

Non-Formal Public History Education: The *Mlaku Magelang* Strategy in Fostering Historical Awareness among Generation Z

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Abstract: One of the informal efforts to foster historical awareness is establishing an action-oriented platform that presents historical data tangibly and physically accessibly. This study aims to analyze the strategies of *Mlaku Magelang* in constructing local historical narratives relevant to the characteristics of Generation Z integrated through the modern elements of walking tours and to uncover the internalizations of local historical values. This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design, with data gathered through observation and interviews. David Kolb's Experiential Learning theory was utilized as the analytical framework. The findings indicate that *Mlaku Magelang* successfully implemented an adaptive and contextual communication approach tailored to Generation Z's lifestyle by selecting engaging routes and providing tokens of appreciation to participants. Furthermore, the activity leveraged modern elements, including visual aids, historical documents, visual aesthetics, and thematic dress codes worn by storytellers. Through the direct experience of traversing urban spaces, Generation Z participants responded positively, as evidenced by high levels of interaction and the publication of their activities on Instagram. Theoretically, this research contributes to enhancing public historical literacy; practically, it serves as a conceptual reference for digital history pedagogy that blends urban physical activity with social media activism. Ultimately, this study contributes to bridging the intergenerational historical communication gap, preventing identity crises, and strengthening the nation's collective memory in the future.

Keywords: generation z; historical awareness; *Mlaku Magelang*; public history literacy, walking tour

Abstrak: Salah satu upaya kesadaran sejarah secara nonformal adalah membangun sebuah wadah gerak yang menyajikan data sejarah secara nyata dan terjangkau fisik. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah menganalisis strategi *Mlaku Magelang* dalam mengonstruksi narasi sejarah lokal yang relevan dengan karakteristik Generasi Z, yang diintegrasikan melalui elemen modern kegiatan tur jalan kaki (*walking tour*), serta untuk mengungkap bagaimana proses internalisasi nilai-nilai sejarah lokal. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis studi kasus deskriptif dengan metode pengambilan data observasi dan wawancara. Teori yang digunakan ialah *Experiential Learning* dari David Kolb. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa *Mlaku Magelang* berhasil menerapkan pendekatan komunikasi yang adaptif dan kontekstual dengan kehidupan Generasi Z melalui pemilihan rute yang menarik serta pemberian apresiasi kepada peserta. Selain itu, kegiatan ini memanfaatkan elemen modern seperti alat peraga visual, dokumen sejarah, estetika visual, dan pakaian tematis (*dress code*) yang dikenakan oleh pemandu (*storyteller*). Melalui pengalaman langsung menyusuri ruang kota, peserta Generasi Z memberikan respons positif yang ditunjukkan oleh tingginya interaksi dan publikasi aktivitas mereka di media sosial Instagram. Penelitian ini memiliki manfaat teoritis peningkatan literasi sejarah public dan manfaat praktis sebagai referensi konseptual pedagogi

sejarah digital yang memadukan aktivitas fisik urban dengan aktivisme media sosial. Penelitian ini berkontribusi mereduksi jurang pemisah komunikasi sejarah antar-generasi, mencegah krisis jati diri, serta memperkuat memori kolektif bangsa di masa depan.

Kata Kunci: generasi z; kesadaran sejarah; literasi sejarah publik; *Mlaku Magelang*; tur jalan kaki



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Introduction

The advancement of digital technology and the rise of an instant culture have trapped historical narratives within texts that are less acceptable to Generation Z, a cohort that prefers rapid and concise information (Rusdan & Laksmi, 2023). Born between 1995 and 2012, Gen Z is often dubbed the "iGen" due to their emergence alongside the expansion of the internet and global computerization (Ngo Tra, 2025). The classification of Generation Z succeeds Generation Y (Millennials). Prior to Generation Y, the term "Generation X" was popularized by Douglas Coupland in his 1991 novel, *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture*. This terminology subsequently served as the baseline for classifying succeeding human generations. Having grown up in the internet era, Gen Z possesses inherent literacy in technology and social media. Being digitally interconnected, they actively engage in social media platforms. A study by Singh et al. (2025), underscores that cross-generational digital access and usage are heavily dominated by Gen Z. Consequently, technological advancements have led to information disruption, which extends to historical insights. Yet, history remains the fundamental bedrock of identity.

There is a wide chasm between conventional history teaching practices and the way Generation Z consumes information. This disparity poses a significant threat to the fading of the nation's collective memory in future generations (Stefaniak et al., 2017). Such a decline is highly regrettable, considering that historical insight equips individuals with both cognitive and affective skills (Almqvist Nielsen, 2025). History fosters critical thinking (Reyes-Parra et al., 2024), analytical reasoning (Fikri et al., 2025), and chronological thinking (Lau et al., 2025), thereby enabling learners to comprehend the causal relationships between past, present, and future events. Furthermore, historical learning facilitates the formation of personal, familial, community, and national identities (Buranok, 2022), while nurturing nationalism, tolerance (Zajda, 2022), and appreciation for noble cultural values (Gadaza et al., 2025). Consequently, from an identity perspective, the negative repercussion of lacking historical understanding is a societal identity crisis. From a socio-political standpoint, it renders society vulnerable to narrative manipulation and polarization. Moreover, historical ignorance potentially eradicates opportunities for reflective thinking in contextualizing contemporary advancements (Bassi, 2025).

