

Culinary Image of Yogyakarta Palace: Netnographic Study of Culinary Image at Bale Raos Restaurant Yogyakarta

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ABSTRACT

Culinary is an important part of cultural identity that plays a strategic role in attracting tourists. In Yogyakarta, Bale Raos restaurant stands out as a representative of the palace's culinary specialties, reviving the cultural heritage of Mataram through traditional recipes inherited from Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono VII to X. Using a netnographic approach, this study examines how the image of palace culinary specialties is formed, perceived, and promoted in the digital space, especially through online reviews and social media. The results show that Bale Raos has succeeded in building a strong identity through the authenticity of taste, traditional nuances, and cultural experiences offered. Visitors appreciate the atmosphere that is thick with palace values, although some operational aspects such as service efficiency still need improvement. The restaurant also utilizes innovative digital marketing strategies, including collaboration with the Yogyakarta Palace and serving exclusive menus. These findings provide strategic insights for the management of culture-based culinary in supporting sustainable tourism in the modern era.

INTRODUCTION

Culinary is an integral part of a region's cultural identity and is a major attraction in the tourism sector. In Indonesia, each region has its own unique culinary richness, which not only reflects traditions and cultural values, but also creates a unique experience for tourists. One example of culinary that is closely related to cultural heritage is the culinary specialty of the palace, which is rich in flavors, processing techniques, and deep philosophy. In Yogyakarta, culinary specialty of the palace plays an important role in depicting the rich culture and history of the Mataram kingdom, which influences the way of life of the people of Yogyakarta to this day.

Bale Raos, a restaurant located in Yogyakarta, is one of the places that offers a culinary experience typical of the palace, with dishes based on royal recipes that have been passed down from generation to generation. As a restaurant that popularizes the image of palace cuisine, Bale Raos not only serves food, but also strives to create a cultural experience through food. This creates space for further discussion on how the image of palace cuisine is constructed and perceived by the public, especially in the context of modernity and tourism.

In the digital era like today, public perception of a product, including culinary, is greatly influenced by information spread through online platforms, such as social media and restaurant review sites. The dynamics of interaction and discussion in this digital space greatly influence how a restaurant or a particular type of culinary is perceived by the wider public. Therefore, it is important to understand how the image of typical

palace culinary, which is promoted through restaurants such as Bale Raos, is received and interpreted by the public in a digital context.

This study aims to explore how the image of typical palace culinary offered by Bale Raos is formed through digital interactions, and how the restaurant builds the identity of palace culinary in public perception. Using a Netnography approach, this study will analyze content shared by restaurant visitors on social media, culinary forums, and reviews on online platforms to identify dominant themes related to the image of typical palace culinary consumed by digital audiences.

METHOD

Netnography, as a research method that combines ethnographic approaches with digital media studies, offers an effective way to analyze interactions in online communities, such as restaurant reviews and discussions on social media. In this context, Netnography can be used to understand how the image of typical palace cuisine served at Bale Raos Yogyakarta is formed and perceived by visitors and the public through digital platforms.

This study aims to:

1. Understand the formation and perception of the image of culinary specialties of the Yogyakarta Palace in the digital space: This study seeks to explore how Bale Raos, as a representation of culinary specialties of the palace, utilizes various visual elements, narratives, and cultural symbolism to create a culinary image. In addition, this study will analyze how the image is received, interpreted, and commented on by audiences on digital platforms, such as social media, blogs, and online reviews.
2. Identify dominant themes in online discussions and reviews: This study aims to find patterns of narratives, preferences, and criticisms that emerge from online discussions related to culinary specialties of the palace at Bale Raos. Using the Netnography analysis method, this study will reveal the main themes that are the attractions, challenges, and opportunities in the image of culinary specialties of the palace.
3. Provide strategic insights for marketing culinary specialties of the palace in the digital era: By utilizing the results of online image and theme analysis, this study seeks to provide strategic recommendations for Bale Raos to increase the effectiveness of marketing culinary specialties of the palace. The focus is on social media management, brand storytelling, and relevant digital interactions with local and international audiences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data taken from visitor reviews using reviews uploaded in the past six months, namely from May to November 2024, totaling approximately 240 reviews.

1. Bale Raos is a restaurant that presents an authentic culinary experience based on traditional recipes from the Yogyakarta Palace, a cultural heritage of high value. The dishes in this restaurant refer to recipes inherited from Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono VII to X, reflecting the richness of the palace's exclusive culinary traditions that are rarely found outside the palace environment. Authenticity of taste is the main priority, with a serving process that maintains originality without significant modification. This aims to maintain the integrity of the taste that has become part of Yogyakarta's culinary history.

