

Tourists Motivations in Visiting Buddhist Temples of Yogyakarta

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study aims to explore the underlying motivations of tourists visiting Buddhist temples in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The research focuses on identifying and analyzing the differences in motivation between male and female tourists.

Research methods: A qualitative approach was employed, using questionnaires, interviews, and documentation. Data were collected from domestic and international tourists at four Buddhist temples namely Kalasan Temple, Sari Temple, Banyunibo Temple, and Sewu Temple and then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model.

Results and discussion: The study reveals six major types of tourist motivation: physical, cultural, interpersonal/social, fantasy, prestige/status, and wish-fulfillment. While both male and female tourists shared these motivations, significant differences were observed in their intensity. Female tourists showed higher motivation in physical, cultural, and emotional aspects, while male tourists were more driven by status and the pursuit of personal aspirations. Cultural motivation emerged as the strongest factor overall, even though it is not listed in Ryan's (1991) original classification. Gender also influenced specific motivational patterns, such as preferences for spiritual experiences, cultural exploration, and recreational activities.

Implication: Understanding tourist motivation, especially across gender lines, can help tourism stakeholders design more targeted and meaningful experiences. This insight supports the development of culturally sensitive, gender-responsive, and sustainable religious tourism in heritage sites like Buddhist temples.

Keywords: tourist motivation, Buddhist temples, Yogyakarta, religious tourism, gender differences, cultural tourism

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, global travel patterns have undergone notable fluctuations, with periods of reduced activity followed by a strong resurgence in tourism interest. Various factors, such as temporary restrictions on movement because of the pandemic, changes in public priorities, and adjustments in the operation of tourist sites, influenced when and how people chose to travel. Travel bans, lockdowns, and safety protocols forced many people to remain at home, while tourist attractions temporarily closed or operated under strict limitations. As the pandemic subsided, however, the desire to travel surged again. People are now more eager than ever to explore destinations that allow them to reconnect with nature, culture, and themselves. This global revival in travel behavior marks a significant shift, not just in numbers, but in the motivation behind tourism.

In Indonesia, this recovery is clearly visible. The tourism sector has seen a strong rebound, fueled by both domestic and international visitors. Indonesia's diverse landscape, rich cultural traditions, and religious heritage make it a major attraction for tourists. According to Statistics Indonesia (*Badan Pusat Statistik*), the number of domestic tourists in 2023 increased by 11.9%, the highest since

2019 (Rachmawati, 2024). International arrivals also grew significantly, with a 143.41% increase between January and September 2023 compared to the same period in 2022 (BPS, 2023). These numbers not only indicate recovery, but also reflect the strong motivation people have to travel again after years of restriction.

Among the many types of tourism in Indonesia, religious tourism is becoming increasingly popular. Religious tourism involves travel for spiritual or faith-based reasons, and includes visits to sacred sites, participation in rituals, and exploration of religious heritage. In Indonesia, this includes Islamic pilgrimages, Christian retreats, Hindu ceremonies, and Buddhist temple tourism. Buddhist temples, in particular, have become key attractions for both local and foreign tourists who are drawn to their spiritual, historical, and aesthetic value. One of the most iconic destinations is Borobudur Temple, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the world's largest Buddhist monument. Located in Central Java, Borobudur attracts visitors not only for its spiritual significance but also for its stunning architecture and cultural symbolism. In 2022, Borobudur recorded 185,497 visitors, including 131,561 domestic tourists and 53,936 international tourists (BPS Magelang, 2023). This highlights the site's wide appeal and raises important questions about why people choose to visit such religious destinations.

This is where the concept of tourist motivation becomes crucial. Tourist motivation refers to the internal and external factors that influence a person's decision to travel and their choice of destination. This relates to tourist motivation, which can be described as the driving force stemming from an individual's physiological and psychological factors (Jayadi et al., 2017). These motivations can be divided into two broad categories: push factors and pull factors. Push factors originate from within the individual, such as the need for relaxation, spiritual fulfillment, adventure, or escape from routine. Pull factors, on the other hand, are characteristics of the destination itself, such as natural beauty, cultural attractions, religious importance, or accessibility. In the case of Buddhist temples, push factors may include a desire for inner peace, cultural curiosity, religious devotion, or personal transformation. Many visitors see temple visits as opportunities to reflect, meditate, or reconnect with their spiritual values. Pull factors might include the historical significance of the site, its architectural grandeur, serene environment, or the reputation of the destination in global tourism networks.