A critical issue in historical education is the challenge of promoting local historical insight. Local history encompasses the study of events, traditions, and identities specific to a particular region (Marilicán et al., 2018). Currently, local history is minimally understood, even by regional communities, due to the dominance of national history curricula (Suswandari et al., 2026), limited documentation (Suswandari et al., 2026), and a shortage of local history enthusiasts (Mohd Asri & Harun, 2023). This problem expands to the loss of historical sites. Therefore, a strategic reorientation of historical communication is urgently required to integrate past values into modern frameworks. This historical phenomenon has triggered the emergence of public history initiatives, which are often marginalized by political or military history

narratives (Laragy et al., 2025). To bridge this dichotomy, the *Mlaku Magelang* Community packages historical exploration, transforming it from a rigid academic presentation into a lifestyle experience as a form of "The Modern Steps" in historical learning.

Activities that integrate visual aesthetics, social media utilization, and personal narratives can successfully embed urban collective memory into the consciousness of Generation Z, a demographic previously difficult to reach through conventional methods (Alzate & Vásquez, 2020). Gen Z spends a considerable amount of time engaging in social media activities (Cismariu et al., 2019), which are dominated by short-form visual content (Gaikwad et al., 2025). As a result, they are accustomed to interacting with information that prioritizes visual aesthetics and personal narratives (Jambulingam et al., 2018). Furthermore, direct, field-based learning activities enhance emotional connections through authenticity. This serves as a strategic niche to exploit the psychological potential of the transfer of knowledge.

The development of historical awareness can be actualized through a profound process of interpretation (López-Bajo et al., 2021). As argued by Freedman (2015) and supported by Saenkum & Meekaew (2025) historical interpretation plays a pivotal role in fostering an understanding of causal relationships and cultivating students' critical thinking skills. To achieve this, interpretive strategies capable of delivering transformative experiences are required, including the use of driving questions, relevance to contemporary issues, discussion, reflection, and context-based field studies. These methodological requirements are successfully met by the *Mlaku Magelang* community or program, a history learning initiative in public spaces that implements an experiential learning approach.

Experiential learning is defined as a process whereby knowledge is created through the combination of grasping and transforming experience. This approach emphasizes that learning is not merely cognitive but involves a dynamic cycle comprising four main stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. In the context of higher education, the application of experiential learning has proven effective in enhancing students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills, as evidenced by empirical studies showing an average 25% increase in competence scores following experience-based interventions. From a public history perspective, the integration of experiential learning bridges academic theory and social reality within a concrete experience.

Concrete experience constitutes the first stage in the experiential learning cycle developed by David Kolb (1984) and supported by Blankesteyn, Houtkamp, and Bossink (Blankesteyn et al., 2024). At this stage, individuals are directly engaged in real-world situations or authentic sensory experiences without prior prejudice or deep analysis. The success of a concrete experience is determined by open engagement, heightened emotional connection and empathy toward the educational object, adaptability to complexity, openness to feedback, and the courage to take risks. Conversely, experience-based learning cannot be successfully achieved if participants detach themselves, either mentally or physically, from the experience being constructed.

In explaining the theory of concrete experience, David Kolb describes a process termed *Grasping via Apprehension*. Kolb divides the way humans process information into two main axes: *Grasping*, which refers to acquiring information by capturing experience, and *Transforming*, which refers to processing that experience. *Transforming via Extension* (Active Experimentation) is the process of manipulating information through action or real-world execution (Blankesteyn et al., 2024). Meanwhile, *Transforming via Intention* (Reflective Observation) is the process of internalizing information through deep contemplation and observation. These information-processing mechanisms are intrinsically inseparable from one another.

These modes of information processing must be integrated to achieve a comprehensive understanding. Although this conceptual framework has been widely applied in formal education, its implementation within the context of public history literacy through walking tour activities requires further exploration. Therefore, this article aims to analyze the strategies employed by *Mlaku Magelang* in managing concrete experiences to foster historical awareness among Generation Z through the lens of David Kolb's Experiential Learning theory.

Various literatures have demonstrated how experiential learning converts experiences into meaningful knowledge. For instance, a study entitled "*Towards transformative experiential learning in science and technology-based entrepreneurship education for sustainable technological innovation*" states that systematically utilizing David Kolb's four core activities generates a transformative learning impact; however, that study focused primarily on the economic sector (Blankestijn et al., 2024). Furthermore, the study "*Systematic Literature Review: The Effect of Experiential Learning (EL) on Learning Outcomes*" concludes that the application of the EL model yields a significant positive impact on boosting student learning outcomes across cognitive (academic), thinking (critical and higher-order), and affective/psychological (motivation, autonomy, and active engagement) dimensions (Syafriani et al., 2025). Additionally, in the research titled "*The Urgency of Experience-Based Learning Strategies in History Education*," the authors demonstrate that experience-based learning manifested through simulation/role-playing activities is effective because it nurtures contextual historical understanding and vital character values such as nationalism and empathy (Satria Krisna & Fahrudin, 2025).

