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Reframing Heritage Change: Applying the Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) Framework to Stakeholder Perceptions in the Heritage Area of Jakarta Historic District

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This study explores stakeholder perceptions of physical, social, and cultural changes in the Core Zone of the Jakarta Historic District using the Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) framework. As a major urban heritage destination experiencing increasing tourism pressure, the area faces challenges related to authenticity, social dynamics, and environmental quality. A qualitative approach was employed through in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, including heritage managers, local communities, and business actors, supported by thematic analysis using NVivo. The findings indicate that while physical improvements and increased visitation are generally perceived positively, stakeholders express concerns regarding crowding, socio-cultural shifts, and the gradual loss of community space. Rather than defining fixed thresholds, the study proposes qualitative indications of acceptable change based on stakeholder perceptions, particularly in relation to visitor density, environmental conditions, and socio-cultural dynamics. This study contributes by adapting the LAC framework to a living urban heritage context through multi-stakeholder qualitative evidence, highlighting the role of socio-cultural indicators and community space as critical dimensions of acceptable change. The findings also inform context-sensitive management strategies, including visitor regulation, cultural space protection, and participatory governance, to support more sustainable heritage tourism management.

heritage tourism; urban conservation; sustainable destination management; lac framework.

Introduction

Historic urban districts have become a central focus in contemporary urban tourism development due to their cultural significance, the role they play in shaping city identity, and their substantial economic potential, while simultaneously facing increasing visitor pressure driven by global tourism growth (G. J. Ashworth & Page, 2011; García-Hernández et al., 2017). Research on heritage destinations indicates that colonial-era architecture, historic public spaces, and museums contribute meaningfully to enhancing visitor experience and strengthening the attractiveness of cities; however, these assets also generate critical challenges related to conservation, environmental quality, and social comfort (Gravari-Barbas & Guinand, 2017; Timothy & Boyd, 2015).

These dynamics are closely associated with the rapid rise of urban tourist mobility, which in many cases places considerable strain on heritage infrastructure, exacerbates conflicts among stakeholders, and heightens the risk of authenticity loss due to ongoing processes of modernization and commercialization (J. Kim et al., 2019; Pinto et al., 2020).

Jakarta Historic District is an important urban heritage area in Indonesia, experiencing intensified tourist flows following extensive revitalization efforts, particularly around major museums that function as core visitor focal points (Table 1). The

Table 1. Number of Tourist Visits to Jakarta Historic District Heritage Area

Year	Number of Visitors
2014	196,433
2015	535,144
2016	733,921
2017	798,139
2018	840,671
2019	746,971
2020 (Covid-19 Pandemic)	153,223
2021 (Covid-19 Pandemic)	51,952
2022	542,554
2023	615,607
Total (10 years)	5,214,615
Average per year	521,462

Source: Statistics Indonesia (BPS), DKI Jakarta Province.

substantial increase in visitation over the past decade underscores its growing role as a cultural destination while simultaneously revealing increasing pressures on historic buildings, public-space capacity, and the social dynamics of surrounding communities (M. M. Su & Wall, 2014; [Vong & Ung, 2012a](#)). This pattern aligns with global evidence showing that heritage districts face heightened risks of physical degradation, erosion of cultural values, and social stress when tourism activities exceed local management capacities. Consequently, sustainable governance of urban heritage tourism requires threshold-based management approaches capable of integrating conservation priorities with visitor comfort and socio-economic sustainability ([Shen et al., 2025](#)).

One of the most widely utilized international frameworks for managing environmentally and culturally sensitive tourism destinations is the Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC). The framework acknowledges that tourism-induced change is unavoidable; however, such change must be regulated within thresholds that remain ecologically, socially, and culturally acceptable to the destination's stakeholders ([Cole & Hall, 2008b](#); [Stankey et al., 1985](#)). Extensive research demonstrates that LAC is effective in operationalizing sustainability by identifying measurable condition indicators, defining stakeholder-endorsed limits of acceptable variation, and supporting adaptive, evidence-informed decision-making within tourism management systems ([Manning, 2016](#); [Moore et al., 2013](#)). Its relevance is particularly pronounced in urban heritage settings, where management challenges extend beyond biophysical impacts to encompass complex social dynamics, resident–visitor interactions, and increasingly diversified patterns of spatial use in historically significant environments ([García-Hernández et al., 2017](#); [Miller et al., 2021](#)).

Although the LAC framework has been widely applied in studies on conservation-area management and nature-based tourism, its application within urban heritage settings in developing countries remains limited—particularly with regard to integrating multi-stakeholder perspectives, local value systems, and socio-cultural indicators of change in dynamic, lived urban environments ([Alazaizeh et al., 2016](#); [Chhabra, 2021a](#)). International scholarship highlights that one of the most persistent challenges in managing tourism–heritage interfaces in historic urban districts is achieving a balance between tourism growth and the preservation of place character, while ensuring that the voices of local communities are meaningfully incorporated into the establishment of acceptable change thresholds ([Alorfi et al., 2023](#); [Vecco & Ghilardi, 2020](#)). Consequently, there is a pressing need for research that adapts the LAC framework to urban heritage contexts in ways that capture the simultaneous, intertwined physical, social, and cultural transformations occurring in such settings.

In response to this research gap, the present study aims to examine the application of the LAC method within the Core Zone of Jakarta Historic District—one of Southeast Asia's most significant heritage clusters. The study focuses on understanding stakeholder perceptions of ongoing changes, identifying core values and desired future conditions to be maintained, determining indicators and acceptable limits of change, and formulating sustainability-oriented management strategies. This approach is expected to yield theoretical contributions to threshold-based heritage management models and provide practical recommendations for managing historic urban districts facing escalating tourism pressures.

Despite the growing body of research on heritage tourism pressure, stakeholder perceptions, and carrying-capacity-based management ([Dodds & Butler, 2019a](#); [Milano et al., 2019b](#); [Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012a](#)), the application of the Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) framework in urban heritage contexts remains conceptually underdeveloped. Existing LAC-based studies have predominantly focused on environmental conditions and visitor-capacity indicators ([J. Ahn & Back, 2018](#); [Beatley et al., 1997](#); [Newsome et al., 2012](#)), with limited attention to how socio-cultural dynamics—such as community space use, cultural expression, and social interaction—can be systematically integrated into threshold-based management approaches.

This study addresses this gap by advancing three contributions. Theoretically, it extends the LAC framework by incorporating socio-cultural dimensions as measurable thresholds of acceptable change. Contextually, it provides empirical evidence from a living urban heritage district in a developing-country setting, where tourism pressures interact with complex socio-spatial dynamics. Practically, it offers a set of context-sensitive indicators and management strategies that link stakeholder perceptions with operational LAC-based governance. By doing so, the study moves beyond descriptive analyses of tourism impacts toward a more integrative and operational application of LAC in urban heritage management.

