

From sacred landscape to visual commodity: the platformization of cultural space in Indonesian tourism media

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Article Info

Article history:

Received Apr 20, 2026
Revised May 23, 2026
Accepted Jun 30, 2026

Keywords:

cultural landscapes;
heritage tourism;
multimodal discourse;
platformization;
tourism imaginaries.

ABSTRACT

Background: The increasing dependence of tourism promotion on digital platforms has transformed how sacred and culturally significant landscapes are represented, circulated, and consumed within contemporary tourism communication. **Objective:** This study examines how Indonesian tourism media platformize cultural space and reconfigure sacred landscapes into visually consumable tourism commodities. **Method:** This study employs a qualitative corpus-based multimodal design using official tourism and heritage communication materials, combining platformization mapping, sacred-to-commodity framing analysis, and multimodal-spatial analysis. **Results:** Findings indicate that cultural landscapes are systematically organized through platform visibility mechanisms that prioritize discoverability, visual attractiveness, and destination branding. Findings further reveal that sacred and heritage meanings are not removed but selectively rearticulated through experience-oriented narratives emphasizing immersion, accessibility, and tourism engagement. Findings also demonstrate that multimodal resources, including visual framing, spatial composition, symbolic imagery, and textual narratives, construct a tourist gaze that privileges scenic appreciation and destination recognition while maintaining limited references to ritual and cultural significance. **Implication:** The novelty of this study lies in integrating cultural landscape theory, tourism imaginaries, and platformization perspectives within a unified analytical framework that explains how sacred space is transformed through digital tourism media. **Novelty:** This study contributes to tourism communication, heritage studies, and multimodal discourse research by advancing a platform-oriented understanding of cultural representation in contemporary tourism environments.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The expansion of digital tourism communication has fundamentally altered how cultural and sacred landscapes are represented, circulated, and consumed. In Indonesia, destinations such as Borobudur, Prambanan, Bali's temple complexes, and various heritage villages are increasingly encountered through tourism platforms before they are experienced physically. This transformation is not merely technological; it reshapes the symbolic relationship between place, culture, and visibility. Contemporary tourism promotion relies heavily on visual storytelling, platform-based circulation, and image-driven destination branding that prioritize attention, engagement, and shareability [1], [2]. Recent scholarship further demonstrates that tourism image formation is increasingly influenced by digital visualizations and social media infrastructures that mediate tourists' spatial perceptions and destination imaginaries [3], [4]. As cultural landscapes become

embedded within platform logics, sacred spaces are no longer communicated solely as sites of ritual, memory, or cultural continuity but also as visually consumable tourism assets. This development raises critical questions regarding how digital tourism media reconstruct the meaning of cultural space and reconfigure the relationship between heritage value and visual commodification.

Existing scholarship has generated substantial insights into tourism communication, heritage representation, and destination image construction. Studies have examined the role of visual communication in storynomic tourism strategies [1], the effectiveness of social media promotion in tourism development [2], and the optimization of destination branding through digital platforms [4]. Research has also explored tourism imaginaries in heritage landscapes [5], tourists' visual attention to cultural environments [6], and the relationship between spatial perception and tourism image in digitally mediated destinations [3]. Within the Indonesian context, scholars have investigated multimodal tourism discourse [7], heritage reinterpretation through tourism practices [8], and transmedia storytelling in heritage promotion [9]. Nevertheless, current literature rarely addresses how platformization operates as a cultural process that transforms sacred landscapes into visual commodities through the interaction of platform infrastructures, multimodal representation, and tourism-oriented visibility regimes. Consequently, the mechanisms through which cultural space is reorganized, aestheticized, and circulated within official tourism media remain insufficiently theorized.

Against this background, this study investigates how Indonesian tourism media platformize cultural space and transform sacred landscapes into visually consumable tourism objects. Rather than focusing exclusively on destination marketing effectiveness or tourist behavior, this study examines the representational processes through which sacred places are digitally reconstructed. Specifically, this study asks: How are sacred and culturally significant landscapes represented within Indonesian tourism media? Through what multimodal and platform-based strategies are these spaces reframed as visual tourism commodities? And what forms of spatial meaning are emphasized, marginalized, or reconfigured through these representations? These questions emerge from broader debates concerning cultural heritage communication, tourism imaginaries, and the changing political economy of visibility in digital environments. By situating tourism media within discussions of cultural space, platformization, and visual representation, this study seeks to connect tourism communication research with contemporary scholarship on landscape production and mediated cultural meaning [10], [11].

