

PRESERVATION OF PEMPEK CULINARY as THE IDENTITY OF PALEMBANG

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Abstract: Culinary tourism activities in tourist destinations are one way to strengthen the identity of a region. Pempek is one of the traditional foods of Palembang which has become the hallmark of Palembang City. This food has become a culinary icon of Palembang and is well known to the public at large, including people outside Palembang. The potential of pempek as an icon of Palembang is increasingly visible because Palembang has become a tourist destination and is strategically located in a center of trade and activity in South Sumatra. The purpose of this study is to find out the processing method and preserving pempek culinary as the identity of Palembang. The method used is descriptive qualitative method with SWOT analysis. The population taken in this study were Palembang residents with pempek processing samples. The results showed that the process of making pempek was quite complicated, the use of local materials made it easy to find all over the city of Palembang. The culinary varieties of pempek such as submarine, lenjer, curly, pistol and others are highly looked for the tourists who visit Palembang. In addition, pempek is able to become one of the icons of Palembang because it becomes tourists' necessity who come to visit Palembang and is one of the market commodities for Palembang since pempek production is not only distributed within the city, but also outside the city.

Keywords: culinary tourism, identity, pempek, preservation, tourist destination.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Palembang is the capital city of South Sumatra Province. Geographically, the city of Palembang is divided by the Musi River into two parts, those are Ilir and ulu. In addition, in Palembang City there is also the Ampera bridge which has become an icon of Palembang. This is a profitable potential for government. In relation to this, the local government tries to maximize Musi River to improve the welfare of the people of Palembang City. The existence of Musi River has become an attractive tourist destination for local and foreign visitors since there are many kinds of tourist attractions, especially culinary tourism and cultural tourism. The purpose of most tourists who visit is to enjoy the culture and taste its culinary delights. This is what is maintained and developed by the regional government of Palembang City to increase its regional income.

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One of the attractions of culinary tourism in Palembang City is *pempek*. *Pempek* is a traditional food which can be classified as fish gel, just like *otak-otak* or *kamaboko* which is from Japan (Made Astawan, 2010). *Pempek* is a processed fish in the form of a homogeneous protein gel, white in color, with a chewy and elastic texture (Railia Karneta, 2013). *Pempek* is one of the leading culinary products of Palembang City and is very well known among Indonesian people. In addition, *Pempek* Palembang has become the identity of "Wong Kito Galo" as a regional culinary heritage that has been maintained for generations.

Talking about identity, the identity of a region is shown through its culture. In order to strengthen the identity of Palembang City, the local government of Palembang together with all components of Palembang City society continue to strive to preserve its culture, especially in managing and maintaining this cultural heritage. This is important in order to protect the richness and cultural diversity owned by the City of Palembang. This step needs to be taken in order to avoid the extinction of the original culture of Palembang area. *Pempek* itself continues to progress from time to time in terms of selling value. *Pempek* has been widely known by the public, including people outside the city of Palembang, so that *Pempek* has a marketing area where crosses the boundaries of its supporting community. This is proven by the spreading of pempek which can also be found outside Palembang. However, people still call it as "Pempek Palembang". This kind of food very is promising if it is managed properly, and Palembang itself is also included as a tourist destination for local and foreign tourists. Thus, as a tourism destination, it provides great opportunities for regional culinary specialties as culinary tours and as souvenirs, so that *pempek* can be used as a supporting aspect of tourism in the Palembang area as well as becoming the identity of Palembang City itself.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Preservation

The definition of preservation according to KBBI (in Eliazer et al., 2013) is that preservation comes from the word sustainable, which means permanent, forever and does not change. Meanwhile, preservation is also an effort that has a basis. This basis is also called the supporting factors both from within and outside the object of preservation.

Meanwhile, according to The American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (AIC), 2014 states that preservation or preservation is an effort to protect cultural objects that have historical value through actions or activities to reduce physical and chemical damage with the aim of avoiding lost important information contained in it. Therefore, it can be concluded that preservation is an action or effort to take care for, protect and preserve research objects that have a use value to be preserved.

Culinary tour

The definition of culinary tourism according to the Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance (OCTA) is a tourism experience in which a person learns about appreciating, consuming, or enjoying food and drinks that reflect local cuisine as a cultural heritage. Meanwhile, according to Long (2022) explains that culinary tourism is about food as a subject and media, destination

and engine for travel. Culinary tourism is an activity in which each individual will search for food and make food a new culture. Apart from it, food is also a medium for a group to sell their history and culture as well as to build a market and publicize their identity on a dine-in system for a diverse experience. Meanwhile, Scarpato (2001) sees culinary tourism as a medium for cultural tourism and as an important resource for destinations wishing to develop new quality tourism products and experiences.

