

## **Urban Spetacle of Motivational Quotes and Skyscraper Photo in Instagram Stories**

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### **Abstract**

Rapid technology advancements, particularly social media Instagram, have brought people's daily lives and urban environments into the domain of visual culture. Instagram's young users were sharing motivational quotes adopted in activities and work using a skyscraper as a background. The trend of encouraging quotes and skyscraper photographs exemplified the community's orientation, which referred to a lifestyle or a typical phenomenon of Indonesian urban culture. This article intended to investigate the image of society by using Instagram to post encouraging phrases and patterns of space production-consumption using images of buildings taken by young people. Purposive sampling was used to track the snapgram of young employees who are also fresh graduates. To enrich the research outcomes, the data was processed utilizing the social semiotic methodology and a qualitative approach. Guy Debord's Spectacle of Society (1967) theory and the postmodernist perspective are also discussed. According to the findings of the paper, there are attempts to achieve a higher lifestyle as a representation of urban society through the uploading of images of work and buildings. On the one hand, an idealized and artistically portrayal of communal life and urban space existed, while on the other side a city with a dense population is ignored. This study is limited to the social media platform Instagram and the Jakarta metropolitan area in Indonesia. There has never been a conversation about the convergence of urban settings with social media as a spectacle before.

**Keywords:** *postmodernism, skyscraper, motivational quotes, spectacle, and urbanism*



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### **INTRODUCTION**

*“Beloved those who sit down. Beloved the stranger and his wife, the neighbor with sleeves, neck and eyes. Beloved be the one who has bedbugs. The one who wears a torn shoe in rain. The one who keeps vigil over the corpse of bread with two matches. The one who catches a finger in a door. The one who doesn't have birthdays. The one who lost his shadow in a fire.*

*Beloved be the one who is hungry or thirsty, but has no hunger with which to satisfy his thirst, no thirst with which to satisfy all his hungers. Beloved be the one who works daily, nightly, hourly, the one who sweats from pain or shame, that one who goes, ordered by his hands, to the movies, the one*

*who pays with what he lacks, the one who sleeps on his back, the one who no longer recalls his childhood."*

- The poem "Stumble Between Two Stars" (1937) by César Abraham Vallejo Mendoza

The poem's quote serves as an introduction to the case study that the author will examine in this paper about the current rhythm of modern society, which includes increased production, job hunting, and money hunting, among other things. A poem criticizing modern life, specifically a lifestyle that must be a la mode or contemporary in order to meet the demands of the times. The urban situation is defined by active participation in life and the performance of social functions. Community orientation is then centered on progress toward development, employment competitiveness, and economic expansion, which then relates to a lifestyle or a typical urban phenomena known as hustle culture.

Hustle culture, according to Balkeran (2020), was a phenomena that existed prior to the Industrial Revolution's work safety laws to perpetuate worker exploitation and terrible working conditions. Hazardous working conditions, low pay, and lengthy work hours are among them. People believe that achieving professional goals through hard effort is the most significant component of life. Workers put themselves in a psychological situation to constantly trying to achieve more and to live an always-on lifestyle. Users of social media, particularly Instagram, adapt this mentality and work ethic to develop their self-image.

Many causes contribute to hustle culture, one of which is the blurring of work-life boundaries due to digital distractions. Advances in technology have since blurred the border between work and personal life, particularly with the arrival of the internet, when emails can be checked from anywhere, documents can be transmitted at any time, and calls must be answered at odd hours, sometimes even late at night. The difference nowadays is that hustle culture is recognized as a lifestyle by the younger generation, and it is all about self-branding, which is inextricably linked to social media as a vehicle for various types of content distribution, particularly Instagram. Caldeira et al. (2018) claim that Instagram can be used to represent oneself through the visibility of images in one's account. However, the presence of Instagram users on social media has the potential to be co-opted and legitimized by authorities, particularly capital owners and other actors who benefit from the hustle culture phenomenon. The major goal of this study is to explore the building of public image through production and consumption patterns in inspiring accounts, which are subsequently adopted by other Instagram users, as well as the trend of youngsters sharing skyscraper photographs to Instagram.

