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Like to Learn: Reimagining Instagram as Architecture Learning Platform

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Abstract

This study posits that Instagram extends beyond social networking, serving as a tool for informal learning and knowledge dissemination. Architecture, deeply intertwined with visual exploration, finds a natural ally in Instagram, a popular visual-based social media platform in Indonesia. This study is an exploratory qualitative study, attempting to reflect on the reinterpretation of Instagram as a potential medium for informal architecture learning. This case study explores Instagram's role in knowledge access for Indonesian architecture, examining its support for learning activities through users, content, and interaction. The findings highlight Instagram's potential to enhance architectural education in learning, especially through professional architects who share knowledge on the platform. Users on Instagram are both consumers and creators of content, fostering a dynamic exchange of ideas. Instagram's features, like comments and live sessions, support a collaborative learning environment. Its visual focus suits architectural learning, helping students and professionals stay informed and engaged. Instagram's extensive reach and real-time interaction capabilities, independent of pre-existing personal connections, render it an invaluable tool for explorative knowledge dissemination. This suggests its potential to play a significant role in the future of architectural education.

Keywords: *Architecture; Digital; Instagram; Learning; Platform*

Introduction

This study suggests that Instagram's function surpasses simple social networking, acting as a powerful medium for informal learning and the dissemination of knowledge. Social media platforms facilitate networking among users with shared interests and backgrounds, creating virtual communities that foster collaboration and information exchange. Instagram, as one of the largest social media platforms, exemplifies modern social media usage (Manovich, 2019), with its intensive use underscoring its significant role in daily life (Akram & Kumar, 2017). Users engage by sharing stories, photos, and videos (Serafinelli, 2017), while professionals leverage Instagram to expand economic opportunities, build personal brands, and connect with a global audience (Usman & Navari, 2019). Additionally, Instagram's algorithm helps users discover content tailored to their interests, enhancing user engagement and satisfaction. The platform's visual-centric nature also makes it an ideal tool for creative industries, including architecture, fashion, and design.

Social media transforms user experiences by creating virtual identities, enabling internet-based interactions, and facilitating rapid information distribution (Toscano, 2017). This digital reality positions humans as subjects with substantial digital needs (Mitchell, 1996) reshaping how individuals engage with information and each other. Indonesia, which had the second largest Instagram user base in the Asia Pacific with over 89 million users as

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of January 2023, ranks fourth globally (Maskuroh et al., 2022; Simon, 2022). For architecture students and professionals, Instagram is a platform for documenting work, showcasing creativity, and engaging with a broader community, thereby highlighting its potential in architectural education (Kosasih & Sangaras, 2022). The platform's ability to facilitate real-time feedback and peer review further enhances its educational value. Additionally, Instagram's integration with other digital tools and resources makes it a versatile component of modern architectural practice and learning.

The integration of Instagram in research and education is accelerating, given its versatility, adaptability, and support for informal learning (Moreira et al., 2016). The convergence of humans and technology into a single entity is evident. Unlike other visual-based media like YouTube or TikTok, Instagram's mobile nature allows for intensive use between activities, making it particularly effective for the informal learning process (Dewanti & Sujarwo, 2021). Instagram's relevance in various research contexts is increasing (Yang & others, 2021), including the usage by students in architectural learning (Ghalejough et al., 2021). However, its role in visual-based learning processes remains underexplored. This study focuses on three key components: users (diverse perspectives), content (creative representation), and interactions (information access and knowledge transfer), exploring Instagram's potential as an informal learning platform within formal education.

Literature Review

1. Learning Architecture through Creative Media

Model-based learning in architecture involves hands-on practice where students build physical or digital models to understand and visualize architectural concepts. This approach enhances spatial reasoning, design thinking, and problem-solving skills, providing a tangible understanding of structures and forms (Iranmanesh & Onur, 2021). With the integration of creative media, model-based learning can be significantly amplified. Digital platforms and interactive apps offer dynamic ways to present, explore, and critique architectural models (Baghaei Daemei & Safari, 2018). These tools enable students to share their work, receive feedback from a global community, and engage with cutting-edge design trends and technologies. By leveraging creative media, model-based learning becomes more accessible, collaborative, and innovative, driving a deeper comprehension and application of architectural principles.

