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A Gastronomic Journey: Analyzing Kebon Ayu Village's Culinary Tourism Potential and Community Readiness

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Abstract: This study assesses the readiness of the Kebon Ayu Village community, particularly its traders, in effectively managing the Culinary Tourism Destination in Kebon Ayu Village, Gerung District, West Lombok Regency. Our investigation focuses on two primary aspects: the untapped potential of culinary tourism in this locale and the community's level of preparedness to harness this potential. Utilizing a combination of observational techniques, interviews, and document analysis, we scrutinized the current state of culinary tourism in Kebon Ayu Village. Our findings reveal several key areas that demand immediate attention: the cleanliness of tourist attractions, which poses a significant challenge due to littering and improper waste disposal practices by some visitors; accessibility, as the absence of clear road signage guiding tourists to culinary attractions hampers ease of access; and culinary diversity and menu information, as culinary offerings lack the diversity expected by tourists, and there is a lack of informative menu lists to aid their choices. In conclusion, our study underscores the immense potential of culinary tourism in Kebon Ayu Village but highlights the urgent need to address these issues to unlock this potential fully. Our research serves as a valuable resource for community leaders, policymakers, and stakeholders seeking to enhance the local culinary tourism experience.

Keywords: Community Readiness, Culinary Tourism, Kebon Ayu

JEL Classification: O14, L83, Z32, R53



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Introduction

Nestled within the heart of the enchanting Gerung District, in the West Lombok Regency of West Nusa Tenggara, lies the beguiling Kebon Ayu Tourism Destination a place where the essence of nature harmoniously intertwines with the tapestry of cultural heritage, lovingly preserved through the passage of generations (Kurniati Fitri et al., 2023). This idyllic village, positioned within a stone's throw from the bustling administrative center of West Lombok Regency, beckons travelers with its captivating fusion of natural beauty and profound cultural riches.

As one ventures into the welcoming embrace of Kebon Ayu, a vista of emerald rice fields unfurls, seemingly infinite in their expanse, their serenity punctuated by the gentle rise and fall of rolling hills (Yanti Utami et al., 2022). It's a picture-perfect landscape, where the lush green fields blend seamlessly with the azure skies, a canvas that evokes a sense of timeless tranquility. But the charm of Kebon Ayu extends far beyond its picturesque scenery.

This village is a living testament to the rich cultural traditions and artistic legacies of the region, meticulously safeguarded and cherished by its inhabitants. A treasure trove of cultural gems awaits the curious traveler—ancient arts and crafts, historical landmarks, and vibrant traditions, all waiting to be discovered and celebrated.

In a visionary and resolute endeavor, the Kebon Ayu Pokdarwis—a dedicated group of community-based tourism advocates took it upon themselves to chart a new course for their village. Their mission extended beyond merely attracting visitors; it was about nurturing the community and creating vital employment opportunities (Kurniati Fitri et al., 2023). Amidst the verdant embrace of Kebon Ayu, the concept of agro-tourism flourishes, where bountiful orchards burst forth with a cornucopia of fruits, tenderly nurtured by the diligent hands of local farmers. During the fruitful harvest seasons, tourists are not just observers but active participants, partaking in the age-old practice of fruit-picking. It is an experience that not only fills baskets but also hearts with the profound appreciation of the labor that goes into each succulent piece of fruit.

Cultural traditions continue to thrive here, weaving the past into the present. Weavers deftly ply their craft, creating intricate patterns that tell stories of generations past. The whimsical puppetry of Wayang-wayangan casts a spell, and the air comes alive with the haunting strains of traditional ceremonies such as the nyelametang gumi—a ritual performed before the sowing of rice a time-honored link to the village's agricultural heritage.

However, as we peel back the layers of this captivating destination, we uncover a poignant and pressing challenge. Despite the provision of well-appointed facilities from charming food stalls and inviting gazebos to playful photoboosts, modern restrooms, and ample parking it becomes increasingly apparent that the community, particularly the culinary artisans within the destination area, grapple with obstacles in fully harnessing the profound potential of culinary tourism.

This realization crystallizes through candid and invaluable conversations with the tourists themselves, who voice genuine concerns. They lament the lack of diversity in the menu offerings, the occasional dips in service quality, plain and uninviting packaging, uninspiring presentations, and cleanliness standards that leave much to be desired, all of which collectively impact visitor loyalty.

In candid discussions with the esteemed chairman of the *Pokdarwis* a pivotal figure in the management of this destination a common thread emerges. The readiness of the community in the realm of culinary tourism management falls short of the mark. The lack of diverse tourism products and issues related to service quality stand as direct impediments to piquing visitor interest. Simultaneously, inadequate management practices cast a looming shadow over the long-term sustainability of this promising venture (Chahal & Devi, 2015; Moon & Han, 2019).

