

Sustainable Heritage Tourism in Urban Settings: Evaluating Glodok Chinatown's of Jakarta Tourism Carrying Capacity

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Abstract: Urban heritage tourism increasingly contributes to cultural preservation and sustainable urban development, yet destinations in dense metropolitan settings often face acute pressure from rising visitation. This study evaluates the tourism carrying capacity of Glodok Chinatown, Jakarta's oldest Chinese heritage district, by assessing its physical, socio-cultural, economic, environmental, and managerial components. Using a qualitative exploratory approach supported by field observations, regulatory review, and interviews with local residents, business actors, heritage experts, and government officials, the study provides a multidimensional analysis of capacity constraints. Results indicate considerable disparities between potential and reality. While the area's Physical Carrying Capacity (PCC) and Real Carrying Capacity (RCC) remain structurally limited by narrow streets, mixed-use density, and constrained public spaces, the Effective Carrying Capacity (ECC) is found to be only 104 visitors per day. In contrast, actual visitation reaches 1,000–1,500 tourists on regular days, with spikes of over 5,000 visitors during major cultural festivals. This excess contributes to congestion, increased waste accumulation, deterioration of heritage structures, reduced walkability, and commercialization of cultural practices. Socio-economically, tourism benefits remain unevenly distributed, with small local MSMEs facing competition from larger commercial actors. Managerially, fragmented governance, sectoral decision-making, and the absence of an integrated heritage management entity hinder sustainable development efforts. The findings underscore the need for capacity-based planning through zoning, visitor flow redistribution, improved interpretation systems, and strengthened community participation to ensure Glodok's cultural authenticity and long-term resilience.

Keywords: carrying capacity, sustainable tourism, urban heritage tourism.

History Article: Submitted 22 June 2025 | Revised 21 July 2025 | Accepted 31 August 2025

How to Cite: Nugroho, F. A., Utami, H. ., Silvia, Hadi, M. F. H., & Rata, J. O. R. (2025). Sustainable heritage tourism in urban settings: Evaluating Glodok Chinatown's of Jakarta tourism carrying capacity. *International Journal of Green Tourism Research and Applications*, 7(2), 178-190. DOI: 10.31940/ijogtra.v7i2.178-190.

Introduction

Heritage tourism has developed into one of the most dynamic and strategic segments in the global tourism industry (Light, 2014). Cultural heritage areas—whether archaeological sites, historic buildings, old city environments, or local community living traditions—have a strong appeal because they offer authentic experiences that cannot be found anywhere else. In an increasingly digitalized and homogenized global context, heritage tourism offers added value in the form of uniqueness, depth of historical narrative, and emotional connection to the past that can attract domestic and international tourists (Kaharuddin, et al., 2021).

According to the UNWTO Global Report on Cultural Tourism (2018) (UNWTO, 2018), around 40% of all international tourist trips have primary or secondary motivations related to culture and cultural heritage. This data shows a significant

increase compared to the previous decade, reflecting a change in tourist preferences towards the search for meaning, knowledge, and cultural engagement. In addition, UNESCO (2021) states that the cultural heritage sector contributes to more than 10 million jobs worldwide, including in conservation, site interpretation, and community-based tourism. This fact confirms that heritage tourism is not only about preserving history, but also a real economic force.

Theoretically, cultural heritage in the context of a city is not only an object that is observed, but also a space that is continuously negotiated between the past, present, and future. Therefore, the management of heritage areas cannot be separated from the socio-economic dynamics of urban communities that are part of the landscape. In the long term, the success of heritage tourism management is not only measured by the number of tourist visits, but also by the destination's ability to maintain cultural integrity, strengthen social cohesion, and maintain the sustainability of the physical environment (Colavitti, 2018).

Given this development, it is not an exaggeration to say that heritage tourism has become an important instrument in cultural diplomacy, city revitalization, and sustainable development. However, for this potential to be truly realized sustainably, a careful and data-based management approach is needed, including an evaluation of the carrying capacity of the area that is the heritage tourism destination (Su, et al., 2018).

