

Exploring the Potential of Local Cuisine as a Cultural Tourism Attraction in Sawahlunto City

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to identify and analyze the potential of local cuisine as a cultural tourism attraction in Sawahlunto City, West Sumatra. A qualitative approach with a case study design was employed to obtain an in-depth understanding of the contribution of traditional culinary products to tourism development. Data were collected through field observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation involving tourists, culinary business owners, local communities, and representatives from the Sawahlunto Tourism Office. The data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings revealed that four traditional culinary products, namely *Kerupuk Kubang*, *Lamang Tungkek*, *Dendeng Batokok*, and *Ale-ale Apam*, possess distinctive ingredients, traditional preparation methods, and cultural values that enhance their attractiveness as tourism assets. These culinary products enrich visitors' experiences, strengthen the cultural identity of Sawahlunto, and contribute to destination competitiveness. However, their tourism potential has not been fully optimized due to limited promotion and stakeholder collaboration. Strengthening partnerships among government institutions, local communities, and culinary entrepreneurs, supported by digital marketing strategies, is essential for promoting sustainable culinary tourism while preserving local cultural heritage.

Informasi Artikel

Kata Kunci:

Daya Tarik Wisata;
Kota Sawahlunto;
Kuliner Lokal;
Pariwisata Budaya;
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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi dan menganalisis potensi kuliner lokal sebagai daya tarik wisata budaya di Kota Sawahlunto, Sumatera Barat. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus untuk memperoleh pemahaman yang mendalam mengenai kontribusi kuliner tradisional terhadap pengembangan pariwisata. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi lapangan, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi dengan melibatkan wisatawan, pelaku usaha kuliner, masyarakat lokal, serta Dinas Pariwisata Kota Sawahlunto. Data dianalisis menggunakan model analisis interaktif Miles, Huberman, dan Saldana yang meliputi reduksi data, penyajian data, serta penarikan dan verifikasi kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa empat kuliner tradisional, yaitu *Kerupuk Kubang*, *Lamang Tungkek*, *Dendeng Batokok*, dan *Ale-ale Apam*, memiliki keunikan bahan baku, teknik pengolahan tradisional, serta nilai budaya yang menjadikannya aset wisata yang potensial. Kuliner tersebut mampu memperkaya pengalaman wisatawan, memperkuat identitas budaya Kota Sawahlunto, dan meningkatkan daya saing destinasi wisata. Namun, potensi tersebut belum dimanfaatkan secara optimal akibat keterbatasan promosi dan kolaborasi antarpemangku kepentingan. Penguatan sinergi antara pemerintah, masyarakat, dan pelaku usaha kuliner melalui strategi pemasaran digital menjadi langkah penting untuk mendukung pengembangan wisata kuliner yang berkelanjutan sekaligus melestarikan warisan budaya lokal.

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1. Introduction

Tourism has undergone a significant transformation in recent years, shifting from conventional sightseeing toward experience-oriented activities that emphasize cultural authenticity and meaningful interactions with local communities. One tourism segment that has experienced remarkable growth is culinary tourism, which enables visitors to explore the cultural identity of a destination through its traditional foods and local culinary practices. According to the *United Nations World Tourism Organization* (UNWTO), culinary tourism has become an essential component of cultural tourism because it offers authentic experiences that strengthen visitors' emotional connection with a destination [1]. Furthermore, the World Tourism Organization (2021) reported that culinary tourism accounts for more than 30% of the global tourism market, demonstrating its growing contribution to tourism competitiveness and regional economic development [2].

Tourism potential refers to various natural, cultural, historical, and social resources that can be transformed into valuable tourism products through appropriate management and promotion [3]. Among these resources, local cuisine has increasingly been recognized as a strategic tourism asset because it not only provides recreational experiences but also reflects the cultural identity and historical heritage of a destination [4]. Culinary tourism allows visitors to experience local traditions through distinctive flavors, preparation techniques, and dining customs that cannot easily be replicated elsewhere. Consequently, local cuisine contributes not only to visitor satisfaction but also to destination branding and cultural preservation.

Indonesia possesses extraordinary culinary diversity that represents the cultural richness of its various regions. Traditional foods are generally produced using locally sourced ingredients and inherited preparation methods that have been preserved across generations. These culinary characteristics create unique gastronomic experiences while simultaneously strengthening regional identity. Traditional cuisine is distinguished by its authentic ingredients, preparation techniques, flavors, and aromas that are closely associated with local communities [5]. Several tourism destinations in Indonesia, including Yogyakarta, Bandung, and Bali, have successfully integrated traditional cuisine into their tourism development strategies, resulting in increased tourist arrivals while reinforcing destination competitiveness. One region with comparable potential is Sawahlunto City, West Sumatra.