Many accounts even discuss job productivity advice and incorporate or change famous lines to make them 'motivating' and 'inspirational,' such as "Good things happen to those who hustle." and "Rise and Grind," as well as the hashtag #ThanksGodItsMonday. These statements are then altered by Instagram users, who utilize them to show off their activities or job via Instagram uploads. However, there is a trend in his work uploads that involves or uses a skyscraper as a backdrop or vista.

The trend of uploading skyscraper backgrounds is enlivened by fresh graduates who have just graduated and got jobs. They distributed overtime work activities accompanied by views from the top floor of the building to show production patterns. In addition, the presence of one of Jakarta's

newest malls, Ashta, in the Sudirman SCBD district, has boosted the craze for tower photography. Space, or space in architecture, is one of the cultural goods produced as a result of social management, according to Alma (1980). Furthermore, Toscano (2017) states in his research that the public space, such as Instagram, is used to recreate numerous everyday life narratives. They investigate cities and public locations, share their findings, and create new pictures and experiences. As a result, social media may capture the dynamism of metropolitan places and reshape them.

Thus, the major objective of this article is to explore the building of public image through production and consumption patterns in motivational accounts, which then adapted in the trend of young people uploading photographs of skyscrapers to Instagram, based on the backdrop of the occurrence that occurred. In addition, how do uploading motivational quotes and skyscrapers become a representation of the urban community. This study is significant because it addresses a critical issue that frequently affects young workers. This article can give new perspectives on the hustle culture issue in order to avoid burnout and new insights into how the system is trending on youth-oriented social media accounts. Furthermore, how young people use big structures to establish self-identity and as a statement that they are a part of society and urban culture. As a result, the posts on young people's Instagram accounts will become subject of a city's representation and identity.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Personal Branding through Hustle**

Based on literature review, the hustle culture phenomena has been ingrained in the metropolitan community's identity. Female creative workers in Australia, according to Idriss (2021), employ the hustler image to negotiate personal aims and ambitions in order to be accepted by society through ethno-entrepreneurship. One of the areas used by its users to enliven this situation is social media. Carter (2016) also cites two categories of Instagram influence, one of which is social media users' use of branding and hashtag hustling to sell themselves. Personal branding by influencers or Instagram users, according to Jacobson (2020), generates always-on-the-job-market persons with professional identities.

### **Creating a New Urban Identity**

Aside from hustling culture, there has also been studies into the image construction of metropolitan areas. According to Stevens (2021), US Instagram influencers use black identity and culture as commodities to gain cultural and economic capital through attractive urban settings. According to Eldik et al. (2019), social media plays a role in migrant urban identity negotiations. Self-esteem and youth empowerment are linked to self-identification as a member of the city. Influencers in Rotterdam develop urban identities that include cultural movements such as football and hip-hop for their local audience, according to another article by Eldik, et al (2019). Kertamukti (2019) examines at Instagram stories that illustrate middle-class identity building through the habit of having fun, which is subsequently seen as an indication that they are in a different social class.

### **Commodification of Space as a Spectacle**

Several researchers have also conducted discussions about the commodification of space as a spectacle. Gerrard and Farugia (2015) look at how homelessness is discussed in public settings and illustrate how representations of poverty, aesthetic politics, and consumerism are all intertwined.

According to Smith (2019), the ideological depiction of a landscape is employed as a form of self-branding or a commodity exchanged on Instagram. According to Mercer and Mayfield (2015), the monetization of space is carried out through Melbourne culture's creative practices, such as art festivals and constructing spectacle venues. It is utilized to revitalize the urban economy while also distinguishing cities from one another.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This qualitative study employs textual studies and the social semiotic technique to examine the meaning of motivating phrases, trends, and skyscrapers as depicted in TikTok users' videos. Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen's book *Social Semiotics* (2006) examines the practice of marking by humans in certain socio-cultural situations, as well as the system of meaning formation in a medium like speech, writing, and images, which can include visual, verbal, auditory, and movement. According to previous research conducted by Arindita (2017) using the social semiotic method, celebrity Andien Aisyah used the Instagram account @andienippeka, which he purposefully created after becoming a mother, to post photos of his daily life with children in order to gain recognition as an ideal mother from the wider community. According to Widianingsh et al. (2021), representation may help establish personal branding by creating symbols that are tailored to the parts of Montoya's personal branding creation. Prishandani (2021) also mentioned that interpreting pictures may be used to conduct semiotic multimodal investigations. Possessive phrases, persuasive statements, and proverbs are among the verbs present in each image, according to the research.