Literature Review

Perception Of Change

Perception of change is widely viewed as a community's evaluative judgment toward tourism-driven transformations across physical, social, and cultural dimensions. According to the Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) framework proposed by ([Stankey et al., 1985](#)), communities perceive change through the extent to which existing conditions deviate from desired standards, especially in sensitive heritage settings. Physical change is often associated with environmental degradation, alterations in spatial configuration, and increased pressure on historic structures, which may influence comfort, congestion, and destination authenticity ([S. Kim & Kang, 2020](#); [Manning, 2007](#)). Social changes emerge as tourism intensifies social contact, reshapes local norms, and influences cohesion or conflict within the resident community ([Andereck et al., 2005](#); [Su & Swanson, 2019](#)). Cultural attractions also undergo transformation as tourism encourages adaptation, commodification, or hybridization of cultural expressions, potentially threatening cultural integrity if not managed appropriately ([Cohen, 1988](#)). Hence, community perception acts as a diagnostic measure of whether tourism development improves or diminishes the lived experience within heritage destinations.

Community values and ideal conditions

Values and ideal conditions represent the normative aspirations of residents toward how a heritage area should be preserved and managed. Within the LAC framework, these represent the “desired future conditions” guiding managerial decisions ([Stankey et al., 1985](#)). Studies highlight that residents generally expect heritage destinations to retain

authenticity, safeguard cultural memory, and maintain aesthetic integrity (Graham. & Howard., 2008; Timothy & Boyd, 2015). Communities often articulate values such as historical continuity, identity preservation, sense of place, and controlled visitor activity that aligns with conservation priorities (G. J. Ashworth & Van der Aa, 2018). Cultural conservation emerges as a critical mechanism through which communities preserve traditional practices, architecture, rituals, and knowledge that support cultural sustainability (Porja et al., 2013; Smith, 2006). Meanwhile, cultural tourism development—when inclusive and community-driven—can support local well-being, generate livelihood opportunities, and promote long-term destination resilience, provided that tourism growth remains compatible with conservation values (Y. Li et al., 2020; UNWTO, 2018). These values constitute the underlying criteria for evaluating acceptable or unacceptable changes in heritage contexts.

Indicators of change

Indicators of change function as measurable signals of deviations from baseline conditions, providing evidence for monitoring social, environmental, and infrastructural impacts in heritage tourism areas. Visitor density often reflects the most visible indicator, as overcrowding leads to congestion, reduced visitor satisfaction, and diminished resident quality of life (Dodds & Butler, 2019b; Seraphin et al., 2018). Environmental quality indicators—such as waste generation, air quality, structural wear, and landscape deterioration—are critical for assessing ecological stress and long-term sustainability (Ballantyne & Pickering, 2015; Munar & Gyimóthy, 2020). Social and infrastructure indicators capture changes in local–tourist interactions, neighborhood dynamics, gentrification, and pressures on public facilities, which may amplify socio-spatial inequalities or transform community identity (Milano et al., 2019a; Novy, 2018). These indicators help policymakers identify thresholds beyond which tourism-induced changes threaten the heritage destination's capacity to function sustainably.

Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC)

The Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) is a widely used framework conceptualizing how much change is tolerable before management intervention is required. Within heritage tourism, LAC provides a structured approach to determining acceptable visitor impact levels and establishing standards for social, cultural, and environmental conditions (McCool & Lime, 2001b; Stankey et al., 1985). Residents play an essential role in determining acceptable thresholds because they directly experience tourism's consequences, including noise, congestion, cultural disruption, and commodification (McCool & Kruger, 2020). Studies show that perceptions of acceptable versus unacceptable change differ across communities, depending on value prioritization, familiarity with tourism, and perceived benefits (Ribeiro, 2020). When change is perceived to exceed acceptable boundaries, communities tend to demand stronger regulatory and conservation measures. Thus, residents' perception of LAC forms a foundation for adaptive and community-centered heritage tourism planning.

Adaptive management strategies

Adaptive management strategies provide a dynamic approach for responding to evolving tourism impacts in heritage regions. Based on the LAC framework, adaptive management requires continuous monitoring, stakeholder involvement, and evidence-based decision-making to anticipate, prevent, or mitigate undesirable changes (Holling, 2001; McCool & Stankey, 2004). Strategies may include visitor flow regulation, zoning, preservation of cultural assets, capacity controls, and participatory planning with local

communities (Aas et al., 2005; Nguyen, 2022). Destination managers apply these strategies to maintain resilience by aligning tourism development with conservation goals and community values. Effective adaptive management also delineates responsibilities across government agencies, local stakeholders, destination management organizations, and cultural institutions to enhance preparedness for environmental, social, and cultural disruptions (UNESCO, 2021). In heritage contexts, adaptive management is crucial to ensuring that tourism remains sustainable, inclusive, and protective of historical significance.

Methods

This study was conducted in the Core Zone of Jakarta Historic District, a historic urban district that functions as a focal point for tourism, cultural activities, and the creative economy. The area encompasses Fatahillah Square, the Jakarta History Museum, the Wayang Museum, and the Museum of Fine Arts and Ceramics. Following the government-led revitalization program, the area has experienced a substantial increase in visitor intensity, producing a range of physical, social, and cultural transformations. These dynamics are particularly suitable for analysis using the Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) framework, which has been widely recognized for its ability to identify thresholds of acceptable development in sensitive environments facing tourism pressures (García-Hernández et al., 2017; S. S. Kim & Lee, 2020; Stankey et al., 1985).

To explore these transformations, this study employed an exploratory qualitative design to examine stakeholders' perceptions and lived experiences (Alazaizeh et al., 2019; Chhabra, 2021b). A purposive sampling strategy was used to select seven informants representing key stakeholder groups (Palinkas et al., 2015). These groups were included to capture diverse perspectives on tourism-induced change within the Jakarta Historic District.

Data adequacy was achieved as consistent thematic patterns emerged across stakeholder groups and no substantially new themes were identified (Guest et al., 2006). Credibility was enhanced through stakeholder triangulation and systematic coding using NVivo, following established qualitative research standards (Lincoln & Guba, 1988). The analysis was guided by the LAC framework, focusing on perceptions of change, desired conditions, indicators of change, and stakeholder-defined limits of acceptable change.

All interview data were analyzed using NVivo 12 to support systematic coding and thematic development. The analysis followed a hybrid approach combining deductive and inductive coding. Deductive codes were derived from the LAC framework dimensions, while inductive codes were generated from recurring patterns in the data.

The coding process was conducted iteratively, involving initial open coding, followed by refinement and consolidation into higher-order themes through constant comparison across stakeholder groups. To enhance analytical rigor, an audit trail was maintained within NVivo to ensure traceability of coding decisions. Credibility was further strengthened through iterative review of emerging themes and cross-checking for consistency across informants.

As presented in Table 2, the composition of informants reflects the involvement of key actors engaged in heritage management and tourism activities within the Jakarta Historic District. Community perspectives were primarily represented by cultural practitioners and local actors who actively use and interpret the heritage space in their daily activities. While direct representation of general residents was limited, these informants provided contextually grounded insights into socio-cultural dynamics and the use of public space. Therefore, the

Table 2. Profile of Research Informants

Informant (Code)	Institution/Community	Position /Role	Relevance to the Study
Suwandi (N1)	Wayang Museum	Head of the Wayang Museum Unit	Provided information on cultural heritage preservation efforts and public education programs.
Anshor (N2)	Wayang Museum	Museum Tour Guide	Contributed insights into cultural preservation practices and visitor education activities.
Sanen (N3)	Jakarta Historic District Onthel Bicycle Community	Head of the Jakarta Historic District Onthel Bicycle Community	Explained traditional values and the role of local communities in sustaining cultural heritage.
Istiqomah Armitawati (N4)	Jakarta History Museum	Head of Service Unit, Jakarta History Museum	Offered perspectives on preservation of historical values within the study area.
Irfal Guci (N5)	Jakarta Historic District Management Unit	Head of Administrative Affairs Subdivision	Provided an understanding of policy frameworks and area management strategies.
Ario Wicaksono (N6)	Jakarta Historic District Management Unit	Information Service Staff	Shared practical insights into on-site management and service implementation.
Ernida Rere Aryani (N7)	Magic Art 3D Museum	General Manager	Provided perspectives on contemporary tourism dynamics within the study area.

