

Preserving Local Identity through Gastronomy Tourism in Cultural Heritage Destinations

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the role of gastronomic tourism in preserving and revitalizing local identity amid global homogenization. Using a qualitative interpretive case study, the research was conducted in Kayutangan Heritage Village, Malang City. Data were collected through observation, participation, in-depth interviews, and documentation involving 12 informants, including culinary actors, destination managers, tourists, and cultural figures. Thematic analysis reveals that gastronomy functions not only as a tourist attraction but also as a medium for transmitting cultural values, strengthening community identity, and supporting a tradition-based creative economy. The study concludes that integrating tourism management, community participation, and authentic cultural interpretation effectively sustains local identity and contributes to the development of heritage-based destination management models.

INTRODUCTION

Gastronomic tourism is now considered a key element in cultural heritage destinations because local food not only meets physical needs, but also stores cultural, historical, and cultural values, and symbols of the identity of local communities. In the post-pandemic era, research shows that tourists are increasingly interested in authentic experiences and local culture through culinary (Santos & Fernandes, 2022). The phenomenon of cultural homogenization due to globalization and market pressures has caused some culinary practices to lose their authentic taste or noble cultural value (Chen et al., 2023). Heritage cities like Malang, with their distinctive heritage and culinary villages, face a dilemma between maintaining culinary traditions and adapting to modern tourism demands (Saputri et al., 2023). In many similar destinations, destination management does not yet have sufficient mechanisms to ensure that local gastronomy remains part of cultural identity, not just a commercial attraction (Achmad & Wiyani, 2021). Therefore, research on how gastronomy can be used as an instrument for the preservation of local identity is very urgent in the context of cultural tourism management studies.

Theoretical studies of cultural and gastronomic identity show that local identity can be seen as a social construct that grows from traditional practices, historical narratives, and cultural materials including culinary (Rodriguez, 2022). Lin and Gómez (2021) found that the success of gastronomic heritage tourism is determined not only by local tastes and ingredients, but also by how local actors maintain those culinary practices through intergenerational transmission. Research by Hassan et al., (2022) shows that when the tourist's experience includes direct interaction with local culinary actors and the cultural narrative behind the dish, then local identity becomes better understood and appreciated by visitors. However, a study by Ahmed & Singh (2023) highlights that many destinations have not critically examined how destination management strategies manage interactions between culinary actors, local communities, and tourists to keep local identities authentic. In the Indonesian literature, the majority of research still focuses on branding, promotion, or tourist experiences only, without paying attention to managerial structures and public policies that support the preservation of local identity through gastronomy (Wijaya et al., 2023).

Recuero-Virto (2024) in his study stated that local gastronomy that is successfully used as a competitive advantage for heritage destinations is one that involves local communities in the management of culinary products, the maintenance of traditional recipes, and the use of local ingredients. Another study by Paunić (2024) corroborates that local ingredients and traditional techniques greatly influence tourists' perceptions of culinary authenticity. In addition, a study by García-Pérez (2024) confirms that cultural interpretation strategies, such as cultural narratives on menus or culinary tour guides, reinforce the tourist experience and understanding of local identity by tourists. At the city level, research on culinary tourism in Yogyakarta by Putri, Marsudi and Santoso (2022) found that domestic and foreign tourists place great emphasis on the authenticity of the ingredients and cultural stories behind the culinary

background. Therefore, this research places the focus of management and interpretation as an important element in the preservation of local identity through gastronomy.

The traveler's experience is an important component in the framework of experiential theory and cultural interpretation, as the culinary experience not only enjoys taste, but also involves aroma, atmosphere, social interaction, and symbolic meaning (Hassan et al., 2022). Empirically, Muzammil and Hasan (2023) in a study on culinary tourism in the city of Bandung found that tourists tend to appreciate culinary experiences that provide cultural context, such as traditional cooking demonstrations or historical stories behind the dishes. Meanwhile, Indriani et al., (2023) reported that in several heritage destinations in East Java, tourists are disappointed when culinary dishes are produced on a large scale without maintaining traditional techniques or the use of local ingredients, because it reduces the sense of authenticity. Therefore, the design of gastronomic experiences needs to be included in destination management as a determinant of the perception of local identity for tourists. This research will explore the elements of this experience through in-depth interviews and observations in Malang's heritage destinations.