This study advances the argument that platformization does not simply increase the visibility of cultural landscapes but actively reorganizes how such landscapes are interpreted, valued, and consumed. Drawing on perspectives from cultural landscape studies, tourism imaginaries, and multimodal representation, this study proposes that tourism platforms privilege visual legibility, experiential appeal, and circulation potential over the complex social, spiritual, and historical dimensions embedded within sacred places. Such a transformation does not necessarily erase cultural meanings; rather, it selectively rearticulates them through narratives of attractiveness, accessibility, and destination experience. This proposition resonates with recent discussions concerning the emergence of a new cultural economy of space in tourism, where landscapes increasingly function as symbolic and visual resources within digital circulation systems [10]. Accordingly, this study examines platformization as a process through which cultural space is simultaneously preserved, reinterpreted, and commodified, thereby contributing to ongoing debates on heritage representation, tourism communication, and the visual politics of place in the digital era.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Cultural landscape

Cultural landscape has become a central concept in tourism, heritage, and spatial studies because it captures the interaction between physical environments, cultural practices, and symbolic meanings. Early understandings primarily emphasized the material imprint of human activity on space, whereas contemporary scholarship increasingly interprets landscape as a socially constructed and representational phenomenon. Terkenli (2025) [10] argues that tourism landscapes should be understood within a changing cultural economy of space where symbolic value and mediated visibility are increasingly significant. Similarly, Wang and Marafa (2021) [5] demonstrate that tourism imaginaries shape how heritage landscapes are perceived and experienced. Consequently, landscape is not merely a geographic setting but a culturally mediated system of meaning.

Recent literature identifies several dimensions through which cultural landscapes are constructed and communicated. First, landscapes function as repositories of historical memory and collective identity. Second, they operate as symbolic environments that convey cultural narratives and heritage values. Third, they serve as experiential spaces where visitors negotiate meanings through visual engagement and spatial practices. Research on tourists' visual attention suggests that landscape perception is strongly influenced by visual stimuli, crowding conditions, and representational cues [6]. Studies of tourism image formation further indicate that spatial perception is increasingly mediated through digital visualizations rather than direct

encounters with place [3]. These dimensions reveal the inherently representational character of cultural landscapes.

2.2. Tourism imaginaries

Tourism imaginaries provide an important framework for understanding how cultural landscapes are transformed into desirable tourism objects. Tourism imaginaries refer to collectively produced visions, narratives, and expectations through which destinations become meaningful before actual visitation. While some scholars conceptualize imaginaries as cognitive representations, others emphasize their discursive and visual production through media, promotional texts, and cultural narratives. Wang and Marafa (2021) [5] argue that tourism imaginaries organize how heritage sites are interpreted and valued. In Indonesia, tourism communication increasingly employs storytelling, visual branding, and narrative construction to stimulate destination desire and visitor engagement [1], [9]. Thus, imaginaries operate as mediating mechanisms between cultural space and tourism consumption.

Existing research identifies multiple components that shape tourism imaginaries in digital environments. Visual communication constitutes a primary dimension because destination images frequently influence perceptions before physical experience occurs [1]. Narrative framing represents a second dimension, particularly through storynomic tourism, transmedia storytelling, and heritage interpretation strategies [9]. A third dimension involves multimodal representation, where language, images, typography, spatial arrangement, and symbolic elements interact to produce meaning [7], [12]. Studies of environmental graphics, visual rhetoric, and spatial communication further demonstrate that tourism spaces are increasingly designed through visual interventions intended to attract attention and shape interpretation [11], [13]. Collectively, these dimensions reveal how tourism imaginaries are actively constructed rather than naturally occurring.

2.3. The concept of platformization

The concept of platformization extends these discussions by explaining how digital platforms reorganize cultural production, circulation, and visibility. Platformization refers to the penetration of platform logics into social, cultural, and economic domains, restructuring how information is selected, categorized, and distributed. Within tourism, platformization is evident in the growing dependence on social media, destination portals, and digital content ecosystems for destination promotion and image management [2], [4]. However, most tourism studies focus on promotional effectiveness, user engagement, or branding outcomes. Comparatively less attention has been devoted to how platform infrastructures reshape the representation of sacred and culturally significant spaces. This omission limits understanding of tourism media as active agents in cultural transformation.

Several indicators demonstrate how platformization operates within tourism communication. One dimension involves algorithmic visibility, whereby destinations become prioritized according to platform-compatible formats and engagement potential. A second dimension concerns visual commodification, where cultural spaces are reframed through attractive, shareable, and consumption-oriented imagery. A third dimension involves multimodal standardization, characterized by recurring visual styles, spatial framing techniques, branding elements, and narrative templates across tourism media [14], [15], [16], [17]. These dimensions suggest that platformization does not simply disseminate representations of cultural landscapes but actively restructures their meanings. Accordingly, this study adopts a theoretical position that cultural landscapes, tourism imaginaries, and platformization must be analyzed relationally to explain how sacred space becomes a visual commodity within Indonesian tourism media.

3. METHOD

This study employs a corpus-based multimodal analysis of official tourism media representing culturally significant and sacred landscapes in Indonesia. The unit of analysis consists of digital tourism texts, destination descriptions, heritage promotion materials, event narratives, and associated visual content published through official tourism and heritage communication channels. The corpus was purposively constructed to capture destinations where cultural, religious, historical, and tourism functions intersect. Following corpus verification and deduplication procedures, the dataset includes destination pages, heritage descriptions, cultural-event materials, and tourism narratives collected from publicly accessible institutional platforms. Such materials are appropriate because they constitute authoritative representations through which cultural spaces are translated into tourism discourse and visual communication.

