



## The Roles of Jakarta Old Town Area Managers in Creating First Impressions of Tourists

*Desy Nur Aini Fajri<sup>1</sup>, Nadia Asti Nurmayningsih<sup>2</sup>*

*<sup>1,2</sup>. Universitas Gunadarma*

**E-mail:** [desynur@staff.gunadarma.ac.id](mailto:desynur@staff.gunadarma.ac.id)

### *Abstract*

This study aims to analyze the role of area managers in creating first impressions of tourists in Jakarta Tua City, focusing on three main aspects, namely the physical environment (servicescape), service quality (Servqual), and information provision. As one of the cultural heritage areas with high historical value, Jakarta Old Town is a leading destination that attracts domestic and foreign tourists. This study uses a qualitative approach. Data collection techniques are carried out through in-depth interviews, observations, documentation, and literature studies. Meanwhile, the data analysis technique is carried out in three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. The results of the study show that the area managers have made various efforts in building a positive first impression for tourists. These efforts include physical revitalization of the area, improving the quality of public services, and developing information systems, both online and offline, which are designed to provide a positive experience towards tourists.

**Keywords:** First Impression, Jakarta Old Town, Roles, Tourist

## INTRODUCTIONS

Tourism is one of the strategic sectors that plays an important role in encouraging global and national economic growth. Tourism makes a major contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) through foreign exchange, tax, and tourist expenditure. In some countries, the sector accounts for between 5% to 10% of national GDP [1,2,3]. Investment in infrastructure such as roads, airports, and public facilities is often driven by tourism needs, which ultimately provides long-term benefits to local communities [4]. Tourism can promote the preservation of cultural heritage and the environment through the restoration of historical sites, the promotion of local culture, and the sustainable management of natural resources [5].

Tourist destinations need to be able to create a positive first impression because the initial perception of tourists is an indicator of the success of the destination. In the context of the travel experience, the first impression has a significant impact on the tourist's overall evaluation of the destination, even stronger than the peak or end moment of the experience [6]. A positive first impression can increase the motivation of tourists to return to the destination [7]. First impressions

can be influenced by elements such as destination website design, which can create inspiration and a perception of high quality [8]. Verbal and non-verbal strategies used by tour guides or destination staff can help create a positive impression and increase traveler satisfaction [9].

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Thus, destination managers are increasingly required to create an environment that fosters a positive initial experience for tourists. Destination managers must be able to provide a physical environment, services, and information that can form a positive initial experience. A quality environment including cleanliness, safety, and aesthetic appeal, contributes positively to the traveller experience [13,14]. The concept of servicescape highlights the importance of environmental stimuli, such as visual, aural, and tactile elements, in shaping the emotional and cognitive responses of travelers [15]. The high quality of service, including efficient and friendly staff interactions, is an important driver of traveller satisfaction and loyalty [16,17]. The quality of service also improves the emotional experience, which in turn has a positive impact on overall satisfaction and subjective well-being [18].

Jakarta Kota Tua is one of the leading heritage destinations in Indonesia that has strong historical value, colonial architecture, and cultural attraction. Kota Tua retains Jakarta's historical, cultural, and social identity, making it a major site for cultural tourism [19]. emphasizing perceived authenticity and historical value, which significantly affects tourist satisfaction and revisiting intent. Efforts to preserve and adapt historic buildings are to enhance the tourist experience [20].

Various revitalization programs have been carried out, such as the restoration of historic buildings, pedestrian arrangements, and the implementation of vehicle-free zones. Although physical revitalization has been carried out, the dynamics of visits show that the management of the area has not been fully able to build a consistent and positive first impression for tourists. So far, research on heritage areas has focused more on physical revitalization and preservation of historic buildings. There is still limited research that specifically examines the role of heritage destination area managers in creating first impressions of tourists through the integration of infrastructure, services, and information provision.