Studies on gastronomic sustainability show that a sustainable gastronomic identity requires public policy support, community empowerment, and cultural education (Paunić, 2024). Rahman et al., (2023) in their study of traditional culinary in North Sulawesi found that when communities are involved in the decision-making and culinary production process, both local sources of ingredients and traditional recipes are maintained. In addition, Li et al., (2022) emphasized that documentation of traditional recipes and training to the younger generation are crucial elements in maintaining the continuity of culinary culture. Challenges such as the substitution of local ingredients by imported products or the use of cheap ingredients without regard to cultural quality often emerge as a threat to local identity (Putri, 2022). Thus, this study will examine local policies and community empowerment practices in Malang as supporting factors for the preservation of local identity gastronomy.

At the local level, Malang as a heritage city has characteristics that are suitable for this study. Culinary tourism in Malang attracts tourists because of the authenticity of the flavors, cultural narratives, and diversity of traditional cuisine. However, in the same study, it was reported that aspects of destination management, especially coordination between stakeholders and standardization of cultural experiences are not optimal (Saputri et al., 2022). Malang has the Kayutangan Heritage Village which combines the physical elements of cultural heritage with local traditional culinary practices, making it an ideal location to observe how local identity is preserved or revitalized through gastronomy. Previous research in Malang by Indriani, Suryani and Putera (2023) also showed that tourists appreciate non-culinary elements such as heritage atmosphere, interaction with local cultural actors, which supports that local identity is more than just taste. Therefore, the case study in Kayutangan Heritage Village is expected to provide rich and relevant empirical data to answer the existing gap.

Based on the analysis of the literature and local context, this study aims to analyze the role of gastronomy in the preservation of local identity in cultural heritage destinations by setting a focus: (1) the practice of local culinary actors in maintaining traditional cultural elements, (2) heritage destination management strategies that support authenticity and community participation, and (3) the meaning that tourists form towards local identity through gastronomic experiences. The contribution of this research is theoretical and practical. Theoretically, this research is expected to enrich the theory of destination management and cultural identity with an interaction approach of actors (culinary actors, destination managers, tourists), and will practically provide recommendations for destination managers in Malang in formulating policies, local culinary preservation programs, and authentic and sustainable gastronomic tourism experiences. This study uses a qualitative approach of interpretive case studies in Kayutangan Heritage Village, Malang, with in-depth interview methods, participatory observation, and thematic analysis so that the results are applicable and contextual.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gastronomy as a Representation of Local Culture and Identity

Gastronomy is a cultural expression that functions as a symbol of social identity and a medium of inheritance of local cultural values. According to Bessi re and Tibere (2021), food not only serves as a biological need, but also as a symbolic sign that reinforces a sense of belonging to a community towards its social space. In the context of tourism, traditional food is a form of cultural communication between local communities and tourists (Richards, 2021). Each culinary dish reflects the history, values, and social structure of the society that produces it. Therefore, when tourists interact with local food, they also interact with the cultural identity inherent in that community (Hjalager & Corigliano, 2022). In this perspective, the preservation of traditional cuisine is an important step to maintain the continuity of local identity in the midst of globalization flows that often encourage cultural homogenization (Everett & Slocum, 2021).

Gastronomy Tourism and Authenticity in Cultural Heritage Destinations

Gastronomy tourism plays an important role in strengthening the image of cultural heritage destinations through authentic culinary experiences. According to Getz et al. (2022), gastronomic tourism creates an emotional connection between tourists and local culture, which makes the dining experience not just a consumption, but also a form of participation in cultural heritage. Research by Okumus et al. (2023) shows that the authenticity of ingredients, cooking techniques, and cultural narratives behind each dish are the main factors that determine tourists' perception of the authentic value of a destination. However, over-commercialization can threaten that authenticity, especially when local foods are modified to suit the tastes of global markets. In the context of destination management, authenticity can be maintained through cultural interpretation strategies that emphasize local narratives and community engagement (Su & Hall, 2024). Thus, gastronomy is an important instrument for

heritage destinations in building identity differentiation in the midst of global tourism competition.