Learning architecture through creative media, such as social platforms and interactive apps, is crucial in today's fast-paced world. These platforms make learning more engaging and accessible (Carpenter et al., 2020), allowing students to explore various architectural styles, techniques, and ideas from around the globe. Creative social and digital media often provide real-time updates and dynamic content, which helps learners stay current with emerging trends and innovations in the field (Ghalejough et al., 2021). Furthermore, interactive tools and visual aids enhance the learning experience by making complex concepts more understandable.

Unlike conventional media, which can be static and limited in scope, creative social digital media encourages collaboration and networking among peers and professionals, fostering a more holistic and collaborative learning environment. This shift towards creative media can lead to a more enriched and well-rounded education in architecture. By embracing these innovative tools, students can gain a deeper understanding of architecture and develop the skills needed to succeed in a rapidly evolving industry. Instagram represents a media-based platform that significantly engages the architectural community in Indonesia. This study aims to explore the potential of Instagram as a medium for informal, interactive learning within the field of architecture.

2. Instagram as a Source

The proliferation of social media marks a new era in response to digitization and high mobility. Boyd (2007) defines social media as a web-based service that enables users to create personal pages within a connected system, facilitating the browsing and access of diverse information. Social media is characterized by its accommodation of user-generated content (Luca, 2015) and direct user-to-user interactions (Huang & Benyoucef, 2015). Through these platforms, users can produce, share, and curate information, engaging in evaluation and discussion. The rapid advancement of technology ensures the high effectiveness and efficiency of information dissemination, making social media highly relevant in reflecting contemporary societal conditions.

Instagram, a visual-based social media application, facilitates the production and sharing of content among users (Tsai & Bagozzi, 2014). This concept creates new opportunities for social media, where interactions are based on visual data, enabling users to communicate and engage through images and videos rather than text alone. Instagram's strong position is attributed to its simplicity and integration of various functionalities, such as filters, stories, and reels, making it easy to learn and operate in a high-mobility daily life (Manovich, 2016). Recent studies indicate that social media has been increasingly integrated into the research process, providing a platform for academic collaboration, data collection, and the dissemination of research findings to a broader audience.

Chen (2021) demonstrated that Instagram's study encompasses a wide range of aspects. The utilization of Instagram's visual data and information can be analyzed through four main models: the content creation process, the nature of the content, the participants, and the context of the content (Rose, 2016). Researchers can conduct quantitative studies on Instagram due to the vast amount of data it accommodates (Sloan & Quan-Haase, 2017).

Quantitative data, such as likes and comments, can be analyzed through surveys or questionnaires to represent various perspectives, behaviors, and trends. Conversely, qualitative studies, based on researchers' experience and intuition (Brannen, 2005), view Instagram as a reflection of empirical societal phenomena. Thus, Instagram presents itself as a valuable alternative research resource with extensive possibilities. While prior research has investigated the utilization of social media within educational contexts, the particular function of reimagining Instagram in the domain of architectural learning remains insufficiently examined. This study endeavors to bridge this gap in the literature.

3. Instagram as a Potential Integrative Platform

Social media platforms, particularly Instagram, now host a wide array of activities and content. This platform facilitates communication, interaction, business operations, and discussions, highlighting its role as an integrated complex system. The social media paradigm covers various aspects of communication and social integration. According to Garcia (2011), social media provides diverse forms of communication, including social blogs, social recommendations, social bookmarking, and social networking. These features enable users to share their thoughts, recommend content, save useful information, and connect with others, creating a dynamic and interconnected online environment. Instagram's visual-centric approach further enhances its versatility, making it a multifaceted tool for personal expression, professional networking, and community building. This integration of multiple functionalities underscores the platform's significance in modern digital life, making it an essential part of contemporary communication and interaction.