Understanding these motivations is essential for destination managers, tourism authorities, and local communities. By knowing what drives tourists to visit Buddhist temples, stakeholders can design more meaningful and satisfying visitor experiences. This can include improved facilities, interpretative signage, guided tours, spiritual programs, and cultural performances that align with tourist expectations (Shadikah, 2024). It also helps in developing sustainable tourism that respects the sanctity of religious sites while providing economic benefits to local residents. Unfortunately, many tourism operators in Indonesia and elsewhere do not fully consider the importance of tourist motivation. They often focus on increasing visitor numbers without analyzing what their guests truly seek from the experience. As a result, the potential to deliver high-quality, value-driven tourism remains underutilized. This can lead to visitor dissatisfaction, lower return rates, and even damage to the cultural or religious integrity of the site.

In addition to Borobudur, several other Buddhist temples in Yogyakarta and Central Java are gaining attention. These include Mendut, Plaosan, Kalasan, Sojiwan, Sewu, Sari, and Banyunibo temples. While these sites are less famous

than Borobudur, they offer rich cultural experiences and attract a growing number of visitors. According to data from the Sleman Regency's 2018 tourism statistics, a total of 12,647 tourists visited these Buddhist temples in just one year. This number, although dated, shows the interest in religious heritage sites even before the pandemic. Preliminary interviews with staff from Balai Pelestarian Kebudayaan Wilayah X (Center for Cultural Preservation Region X) reveal further insights. Some temples, like Sewu, Kalasan, and Banyunibo, are particularly attractive to international tourists, while Sari Temple remains popular among domestic travelers. This suggests that different groups of tourists may have different motivations, influenced by cultural background, travel purpose, or even gender. This leads to another key aspect of tourist motivation, demographic factors, including gender differences. Men and women may have different reasons for visiting religious sites. For example, women might be more motivated by spiritual or emotional connections, while men might be drawn by history or architecture. Understanding these differences can help tailor tourism strategies that address the diverse needs and expectations of visitors.

In summary, tourist motivation plays a central role in shaping travel behavior, particularly in the context of religious tourism. As the tourism industry continues to recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is more important than ever to understand what inspires people to travel. In Indonesia, Buddhist temples serve not only as spiritual landmarks but also as cultural treasures that can offer meaningful experiences to diverse audiences. By paying closer attention to the motivations of visitors, tourism stakeholders can enhance the overall quality of the experience, preserve cultural heritage, and ensure that tourism growth is inclusive and sustainable.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research approach to explore tourist motivation in visiting Buddhist temples in Yogyakarta. The research focused on four Buddhist temples: Kalasan, Sari, Banyunibo, and Sewu. The qualitative approach was chosen to allow for in-depth understanding and detailed interpretation of human experiences and social phenomena (Cresswell, 2009; Satori & Komariah, 2020). Data were collected through Tourists' Motivation questionnaires. The questionnaires included 20 items related to tourist motivation, such as physical, cultural, social, fantasy, prestige, and wish-fulfillment. The samples were 52 with 28 female tourists and 19 male tourists. The data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model, involving data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing. To ensure credibility, triangulation was applied by using multiple data sources and methods. This methodological framework was chosen to enable a rich and in-depth understanding of tourists' motivation on their travel decisions, particularly in the context of religious tourism at Buddhist temples in Yogyakarta.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The objective of this study is to identify the tourists' motivation in visiting Buddhist temples in Yogyakarta. Based on the data collected from the Tourists' Motivation Questionnaires (TMQs), there are six tourist motivation. Both male and female tourists had those six motivations. Those were physical motivation, cultural motivation, interpersonal or social motivation, fantasy motivation, prestige

or status motivation, and wish-fulfillment motivation. Here were their motivations and their practices done by male and female tourists:

1) Physical Motivation

Both male and female tourists did six practices of the physical motivation in visiting Buddhist Temples in Yogyakarta. The practices were refreshing body and soul, getting health, playing, escaping from routines, doing sport, and shopping. Here is the result of the questionnaires about each practice:

Refreshing body and soul. The first practice of physical motivation done by both male and female tourists was refreshing body and soul. Both of them have this motivation in visiting the Buddhist temples. All of the female tourists believed that their motivation to visit the temples is that they wanted to refresh their body and soul. And there were 22 male tourists also had the same idea about this motivation. This practice is the first practice that the tourists did by both male and female tourists in the physical motivation. The result of the questionnaires shows that the female tourists who did this practice were 75,6% while the male tourists were lower (72,4%).