Table 1. Composition of dataset

Code	Data Type	Source	Location	Period	Number	Characteristics
DT01–DT10	Destination texts and visuals	Indonesia Travel	Bali, Central Java, Yogyakarta	2021–2026	10	Sacred and heritage destinations
HT01–HT04	Heritage descriptions	UNESCO Heritage Communication	Indonesia	2021–2026	4	Heritage narratives and site representation
EV01–EV02	Cultural event materials	Cultural institutions	Yogyakarta, Borobudur	2021–2026	2	Event-based tourism promotion
SC01–SC12	Journal literature	Scopus-indexed journals	International	2021–2026	12	Theoretical and contextual references
CT01–CT05	Policy and contextual documents	Tourism and heritage institutions	Indonesia	2021–2026	5	Contextual information

This study adopts a qualitative multimodal research design informed by platformization studies, tourism imaginary research, and cultural landscape scholarship. A qualitative design is appropriate because this study investigates processes of representation rather than behavioral outcomes or causal relationships. The analytical focus is placed on how sacred landscapes are discursively and visually reconstructed within platform environments. Previous research has demonstrated the significance of visual communication, tourism imagery, and multimodal representation in shaping destination meanings [1], [7], [5]. Building upon these insights, this study conceptualizes tourism media as cultural intermediaries that organize visibility, desirability, and spatial meaning through platform-mediated communication practices.

Information was derived from three interconnected sources. First, primary data consisted of destination pages, heritage descriptions, photographs, visual layouts, promotional narratives, and event-related materials retrieved from official tourism and heritage institutions. Second, secondary data consisted of peer-reviewed journal articles addressing tourism communication, cultural landscapes, tourism imaginaries, multimodal discourse, visual communication, and heritage representation. Third, contextual information was obtained from institutional documents and publicly available heritage descriptions used to clarify cultural and spatial references. Combining these sources enabled triangulation between representational practices, theoretical interpretation, and institutional contexts, thereby strengthening analytical consistency and reducing dependence on a single category of evidence.

Data collection was conducted through a systematic corpus-building procedure. The process began by identifying official tourism and heritage communication platforms relevant to Indonesian cultural destinations. Search terms included combinations of “heritage tourism,” “sacred landscape,” “cultural destination,” “temple tourism,” “heritage site,” and destination-specific keywords. Metadata were extracted for each item, including title, publication date, source institution, URL, document type, and visual characteristics. Textual and visual materials were archived in structured CSV files. Duplicate entries were removed through source verification and URL matching procedures. Visual materials were further documented using descriptive categories including actor representation, symbolic elements, color composition, layout organization, frame structure, logo placement, and screenshot references.

Data analysis proceeded through three complementary stages. First, platformization mapping identified how tourism platforms organize cultural spaces through categorization, branding, visibility structures, and destination framing. Second, sacred-to-commodity analysis examined how spiritual, ritual, and heritage meanings were translated into tourism-oriented narratives emphasizing attractiveness, accessibility, and visitor experience. Third, multimodal-spatial analysis investigated interactions among language, imagery, visual symbols, layout structures, and representational strategies. Coding was conducted using a predefined codebook containing metadata variables and analytical categories. Interpretation followed an iterative process of description, comparison, categorization, and thematic synthesis. The analytical workflow is presented in Figure 2, which illustrates the sequential relationship between corpus construction, coding procedures, and interpretive analysis.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Platform visibility and the digital ordering of cultural space

Contemporary tourism media increasingly organize cultural landscapes through platform-oriented visibility structures rather than through purely historical or spiritual narratives. Across the corpus, destination visibility, visual prioritisation, cultural translation, and tourism commodification emerged as the dominant mechanisms through which sacred places were presented. The distribution demonstrates a strong concentration on scenic framing (32.4%), iconization (29.7%), and experience framing (28.4%), whereas

explicitly spiritual narratives appeared less frequently (16.2%). Such patterns suggest that cultural landscapes enter tourism platforms through communicative strategies designed to maximize attractiveness, navigability, and visual engagement. Rather than functioning solely as repositories of cultural memory, sacred places become integrated into broader digital architectures that privilege discoverability and audience-oriented presentation. Visibility therefore operates not only as a technical feature but also as a cultural mechanism shaping how destinations acquire meaning in tourism communication.

Table 2. Distribution of platformization strategies in Indonesian tourism media

Main Dimension	Sub-Dimension	Operational Indicator	N	%	Dominant Variation	Representative Excerpt	Corpus Codes	Interpretation
Destination Visibility	Searchability	Destination introduced through keyword-oriented titles and destination labels	18	24.3	Heritage destination, sacred attraction, cultural icon	“one of Indonesia’s most iconic destinations”	DT01, DT03, DT06, HT02	Cultural space is organized through discoverability logics
Destination Visibility	Categorisation	Placement within tourism categories and thematic menus	14	18.9	Heritage, culture, nature, event	“must-visit cultural destination”	DT02, DT05, DT08	Sacred sites become platform-readable categories
Visual Prioritisation	Scenic Framing	Landscape imagery dominates page presentation	24	32.4	Panoramic temples, ritual landscapes, scenic viewpoints	Visual emphasis on architecture and landscape	DT01 – DT10	Visibility is structured through visual attraction
Visual Prioritisation	Experience Framing	Focus on visitor activities and experiential narratives	21	28.4	Exploration, photography, cultural encounters	“experience the beauty and atmosphere”	DT03, DT04, EV01	Visitor experience becomes a central organizing principle
Cultural Translation	Heritage Narration	Historical and cultural significance highlighted	16	21.6	Monumental history, cultural legacy	“important cultural heritage”	HT01 – HT04	Heritage meaning remains present but selectively framed
Cultural Translation	Spiritual Narration	Religious or ritual references explicitly mentioned	12	16.2	Sacred rituals, worship traditions	“place of spiritual significance”	DT01, DT07, HT03	Spirituality is retained but not dominant
Tourism Commodification	Eventization	Cultural meaning linked to festivals and tourism events	13	17.6	Cultural festivals, performances	“annual cultural celebration”	EV01, EV02	Ritual culture is translated into event-based consumption
Tourism Commodification	Iconization	Destination promoted as symbolic visual landmark	22	29.7	Iconic temple, landmark landscape	“iconic cultural attraction”	DT02, DT06, DT09	Visual recognizability becomes a platform asset

