

Followers' Affective Responses to Tourism Information on Instagram: A Study of the @zonakalakkaro Instagram Account

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – This study aims to understand the affective experiences of followers in responding to tourism information published through the Instagram account @zonakalakkaro. The research focuses on how visual content shapes followers' emotional attraction, imagination, expectations, and evaluations of the tourist destinations presented.

Method – This study employed a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach to explore the subjective experiences of followers when interacting with tourism-related content on the Instagram account. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with three active followers of @zonakalakkaro, observations of digital interactions on the account's posts, and documentation of relevant tourism content. Data analysis was conducted using phenomenological procedures, including the identification of significant statements, the categorization of these statements into experiential themes, and the formulation of the essence of participants' experiences.

Findings – The findings reveal that followers' affective experiences are formed through three main stages: emotional attraction to the visual representation of tourist destinations, the development of imagination and expectations regarding tourism experiences, and emotional evaluation after comparing digital representations with the actual conditions of the destinations. Furthermore, the analysis of followers' comments indicates that most responses reflect positive emotional experiences, such as admiration, interest, comfort, and a desire to visit the featured destinations. These findings suggest that social media functions not only as a medium for disseminating tourism information but also as a space for constructing emotional experiences that influence users' perceptions and interests toward tourist destinations.

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INTRODUCTION

Globalization has significantly influenced the development of the tourism sector, particularly through the utilization of digital media as a means of disseminating information and promoting tourist destinations to a wider audience. Indonesia, as a country rich in natural beauty and cultural diversity, possesses numerous tourist destinations, especially local attractions, that remain underrecognized due to limited information dissemination and promotional outreach. In fact, the tourism sector makes a substantial contribution to economic growth at both regional and national levels. The tourism industry not only serves as a recreational medium but also contributes to increasing community income, creating employment opportunities, and supporting sustainable development (Defhany, 2024). Therefore, effective media are needed to introduce tourist destinations more rapidly, broadly, and attractively in order to enhance public interest in visiting them.

The rapid advancement of digital technology has created new opportunities for tourism promotion, one of which is through social media. Social media has become an effective channel for information dissemination because it can reach a broad audience within a short period of time (Anzani et al., 2024). Tourist attractions can utilize social media as a tool for communication and interaction with tourists and potential visitors. The emergence of various social media platforms has also attracted public interest in obtaining information across different fields, including information about tourist destinations from various regions. Moreover, many users are more interested in social media content that is presented in an engaging and entertaining manner while still providing valuable information to audiences (Hadiati & Suksmawati, 2024; Ihsan & Samosir, 2026). The advancement of tourism in the digital era is closely associated with Instagram, which was initially designed as a photo-sharing platform among users (Abdilla, 2024). Today, Instagram facilitates tourists in capturing moments through smartphones and sharing them with others, thereby supporting digital tourism promotion (Fithriya, 2020).

In the context of tourism, social media, particularly Instagram, plays a strategic role in introducing destinations, building destination images, and influencing tourists' perceptions and interests (Tholibin et al., 2024). Instagram has evolved into a digital communication space that functions not only as a medium for information dissemination but also as a space for constructing experiences and meanings for its users (Wiriany et al., 2022). Instagram provides individuals with opportunities to act not only as information recipients but also as information disseminators. In addition to serving as a communication medium, Instagram is widely used for obtaining information quickly, providing entertainment, and facilitating access to diverse information from multiple perspectives (Zaxrie et al., 2024). Therefore, examining users' affective responses to tourism information on Instagram is important for understanding how meanings and experiences are constructed, while also contributing to the development of digital communication studies and more effective and meaningful tourism promotion strategies (Syiful, 2025).

The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy of the Republic of Indonesia reported that most tourists use social media as their primary source when planning travel activities (Kemenparekraf, 2025). This indicates that digital communication plays a significant role in shaping how individuals perceive and emotionally respond to a destination. The ease of using Instagram has led followers to rely on the platform as a source of information to fulfill their informational needs (Effendy et al., 2022). The rapid growth of tourism in Karo Regency has made it increasingly difficult for people to determine which tourist destinations to visit. Through Instagram, users can easily access tourism-related information about destinations in Karo Regency.