Source: Author's Analysis, 2025

Table 3. Operational definitions of research variables

Variable	Operational Definition	Sub-variable	Indicators
1. Perceptions of Change	Public and stakeholder perceptions regarding the physical, social, and cultural impacts of tourism on the heritage area. Within the LAC framework, stakeholder perceptions form the basis for determining acceptable levels of change (McCool & Lime, 2001a; Stankey et al., 1984). Urban tourism activities frequently trigger physical transformation, social pressure, and cultural shifts in historic districts	Physical changes in the heritage area (García-Hernández et al., 2017; Santana-Jiménez & Hernández, 2011)	1. Areas experiencing significant physical transformation 2. Factors driving physical change 3. Implications for comfort and heritage conservation
		Social interaction (Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012b)	4. Changes in social relations within the community 5. Locations most affected by social alteration 6. Strategies to maintain social harmony
		Cultural attractions (McKercher & du Cros, 2002; Timothy & Boyd, 2015)	7. Types of changes occurring in cultural attractions 8. Locations where cultural transformation is most visible 9. Strategies to safeguard cultural identity
2. Desired Values and Ideal Conditions of the Heritage Area	Aspirations and ideal conditions that stakeholders seek to maintain to preserve the character and integrity of the heritage district. In the LAC framework, these desired conditions define the benchmarks for acceptable change (B. Ahn et al., 2002; Stankey et al., 1985). Cultural values and local identity constitute a core foundation of sustainable heritage destination management ((Poria et al., 2006)).	Community values and aspirations (Poria et al., 2006; Stylianou-Lambert, 2016)	10. Descriptions of the ideal state of the area 11. Key values that stakeholders wish to preserve 12. Recommendations to maintain local values amid tourism growth
		Cultural conservation (G. Ashworth, 2011; Logan, 2012)	13. Tangible forms of cultural preservation 14. Key achievements of conservation efforts 15. Impacts of conservation on community well-being

Variable	Operational Definition	Sub-variable	Indicators
		Cultural tourism development (McKercher & du Cros, 2002; Richards, 2018; Vong & Ung, 2012b)	16. Types of cultural tourism products developed 17. Active locations of cultural tourism development 18. Strategies to ensure sustainable and positive cultural tourism impacts
3. Indicators of Change	Observable signs of significant transformation in the area, including social, environmental, and infrastructure changes. Within the LAC approach, indicators help determine current conditions and identify thresholds of acceptable change (Cole & Hall, 2008a; S. S. Kim & Lee, 2020).	Visitor density (García-Hernández et al., 2017; Santana-Jiménez & Hernández, 2011)	19. Zones with high visitor concentration 20. Impacts of visitor density on spatial comfort and usability
		Environmental conditions (García-Hernández et al., 2017; B. Su & Wall, 2014)	21. Current condition of the physical environment 22. Challenges in maintaining environmental quality 23. Conservation efforts implemented or planned
		Social and infrastructure dynamics ((Alazaizeh & Al-Zu'bi, 2019; Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012b))	24. Interactions between residents and tourists 25. Changes in supporting physical infrastructure
4. Acceptable Limits of Change (LAC)	Stakeholders' perceptions of the extent to which tourism-induced changes remain tolerable. The LAC framework emphasizes ecological, social, and cultural boundaries within which changes are considered acceptable (Manning, 2016; Stankey et al., 1985)	-	26. Changes considered acceptable by stakeholders 27. Changes perceived as exceeding acceptable thresholds 28. Required control or mitigation measures
5. Adaptive Management Strategies for the Heritage Area	Adaptive approaches for preventing, managing, and mitigating negative impacts of tourism-driven change. Adaptive management is essential for heritage destinations facing high visitor pressure (g25S. S. Kim & Lee, 2020; Manning, 2016).	-	29. Types of undesirable changes that must be prevented 30. Responsible actors and their preparedness to address changes

Source: Author's Analysis, 2025

findings should be interpreted as reflecting key stakeholder perspectives rather than a comprehensive representation of all resident groups.

Following the identification of stakeholder groups, data collection was conducted through in-person semi-structured interviews lasting approximately 30–60 minutes. All interviews took place within the Jakarta Historic District heritage area to ensure contextual relevance. Each session was audio-recorded with participant consent, transcribed verbatim, and imported into NVivo 12 as source materials for systematic coding and theme development. The interview guide was developed based on the operational definitions used in the study, covering dimensions such as physical changes to the area, social interactions, cultural dynamics, desired future conditions, indicators of significant change, and stakeholder-defined limits of acceptable change (see Table 3).

Result and Discussion

The findings reveal clear variations in how different stakeholder groups perceive changes in the Jakarta Historic District. Heritage managers generally view physical revitalization positively, emphasizing improvements in infrastructure, cleanliness, and spatial organization. As one manager noted, “revitalization has improved the area’s image, but increasing visitor density makes regulation more difficult.” In contrast, local community members express greater concern regarding socio-cultural impacts, particularly the loss of communal space and declining opportunities for traditional cultural expression. A community representative stated that “spaces once used for cultural activities are now dominated by tourists and vendors.”

Business actors tend to adopt a more balanced perspective, acknowledging economic benefits while also recognizing emerging social tensions. One informant highlighted that “tourism brings income, but the community atmosphere is gradually fading.” These differences indicate

Table 4. Research Findings Based on Stakeholder Perceptions

Research Focus	Key Findings (NVivo-based analysis)	Stakeholder Perceptions (illustrative quotes)	Supporting Evidence (NVivo coding)
1. Stakeholder perceptions of area changes	- Increasing physical improvements (revitalization, cleaner environment, improved spatial organization) - Negative social changes: congestion, reduced mobility, shrinking community spaces - Cultural changes: commodification of cultural attractions, diminishing traditional expressions	Area Management: "Revitalization is positive, but visitor density makes regulation increasingly difficult." Business Actors: "More tourists help the economy, but the community atmosphere is fading." Community and Cultural Actors: "Traditional performances are increasingly overshadowed by popular entertainment." Community and Cultural Actors: "Our social spaces are now filled with tourists and vendors."	Nodes: physical change, visitor congestion, social tension, cultural shift, loss of authenticity
2. Desired values and ideal conditions of the heritage area	- Preservation of colonial architectural authenticity - Continuation of local cultural expressions as part of the visitor experience - Balance between tourism activities and community well-being	Community and Cultural Actors: "Original buildings and local art must remain the soul of Kota Tua." Museum Management: "Museums should remain educational spaces, not merely photo spots."	Nodes: ideal conditions, heritage identity, cultural continuity, public-space comfort
3. Indicators of Change and Acceptable Limits (LAC Framework)	- Visitor density: acceptable when mobility remains unhindered - Physical environment: acceptable when clean, safe, and well-maintained - Social-infrastructure dynamics: acceptable when community functions and identity remain intact	Informant (Management): "If visitors can no longer move comfortably, the threshold has been exceeded." Informant (Business): "During peak days, waste increases even though conditions are usually good." Informant (Community): "Some community spaces have been converted into commercial zones."	Nodes: visitor density, environmental quality, social-infrastructure pressure, threshold conditions
4. LAC-Based Management Strategies	- Visitor regulation and dispersal (timed entry, zoning) - Strengthening authentic cultural attractions and community spaces - Adaptive infrastructure aligned with conservation principles - Multi-stakeholder collaboration (UPK, communities, businesses) - Continuous monitoring based on LAC indicators	Area Management: "Visitor zoning and restrictions on large events are necessary." Business Actors: "Authentic cultural attractions can be strong magnets if well managed." Community and Cultural Actors: "We need dedicated spaces to sustain cultural expression."	Nodes: management strategy, cultural preservation, adaptive infrastructure, collaborative governance, LAC monitoring

Source: Author's Processing Result, 2025

that perceptions of acceptable change are not uniform, but are shaped by stakeholders' roles and their degree of dependence on tourism activities.