Given the categorization above, there is significant potential for this medium to be utilized in informal learning processes. Social

blogs can document not only everyday life but also thoughts and ideas related to design from daily activities (Barbour & Heise, 2019). Recommendations and reviews can curate essential items, particularly project references that support the design process (Thömmes & Hübner, 2018). Bookmarking allows users to save valuable resources for enriching future design insights (Kosasih & Sangaras, 2022). Networking facilitates connections among various parties or users who might not otherwise interact, such as architecture students and professional architects. According to Harahap (2019), the interplay between rationality and creativity can support knowledge development. Social media provides opportunities to enhance creativity and rationality by reflecting on the works of other architects.

The integration of social media into learning paradigms encompasses four primary components: authentic material or content, learner motivation, observer participation, and constructive feedback (Lestari & German, 2021). According to learning theory (Erarslan, 2019), learning involves both cognitive and emotional dimensions, where the cognitive dimension pertains to the acquisition of knowledge or skills based on comprehension, and the emotional dimension involves mental states, feelings, and motivation, which can be examined through two variables: cognitive, focusing on evaluation and understanding, and affective, which is based on emotions, reactions, and feelings, thereby highlighting the multifaceted nature of the learning process.

Social media platforms have the potential to enhance formal learning through their content and the informal communication they facilitate (Adams, 2016; Erarslan, 2019). Specifically, Adams (2016) demonstrated that Instagram holds significant promise for both formal and informal architectural education. The trend of sharing architectural works on Instagram can connect various architectural schools and expose students to a global audience. Additionally, Karimah and Atmodiwirjo (2021) found that a catalog can aid designers and

students in managing design information by collecting, investigating, and organizing it into a personal library. With its catalog-like user interface, Instagram can effectively support the learning process, particularly in design. Figure 1 illustrates the potential model of the informal learning process through social media.

Figure 1. Proposed model of learning process through social media
Source: Author
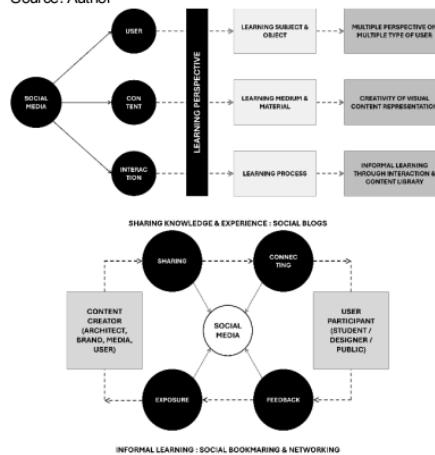
This study investigates the diverse applications of Instagram features for informal learning, emphasizing the platform's potential to facilitate knowledge sharing and skill development outside traditional educational settings. It focuses on three primary components of social media: users, content, and interactions, which form the foundation of the discussion on how informal learning takes place, particularly in visually-oriented disciplines like architecture. The aim is to understand how the integration of Instagram into informal learning can enhance and support formal educational processes by providing additional resources, fostering community engagement, and encouraging creative expression. Additionally, the study explores the role of visual storytelling in making complex architectural concepts more accessible and engaging for learners. It also examines how user-generated content can contribute to a collaborative learning environment, where

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students and professionals alike can share insights, critique each other's work, and build a supportive community. Finally, the research considers the potential for Instagram to serve as a bridge between informal and formal education, offering a complementary platform that enriches traditional learning experiences.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach based on case studies observed through virtual means. Qualitative research preserves natural conditions, emphasizes interpretation and meaning, and is conducted within specific, limited contexts (Groat & Wang, 2013). Architectural accounts are identified using advanced searches filtered by follower count (over 50,000) and location (Indonesia) via the Inflact search tool.
(https://inflact.com/tools/instagram-search/)

Additional search methods include conducting polls on Instagram to gather recommendations from architectural users and obtaining suggestions from architecture students who extensively use Instagram for their studies. This multi-faceted approach ensures a comprehensive selection of relevant accounts for analysis. The study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of how Instagram can be leveraged for informal learning in the field of architecture. Figure 2 illustrates the research framework.

