

The Role of Kampung Ujung Culinary Tourism in Developing Labuan Bajo Local Tourism

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KEYWORDS

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the role of culinary tourism in Ujung Labuan Bajo Village in improving the tourism sector in Komodo District, West Manggarai Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province. This research is also aims to understand how culinary tourism can enrich tourists' experiences and have a positive impact on the local economy. The research methods used including interviews with culinary entrepreneurs, observation and documentation. The research results show that culinary tourism in Kampung Ujung plays a significant role in attracting tourists, supporting tourist attractions, and empowering local communities through job creation and increasing MSME income. Culinary tourism also contributes to the preservation of local culture and the development of distinctive culinary products that support regional identity. This article suggests the need for an integrated development strategy between the culinary and tourism sectors to maximize the economic and social potential of this sector. It is hoped that these findings become a reference for stakeholders in designing policies and programs that focus on developing sustainable tourism in the region.

INTRODUCTION

Culinary tourism is one of the main attractions in the tourism industry that is growing throughout the world (Purwanto, 2021). According to Roza et al (2023), in Indonesia, the diverse culinary wealth reflects the culture, traditions, and abundant natural resources. One area that is starting to steal attention is Kampung Ujung Labuan Bajo, which is located in Flores, East Nusa Tenggara. With stunning natural scenery and unique local culture, Kampung Ujung Labuan Bajo not only offers beautiful panoramas, but also a wealth of distinctive culinary delights. In recent years, tourism in Labuan Bajo has experienced a significant spike, especially along with the development of world-class tourist destinations such as Komodo National Park (Hargen, et al 2024). This moment has encouraged the government and local communities to develop various aspects of tourism, including culinary, as an additional attraction for tourists. However, sustainable tourism requires more than just natural beauty; cultural elements, including culinary, play an important role in attracting tourists (Akmal et al 2023). Through culinary tourism, visitors are not only treated to food, but are also introduced to the stories and traditions that accompany it.

One of them is the village of Ujung Labuan Bajo which has a variety of unique dishes, ranging from fresh seafood taken directly from the sea, to traditional foods based on sago and local spices (Wongge, F. E., & Dutha, I. 2022). These dishes are often symbols of the cultural identity of the local community, which can describe their history and way of life. In addition, this culinary experience can be a bridge of communication between visitors and local residents, building deeper interactions and changing the way tourists view the places they visit (Ningsih, Y., & Arianto, T. 2024). Culinary tourism is not only located in the gastronomic aspect, but also in the economic impact it has (Fatma et al., 2024). With the increasing interest in local cuisine, small and medium business actors in Kampung Ujung Labuan Bajo have the potential to grow. This creates new jobs, increases community income, and reduces poverty in the area. In addition, the existence of an environmentally friendly culinary market can promote local agriculture and environmental sustainability (Salam, N. 2022).

This article will discuss in depth the role of culinary tourism in Kampung Ujung Labuan Bajo in increasing local tourism, exploring how signature dishes can be a bridge between visitors and local culture, as well as its positive impact on the local economy (Yusin, W. 2019). Thus, culinary tourism is not just a taste experience, but also a strategy to develop more inclusive and sustainable tourism, while preserving valuable cultural heritage for future generations (Trisdayanti, N. P. E., & Kristiana, N. I.2024). Through understanding and appreciation of local cuisine, it is hoped that tourists can return with deep memories and meaningful contributions to the local community.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism and Its Potential

Tourism is a travel activity carried out by individuals or groups to a location for recreational, business, or other purposes. It includes movement, destinations, and various activities carried out during the trip, as well as its impact on the local economy and culture (Idris, M. H., & Destari, R. 2019). Tourism has become one of the important pillars of global economic growth. In the context of Indonesia, this sector has a strategic role in increasing state revenue and creating jobs (Windusancono, B. A. 2021). According to (Batubara et al 2023), the tourism sector contributes around 4.5% to the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Kampung Ujung Labuan Bajo, which is located near Komodo National Park, offers enormous tourism potential, especially thanks to its natural beauty and local cultural diversity (Islahuddin et al 2022).