From the perspective of Uses and Gratifications Theory, users actively utilize social media to satisfy specific needs, including information seeking, social interaction, and entertainment

(Yumiarti & Komalasari, 2020). However, in practice, such interactions extend beyond the fulfillment of informational needs and involve emotional dimensions that shape attitudes and perceptions toward tourist destinations (Arifin, 2022). The process of interpreting tourism content on Instagram can also be understood through an affective perspective, which emphasizes that media messages are not merely received as information but also evoke emotional responses among audiences. Visual content presented through photographs, videos, and captions about tourist destinations can generate various feelings among users, such as admiration, attraction, enthusiasm, and a desire to visit the featured locations.

These emotional responses emerge when users interact with digital content and interpret it based on their experiences, knowledge, and perceptions. In this context, Instagram functions not only as a medium for conveying tourism information but also as a space that shapes users' emotional experiences toward the destinations being presented. Therefore, the interpretation of tourism content on social media is not uniform; rather, it is constructed through diverse affective experiences that vary across individuals.



Figure 1. Profile of the Instagram Account @Zonakalakkaro

In the context of regional tourism, the Instagram account @Zonakalakkaro serves as an official medium for disseminating information related to tourism, culture, and various tourism activities in Karo Regency. As of December 2025, the account had accumulated approximately 100,000 followers and more than 2,900 posts, making it one of the most widely accessed digital information sources, particularly among the Karo community. The account provides tourism-related information about destinations such as Lake Toba, Mount Sinabung, Lake Lau Kawar, and various aspects of Karo culture.

However, followers' responses are not always uniform. Some users express interest and enthusiasm, while others provide criticism or raise questions regarding the completeness of the information presented. This variation in responses indicates that users' experiences with tourism content are not singular but rather complex and influenced by each individual's subjective interpretation (Tourism Office, 2025).

Several previous studies have demonstrated that attractive visual content can increase

audience engagement and tourists' interest. Research conducted by Lily Siti Nurhasna and colleagues found that strong visual representations are effective in capturing users' attention, although limitations remain in the delivery of practical information (Nurhasna & Azhar, 2025). Similarly, a study by Uswatun Khasanah and colleagues revealed that emotional and personalized content strategies can foster a sense of closeness and enhance audience participation (Khasanah et al., 2024). Meanwhile, Wijayanti found that tourism-related content on Instagram influences followers' perceptions of tourist destinations. Nevertheless, most of these studies focus primarily on content effectiveness and general forms of audience responses, without deeply exploring followers' emotional experiences as subjective lived experiences (Farid Afandi, 2024).

In the context of digital communication, affective responses such as admiration, enthusiasm, hope, and even disappointment constitute important dimensions that influence tourists' attitudes and behavioral tendencies. Affective responses are not merely indicators of interest; rather, they represent emotional experiences that individuals undergo after being exposed to communication messages. Therefore, an approach is needed that can capture the meaning of these experiences directly from the participants' perspectives (Saputra, 2025).

Based on these considerations, this study is important for understanding the affective experiences of followers in interpreting tourism information published through the Instagram account @Zonakalakkaro. A phenomenological approach is employed to explore the meaning of followers' subjective experiences when interacting with the tourism content presented on the account. By understanding the essence of these affective experiences, this study is expected to contribute academically to the development of digital communication and tourism studies, while also providing practical insights for account managers in designing communication strategies that are more responsive and emotionally meaningful.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. According to Sugiyono, qualitative research is a type of inquiry conducted in natural settings, as it is carried out according to actual conditions in the field. The findings of qualitative research focus on how researchers interpret and make sense of the data collected throughout the research process (Sugiyono, 2021). A phenomenological approach was adopted to gain an in-depth understanding of followers' subjective experiences in receiving, interpreting, and responding to tourism information delivered through the Instagram account @Zonakalakkaro. Phenomenological research emphasizes the exploration of participants' lived experiences regarding a particular phenomenon; therefore, this study sought to capture the essence of followers' experiences when interacting with tourism content published on the account.

The participants in this study were followers of the Instagram account @Zonakalakkaro who had direct experience accessing, reading, and responding to tourism-related posts. Participants were selected purposively based on the following criteria: (1) having followed the Instagram account @Zonakalakkaro for at least six months; (2) having interacted with posts through likes, comments, shares, or saves; (3) having used tourism information from the account as a travel reference; and (4) being willing to participate in an in-depth research process. Participants were recruited through direct messages sent via Instagram to followers who met the research criteria. The number of participants was determined based on the principle of data saturation, which occurs when the information obtained begins to show repetitive patterns and no significant new themes emerge (Sugiyono, 2021).