Despite a number of previous studies examining experiential learning theory in conventional history learning, there remains a paucity of literature exploring historical narrative strategies based on urban spaces (urban walking tours). Consequently, this study fills this gap by focusing its analysis on the strategies used by *Mlaku Magelang* to convert physical experiences into reflective historical awareness. Through the lens of David Kolb's Experiential Learning theory, this study does not merely view history as a static chronological record, but rather as an ongoing, dynamic process of meaning-making constructed through active bodily and sensory engagement. By centering the analysis on the dialectics of *Grasping via Apprehension* and *Transforming via Intention*, this theoretical perspective provides a robust framework to evaluate how physical spatial navigation transitions into internal historical consciousness. Concurrently, this research contributes to the broader scholarly discourse by addressing a critical lacuna in public history and pedagogical literature, which heavily favors formal classroom settings over informal, community-led urban spaces. Beyond the specific geographical boundaries of this case study, the significance of this research lies in its generalizability; it offers a scalable and adaptable experience-based historical pedagogy model. Consequently, the conceptual framework formulated herein can be universally understood and applied by educators, heritage practitioners, and urban communities worldwide to re-engage contemporary youth with localized historical narratives across diverse digital and spatial contexts. Furthermore, this study will identify the concrete forms offered by *Mlaku Magelang*, describe the reflective observations made by participants, and delineate the program's impact on the historical awareness of Generation Z.

Research Methods

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design, utilizing an interpretive lens. This descriptive case study design draws on Yin (2018), who posits that this method is utilized to provide a comprehensive, in-depth, and detailed description of a phenomenon within its real-world context. The interpretive paradigm emphasizes that social

reality is a construction of meaning that can only be understood and comprehended through direct interaction (Novari, 2025). This interpretive approach aligns with David Kolb's Experiential Learning theory. Within this context, the study examines how *Mlaku Magelang* fosters historical awareness among Generation Z. The research was conducted in Central Magelang District, Magelang City, specifically focusing on the route titled *Sigarenfabriek Ko Kwat le en Zonnen*. This location was selected based on the active walking tour operations of the *Mlaku Magelang* community. Research data were gathered through in-depth interviews using a purposive sampling technique. The informants for this study consisted of the founder of *Mlaku Magelang* and the walking tour participants. The researcher interviewed the founder of *Mlaku Magelang* due to their pivotal role as the main route conceptualizer and lead storyteller. Meanwhile, the selection of participants as informants was based on two criteria: being born between 1995 and 2012 (ranging from 14 to 31 years old) and demonstrating high level of engagement during the tour. This variation among informants aimed to understand the perspectives of both the organizers and the participants in building historical awareness for Generation Z. The interview informants for this study are detailed as follows:

Table 1. List of Interview Informants

No.	Informant's Name	Code	Identity	Description
1.	Gusta	G1	Founder of <i>Mlaku Magelang</i>	-
2.	Dwi Septyani	P1	Private Sector Employee	25 years old
3.	Ara	P2	Undergraduate Student	19 years old
4.	Sabrina	P3	Undergraduate Student	20 years old
5	Valin	P4	Undergraduate Student	18 years old

In addition to interviews, data were also obtained through observations of the *Mlaku Magelang* walking tour activities. The observation was conducted using a participant observation method, wherein the researcher directly engaged as a tour participant. Based on these observations, the walking tour consisted of 30 participants, from whom 4 individuals were selected as interview informants. The first informant, Dwi Septyani, is a 25 years old private sector employee. The second informant is Ara, a 19 years old Forestry undergraduate student at Universitas Gadjah Mada. The third informant is Sabrina, a 20 years old Accounting undergraduate student at Universitas Diponegoro. The fourth informant is Valin, an 18 years old Microbiology undergraduate student at Universitas Gadjah Mada. These informants were selected because they demonstrated the highest level of engagement among the total participants aged 14 to 31 years old. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify critical patterns and themes related to historical delivery strategies.

This analysis highlights how specific elements were utilized to bring historical narratives to life visually and emotionally, while examining how this approach contributes to enhancing Generation Z's historical understanding and awareness. Activities such as photography, videography, and discussions during the tour were also reviewed to investigate the representation of Generation Z participants' profound interest in local history. Through this approach, this study aims to provide deep insights into the interaction between history, learning methods, and visualization, as well as their roles in advancing historical awareness among Generation Z.

The data analysis process commenced with transcribing the interviews, repeated reading, and reviewing the observational data. The subsequent step involved initial coding to mark relevant meanings, allowing them to be categorized based on conceptual interconnectedness. The third stage was conducted by ensuring the consistency and relevance of the questions,

which were further developed to represent the tourists' experiences, the guides' interpretive strategies, and the contribution of the walking tour to Generation Z's historical awareness. The analysis was further reinforced by source and method triangulation techniques, ensuring that the research findings not only describe the data but also uncover deeper meanings behind the interactions among tourists, guides, and historical learning.