Figure 2. Proposed framework of research through instagram
Source: Author

Relevant architectural content (informative and educational) is selected for analysis based on four aspects of visual content (Rose, 2016; Yang & others, 2021); creation, character, participants, and context. The creation aspect examines how the content is produced and the techniques used. The character aspect focuses on the nature and style of the content. Participants involved in interactions are identified through comments and likes, providing insights into user engagement and feedback. The context aspect considers the situational and environmental factors influencing the content. The observations and analysis are presented in a narrative discussion format, divided into three main sections corresponding to the investigated instruments: User, Content, and Interaction. This comprehensive approach ensures a thorough understanding of how Instagram facilitates informal learning in architecture.

Result and Discussion

1. User: Multiple user's perspective

Based on observations, there are several distinct categories of architectural-based Instagram users. The first category comprises architects who publish their work to a broad audience. Students often use Instagram to seek architectural ideas and inspiration. The second category includes commercial brands that utilize Instagram to introduce the technical aspects of their production materials. The third category consists of architectural media, which curate existing architectural content. The final category includes building users who share their experiences with their homes, providing designers with valuable insights into how people respond to design.

Recently, some architects have expanded their roles to become content creators, sharing their architectural knowledge and design experiences through narratives, compelling photos, and short videos. This trend not only broadens their professional reach but also enriches the architectural community with diverse insights and practical knowledge. Figure 3 and Table 1 illustrate the multiple

types of architecture-related Instagram users and their related knowledge. These visual aids provide a comprehensive overview of how different user categories contribute to the dissemination and exchange of architectural information on the platform.

Figure 3. Multiple type of user and their perspective
Source: Author
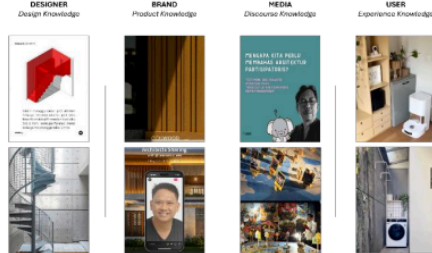
Architects: For example, Mande Austriono shares architectural knowledge based on his built projects, explaining practical and technical aspects. His Instagram account, @mondododo, with 109K followers, features photos of completed works (Austriono, 2025). Another architect, Zurnalis, uses his account @zurnalisarchitect (166K followers) to share architectural knowledge through informative diagrams and reels, offering interactive and creative content (Zurnalis, 2025).

Brands: These accounts use Instagram to educate about their products, often providing technical information that benefits architects and students. For instance, the Instagram account @conwoodid (69K followers) explains composite cement materials, with various responses discussed in the comments (Conwood, 2025). Some brands also host live Instagram sessions with architects to discuss specific architectural topics.

Media: These users curate content and present it in an educational format. The Instagram account @omahlibrary (56K followers) shares narrative and informative content on various architectural discourses. For example, architect Eko Prawoto's ideas on participatory architecture are presented in visually engaging graphic content (Omah, 2025). Another

account, @arsitekturui, shares notable student works with detailed narrative captions, serving as a valuable knowledge resource (UI, 2025).

Users: These accounts share their experiences with their homes, offering perspectives that differ from those of designers. For example, the account @ruma.ciel (214K followers) shares architectural insights from the perspective of building users. Designers can use this content for design reflection, students for design ideas, and fellow users for design inspiration (Ciel, 2025).

Table 1. Multiple perspective of multiple kind of architectural related Instagram user in Indonesia

| Creator (perspective)	Content type	Social motivation instrument (content)	Learning object (content)	Learning subject (comment & likes)
Architect	Project portfolio	Exposure Sharing	Architectural design knowledge	Fellow architect, architecture student
	Educative content	Sharing	Architectural design knowledge	Architect, architecture student
	Narrative content	Sharing	Architectural design knowledge & discourse	Architect
Brand	Product knowledge	Connecting Exposure	Product knowledge	Architect, architecture student, building user
	Architect Interview	Connecting Exposure Sharing	Design knowledge	Architect, architecture student
Media curatorial	Project curatorial	Exposure Connecting Sharing	Discourse knowledge	Architect & architecture student
Building user	Building experience	Exposure Connecting Sharing	Experience knowledge	Architecture student, building user