Sawahlunto is widely recognized for its mining heritage and received UNESCO World Heritage status in 2019 [6]. Although this international recognition has strengthened the city's reputation as a historical tourism destination, its local culinary heritage has received considerably less attention. Traditional foods such as *Kerupuk Kubang*, *Lamang Tungkek*, *Dendeng*

Batokok, and *Ale-ale Apam* represent unique culinary identities characterized by distinctive ingredients, traditional preparation methods, and cultural values. However, these culinary products remain underrepresented in tourism promotion and are still relatively unfamiliar to tourists outside the region. In addition, the development of culinary tourism continues to face several challenges, including limited collaboration among government institutions, tourism stakeholders, and local culinary entrepreneurs.

The underutilization of Sawahlunto's culinary resources is also reflected in previous findings concerning regional tourism development. Previous research by Shintya, based on Sawahlunto's locally generated revenue (PAD) data from 2010 to 2015, reported that the tourism sector contributed an average of 4.19% to regional revenue [7]. The study, however, did not specifically examine the contribution of local cuisine to tourism development. These findings suggest that the role of local culinary resources has not yet been explicitly recognized within the city's tourism development strategy. Consequently, visitors' experiences continue to be dominated by historical attractions rather than opportunities to explore Sawahlunto's distinctive culinary heritage and local wisdom.

Previous studies consistently demonstrate the strategic contribution of local cuisine to tourism development. Traditional cuisine plays an important role in shaping destination image while strengthening tourism branding [8]. Likewise, local cuisine should be recognized as an important tourism asset capable of enhancing destination attractiveness [9]. Moreover, local culinary products as one of the key factors influencing tourists' intention to visit a destination [10]. However, these studies mainly examine culinary tourism in destinations where local cuisine has already been established as a primary tourism attraction. Limited attention has been given to the role of local cuisine in UNESCO World Heritage cities, where tourism development is generally dominated by historical and cultural heritage rather than culinary experiences. Consequently, there remains limited empirical evidence on how local culinary resources can complement heritage tourism while strengthening destination identity and competitiveness in the context of World Heritage destinations such as Sawahlunto.

To address this gap, the present study investigates the potential of local cuisine as a cultural tourism attraction in Sawahlunto City, a UNESCO World Heritage city recognized primarily for its mining heritage. Specifically, this study explores the uniqueness, authenticity, cultural values, and experiential aspects of local culinary products and examines their contribution to destination attractiveness. The findings are expected to provide practical recommendations for tourism stakeholders in developing sustainable culinary tourism strategies, preserving traditional culinary heritage, strengthening regional identity, and enhancing the competitiveness of Sawahlunto as a cultural tourism destination.

2. Method

This study employed a qualitative method using a case study approach to obtain an in-depth understanding of the potential of local cuisine as a tourist attraction in Sawahlunto City. A qualitative case study was selected because it enables researchers to explore a particular phenomenon comprehensively within its social, cultural, and economic context. The study was conducted in Sawahlunto City, West Sumatra, during July 2025 over a period of approximately one to three weeks. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that they possessed relevant knowledge and experience related to the research topic. The selection criteria included visitors aged at least 17 years who had visited Sawahlunto within the previous six months, culinary business owners who had operated their businesses for at least one year, local residents familiar with the city's traditional cuisine, and representatives from the Sawahlunto City Tourism Office who were directly involved in tourism policies, promotional activities, and culinary tourism development programs.

Research data were collected through field observations, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and documentation using an interview guide, a voice recorder, and field notes as research instruments. Each interview lasted approximately 35 minutes, depending on the participants' responses and the depth of the discussion. Prior to data collection, the researcher explained the objectives of the study and obtained participants' voluntary consent. All interview recordings were made with participants' permission, transcribed for analysis, and securely stored together with field notes to maintain data integrity and confidentiality. Data credibility was enhanced through source triangulation and technique triangulation. Subsequently, the data were analyzed using the interactive analysis model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification [11]. This analytical procedure enabled the researcher to interpret the findings in accordance with the study's objective of exploring the potential of local cuisine as a cultural tourism attraction in Sawahlunto City. The conceptual framework of the study is presented in **Figure 1**.



Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

3. Result and Discussion

Results

1. Local Cuisine Potential in Sawahlunto City

Field observations conducted at several culinary businesses and tourism locations, supported by interviews with culinary business owners and local community members, identified four traditional culinary products that are widely recognized as representative local foods of Sawahlunto, namely *Kerupuk Kubang*, *Lamang Tungkek*, *Dendeng Batokok*, and *Ale-ale Apam*. These culinary products remain available in local markets and culinary centers and continue to be produced using traditional methods inherited across generations. The findings indicate that each product possesses distinctive characteristics in terms of raw ingredients, preparation techniques, cultural background, and serving style, making them important culinary resources that differentiate Sawahlunto from other tourism destinations.

Kerupuk Kubang originates from Nagari Kubang, Lembah Segar District, Sawahlunto City. Field observations showed that the product is primarily made from cassava and processed using traditional sun-drying techniques before frying. Interviews with local producers also indicated that the product is not only consumed locally but has been marketed to several regions outside West Sumatra, demonstrating its economic potential as a local culinary product.



Figure 2 Kerupuk Kubang

Lamang Tungkek is a traditional delicacy originating from Talawi District. Observations revealed that the product is prepared from rice flour, coconut milk, and palm sugar, while interviews confirmed that it is commonly served during religious celebrations and traditional ceremonies. One distinctive characteristic observed during the study is its cylindrical shape tied with raffia string, which has become part of its cultural identity and distinguishes it from similar traditional foods in other regions.



Figure 3 Lamang Tungkek

Another traditional culinary product identified during the study is *Dendeng Batokok*. Field observations showed that the beef is grilled over coconut-shell charcoal before being pounded and served with chili seasoning and coconut oil. Culinary business owners explained that this traditional cooking technique has been maintained to preserve the original texture and flavor of the dish.



Figure 4 Dendeng Batokok

Observations also identified *Ale-ale Apam* as one of Sawahlunto's distinctive traditional cakes originating from Silungkang. The product is made from rice flour, coconut milk, palm sugar, and pandan leaves through a cooking process lasting approximately six to seven hours. Although visually similar to *serabi*, the preparation process and serving method differ because the cake is served without coconut milk sauce, giving it distinctive characteristics among Indonesian traditional cakes.



Figure 5 Ale-ale Apam

2. Authenticity and Uniqueness of Local Cuisine

Interviews with culinary entrepreneurs and local residents consistently showed that traditional recipes continue to be preserved and passed down from one generation to another. Field observations also indicated that locally available ingredients and manual cooking techniques remain widely used in preparing the four traditional culinary products. These practices demonstrate that authenticity remains an important characteristic of Sawahlunto's local cuisine and contributes to preserving its original taste, preparation methods, and cultural

identity.

The findings further revealed that visitors are not only introduced to the taste of local food but also to the cultural traditions associated with its preparation. Traditional cooking methods, inherited recipes, and locally sourced ingredients collectively create culinary experiences that reflect the identity of the local community.

3. Cultural Values and Local Wisdom

The study found that Sawahlunto's traditional cuisine embodies important cultural values and local wisdom. Interviews with local residents indicated that several traditional dishes, particularly *Lamang Tungkek*, continue to be prepared during religious celebrations, weddings, and other community ceremonies. Field observations further showed that food preparation often involves the participation of family members and local communities, reflecting values of cooperation and togetherness.

The findings also indicate that knowledge regarding ingredient selection, traditional cooking techniques, and the cultural meanings associated with particular foods continues to be transmitted across generations. This demonstrates that local cuisine functions not only as a food product but also as a medium for preserving local cultural heritage.

4. Culinary Experience and Tourist Satisfaction

Interviews with visitors revealed generally positive perceptions of Sawahlunto's traditional cuisine. Participants highlighted the distinctive taste, traditional preparation methods, and presentation of the local dishes as important aspects of their culinary experience. Field observations further showed that culinary business owners frequently explained the history and preparation process of each traditional food to visitors, creating opportunities for cultural learning in addition to food consumption.

Overall, the findings indicate that visitors' culinary experiences in Sawahlunto extend beyond food consumption. Interactions with local culinary entrepreneurs, combined with explanations regarding the cultural background of each dish, contribute to meaningful tourism experiences and enhance visitors' appreciation of Sawahlunto's local heritage.

Discussion

5. The Contribution of Local Cuisine to Tourism Attractiveness in Sawahlunto City

The findings demonstrate that local cuisine represents an important component of Sawahlunto's cultural tourism potential. Although the city has long been recognized for its mining heritage and historical attractions, the four traditional culinary products identified in this study provide complementary experiences that enrich visitors' understanding of local culture. Rather than functioning solely as food products, *Kerupuk Kubang*, *Lamang Tungkek*, *Dendeng Batokok*, and *Ale-ale Apam* reflect the historical background, traditions, and identity of the

local community. Consequently, culinary resources can strengthen Sawahlunto's tourism attractiveness by diversifying the experiences offered to visitors.