On the other hand, the rapid growth of tourism activities in urban heritage areas often puts pressure on the local physical, social, and cultural environment. Phenomena such as tourist density, changes in land use, excessive commercialization, and damage to historical sites are real challenges faced by heritage area managers in big cities.

In Indonesia, the Glodok area in Jakarta is one example of a cultural heritage area that has high historical value. Known as the oldest Chinatown in Jakarta, Glodok holds a wealth of history, architecture, cuisine, and Chinese traditions that are still alive today. The DKI Jakarta government has identified Glodok as one of the leading destinations in the old city revitalization program and the development of cultural tourism. A study conducted by Fernando & Sarudin (2024) stated that in the first semester of 2023, tourist visits to the Glodok Chinatown area reached 450,641 in one semester. And data from a study by Kurniawan & Husin (2025) in the final semester of 2024, tourist visits to Glodok Chinatown reached 540,000 tourists, indicating an increase of approximately 20% in a year. However, along with the increasing number of tourist visits and the intensity of development, concerns have arisen regarding the sustainability of this area. If not managed properly, tourism potential can turn into a threat to the preservation of cultural values and the quality of life of the local community.

One important approach in managing tourism sustainably is through the evaluation of tourism carrying capacity. This concept refers to the maximum limit of the number of tourist visits that can be received by a destination without causing negative impacts that are ecologically, socially, culturally, or economically damaging (Erdogan, 2025). In the context of an urban heritage area such as Glodok, the application of the carrying capacity concept is crucial to maintain a balance between the preservation and utilization of cultural resources.

Unfortunately, studies related to the evaluation of tourism carrying capacity in urban heritage areas in Indonesia are still very limited. The approaches used are often sectoral, do not consider the overall sustainable dimension, and have not integrated stakeholder participation optimally. Therefore, this study aims to evaluate the tourism carrying capacity in the Glodok Chinatown area by considering the physical, social, economic, and psychological aspects that are relevant in the context of sustainability.

This study is expected to provide conceptual and practical contributions to the development of sustainable heritage tourism in urban areas.

According to Park, et al. (2019), heritage tourism provides various benefits, including:

- increasing local income and creating jobs,
- encouraging the preservation of local culture and identity,
- encouraging the conservation of historical sites and landscapes.

Meanwhile, in the urban context, heritage tourism refers to tourism activities that focus on exploring historical and cultural heritage found in urban environments, including colonial buildings, old town areas, museums, monuments, and distinctive urban traditions (Ponirin, et al., 2021). Cities with rich historical backgrounds, such as Yogyakarta, Jakarta, Melaka, or Barcelona, are often the main destinations for heritage tourism because they have historical traces integrated into the structure and culture of their cities.

In a specific context, the development of heritage tourism in urban areas has a special character. This is related to the complexity of the urban situation itself. Yagi & Frenzel (2022) explained that urban heritage has special characteristics, namely:

- Multifunction where heritage sites in the city often overlap with modern functions, such as old buildings that are used as restaurants or galleries.
- High spatial density. This is because heritage elements are often adjacent to commercial elements, residential, and modern infrastructure.
- Complex interactions between preservation and development. Heritage preservation efforts must be negotiated with the needs of city development and modernization.

However, there are specific challenges in developing heritage tourism in urban areas, such as:

- Gentrification where the modernization of historic areas can displace local communities and change the socio-cultural character of the area.
- Conflict between preservation and development. Tensions often arise between the conservation of sites and the demands of urban space for economic growth (Ripp & Rodwell, 2016).
- Congestion and infrastructure pressures caused by increasing numbers of tourists cause pressure on urban infrastructure, especially in the historic center.