Across stakeholder groups, several qualitative indicators of acceptable change consistently emerge. Visitor density is considered acceptable when mobility remains unobstructed and public space continues to support both tourist and community activities. Environmental conditions are perceived as acceptable when cleanliness and physical maintenance are sustained despite increased visitation. Socio-cultural conditions are viewed as acceptable when community space remains accessible and cultural practices continue to be actively performed. These findings suggest that acceptable limits are not defined as fixed quantitative thresholds, but rather as qualitative conditions grounded in stakeholder experience and perception.

All stakeholder perspectives regarding the changes occurring within the core zone of Jakarta Historic District were analyzed through a structured thematic coding process in NVivo. The findings were systematically synthesized and presented in the following table to offer a clear, comparative view of how different stakeholder groups perceive physical, social, and cultural transformations in the heritage area. A detailed narrative interpretation is provided after the Table 4 to elaborate on the emerging themes and their implications.

Stakeholder perceptions of changes in the Jakarta Historic District Heritage Area

Thematic analysis using NVivo coding reveals that stakeholders—including area managers, business operators, cultural communities, and local residents—share relatively consistent views regarding the transformations occurring in the core zone of Jakarta Historic District. Most informants emphasized noticeable physical improvements over the past decade, particularly the revitalization of heritage buildings, enhanced public facilities, and better-organized open spaces. These improvements were generally perceived as positive contributions to the visitor experience and the overall image of the heritage area.

At the same time, stakeholders expressed growing concern over the intensified social pressures associated with increasing tourist numbers. Congestion, limited mobility, and the reduction of communal spaces emerged as recurrent themes, especially among residents and community groups. Cultural stakeholders also highlighted the gradual shift from traditional cultural expressions to more commercialized attractions, signaling risks to authenticity and cultural continuity.

Perceptions of Change in the Jakarta Historic District Heritage Area

Stakeholders generally perceive the ongoing revitalization efforts as contributing positively to the aesthetic quality of the heritage district and enhancing the overall visitor experience. However, several informants emphasized that increasing commercial activity and growing tourist inflows have introduced substantial pressure on social comfort, particularly during peak

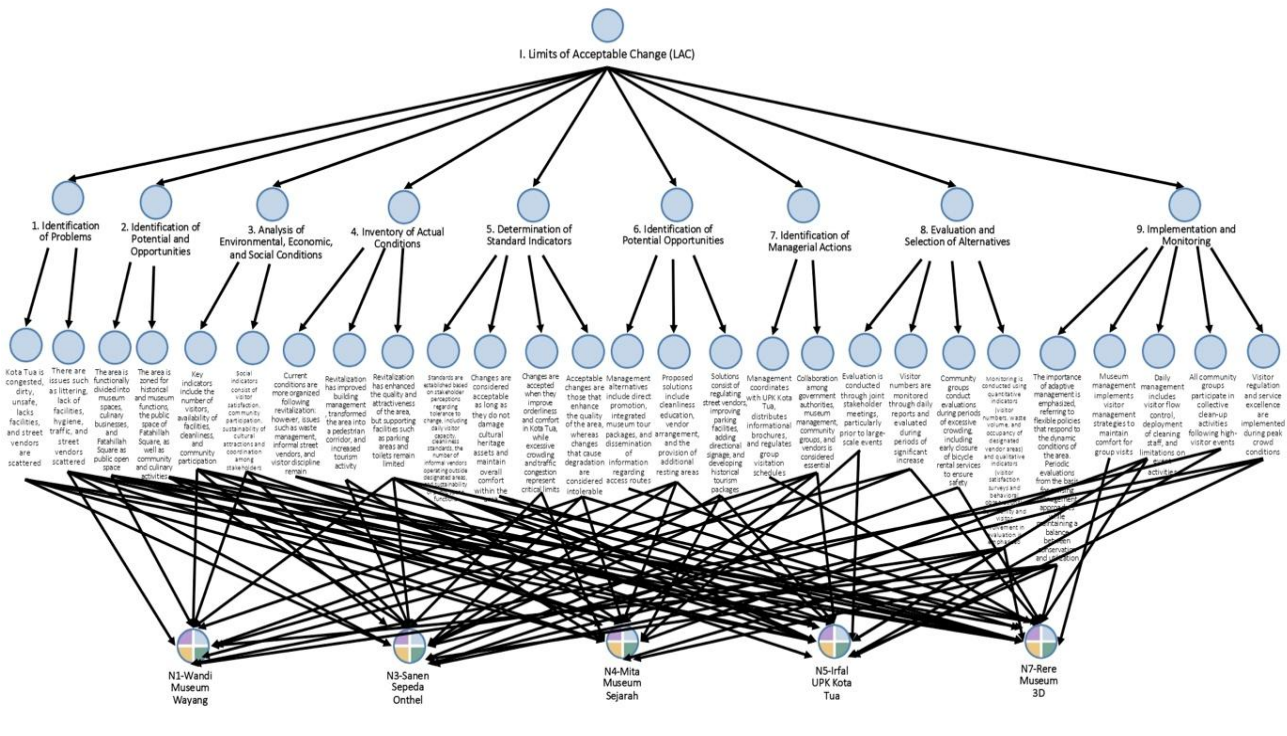


Figure 1. Project Map Topic Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) (Source: Author’s Processing Result, 2025)