This restaurant is also known for its use of high-quality ingredients, which are selectively selected to ensure that taste and quality are maintained. The food processing process follows strict operational standards, reflecting Bale Raos' commitment to quality and authenticity. With this approach, the restaurant is able to present dishes that are not only delicious, but also in accordance with the high culinary standards of the palace, offering an authentic gastronomic experience to visitors.

Based on Elvita Yuli review in July 2024 “*Bale Raos merupakan resto yg berada di kawasan kraton yogya dengan suasana yg tenang, nyaman, sambil diringi musik gamelan. Makanan di hidangkan pada meja formal layaknya jamuan khas kraton. Pilihan menunya, beberapa merupakan menu favorit sultan hamengkubuwono dan keluarga. Banyak sekali menu pilihannya dari appetizer, main course, & dessert-nya. Untuk rasa, terasa sekali khas yogya-nya (manis). Jadi jangan cari makanan pedas dsini ya. Hehe.. Bagi saya, overall rasa makanan so-so. But, klo di nilai berdasar varian menu bagi yg kepingin coba2 dan suasananya yg tenang,,,yaaaa boleh lah.*” (*Bale Raos is a restaurant located in the Yogyakarta palace area with a calm, comfortable atmosphere, accompanied by gamelan music. Food is served on a formal table like a typical palace banquet. The menu choices, some are favorite menus of Sultan Hamengkubuwono and his family. There are so many menu choices from appetizers, main courses, & desserts. For the taste, it really feels typical of Yogyakarta (sweet). So don't look for spicy food here. Hehe. For me, overall, the taste of the food is so-so. But, if judged based on the menu variants for those who want to try and the calm atmosphere, yes, it's okay.*)

Elvita highlighted the typical Yogyakarta flavors that are predominantly sweet in Bale Raos dishes, warning that this restaurant might not be suitable for spicy food lovers. Although she personally considered the taste of the food "so-so," she appreciated the variety of menus and the calm atmosphere presented, recommending this restaurant for those who want to try a different culinary experience.

Interestingly, the review also highlighted that Bale Raos does not use excessive MSG, showing the restaurant's efforts in maintaining natural and distinctive flavors. This approach not only reflects respect for traditional recipes but also creates added value in offering healthier food. Thus, Bale Raos is not only a place to enjoy typical palace dishes but also a window to understand the richness of Javanese culture through a unique and memorable culinary experience.



Source: Elvita Yuli on Google Review “Bestik Komplit”

There are several menus that are in demand by many visitors, the main course menu with *Bestik Djawa*, *Bebek Suwar Suwir*, and *Gudeg Manggar*, the dessert menu with *Prawan Kenes*, and the traditional drink menu with Beer Djawa. These menus are best sellers that are often ordered by visitors according to google reviews.

2. Bale Raos has succeeded in attracting visitors with its unique concept as a palace restaurant. Based on visitors' reviews on Google Review, many have assessed that the taste of the food served tends to be simple, resembling home cooking. However, the specialty of Bale Raos lies in the palace menus that are rich in spices, providing an authentic taste sensation that is different from everyday dishes.

The appearance of the food is also an attraction. With a modern touch that still maintains a traditional feel, several dishes are served using banana leaves as a base and bamboo as a complement, such as on their mainstay menu, *Prawan Kenes*. These elements not only beautify the presentation of the food but also add a deeper experience for visitors.

In addition to the food, the restaurant's ambiance is one of the main factors that makes Bale Raos special. Located in a palace-style environment, this restaurant has succeeded in creating a classic and elegant atmosphere. Visitors feel as if they are in a real palace, with an interior that emphasizes Javanese culture and friendly and polite service, in accordance with palace traditions.

A review by Vincent in September 2024 “*Konsepnya oke bgt, pendopo semi outdoor gitu, khas jogja nya dpt bgt, karena sepertinya bangunan ini masih bagian dr keraton cmiiw. Disini ada galery nya juga. Untuk makanan gw order bistik lidah. Lidahnya sendiri enak no problem, cuman sayur nya dan mashed potato perlu dikoreksi rasa kaliya, karena terlalu plain menurut gw. Ronde nya aman aja. Serving time nya juga sepertinya perlu diimprove. Oiya, waktu gw kesini lg rame bgtt. Dan terasa panas walupun ini semi outdoor, ada kipas angin tp belum ngatasin, mungkin prepare standby fan bisa jadi masukan.*” (The concept is really good, a semi-outdoor pavilion, typical of Jogja, because it seems like this building is still part of the palace cmiiw. There is a gallery here too. For food, I ordered tongue steak. The tongue itself is delicious, no problem, only the vegetables and mashed potatoes need to be corrected, because they are too plain in my opinion. The Ronde is okay. The serving time also seems to need to be improved. Oh yeah, when I was here it was really crowded. It felt hot even though it was semi-outdoor, there was a fan but it didn't solve the problem, maybe preparing a standby fan could be the solution.)