There has not been much research that places the manager of the Jakarta Old Town area as the main actor in the formation of the initial perception of tourists. Therefore, this study explores further the role of Jakarta Old Town Area managers in creating first impressions of tourists. The first impression of tourists is influenced by the physical environment conditions (*servicescape*), service quality (*servqual*), and the availability of clear and easily accessible information. Quality of service that includes the dimensions of tangible, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy plays an important role in shaping a positive initial experience [21,22,23]. A positive first impression will increase traveller satisfaction and loyalty, including the tendency to revisit and recommend the destination to others [24].

## **METHODS**

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method to describe in depth the role of the Jakarta Old Town area manager in creating the first impression of tourists. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand the meaning, experiences, and

actions of managers from their perspective directly, so as to capture the complexity of the phenomenon being studied holistically. The descriptive method is used to present a systematic, factual, and accurate picture of objective conditions in the field, especially related to the manager's efforts in managing the physical environment (*servicescape*), service quality (*SERVQUAL*), and the provision of information for tourists. Through this approach, the research focuses not only on the final results, but also on the processes and dynamics that occur in the management practices of heritage tourism areas.

The data collection techniques in this study are carried out through several complementary methods. First, in-depth interviews were conducted with key informants who were selected purposively, including the staff of the Kota Tua Area Management Unit (UPK), information service officers, and operational officers who were directly involved in the day-to-day management of the area. Second, field observations are carried out to directly observe the physical condition of the area, public facilities, interaction between officers and tourists, as well as the availability and completeness of the information provided. Third, documentation is carried out to capture field conditions and support observation data. Fourth, literature studies are used to enrich the analysis by referring to literature, policy documents, and previous research that are relevant to the research topic.

The data analysis in this study has stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. Data reduction is carried out by summarizing, selecting main things, and focusing on information that is relevant to the formulation of the problem. Data presentation is carried out in the form of narrative descriptions, tables, and charts that facilitate understanding the patterns and relationships between data. Conclusions are drawn continuously throughout the research process, supported by data verification through triangulation of sources and techniques to ensure the validity of the findings. Thus, this research is expected to be able to produce credible and comprehensive findings regarding the role of Jakarta Old Town area managers in shaping tourists' first impressions.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Results**

Jakarta Old Town is a strategic heritage area covering an area of about 1.3 km<sup>2</sup> located in the administrative area of West Jakarta and North Jakarta. Its location connected to Sunda Kelapa Port, trade area, and the Ciliwung River network makes this area not only function as a space for historical preservation, but also as a center of social, economic, and tourism activities. Historically, Jakarta Old Town has had a long journey that has shaped its identity as a cultural heritage destination. After Indonesia's independence, the area was neglected and a number of historical buildings were degraded due to the pressure of urban development. Awareness of the importance of preserving cultural heritage prompted the Jakarta Provincial Government to designate Kota Tua as a cultural heritage area in 1972 and started various restoration programs. The collaborative program began in 2014 through the Jakarta Old Town Reborn program, which involves the government, business entities, and the private sector in the revitalization of the area. The combination of historical values, colonial architectural character, and sustainable preservation efforts makes Jakarta Old Town one of the main heritage destinations in Indonesia and an important foundation in forming tourists' first impressions.

The results of the study show that the management of Jakarta Old Town is carried out through an integrated institutional mechanism. Based on the Jakarta Governor's Regulation Number 294 of 2014, the Jakarta Old City Area Management Unit (UPK) was formed under the Jakarta Provincial Tourism and Creative Economy Office with mandates including planning, operational management, cross-agency coordination, supervision of the preservation of cultural heritage

buildings, and regional promotion. The existence of UPK allows the management of the area to be carried out in a more targeted manner to maintain historical value while increasing tourist attractions in a sustainable manner. The main attraction of Jakarta Old Town lies in the existence of cultural heritage buildings that have been revitalized and converted into educational and cultural tourism spaces, such as the Fatahillah Museum, the Wayang Museum, the Museum of Fine Arts and Ceramics, the Bank Indonesia Museum, the Red Shop, Fatahillah Park, and Café Batavia. The adaptation of the function of the historic building strengthens the heritage-based tourism experience and forms a distinctive regional identity.