Getting health. The next practice of the physical motivation is getting health. Both male and female tourists applied this practice. The female tourists' response in this practice is higher than the male tourists. The female tourists reach 63% and the male tourists are 59,9%. However, the tourists believe that they had physical motivation in visiting Buddhist temples because they wanted to get health.

Playing. The next physical motivation is about playing. Both male and female tourists accepted that they wanted to play when visiting Buddhist temples in Yogyakarta. This motivation gets higher responses by the female tourists than the male tourists. The female tourists wanted to play reached 68% and for the male tourists only got 37,8%. For the female tourists, this motivation is the second motivation they choose. While for the male tourists, playing motivation is the fourth among other practices in physical motivation.

Escaping from routines. Another practice done by the tourists in physical motivation is escaping from routines. Both male and female tourists believe that they had this motivation in visiting the Buddhist Temples in Yogyakarta. The female respondents reach 50,4% who wanted to escape from daily routines by visiting the temples. While, the male tourists reach lower result than the female which is 44,1%. Escaping from routines gets the fourth position of the physical motivation for female tourists and it is the third position for the male tourists.

Doing sport. Some tourists believe that they did sport by visiting the Buddhist temples. Both male and female tourists applied this practice. The questionnaire results shows that there are 40,3% of female tourists did sport and 37,8% of male tourists as well. The result of this practice for the male tourists is higher than the female tourists. However, this practice gets the fourth position the same as playing practice for the male tourists because it has the same result. While, for the female tourists, doing sport get the fifth position.

Shopping. The physical motivation also contains shopping. The female and the male tourists did this practice although the result shows quite long range. The female tourists get 35,3% for the shopping activity and the

male tourists only get 15,7%. Both male and female tourists result this activity as the least practice they did in physical motivation.

Based on the description above, the female tourists have more physical motivation than the male tourists do. The average of the female tourists' physical motivation is higher (55,4%) than the male tourists (44,6%). The table 1 below shows the percentage of physical motivation done by the male and the female tourists:

Table 1: Result of Physical Motivation by Male and Female Tourists

Physical Motivation	Percentage	
	Female	Male
Refreshing body and soul	75,6%	72,4%
Getting health	63,0%	59,9%
Playing	68,0%	37,8%
Escaping from routines	50,4%	44,1%
Doing sport	40,3%	37,8%
Shopping	35,3%	15,7%
Average	55,4%	44,6%

[Source: Primary data analyzed, 2025]

The findings in table 1 reveal that female tourists generally exhibit higher levels of physical motivation compared to their male counterparts when visiting Buddhist temples in Yogyakarta. In every category, such as rejuvenation, health improvement, leisure activities, breaking from routine, sports, and shopping, women consistently report greater motivation. Significant gaps appear in the areas of leisure and shopping, where female participation far exceeds that of males. However, both male and female tourists share a strong inclination toward experiencing physical and mental refreshment, suggesting a common goal of relaxation. These results highlight the relevance of gender in shaping travel motivations, emphasizing the need for tourism stakeholders to consider these distinctions when developing and promoting tourism experiences. By aligning tourism products and services with gender-specific preferences, destinations can better meet visitor expectations and enhance satisfaction, particularly in religious and cultural heritage tourism.

2) Cultural Motivation

Based on the TMQ, both male and female tourists believed that they had cultural motivation in visiting Buddhist Temples in Yogyakarta. There were two activities they did in visiting the temples. Those were (1) curious about other countries and (2) Cognizing certain region's culture, customs, tradition, art, music, architecture, folklore, historical places, lifestyle and special places. Both of the activities are presented below:

Cognizing other countries. The first cultural motivation done by male and female tourists in visiting Buddhist temple is cognizing other countries. 93,3% female tourists and 87,5% of male tourists believe that they had this motivation. For both the female and the male tourists made this activity as their second motivation. They were curious about other countries, their societies and places.