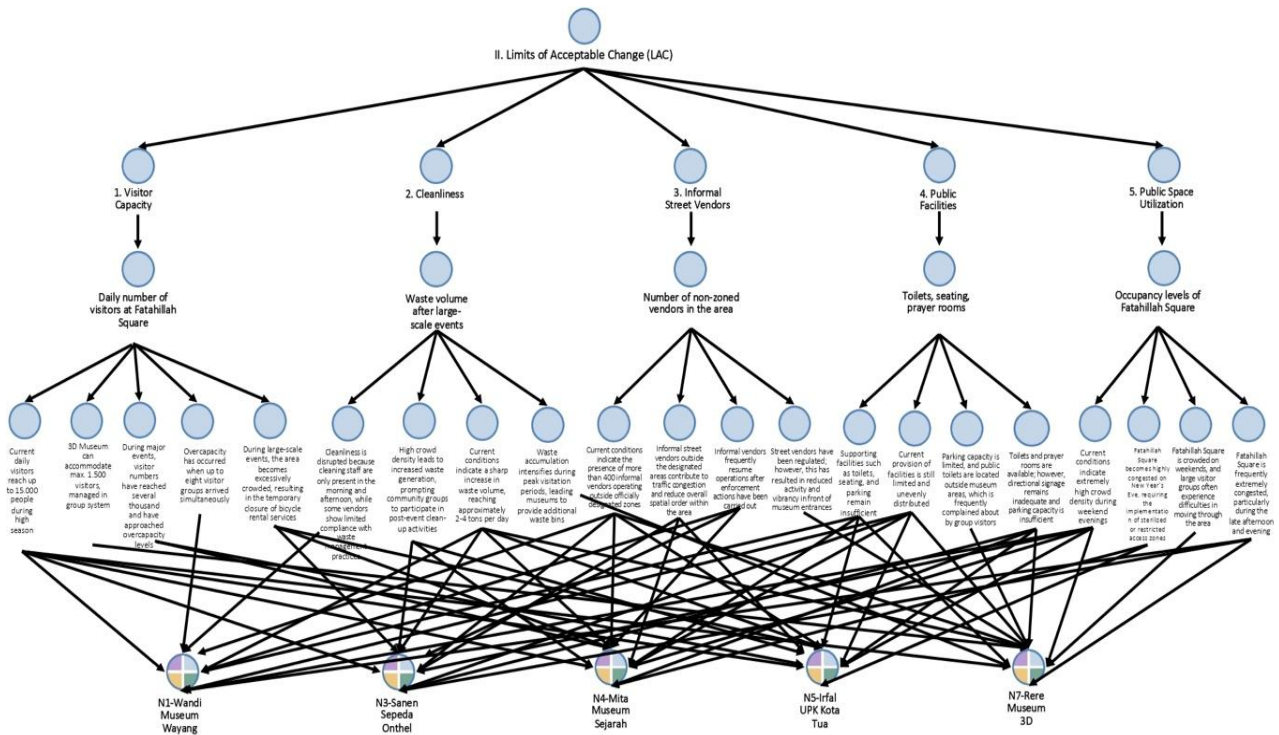


Figure 2. Project Map Topic Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) (Source: Author’s Processing Result, 2025)

hours and weekends. Social interactions that were once fluid and community-oriented have gradually shifted toward more transactional encounters, especially around Taman Fatahillah, which functions as the primary node of visitor concentration.

Changes in cultural attractions also emerged as a critical point of concern. Local artists and cultural practitioners noted that traditional performances are becoming increasingly

marginalized, displaced by more “popular” and commercially driven entertainment preferred by tourists. This shift reflects broader anxieties regarding the erosion of cultural identity, as excessive commodification of cultural expressions risks weakening the authenticity and symbolic meaning of the heritage landscape.

Overall, stakeholders acknowledge that physical improvements—such as spatial reorganization, enhanced

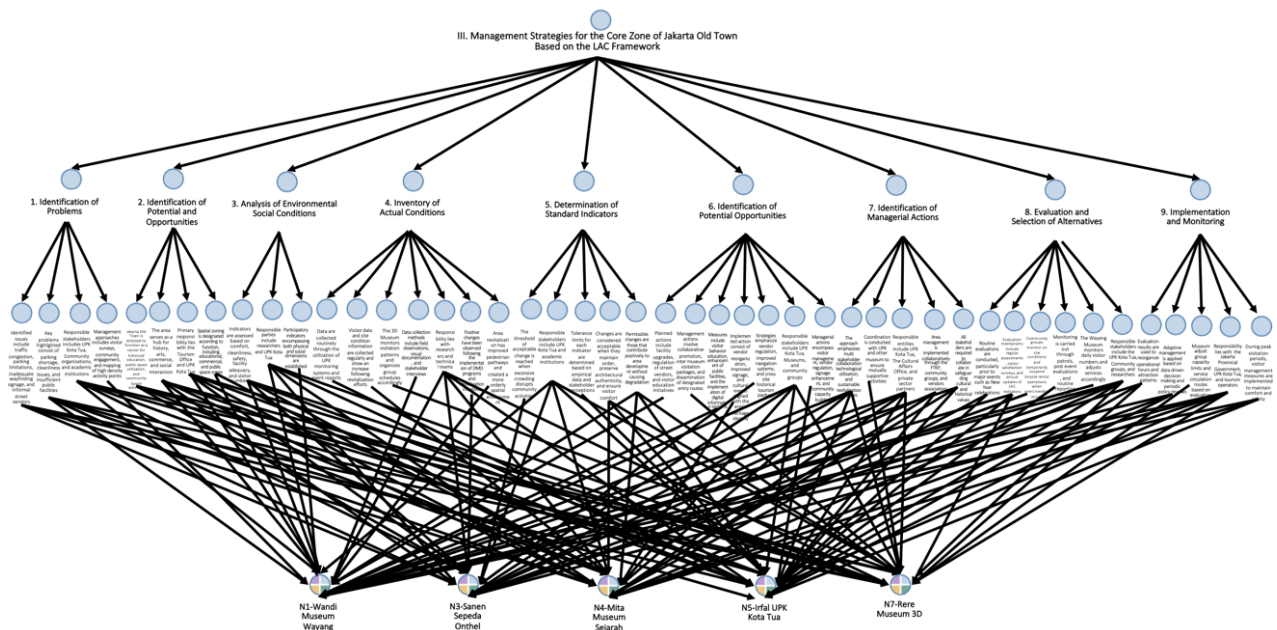


Figure 3. Project Map Topic Management Strategies for the Core Zone of Jakarta Old Town
(Source: Author’s Processing Result, 2025)

cleanliness, and upgraded public amenities—have produced clear benefits for the area. Nevertheless, they perceive the social and cultural changes as more troubling, particularly when rapid tourism growth and modernization are not accompanied by adequate efforts to strengthen local cultural values and safeguard the unique identity of the heritage district.

Desired values and ideal conditions of the heritage area
NVivo-based thematic analysis reveals a strong alignment among stakeholder groups regarding the ideal conditions they expect for the Jakarta Historic District heritage zone. Informants consistently emphasized the importance of maintaining the district’s historical character and colonial urban atmosphere as its core identity. The values stakeholders seek to preserve include: (1) the authenticity of historic architecture, particularly the facades, materials, and structural integrity of colonial buildings; (2) the continuity of local cultural expressions, including traditional arts, historical narratives, and community-based creative activities; and (3) the comfort and inclusivity of public spaces, especially those serving as interaction areas for local residents rather than being dominated solely by tourism functions.

Cultural community representatives stressed that the ideal condition is one in which historical values remain visually and experientially dominant while modernization proceeds cautiously and respectfully. Meanwhile, local business actors articulated that the ideal scenario balances high visitor flows with a high-quality experience that does not generate excessive crowding or diminish the character of the area.

Cultural conservation is widely regarded as a central priority. Several informants pointed out that successful cultural preservation can be observed not only through the physical protection of historical buildings but also through the vitality of local cultural communities and improvements in the well-being of residents engaged in cultural tourism activities. Thus, the desired condition encompasses both material and intangible heritage dimensions.

Indicators of change and acceptable limits (LAC Framework)
Applying the Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) framework

in conjunction with NVivo analysis, the study identifies three major categories of change indicators perceived as most significant by stakeholders: visitor density, environmental quality, and socio-infrastructure transformation.