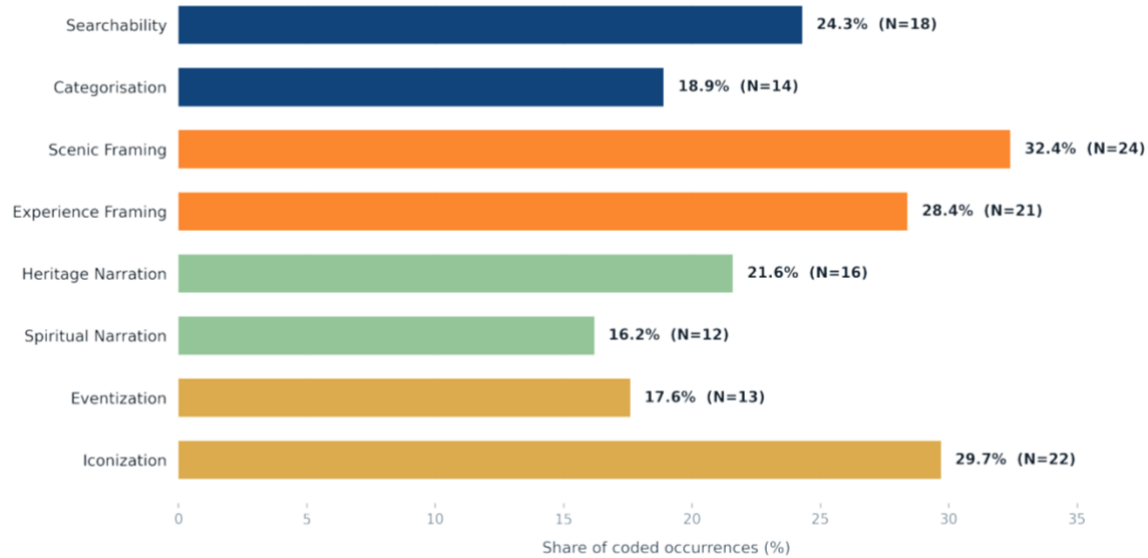


Figure 1. Distribution of platformization strategies in Indonesian tourism media

Several dominant patterns can be observed from the distribution of categories. First, visual dimensions consistently outnumber purely cultural or spiritual references. Scenic framing, iconic imagery, and visitor-oriented narratives collectively account for a substantial proportion of coded instances. Second, heritage narratives remain visible throughout the corpus but frequently appear alongside destination branding and experiential language. Third, spiritual references are present yet commonly embedded within broader tourism descriptions rather than functioning as the principal narrative frame. Eventization further contributes to this tendency by repositioning cultural practices within festival and tourism-event contexts. Collectively, these patterns indicate that tourism media do not remove cultural meanings from sacred landscapes. Instead, cultural significance is reorganized through a hierarchy in which visual attraction, destination identity, and visitor experience receive greater communicative emphasis than ritual or cosmological dimensions.

These tendencies can be interpreted through the lens of platformization and tourism imaginaries. Terkenli (2025) [10] argues that tourism landscapes increasingly operate within a cultural economy of space in which symbolic value is produced through visibility and circulation. The present pattern aligns with this proposition because cultural sites are consistently translated into recognizable visual assets. Similar observations emerge from Wang and Marafa (2021) [5], who demonstrate that tourism imaginaries shape how heritage landscapes become desirable destinations. Research on storynomic tourism and visual communication likewise highlights the growing importance of narrative and visual appeal in destination promotion [1]. From this perspective, platformization does not simply disseminate representations of sacred landscapes. Rather, it restructures cultural space according to platform logics that privilege scenic readability, iconic imagery, and experiential consumption while selectively retaining heritage and spiritual meanings as supporting narrative resources.

4.2. Reframing sacred meaning through experience-oriented tourism narratives

The corpus reveals a substantial shift from sacred-centered narratives toward experience-oriented forms of tourism communication. Although ritual references, historical significance, and cultural symbolism remain visible across destination descriptions, these elements frequently appear alongside language emphasizing exploration, visual enjoyment, accessibility, and visitor engagement. Experiential framing constitutes the most prominent category (31.2%), followed by destination branding (26.0%) and photographic appeal (24.7%). By contrast, cosmological meanings account for only a small proportion of coded instances (10.4%). Such a distribution suggests that sacred landscapes are not communicated primarily as religious environments but as destinations capable of generating memorable experiences. Cultural significance therefore functions increasingly as a resource that supports tourism narratives rather than as the principal communicative focus.