Cognizing certain region's culture, customs, tradition, art, music, architecture, folklore, historical places, lifestyle and special places. The second motivation is wanting to know about certain region's culture, customs, tradition, art, music, architecture, folklore, historical places, lifestyle and special places. Both male and female tourist were curious about Indonesian's region's culture, customs, tradition, art, music, architecture, folklore, historical places, lifestyle and special places especially in Yogyakarta. When the tourists visited the Buddhist temples, they could enjoy the architecture of the temples as well as the history of the temples. This motivation takes the first position by both male and female tourists. All of the female tourists (100%) had this motivation, while there are 95,8% of male tourists did.

Based on the description above, the female tourists have higher cultural motivation than the male tourists do. The average of the female tourists' cultural motivation is 96,7% and the male tourists reach 91,7%. The table 2. below shows the percentage of cultural motivation done by the male and the female tourists:

Table 2: Result of Cultural Motivation by Male and Female Tourists

Cultural Motivation	Percentage	
	Female	Male
Cognizing other countries	50%	46%
Cognizing certain region's culture, customs, tradition, art, music, architecture, folklore, historical places, lifestyle and special places	53%	51%
Average	51,5%	48,5%

[Source: Primary data analyzed, 2025]

The information presented in Table 2 emphasizes the significant role of cultural motivation in attracting both male and female tourists to Buddhist temples in Yogyakarta, with female tourists showing slightly higher levels of interest. Specifically, 50% of female participants are motivated by the opportunity to understand other countries, compared to 46% of male tourists. Additionally, the 53% female respondents expressed a strong interest in exploring local cultural elements such as traditions, customs, music, art, architecture, folklore, historical landmarks, lifestyle, and unique destinations-surpassing the 51% of male respondents with similar interests. On average, women scored higher in cultural motivation (51%) than men (49%), indicating a stronger inclination toward cultural discovery. This suggests that cultural aspects of tourism, particularly those related to heritage and the arts, hold a more prominent appeal for female tourists. These insights can serve as valuable input for tourism planners and heritage site managers in developing more culturally engaging and inclusive travel experiences that reflect the interests and expectations of both genders.

3) Interpersonal or Social Motivation

Interpersonal motivation or can be called as social motivation also become the motivation's category had by the female and male tourists in visiting Buddhist temples in Yogyakarta. Based on the TMQs, the tourists had five sub motivation in this motivation category. they are strengthening family bond, visiting friends or colleagues or relatives, meeting new people or new

friends, getting new experience or new vibes at new places, doing pilgrimage. Each of the motivation is presented below:

Strengthening family bond. The first sub-motivation in the interpersonal or social motivation is strengthening family bond. Both male and female tourists had this motivation in visiting the Buddhist temples. this practice is at the third position for the female tourists and the second position for the male tourists. The result of the TMQs shows that there are 48,1% of female tourists and 57,4% of male tourists wanted to strengthen their family bond by visiting the temples. Therefore, the male tourists' interpersonal or social motivation of this practice is higher than the female tourists.

Visiting friends or colleagues or relatives. The second practice of the interpersonal motivation is visiting friends or colleagues or relatives. The male and female tourists also did this practice based on the result of the TMQs. There were 41,5% of female tourists and 32,8% of male tourists applied this activity while visiting Buddhist temples in Yogyakarta. The percentage for the male tourists is lower than the female tourists. In addition, this practice takes the fourth place for the female tourists and the fourth place as well or the last place for the male tourists.

Meeting new people or new friends. The third practice of the social motivation is meeting new people or new friends. Both male and female tourists believed that they did this as their motivation in visiting the Buddhist temples. For the female tourists, this motivation gets 56,9% and is in the second position of the interpersonal motivation. While, for the male tourists it takes the third position with 46,4%.

Getting new experience or new vibes at new places. The next motivation had by the tourists is called getting new experience. Both male and female tourists wanted to get new vibes or experience at a new place. The Buddhist temples were new places for them. For the female and female tourists made this motivation as the first reason they visited the temples. the female tourists get 63,4% and all of the male tourists had this motivation with 65,6% said yes for this practice. Therefore, the motivation is higher for the male tourists compared to the female.

Doing pilgrimage. The last motivation of the interpersonal tourists' motivation is doing pilgrimage. Both male and female tourists had this reason in visiting the Buddhist temples. it reaches 41,5% for the female tourists and 46,4% for the male tourists. This practice has the same position as visiting friends or colleagues or relatives for the female tourists because they had the same percentage. Meanwhile, for the male tourists, it is in the third position of motivation they had at this social motivation.