Research Result

***Mlaku Magelang* as a Platform for Raising Historical Awareness in Gen-Z**

Historical awareness is constructed from an individual's knowledge and understanding of history. The broader and deeper a person's knowledge of events, social dynamics, and historical contexts, the higher the likelihood of developing a reflective and critical historical awareness (Susilo et al., 2025). Thus, historical awareness does not emerge spontaneously; rather, it arises from a process of understanding, interpreting, and internalizing historical knowledge. *Mlaku Magelang* is a community that focuses on introducing the history, culture, and historical buildings of Magelang City through walking tours. The primary objective of *Mlaku Magelang* is to promote Magelang's history so that it is embraced and cherished by the local community. *Mlaku Magelang* is managed independently by a single individual who serves as the founder. The founder of *Mlaku Magelang* concurrently acts as the storyteller, researcher, and social media administrator. By leveraging social media, particularly Instagram, the founder of *Mlaku Magelang* not only actively organizes trips but also serves as a catalyst for historical discussions. This is aligned with the statement from the founder of *Mlaku Magelang*, as follows:

"*Mlaku Magelang* is not just a walking tour; there is a mission within it, which is to build a love for Magelang City through a historical perspective. So, the focus is indeed on history. Actually, the target audience is anyone, but it is specifically for the people of Magelang so that they get to know their own city. Therefore, the motivation is not merely for sightseeing, but there is an element of activism in it." (Personal communication with G1, May 3, 2026).

According to Chauhan & Anand (2023), historical walking tours can enhance historical awareness if they are designed educationally and contextually. The storyteller must be capable of delivering historical contexts and distinctive narratives at the tour locations, enabling participants to establish a connection between the past and contemporary conditions. In terms of contextuality, the storyteller must also be able to guide participants toward heightening their emotional and educational values by creating experiential learning (Leong et al., 2024). Consequently, *Mlaku Magelang* pays meticulous attention to route selection to ensure participants receive engaging historical information, which includes delineating specific areas and mapping out walking paths. The selection of these areas as walking routes is conducted by the founder of *Mlaku Magelang* to ensure that participants can acquire historical information about a micro-region of the city within a walking duration of up to three hours. By walking for three hours, the activity attempts to maintain an optimal balance between physical exertion and the depth of the educational experience, while allowing participants to interact profoundly with historical sites and narratives. Therefore, the climax of the narrative becomes critical when formulating the walking route. This was stated directly by Gusta, the founder of *Mlaku Magelang*, as follows:

"To select a route, we base it on the area rather than a specific theme. The route itself represents the name of the area, not a theme. Implementing a theme is quite difficult because it would require jumping from one place to another, which within a certain distance, is impossible to cover on foot. Therefore, we use an area-based concept. Within

that specific area, we evaluate what can be discovered within a duration of 2.5 to 3 hours. We identify the most catchy, most dominant story along that route, and that is what we ultimately use as the title of the route. The considerations include what features exist in that area and which paths to take. Safety, comfort, and the designated stopping points for storytelling are the factors that we carefully plan. Once we identify potential storytelling points, we supplement them with our existing database. For instance, if we find 'oh, there is the source of the Manggis River,' then we will narrate the history of the Manggis River rather than leaving the spot silent. Or, if there is a traditional Javanese house, we will explain it; it just evolves organically. Consequently, those who participated in the early version of this route would definitely experience a difference now because new materials have been progressively added." (Personal communication with GI, May 3, 2026).

To optimize this educational experience, *Mlaku Magelang* classifies the exploration areas into several specific routes with varying depths of historical narrative, as presented in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Walking Tour Routes of *Mlaku Magelang*

No	Route Name	Topic
1	Sigarenfabriek ko kwat ie en zonnen	The Dutch town square (alun-alun) area, the eastern Chinatown district, the history of the Armada cigar factory owned by Ko Kwat Ie and his family, the Chinese internment school, and the narrative of the Prawirokusuman figure.
2	Stadwijk Kawarasan	The Cacaban sub-district area, encompassing the history of colonial-era housing, Dutch and Chinese cemeteries (<i>Bong Cina</i>), and a historic military basecamp.
3	Karesidenan En Panderstiran	The former Kedu Residency area, the former Oranje Nassau Orphanage owned by Johannes van der Steur, and the former Magelang branch of Universitas Gadjah Mada.
4	Bajeman West	The West Bajeman area, highlighting the history of colonial civilization ranging from elite and standard colonial housing complexes to the Javanese Christian Church (<i>Gereformeerde Kerk</i>) and the evangelist Ds. A. Markelijn.
5	Grooteweg Noord Pontjol	The Pontjol area (North of Magelang Town Square), covering colonial-era schools and hotels, the "Magelang Sea of Fire" historical event, the <i>Plengkung</i> (historic arch gateways), the Old Magelang City Hall, the former official residence of the Magelang Regent, and the Freemasonry alliance.
6	Badaan zuid en Kampong Botton	The Magelang sub-district area, exploring regional history based on toponymy, colonial-era schools and narratives up to the Indonesian independence transition period, and the Sudirman Museum (the official residence of General Sudirman).
7	Aloon-Aloon en Omstreken	The Magelang Town Square area, focusing on the historical development of the city and its town square, the chronological timeline of Magelang City and Regency, and Magelang's legendary water tower.