Local Community Engagement and Culinary Cultural Empowerment

Local community participation is a key component in maintaining the sustainability of gastronomy and cultural identity. Koh and Lee (2023) explain that when people are directly involved in the process of production, management, and promotion of culinary, their sense of belonging to cultural heritage increases significantly. In this case, gastronomy serves as a means of social and economic empowerment, since society is not only a tourist attraction, but also an active subject in tourism development (Nguyen et al., 2023). Research by Rahmawati and Mulyono (2023) found that the involvement of the younger generation in traditional culinary training helps maintain the continuity of local knowledge and strengthens intergenerational attachment. On the other hand, the role of women is often a determining factor in maintaining recipes, cooking techniques, and hereditary cultural practices (Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2022). Therefore, collaboration between communities, local governments, and business actors is important to create a sustainable gastronomic model that remains grounded in cultural roots.

Gastronomy, Sustainability, and Identity Strengthening in Destination Management

Sustainability in gastronomic tourism includes not only economic dimensions, but also social, cultural, and environmental dimensions. According to Pérez-Gálvez et al. (2022), culinary practices that use local ingredients, preserve traditional techniques, and promote environmental awareness are all part of a sustainable tourism strategy. The results of Li et al.'s (2023) research show that heritage destinations that manage to maintain their culinary identity are those that are able to balance gastronomic innovation and the preservation of cultural values. In addition, Karim and Chi (2020) state that local food can be a symbolic tool to strengthen the image of the destination and distinguish it from other locations. In the context of Malang City, this approach is relevant because gastronomy is not only a tourist attraction, but also a means of cultural preservation and strengthening a community-based creative economy. Thus, gastronomy acts as a bridge between the preservation of local identity and the sustainable development of cultural heritage destinations.

METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

This study uses a qualitative approach with an interpretive case study design to understand the social meaning, cultural values, and gastronomic practices in the preservation of local identity in cultural heritage destinations. The qualitative approach was chosen because it is able to explain social phenomena in depth, contextual, and meaningful for participants (Fuchs, 2023). The interpretive case study design was used to examine the process, meaning, and interaction between culinary actors, destination managers, tourists, and local

communities involved in the dynamics of gastronomic tourism (Tomasella, 2022). Through this approach, the researcher seeks to interpret how culinary practices become a means of preserving cultural identity in the midst of modernization and commercialization of heritage tourism.

Research Location and Population

The research was carried out in Kayutangan Heritage Village, Malang City, East Java, which is an active cultural tourism area with traditional culinary activities that reflect the local identity of the people of Malang. This location was chosen because it showcases the close relationship between tourism, local culinary, and cultural heritage preservation efforts. The research population includes all parties who play a role in gastronomic tourism activities, including culinary actors, destination managers, tourists, and cultural figures or local communities.

Sampling Techniques

The sampling technique used is purposive sampling, which is the deliberate selection of informants based on their knowledge, experience, and relevance to the research focus (Patton, 2022). A total of 12 main informants were determined after the initial exploration stage, consisting of four local culinary actors, three destination managers, three tourists, and two cultural figures. This number is maintained until data saturation is achieved, which is when no new information emerges from the next interview (Guest et al., 2023).

Data Collection Methods

Research data were obtained through three main techniques: participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Participatory observation is used to observe social interactions, culinary consumption patterns, and traditional practices that take place in the field. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner so that researchers could explore the meaning and perception of the informant without losing focus on the themes of local identity and gastronomy (Hall & Gössling, 2022). Documentation such as culinary archives, photos of activities, historical records, and tourism promotion documents were collected to reinforce the results of observations and interviews. The validity of the data is strengthened through triangulation of sources and methods, so that the results of the analysis have high consistency and reliability (Creswell & Poth, 2021).

Research Procedure

This research was carried out through several systematic stages, starting from a preliminary study to understand the socio-cultural context at the research site. The next stage was the collection of field data, which was carried out over several weeks at Kampung Heritage Kayutangan, including interviews, observations, and documentation. Each interview is recorded and transcribed verbatim to maintain the accuracy of the participants' narratives. The validation process is carried out through member checking, which is confirming the results of the researcher's interpretation to the informant to ensure the suitability of the

meaning. In addition, peer debriefing with research colleagues was conducted to assess objectivity and reduce interpretive bias (Nowell et al., 2022).