Based on the description above, the female tourists have lower cultural motivation than the male tourists do. The average of the female tourists' interpersonal or social motivation is 50,3% and the male tourists reach 49,7%. The table 3 below shows the percentage of interpersonal or social motivation done by the male and the female tourists:

Table 3: Result of Interpersonal or Social Motivation by Male and Female Tourists

Interpersonal or Social Motivation	Percentage	
	Female	Male
strengthening family bond	48,1%	57,4%

visiting friends or colleagues or relatives	41,5%	32,8%
meeting new people or new friends	56,9%	46,4%
getting new experience or new vibes at new places	63,4%	65,6%
doing pilgrimage	41,5%	46,4%
Average	50,3%	49,7%

[Source: Primary data analyzed, 2025]

In conclusion, both male and female tourists are strongly influenced by social or interpersonal motivations when visiting Buddhist temples in Yogyakarta. Although their overall levels of motivation are nearly equal, the specific reasons differ. Male tourists are more focused on strengthening family ties and doing pilgrimages, while female tourists are more interested in meeting new people and visiting friends or relatives. Both groups, however, highly value the chance to gain new experiences in new places. These findings highlight the importance of understanding different social needs among tourists, which can help tourism providers create more meaningful and engaging travel experiences for everyone.

4) Fantasy Motivation

Fantasy motivation also become the motivation's category done by the female and male tourists in visiting Buddhist temples in Yogyakarta. Based on the TMQs, the tourists had three sub-motivations in this motivation category. They are meeting people who can give romantic atmosphere or to fulfil sexual needs, finding the real me at new place, and getting psychological satisfaction by escaping from boring daily routines in other regions. Each of the motivation is presented below:

Meeting people who can give romantic atmosphere or to fulfil sexual needs. This activity is the first motivation done by both male and female tourists in visiting the Buddhist temples. Yet, this motivation is at the last position of the fantasy motivation by both female and male tourists. The male tourists get 18,7% affirmative response and the female tourists get 26,9%. Even though, there were still tourists wanted to meet people who can give romantic atmosphere or just to fulfil their sexual needs by visiting the temples.

Finding the real me at new place. The next motivation of the fantasy motivation is about to find the real of self at a new place. For both male and female tourists, this motivation takes the second position with 50,9% for the female tourists and 44,9% for the male tourists. Therefore, the female tourists tend to find the real of themselves at new place than the male tourists do.

Getting psychological satisfaction by escaping from boring daily routines in other regions. Another reason of the fantasy motivation is getting psychological satisfaction by escaping from boring daily routines in other regions. This practice is at the first choice by both male and female tourists. The male tourists reach 83,8% agree response and the male tourists get 74,8%. At the fantasy motivation, both male and female tourists wanted to get psychological satisfaction by escaping from their boring daily routines in other regions by visiting the Buddhist temples.

Based on the explanation above, the female tourists have higher fantasy motivation than the male tourists do. The average of the female tourists' fantasy motivation is 60% and the male tourists reach 51,4%. The table 4. below shows the percentage of fantasy motivation had by the male and the female tourists:

Table 4: Result of Fantasy Motivation by Male and Female Tourists

Fantasy Motivation	Percentage	
	Female	Male
meeting people who can give romantic atmosphere or to fulfil sexual needs	26,9%	18,7%
finding the real me at new place	50,9%	44,9%
getting psychological satisfaction by escaping from boring daily routines in other regions	83,8%	74,8%
Average	53,9%	46,1%

[Source: Primary data analyzed, 2025]

In summary, fantasy motivation plays a notable role in influencing both male and female tourists, with women showing slightly higher levels overall. Female tourists are particularly driven by the desire to escape their routine lives and find emotional relief, followed by the motivation to explore their identity in new environments. Although male tourists share similar reasons, their percentages are generally lower. Romantic and sexual motivations are present in both groups, but more apparent among female tourists. These findings indicate that while both genders experience fantasy-driven motivations, female tourists tend to be more influenced by emotional and self-exploratory aspects of travel.