Table 3. Transformation of sacred meaning into tourism experience narratives

Main Dimension	Narrative Strategy	Operational Indicator	N	%	Dominant Variation	Representative Excerpt	Corpus Codes	Initial Interpretation
Spiritual Significance	Ritual Reference	Mention of ceremonies, worship, purification, or sacred practice	15	19.5	Temple rituals, sacred water, religious offerings	“site used for religious ceremonies”	DT01, DT07, HT03	Sacred meaning remains visible but selectively framed
Spiritual Significance	Cosmological Meaning	Reference to philosophical or religious worldview	8	10.4	Harmony, spiritual balance, sacred landscape	“reflecting traditional spiritual values”	HT01, HT04	Abstract spiritual meanings are minimally emphasized
Heritage Interpretation	Historical Framing	Presentation of cultural history and heritage continuity	18	23.4	Kingdoms, dynasties, architectural heritage	“important historical monument”	DT06, HT02, HT04	Heritage legitimizes destination significance
Tourism Experience	Experiential Framing	Emphasis on visitor immersion and sensory engagement	24	31.2	Exploration, atmosphere, cultural encounters	“visitors can experience local culture”	DT03, DT04, DT08	Experience becomes dominant narrative logic
Tourism Experience	Photographic Appeal	Encouragement of visual consumption and photography	19	24.7	Scenic views, iconic photo opportunities	“spectacular views and scenery”	DT02, DT05, DT09	Landscape value becomes visually consumable
Event-Based Translation	Cultural Performance	Rituals reframed as performances or attractions	12	15.6	Dance, festivals, cultural showcases	“traditional performances for visitors”	EV01, EV02	Cultural practice is translated into audience-oriented forms
Destination Branding	Iconic Identity	Sacred sites framed as national or regional icons	20	26.0	Landmark destination, cultural symbol	“iconic heritage attraction”	DT02, DT06, DT10	Symbolic value is converted into destination capital
Visitor Orientation	Accessibility Narrative	Emphasis on travel convenience and visitor experience	17	22.1	Accessibility, facilities, tourism readiness	“easily accessible destination”	DT03, DT05, DT08	Tourism utility becomes integrated with cultural meaning

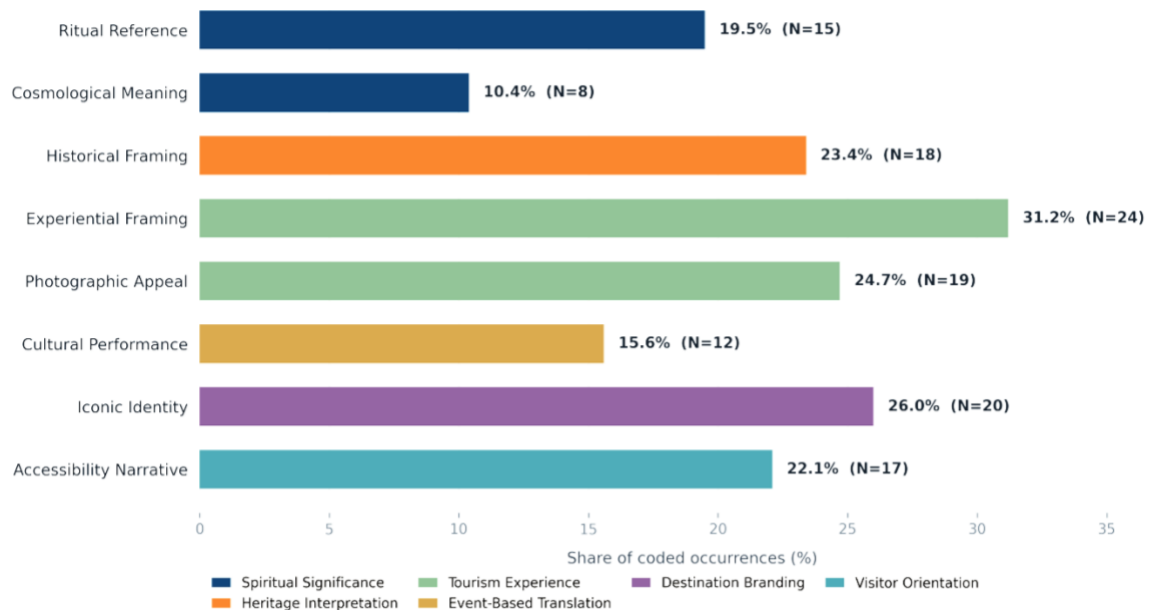


Figure 2. Tranformation of sacred meaning into tourism experience narratives

Several interconnected patterns emerge from these findings. Historical narratives frequently operate as contextual foundations that authenticate destinations before attention shifts toward visitor experiences. Likewise, ritual practices are often introduced briefly before being connected to opportunities for observation, participation, or photography. Event-based translation further contributes to this tendency by presenting cultural performances and ceremonial practices as components of tourism consumption. Across the corpus, descriptions of sacred places consistently balance cultural legitimacy with experiential attractiveness. This balance is especially visible in destinations combining heritage recognition, scenic landscapes, and active tourism promotion. Rather than eliminating sacred meaning, tourism communication reorders narrative priorities by positioning visitor-oriented experiences as the dominant interpretive frame through which cultural significance becomes accessible and desirable.