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

Data analysis is carried out using a thematic analysis method that allows researchers to systematically identify patterns, categories, and themes from qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The analysis stages include the process of reading interview transcripts in depth, conducting initial coding, grouping the code into themes, reviewing the suitability of the theme, and interpreting the findings based on the theory of cultural identity and gastronomic tourism (Fuchs, 2023). To help organize the data, NVivo 12 Plus software is used, which allows digital coding and visualization of linkages between themes. The validity of data is maintained through the principles of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Creswell & Poth, 2021).

RESEARCH RESULT

Traditional Culinary Practices as a Media for the Preservation of Local Identity

Gastronomy in Kayutangan Heritage Village is a concrete form of efforts to maintain and revitalize the local identity of the people of Malang. The results of observations and interviews show that the majority of culinary actors in this region still rely on traditional recipes and cooking techniques that have been passed down from generation to generation. The process of cooking with a wood stove, the use of natural ingredients such as fresh spices from the local market, and the avoidance of instant ingredients are principles that are strictly maintained by culinary actors. They see the practice as not just a cooking tradition, but also a symbol of respect for ancestors and a form of profound expression of cultural values. "If we change the recipe, it feels like losing Malang's identity. It's not just food, it's the story of our parents that must be passed on," (PK1, July 5, 2025 interview).

Of the twelve informants, nine of them emphasized that maintaining authentic taste and cooking is part of the moral responsibility to maintain the continuity of regional identity. This practice shows that gastronomy functions not only as an economic activity, but also as a social ritual and a collective symbol that reinforces a sense of community among community members. In addition, culinary actors also show adaptive ability to change times without losing their traditional roots. For example, some culinary businesses have begun to improve the appearance of packaging and expand their marketing reach through digital media, but still refuse to replace the basic ingredients or cooking techniques that are their hallmarks. This adaptation shows a balance between modernity and tradition, where cultural preservation goes hand in hand with the needs of contemporary tourism. "Young people now like things that are visually appealing, so we changed the look of the packaging, but it still feels the same as before, that's our principle," (PK3, interview July 9, 2025).

Furthermore, this traditional culinary practice acts as a means of cultural learning for tourists. The serving process, the meal, and the story behind each dish create an authentic experience that reinforces the symbolic value of

gastronomy as part of local identity. Thus, gastronomy in Kayutangan is not just a consumption activity, but a cultural practice that represents the continuity of traditional values in the context of sustainable tourism.

Social Interaction and Cultural Narratives in Culinary Tourism Experiences

The results of the study show that tourists interpret the culinary experience at Kayutangan Heritage Village not only as a food tasting activity, but also as a process of understanding the local culture in depth. Interviews with tourists revealed that direct interaction with culinary actors is an important moment that strengthens their emotional experience of Malang culture. In the process of eating, tourists often listen to stories about the history, philosophy of ingredients, and spiritual meaning of each dish. "When the saleswoman explained why rawon had to be cooked for hours, I felt like I was reading the history of the life of the people of Malang, not just lunch," (W2, interview July 11, 2025).

This social interaction creates an effective form of cultural communication, in which culinary actors act as narrators who bridge knowledge between the past and the present. The narrative about the origins of dishes such as Nasi Corn Kayutangan or Rawon Nguling is an entrance for tourists to understand local values such as simplicity, togetherness, and respect for nature. In addition, field observations show that foreign tourists tend to be interested in experiences that are participatory in nature, such as attending cooking workshops, traditional market tours, and community-based activities. The experience provides a deeper understanding of the social context and history of the food they enjoy.

Culinary actors and destination managers are aware of the potential of this narrative as part of a cultural interpretation strategy. They consciously craft storylines that touch on aspects of history, taste, and values, to present an experience that is not only interesting but also educational. "Tourists are happy when we tell stories, they say that food feels more meaningful when they know its origins," (PD2, interview July 13, 2025). Through this practice, gastronomy serves a dual function: as an experiential tourist attraction and as a means of cultural education that strengthens local identity in the eyes of visitors.