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations of digital interactions, and

documentation of relevant posts. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format using an interview guide that included questions regarding participants' experiences in obtaining tourism information, emotional responses, perceptions of uploaded content, and the influence of such content on their travel interests. Interviews were conducted either online or face-to-face according to participants' preferences, with each session lasting between 25 and 45 minutes.

Digital interaction observations were conducted on the @Zonakalakkaro account by examining comments, numbers of likes, captions, and other forms of engagement associated with each post. Documentation was carried out by collecting screenshots of posts and interactions relevant to the research focus. Data analysis followed Creswell's phenomenological model, involving several stages: reading the entire dataset comprehensively, conducting phenomenological reduction to identify significant statements, grouping these statements into experiential themes, and formulating the essence of participants' experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The trustworthiness of the data was established through source triangulation and member checking. Triangulation was conducted by comparing findings from interviews, digital observations, and documentation to ensure consistency and credibility. Member checking involved confirming the researcher's interpretations with participants to ensure that the meanings derived accurately reflected their intended experiences. In addition, the researcher practiced reflexivity by acknowledging the possibility of personal subjectivity as a social media user. Therefore, reflective notes were maintained throughout the research process to enhance objectivity. Ethical considerations were also observed by protecting participants' identities through the use of pseudonyms, and all collected data were used solely for academic purposes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Followers' Affective Responses to Tourism Information on the Instagram Account @Zonakalakkaro

Based on data obtained from the Instagram account @Zonakalakkaro, this study found that followers experience various affective responses when engaging with tourism information presented through the account's posts. Affective experience is understood as an emotional experience formed through individuals' interactions with the digital representation of a phenomenon. Followers' responses to tourism content are not limited to understanding information; rather, they involve subjective meaning-making processes that generate emotional engagement with the featured tourist destinations.

This study involved six participants who were active followers of the Instagram account @Zonakalakkaro. To ensure confidentiality, participants' identities were anonymized. The six participants were identified as SA (21), PH (25), CA (23), RN (22), DF (24), and NL (20). All participants reported actively following tourism-related posts on the account and having used the information obtained as a reference for tourism activities.

The findings indicate that one of the primary reasons participants were interested in following the Instagram account @Zonakalakkaro was its consistent presentation of various tourist destinations in Karo Regency through attractive visual representations. CA explained that she began following the account approximately one year ago because it frequently appeared on her Instagram feed. According to her, the account was appealing because it showcased tourist destinations in Karo Regency that she had never visited before. She further noted that her interest stemmed from the attractiveness of the tourism-related posts, which stimulated her curiosity about the destinations being promoted.

"I was interested in following this account because it frequently posts beautiful and

interesting tourist destinations in Karo that I have never visited before.” (CA, Interview, 2026)

This statement suggests that tourism visualization on social media has the ability to generate followers' initial interest in a tourist destination. The content not only provides information about tourist attractions but also stimulates curiosity regarding the experiences that might be gained through direct visitation.

A similar perspective was expressed by SA. According to SA, the most appealing aspect of the Instagram account @Zonakalakkaro was its photographs and videos showcasing the beauty of tourist destinations in Karo Regency. SA felt that these visuals created a positive impression of the destinations being featured.

“What I find most interesting are the photos and videos because they show the beauty of tourist attractions in Karo.” (SA, Interview, 2026)

Likewise, PH stated that she frequently viewed posts from @Zonakalakkaro because she was an active Instagram user. She explained that whenever the account's posts appeared on her social media feed, she was motivated to view the content.

“Because I am quite active on social media, I often see its posts. Whenever they appear on my feed, I immediately look at them.” (PH, Interview, 2026)

PH further noted that the tourism content attracted her attention because it introduced many tourist destinations she had not previously known about.

“The photos and videos catch my attention because they feature many tourist attractions that I was previously unaware of. As a result, I feel encouraged to visit those places.” (PH, Interview, 2026)

1. Digital Visualization as a Medium for Constructing Affective Responses

The findings indicate that the primary strength of the Instagram account lies in its aesthetic and dynamic visual content. The photographs and videos presented function not only as tools for conveying information about tourist destinations but also as a medium capable of generating initial emotional experiences among followers.

This theme is grounded in the perspective of Uses and Gratifications Theory, which argues that media users actively select and use media to satisfy specific needs, including not only informational needs but also entertainment and emotional needs (Sumadiria, 2024). Therefore, visual content on Instagram is understood not merely as a vehicle for tourism information but also as a stimulus that fulfills affective needs by eliciting emotional responses from users.