8	Tidarweg en petjinan koelon	The western Chinatown and Tidar Street areas, the history of the Magelang Regional Public Hospital, the Kempeitai headquarters and its bloody tragedies, Abu Bakrin Stadium, Plengkung Tengkon, Tukangan Market, and the civilization history of Chinese-Indonesian citizens.
9	Tidar; De Sprijker van Java	The Mount Tidar area, discussing the history and myths surrounding Mount Tidar. In this session, participants are invited to hike Mount Tidar.
10	Memento mori	The Magersari area, primarily focusing on the historical narrative of Johannes van der Steur and his orphanage.
11	Stasiun Magelang Kotta & Kebonpala	The Kebonpolo area in Magelang, with a central theme on urban development in the transportation sector, specifically the railway system.

Sources: Research Data, 2026

Mlaku Magelang serves as a learning platform for local history, utilizing both online social media channels and offline walking tour activities. On Instagram, *Mlaku Magelang* disseminates information through regular posts and facilitates brief discussions via its Instagram Stories. Through these digital efforts, *Mlaku Magelang* provides a dialogic space for its social media followers. Furthermore, the community remains open to resharing participant-generated content on its official account. Concurrently, as an offline learning medium, the walking tours enable participants to acquire on-site location data, learn historical narratives, and network with fellow history enthusiasts.

The Transformation of Historical Narratives through Experiential Learning

David Kolb, through his experiential learning theory, posits that learning by engaging in autonomous experiences is a process of creating knowledge through the transformation of experience. Learning is not merely the passive reception of information; rather, it entails experiencing, reflecting, meaning-making, and internalizing. Kolb conceptualizes a four-stage experiential learning cycle: first, Concrete Experience, which is a cognitive process wherein participants receive direct sensory inputs in the field. Public history education utilizing concrete experience is effective because it provides robust sensory stimuli (visual, auditory, and kinesthetic), thereby enhancing the participants' initial focus and engagement. This heightened engagement increases the likelihood of the information being processed more deeply. Second, Reflective Observation, a stage where the learning process is conducted by observing objects and reflecting on the outcomes to discover underlying meanings and patterns. Third, Abstract Conceptualization, a phase in which learners begin to formulate abstract concepts and theoretical frameworks based on their field observations. Fourth, Active Experimentation, which involves the application of these concepts into new actions or situations, thereby rendering learning a continuous, cycle oriented toward real-world experiences.

To provide a more concrete illustration regarding the practical implementation of each stage within the context of public history education, a summary of definitions along with descriptions of the field activities is presented in Figure 1 and Table 3 below.

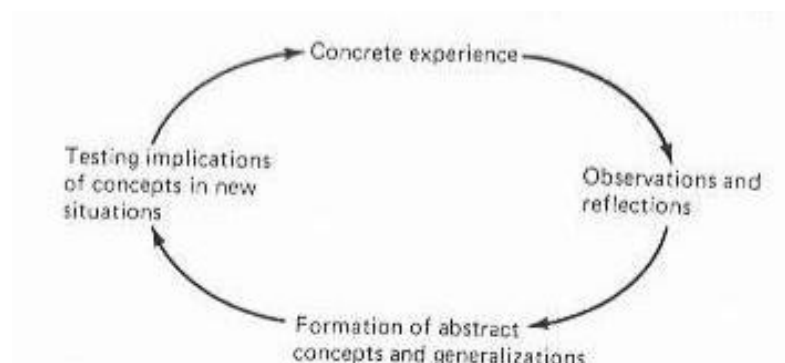


Figure 1. David Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle
Source: (Kolb, 1984).

Table 3. David Kolb's Experiential Learning Stages, Definitions, and Descriptions of *Mlaku Magelang* Activities

Kolb's Cycle Stages	Brief Definition	Description of Activities
1. Concrete Experience (CE)	Learning through feeling and direct physical involvement. Observations showed that participants were enthusiastic, laughed, captured photos and videos, and actively engaged in enjoying the information delivered by the storyteller. This aligns with the principle of Concrete Experience, which underscores the involvement of direct emotions and physical presence.	Learning through feeling and direct physical involvement. Observations showed that participants were enthusiastic, laughed, captured photos and videos, and actively engaged in enjoying the information delivered by the storyteller. This aligns with the principle of Concrete Experience, which underscores the involvement of direct emotions and physical presence.
2. Observations and Reflections (OR)	Observing and reflecting on newly encountered experiences. <i>Mlaku Magelang</i> participants observed the architecture and reflected on the massive scale of past economic movements, such as when observing the Armada Cigar Warehouse owned by Ko Kwat Ie. While at Ngasem Market, walking tour participants listened to historical narratives while enjoying <i>dawet</i> (a traditional beverage).	Observing and reflecting on newly encountered experiences. <i>Mlaku Magelang</i> participants observed the architecture and reflected on the massive scale of past economic movements, such as when observing the Armada Cigar Warehouse owned by Ko Kwat Ie. While at Ngasem Market, walking tour participants listened to historical narratives while enjoying <i>dawet</i> (a traditional beverage).