Methodology

Using a qualitative research design with an exploratory approach, this study aims to investigate in depth the conditions and dynamics of the carrying capacity of heritage tourism in the Glodok Chinatown area of Jakarta. This approach was chosen because the issue of carrying capacity in the context of heritage areas is a complex topic and has not been fully revealed through quantitative approaches or previous studies. Through this approach, researchers seek to understand how social, cultural, physical, and institutional elements interact and influence the sustainability of tourism in the area.

The data sources in this study comprise primary data obtained through literature reviews, including scientific journals, books, laws and regulations, policy documents, and reports on heritage area planning and management. These sources provide a conceptual framework regarding the carrying capacity of tourism and the policy context applicable in the Glodok area. In addition, to strengthen the data, in-depth interviews were also conducted with various key informants, such as local tourism actors, heritage area managers, residents, business actors, and representatives from related agencies (for example, the). In addition, direct observation was also conducted at several strategic

points in the Glodok Chinatown area to observe the actual conditions of tourism facilities, tourist visits, social interactions, environmental aspects, and supporting infrastructure. The details of the informants and data requirements collected in this study are as follows.

Table 1. List of Informants

No	Informant	Required data
1	Leader of Pokdarwis (Tourism Awareness Group) Pecinan Glodok	Community participation, cultural preservation efforts, challenges in managing tourism at the grassroots level
2	DKI Jakarta Provincial Tourism and Creative Industry Office	Tourism policy, strategic plans, carrying capacity regulations, government programs for Glodok area
3	DKI Jakarta Public Works and Spatial Planning Office	Infrastructure planning, spatial regulation, revitalization projects, pedestrian facilities
4	Local Residents of Glodok Chinatown (street vendors)	Perception of tourism impacts, daily life disturbance, cultural continuity, social well-being
5	Local Business Actors (Culinary & Souvenir MSMEs)	Economic benefits, challenges in competition, support needed from government, tourism dependence
6	BPCB (Cultural Heritage Conservation Experts)	Conservation principles, evaluation of building restoration, threats to authenticity
7	Walking Tour Organizers	Visitor behavior, tourist expectations, challenges in interpretation and storytelling

Source: Researcher's Data (2025)

Data collection was carried out simultaneously by combining literature study techniques, interviews, and observations. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to provide flexibility in exploring the perspectives of informants, while observations were conducted in a non-participatory manner to capture symptoms that appear naturally in the field. All data were analyzed qualitatively using thematic analysis techniques, which include data coding processes, identification of categories and themes, and interpretations that refer to the local context of the Glodok area. This process aims to understand tourism carrying capacity not only in terms of physical capacity but also in socio-cultural and institutional dimensions.



(Source: Personal Documentation, 2025)

Figure 1. Data Collection through Deep Interview with the Informants

Results and discussions

Results

Pecinan Glodok (Glodok Chinatown) area in West Jakarta is one of the urban heritage tourist destinations that has a wealth of history, culture, and unique cuisine. Known as one of the oldest Chinatowns (Pecinan) in Indonesia, this area is a major attraction through the existence of historical buildings such as the Jin De Yuan Temple, old shophouses, and traditional markets that are still active, as well as the traditions of the Chinese community that continue to live in the form of cultural celebrations, religious practices, and authentic cuisine.

In terms of accessibility, Glodok Chinatown is quite easy to reach via various modes of public transportation such as TransJakarta, KRL Commuter Line, and MRT which are integrated with the Kota Tua Bus Stop, although it still faces the challenge of traffic jams and limited comfortable pedestrian paths. Supporting facilities (amenities) such as culinary centers, accommodation, and shopping areas are also available in various classes, although they are not yet fully organized in an integrated tourism framework. Meanwhile, support for ancillary services such as tourist information centers, certified tour guides, and digital promotions still need to be strengthened to support a quality tourism experience.

This area has been officially designated as part of the DKI Jakarta Provincial Tourism Strategic Area (KSPP) through the Regional Tourism Development Master Plan (RIPPARDA DKI Jakarta No. 6 Year 2015), indicating its position as one of the priority destinations that integrates historical, cultural, and local economic values. In addition, Glodok is also the target of various government revitalization programs, including the arrangement of pedestrian areas, restoration of cultural heritage buildings, and strengthening accessibility implemented by the DKI Jakarta Provincial Government in collaboration with the Ministry of PUPR.