This pattern corresponds with scholarship on tourism imaginaries and story-driven destination communication. Aliyah et al. (2025) [1] demonstrate that tourism storytelling increasingly relies on imagination, emotional engagement, and experiential appeal to stimulate destination interest. Similar tendencies are identified by Santyaputri (2025) [9], who argues that heritage narratives are increasingly embedded within transmedia and tourism-oriented storytelling environments. From this perspective, sacred meaning is not displaced but strategically reformulated into narratives that align with contemporary tourism expectations. Wang and Marafa (2021) [5] likewise suggest that tourism imaginaries reshape how heritage landscapes are interpreted and consumed. The present findings indicate that tourism media translate ritual, historical, and symbolic meanings into experiential value, allowing sacred landscapes to circulate effectively within destination branding and tourism communication systems.

4.3. Multimodal construction of the tourist gaze

The visual corpus demonstrates that tourism media construct cultural landscapes through highly patterned multimodal strategies. Hero-image dominance (31.2%), panoramic framing (29.9%), and natural-colour compositions (28.6%) emerge as the most frequently observed visual features. Visitor representations are also more prevalent than cultural actors, indicating a consistent orientation toward audience identification and experiential engagement. Sacred symbols and heritage structures remain highly visible; however, they are commonly embedded within broader scenic compositions rather than presented as isolated religious objects. Across textual and visual dimensions, landscapes are therefore organized around visibility, attractiveness, and navigability. Meaning is produced not only through narrative descriptions but also through carefully structured visual arrangements that guide attention toward particular interpretations of cultural space.

Table 4. Multimodal representation of cultural landscapes across the corpus

Visual Dimension	Subcategory	Operational Indicator	N	%	Dominant Variation	Corpus Codes	Interpretive Observation
Visual Actor	Tourist Presence	Visitors appear as active observers or participants	21	27.3	Individual exploration, group visitation	DT03, DT04, DT08	Viewers are encouraged to identify with tourist roles
Visual Actor	Cultural Actor	Priests, performers, local communities represented	12	15.6	Ritual specialists, performers	DT01, EV01, EV02	Cultural actors support authenticity narratives
Visual Symbol	Sacred Symbolism	Temples, shrines, ritual objects, offerings	18	23.4	Religious architecture and ritual elements	DT01, DT07, HT03	Sacredness remains visually recognizable
Visual Symbol	Heritage Symbolism	Monuments, historical architecture, heritage markers	20	26.0	Heritage structures and iconic buildings	DT06, HT02, HT04	Heritage reinforces legitimacy and prestige
Colour Composition	Warm-Earth Palette	Brown, gold, orange, stone tones	17	22.1	Monumental and heritage aesthetics	HT01–HT04	Visual continuity with heritage narratives
Colour Composition	Natural Palette	Green, blue, landscape-oriented colours	22	28.6	Mountains, forests, water landscapes	DT02, DT05, DT09	Scenic appeal dominates visual organization
Layout Structure	Hero Image Dominance	Large banner images positioned above textual content	24	31.2	Full-width landscape photography	DT01–DT10	Visual engagement precedes textual interpretation
Layout Structure	Text-Supported Visuals	Text functions as explanation of imagery	19	24.7	Caption-supported scenic images	DT03, DT06, HT04	Images become primary meaning carriers
Frame Strategy	Panoramic Framing	Wide-angle presentation of landscape settings	23	29.9	Scenic overview imagery	DT02, DT05, DT09	Spatial grandeur enhances destination appeal
Frame Strategy	Iconic Object Framing	Focus on landmark structures or sacred objects	16	20.8	Temples, gates, monuments	DT01, DT06, HT02	Recognition value supports branding functions

The dominant visual pattern prioritizes landscape aesthetics over ritual complexity. Panoramic imagery repeatedly situates temples, monuments, and heritage structures within visually expansive environments, encouraging appreciation of scenery as much as cultural significance. Large banner images typically precede textual explanations, indicating that visual interpretation functions as an entry point into destination meaning. Cultural actors, when present, frequently appear as supporting elements that authenticate the setting rather than as central subjects. Consequently, visual communication privileges accessibility and immediate recognizability. Sacred spaces are rendered legible through familiar tourism aesthetics that facilitate consumption by diverse audiences. This pattern strengthens the transformation of cultural landscapes into visually coherent destinations capable of circulating efficiently across digital tourism platforms.