3. Formation of Abstract Concept (AC)	Creating theories or generalizations based on reflection outcomes. <i>Mlaku Magelang</i> participants were able to formulate theories or general conclusions from what they witnessed and felt during the walking tour activities. For instance, they provided statements regarding the revitalization of Magelang's Chinatown to revive the constructed urban atmosphere. Chinatown itself is a complex colonial product resulting from the <i>Wijkenstelsel</i> regulation.	Creating theories or generalizations based on reflection outcomes. <i>Mlaku Magelang</i> participants were able to formulate theories or general conclusions from what they witnessed and felt during the walking tour activities. For instance, they provided statements regarding the revitalization of Magelang's Chinatown to revive the constructed urban atmosphere. Chinatown itself is a complex colonial product resulting from the <i>Wijkenstelsel</i> regulation.
4. Testing Implementation / Active Experimentation (AE)	Testing concepts in new situations and taking action. <i>Mlaku Magelang</i> participants engaged in advocacy by sharing educational information on social media to reshape public perception, exercising caution when touching historical buildings, and proposing conceptual ideas for the issues they observed.	Testing concepts in new situations and taking action. <i>Mlaku Magelang</i> participants engaged in advocacy by sharing educational information on social media to reshape public perception, exercising caution when touching historical buildings, and proposing conceptual ideas for the issues they observed.

Sources: Research Data, 2026

According to Chen & Yang (2019), visualization plays a pivotal role in experiential learning by helping learners transform abstract concepts into more concrete understandings (Chen & Yang, 2019). Wahyuni demonstrated that implementing Kolb's experiential learning model with visualization enhances conceptual comprehension because learners actively construct knowledge through learning experiences supported by visual representations (Wahyuni, 2015). This is further substantiated by Samha and Radandi (Samha & Radandi, 2023) whose research indicates that visualization methods are highly effective in improving material comprehension, particularly among adolescents; thus, integrating visualization methods is essential. *Mlaku Magelang* utilizes several media to provide historical visualization during tour activities, one of which is the use of thematic costumes during storytelling sessions. This approach is reflected in the statement from the founder of *Mlaku Magelang*:

"Initially, I just wore ordinary, casual clothes. However, I challenged myself to be different because I personally enjoy it, and I own many costumes from my background as an actor who loves historical reenactments. Then I thought, why not go all out? I want to narrate Magelang comprehensively, not just through my words but also through my visual appearance. This triggers people's curiosity to wonder, 'what kind of clothing is that?' or 'why does it look like that?' Consequently, the education is derived not only from the walking activity and the historical narrative but also from what I wear, which has now become a signature characteristic of *Mlaku Magelang* itself. I personally wear attire that aligns with the specific theme of the route, so the educational element is also achieved through that aspect." (Personal communication with GI, May 3, 2026).

An educator's costume or attributes can clarify the facilitator's role while strengthening the visual appeal of the learning process. Furthermore, visualizations using archived old images and photographs compiled into a book format serve as compelling storytelling materials that engage participants. Both elements have the potential to capture attention, facilitate meaning-making, and enrich the learners' educational experience. This aligns with the perspectives shared by the tour participants below:

"The visualization displayed by the educator was quite clear, especially with the addition of explanations using pictures and photographs. That was extremely helpful for us to understand." (Personal communication with P4, May 3, 2026).

"In my opinion, it is sufficient. I am very satisfied because it met my expectations, regarding the path, the storyline, the figures being narrated, and the chronological order of the stories. The costume presented was also fascinating, making me want to learn more about the history of that era." (Personal communication with P1, May 3, 2026).

The visualization through costumes and storytelling materials is reflected in the activity documentation shown in Figure 2 below:



Figure 2. Walking and Historical Storytelling Activities of *Mlaku Magelang*
Source: Research Data, 2026

P1 expressed a specific interest in traditional, modest Chinese buildings that had previously caught their attention. These structures are characterized by their orderly arrangement, philosophical value, and specialized functions, yet they have now become increasingly rare. This interest is captured in the following statement:

"Over there, there are only about five remaining Chinese shophouses left here. There are three others over that way (pointing toward another route). So, if you look closely along this street, there aren't many shophouses that also serve as residences anymore. For me, that is the most interesting part because from the outside, the house looks quite small, but when looking at the interior visual maps, it turns out to be incredibly spacious." (Personal communication with P1, May 3, 2026).

Following the walking tour, participants expressed feelings of enjoyment and satisfaction as they acquired meaningful and impactful historical insights. This experience prompted them

to reflect on how urban layouts are formed through specific cause-and-effect relationships. This perspective is reflected in the participants' accounts below:

"I am thrilled because I was able to gain insights into information that I previously did not know. It turns out that there are specific factors that shape the orderly organization of urban spaces." (Personal communication with P2, May 3, 2026).

"My feeling is that my knowledge has expanded regarding the fun facts or the intricacies of Magelang City. It turns out that things like this exist, and these places have distinct origins and histories." (Personal communication with P3, May 3, 2026).