These findings are consistent with Antara and Trimandala [8], who argue that traditional cuisine contributes significantly to destination image and tourism branding. Likewise, the authenticity embedded in Sawahlunto's culinary products differentiates the destination from other historical tourism cities because visitors are offered experiences that combine local food with cultural heritage. This finding also supports Kurniansah et al. [9], who emphasize that local cuisine should be recognized as a tourism asset capable of increasing destination attractiveness through its uniqueness and cultural value.

Another important finding concerns the contribution of local cuisine to visitor satisfaction. Visitors not only appreciated the taste and presentation of the traditional dishes but also valued the opportunity to interact with culinary business owners and learn about the history and preparation of each food. These interactions transformed culinary consumption into a meaningful cultural experience. Similar conclusions were reported by Purnomo et al. [10], who found that authentic culinary experiences positively influence tourists' intention to visit a destination because they provide memorable experiences that cannot easily be replicated elsewhere.

The uniqueness of each culinary product further strengthens Sawahlunto's destination identity. Traditional preparation techniques, locally sourced ingredients, and cultural meanings embedded within each dish represent competitive advantages that distinguish Sawahlunto from other destinations with similar historical attractions. Therefore, integrating local cuisine into tourism promotion can broaden the city's tourism appeal while reinforcing its image as a UNESCO World Heritage destination with distinctive cultural experiences.

Furthermore, the study indicates that local cuisine contributes not only to tourism development but also to cultural preservation. Maintaining traditional recipes, cooking techniques, and community participation ensures that culinary knowledge continues to be transmitted across generations. In this regard, culinary tourism functions simultaneously as an economic activity and as a mechanism for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. This finding reinforces the importance of involving local communities in tourism development to maintain the authenticity and sustainability of traditional culinary practices.

Despite its considerable potential, several challenges remain. Limited collaboration among government institutions, tourism stakeholders, culinary entrepreneurs, and local communities has constrained the integration of culinary resources into Sawahlunto's tourism development strategy. Promotional activities also remain relatively limited, resulting in many traditional culinary products receiving less attention than the city's mining heritage attractions. Strengthening stakeholder

partnerships, improving digital promotion, and incorporating culinary experiences into tourism packages could increase visitor engagement while supporting sustainable cultural tourism development.

Overall, the findings suggest that local cuisine should be positioned as an integral component of Sawahlunto's tourism strategy rather than merely as a supporting tourism facility. By combining historical heritage with authentic culinary experiences, Sawahlunto has the opportunity to diversify its tourism products, strengthen its cultural identity, enhance visitor satisfaction, and improve the competitiveness of the destination in the long term.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that Sawahlunto City possesses considerable potential to develop local cuisine as a cultural tourism attraction. Traditional culinary products, including *Kerupuk Kubang*, *Lamang Tungkek*, *Dendeng Batokok*, and *Ale-ale Apam*, demonstrate distinctive characteristics through their authentic ingredients, traditional preparation methods, cultural significance, and historical values, making them valuable tourism assets. Beyond providing gastronomic experiences, these culinary products contribute to strengthening destination identity, preserving local cultural heritage, and enriching tourists' overall travel experiences.

The findings further indicate that the development of culinary tourism in Sawahlunto requires coordinated actions among multiple stakeholders. The Sawahlunto City Tourism Office should integrate local culinary products into official tourism packages, cultural festivals, destination branding programs, and digital promotional campaigns through the city's tourism website and social media platforms. Culinary entrepreneurs are encouraged to maintain the authenticity of traditional recipes while improving product packaging, hygiene standards, and online marketing to enhance visitors' experiences and expand market reach. Local communities can support these initiatives by actively participating in culinary festivals, traditional cooking demonstrations, and cultural education programs that introduce the historical and cultural significance of local cuisine to visitors. Collaborative partnerships among these stakeholders should also establish regular promotional events and integrated tourism programs that combine historical attractions with culinary experiences. Implementing these practical measures would strengthen the visibility of Sawahlunto's culinary heritage, improve destination competitiveness, preserve traditional culinary knowledge, and generate broader economic benefits for local communities.

This study is limited to the exploration of local culinary potential through a qualitative case study conducted in Sawahlunto City. Future studies are recommended to involve a larger number of participants, compare culinary tourism development across different cultural destinations, or adopt

mixed-method and quantitative approaches to examine tourists' perceptions, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions toward local culinary attractions. These approaches would provide broader empirical evidence to support sustainable culinary tourism development.

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