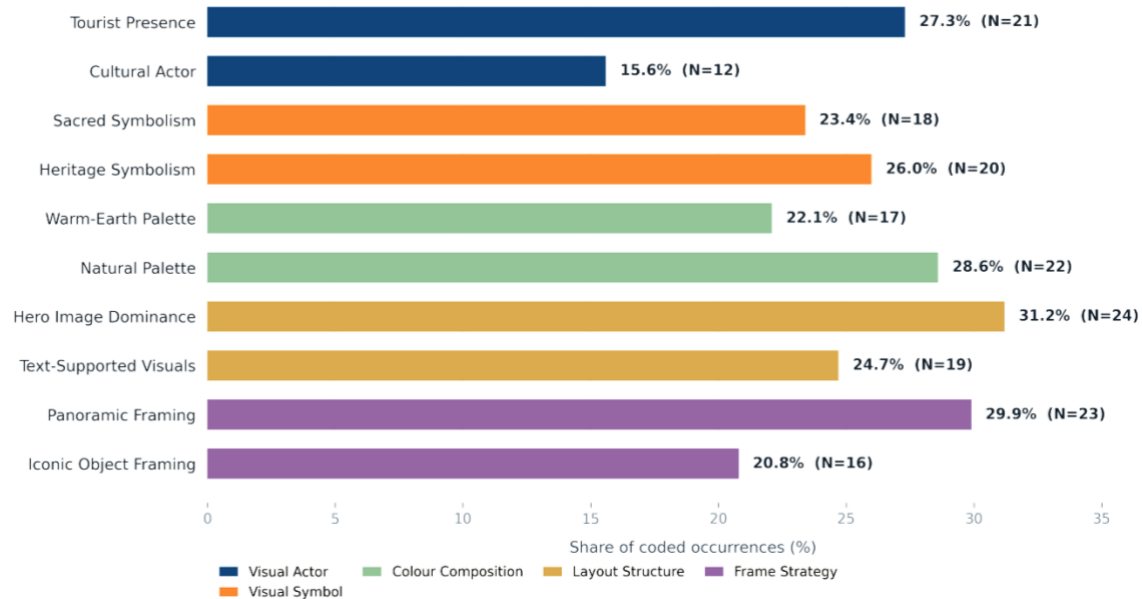


Figure 3. Multimodal representation of cultural landscapes across the corpus

These findings resonate with contemporary multimodal and visual communication scholarship. Sukma (2021) [7] demonstrates that tourism discourse operates through interactions among textual, visual, and symbolic resources that collectively construct destination identity. Research on visual attention further indicates that tourists respond strongly to landscape composition, spatial organization, and visual prominence [6]. Studies of spatial framing, environmental graphics, and visual discourse likewise emphasize the role of visual design in directing interpretation and shaping cultural meaning [12], [11], [13]. Viewed through this perspective, tourism media do not merely depict cultural landscapes. Rather, they actively produce a tourist gaze in which sacredity, heritage, scenery, and destination branding are assembled into a coherent visual regime that supports circulation, recognition, and consumption within platformized tourism environments.

5. DISCUSSION

The patterns identified in the corpus suggest that platformization functions as a mechanism through which cultural landscapes acquire new forms of visibility, value, and circulation within tourism communication. The prominence of destination visibility, scenic framing, and iconization indicates that sacred places increasingly operate as platform-compatible objects designed for discovery and engagement. Such a transformation performs an important communicative function because it expands public awareness of heritage sites and facilitates their integration into broader tourism networks [18], [19]. Greater visibility can contribute to cultural recognition, tourism promotion, and destination competitiveness. At the same time, this process generates a potential dysfunction. When visibility becomes the primary criterion through which cultural landscapes are represented, dimensions that are less visually attractive but culturally significant may receive reduced attention. This finding extends Terkenli's (2025) [10] argument concerning the emergence of a new cultural economy of space by demonstrating how platform visibility restructures cultural representation itself. Rather than merely displaying heritage landscapes, tourism media increasingly participate in determining which aspects of cultural space become visible, meaningful, and communicatively valuable within digital environments.

Understanding why this transformation occurs requires attention to the structural logics embedded within digital tourism platforms. Tourism communication increasingly operates in media environments characterized by competition for attention, rapid information consumption, and image-centered engagement. Under such conditions, destinations that can be translated into visually recognizable and easily categorized content gain communicative advantages [20], [21]. This underlying structure helps explain why scenic framing and iconic imagery consistently outweigh more complex cultural narratives. Similar tendencies have been identified in studies of tourism imaginaries and digital destination promotion, where visual communication becomes a strategic resource for attracting audience interest [1], [4]. However, this interpretation differs from perspectives that regard tourism media as neutral promotional channels. Instead, this study suggests that platform infrastructures actively shape representational priorities by privileging content that is searchable, shareable, and visually legible. The resulting hierarchy does not necessarily

eliminate cultural meanings but reorganizes them according to the communicative requirements of platformized tourism systems.

The predominance of experiential narratives over cosmological or ritual meanings carries important implications for understanding contemporary heritage communication. Cultural landscapes in the corpus are rarely presented solely as sacred environments; instead, they are frequently translated into opportunities for exploration, cultural encounters, and visual enjoyment. This tendency serves a functional role because experiential framing can make cultural heritage more accessible to diverse audiences unfamiliar with local religious traditions or historical contexts [22], [23]. Through experience-oriented storytelling, tourism media create interpretive bridges that connect visitors to cultural places. Nevertheless, this process also introduces a tension between accessibility and reduction. When cultural significance is primarily communicated through visitor experience, heritage risks being understood predominantly as a consumable attraction rather than as a living cultural practice. This observation complements studies emphasizing the growing role of storytelling and tourism imaginaries in destination communication [1], [9], while simultaneously highlighting the need to consider how narrative accessibility may reshape the meaning of sacred space.