Based on the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (2014) explains that culinary tourism activities are a series of activities consisting of the process of preparing, making and presenting food and drinks including creativity, beauty, tradition and/or local culture which are important elements for enhancing the taste and value of a product. Culinary tourism must have elements of genuine local culture that can attract tourists to come to visit. Thus, culinary tourism must stick to a dine-in while traveling to get a variety of experiences.

Therefore, the experience of culinary tourism in a tourist destination will enhance the visitor experience and can strengthen visitor knowledge about a destination visited, including local customs and culture that complement each other's journey.

Traditional food

Traditional culinary refers to traditional food which is defined as food and drink that has long developed in a certain area which is processed with recipes and methods that are already known by the local community, so as to produce food products with a distinctive taste and are in demand by the local community (Nurhayati, et al. al, 2013). Meanwhile, according to Almli et al., (2010) argue that traditional food as food products that are often eaten by their ancestors until today.

According to Nurhayati, et al. (2013), there are several criteria in the society of a nation, namely:

The processing uses recipes passed down from generation to generation and is often passed down through the family system or certain community groups.

The raw materials are easy to get in that place, both those produced in the area and those available in the market.

The method of processing is specific and unique and sometimes differs from one region to another even though the materials used are the same.

According to Winarno in Suter & Yusa (2014), in general, traditional food can be divided into 4 major groups, such as:

Main food, it is a type of food that is the staple of a menu. Usually, made in large quantities and special which is aimed at eliminating hunger.

Side dish, it is a type of food that accompanies the main meal. The purpose of side dish is to grow and increase appetite. The side dish consists of wet and non-gravy side dishes, fried and grilled dishes and chili sauce.

Snacks, it is a type of food that can be eaten throughout the day as entertainment, not limited to a time, place and amount of consuming. In addition, snacks also function as a food additive that is absent or lacking in main meals and side dishes.

Drink, it aims at relieving thirst.

Identity

Identity is a form of social construction, so that it becomes a source of meaning and human experience (Calhoun, 1997). Identity becomes a more powerful source of self-determination. In a simple sense, identity will form a meaning. Identity itself is something that is actually formed through an unconscious process that transcends time and is not a condition that is simply given in circumstances from birth. In identity there is something that is "imaginary" or fantasy (Hall, 1994).

One form of identity is culinary. Culinary itself is a cultural element of a nation which is very easily recognized as the identity of a society. Culinary which is one of the elements of this culture shows a social relationship regarding what is eaten, with whom, and how the food is served which shows an important role in interpreting social relations.

In its development, culinary as a cultural identity provides insight into the scope of changes in social, cultural, political and economic contexts in society and is one of the easiest and most direct ways to promote a multicultural situation somewhere.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research method used in this study is a qualitative descriptive method and the objective of this study is to understand and discover the phenomena of the objects. The data used in this study was secondary data sourced from literature which was used to obtain information related to the history of *pempek*. The Researchers are *human instruments* themselves so that the researchers must be able to obtain data through literary sources, have broad insights, analysis and construct research objects to be clear and have meaning (Sugiyono, 2014). The analysis technique in this study is using SWOT analysis to obtain data on the strengths, weaknesses, challenges, and opportunities of *pempek* so that it can always be sustainable.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

a. Origins of Pempek

Pempek is a typical food from Palembang which is famous in Indonesia. It is made from fish mixed with sago flour. The people of Palembang have succeeded in developing *pempek* into various types by adding fillings and other additional ingredients. Based on information from a cultural observer from South Sumatra, Sofie in Efrianto (2014) *pempek* was known as *kelesan*. The name is taken from the way it is made, where the fish is *keles* (pressed on a mat that resembles a washboard made of coconut shells). An unwritten agreement in Palembang states that the name *pempek* comes from the name of a *kelesan* seller who comes from ethnic Chinese named 'Apek'. It is said that Apek sells the food using a bicycle from village to village. The

people who wanted to buy called the man "pek-apek", so starting from that moment, the term *pempek* emerged.