Source: Author

2. Content: Creative Informative Contents

Instagram, originally a photo-centric platform, has transformed into a multifaceted social media tool that accommodates a diverse array of visual content, including videos, stories, and reels. Through the exploration of Instagram's potential within the architectural domain, several educational content formats have been identified, underscoring the platform's efficacy in knowledge dissemination. These formats include three primary types of visual content: actual photos or videos that depict real-world

examples, illustrations or diagrams that offer detailed explanations, and graphical narrative content that integrates text and visuals to convey comprehensive stories about architectural concepts and projects. Additionally, Instagram's interactive features, such as comments, likes, and direct messaging, facilitate real-time feedback and discussions, enhancing the learning experience. The platform's algorithm also helps users discover relevant content and connect with other architecture enthusiasts and professionals. This dynamic environment not only supports the sharing of knowledge but also fosters a sense of community and collaboration among users.

Figure 4. Several types of visual-based content, beyond photo and video
Source: Author
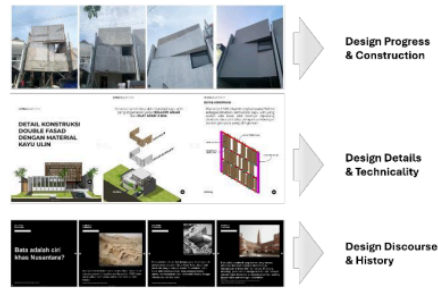
The most popular contents are photos and short video content (reel). Most of the content is in the form of architectural design processes or results. However, because architects generally work with visualization, diagrams and illustrations are often used as educational content. In addition, the collage feature on Instagram is used to present content that resembles a 'magazine,' where information and ideas are represented in this format. This content-based learning process places content material as a source of knowledge. Because educational content is shared on the Instagram platform, it is possible for learning to occur in a relaxed atmosphere (while consuming other Instagram content). The uniqueness of the content is needed so that participants become interested and understand the message they want to convey. Figure 4 and Table 2 illustrate the multi type of content that has informative

and knowledge-worth material on it (Architecture, 2025; Indonesia, 2025; Zurnalis, 2025).

Table 2. Content creative of useful knowledgeable contents

Content (based on content type)	Substance (based on content type)	Learning object (based on content type)	Learning subject (based on comment & likes)
Actual (photo & video)	Design output	Reference	Architect, architecture student
	Design process	Knowledge, process	Architect, architecture student
Illustration diagram (graphic & video)	Design output	Reference	Architect, architecture student
	Design element	Knowledge, details	Architect, architecture student
	Design method	Knowledge, process	Architect, architecture student
Narrative (graphic)	Design history	Information	Architect, architecture student
	Design discourse	Knowledge	Architect, architecture student

Source: Author

Table 3 maps the potential features and characteristics of Instagram in supporting informal learning related to architecture.

Table 3. Features that support learning

Features	Possible Learning Content
Posts	static & graphical, more polished informational content
Stories	design process and non direct discussion through comment
Reels	video based informative content
Live	talks and discussion with the expert
Direct Message	communicating with the expert
Explore	curative content based on personal algorithm
Highlight	design process and content on curation

Source: Author

3. Interaction: Interactive Knowledge Transfer

According to Yusron (2018), there are two models of learning through social media related to interaction: the Cognitive model, which focuses on logical evaluation, and the Affective model, which is based on emotions,

reactions, and feelings. The Cognitive model applies to extended interactions and requires thought and time to provide action (not instant). An Instagram feature that accommodates this model is a discussion of questions that users can post in the comments and replies (Post & Stories) column. These two types require that the learning subject actively responds to what is given by the content creator. At the same time, the second model is one-way, namely the act of saving, giving likes, and sharing posts with fellow users. This type of learning is an Affective model because it occurs instantaneously and is based on momentary emotions, reactions, and feelings. Users can do informal learning by recalling the content they have saved to seek references, information, and knowledge from the past. Figure 5 & Table 4 illustrates the model of the learning process method, by creating a personal collection and interaction with the professionals (Architect, 2025; Rahman, 2025).