Source: Vincent on Google Review “Bestik Lidah”

Many visitors come not only to enjoy the food, but also to experience something different from restaurants in general. The combination of atmosphere, taste, and unique concept make Bale Raos a culinary destination that not only pampers the tongue, but also presents a memorable cultural

experience. It is no wonder that this restaurant is often chosen by those who want to enjoy the sensation of eating in the style of a palace in Yogyakarta.

3. Bale Raos Restaurant has successfully built a strong image on social media with an integrated marketing strategy, utilizing its close relationship with the Yogyakarta Palace. The most frequent is collaboration with the palace in various official events held, which not only strengthens cultural identity but also increases the restaurant's exposure in the eyes of the public. This collaboration provides a competitive advantage for Bale Raos, because they are able to pair their name with the symbol of Yogyakarta culture and tradition.

On social media platforms such as Instagram, Bale Raos actively shares quality content that showcases their diverse food menus. These posts not only include regular menus but also new menus that are introduced every month, creating an element of surprise for visitors. Interestingly, these new menus are not listed in the menu book, providing an appeal of exclusivity that encourages curiosity and interest in visitors to keep coming back. This strategy successfully takes advantage of trends on social media, where exclusive and dynamic content is more likely to attract the attention of the audience. Not only stopping at monthly updates, Bale Raos also innovates annually by overhauling part of their menu. This step ensures that the restaurant remains relevant and fresh in the eyes of loyal customers and new visitors. However, the commitment to the authenticity of traditional recipes is always the main priority, so that menu updates do not reduce the essence of Bale Raos' identity as a provider of authentic palace cuisine.

In addition to activities on social media, Bale Raos' popularity is also strengthened by support from the government, influencers, and television media coverage. Events held at the palace often become a momentum to promote this restaurant, both through live coverage and content collaboration with influencers. This approach allows Bale Raos to reach various audience segments, from local to foreign tourists. The combination of digital marketing, strategic collaboration, and continuously updated menu innovations make Bale Raos one of the culinary destinations that is increasingly widely known and has sustainable appeal in the restaurant industry.

CONCLUSION

Bale Raos is a restaurant that embodies an authentic culinary experience based on the traditions of the Yogyakarta Palace. Carrying recipes inherited from Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono VII to X, this restaurant emphasizes a distinctive, deep taste with a dominant sweet taste, depicting the unique and exclusive characteristics of the palace's cuisine. Authenticity of taste is the main priority, with a serving process that maintains the integrity of the recipe without significant modification, so that visitors can enjoy dishes that truly reflect the culinary history of Yogyakarta.

In addition to food, Bale Raos offers a special dining atmosphere. Located in a palace environment that is thick with Javanese cultural nuances, this restaurant is designed with a classic interior that is reminiscent of the elegance of the palace, complete with gamelan music that adds a deep impression. The presentation of dishes is done formally, like a typical palace banquet, using traditional elements such as banana leaves and bamboo, but still combined with modern aesthetics. This experience makes visitors feel as if they are part of the real palace environment.

The menu offered is very diverse, ranging from appetizers to desserts, with dishes such as Bestik Djawa, Bebek Suwar Suwir, Gudeg Manggar, to special desserts such as Prawan Kenes, and traditional drinks such as Beer Djawa. These menus are favorites of visitors and are often mentioned in reviews, showing the appeal of Bale Raos which is not only in the uniqueness of the taste but also its diversity. However, it is important to note that the typical taste of Bale Raos tends to be sweet, so it may not be suitable for lovers of spicy food, as expressed in the reviews of several customers.

In addition to the culinary aspect, Bale Raos also stands out in marketing and innovation. This restaurant utilizes social media to strengthen its image, by showcasing exclusive menus that are regularly updated and not listed in the menu book, creating attraction and curiosity for visitors. Strategic collaboration with the Yogyakarta Palace, media coverage, and influencer support also help Bale Raos attract the attention of various audience segments, including local and foreign tourists.

However, there are several aspects that need to be improved, such as the efficiency of serving time and comfort in the semi-outdoor area which sometimes feels hot when crowded, as conveyed by several visitors. This criticism suggests that while the cultural and gastronomic experiences on offer are strong, there is room for improvement in service and facilities.

Overall, Bale Raos has managed to create a balance between cultural heritage and modern innovation, making it a culinary destination that not only offers deliciousness, but also a memorable cultural experience. This restaurant not only pampers the tongue but also opens up insights into the richness of Javanese tradition through authentic palace dishes that have high historical value.

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