Visual representations showcasing natural beauty, the atmosphere of tourist environments, and activities available at destinations are capable of attracting users' attention and generating spontaneous emotional reactions. SA explained that when viewing the published content, they experienced various affective responses, including admiration for the beauty of the destinations, curiosity to learn more about them, and interest in visiting the featured locations. These emotional responses indicate that visual content on social media does not merely communicate tourism information but also creates emotional engagement that influences how followers interpret and experience the destinations being promoted.

Dwi Dini Farah Diva et al
Followers' Affective Responses to Tourism Information on Instagram:
A Study of the @zonakalakkaro Instagram Account



Figure 2. Tourism Post on the Instagram Account @Zonakalakkaro, October 7, 2025:
Foursety Lau Kawar Sinabung, Karo Regency

The image above was taken at Foursety Lau Kawar Sinabung and presents a visual representation of a tourist destination that emphasizes natural beauty and an appealing environment for visitors. The aesthetic presentation of photographs and videos serves as the primary attraction capable of capturing followers' attention. From the perspective of Uses and Gratifications Theory, attractive visuals function not only as information providers but also as sources of emotional gratification through immersive visual experiences.



Figure 3. Tourism Post on the Instagram Account @Zonakalakkaro, October 20, 2025:
Telaga Sinabung, Karo Regency

The image above, taken at Telaga Sinabung, illustrates how tourism destinations are visually represented through the Instagram account @Zonakalakkaro, emphasizing aesthetic elements such as composition, lighting, and camera angles. The visual representation of tourism content also demonstrates the emergence of initial affective responses among followers. These responses are reflected in feelings of admiration, attraction, and a desire to learn more about the featured destination. This finding suggests that social media content is processed not only cognitively as information but also affectively as an emotional experience that shapes how individuals interpret the messages they receive.

Dwi Dini Farah Diva et al
Followers' Affective Responses to Tourism Information on Instagram:
A Study of the @zonakalakkaro Instagram Account



Figure 4. Comments on the Tourism Post Published by @Zonakalakkaro, October 20, 2025: Telaga Sinabung, Karo Regency

Based on interviews with SA, it was found that the visual and verbal elements presented through photographs, videos, and captions on Instagram possess a strong appeal for followers. SA perceived that the content successfully fulfilled their informational needs regarding the featured destinations. Beyond its informative function, the visual content also generated affective responses such as interest, curiosity, and admiration. These emotional responses emerged subjectively, depending on how individuals interpreted the messages, the extent of their informational needs, and their trust in the account as a reference source. The visual beauty conveyed through photographs and videos directly stimulated imagination and emotional attraction toward the destinations, creating a stronger desire to learn about and even visit the locations.

This finding is consistent with Wijayanti et al., who argue that, beyond acquiring information, followers tend to exhibit emotional responses after viewing tourism content. Attractive visual exposure and persuasive destination descriptions can evoke admiration, enthusiasm, and a desire to experience the destinations firsthand. Such conditions encourage individuals to visit, share information with others, and recommend destinations through their personal social media accounts (Farid Afandi, 2024).

These experiences demonstrate that digital visuals function as affective stimuli that create emotional connections between individuals and the spaces being represented. Visualization generates the sensation that participants have already “approached” the destination imaginatively, despite having had no physical interaction with it. Thus, Instagram functions as a space of emotional mediation between users and tourist destinations.

2. The Formation of Imagination and Expectations as an Affective Process

Followers' affective responses do not end with their initial attraction to visual content; rather, they develop into a process of constructing imagination and expectations regarding the destinations being viewed. According to Uses and Gratifications Theory, media users seek not only information and entertainment but also emotional experiences and expectations of future experiences (Sumadiria, 2014). Therefore, imagining and anticipating particular experiences constitutes part of the fulfillment of affective needs that emerge through interactions with media.

PH explained that when viewing the photographs and videos published on the account, they began imagining the atmosphere of the destination before actually visiting it. Similarly, CA and SA stated that visualizations depicting natural landscapes, pleasant environments, and enjoyable tourism activities led them to imagine the destinations as cool, comfortable, and capable of providing enjoyable recreational experiences. Social media representations of tourist destinations thus

contribute to the construction of followers' mental images regarding the experiences they expect to have before making an actual visit.