As we traverse the pages that follow, our journey will lead us through the intricate tapestry of challenges and opportunities that define Kebon Ayu Tourism Destination. We will embark on a quest to understand the vital role of culinary tourism readiness a notion that transcends mere preparedness in elevating the allure of this remarkable locale (Gui et al., 2004; Ife, 2002; Orbawati et al., 2020). Together, we shall explore the paths to unlock the full potential of Kebon Ayu, where nature's bounty and cultural treasures stand as a testament to the enduring spirit of this extraordinary destination.

Research Method

In this research, we employ a theoretical framework to guide our investigation, consisting of two key elements: Community Readiness and Tourism Products. Community Readiness, as defined by Orbawati et al. (2020), encompasses physical, mental, and learning readiness, highlighting the importance of energy, health, interest, and motivation in individuals' ability to undertake activities. Orbawati et al. (2020) contributes three critical indicators of community readiness in managing culinary tourism: knowledge, attitude, and response.

On the other hand, Tourism Products, as elucidated by Nugroho & Asriadi (2020) and Setiawati & Aji (2020), encompass a constellation of components including tourist attractions, accommodation, facilities, and accessibility. In the context of tourism villages, these products often carry profound cultural and traditional significance (Qolby & Hailuddin, 2022). Arismayanti et al. (2019) further emphasizes that rural tourism involves tourists immersing themselves in traditional village life.

Our research methodology adopts a descriptive qualitative phenomenological approach. We gather data through three primary techniques: Interviews, Observations, and Documentation. Interviews serve as a direct means of engaging with our sources, allowing for face-to-face interactions with key stakeholders. These interviews were conducted with various figures, including the village head, the head of the Pokdarwis (Village Tourism Awareness Group), and culinary producers operating within the Culinary Tourism Destination area. Observation, as described by Orbawati et al. (2020), involves direct and intentional sensory perception within the study environment. In this study, observations are carried out at the Kebon Ayu Tourism Destination to capture firsthand experiences and conditions.

Documentation plays a complementary role, leveraging records and artifacts from past events and activities. These documents, such as photographs, provide visual context and supplement the interview and observation data. Sugiyono (2016) suggests, documentation serves as a valuable resource in qualitative research.

The determination of informants is based on purposive sampling, a technique aligned with specific research objectives. Informants are selected based on their knowledge of Culinary Tourism at Kebon Ayu Tourism Destination, Gerung District, West Lombok Regency. They include the village head, village development agency representatives, the head of Pokdarwis for Kebon Ayu Tourism Destination, culinary tourism managers, tourism actors, and community leaders. These informants meet criteria such as residing within the study area, direct involvement in destination management, possession of knowledge relevant to the research, being considered highly knowledgeable regarding culinary tourism conditions, and having direct involvement in the issue under study.

For data analysis, we employ the SOAR Analysis framework (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results). SOAR Analysis, as explained by Bridges et al. (2023) and Whittaker et al. (2022), encourages a positive perspective in strategic thinking and analysis. It focuses on strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and measurable outcomes. This framework will help us generate innovative insights and recommendations to enhance culinary tourism readiness at Kebon Ayu Tourism Destination.

Result and Discussion

Kebon Ayu culinary tourism represents a unique destination that embraces the concept of agro-tourism, drawing on the rich agricultural products of the local community to craft traditional dishes that captivate the palate of tourists. The signature menu items that stand out as culinary treasures include Mushroom Satay, Menik Satay, Sumping Prenggi, Pelecing Kale, Urab-Urab, Serabi, Soto Bebalung, Fruit Salad, Whole Young Coconut, Various Snacks, and an array of refreshing beverages. These offerings not only showcase the region's agricultural abundance but also celebrate its cultural identity.

This potential for culinary tourism is reinforced by findings from previous studies (Darsana & Susanti, 2022; Kaushal & Yadav, 2021; Stone et al., 2022; Wondirad et al., 2021; Woyesa & Kumar, 2022; Yousaf & Xiucheng, 2018). Research by Darsana & Susanti (2022) highlights that showcasing local agricultural products in culinary offerings can significantly enhance a destination's appeal to tourists, providing them with an authentic taste of the region's culture and traditions. Furthermore, the diversity of menu items aligns with findings

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from [Woyesa & Kumar \(2022\)](#), who emphasize the importance of offering a wide range of culinary choices to cater to the preferences of diverse tourist groups.

The community of Kebon Ayu Village demonstrates a commendable level of culinary knowledge, particularly among traders operating within the Culinary Tourism Destination area. Their proficiency is evident in the innovative use of local agricultural products to create enticing food offerings. Traders actively engage tourists by warmly welcoming them, explaining the menu options, providing price information, and offering exceptional hospitality. Moreover, community members frequently participate in informational sessions conducted by the West Lombok Regency government, in collaboration with the Tourism Office. These sessions aim to enhance their culinary skills, improve plating techniques, and bolster promotion efforts, all of which contribute to the advancement of culinary tourism in Kebon Ayu Village.

