences (Larsen & Urry, 2011). In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the impact of the tourist gaze on cycling tourism has been further complicated. The global spread of COVID-19 has led to travel restrictions, border closures, and lockdown measures, which have significantly affected tourism worldwide (Yu et al., 2022). Tourists' motivation and behavior have been influenced by concerns over COVID-19, and the depth and breadth of its effects on cycling tourism have yet to be fully understood (Yu et al., 2022). In conclusion, the impact of the tourist gaze on cycling tourism is multifaceted. While the tourist gaze can contribute to the promotion and economic development of cycling destinations, it can also have negative consequences for local communities. The COVID-19 pandemic has further complicated the impact of the tourist gaze on cycling tourism. Further research is needed to understand the complex dynamics between the tourist gaze, cycling tourism, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.4 How can heritage trails and cycling tourism be used to promote cultural heritage?

The papers suggest that heritage trails and cycling tourism can be effective ways to promote cultural heritage. Hayes (2007) argues that heritage trails can be improved by using experience design principles to

maximize visitor engagement. Ramshaw (2014) suggests that combining sport and heritage, such as in the Tour of Flanders cycling race, can be a potentially important avenue for tourism development. Mills (2021) emphasizes the importance of heritage trails in sustainable city planning, as they promote emissions-free activities and provide green spaces that offset carbon emissions. Finally, Al-Hagla (2010) argues that heritage trails can be used to achieve sustainability goals in urban historical areas, by stimulating conservation and rehabilitation, interpretation, and micro-economic development. Overall, the papers suggest that heritage trails and cycling tourism can be effective tools for promoting cultural heritage, but require careful planning and stakeholder involvement to maximize their potential.

4.5 Economic Impacts of Heritage Trails and Cycling Tourism

The intersection of heritage trails and cycling tourism holds significant potential for economic development, particularly in heritage-rich urban contexts like Surakarta. These forms of tourism not only enhance cultural appreciation but also stimulate local economies through direct and indirect spending. Cycling tourism typically attracts travelers who are more likely to stay longer and spend more per visit compared to other tourists, particularly when infrastructure such as heritage trails, rest stops, and cultural experiences are well-developed. Expenditures by cycling tourists include accommodations, food and beverages, bike rentals, tour guides, and souvenirs, all of which inject revenue into local businesses and create employment opportunities. Research by Lukoseviciute (2022) emphasizes that investments in recreational trail infrastructure often result in higher visitor expenditures, thus contributing positively to regional economic performance. Similarly, Buning (2020) highlights the importance of rigorous economic impact assessments in mountain bike tourism, suggesting that cycling-based tourism can support business diversification in both urban and rural settings.

Furthermore, heritage trails can function as catalysts for micro-entrepreneurship, particularly for small-scale vendors and community-based tourism initiatives. These ventures may include local food stalls, crafts, homestays, and storytelling tours that allow visitors to engage with the destination's intangible cultural heritage. Silberberg (1995) underscores the role of cultural tourism in providing sustainable economic benefits to heritage sites and encourages entrepreneurial strategies for enhancing visitor experiences and increasing self-generated revenues. From a policy standpoint, aligning economic development strategies with sustainable tourism planning is essential. Ensuring that benefits are equitably distributed—especially to communities residing near heritage trails—can help strengthen local support, preserve cultural identity, and reduce socio-economic disparities.

5. Conclusion

This study has explored the dynamic interrelationship between heritage trails, cycling tourism, and city branding within the culturally rich context of Surakarta. Through the lens of the tourist gaze, it becomes evident that tourists' experiences and expectations are deeply influenced by socially constructed perceptions of heritage, culture, and local identity. The integration of heritage trails into urban tourism design not only enhances the tourist experience through embodied and immersive interactions with place, but also plays a significant role in shaping and reinforcing the city's brand image. Cycling tourism emerges as a sustainable and experiential modality that aligns well with heritage tourism. By connecting visitors with tangible and intangible cultural assets, cycling trails foster emotional connections, enhance place attachment, and support narratives of authenticity and tradition. Moreover, the economic dimension of heritage cycling trails presents valuable opportunities for local development, job creation, and micro-entrepreneurship, particularly when supported by inclusive planning and community engagement. However, the success of heritage-based cycling tourism relies on thoughtful design, collaborative governance, and a balanced approach that considers cultural preservation, environmental sustainability, and socio-economic equity. Community involvement, infrastructure investment, and the careful management of tourist-local dynamics are essential for sustaining the long-term viability and integrity of heritage tourism initiatives. Ultimately, heritage trails and cycling tourism offer a compelling avenue for cities like Surakarta to build meaningful, memorable, and marketable tourism experiences. They not only contribute to sustainable tourism development but also serve as instruments for strengthening urban identity, economic resilience, and cultural continuity in an increasingly competitive tourism landscape.

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