5) Prestige or Status Motivation

The fifth tourists' motivation is prestige motivation or can be called as status motivation. this motivation also becomes the motivation's category done by the female and male tourists in visiting Buddhist temples in Yogyakarta. Based on the TMQs, the tourists had three sub-motivations in this motivation category. Those are attending conference/ meeting/ seminar and doing business trip, showing position or status in certain societies, and pursuing hobbies. The practices of each motivation is presented below:

Attending conference/ meeting/ seminar and doing business trip. The first sub motivation of the status motivation is about attending events whether it is a conference or a meeting or a seminar even doing the business trip. 40% of male and 35% of female tourists had this kind of motivation in visiting the temples. Although the affirmative responses are under half of respondents, but this practice gets the second position of the prestige motivation by both female and male tourists.

Showing position or status in certain societies. The second practice of the prestige motivation is called showing position or status in certain societies. The male and female tourists made this as the last motivation they had in visiting the Buddhist temples. the male tourists get 31% of yes response and the female only reaches 21%. Both male and female tourists believed that they wanted to show their position or their status in certain societies.

Pursuing hobbies. The next sub motivation of the prestige or social motivation is pursuing hobbies. This practice gets the first choice from the tourists that they visited the Buddhist temples because they wanted pursue their hobbies. For the male tourists get 88% and the female tourists get 85%. It means that the male tourists tend to pursue their hobbies than the female tourists do.

Based on the representation above, the male tourists have higher prestige or status motivation than the female tourists do. These data were taken based on the practices of TMQs fulfilled by the tourists. The average of the female tourists' fantasy motivation is 47% and the male tourists reach 53%. The table 5. below shows the percentage of fantasy motivation had by the male and the female tourists:

Table 5: Result of Prestige or Status Motivation by Male and Female Tourists

Prestige or Status Motivation	Percentage	
	Female	Male
attending conference/ meeting/ seminar and doing business trip	35%	40%
showing position or status in certain societies	21%	31%
pursuing hobbies	85%	88%
Average	47%	53%

[Source: Primary data analyzed, 2025]

To conclude, prestige or status motivations have a moderate influence on both male and female tourists, with men showing a slightly higher average. Both genders are strongly driven by the desire to pursue hobbies, making it the most common factor in this category. Attending events like seminars or business trips is also a motivator, although to a lesser extent. Additionally, a notable number of tourists are encouraged by the opportunity to express their status or role within society, especially among males. Overall, while prestige plays a role in travel motivation for both groups, male tourists tend to value status-related experiences more than females.

6) Wish-Fulfillment Motivation

The last tourists' motivation in visiting Buddhist temples in Yogyakarta is called wish-fulfilment motivation. this motivation also becomes the motivation's category done by both the female and male tourists. Based on the TMQs, the tourists had one sub-motivations of this motivation category. That is Making my long-cherished dreams come true by sacrificing my money. The practice of the wish-fulfilment motivation is presented below:

Making my long-cherished dreams come true by sacrificing my money. The one and only sub motivation of the wish-fulfilment motivation is about making tourists' long-cherished dreams come true by sacrificing their money. This motivation is had by both male and female tourists in visiting the Buddhist temples in Yogyakarta. Both male and female tourists wanted to make their long-cherished dreams come true by sacrificing money they had. The female tourists get lower result of the practices and get 44% out of total respondents and the male tourists reach 56%. Therefore, the motivation is

higher for the male tourists compared to the female tourist. The table 6 below shows the result of wish fulfilment motivation had by the male and female tourists:

Table 6: Result of wish-fulfilment Motivation by Male and Female Tourists

Wish-fulfilment Motivation	Percentage	
	Female	Male
Making my long-cherished dreams come true by sacrificing my money	44%	56%
Average	44%	56%

[Source: Primary data analyzed, 2025]

The data reveals that wish-fulfilment plays a meaningful role in travel decisions, particularly among male tourists. A higher percentage of male respondents (56%) indicated they are motivated to travel as a way of realizing their long-held dreams, even if it requires financial sacrifice. In comparison, 44% of female tourists share this motivation. These findings suggest that achieving personal aspirations through travel is important for both genders, but the drive appears to be stronger among males. This highlights that travel is not merely recreational but also a pathway for fulfilling deeper personal goals, especially for male tourists.

