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## Review of culinary tourism development policy in Indonesia

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### Abstract

*Purpose* - This study examines the Indonesian government's strategies for advancing culinary tourism, focusing on initiatives like the "Indonesia Spice Up the World" program and promoting culinary destinations such as Bali and Yogyakarta.

*Methodology/Design/Approach* - The study analyzes initiatives by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemenparekraf) and compares Indonesia's efforts with neighboring countries like Hong Kong and Singapore, which have successfully leveraged food for tourism.

*Findings* - Despite efforts, Indonesia has yet to fully establish itself as a global culinary tourism leader. Challenges include integrating food into broader tourism strategies, improving chef competence, and developing policies that address the entire food supply chain.

*Originality/Value* - The study advocates for a comprehensive approach to culinary tourism that links food with national development policies, strengthens chef skills, and extends efforts to rural areas to preserve traditions and promote sustainable tourism.

**Keywords** culinary tourism, sustainable tourism, tourism policy, Indonesian tourism strategy

### Introduction

Currently, tourist destinations worldwide are seeking ways to build their local culinary identities and support their gastronomic uniqueness to have a significant impact on sustainable development, particularly in the tourism sector (Hall & Gössling, 2016). The UNWTO actively assists in promoting culinary tourism in various countries, both in terms of knowledge and the practical application of product creation models, aiming to influence tourists' interest in visiting attractions within a region or country (UNWTO, 2019). In cases where a country wants to promote culinary or gastronomic attractions, it is crucial to develop a strategic tourism plan for this sector supported by a holistic tourism policy (Richards, 2012; Wondirad et al., 2021).

Previous studies have confirmed this phenomenon and described the challenges and opportunities within this sector. Although some authors focus on tourism policy themes in various countries, their work is often limited to general tourism policy (Hall & Gössling, 2013; Hall & Gössling, 2016; Henderson, 2009, 2014). This study highlights the policies of the Indonesian government, as announced by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy through press releases, and outlines the specific focuses related to the development of culinary tourism in this archipelagic country. The review aims to enrich the literature on culinary tourism and provide practical benefits for stakeholders in this sector.

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### **Press Release from the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy: Cuisine as a Tourism Attraction and Promotion Tool for Indonesia**

Indonesian cuisine is generally well-known globally, with several traditional Indonesian dishes becoming favorites in countries such as the Netherlands, the UK, Australia, and the US. Therefore, food can be used as a tool for tourism promotion and as a means of cultural exchange that contributes to the formation of social identity. The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemenparekraf) has been working to develop culinary tourism through various initiatives, such as the Australia-Indonesia Youth Exchange Program (MASAMO), which introduces dishes like Rendang and Nasi Goreng. Additionally, efforts are being made to enhance Indonesia's culinary presence globally by opening Indonesian restaurants and cafes abroad, thereby increasing the country's recognition. The "Indonesia Spice Up the World" program, a cross-stakeholder initiative, aims to boost the contribution and added value of the culinary subsector to the national economy by increasing the export of spices and establishing 4,000 Indonesian restaurants abroad by 2024.

Locally, since 2017, Kemenparekraf has designated five culinary tourism destinations: Bali, Bandung, Yogyakarta, Solo, and Semarang. Moreover, in 2023, the UNWTO recognized Ubud, Gianyar, Bali, as a gastronomic destination. The food in Ubud is not just culinary but represents a tradition passed down through centuries. There are also policies in place for sustainable rice paddy protection, which supports gastronomic activities and aims to preserve traditional healthy cuisine. However, despite these various programs, Indonesia has not yet fully established itself as a premier destination for culinary and gastronomic tourism.

### **Food Tourism: Learning from Neighboring Countries**

Hong & Tsai (2012) in their study, which examines strategies and content for the development and marketing of culinary tourism in Hong Kong and Singapore, discuss marketing strategies for culinary tourism from a resource-based theory perspective. Although Hong Kong and Singapore lack sufficient natural resources to develop a more diverse tourism experience, their rich cultural and dietary backgrounds enable them to create innovative, varied, and potentially appealing culinary tourism experiences through a blend of tourism and creativity. To enhance tourism appeal, both the public and private sectors can collaborate to promote the cultural image of culinary destinations through various marketing strategies. Furthermore, Chang et al. (2011) assert that food has become a new tool for many destination marketers to attract visitors. This illustrates that many countries have positioned cuisine as a strategic resource.

### **Future Policy Directions for Culinary Tourism Development in Indonesia**

Currently, food is considered a strategic tool for a country. Many nations around the world have used food as a means of diplomacy and cultural exchange, which helps build social identity. Food can also be viewed as a vital resource for rural development strategies (Bessière, 2013). This is because food is closely linked with other industries, including tourism and gastronomic heritage, which involve the construction and mobilization of social and cultural dynamics within specific spaces. Through food, tourists can have the opportunity to understand destinations and connect with local residents (Luoh et al., 2020). Furthermore, a significant portion of recreational tourists (79%) learns about local food and beverages when visiting a destination, and a large part of their spending is on food and drink. Therefore, the future development of food tourism should be supported by strategic policies that position cuisine as a crucial tool for national development, extending to rural areas.