The results of interviews and document analysis revealed that the management of Jakarta Old Town applies a collaborative approach involving local governments, cultural institutions, museum managers, and the private sector. This multi-agency involvement allows for the sharing of complementary roles, ranging from the physical preservation of buildings, museum management, the organization of attractions, to the reactivation of old buildings. The governance model shows that the success of heritage destination management does not only depend on the existence of historical assets, but also on the coordination capacity between stakeholders in providing an integrated and memorable tourist experience for visitors.

## **Discussions**

The results of this study found that there are three main roles of Jakarta Old Town Area managers in creating first impressions for tourists, including physical revitalization of the area, improving the quality of public services, and developing information systems designed to provide a positive experience to tourists.

### **Quality Improvement through Physical Environment Revitalization (Servicescape)**

The findings of the study show that the managers of the Jakarta Old Town Area play a strategic role in shaping the first impression of tourists through the revitalization of the physical environment that is oriented towards comfort, aesthetics, and preservation of heritage values. The revitalization of the area through pedestrian arrangements, restoration of historic buildings, and improved cleanliness and landscaping creates a positive visual stimulus from the moment tourists first enter the area. This condition reinforces the view that the physical environment is the initial element that shapes the perception and evaluation of visitors towards a destination.



Figure 1. Jakarta Old Town (Field Observation, 2025)

The spatial arrangement that prioritizes visual regularity and pedestrian comfort shows that the quality of servicescape in heritage destinations is not only determined by the existence of historical assets, but also by the ability of managers to package these assets into safe, clean, and accessible public spaces. A well-organized environment signals the quality of the destination, increases comfort, and encourages the formation of a positive initial experience. These findings are in line

with previous research showing that a quality physical environment contributes to satisfaction, emotional attachment, and a stronger image of destinations.

The implementation of the zoning system and the arrangement of economic activities also shows the role of managers in maintaining a balance between the preservation of cultural heritage and the needs of contemporary tourism. A clear spatial arrangement is able to reduce visual disturbances and activity density, so that the historical character of the area is maintained. This indicates that the management of the servicescape in heritage destinations requires an integrated approach that integrates conservation, spatial planning, and visitor management. In addition, the provision of inclusive facilities, such as wheelchair lanes, guiding blocks, open spaces, and easily accessible public facilities, demonstrates the manager's commitment to creating an equal experience for all tourists. This inclusivity expands the function of the heritage area not only as a space for historical preservation, but also as a public space that is friendly and adaptive to the diverse needs of visitors.

This study confirms that the success of building a first impression on a heritage destination is greatly influenced by the manager's ability to manage the servicescape holistically. Physical revitalization that combines the preservation of historical value, environmental quality, comfort, and accessibility is an important foundation in strengthening the image of Jakarta Old Town as an attractive and memorable cultural tourism destination from the first glance.

### **Service Quality Improvement (SERVQUAL)**

The findings of the study show that the managers of the Jakarta Old Town Area play an important role in shaping the first impression of tourists through the integrated implementation of the five dimensions of SERVQUAL. In the tangible dimension, the arrangement of pedestrian-friendly areas, restrictions on motor vehicles in the core zone, architectural lighting, and the provision of supporting facilities such as lactation rooms create an orderly, comfortable, and strong visual identity. This physical condition is the initial stimulus that affects the perception of tourists since they first entered the area.

In the responsiveness dimension, the speed of the officers in responding to the needs, questions, and complaints of tourists builds the perception that the area is managed professionally and oriented towards visitors. Quick response to incidents and the availability of multiple communication channels increase a sense of security and appreciation, which is an important component in forming a positive first impression.