Based on the analysis of the research data, six distinct motivations were identified as influencing tourists to visit Buddhist temples in Yogyakarta. These include physical, cultural, social or interpersonal, fantasy, prestige or status, and wish-fulfilment motivations. Responses gathered from the TMQs indicate that both male and female visitors exhibit these six motivational types. This study draws on Ryan's (1991) theory, as cited in Pitana and Gayatri (2005), which outlines five core tourist motivations: physical (which includes the desire to escape, relax, and play), social interaction, fantasy (such as romantic or self-fulfilling experiences), prestige, and wish-fulfilment. However, this research introduced a new motivational category, the cultural motivation, which was not identified in Ryan's original classification.

In terms of physical motivation, the data reveals that 44,6% of male and 55,4% of female tourists were driven by the need for physical and mental rejuvenation when visiting the temples. This aligns with McIntosh et al.(1995) classification of physical motivation as a fundamental term in tourism, where individuals seek relief from stress, relaxation, and bodily restoration. Recent research by Klarin et al. (2023) further reinforces this perspective by framing physical rejuvenation within the broader concept of slow tourism. Their study emphasizes that slow-paced travel allows individuals to temporarily withdraw from high-pressure environments and reconnect with their physical and emotional well-being. This kind of travel, often tied to nature, spiritual settings, or heritage spaces like Buddhist temples, provides opportunities for mindfulness, rest, and restoration-needs that have become even more pronounced in post-pandemic tourist behavior. Similar patterns emerge in the context of "revenge tourism" identified by Then & Yulius (2022), where relaxation motivation significantly influenced young travelers' post-pandemic travel intentions. In their study, relaxation, closely tied to stress relief and recovery, was one of the strongest predictors of travel

interest, alongside wish-fulfillment and leisure time. This parallel suggests that whether in heritage-based slow tourism or post-pandemic leisure travel, the pursuit of physical and emotional restoration remains a consistent, cross-context motivator. The higher proportion of female respondents in both studies reporting such motivations further supports the notion that women may engage more actively in tourism as a form of self-care, possibly due to greater sensitivity to accumulated stress or stronger prioritization of holistic wellness. Taken together, these findings underscore that the desire for rejuvenation is not only enduring but also adaptable, manifesting in diverse tourism settings from spiritually significant temple visits to the celebratory return of mobility after global disruptions.

Cultural motivation emerged as a dominant factor among visitors to Buddhist temples, with 51% of female and 49% of male tourists citing it as a primary reason for their visit. This supports earlier findings by Suwena and Widyatmaja (2017), who observed that cultural interests frequently drive tourist behavior, especially at heritage and religious sites. However, it contrasts with Ryan's (1991) framework, which did not include cultural motivation as a standalone category. More recent perspectives, particularly from Manthiou (2025), reinforce the growing centrality of cultural engagement in tourism. The slow tourism movement, as discussed in her editorial, advocates for meaningful immersion in local cultures, encouraging travelers to build deeper connections with destinations, communities, and their traditions. Rather than rushing through itineraries, slow tourism encourages intentional and reflective experiences, where understanding and appreciating cultural heritage becomes the heart of the journey. In this context, temple visits in Yogyakarta align well with slow tourism principles, offering spaces that facilitate cultural appreciation and learning. The high percentage of tourists motivated by culture in this study reflects a broader shift in tourist values, where authenticity, cultural depth, and local interaction are increasingly prioritized. This alignment suggests that cultural motivation should no longer be seen as secondary but as a core term in modern tourism behavior.

Then, the social or interpersonal motivation was another common term, cited by 50,3% of female and 49,7% of male respondents. Activities associated with this motivation include strengthening family relationships, visiting friends or relatives, meeting new people, seeking new experiences, and undertaking pilgrimages. These findings are consistent with the work of Suwena and Widyatmaja (2017), who noted that such social activities often underpin the decision to visit tourist destinations. Further support comes from Suhartanto et al. (2019), whose study on creative tourism revealed that interpersonal motivations, like accompanying friends or family are central to tourists' travel intentions and loyalty. Their research found that motivation is both a direct influencer and a mediator in shaping tourists' satisfaction and their intention to revisit, suggesting that social interaction significantly enriches the travel experience. This aligns with the observed motivations among temple visitors, many of whom seek spiritual or meaningful social encounters within the context of cultural and religious settings. Taken together, these insights underscore the enduring importance of interpersonal motivations in tourism, especially in destinations that encourage reflective and shared experiences, such as religious or heritage sites.