In addition, Guy Debord's Spectacle of Society theory is used in literature. For example, Horta (2016) investigated the body positive narrative through the commodification process for capitalist purposes, which was one of several studies that used this idea. Andreas (2016) looked at the Geyajan Calling demonstration, which was posted on social media to help people develop their self-image as an object by separating themselves from other users (distinction). Apart from Instagram, other social media platforms, according to Karuaningsih (2022), are a spectacle for the transmission of ideology concerning role models and living standards for teens, notably the sultan's hedonistic lifestyle. Purposive sampling was used to obtain data by identifying the unique qualities of postings from Instagram user accounts that were relevant to the study's goals

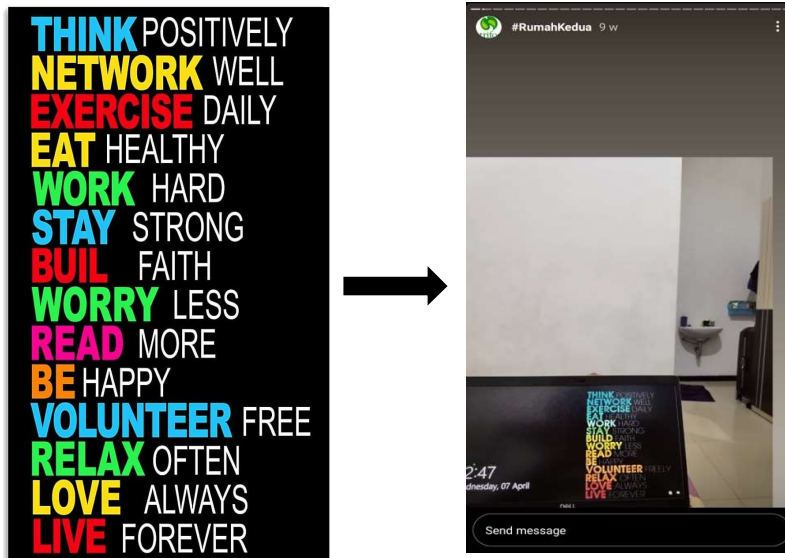
We use a qualitative approach and a constructive paradigm in order to gain an in-depth understanding of a problem rather than a surface description of a large population sample. We set out to take the issue from the individual who then bridged the problem in general with contextualization to give space in a particular way in each case. The corpus under investigation consists of Instagram stories or snapgram from four Instagram accounts with the status of workers in Jakarta with an age range of 23-25 years representing youth and fresh graduates. One Instagram user is male and the other three users are female.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### ***The Productivity Paradox in Youth Job Uploads***

The hustle culture depicted in Instagram user uploads is indeed more concerned with the public image exhibited on social media than the legitimacy of the photo. Modern conditions in the producing side of society, according to Debord (2004), exist as a huge accumulation of spectacles. All things that were once life principles have been reduced to mere representations or images. The spectacle is the polar opposite of life, a self-contained movement of non-living matter. People use Instagram as a show to fight for the highest level of fame with all of the photographs they create,

but they leave themselves as objects since they have no true claim to themselves. The following is an example of a quote on a motivational account which was later adapted by Instagram users:



**Figure 1.** The #ThankGodItsMonday hashtag search includes productive activities and motivational work quotes which were later adapted by Instagram user