Figure 5. Visual Content of a Tourist Destination on the Instagram Account @Zonakalakkaro, Located in Deleng Singkut, Berastagi

The image above presents natural scenery and a tourism environment that provides an impression of the experiences visitors may encounter. The visualization encourages followers to imagine the atmosphere of the destination before visiting it directly. Visual content on social media not only provides information about tourist destinations but also shapes followers' imagination and expectations regarding the tourism experiences they may obtain.

Based on an interview with Putri, it was found that videos accompanied by informative captions play an important role in attracting Instagram users' attention in the digital era. PH considered the combination of appealing visuals and informative explanations to be essential for encouraging followers to explore an Instagram account more deeply. In this context, Instagram is perceived as an effective medium for obtaining information quickly, particularly information regarding tourist destinations. PH further stated that the account @zonakalakkaro fulfills the criteria of a reliable tourism information source. Moreover, when viewing photographs of tourist destinations, PH spontaneously constructed imaginative representations of the atmosphere of those locations, thereby generating initial emotional experiences even before physically visiting them.

This finding indicates that visual and narrative content work together to construct emotionally charged mental images. Visual representations do not merely communicate facts; they also shape expectations and projections of future experiences. Affective responses are manifested through enthusiasm, curiosity, and emotional motivation to visit the destinations.

This finding is consistent with the argument of Citra Noza et al., who state that followers gain benefits in the form of knowledge, understanding, and information that align with audience needs. Social media has become a preferred channel for obtaining information due to its accessibility, rapid dissemination, and interactive nature, making it a more effective and efficient source of information than conventional media (Noza, 2019).

From the perspective of Uses and Gratifications Theory, social media is utilized to obtain information relevant to users' needs, including information necessary for planning tourism activities. The accessibility of information through Instagram enables followers to obtain references for tourist destinations quickly and conveniently. Consequently, followers' experiences demonstrate that

tourism promotion through social media operates through the construction of a collective imagination that precedes actual experience.

3. Affective Experiences Between Digital Representation and the Actual Conditions of Tourist Destinations

Another important finding of this study is the emergence of emotional experiences when followers compare tourism information viewed on social media with the actual conditions of the destinations. According to Uses and Gratifications Theory, media users do not merely seek information and entertainment but also develop expectations regarding the experiences associated with the messages they receive (Sumadiriya, 2024). Therefore, social media functions not only as a channel for information dissemination but also as a mechanism for shaping emotional expectations about future experiences.

In this study, digital representation refers to the portrayal of tourist destinations through visual content on social media, including photographs, videos, and captions published by the Instagram account @Zonakalakkaro. Such content highlights natural beauty, environmental conditions, and tourism activities, thereby creating specific perceptions of the destinations being featured. In contrast, the actual condition of a tourist destination refers to the real experiences encountered by visitors when they physically visit the location.

Based on CA's experiences, expectations formed through social media visualizations significantly influenced feelings and evaluations of the destinations visited. When the actual conditions matched the images presented on social media, participants tended to experience satisfaction and reinforce previously established positive perceptions. However, when discrepancies existed between the social media representations and the actual experience, participants reported feelings of disappointment or dissatisfaction. This finding suggests that tourism content on social media functions not only as a source of information but also as a mechanism for constructing emotional expectations that influence how followers interpret their tourism experiences.

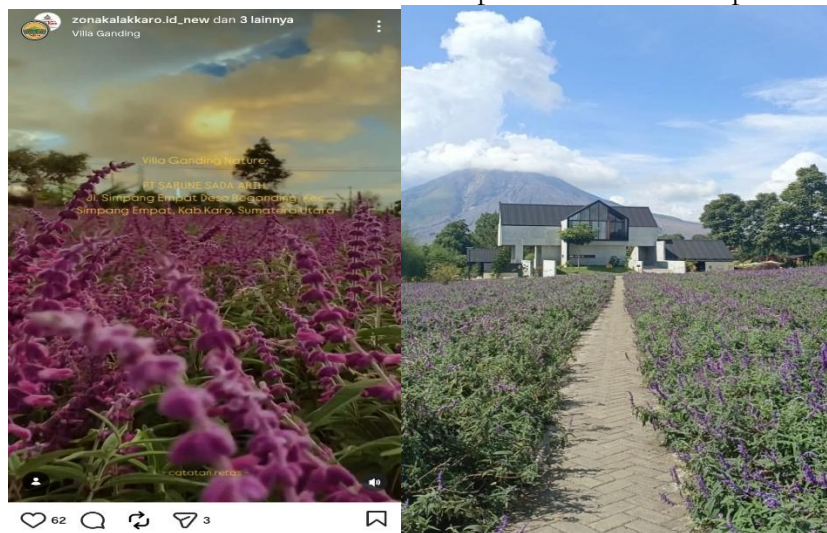


Figure 6. Differences Between Posts on the @Zonakalakkaro Account and Visitors' Actual Experiences at Sarune Coffee, Beganding, Karo Regency