### **Positioning Cuisine Holistically in the Context of Tourism in Indonesia**

In recent decades, culinary and gastronomic tourism has evolved beyond mere dining arrangements to encompass the entire food and tourism supply chain within a destination. This includes agriculture, fisheries, livestock, plantations, and processing companies such as dairy

farms and canneries, as well as the tourism and hospitality sectors like restaurants, specialty accommodations, and hotels. It also involves retail, trade or product sales, and even the knowledge sector. Culinary and gastronomic tourism are not limited to tourism products alone but also include the activities involved in their production, processing, and environment. Consequently, culinary tourism and gastronomy are based on the concepts of knowing and learning about, eating, tasting, and enjoying the gastronomic culture associated with a particular region.

When discussing culinary tourism, it is essential to consider gastronomy as *terroir*, which refers to the combination of various environmental elements that influence the unique characteristics of agricultural products, particularly food and beverages. *Terroir* involves factors such as soil, climate, topography, and agricultural practices that contribute to the quality and flavor of products. For example, Trichopoulou et al. (2006) show that Greek traditional foods, which are part of the Mediterranean diet, offer significant health benefits and have been transferred to twelve European countries. One aim of this project is to define the term "traditional" so that traditional foods can be classified and registered exclusively. Local products with geographical indications have the most substantial impact on the development of culinary tourism (Pamukçu et al., 2021) and are anticipated to be of increasing interest to tourists in the future (Tan et al., 2018).

### **Chef Competence as a Key Factor for the Success of Culinary Tourism in Indonesia**

Mahfud et al. (2019) in their study emphasize that the success of food tourism (culinary tourism, gastronomic tourism) is considered dependent on the skills of chefs. Chef competence in this sector includes both functional and core competencies. Functional competencies involve cooking skills, knowledge of flavors and foods, and service refinement. Core competencies include conceptual understanding, cleanliness, and business acumen. Additionally, general competencies encompass interpersonal skills, leadership, management, and motivation. Identifying chef capabilities serves as a guide for culinary educators and trainers in developing careers in the culinary field that are sustainable and support the success of the tourism sector.

### **Future Directions and Actions**

An important step in the development and management of culinary tourism in a region is to identify, inventory, and analyze the potential and level of development of various components in the culinary tourism value chain. This includes primary and secondary producers, tertiary companies, catering services, accommodations, specialty trade, and businesses providing gastronomic activities and services such as culinary education. Additionally, it is essential to identify other dimensions that can elevate food products to compelling culinary experiences, such as coherence, anti-capitalist attitudes, efforts against extinction, personal character, mutual disclosure, spatial and physical proximity rituals, and sustainability practices. Food providers can use these features to highlight the uniqueness of their offerings to tourists, while policymakers can integrate them into regional development models to enhance culinary tourism without altering the historically, socially, and environmentally significant culinary traditions (Sidali et al., 2015).

### **Conclusion**

The development of culinary tourism on a global scale is increasingly receiving attention as an integral part of sustainable tourism strategies and local identity development. With the rising interest of tourists in unique cuisines from around the world, destinations are striving to leverage their gastronomic strengths as effective promotional tools. Previous studies have demonstrated that cuisine can serve as a means of cultural exchange and social identity formation, as evidenced by the success of Indonesian cuisine in the international market (Hall & Gössling, 2016; UNWTO, 2019). The Indonesian government's policies, particularly those initiated by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, show a targeted effort to promote local cuisine as a global tourist

attraction. Programs such as MASAMO and “Indonesia Spice Up the World,” along with the opening of Indonesian restaurants abroad, are part of a strategy aimed at enhancing the visibility and economic contribution of the culinary sector (Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, 2023). Although progress has been made, these efforts have yet to fully establish Indonesia as a premier destination for culinary and gastronomic tourism. Drawing from the experiences of neighboring countries like Hong Kong and Singapore, which have successfully developed culinary tourism despite limited natural resources, Indonesia can learn valuable lessons in marketing strategies and public-private sector collaboration (Horng & Tsai, 2012; Chang et al., 2011). The success of this sector also depends on the competencies of chefs and the quality of service they provide, which are key factors in creating an enticing culinary experience (Mahfud et al., 2019). Looking ahead, the development of culinary tourism in Indonesia needs to be optimized through a comprehensive and strategic approach. This includes identifying and developing the potential of all components of the culinary value chain, as well as integrating sustainability and local uniqueness into regional development models (Sidali et al., 2015). By leveraging local expertise, preserving gastronomic heritage, and effectively promoting culinary products, Indonesia can strengthen its position as an attractive and sustainable global culinary destination.

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RS designed the study, drafted the manuscript, and wrote the final version.

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