Visitor Density

Stakeholders reported that the highest levels of visitor concentration occur in Taman Fatahillah, the Jakarta History Museum, and the surrounding areas of the Wayang Museum. Within the LAC perspective, acceptable limits of visitor density were derived qualitatively from recurring stakeholder narratives rather than fixed numerical measures. Specifically, a condition was considered acceptable when multiple informants consistently indicated that mobility remained unobstructed and both residents and visitors could continue their activities without disruption.

In contrast, conditions were interpreted as exceeding acceptable limits when stakeholders described situations in which crowding impeded movement, constrained cultural or artistic performances, or reduced local comfort. These thresholds therefore reflect perception-based and experience-driven judgments, distinguishing observed conditions (e.g., congestion in specific locations) from normative evaluations of what is considered tolerable.

Environmental quality and Cleanliness

Stakeholders indicated that the physical environment of Jakarta Historic District has improved significantly following the revitalization efforts, particularly in terms of cleanliness, safety, and the visual condition of public spaces. Nevertheless, challenges persist during periods of peak visitation, when waste accumulation and rapid wear on pedestrian pathways tend to increase. Within the Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) framework, the acceptable threshold for environmental quality is defined as a condition in which the area remains clean, safe, and well-maintained, without exhibiting signs of degradation attributable to tourism pressure. Exceeding this threshold—such as visible deterioration of public spaces or insufficient waste management capacity—signals the need for corrective interventions.

Social dynamics and Infrastructure transformation
Stakeholders also reported noticeable changes in social

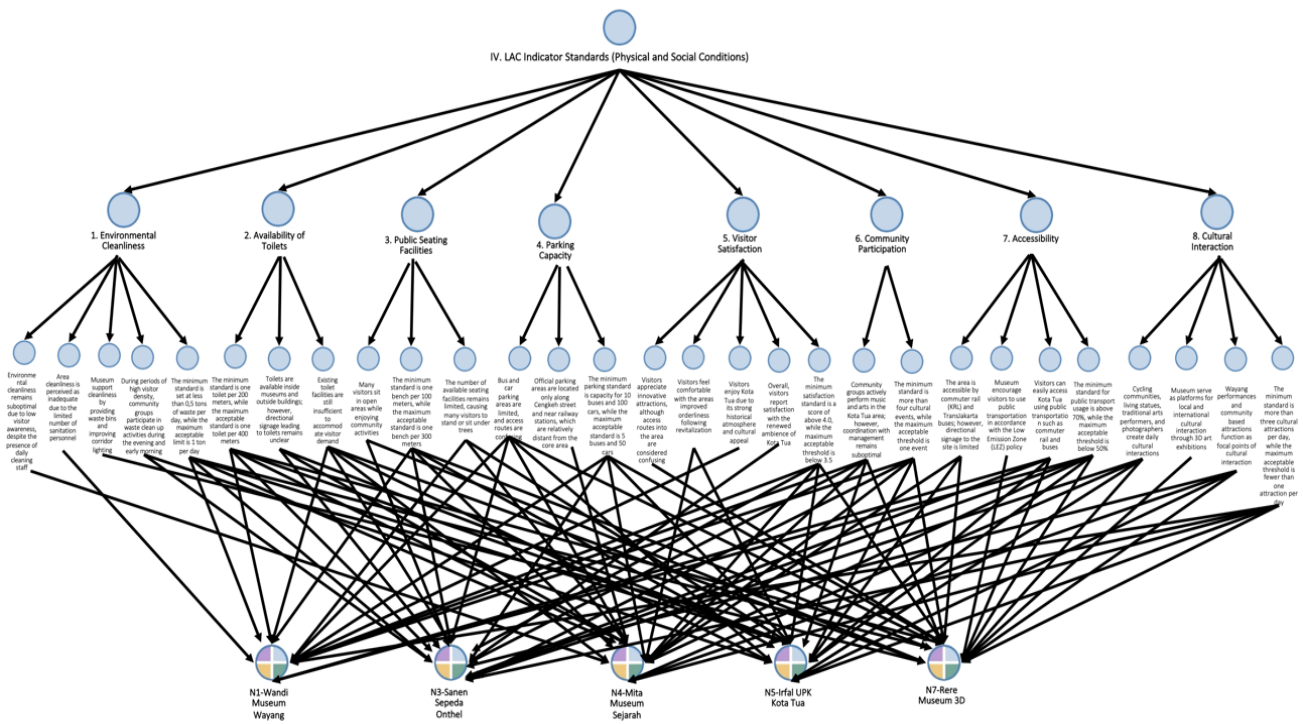


Figure 4. LAC Indicator Standards (Physical and Social Conditions)
 (Source: Author’s Processing Result, 2025)

dynamics, particularly in the patterns of interaction between residents and tourists. These changes include shifts in behavioral norms, increased competition for public space, and the proliferation of informal commercial activities. Infrastructure improvements, such as enhanced pedestrian pathways and restored building façades, were generally perceived positively. However, stakeholders expressed concern that unchecked commercialization may threaten the district’s historical character. Within the LAC framework, the acceptable limit for socio-infrastructure change is achieved when infrastructure continues to support social and cultural functions without altering the essential meaning or identity of the space. Thus, maintaining this balance is crucial for sustaining both the authenticity and livability of the heritage area.

Overall, stakeholders’ understanding of acceptable limits reflects both areas of convergence and divergence. While most stakeholders agree on the importance of maintaining a balance between tourism activities and the preservation of the district’s historical and socio-cultural values, their priorities differ. Heritage managers tend to emphasize visitor control and spatial regulation, business actors highlight economic opportunities and visitor attractiveness, and community and cultural actors express stronger concerns regarding the preservation of community space and cultural continuity. These differences indicate that acceptable limits are not uniformly defined, but are negotiated across stakeholder groups with varying interests and degrees of dependence on tourism..

LAC-based and sustainable management strategies

Findings from stakeholder interviews and NVivo thematic analysis point to several management strategies aligned with the LAC framework and the principles of sustainable heritage tourism: (1) Regulating visitor intensity and spatial dispersion. Stakeholders recommend managing visitor flows through measures such as scheduled museum visiting hours, restricting large-scale events during peak times, and creating additional attraction nodes outside the core zone to reduce

congestion in Taman Fatahillah and adjacent areas; (2) Strengthening cultural performance spaces and safeguarding intangible heritage. Cultural practitioners emphasized the need for designated spaces for traditional performances. This includes curating cultural attractions more selectively, ensuring that traditional arts receive prominence over modern entertainment forms that may dilute the district’s historical identity; (3) Developing infrastructure without compromising historical character. Stakeholders stress that new or upgraded infrastructure should use materials and design elements that are consistent with the colonial aesthetic. Technology—such as digital signage or interpretive tools—should be integrated carefully to avoid visual disruption; (4) Enhancing multi-stakeholder collaboration and governance. Informants consistently highlighted that effective heritage management depends on continuous collaboration between local government, the Jakarta Historic District Management Unit (UPK), local communities, business actors, historians, and cultural organizations. Regular dialogue is considered essential for monitoring changes and making adaptive policy adjustments. Implementing measurable, regularly monitored indicators. Stakeholders support the development of quantifiable metrics—such as visitor density indices, environmental quality scores, and the frequency of local cultural activities—that can be monitored through both technological tools and community participation. These indicators are essential for operationalizing the LAC framework and guiding adaptive management decisions.