The image above, taken at Sarune Coffee in Beganding, Karo Regency, illustrates the differences between the tourism destination as represented on the Instagram account @Zonakalakkaro and the actual conditions experienced by visitors. Instagram posts typically highlight natural beauty and attractive atmospheres through carefully selected photographs and

videos, thereby generating positive perceptions among followers. However, according to participants' experiences, actual conditions do not always fully correspond to what is portrayed on social media. Differences may be observed in the atmosphere of the location or in visual perspectives that differ from those presented in Instagram posts. This finding demonstrates that social media can create specific expectations, while direct experience serves as a process of evaluating the reality of the destination.

Based on interviews with CA, it was found that before following the Instagram account @zonakalakkaro, the participant's knowledge of tourist destinations in Karo Regency was limited to well-known locations such as Berastagi. After following the account, however, the participant gained awareness of a wider range of tourism destinations throughout the region. CA stated that the account provided alternative recommendations for places that had previously been unknown, thereby expanding the range of destinations available for consideration. Nevertheless, CA also noted that there were differences between the visual representations presented on Instagram and the actual conditions encountered on-site, as some destinations that appeared highly attractive in photographs did not fully meet expectations when visited in person.

This shift in feelings constitutes a clear indicator of affective responses. The experience demonstrates that social media possesses the capacity to shape strong emotional expectations, while simultaneously creating the potential for discrepancies between digital representations and the actual conditions of tourist destinations. This tension highlights that digital communication in tourism promotion is not neutral; rather, it carries emotional consequences for audiences.

Based on the overall analysis, the essence of followers' affective experiences toward the Instagram account @Zonakalakkaro can be formulated as an emotional process occurring in three stages:

1. Initial attraction triggered by the power of visual content.
2. The formation of imagination and expectations regarding tourist destinations.
3. Emotional evaluation after comparing digital representations with actual experiences.

Thus, followers' affective experiences are dynamic and reflective in nature. Instagram functions not only as a medium for disseminating information but also as a space for constructing emotional experiences that influence how individuals perceive and experience tourist destinations. This affective dimension demonstrates that the effectiveness of digital tourism promotion lies not merely in the transmission of factual information but in its ability to generate emotional engagement.

Phenomenological Analysis of Followers' Responses to Tourism Content in the Instagram Comment Section of @Zonakalakkaro

Based on observations of the comment sections on posts published by the Instagram account @Zonakalakkaro, various follower responses were identified that reflected positive emotional experiences toward the tourism content being shared. These comments illustrate how followers interpret the visual messages conveyed through the account. The responses expressed in the comment sections reveal a variety of emotional reactions, including admiration, attraction, and a desire to visit the featured destinations.

Table 1. Analysis of Followers' Comments on Tourism Content Published by @Zonakalakkaro

NO.	ACCOUNT NAME	FOLLOWERS' COMMENTS	DECODING RESULTS	RESEARCHER'S INTERPRETATION
1	@Anita_bee	"This place is so beautiful."	Followers interpret the	The audience accepts the visual message as a

Dwi Dini Farah Diva et al
 Followers' Affective Responses to Tourism Information on Instagram:
 A Study of the @zonakalakkaro Instagram Account