According to the preceding image, posts with the hashtag #ThankGodItsMonday offer insights or thoughts on parts of the economy and productive activities, or these inspirational quotations are compelling invitations to select a fast pace and try harder in professional life. When an Instagram user is assigned to work and is in his rented apartment, the quote is displayed on his laptop wallpaper. On the user's laptop background, there is an encouraging quotation that reads:

*"Think positively. Network well. Exercise daily. Eat healthy. Work hard. Stay strong. Build faith. Worry less. Read more. Be happy. Volunteer free. Relax often. Love always. Live Forever"*

The user gets a positive feeling and a liberating impression from the inspirational phrase in Figure 1. Positive thinking, such as "think optimistically," is emphasized in the hustler mindset as a key to success (Hill, 2020). The user's interpretation of the quotation, which encompasses inspiration in all aspects of his life, is to live the best life possible. Healthy habits are also encouraged, ranging from elementary activities such as "eat healthy" to tertiary activities such as meditation or yoga "relax frequently." The quotation on his laptop wallpaper appears to be a reflection of himself, and it's an attempt at positive self-talk and pseudo-psychological techniques to break through limiting beliefs and notions. According to Lan et al. (2018), pseudo-psychological demonstrations can have a significant impact in shaping problematic understandings within a science and raise questions about its wider impact.

When the quote is paired with other parts, such as a photo in its entirety in a snapgram collection with the title #Rumahkedua (second house), the Instagram user's professional activities in his firm are revealed. If he looks at the context of the photo while in a leased property to meet his work needs, this motivation can be used as an orientation to increase his work performance. In poetry quotations, activities like "exercise well," "work hard," "stay strong," "develop faith," and "read more" are meant to improve physical stamina and attention span through hard effort. Self-

empowerment refers to the social, health, spiritual, intellectual, and mental aspects of one's life that are focused on the quote.

The snapgram depicts how a person creates a work environment in his resting area or private space using quotes from laptop wallpapers as a medium. Rapid advancements in electronic communication technology have reduced the necessity for face-to-face communication in business, work, and other human relationships. According to Hill (2018), technological platforms enable individuals and businesses to monetize products, services, advice, and the personalities of workers and consumers in new ways. Financial independence for kids is no longer limited to office space or other public settings, but rather begins in the home. This is paradoxical because it demonstrates how the home can be used as a work setting while still allowing for personal life. This plainly demonstrates that there is no clear distinction between professional and personal spaces in the hustle culture phenomenon.

Another irony is how the attitude represented by motivational slogans becomes the tradable value for social mobility when the photo is shared to the social networking platform Instagram. Young people who work not only want to work hard, but they also want to use social media to establish their identity and significance. Workers use technology in the form of social media platforms to create their ideal persona as a professional worker while online. Instagram users' production tendencies are displayed to other users. According to Debord (1967), the spectacle "unifies and explains a wide range of apparent phenomena." The production and consumption of images, commodities, and staged events are central to the media and consumer society. The importance of productivity in the workplace is captured in this snapgram.

The portrayal of the post's and work's success is more important than the verification of the man's own success. The adolescents on Instagram believe that the only thing standing in their way of success is laziness, and that if they work hard enough, they can change the world. This relates to poisonous positivity; if the upload becomes a spectacle, the value of the hard effort is swapped and absorbed. Other people who watch will be as successful as him who got a job in a huge company if they follow this quote. The only road to happiness, or the peak of happiness, is to live by these values. Although the quote's message appears to be pleasant and innocuous, the application of these ideals can be harmful. This toxicity will lead to people believing that positive things must be avoided in addition to negative things, which is extremely political given that there were previously positive and negative constructs, active and passive, production and consumption. Instagram users will then judge their self-worth based on the productivity they generate, and how this ties to the Industrial Revolution, which pitted humans against machines. As a result, Instagram users' image construction is influenced by their work ethic.

In contrast to workaholism, users feel compelled to brag about their workload and even laugh about it. Users are broadcasting how hard they work and how occupied they are to the rest of the world. They want to demonstrate that they work harder than other users and that no one can beat them because it is a skill. This phenomenon therefore relates to the irony that those Instagram users who praise work should not waste time submitting photographs and comments if they are truly busy. This behavior can then be compared to systemic issues like poverty. According to the author, thinking optimistically, working hard, and never giving up would not cure the problem. Even for one, two, and small societies that are successful or are said to be successful, they cannot represent the millions of societies that have failed economically. Even if those who are successful fall into the successful category, they are not a representation of the majority.