The walking tour activities organized by *Mlaku Magelang* deliver an engaging experience capable of influencing the public, particularly Generation Z, to become actively involved. Currently, *Mlaku Magelang*'s Instagram account has amassed over fifteen thousand followers. The community's walking tours, which are held twice a week, are highly anticipated and frequently attended. Consequently, to ensure the comfort of the tour participants, the organizers implement a strict participant quota, as detailed by the founder in the following interview statement:

"Every walking route has a quota; I limit it to a maximum of 50 participants and turn people down if it exceeds the quota. This is done to prevent the group from becoming *kemruyuk* (overcrowded) so that the participants can absorb the information effectively." (Personal communication with G1, May 3, 2026).

The successful internalization of historical values through the Experiential Learning cycle is inseparable from the participant management strategy implemented by *Mlaku Magelang*. The community consistently limits the participant quota to a maximum of 50 individuals per walking tour session. Theoretically, this restriction aligns with the small-group principles of cooperative learning pioneered by Robert E. Slavin and further developed within the Indonesian context by Anita Lie. Slavin (2016) asserts that learning within small groups with a limited number of members is empirically proven to significantly increase the active engagement of each individual while minimizing information distraction (Slavin, 2016). Furthermore, Anita Lie (Lie, 2008), supported by Tabrani and Amin (2023), emphasizes that a small-group structure provides a greater space for psychological comfort, allowing participants to interact equitably without unilateral dominance (Tabrani & Amin, 2023).

When correlated with David Kolb's theory, the small-group restriction from the perspective of Slavin and Anita Lie acts as a primary enabler or support factor that guarantees the quality of the Concrete Experience (CE) and Reflective Observation (RO) stages. By conducting tours within a limited group size, each Generation Z participant gains equally optimal sensory access to view archived photographic documents, clearly hear the storyteller's articulation without urban noise interference, and feel an emotional proximity to the visited historical objects.

Conversely, if the tours were conducted on a mass scale, spatial information distortion would occur, and the participants' psychological comfort would be disrupted. Consequently, honest and deep reflection (Reflective Observation) would be hindered due to the lack of an intimate discussion space between the participants and the historical narrator. Thus, the synchronization of small-group management models by Slavin and Anita Lie is proven effective in maintaining the quality of Kolb's experiential learning cycle within a deep and meaningful framework for the participants.

The Implementation Historical Awareness among Gen-Z

The implementation of the walking tour method by the *Mlaku Magelang* community functions not merely as an urban recreational activity (lifestyle experience) but has transformed into a structured, non-formal historical pedagogical strategy. Based on the gathered data, the internalization process of local historical values among Generation Z participants progresses linearly in alignment with the four stages of the experiential learning cycle conceptualized by Kolb (1984).

The first stage of Kolb's cycle emphasizes the crucial importance of an individual's direct physical and sensory involvement in a real-world situation, free from preliminary theoretical prejudices. Field findings indicate that *Mlaku Magelang* successfully activates this stage through visual and spatial manipulation. This is identified by the storyteller's use of colonial-era thematic costumes and the direct presentation of archived historical photographs in front of the physical structures of heritage buildings, such as the former Ko Kwat Ie Armada Cigar Factory. Theoretically, Kolb (1984) states that the success of a Concrete Experience is heavily determined by open emotional involvement (feeling) and the participants' mental immersion with the educational object. Herein lies the excellence of *Mlaku Magelang*'s strategy. Through deliberate spatial route planning that caps the walking duration at a maximum of three hours, the community successfully maintains the participants' physical stamina and cognitive focus at an optimal equilibrium. This is supported by the account of informant P1, who stated that the visualization of costumes and archival photographs triggered a profound curiosity to comprehend the history of that particular era. This psychological phenomenon demonstrates that sensory stimuli derived from observing authentic architecture and the storyteller's costume act as an effective entry point for the psychological characteristics of Generation Z.

During the Reflective Observation stage, learners are required to examine their newly acquired experiences from multiple perspectives to discern patterns of meaning. *Mlaku Magelang* facilitates this reflective process (intention) by utilizing the cityscape as a living laboratory. A critical dialogue occurs when participants are confronted with socio-spatial contrasts while traversing the Chinatown route. Informant P1 reflected that the ancient Chinese shophouses, which appear modest from the exterior facade, possess an internal visual structure that is incredibly spacious and laden with functional philosophies. This architectural observation process is not merely a passive act of viewing; rather, it constitutes a chronological and analytical thinking process. Referring to Kolb's concept of *Transforming via Intention*, this deep reflection emerges due to a cognitive dissonance between what Generation Z has previously known regarding modern urban planning and the reality of local history they encounter directly in the field. Leisurely activities, such as enjoying the traditional beverage *dawet* at Ngasem Market while listening to historical narratives, also alleviate academic tension, thereby fostering a more honest and emotional reflective space among these adolescents.