b. Pempek as Palembang City Identity

As a traditional food, *pempek* has an important role as a cultural, historical, geographical, and lifestyle identity of the people in Palembang, South Sumatra. *Pempek* as a traditional food is still popular until today, even more in demand by foreign countries. The distinctive taste produced by a traditional food, such as *pempek* is preferred by many consumers, compared to other conventional foods because it can bring memories of the past (Elizabeth, 2006). One of the reasons why *pempek* has become Palembang's identity is because it moves from natural conditions that provide all the basic needs in making *pempek*, for example Musi River and its tributaries which contribute to providing abundant fish. Apart from that, *pempek* is also an integral part of the cities of Palembang and South Sumatra. In addition, the development of *pempek* is also significant in big cities in Indonesia, so that sales of *pempek* have increased sharply at a time making *pempek* increasingly popular in Indonesia.

c. Pempek Preservation Strategy

1. SWOT analysis of *pempek* culinary development strategy

SWOT analysis (Strength, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats) is a tool used to compile the company's strategic factors (Rangkuti, 2014). SWOT is an abbreviation of the internal environment of strengths and weaknesses and the external environment of opportunities and threats. This matrix describes how the external opportunities and threats faced by the company can be adjusted to the strengths and weaknesses of the company in a clear and detailed manner, which can produce four sets of possible alternative strategies. Based on the results of the literature study, the results regarding to the supporting and inhibiting factors of *pempek* culinary development strategy as the identity of Palembang City are as follows:

	STRENGTHS (S)	WEAKNESS (W)
	1. There are many <i>pempek</i> producers 2. The overflow availability and easy to obtain of raw materials. 3. <i>Pempek</i> as a typical Palembang food has historical value regarding to the city of Palembang as well as being a cultural heritage	1. The storage of <i>pempek</i> is relatively short, making it difficult to market them outside Palembang City. 2. The high price of the main raw material for <i>pempek</i> affects the selling price of <i>pempek</i> . 3. Cuko as a companion sauce for <i>pempek</i> , which has a sour and spicy taste, is not necessarily acceptable to all level of society.

<p>OPPORTUNITES (O)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It has potential as one of the aspects in supporting the development of Palembang City tourism. 2. <i>Pempek</i> is one of the typical export commodity potentials of Palembang City. 3. <i>Pempek</i> commodity is one of the efforts to introduce Palembang culture to the global arena. 	<p>S-O STRATEGY</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encouraging <i>pempek</i>'s producers 2. Cooperating with the main raw material producers so they can meet the needs of <i>pempek</i> as an export commodity. 3. Develop <i>pempek</i> culinary centers that bring historical and cultural elements of <i>pempek</i>. 	<p>W-O STRATEGY</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Innovate <i>pempek</i> packaging process using an airtight method so that, it can extend the storage of <i>pempek</i>. 2. Cooperate with producers of raw materials, as well as control the prices of raw materials in the market on a regular basis. 3. Provide an alternative <i>cuko</i> flavor that is relatively not too sour and spicy so that it can be more accepted by all levels.
<p>THREATS (T)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There are many <i>pempek</i> requests from consumers but it cannot be fulfilled optimally. 2. There is a scarcity of the main raw material in the process of making <i>pempek</i> in form of mackerel 3. The emergence of modern cafes and restaurants shifts the existence of traditional culinary. 	<p>S-T STRATEGY</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conducting regular training and socialization regarding to <i>pempek</i> production to <i>pempek</i> producers, so that by having good skills they can meet market demand. 2. Utilizing alternative fish commodities in the process of making <i>pempek</i> as a substitute for mackerel 3. Developing innovations at cafes or restaurants where they carry <i>pempek</i> as the main menu so, it helps the existence of <i>pempek</i>. 	<p>W-T STRATEGY</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fulfilling the demand for <i>pempek</i> by expanding the market outside Palembang area. 2. Using alternative fish raw materials at more affordable prices, so as to maintain the stability of the selling price of <i>pempek</i>. 3. Maintaining the original taste of <i>pempek</i> in order to compete in the modern market

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis and discussion described previously, it can be concluded that

1. *Pempek*, as a typical Palembang culinary, is a food made primarily from fish mixed with sago flour. The name *pempek* itself does not come from the basic ingredients or the manufacturing process, but it comes from the history and stories that developed in Palembang society.
2. *Pempek* is one of the culinary delights that has great potential in helping the

development of the tourism sector in Palembang City, because it has many variants and historical as well as cultural values in the lives of Palembang people.

3. *Pempek* Palembang has the potential to be preserved as the identity of Palembang City. However, a series of strategies are needed to maintain *pempek* as the identity of Palembang City.

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