Participation of Local Communities in the Management of Gastronomic Heritage

The success of gastronomic preservation in Kayutangan Heritage Village cannot be separated from the active role of the local community which is the backbone of the sustainability of culinary identity. The local community plays a dual role as economic actors and guardians of cultural values. Collaboration between culinary actors, local artisans, and destination managers creates a mutually reinforcing social ecosystem. For example, groups of housewives produce traditional chili sauce and snacks, while youth organizations play a role in promotional activities and annual culinary festivals. This form of cooperation shows that gastronomy is a means of social empowerment as well as an inclusive cultural preservation mechanism.

Community participation not only strengthens cultural identity, but also improves local economic welfare. Through the support of destination managers,

the community received training in food hygiene, digital marketing, and culinary certification. However, challenges are still faced, such as limited local raw materials and inconsistent reliance on government support. However, the collective spirit of the community has proven to be a strong social capital in maintaining the authenticity of Kayutangan gastronomy. "We don't just sell food, but keep the story behind it. If we stop, we will lose part of the identity of this city," (TB1, July 15, 2025 interview).

Furthermore, this study found that community participation serves as a bridge between tourism policy and cultural realities on the ground. The community becomes an actor who is able to integrate traditional values into a sustainability-oriented creative economy system. This shows that the preservation of local identity through gastronomy cannot only be done structurally, but requires a community-based approach that places the community as the main subject of cultural heritage actors.

Destination Management Strategy in Maintaining Authenticity

The management of gastronomic destinations in Kayutangan Heritage Village shows how collaboration between the community, culinary actors, and area managers can be an effective strategy in maintaining cultural authenticity. The results of the study show that the management system implemented is not top-down, but is rooted in the participation of the local community. Destination managers strive to integrate cultural values into all tourism activities, including in the arrangement of culinary spaces, the selection of food providers, and the narrative used in promotions. One of the tangible forms of this strategy is the policy to give priority to local culinary actors in providing dishes offered to tourists, so that the economic chain remains within the community. "We want those who sell food here to be locals, not from outside, because they know the story and meaning behind the cuisine," (PD1, July 10, 2025 interview).

In addition, the annual festival entitled "Gastronomy of Kayutangan Heritage" is an important means in strengthening the image of destinations based on local identity. The festival not only features traditional food, but also features art performances, cooking workshops, and culinary innovation competitions based on ancestral recipes. The activity succeeded in building collective awareness about the importance of cultural preservation through food, as well as strengthening social relations between culinary actors, destination managers, and the community. Although the management system is still informal and relies heavily on citizen initiatives, it reflects social dynamics that are adaptive to the local cultural context. "We don't have an official written rule yet, but everyone knows their respective responsibilities. It has become an unwritten agreement between us," (PD3, July 14, 2025 interview).

This collaboration-based management approach shows that the success of preserving authenticity is not solely determined by formal policies, but by social forces and trust between actors. Harmonious interaction between managers, culinary actors, and visitors results in a vibrant and characterful tourism ecosystem. Through this pattern, Kayutangan is able to maintain its

characteristics as a heritage destination that does not lose its cultural identity even though it continues to develop in the context of tourism modernization.

Challenges and Adaptations to Global Homogenization

One of the main challenges faced by gastronomic actors in Kayutangan Heritage Village is the pressure of global homogenization that encourages uniformity of taste and presentation style. The increase in the number of domestic and foreign tourists brings expectations for a more universal taste and appearance of food. Some culinary actors admit that they once considered adapting recipes to make them more receptive to the global market, but later realized that doing so could erode the inherent cultural value of local cuisine. "There have been foreign tourists who asked for rawon without kluwek seasoning, but I can't change it, because without it it is no longer rawon. This food has a soul that should not be eliminated," (PK2, interview July 7, 2025).

This phenomenon shows the negotiation between tradition and modernity, where culinary actors try to balance economic demands with cultural responsibility. The adaptation is not directed at changing recipes, but at ways of presentation, packaging, and promotion that are more attractive to the global market. For example, the use of eco-friendly containers, the addition of food origin narratives in English, and digital promotion through social media are new strategies to reach tourists without sacrificing authenticity. These efforts reflect a smart and measured form of cultural resistance to the uniform flow of globalization.