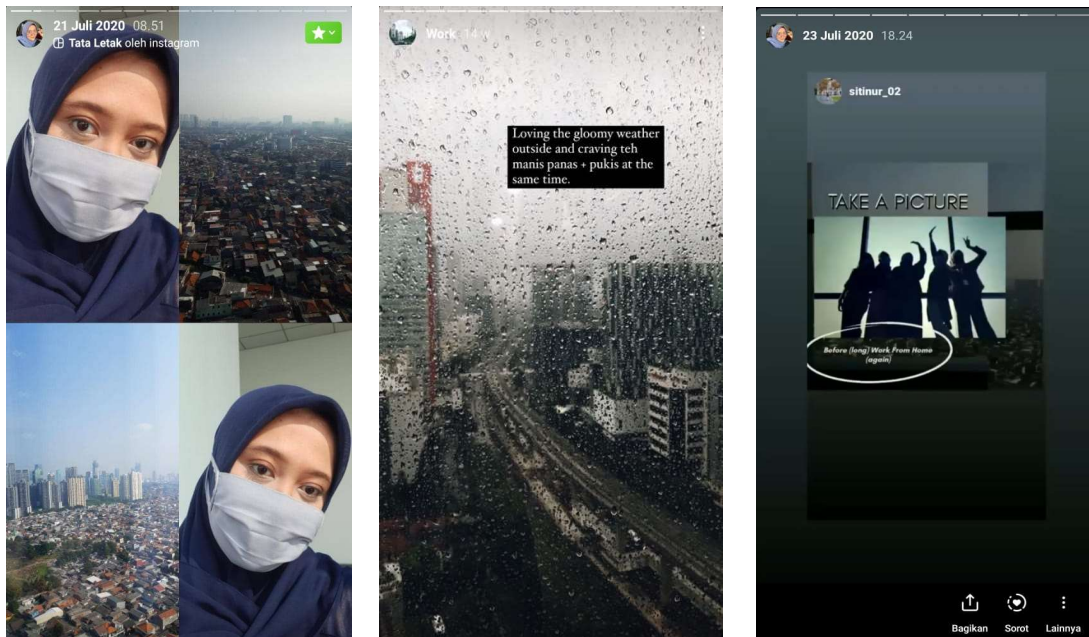
This can lead to the use of class differences as a strategy to maintain the status quo and avoid variety of thought. The monetization of happiness or consumption-production activities themselves follows the positivity narrative through published work activities. The omnipresent reinforcement that the lives of employees on Instagram are the representation orientation of urban and modern culture is then referenced in this happiness narrative. According to McKechnie (1974), urban lifestyles are more likely to value high-density living, diverse interpersonal relationships, and cultural diversity. The pleasant and happy existence of the metropolitan community is far from reality, leading to the legitimacy of an elite group that dominates and does not require change like other social classes.

### **Skyscrapers as an Indicator of Urban Society**

Henri Lefebvre (1991) writes in his book *The Production of Space* that space is not only something that may be consumed, but also exploited as an instrument of power by the ruling classes to obtain control over space that is expanding. Social relations produce space, and social space is a result of social ties (Lefebvre, 1991: 26). Furthermore, according to Debord (2006), "spectacle is the apogee of ideology because it fully reveals and manifests the core of all ideological systems, such as poverty, enslavement, and the negation of actual life."

Spectacle preserves the traits of materialism by representing reality through the technical mediation of signs or signs, such as buildings. Baecham (2016) also demonstrates how the spectacle notion is utilized to demonstrate the ruling class's authority, and how the building is used as a symbol of luxury, popularity, prosperity, control, and military force to the populace. Megaprojects are designed to demonstrate extraordinary urban development while also encouraging economic growth and attracting foreign capital investment.