(Source: Personal Documentation, 2025)

Figure 2. Current Condition of Tourist Attraction in Glodok

Legally, several important locations such as the Jin De Yuan Temple and Petak Sembilan Market have been designated as cultural heritage according to local

government regulations, strengthening the legitimacy of the area as an urban historical heritage that needs to be preserved. In the realm of cultural promotion, the Glodok area consistently hosts various local to international cultural festivals, such as Cap Go Meh, the Jakarta Chinese New Year Festival, and the Peranakan Culinary Festival which have succeeded in attracting thousands of local and foreign tourists every year (Rianto, 2021).

These activities not only strengthen Jakarta's multicultural identity but also act as the main attraction in the 4A tourism concept (Camilleri, 2018). Recognition of Glodok as a leading destination can also be seen from its popularity in various educational tourism programs and walking tours organized by local communities and creative tourism industry players (Azizah, et al., 2024). Even international media such as CNN Travel call Glodok one of Jakarta's "hidden gems" that holds a wealth of history and typical Chinese cuisine. This series of achievements shows that Glodok not only has high historical value but is also able to position itself as an active and dynamic urban heritage destination in the tourism landscape of the city of Jakarta.

Current Condition of Urban Heritage Tourism in Glodok Chinatown

By adopting the concept of Lei & Zhou (2022), Lucia, et al. (2017), and Gaonkar & Sukthankar (2025), a comprehensive model was obtained on how urban heritage tourism should be implemented in a destination, which considers the sustainability aspect. The following is an elaboration of the three concepts and their application in the Glodok Chinatown area.

Table 2. The Current Condition of Heritage Tourism in Glodok

Elements	Indicators	Current Conditions
Environment	Physical conditions, visitor capacity, waste management, air/noise quality	The physical condition of the Glodok Chinatown area shows that there have been efforts to preserve cultural heritage buildings, such as the Jin De Yuan Temple and the old shopping area along Jalan Pancoran. However, environmental management is not yet optimal, especially in terms of waste management and cleanliness. Visitors often complain about traffic congestion and the lack of green open spaces. The physical capacity of the area tends to exceed the threshold during weekends or cultural events, resulting in pressure on infrastructure and increased motor vehicle emissions.
Socio-Cultural	Community participation, maintenance of traditions, sense of place, perception of local identity	Glodok Chinatown still maintains a strong Chinese cultural identity, seen from religious activities, culinary specialties, to the annual festival calendar such as Cap Go Meh. Local people show active involvement in maintaining traditions, although some feel that economic-oriented tourism activities are starting to shift native cultural values. There are also concerns about excessive commercialization, which has resulted in the whitening of the area's identity into merely a tourist attraction without deep social meaning.
Economic	Local income, MSME support, distribution of economic benefits,	Heritage tourism provides significant economic contributions to local MSMEs, especially in the culinary, souvenir, and tour service sectors. However, the economic benefits are not evenly