In the context of destination management, managers and cultural figures also play a role as keepers of the balance between commercial needs and the preservation of local values. They educate business actors to understand the importance of maintaining the essence of culture in every adaptation carried out. "We do not reject change, but any change must still respect the cultural roots. If everything is standardized, then all that will be left is a meaningless name," (TB2, interview July 16, 2025). Through this adaptive strategy, Kayutangan gastronomy is able to maintain its unique character, while responding to global challenges while still being grounded in local wisdom.

Local Identity as a Strategic Resource for Heritage Destinations

Local identity manifested through gastronomy has proven to be a strategic resource that strengthens the position of Kayutangan Heritage Village as a leading cultural destination in Malang. This identity is not only manifested in the physical form of food, but also in the social and symbolic meanings contained in it. Each traditional dish serves as a medium to convey historical stories, the value of togetherness, and people's perspective on life. For culinary actors, maintaining traditional recipes and techniques is not just an economic activity, but an action to maintain cultural existence in the midst of changing times. Through these culinary practices, local identity becomes a living narrative, which continues to be reproduced and passed down from one generation to the next.

In addition to strengthening culture, local identity also makes a significant economic contribution to society. Small and medium-sized businesses benefit directly from increased tourist visits, while festival activities and digital

promotions open up wider market opportunities. This relationship between culture and economy creates a sustainable tourism model, where cultural preservation goes hand in hand with improving people's welfare. "In the past, I only sold food in front of my house, but since many tourists came to Kayutangan, this business has grown. But most importantly, I'm happy that outsiders can know about our culture," (PK4, July 12, 2025 interview).

Furthermore, the success of Kayutangan gastronomy shows that local identity is not just a cultural symbol, but a strategic force in building the competitiveness of heritage destinations. By placing traditional values at the core of every culinary practice, this destination manages to differentiate itself from other globally uniform tourist areas. Local wisdom-based management that is collaborative, participatory, and sustainability-oriented has made Kayutangan a model for how gastronomy can function as a bridge between cultural preservation and creative economy development.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study show that gastronomy in Kayutangan Heritage Village plays an important role in maintaining the cultural identity of the people of Malang as well as being a strategic resource in the development of cultural heritage-based tourism. Through traditional culinary practices, the local community not only maintains the distinctive flavors and recipes of their ancestors, but also preserves social values such as togetherness and mutual cooperation. These findings show that traditional food is not just an economic product, but also a symbol of a collective identity that reinforces local pride. According to Choi and Kim (2022), gastronomy can be a means of inheriting cultural values when managed based on local wisdom and the authenticity of taste inherited between generations.

In addition, this study found that social interaction between culinary actors and tourists is one of the main factors that strengthen the cultural tourism experience in Kayutangan. Travelers feel a deeper emotional connection when they learn the story behind each dish, from the origin of the ingredients to their symbolic meaning. This shows that cultural narratives play an important role in creating memorable travel experiences. In line with the views of Tussyadiah (2023), culinary tourism accompanied by local narratives has the ability to build cross-cultural understanding and strengthen the image of heritage destinations as spaces for social learning.

The involvement of the local community has also proven to be the key to the success of gastronomic preservation in Kayutangan. The community functions not only as a food provider, but also as a guardian of the cultural values contained in culinary practices. Groups of housewives, youth, and artisans work together in maintaining the production of local ingredients and maintaining the authenticity of recipes. This shows that community participation is a social capital that strengthens the sustainability of destinations. According to Wijaya (2024), the empowerment of local communities in gastronomic management is able to increase the sense of belonging to cultural heritage and encourage the independence of the regional creative economy.

The destination management strategy implemented in Kayutangan also shows a collaborative model between managers, culinary actors, and local communities. This collaboration resulted in a flexible form of culture-based management, although it was not yet fully integrated into the city's tourism policy. Some initiatives such as traditional culinary festivals and local story-based promotions are examples of effective strategies in maintaining authenticity. This is in line with the findings of Gómez and Morales (2022) who stated that the success of heritage destination management is determined by the ability to balance economic aspects and the preservation of cultural values. Thus, the collaborative approach applied in Kayutangan becomes the basis for a sustainable destination management model that is relevant to the local context.