The reliability dimension is reflected in the consistency of the delivery of information regarding the schedule of activities, map of the area, and historical interpretation in an accurate and transparent manner. The reliability of information reduces tourist uncertainty and increases confidence in destination management. Meanwhile, the assurance dimension is realized through the competence of officers supported by service training, mastery of regional history, foreign language skills, as well as the existence of certified guides and adequate security systems. This condition strengthens tourists' perception of the credibility and professionalism of the manager.



Gambar 2. Tourist Information Center (Observasi Lapangan, 2025)

In the empathy dimension, managers show attention to the diverse needs of tourists through the provision of disability-friendly facilities, such as ramp tracks and guiding blocks. The provision of inclusive facilities shows that the travel experience is designed to be accessible to all groups of visitors without discrimination.

These findings confirm that the first impression in a heritage destination is not only shaped by the historical and architectural attraction, but also by the quality of service felt by tourists from the beginning of their visit. The consistent implementation of SERVQUAL makes the Jakarta Old Town Area not only a space for cultural heritage preservation, but also a heritage destination that is professional, inclusive, and oriented towards tourist experience.

### **Provision of Information**

The findings of the study show that the managers of the Jakarta Old Town Area place the provision of information as the main instrument in building tourists' first impressions. The provision of information is carried out through the integration of offline and online services that allow tourists to obtain information quickly, easily, and comprehensively from the beginning of their visit. The existence of the Tourist Information Center (TIC), Kota Tua Tourism Information Center (KOTIC), the Free Guided Walking Tour program, and active social media strengthen the interpretation function of destinations and help tourists understand the historical value and attractions of the area. These findings indicate that clear and accessible access to information is an important component in shaping a positive initial experience at a heritage destination.

In addition to providing an information center, the manager also strengthens the tourist orientation system through the installation of interpretive boards, directions, and information displays that are integrated with the spatial layout of the area. The availability of information in two languages shows the manager's efforts to improve accessibility for domestic and foreign tourists. This condition is in line with the view that easy-to-understand information can reduce tourist uncertainty, increase comfort, and strengthen positive perceptions of the quality of destination management.

Nonetheless, efforts to build an optimal first impression still face various challenges. The presence of street vendors in restricted areas, the density of visitors on weekends and holiday seasons, the increase in the volume of garbage, the utilities of the area that have not been organized, and vandalism of cultural heritage buildings still reduce the quality of tourists' initial experience. These problems show that the first impression on heritage destinations is not only influenced by the provision of information, but also by the ability of managers to maintain order, cleanliness, security, and aesthetics of the area.



Figure 3. Old Town Tourism Center (KOTIC)

Various strategies carried out, such as increasing surveillance, installing CCTV, education for tourists, strengthening cross-agency coordination, adding cleaning facilities, and regional spatial planning, show that the creation of first impressions is a multidimensional management process and requires the collaboration of various parties. Thus, the success of building a first impression in the Jakarta Old Town Area is not only determined by the availability of adequate information, but also by the ability of managers to create an orderly, comfortable, safe, and characterful destination environment since tourists first enter the area.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study shows that the success of building a first impression in a heritage area depends on the ability of managers to restore quality through the revitalization of the physical environment (servicescape), excellent service quality (SERVQUAL), and the availability of easily accessible information. Good area layout, cleanliness, ease of access, friendliness of officers, and availability of adequate information form a positive initial perception, increase tourist satisfaction, and strengthen the image of Jakarta Old Town as a competitive heritage tourism destination. Theoretically, this study contributes by expanding the study on the formation of tourists' first impressions of heritage destinations through the integration of servicescape perspectives, service quality, and information management. Practically, the results of the study provide input for destination managers and local governments regarding the importance of managing areas that are not only oriented towards physical revitalization, but also on creating a positive and memorable initial experience for tourists. The limitation of this study is that this research was only conducted in the Kota Tua area of Jakarta so that the results could not be generalized to all heritage destinations in Indonesia. Thus, future research is recommended to conduct comparative studies on various heritage destinations in Indonesia to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the role of managers in shaping tourists' first impressions.

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