The third stage occurs when participants begin to formulate logical conclusions, make generalizations, or build abstract theories from their reflections. The success indicator of the Abstract Conceptualization stage in this study is highly evident when Generation Z participants successfully comprehend the cause-and-effect laws behind the aesthetics of Magelang's urban layout. Informant P2 stated that "there are specific factors that shape the orderly organization of urban spaces," which was subsequently conceptualized by other participants into an understanding of colonial jurisprudence, such as the *Wijkenstelsel* regulation (the Dutch colonial ethnic residential zoning system). Through the lens of David Kolb's theory, this process is identified as *Grasping via Apprehension*, which is successfully transformed into comprehensive conceptual knowledge. Through this pedagogy, history is no longer perceived

as a mere memorization of death years or dead text in textbooks; instead, it is understood as a product of past regulations whose contemporary implications continue to shape the urban landscape of Magelang today.

The final stage of Kolb's cycle involves testing the newly learned concepts in novel situations or taking real-world action (*Transforming via Extension*). At this juncture, "Historical Awareness" which is affective and psychomotor in nature, is rigorously tested within the social reality of Generation Z. Based on the narrative of the founder of *Mlaku Magelang* (G1), the long-term impact of this tour manifests in the form of micro-scale digital activism. Tour alumni have actively begun utilizing their personal social media platforms to disseminate educational historical insights, refuse to vandalize cultural heritage sites, and spark critical discussions with the founder via Instagram Direct Messages (DM). The act of circulating historical routines through Instagram Stories or passing these narratives down to their immediate family circles represents a tangible manifestation of Active Experimentation for digital natives. Kolb reinforces that genuine knowledge must ultimately lead to action. By sharing local historical narratives through digital platforms that prioritize visual aesthetics, Generation Z actively participates in reproducing their city's collective memory while simultaneously safeguarding against national identity crises. An example of Generation Z participants uploading *Mlaku Magelang* events on social media is illustrated in Figure 3 below:

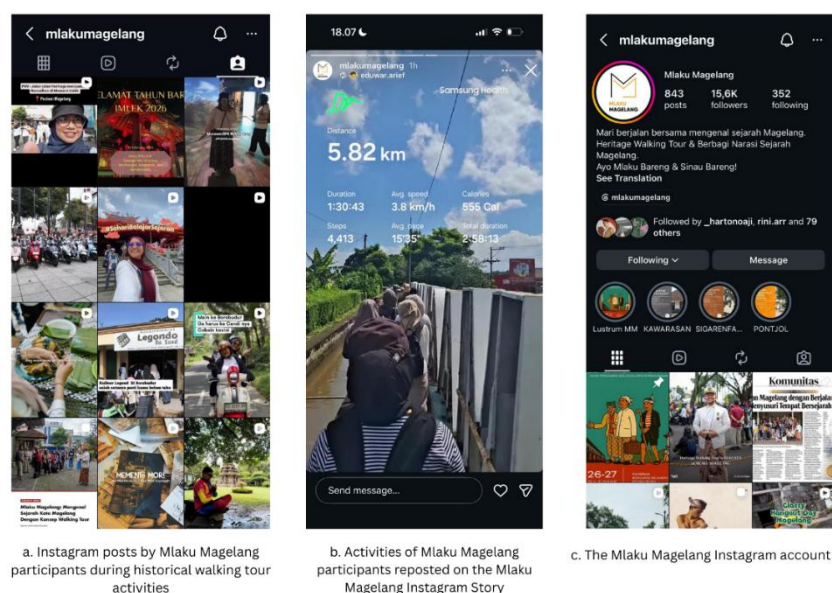


Figure 3. Publication Activities of *Mlaku Magelang* Walking Tour Participants

Source: Research Data, 2026

Conclusion

This study concludes that the strategy employed by the *Mlaku Magelang* community in utilizing the walking tour method is highly effective as a platform for non-formal public history education among Generation Z. Through the lens of David Kolb's Experiential Learning theory, the stages of historical learning are no longer merely cognitive-textual; instead, they transform into a dynamic cycle. The integration of modern elements-such as the storyteller's thematic costumes, the use of archived historical photographs, and a communicative small-group approach-successfully reconstructs local historical narratives into a lifestyle experience that is relatable to the psychological characteristics of Generation Z. Consequently, the internalization

of historical values triggers a high affective response, as evidenced by an enhanced sense of regional ownership and the participants' active engagement in disseminating local historical content via social media.

Based on the research findings, the researcher recommends that the *Mlaku Magelang* community maintain its strict participant quota to prevent spatial information distortion and ensure psychological comfort throughout the activities. Furthermore, it is suggested that local government agencies or regional government organizations (*Organisasi Pemerintah Daerah / OPD*) provide substantial support for the preservation of historical heritage sites to protect them from being eroded by contemporary societal disruptions. For history educators and educational practitioners, the pedagogical aspects of this study advocate for a reorientation of history teaching in schools; specifically, adopting experiential learning models by engaging students in contextual field studies or transforming classrooms into environments with strong visual representations to cultivate students' critical and chronological thinking skills.

The academic implications of this research reaffirm that group management structures and the power of visual narratives serve as primary enablers that guarantee the quality of the Concrete Experience within public history education. Meanwhile, the practical contribution of this study offers a conceptual reference model for digital history pedagogy that harmonizes urban physical activities with social media activism. Ultimately, this research significantly contributes to narrowing the intergenerational communication gap in historical education, preventing identity crises, and strengthening the nation's collective memory for the future.

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