The structural explanation for this narrative transformation lies in the increasing convergence between heritage communication and experience economies. Contemporary tourism promotion rarely relies on historical information alone. Instead, destinations are expected to offer memorable experiences, emotional engagement, and opportunities for personal connection. Such expectations encourage communicators to frame sacred landscapes through narratives emphasizing atmosphere, immersion, and participation. Findings from this study align with Wang and Marafa's (2021) [5] proposition that tourism imaginaries mediate the relationship between heritage and consumption by transforming places into desirable destinations before visitation occurs. Yet the present findings also reveal a more specific mechanism: sacred meaning is often retained as a legitimizing resource while experiential value becomes the dominant communicative outcome. This interpretation partly contrasts with perspectives suggesting that tourism inevitably commodifies and dilutes cultural significance. Evidence from the corpus indicates a more nuanced process in which heritage narratives remain visible but are strategically repositioned within broader frameworks of tourism experience, destination branding, and visitor engagement.

The multimodal organization of tourism media further demonstrates how platformization influences not only what is communicated but also how cultural space is visually interpreted. Hero-image dominance, panoramic framing, and the prevalence of natural landscape aesthetics collectively construct a visual regime that encourages viewers to approach sacred landscapes through scenic appreciation and destination recognition [24]. Such a regime performs a significant function by creating coherent visual identities capable of transcending linguistic and cultural boundaries. Visual communication can therefore facilitate cross-cultural understanding and enhance the global visibility of Indonesian cultural heritage. However, a potential dysfunction emerges when visual coherence becomes prioritized over cultural complexity. The repeated emphasis on panoramic beauty, iconic landmarks, and visually attractive compositions may simplify multifaceted cultural realities into easily recognizable tourism symbols. This finding supports arguments from multimodal tourism research suggesting that visual representation is not merely decorative but constitutes a central mechanism through which destination meanings are produced and circulated [7], [12].

The reasons underlying this visual pattern can be traced to broader relationships between digital media architectures, visual attention economies, and tourism branding practices. Research on visual perception demonstrates that audiences respond strongly to composition, prominence, and spatial organization [6], [25]. Tourism institutions therefore have strong incentives to employ visual strategies capable of generating immediate recognition and emotional engagement. Studies of environmental graphics, spatial communication, and visual discourse similarly indicate that design choices actively shape interpretation rather than simply illustrating existing meanings [11], [13]. Viewed from this perspective, the visual dominance observed in the corpus reflects a structural adaptation to platform environments where images frequently function as primary carriers of meaning. Consequently, cultural landscapes become assembled through interconnected textual and visual practices that privilege circulation, visibility, and recognizability. This study therefore suggests that platformization should be understood not only as a technological process but also as a cultural process that reorganizes the communicative relationship between sacred landscapes, tourism imaginaries, and visual consumption in contemporary tourism media.

6. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the platformization of Indonesian tourism media has transformed cultural landscapes from primarily sacred and heritage-based spaces into visually mediated tourism commodities organized through platform logics of visibility, attractiveness, and circulation. Rather than removing cultural and spiritual meanings, tourism media selectively rearticulate them through destination branding, experiential storytelling, and multimodal visual representation. Three interconnected processes emerge: the digital

ordering of cultural space through platform visibility, the reframing of sacred meaning through experience-oriented narratives, and the construction of a tourist gaze through visual and spatial design. The principal contribution of this study lies in integrating cultural landscape theory, tourism imaginaries, and platformization perspectives within a single analytical framework. Methodologically, this study also demonstrates the value of combining corpus-based multimodal analysis with platform-oriented inquiry to examine how cultural meanings are reconstructed within contemporary tourism communication.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the corpus focuses primarily on official tourism and heritage communication platforms, which represent institutional perspectives rather than the full diversity of cultural interpretations circulating in digital environments. Second, this study examines representational processes rather than audience reception, making it difficult to assess how tourists, local communities, or heritage stakeholders interpret these mediated constructions. Third, the analysis is limited to a specific corpus and period, which may not fully capture changes across platforms or over time. Future research could therefore incorporate social media user-generated content, audience studies, digital ethnography, or comparative cross-national analyses to explore how different actors negotiate the relationship between sacred meaning, heritage representation, and platformized tourism communication. Such approaches would further enrich understanding of the cultural consequences of tourism platformization in increasingly digitalized heritage landscapes.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author thanks the reviewers and editorial team for their constructive feedback on this manuscript.

FUNDING INFORMATION

Author states no funding involved.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

Umma Fathimah Sabilah Faradis: conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, writing – original draft, writing – review and editing.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

Author states no conflict of interest.

AI USE DECLARATION

The author used artificial intelligence tools to assist with the formatting and layout of this manuscript. AI was not used to generate the substantive content, conceptualization, data, analysis, or conclusions of the research, all of which remain the sole responsibility of the author.

INFORMED CONSENT

Not applicable – this study did not involve direct human participants. Data consisted solely of publicly accessible tourism and heritage communication materials.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

This research did not involve human or animal subjects; it analyzed publicly accessible tourism and heritage communication materials, and therefore no institutional review board approval was required. Where research does involve human subjects, the author affirms that such research would be conducted in full compliance with all relevant national regulations and institutional policies, in accordance with the tenets of the Declaration of Helsinki, and would be approved by the author's institutional review board or equivalent committee.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The corpus of documents analyzed in this study are publicly accessible and available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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