The findings indicate that physical, social, and cultural transformations in the Jakarta Historic District occur simultaneously and exert reciprocal influence on one another. Beyond confirming existing overtourism narratives, this study advances the theoretical understanding of tourism-induced change by extending the Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) framework into a living urban heritage context. Specifically, the study demonstrates that socio-cultural transformations—particularly the displacement of community space and the shifting function of public areas—can be conceptualized as measurable thresholds of acceptable change. Unlike

conventional applications of LAC that emphasize environmental and visitor-capacity limits, this research highlights the critical role of socio-spatial dynamics as core indicators of sustainability. In this regard, the Jakarta case provides a novel conceptual contribution by positioning community space not merely as a social outcome of tourism development, but as a key threshold variable within the LAC framework, signalling when tourism growth begins to undermine cultural continuity and local identity.

However, stakeholders display varying levels of sensitivity toward these changes, with socio-cultural dimensions perceived as the most vulnerable to tourism pressures. Physical revitalization—such as improved cleanliness, upgraded pedestrian pathways, and the restoration of colonial-era buildings—was regarded positively by nearly all stakeholder groups. This aligns with global scholarship emphasizing that enhanced physical quality contributes directly to strengthening destination attractiveness in urban heritage areas (García-Hernández et al., 2017; M. Li et al., 2021).

In this context, (Eddyono, 2023b) on ecotourism provide an important conceptual bridge. Although the Jakarta Historic District is an urban heritage district rather than a natural ecotourism site, the core sustainability principle—balancing ecological, economic, and socio-cultural interests—remains highly applicable. This study highlights that an imbalance between physical revitalization and socio-cultural dynamics constitutes a critical governance issue requiring immediate attention. Rather than presenting this imbalance as a new empirical phenomenon, this study contributes by demonstrating how such socio-cultural tensions can be systematically operationalized within the Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) framework. Specifically, the findings show that tensions between infrastructural development and cultural sustainability can be translated into measurable indicators—such as community space availability, patterns of social interaction, and the continuity of cultural expressions—thereby enabling more adaptive and evidence-based management of urban heritage destinations. These findings further suggest that revitalization efforts prioritizing aesthetic and infrastructural enhancement, without parallel investment in cultural preservation and community empowerment, risk undermining the long-term sustainability of the heritage district.

However, the high intensity of tourist visitation has generated considerable social pressure, a pattern similarly observed in other urban heritage destinations such as Lijiang, Macau, and Florence (B. Su & Wall, 2014; Vong & Ung, 2012b). The gradual transformation of public spaces—originally used and owned by local communities—into commercial and tourist-oriented areas has created tensions between economic needs and the preservation of local identity. This condition reflects symptoms of over tourism and processes of cultural commodification, phenomena extensively discussed in the cultural tourism literature (Chhabra, 2021a; Cohen, 1988). Thus, the findings of this study reinforce the argument that physical revitalization alone is insufficient; more deliberate social and cultural management is required to ensure that modernization does not erode the local values that define the identity of Jakarta Historic District.

Stakeholders also emphasized the importance of maintaining the authenticity of colonial architecture, the continuity of local cultural practices, and the comfort of public spaces as the ideal conditions for the district. This perspective resonates with (G. Ashworth, 2011) and (Timothy & Boyd, 2015), who argue that successful urban heritage management is not solely determined by the conservation of built structures, but also by sustaining the “spirit” or *living heritage* embodied in the community and its cultural

expressions.

One of the most significant findings concerns the shrinking of community spaces due to the dominance of tourist activities and commercial vendors. Beyond describing this phenomenon, this study advances a key conceptual contribution by identifying community space displacement as a One of the most significant findings concerns the shrinking of community spaces due to the dominance of tourist activities and commercial vendors. Beyond describing this phenomenon, this study advances a key conceptual contribution by identifying community space displacement as a measurable socio-spatial indicator within the Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) framework. Specifically, the findings demonstrate that the reduction, transformation, or loss of community space can serve as a threshold variable for determining acceptable versus unacceptable levels of tourism-induced change in urban heritage environments. Unlike conventional LAC applications that primarily focus on environmental degradation or visitor capacity, this study highlights that community space functions as a critical indicator of socio-cultural sustainability, reflecting the extent to which local interaction, cultural expression, and place identity are maintained. Therefore, the displacement of community space signals not only spatial change but also a structural shift in the social fabric of the heritage area, indicating that acceptable limits of change may have been exceeded. Empirically, areas previously used by local artists, historians, and cultural practitioners for expression and interaction have gradually transitioned into commercial zones. This pattern parallels the phenomenon identified by (B. Su & Wall, 2014) in the heritage city of Lijiang, where local cultural practices were displaced by tourism-driven economic expansion.

In the Indonesian context, this dynamic aligns with the ideas of (Eddyono, 2025) in *Sustainable Village Tourism Planning*, which highlight that community space is a fundamental pillar for maintaining community-based ownership over tourism development. When these spaces disappear or experience displacement, social connection, cultural values, and local practices become increasingly vulnerable to decline.

This study demonstrates that community spaces are not merely social needs but constitute critical indicators for establishing thresholds of social change within the LAC framework. Accordingly, the preservation of community spaces should be treated as an integral element of sustainability in urban heritage areas.

The findings also reveal that local communities believe that historical identity must not be overshadowed by tourism-driven commercialization. This supports (Richards, 2018) argument that the sustainability of heritage destinations relies on maintaining equilibrium between tourism functions and community functions. Consequently, the values and ideal conditions identified in this study can serve as a foundational basis for setting acceptable thresholds of change within the LAC framework.

The application of the LAC framework in this study generated three primary groups of indicators—visitor density, environmental quality, and socio-infrastructural dynamics. While these categories are broadly consistent with indicators identified in prior LAC-based studies in environmentally and culturally sensitive destinations (J. Ahn & Back, 2018; Newsome et al., 2012), this study advances the framework by refining and contextualizing these indicators within a living urban heritage setting. In particular, the inclusion of socio-infrastructural dynamics extends conventional LAC applications by explicitly incorporating socio-cultural and spatial interactions—such as community space use, patterns of social interaction, and the functional transformation of public areas—as measurable dimensions of acceptable change. This represents a critical adaptation, as urban heritage

environments involve more complex and dynamic human interactions than natural or protected areas, where LAC has traditionally been applied. Therefore, rather than serving merely as a descriptive categorization of impacts, the proposed indicators constitute a context-sensitive model for operationalizing LAC in urban heritage governance, enabling the integration of physical, environmental, and socio-cultural thresholds within a unified management framework.

Stakeholders further emphasized that acceptable change occurs when visitor mobility remains manageable, public space functions are not disrupted, environmental quality is maintained, and cultural identity is preserved. These thresholds demonstrate that local perceptions play a central role in determining the sensitivity of change—an insight consistent with the participatory approach emphasized in LAC literature (Beatley et al., 1997; Stankey et al., 1984). Taken together, these findings reinforce the theoretical contribution of this study by demonstrating that LAC can be effectively adapted to urban living-heritage contexts characterized by complex socio-cultural dynamics. In this regard, the identified indicators offer an adaptive and context-sensitive model for urban heritage management, particularly in developing-country settings.