	product diversification	distributed. Large business actors are more dominant in reaping profits compared to local residents who are only involved as informal workers. Several entrepreneurs stated that government support in the form of training and access to capital is still very limited. In addition, the diversification of tourism products is considered still low, with a high dependence on culinary tourism.
Governance	Heritage policies, participatory planning, regular monitoring, collaboration between local/international actors	Coordination between the management institutions of the area, both from the city government, tourism office, cultural communities, and the private sector, is still sectoral and has not been integrated into a sustainable master plan. There is no single institution that is specifically responsible for the holistic management of the Glodok heritage area. Several cultural communities have taken the initiative to hold educational events or tours, but regulatory and budget support from the government is still minimal. In addition, there is no sustainable monitoring and evaluation system for the impact of tourism in the area.
Culture/Values	Authenticity, cultural integrity, sustainability of cultural practices, preservation of local identity	The historical and symbolic values of the area are still preserved in various forms, from building architecture, culinary traditions, to historical narratives. However, there is no adequate cultural interpretation system for tourists. Information available in the field is still limited and not in-depth, so that many educational potentials are not utilized. The authenticity of the site is still relatively well maintained, but some renovations of old buildings are not in accordance with conservation principles, which has the potential to reduce the integrity of the heritage.
Technology & Infrastructure	Digital monitoring systems, technology-based conservation, smart tourism	The application of technology to support heritage tourism is still very limited. There is no digital site interpretation system (such as QR codes, audio guides, or information applications), even though this potential can help tourists understand the historical context of the area. Supporting tourism infrastructure such as signage, pedestrian paths, and public transportation have not been well integrated. The absence of an integrated ticket system and tourist information center makes the tourism experience less than optimal, especially for foreign tourists.
Institutional/ Political	Public-private partnerships, supranational participation, crisis management, heritage support policies	Policy support from the provincial government for the preservation of the Glodok Chinatown area is still not optimal. Although this area has been included in the Jakarta heritage priority destination map, there are no specific regulations that guarantee long-term cultural protection. Collaboration with national institutions such as the BPCB (Cultural Heritage Conservation Center) or UNESCO has not been formed systematically. The absence of community-based management institutions has weakened the

position of local residents in the planning and decision-making process.

Source: Processed Data (2025)

The seven dimensions show that Glodok Chinatown has great potential as a sustainable urban heritage tourism destination, but still faces various structural and institutional challenges. Strengthening cross-sector collaboration, active community involvement, and integration of technology and preservation regulations are important keys to encouraging sustainable tourism in the area.

Carrying Capacity Analysis

The tourism carrying capacity approach is used to detect the capacity of a heritage tourism destination, especially in an urban setting. As is known from scientific studies, urban heritage conservation areas have a much higher vulnerability than urban areas in general (Šćitaroci, et al., 2019). This is what makes urban heritage tourism activities need to be limited, and to obtain parameters according to the regional context, this carrying capacity approach is used. In general, the study of tourism carrying capacity is carried out through a sequential model consisting of Physical Carrying Capacity (PCC), Real Carrying Capacity (RCC), and Effective Carrying Capacity (ECC).

After going through the process of compiling the data needed from the Glodok Chinatown Area, the analysis of tourism carrying capacity as the analysis model proposed by Nugroho et al (2025) is as follows.

1) Physical Carrying Capacity (PCC)

Is the maximum number of tourists that can be accommodated by a tourist destination based on the capacity of the available space and physical facilities, without causing environmental damage or reducing the quality of the tourist experience. In the analysis of tourism carrying capacity, physical carrying capacity is usually calculated by considering the area that can be used for tourist activities, time limits for visits, and the minimum space standards required per person (personal space).

$$PCC = A \times \frac{V}{a} \times Rf \quad (1)$$

A = Land area of Pecinan Glodok= 132 ha

V/a = Space required per individual for tourism activities (specific for heritage tourism activities) = 1/1 m² (Butler, 2020)

Rf = Rotation Factor = 5.5 (Estimated daily tourist turnover cycle)

$$PCC = 132 \times \frac{1}{1} \times 5.5 = 726 \quad (2)$$

2) Real Carrying Capacity (RCC)

The maximum capacity of tourists that a tourist destination can actually accept after considering various real limitations in the field, such as environmental conditions, availability of facilities, and security aspects.

$$RCC = PCC - Cfn - Cfn - Cfn \quad (3)$$

Cf1 = Average rainfall = 0.5

Cf2 = Average land slope area = 0

Cf3 = Average building = 0.035

$$RCC = 726 - 0.5 - 0 - 0.035 = 725.4 \quad (4)$$

3) Effective Carrying Capacity (ECC)