Research by Fathoni and Supriyadi (2020) shows that destinations that integrate cultural and natural aspects have greater appeal to tourists. In this context, Kampung Ujung not only offers natural beauty, but also culinary richness that reflects the local cultural identity. Therefore, culinary tourism can serve as an additional attraction that increases tourist visits to the area.

Culinary Tourism as an Attraction

Culinary tourism is a travel activity that focuses on exploring and enjoying the typical food and drinks of a region (Harsana, M., & Triwidayati, M. 2020). It involves the experience of trying various local dishes, which often reflect the culture and traditions of the region. Culinary tourism is becoming a form of tourism that is increasingly popular in various parts of the world. According to Kivela and Crotts (2020), culinary tourism offers a more in-depth experience for tourists, allowing them to experience and understand local culture through food. Kampung Ujung Labuan Bajo has a variety of culinary specialties that can attract tourists, such as grilled fish and other traditional dishes that use local ingredients. A study by Firdaus et al. (2024) emphasized that the existence of restaurants and food stalls serving local cuisine is very important in increasing the attractiveness of a destination. In Kampung Ujung, the development of sustainable culinary

tourism can be a key factor in attracting more visitors and increasing the visibility of the area as a culinary tourism destination.

Enriching the Tourist Experience

Culinary tourism is not just about food but also involves a more holistic experience for tourists. Research by Dewi et al. (2024) shows that culinary tourism can increase tourist satisfaction through social interaction and authentic experiences. In Kampung Ujung, tourists can interact directly with culinary entrepreneurs, learn about how to cook, and taste food prepared in traditional ways. A study by Daru et al (2024) revealed that unique culinary experiences can create deep memories for tourists, which in turn increases their likelihood of recommending the destination to others. By developing authentic and interactive culinary experiences, Kampung Ujung can enrich the tourist experience and encourage more frequent visits.

Positive Impact on the Local Economy

The economic impact of culinary tourism in local areas cannot be ignored. According to Riatmaja, D. S., & Wibawanto, S. (2024), the development of the culinary sector can make a significant contribution to the income of local communities and create jobs. In Kampung Ujung, local entrepreneurs involved in culinary businesses experienced an increase in income due to the increase in the number of tourists (Widyastuti, 2022). Research by Sarjana et al (2022) shows that culinary tourism also supports the growth of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) by creating a strong local supply chain. This not only helps increase individual income but also supports sustainable economic development in the area. By utilizing local resources and creating unique culinary products, Kampung Ujung can create a broad positive impact on the local economy.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with the Miles and Huberman interactive data analysis model to explore the role of culinary tourism in Kampung Ujung, Labuan Bajo, in increasing local tourism. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 10 culinary business actors, 5 domestic and foreign tourists, and 3 representatives of the local government, accompanied by participatory observation of culinary activities in Kampung Ujung and documentation in the form of tourism reports and tourist reviews. Data analysis was carried out through three stages: data reduction to filter relevant information related to the contribution of culinary tourism to tourism, data presentation in the form of descriptive narratives and tables to visualize the relationship between findings and drawing conclusions that were verified through triangulation of sources and methods. Data validity was guaranteed through method triangulation, member checks, and audit trails to ensure the validity of the findings. This approach allows the study to explore in depth the relationship between Kampung Ujung culinary tourism and its impact on local tourism growth in Labuan Bajo.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Culinary Tourism as the Main Attraction in Improving the Local Tourism Sector

Based on interviews with culinary business actors and tourists, it was found that culinary tourism is one of the main attractions that supports the tourism sector in Kampung Ujung. Many tourists come to Labuan Bajo not only to enjoy the natural beauty and marine tourism, but also to enjoy local culinary specialties. The foods served in Kampung Ujung, such as fresh grilled fish, Komodo sea fish, and traditional dishes based on local spices, offer an authentic experience that enriches their trip. Culinary tourism not only fulfills visitors' physical needs for food, but also introduces them to local culture and traditions through the way the food is

prepared and served. This is also in line with research by Dewi et al (2024) which states that culinary tourism provides a deeper experience for tourists, allowing them to feel and understand local culture. Most of the tourists interviewed said that one of the main reasons they chose Kampung Ujung was to taste the unique local cuisine. The culinary specialties served in local eateries not only add value to the destination, but also become cultural icons that introduce local identity to the outside world. The culinary specialties of this area reflect the culture and traditions of the Kampung Ujung community, which are increasingly well-known along with the development of tourism.