			content as a representation of the beauty of the destination.	depiction of the destination's beauty.
2	@rizkyhusnulhasanah	"Masha Allah, the waterfall is so beautiful, especially if seen in person."	Followers express admiration for the waterfall and imagine experiencing it firsthand.	The destination's visualization successfully creates positive perceptions and emotional attraction.
3	@ervi_venna	"The scenery makes me want to stay forever."	Followers interpret the destination as comfortable and enjoyable.	The visual message creates an impression of a relaxing and pleasant atmosphere.
4	@chaca_ghesafa	"Ahhhh, healing here would be such a mood booster. I want to come here."	Followers perceive the destination as a place for relaxation and emotional recovery.	Tourism content generates positive emotions that encourage visitation intentions.
5	@Raja.azka.official	"I could stay here for hours. It's beautiful and the atmosphere is so refreshing."	Followers perceive the destination as comfortable and calming.	The visualization of a cool and beautiful environment creates the perception of an ideal tourist destination.
6	@raveaira	"The definition of a tourist destination that doesn't make you cranky—so green and exceptionally clean."	Followers interpret the destination as clean and well-maintained.	The audience receives a positive impression regarding environmental quality.
7	@afifahalaqilah	"The view looks like it belongs in a painting. So beautiful."	Followers perceive the destination as highly beautiful and artistic.	The visualization creates a strong aesthetic perception, making followers view it as a work of art.
8	@partofilila	"The vibe is so calming when looking at scenery like this."	Followers experience a sense of tranquility from the destination's	The visual content successfully creates an impression of peace and comfort.

9	@sukakelilingsay	“This view is amazing. I want to come here too.”	visualization. Followers express strong attraction and a desire to visit.	The destination’s visualization generates positive emotions that encourage visitation intentions.
10	@astrellita.tw	“Sis, this place is so beautiful. Looking at it is incredibly soothing—it feels healing.”	Followers perceive the destination as beautiful and relaxing.	The content creates the perception of the destination as a peaceful recreational space.

Based on the analysis of followers’ comments on tourism content published by @Zonakalakkaro, most responses reflect positive affective experiences toward the featured destinations. These comments not only represent spontaneous reactions to visual content but also demonstrate how followers construct emotional experiences while viewing representations of tourist destinations through social media.

These findings can be understood within the framework of Uses and Gratifications Theory, which explains that media users are not passive recipients but actively select and use media to satisfy specific needs, including informational, entertainment, emotional, and psychological needs (Sumadiria, 2024). In this context, the comment section can be viewed as a manifestation of users’ active engagement in expressing the fulfillment of these needs after interacting with tourism-related content.

Comments such as “so beautiful,” “healing,” and “I want to come here too” indicate that followers do not merely receive information passively; rather, they actively use social media to fulfill psychological and emotional needs. These needs include entertainment, emotional escape (escapism), and aesthetic experiences.

From a phenomenological perspective, such comments can be interpreted as expressions of followers’ lived experiences when interacting with tourism content. Comments such as “the vibe is so calming” and “the scenery makes me want to stay forever” demonstrate that followers not only interpret the content visually but also experience impressions of tranquility and comfort. These comments reveal how tourism content on social media can generate perceptions of atmosphere, enabling followers to experience certain emotions even before physically visiting the destinations.

Several comments also reveal a desire to visit the featured destinations. This is reflected in statements such as “I want to come here too” and “healing here would be such a mood booster.” These comments indicate that destination visualizations are capable of stimulating interest and encouraging followers to seek direct tourism experiences.

Responses characterized by admiration and attraction suggest that the visual content successfully fulfills users’ affective needs. In this context, Instagram functions not merely as an information platform but as a medium capable of providing enjoyable emotional experiences for its users.

CONCLUSION

Followers' affective experiences toward tourism information published through the Instagram account @Zonakalakkaro are formed through emotional interactions between users and the visual content presented. The visualization of tourist destinations through photographs, videos, and captions serves not only as a means of conveying information but also as a stimulus that evokes emotional responses such as admiration, attraction, and curiosity toward the featured destinations.

These emotional experiences subsequently develop into a process of constructing imagination and expectations regarding tourist destinations. Through social media visualizations, followers build mental representations of the atmosphere and tourism experiences they expect to encounter before making actual visits. This process demonstrates that tourism-related content on social media plays a significant role in shaping followers' perceptions and expectations regarding tourist destinations.

Furthermore, followers' affective experiences are also formed when they compare digital representations of destinations on social media with the actual conditions they encounter on-site. Consistency between the visual representations and real-world conditions reinforces positive perceptions and visitor satisfaction, whereas discrepancies may generate emotional experiences such as disappointment.

Followers' affective experiences toward tourism content on the Instagram account @Zonakalakkaro occur through three major stages: emotional attraction to the visualization of tourist destinations, the formation of imagination and expectations regarding tourism experiences, and emotional evaluation after comparing digital representations with the actual conditions of the destinations. These findings demonstrate that social media functions not only as a platform for disseminating tourism information but also as a space that shapes followers' emotional experiences toward the destinations being presented.

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