This level of knowledge aligns with the findings of [Stone et al. \(2022\)](#), who emphasize the importance of local communities possessing culinary expertise to create an authentic and memorable dining experience for tourists. Additionally, [Kim et al. \(2020\)](#) underscore the significance of training and educational programs for communities involved in culinary tourism, which can lead to improved product quality and service standards.

While the community exhibits readiness in terms of knowledge, the attitude readiness for culinary tourism in Kebon Ayu Village presents some challenges. There is a notable lack of comprehensive socialization and training initiatives for traders. As a result, only a fraction of the community members fully comprehend the intricacies of culinary tourism, leaving the majority with limited understanding. Presently, the Pokdarwis primarily conducts briefings and socialization sessions focused on serving techniques, service quality, and pricing in line with market rates.

This finding resonates with the work of [Whittaker et al. \(2022\)](#) and [Wijaya \(2019\)](#), who stress the importance of ongoing training and capacity-building programs for community members involved in culinary tourism. It is evident that further investment in attitude development through comprehensive socialization and training is essential to empower the entire community.

In response to the growing interest in culinary tourism, the village administration, in collaboration with Pokdarwis Kebon Ayu, has initiated improvements within the Culinary Tourism Destination area. These enhancements, funded through the Village-Owned Enterprises (Bumdes), aim to enhance the comfort of visiting tourists. Measures include the installation of paving blocks to mitigate rain-related inconveniences and the reorganization of culinary tourism stands for a more orderly and clean environment. Traders have also diversified their menus to cater to varying tastes and preferences, adopting a hospitality-oriented approach to entice tourists.

The proactive response of the Kebon Ayu community mirrors the findings of [Wondirad et al. \(2021\)](#), who emphasize the importance of community-driven efforts to enhance the overall visitor experience in culinary tourism destinations. Moreover, the utilization of agricultural land for agrotourism aligns with research by [Pelegrín Entenza et al. \(2022\)](#), highlighting the potential for multifaceted economic benefits within communities engaged in culinary tourism.

The results of this study carry several implications. Firstly, the rich potential of Kebon Ayu culinary tourism underscores the importance of leveraging local agricultural resources to create unique culinary experiences, in line with the preferences of today's tourists. Community-driven initiatives to maintain and develop traditional dishes can serve as a key attraction.

Furthermore, the findings emphasize the need for comprehensive training and educational programs that enhance the readiness of the community, particularly in terms of attitude. Strengthening the attitude readiness of traders and community members can elevate the overall quality of culinary tourism offerings and contribute to the sustained growth of the destination.

In conclusion, Kebon Ayu Culinary Tourism Destination represents a promising avenue for community-driven tourism development, capitalizing on its agricultural heritage. The commitment to enhancing knowledge and response readiness, along with further investments in attitude development, is vital for the sustainable growth of culinary tourism in this captivating destination.

Conclusion

In the heart of Kebon Ayu Village, we have unveiled the potential for a culinary tourism gem waiting to shine. This study has illuminated the unique blend of agricultural abundance, rich culinary traditions, and cultural heritage that sets Kebon Ayu apart as a promising culinary tourism destination. However, as with any gem, it requires careful polishing to fully realize its brilliance.

Our findings underscore the significance of addressing critical challenges to nurture and sustain this culinary tourism potential. The issues of cleanliness, accessibility, and culinary diversity stand as roadblocks on the path to culinary excellence. The need for clean, inviting tourist attractions, well-marked pathways, and a wider array of culinary offerings cannot be overstated. Drawing inspiration from successful culinary destinations worldwide, such as the bustling street food markets of Southeast Asia or the vineyard tours of Tuscany, can offer valuable insights and solutions.

Community readiness, too, is a pivotal factor in the success of Kebon Ayu Village's culinary tourism journey. While knowledge and willingness to collaborate are evident, there is room for growth in attitude and response readiness. Comprehensive training, workshops, and ongoing educational efforts are essential to empower the entire community. Collaboration between local authorities, Pokdarwis, and culinary practitioners can harness the potential within the community, driving the development of this unique tourism niche.

In closing, Kebon Ayu Village Culinary Destination is poised at the precipice of a remarkable culinary tourism adventure. By acknowledging its potential and embracing these challenges with vigor and innovation, Kebon Ayu can transcend expectations. The journey ahead demands dedication, creativity, and a shared commitment to preserving traditions, enriching livelihoods, and offering travelers an unforgettable culinary experience. As we step into this future, we invite all stakeholders to unite in realizing the full culinary potential of Kebon Ayu Village—a destination where flavors, traditions, and the spirit of community intertwine to create a memorable culinary journey for all.

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