Culinary Tourism Enriches Tourist Experiences

The culinary tourism experience in Kampung Ujung provides a deeper dimension for tourists, who come not only to enjoy the food, but also to engage in cultural interactions with the local community. Several tourists reported that they had the opportunity to interact directly with culinary entrepreneurs, learn about how to cook traditional dishes, and listen to cultural stories that accompany each dish. Observations also show that social interactions between tourists and local residents create a more authentic and immersive experience. Research by Haris et al. (2024) revealed that social interactions like this can increase tourist satisfaction and strengthen the impressions they take home. This is evident in Kampung Ujung, where many tourists feel more connected to the local culture after talking directly with the community about the food making process or the history behind the dishes. In addition, authentic culinary experiences in Kampung Ujung provide deep memories, which increase the likelihood of tourists returning or recommending this place to their friends and family. This is in line with the findings of Husin (2022) who stated that unique culinary experiences can create long-lasting memories for tourists and increase their loyalty to the destination.

Economic Impact on Local Communities

Culinary tourism in Kampung Ujung also has a very important economic impact on local communities. Interviews with culinary entrepreneurs showed that they felt a significant increase in income since the development of the culinary tourism sector. With the increasing number of tourists visiting Kampung Ujung to enjoy local food, many local Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are growing rapidly, creating new jobs, and improving the economic welfare of the community. Culinary entrepreneurs said that the culinary sector makes a direct contribution to family income and influences the consumption patterns of the surrounding community. Local communities who previously depended on agriculture or fisheries now have the opportunity to become entrepreneurs in the culinary sector. Several culinary entrepreneurs also include local products such as fresh fish, vegetables, and spices in their menus, which not only improve the quality of the dishes but also support local agriculture and fisheries. This finding is in line with research by Mere et al (2023) which states that the development of the culinary sector can make a significant contribution to local community income and create jobs. With the increasing interest in local cuisine, culinary entrepreneurs in Kampung Ujung have the potential to continue to grow, increase income, and create a stronger local supply chain.

Sustainable Culinary Tourism Development Strategy

Although culinary tourism in Kampung Ujung has a positive impact, several challenges are also faced, especially in terms of destination management and sustainable culinary product development. Several culinary business actors expressed the need for mentoring and training to improve the quality of service and food hygiene, as well as increasing understanding of the importance of environmentally friendly local resources. This study suggests the need for an integrated development strategy between the culinary and tourism sectors, where the government, business actors, and local communities work together to optimize the economic and social potential of culinary tourism. One important step that can be taken is to encourage

wider promotion of local culinary, either through digital platforms, culinary festivals, or collaboration with other tourism sectors, such as nature and cultural tourism.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that culinary tourism in Kampung Ujung Labuan Bajo has a very important role in increasing local tourism and providing a significant positive impact on the local community. Culinary tourism not only functions as an additional attraction that enriches the tourist experience, but also as an important element in creating cultural identity and introducing the richness of local culinary traditions to the outside world. Kampung Ujung's signature dishes, which include a variety of fresh fish and local spice-based menus, are a symbol of cultural richness that can enrich the tourist experience and create deep memories that encourage them to return or recommend this destination. Culinary tourism in Kampung Ujung has also been proven to contribute significantly to local economic growth by creating new jobs, increasing the income of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), and supporting the sustainability of the local agriculture and fisheries sectors. However, although these positive impacts are very real, there are still challenges in terms of destination management and sustainable culinary product development. Therefore, a more integrated development strategy is needed, where the government, culinary business actors, and the local community work together to maximize the potential of culinary tourism. Improving the quality of service, wider promotion, and training for local business actors can be strategic steps to maintain the sustainability of this culinary tourism sector. Overall, culinary tourism in Kampung Ujung Labuan Bajo has great potential to become a main pillar in the development of sustainable tourism, which not only supports economic growth but also maintains the sustainability of local culture and traditions. Therefore, it is important for all related parties to collaborate and develop policies that support the development of culinary tourism as an integral part of local tourism in this area.

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