However, the study also found that there is a global homogenization challenge, namely the pressure to adjust the taste to be accepted by tourists who are used to modern food. Some culinary actors are tempted to change the composition of ingredients to suit global tastes, but the majority still maintain the authenticity of the recipe. This phenomenon shows that there is a negotiation between maintaining tradition and meeting market needs. According to Huang (2023), global homogenization can threaten the diversity of local gastronomy if it is not balanced with strong preservation policies. Therefore, the adaptation strategy applied in Kayutangan—such as modern packaging without changing the original taste—is a form of smart compromise between tradition and innovation.

More broadly, the results of this study reinforce the view that local identity is not only a cultural symbol, but also a strategic asset in the development of heritage destinations. The identity embodied through local cuisine creates an attraction that distinguishes Kayutangan from other destinations, while opening up new economic opportunities for the community. This supports the argument of Setyawan (2024) that strengthening local identity through gastronomy plays an important role in creating sustainable tourism, because it is able to combine cultural values with creative economic opportunities. Thus, gastronomy is an effective medium to strengthen the competitiveness of heritage destinations at the national and global levels.

The theoretical contribution of this research lies in a new understanding of the relationship between gastronomy, local identity, and destination sustainability. This research proves that the preservation of traditional culinary can go hand in hand with modern management innovations, as long as cultural values remain the foundation. From a practical point of view, these findings provide important recommendations for destination managers and policymakers to strengthen the capacity of local communities, develop cultural story-based promotions, and ensure the sustainability of local foodstuffs. As stated by Farida (2023), the success of culture-based tourism is highly dependent on the ability of destinations to maintain a balance between authenticity, innovation, and community participation.

The limitations of this research lie in the coverage of the area which is still limited to one heritage area and the relatively small number of informants. Therefore, further research is recommended to be carried out in various other

gastronomic destinations in Indonesia so that they can be compared with their preservation strategies. In addition, a longitudinal approach is also needed to see how the younger generation continues culinary traditions in the future. According to Rahman (2024), long-term studies on the transmission of culinary culture can help understand the changes in values and practices that occur as the social and economic development of society develops. Thus, the next research is expected to be able to expand insights into how gastronomy can function as a strategic instrument in the preservation of identity and the sustainability of heritage destinations.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research confirms that gastronomic tourism has an important role in maintaining and strengthening local identity in cultural heritage destinations. Through a case study in Kayutangan Heritage Village, it was found that traditional culinary practices are not only economic activities, but also representations of cultural values and the collective history of the community. Culinary actors, destination managers, tourists, and cultural figures play an active role in the preservation process through flavor narratives, presentations, and culinary rituals that are full of meaning. This cross-actor collaboration shows that the sustainability of local identity can be achieved when gastronomy is managed with a participatory approach and respects traditional values as the main resource.

In addition, the results of this study show that the balance between adaptation to global trends and the preservation of authenticity is the key to the success of gastronomy-based heritage destinations. Local identity has been proven to be a differentiation strategy with economic value while strengthening the cultural image of the destination. Thus, the integration of destination management, culinary innovation, and authentic cultural interpretation can create a sustainable tourism management model rooted in local wisdom. These findings make a conceptual and practical contribution to the development of other heritage destinations in Indonesia that seek to maintain cultural uniqueness through gastronomy as a means of inheritance and community empowerment.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

This study advances current research by providing an in-depth empirical explanation of how gastronomic tourism functions as a multidimensional mechanism for sustaining local identity within cultural heritage destinations. Unlike previous studies that focus mainly on gastronomy as a cultural product or economic driver, this research highlights the dynamic interactions among culinary actors, destination managers, tourists, and cultural figures as an integrated system of identity preservation. The findings introduce a conceptual model that positions gastronomy not merely as heritage consumption, but as an active process of cultural transmission through narrative, ritual, and sensory experience. This study also contributes a nuanced understanding of how authenticity can be strategically negotiated in the face of global trends, demonstrating that participatory governance and community-rooted culinary

innovation can reinforce both cultural resilience and destination competitiveness. Consequently, this research provides a new theoretical and practical framework for developing gastronomy-based heritage destinations in Indonesia and comparable multicultural settings.

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