The maximum number of tourists that can be optimally served by the tourism destination manager based on the available resources, manpower, budget, and management system. Different from physical and real carrying capacity which focuses on space and environmental boundaries, effective carrying capacity emphasizes institutional and operational capacity in managing tourism visits.

$$ECC = RCC \times MC \quad (5)$$

Where

$$MC = \frac{Rn}{Rt} \times 100\% \quad (6)$$

Rn = Tourism-related worker = 135

Rt = Non-tourism-related worker = 940

$$ECC = 725.4 \times \left(\frac{135}{940} \times 100\% \right) = 103.73 \text{ (rounding: 104)} \quad (7)$$

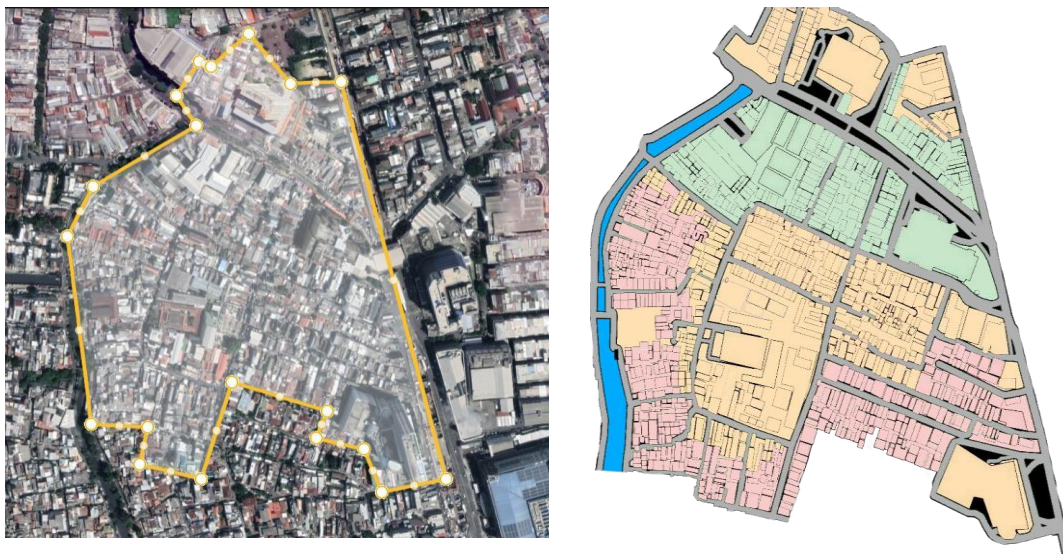
Discussions

From the results of the analysis, it can be said that the Effective Carrying Capacity of the Glodok Chinatown area is 104 tourists per day. This effective capacity is quite small. This is due to the original condition of the area which has been densely populated by trading activities. Moreover, with the density of buildings that have been standing for a long time. With this effective capacity, when compared to AV (Actual Visit), namely the average number of visits per day, it can be said that tourist visits to Glodok Chinatown exceed its effective capacity.

Table 2. Tourism Carrying Capacity Result Classification

No	Classifications			Status	Recommendations
1.	PCC > AV	RCC > AV	ECC > AV	Big CC	Can be further developed
2.	PCC < AV	RCC < AV	ECC < AV	Exceed CC	Must be organized and controlled
3.	PCC = AV	RCC = AV	ECC = AV	Optimal CC	Effective and efficient

Source: Nugroho et al. (2025)



(Source: Processed Data, 2025)

Figure 3. Pecinan Glodok Urban Heritage Tourism Destination Zoning

This study shows a stark reality for Glodok Chinatown: the space can comfortably host only around 104 visitors per day, yet it regularly welcomes 1,000 to 5,000 people during festivals. That's not just "a bit over" the limit—it's a flood that strains its streets, heritage buildings, and community life. In an urban heritage zone like Glodok, carrying capacity is more than a number; it's the balance point between keeping the place alive for visitors and keeping it livable for the people who call it home. When that balance tips too far, you see the telltale signs described by Butler (2020) and Ripp & Rodwell (2016): crumbling infrastructure, streets choked with crowds, traditional shops replaced by tourist trinkets, and a cultural rhythm that starts to feel staged rather than lived.