The increasing rate of urbanization in recent decades, particularly in emerging nations, has resulted in a rise in the construction of tall structures around the world. Cities all over the world compete to construct the world's tallest structures, with some even holding competitions to construct the most iconic and magnificent tall structures. Figure 2 depicts a building in Jakarta that serves as an urban space. These structures serve as a sign of hegemony and authority. Instagram users then employ this luxury architecture style as a means of self-promotion. High-rise architecture has its origins in religious structures such as Egypt's huge pyramids or Middle Ages churches. The infatuation with large structures continues to rise today, and it is a symbol of the times. This obsession with tall buildings is still growing today and is a sign of the architectural manifestation of capitalism and power (Elshawanty, 2020). Space is increasingly being commodified and subject to short-term investment, income generation, and long-term urban development. Here are some examples of snapgram by users showing office space in a tall building in Jakarta:



**Figure 2.** Skyscraper uploads by Instagram users

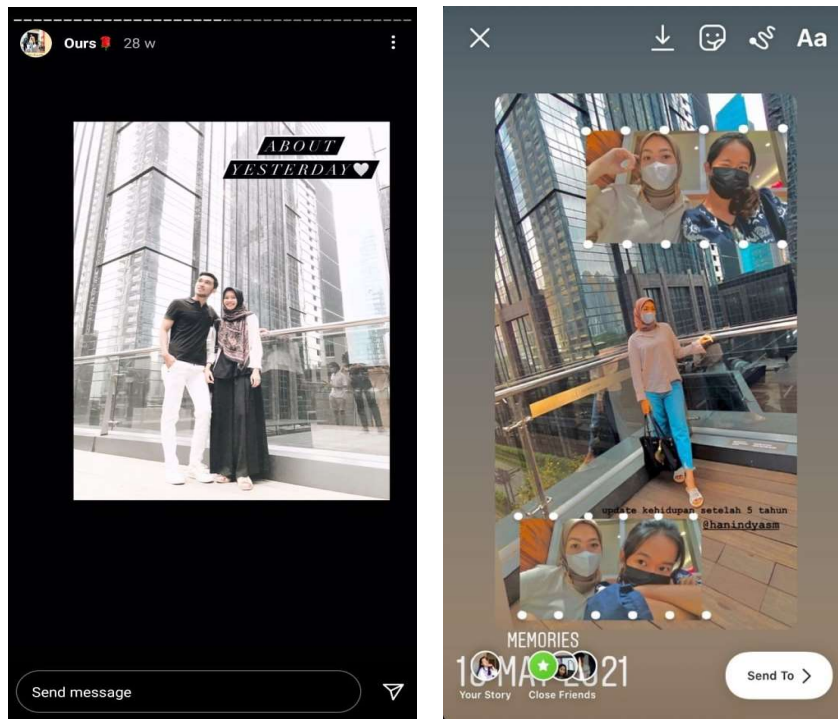
Several photographs depicting the perspective from a tall office building can be found in Figure 2. This magnificent construction is regarded as a status symbol and promotes people's yearning for space. People post images of towering structures not simply because they admire them, but also because they are thought to confer "status." People who have access to high-rise buildings are regarded as "cool" or "exclusive." Buildings are portrayed visually and then used in social media to emulate popular cultural trends. The public space is then commodified for private use and produced to fulfill the needs of consumption and production through various and spectacular designs. As a result, there are symbols that depict the metropolitan way of life..

Figure 2 depicts a collage of selfies and views of tall office buildings, demonstrating that space is no longer viewed solely for its utility in the workplace, but also for its aesthetic value. They enhanced the beauty of the view of the towering structure by adding effects or filters. The lofty building can subsequently be viewed as a representation of Instagram users' supremacy. The pervasive affirmation is tied to civilized beings since they feel close to the city as a civilization and are regarded an advanced society when contrasted to rural communities, notably in the first shot, which juxtaposes a view of the skyscraper with a selfie of herself. According to Figure 2, the work space no longer serves as a place to work, but rather as a creation of the users' identities as workers. When photography is shared, according to Van Dijk (2008), it serves as a tool for identity development.