Figure 5. Two way learning process (interactive - green) & one way learning (bookmarking - red)
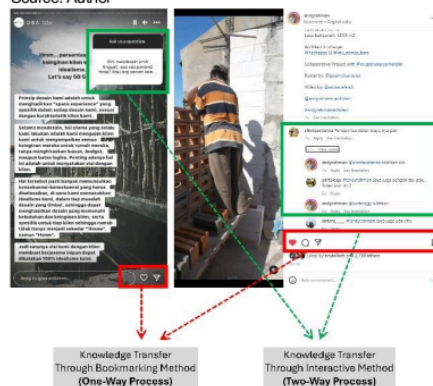Source: Author

Table 4. Content creative of useful knowledgeable contents

Social interactivity	Learning method	Models
Post and comment	Direct (two way)	Cognitive learning (action)
Stories replies, question and answer, poll	Direct (two way)	Cognitive & affective learning (reaction)
Like, saved, share	Indirect (one way)	Affective learning (quick reaction)

Source: Author

The exploration above demonstrates that Instagram is a highly effective platform for facilitating informal learning, particularly within the architectural domain. Architectural science and knowledge, which are inherently visual and graphical, align seamlessly with Instagram's capabilities, enabling efficient sharing and dissemination of information. The learning process on Instagram can occur through various modalities, including one-way content consumption, instant reactions, or extended discussions, fostering a diversity of perspectives and interactions among users who may not have previously connected, thereby creating significant opportunities for accelerating and expanding architectural knowledge. Moreover, Instagram's algorithmic recommendations help users discover relevant content, enhancing personalized learning experiences. The platform's global reach also allows for cross-cultural exchanges, enriching the learning process with diverse architectural styles and practices. Additionally, the use of hashtags and geotags can help categorize and locate specific architectural content, making it easier for users to find and engage with topics of interest.

While Instagram provides a visually engaging platform for sharing architectural concepts and projects, it presents several limitations as a supportive informal educational medium. One significant challenge is the superficial nature of content consumption; the platform's design encourages quick scrolling and brief interactions, which can undermine deep learning and critical engagement with

architectural theories and practices. Additionally, algorithmic content curation can create echo chambers, limiting exposure to diverse perspectives and fostering a narrow understanding of the field. Furthermore, the emphasis on aesthetic appeal over substantive content can skew the perception of architectural quality and innovation, leading to a preference for visually striking yet conceptually shallow work. These limitations highlight the need for complementary educational strategies that promote comprehensive and critical learning in architecture.

Conclusion

Based on the exploratory study, Instagram demonstrates significant potential to support learning, particularly in informal and casual contexts. From the user perspective, Instagram serves as a platform that connects various stakeholders. In terms of knowledge transfer, Instagram enables architectural students to study the works and thoughts of professional architects and even directly contact them. The diverse perspectives of different users further enrich this knowledge exchange. The development of visual content on Instagram surpasses traditional photography and short video aesthetics, with informative diagrams and visually packaged content representing a positive trend for direct knowledge transfer. The presentation of knowledge through photos and videos facilitates casual and engaging learning experiences. Instagram supports both active and passive learning through features such as comments, Q&A sessions, likes, shares, and saved content, allowing users to easily access a library of informative and educational materials.

However, this study has limitations as it represents an initial exploration of a specific platform (Instagram). The analysis is based on a limited number of cases, which may not capture the full range of Instagram's potential in supporting architectural learning. Future research should expand to include more cases to provide a comprehensive understanding of

virtual/digital learning. Additionally, examining upcoming Instagram features, such as reels and filters, and exploring other platforms (YouTube, TikTok, Twitter, and Facebook) could further extend this study. It would also be beneficial to investigate the long-term impacts of using Instagram for educational purposes. Understanding user engagement patterns and the effectiveness of different content types could provide deeper insights into optimizing social media for learning.

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