Field observations further reveal that traditional cultural performances are increasingly disrupted by the rise of modern entertainment forms that do not necessarily reflect the identity of Kota Tua. Several cultural communities noted that traditional performances have fewer opportunities to appear, and shifting tourist preferences have led to the dominance of popular entertainment.

This finding reinforces the arguments of G. Ashworth (2011) and Richards (2018), who assert that when culture becomes a mere commodity, the authentic values that give meaning to a heritage site are likely to be diminished. Such trends highlight the pressing need for strategic cultural governance to ensure that modernization and tourism growth do not undermine the living cultural expressions that define the character of Jakarta Historic District.

This study reinforces the importance of cultural differentiation in destination competitiveness, which emphasizes that the distinctiveness of heritage destinations should be grounded in local cultural uniqueness rather than short-term market-driven preferences (Richards, 2020; Ritchie & Crouch, 2010). In this regard, cultural attractions are not merely components of the visitor experience; they represent essential elements that sustain the living character of the Jakarta Historic District. This perspective is also consistent with (Eddyono, 2022a, 2022b), who highlights the role of local cultural identity in shaping destination competitiveness. Within the LAC framework, changes in cultural attractions can therefore be understood as critical socio-cultural indicators, signaling the threshold between acceptable transformation and shifts that may jeopardize the identity and authenticity of the heritage area (McKercher, 2002; Timothy & Boyd, 2003).

The management strategies emerging from this study—visitor regulation, strengthening cultural authenticity, heritage-sensitive infrastructure, multi-stakeholder collaboration, and continuous monitoring—are derived from both empirical findings and existing literature. Each strategy is explicitly linked to the identified LAC indicators: visitor regulation addresses density thresholds; cultural strengthening and community space protection respond to socio-cultural indicators; infrastructure aligns with environmental quality; collaboration reflects differing stakeholder perceptions; and monitoring operationalizes the LAC framework. This linkage strengthens the coherence between findings, theory, and policy, enhancing the applicability of LAC in urban heritage management. These strategies align closely with the principles of sustainable

tourism management articulated by (García-Hernández et al., 2017) and with UNESCO guidelines for urban heritage management. The findings further support the broader literature asserting that cultural preservation is essential not only for enhancing the quality of visitor experiences but also for ensuring the long-term economic sustainability of local communities (Richards, 2018).

Moreover, the collaborative governance approach emphasized by stakeholders highlights the importance of inclusive decision-making—an insight consistent with the findings of (Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012b), who argue that community support is fundamental to destination management success. Across stakeholder groups, visitor density was consistently identified as the most critical determinant of acceptable change. When crowding disrupts mobility, decreases public-space comfort, or constrains community activities, such conditions are perceived as exceeding the threshold of acceptable change.

These findings are consistent with the work of (S. S. Kim & Lee, 2020; Manning, 2016; Santana-Jiménez & Hernández, 2011; Stankey et al., 1985). In the Indonesian context, this principle aligns with (Eddyono, 2023b), who emphasizes that tourism sustainability is fundamentally contingent upon regulating visitor intensity. The case of Jakarta Historic District demonstrates a similar pattern: the higher the density, the greater the potential for degradation of visitor experience and environmental quality. Accordingly, crowding functions not only as an indicator of change but also as an early-warning system for safeguarding the long-term sustainability of the heritage district.

The study also reveals notable differences in stakeholder perceptions regarding acceptable limits of change. These differences were consistently observed across informants within each stakeholder group rather than arising from isolated views. Site managers tend to be more flexible toward physical alterations and commercialization, reflecting their emphasis on increasing visitor numbers and destination attractiveness. In contrast, community and cultural actors adopt a stricter threshold, prioritizing the preservation of local cultural values and the protection of community space. Business actors demonstrate a more moderate position, balancing economic benefits with visitor experience quality. These patterns are supported by recurring themes identified through NVivo coding—such as “visitor density,” “cultural continuity,” and “community space”—and are illustrated through representative quotations presented in Table 4. The findings reflect patterns commonly discussed in stakeholder conflict literature within heritage tourism (Nunkoo, 2017; Poria et al., 2003). Such divergences underline the need for multi-stakeholder dialogue in implementing the LAC framework in urban heritage areas, consistent with collaborative governance perspectives e.g., (Eddyono, 2023a; Eddyono et al., 2021; Sulistyadi et al., 2017; Sulistyadi et al., 2021).

The management strategies emerging from this study—including visitor dispersal, the strengthening of local cultural expressions, adaptive heritage-sensitive infrastructure, and LAC-based monitoring—underscore the necessity of governance that is collaborative, data-driven, and flexible in responding to dynamic changes. These findings strongly align with the principles of sustainable tourism planning proposed by (Eddyono, 2025), particularly the assertion that tourism areas must be managed through participatory approaches to maintain a balance between conservation and use.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that changes in the Jakarta Historic District are perceived differently by stakeholders, depending on their roles and proximity to tourism activities. Beyond these empirical insights, it extends the Limits of

Acceptable Change (LAC) framework to a living urban heritage context by emphasizing stakeholder-defined socio-cultural thresholds—such as community space, cultural continuity, and social interaction—as critical determinants of acceptable change. This contribution advances LAC beyond its traditional environmental focus, offering a more context-sensitive approach to sustainable heritage governance. Overall, stakeholders acknowledge that physical revitalization and increasing tourist flows contribute positively to the image and economic vitality of the destination; however, they also express growing concerns regarding social pressures, shifts in cultural practices, and the risk of losing authenticity. Physical transformations are generally accepted, yet social and cultural changes are viewed as more sensitive and potentially disruptive when rising visitation and modernization are not balanced with strong local value preservation.

The findings also reveal that stakeholders envision Jakarta Historic Districts as a living heritage district that remains authentic, safe, well-organized, and culturally grounded despite tourism dynamics. Key values that stakeholders wish to maintain include the conservation of historical buildings, inclusive public spaces, the continuity of cultural expressions, and social harmony among residents and visitors. These values form the foundation for defining the area's ideal conditions in alignment with the Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) framework.

The study further identifies critical indicators of change—visitor density, environmental quality, social interactions, and infrastructure conditions—which are perceived as primary signals of significant shifts within the area. Through NVivo-assisted thematic analysis, stakeholders consistently

emphasized the necessity of clear thresholds for acceptable change, particularly concerning peak-hour visitation, large-scale events, commercialization of public spaces, and modernization processes that may compromise cultural identity.

Applying the LAC framework underscores the importance of adaptive and collaborative management strategies to ensure the long-term sustainability of the heritage district. These strategies include regulating tourism intensity during specific periods, strengthening zoning and spatial-use controls, enhancing heritage conservation capacity, empowering local communities, and establishing more systematic monitoring mechanisms using data-driven indicators. Such approaches not only protect the physical and socio-cultural integrity of the heritage site but also contribute to more balanced and context-sensitive tourism development.

In conclusion, the successful management of an urban heritage destination such as Jakarta Historic District depends on the ability of stakeholders to establish shared thresholds of acceptable change and implement boundary-based management strategies that respond effectively to ongoing transformations. The findings contribute conceptually by extending the LAC model in urban heritage contexts through the incorporation of socio-cultural indicators, the identification of community space as a key threshold variable, and the integration of qualitative stakeholder perceptions into LAC-based monitoring systems, while also providing practical insights for sustainable tourism governance in historic urban districts.

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