In addition to skyscrapers, one mall in Jakarta, Ashta District 8 in the SCBD business district, has become the focus of Instagram users' attention. The shopping center in the heart of this tower creates a picturesque ambience reminiscent of New York. In addition to being a renowned cafe, Ashta District 8 is a popular OOTD and instagramable location. According to Febriyanti (2018), managers and netizens use instagrammable sites to disseminate images of tourism artifacts via the



official Instagram account in order to increase tourist interest. Instagram users can communicate through their appearance by curating their self-image and constructing their own identity through the images and videos they take and choose to post/share on their account (Seibel, 2019).



**Gambar 3.** Upload of Ashta 8 SCBD Sudirman building by Instagram users

This can also be seen in Figure 3, which depicts how consumer activities, particularly in the Ashta 8 SCBD building's open spaces, define an urban lifestyle. The lifestyle shown is a modern one, with wide glass windows and a minimalist, industrial, futuristic building design to give a wonderful impression. The building's dominant hue is gray or black, which represents intelligence, the future, elegance, and refinement. Modern or urban society, according to Wirth (1938), is a component of modernity. A culture that is individualistic, rational, with technical developments, forsaking tradition, and a tendency toward instant and fast items characterizes the modern lifestyle. Furthermore, Instagram users in Figure 2 shoot photos with their spouses and close friends, demonstrating an affective attachment that is perceived as a transactional relationship through space consumption patterns. As a result, both photographs depict the tendency of big structures or skyscrapers as proof of being a part of a city civilization.

However, the spectacle always generates paradoxes or ironies, such as how it attempts to replace reality with current illusions and perceptions that may not necessarily reflect the true state of urban space and society. The image of office workers in high-rise buildings therefore becomes one of the orientations or standards of a prosperous and ideal society. This ignores the fact that these workers

are merely corporate slaves who use tall buildings as symbols of a better, contemporary, strong, and best society urban society in order to enhance the aesthetics of their workplaces. The aesthetics of the metropolitan community's working life appears to encompass the exploitation of energy and time, which can lead to additional issues such as burnout. The irony resurfaces when these workers are paired with instructors who work in older, less contemporary school facilities, particularly in rural areas, where wages are low and fluctuate with the economy. When compared to office employees in skyscrapers, the teaching profession will appear more essential, significant, and noble.

## **CONCLUSION**

Instagram allows users to create identities as professionals and members of urban culture. Instagram uploads become symbolic consumption, and users associate the architecture with their preferred identity imagination. The buildings in the background demonstrate that what is cool and current is a way of life or a way of life in a city. This is similar to responding to the desire of recent graduates to work in a city center office and for others to enjoy the city lifestyle. The photo's aesthetics must be scrutinized in order to demonstrate how the pattern of production and consumption would always favor one side, namely the capital and power owner. The focus of urban space then shifts back to object-oriented development. On the other side of city, this can lead to irony. Instagram, therefore, becomes a criterion for classifying or dividing active-passive, or current-ancient society, forming a community-gated or elite group.

The irony also applies to the outlying slums, which are ignored and relegated in metropolitan space, yet are made present and real by depictions of Jakarta as a sophisticated city comparable to New York. As a result of this need, a trend has emerged in which buildings are constructed solely to elicit a spectacular effect, which is a trademark of modern spectacle to achieve a surprise effect in its representation. Modernization initiatives are carried out by acquiring land in city villages and then attempting to establish a gated community while ignoring other consequences. The different parties in society should be able to connect with their own culture and history through urban space and architecture. The concept of modernity and universality via development that mimics global development must be re-examined, keeping in mind that space must be addressed according to its own particular character.

## **LIMITATION & FURTHER RESEARCH**

This study is limited to DKI Jakarta's city space, which has seen a rising tendency during the pandemic. The conditions that arise in urban environments as indicators of urban community identity are only described qualitatively in this study. Further research is needed to determine how the impact of trends that become identities for urban youngsters should be studied in depth..

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