Glodok's situation isn't unique. Other heritage districts face the same challenge of keeping their charm without being overrun. Singapore's Chinatown is one example of how a destination can keep its cultural heartbeat while still welcoming the world. Since the Urban Redevelopment Authority's Conservation Plan in 1989, Singapore has carefully restored its historic shophouses, turned key streets like Pagoda Street into pedestrian zones, and spread visitors across several themed sub-districts—Kreta Ayer, Telok Ayer, Bukit Pasoh, and Ann Siang Hill—each with its own cultural flavor (Ajahari et al., 2023). Festivals are timed, routes are designed to guide people through different parts of the district, and real-time monitoring helps smooth out the surges (Zeng et al, 2023). While Singapore doesn't always use the term "carrying capacity," these measures function exactly as the UNWTO (2018) describes: keeping visitor numbers within the social, cultural, and environmental limits of the place.

In Glodok, by contrast, most of the action—and therefore most of the people—end up in the same narrow core streets, especially during big cultural events. Without zoning, without designated alternative routes, and without tools to monitor and adjust visitor flows, those streets take the full brunt of every festival crowd. The result is a heavy "tourism burden" that shows up in three ways: physically, in the wear and tear on old buildings and public spaces (Erdogan, 2025); socially, in the disruption of daily life for residents and the commodification of cultural practices (Su et al., 2018); and managerially, in the constant firefighting mode of trying to handle crowds without a long-term, integrated plan (Yiu & Cheung, 2021).

The lesson from Singapore isn't that Glodok should copy it exactly—every Chinatown has its own history and personality—but that capacity management works

best when it's woven into the everyday fabric of the place. That could mean creating a network of attractions so crowds naturally spread out, setting up timed-entry or staggered programming during festivals, and making sure local residents are part of the decision-making so that tourism supports rather than replaces their culture (Colavitti, 2018).

The real heart of the issue is that Glodok's greatest strength—its cultural magnetism—is also its greatest vulnerability. Left unmanaged, the very things that draw people in could fade under the weight of too many visitors. A multidimensional approach, mixing smart spatial planning, community stewardship, and real-time monitoring, can help ensure Glodok stays both a vibrant cultural hub and a livable neighborhood—mirroring the best practices seen in sustainable urban heritage zones worldwide (UNESCO, 2021).

Conclusions

Glodok Chinatown stands as one of Jakarta's most vibrant cultural heritage areas, yet this study reveals that its tourism growth has outpaced the destination's ability to sustain it. With an Effective Carrying Capacity (ECC) of only 104 visitors per day, actual daily visitation—often exceeding 1,000 and peaking at more than 5,000 during festivals—places intense physical, social, and managerial burdens on the area. Left unchecked, these pressures risk eroding the very "soul" of Glodok: its authentic cultural practices, historical architecture, and sense of place.

The comparison with Singapore's Chinatown illustrates that sustainable tourism in urban heritage zones is possible when capacity management is built into daily operations through zoning, visitor flow diversification, timed programming, and continuous monitoring. These interventions not only protect heritage integrity but also maintain a high-quality visitor experience and safeguard community well-being. Glodok's challenge, therefore, is not simply to limit numbers, but to redesign the way tourism interacts with its urban fabric—shifting from reactive crowd control to proactive, data-informed stewardship.

This study underscores that carrying capacity is not a static number, but a dynamic threshold shaped by spatial design, governance structures, and community participation. To ensure Glodok's long-term viability as both a cultural hub and a livable neighborhood, stakeholders must adopt an integrated management framework that unites government, local communities, and the private sector. By doing so, Glodok can avoid the fate of heritage destinations that have lost their identity under tourism pressures, and instead emerge as a model of how urban heritage can thrive—sustainably, inclusively, and without sacrificing its cultural heartbeat.

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