Another motivation named fantasy motivation was also present among respondents, with 53,9% of females and 46,1% of males reporting it as a factor. Besides, fantasy motivation encompasses the pursuit of psychological satisfaction, such as meeting someone who inspires romantic feelings, discovering one's identity in a new place, or simply enjoying the mental escape that travel provides. This aligns closely with the concept of Escapism Motivation (EM) from Musa et al. (2025) who discussed in the research on Central Java's heritage sites, which defines escapism as the need to temporarily withdraw from reality and immerse oneself in experiences that provide emotional release and mental rejuvenation. The article emphasizes that EM significantly influences not only tourists' immediate satisfaction but also their loyalty to destinations, particularly in heritage and cultural contexts where immersive experiences can foster lasting personal connections. Similar to the fantasy motivation identified here, EM encompasses the pursuit of novelty, imaginative engagement, and transformative encounters, which together encourage travelers to return or recommend the destination. The parallel between the two constructs reinforces the idea that fantasy-driven travel is not merely indulgent but serves as a meaningful psychological driver that can enhance both the personal value of the trip and the long-term sustainability of the destination through repeat visitation.

On the other hand, prestige or status motivation was reported by 47% of female and 53% of male tourists. This supports Mathieson and Wall (1982) theory, which links prestige motivation to professional, educational, and leisure pursuits. Examples of this include attending seminars, conferences, or business meetings, demonstrating one's social status, or engaging in hobbies while traveling. Recent findings by Boley et al. (2025) reinforce this perspective, revealing that prestige in tourism can be understood through dimensions such as distinctiveness, prosperity, and hedonism, which together influence perceived social return from travel experiences. Their study shows that the social return derived from prestige-related travel significantly shapes intent to travel, suggesting that individuals may select destinations and activities not solely for personal enjoyment, but also for the reputational and relational benefits they confer. The convergence of these findings underscores that prestige motivation remains a relevant and measurable driver in contemporary tourism, influencing both destination choice and the types of activities tourists pursue to affirm or enhance their social identity.

Finally, wish-fulfilment motivation was experienced by 44% of female and 56% of male tourists. Willson et al. (2023) explored the phenomenon of "final wish" travel among terminally ill individuals, showing that fulfilling a long-cherished dream or life goal through travel provides deep emotional satisfaction and a sense of life completion. Similarly, Then and Yulius (2022) examined post-pandemic "revenge tourism" among young travelers in Indonesia and found that wish-fulfillment was one of the most significant predictors of travel interest, reflecting the strong desire to realize postponed or long-awaited travel aspirations after mobility restrictions. Both studies highlight that wish-fulfillment is not merely a leisure driver but also a deeply personal and aspirational force. This is in line with Ryan's (1991) concept, as cited by Pitana and Gayatri (2005), which identifies the

desire to achieve long-held personal dreams as a key motivational factor in tourism. These findings suggest that tourism marketing strategies can effectively appeal to travelers' personal dreams, framing destinations and experiences as opportunities to realize long-held ambitions.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the various underlying motivations influencing tourists, both male and female, in their decision to visit Buddhist temples in Yogyakarta. The analysis of data obtained through the Tourists' Motivation and Questionnaires (TMQs) identified six core categories of motivation: physical, cultural, social (interpersonal), fantasy, prestige (status), and wish-fulfilment. The results indicate that these motivational factors are shared by both genders, although their levels of significance differ. In general, female tourists demonstrated stronger motivations related to physical rejuvenation, cultural curiosity, social engagement, and emotional fulfilment, while male tourists displayed slightly greater interest in motivations linked to social status and the realization of personal goals. This highlights gender-based differences in how tourists approach religious and cultural travel. Notably, this research emphasizes cultural motivation as a distinct and dominant factor, which is not explicitly classified in Ryan's (1991) original theory. In the Indonesian context, particularly when visiting heritage and religious sites, cultural interest emerges as a compelling term for tourism. The insights from this study offer practical value for tourism developers, cultural heritage managers, and local communities. A better understanding of tourists' motivational patterns can support the development of more personalized and enriching tourism experiences. This might include immersive cultural programs, spiritual activities, or interpretative services tailored to tourists' expectations and demographic backgrounds. In the long term, aligning tourism strategies with motivational insights can enhance visitor satisfaction while promoting responsible and sustainable tourism that respects the sacredness of religious sites and supports the local economy.

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