

Development of Local Culinary Innovation to Support Cultural Tourism and the Creative Economy in Mojokerto Regency

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Abstract

The local culinary potential in Mojokerto Regency has a close relationship with the cultural heritage and history of Majapahit, but its utilization as part of cultural tourism and creative economy development still needs to be strengthened. This research identifies the local culinary potential of Mojokerto and develops an integrative model that connects culinary, cultural heritage, tourism experience, and destination competitiveness. The research uses a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study design. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews, field observations, and document analysis involving culinary MSME actors, local government, cultural communities, tourism destination managers, and tourists in Mojokerto Regency. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The research results show that Mojokerto has strong local culinary potential, supported by the richness of Majapahit's culture and history. Based on informants' perspectives, six main themes are seen as playing a role in supporting local culinary development, namely product and process renewal, packaging innovation, digital marketing, cultural storytelling, and multi-stakeholder collaboration. The novelty of this research lies in the integrative model that positions local culinary potential as the foundation for development, then connects it with the strengthening of tourism experience, destination image and competitiveness, and the growth of the regional creative economy. This model shows that the integration of local culinary, cultural heritage, tourism experience, and digital marketing can become a strategic approach to strengthen the competitiveness of cultural tourism destinations sustainably.

Keywords: Creative Economy, Culinary Innovation, Cultural Tourism, Gastronomic Tourism, Mojokerto Regency.

1. Introduction

The development of global tourism over the past few decades has seen a shift in focus from attraction-based tourism towards experience-based tourism. Modern travelers no longer seek merely physically appealing tourist attractions, but also authentic, meaningful experiences that foster emotional engagement through interaction with a destination's culture, communities and local characteristics. In this context, local cuisine is gaining increasing attention as a key element capable of delivering a multi-sensory travel experience through a combination of flavors, aromas, visual presentation, stories and the accompanying atmosphere. Memorable culinary experiences have been shown to enhance traveler satisfaction, strengthen emotional attachment to a destination, and encourage the intention to return by fostering a positive image of the destination (Hurdawaty et al., 2025). In addition to providing experiential value for tourists, culinary tourism also has the potential to serve as an instrument for local economic development by strengthening regional supply chains, increasing consumption of local products, and creating more inclusive economic benefits for local communities (Fernández & Irimia-Diéguez, 2025).



Culinary tourism is currently developing into one of the most dynamic sub-sectors of tourism, characterized by significant growth rates. Cuisine is no longer viewed merely as a consumption need during travel, but has become an integral part of the overall tourism experience. Ellis et al. (2018) explain that food tourism encompasses various dimensions that go beyond the act of eating and drinking, including cultural identity, culinary heritage, social interaction, and the representation of local values that shape the tourist's experience holistically. Therefore, local cuisine can serve as an effective medium for cultural interpretation in introducing the characteristics and uniqueness of a region to tourists.

This phenomenon aligns with the concept of the Experience Economy put forward by Pine and Gilmore (2019), which states that modern consumers tend to seek experiences that provide emotional, educational, aesthetic, and even transformational value. In the context of tourism, authentic and meaningful experiences are key factors in building satisfaction, loyalty and long-term relationships between tourists and the destinations they visit. Consequently, the development of tourism products no longer focuses solely on the provision of services, but also on the creation of unique and memorable experiences.

On the other hand, the creative economy is increasingly recognized as a strategic sector for development, particularly in developing countries. The creative economy contributes to the creation of added value, innovation, enhanced competitiveness, and the generation of jobs based on creativity and local cultural heritage. UNCTAD (2022) emphasizes that the development of the creative economy requires a strong ecosystem through capacity building for business operators, supportive policies, the utilization of technology, and broader market access. Within the tourism sector, the creative economy serves as a tool for destination differentiation, as it enables various local potentials to be realized in the form of products and experiences with distinctive characteristics, including through the culinary sub-sector, which is closely linked to local culture and identity.

In the context of Indonesia, local culinary is increasingly positioned as part of the cultural experience and destination attractiveness, although its integration with tourism strategy, business actor competence, and supply chain still needs to be strengthened (Setyawati, 2024). Tourists are also attracted to culinary experiences because of the opportunity to try new food, interact socially, and get to know local culture (Mulyani & Wirakusuma, 2016). Culinary uniqueness, cultural storytelling, authenticity, sensory aspects, atmosphere, and historical value also strengthen tourist experience and behavior (Nurwitasari et al., 2024; Rizky et al., 2025). These findings indicate the need for culinary development that integrates innovation, cultural authenticity, tourism experience, and marketing. However, studies that integrate these aspects into a culinary innovation model based on cultural heritage at the regional level are still limited.

Mojokerto Regency possesses significant potential to develop local culinary innovations as part of a strategy to strengthen cultural tourism and the creative economy. As a region with close ties to the history and civilization of the Majapahit Kingdom, Mojokerto possesses a wealth of cultural heritage that can serve as a source of inspiration for the development of culinary products and experiences. Local cuisine can be positioned not only as a consumer product but also as a medium for storytelling that conveys history, cultural values, traditions and local identity to tourists. This approach enables tourists to gain a deeper experience, as they not only enjoy the food but also understand the cultural significance embedded within it. Various studies on gastronomic tourism indicate that the uniqueness of culinary products and the power of cultural narratives are key factors influencing a destination's appeal, particularly when supported by effective digital marketing strategies and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM).

Nevertheless, the development of local cuisine in various regions still faces a number of challenges. Innovations are often piecemeal and focus solely on product aspects, such as adding new flavors or modifying menus, without being complemented by efforts to strengthen cultural identity, improve packaging quality, standardize product quality, or implement integrated marketing strategies. Various studies indicate that enhancing the competitiveness of culinary SMEs requires a comprehensive approach through the development of flagship products, packaging innovation, and the optimal utilization of digital marketing. Furthermore, the effectiveness of packaging innovation has been shown to increase significantly when supported by adequate digital marketing capabilities, thereby expanding market reach and boosting sales performance. Consequently, local culinary innovation in Mojokerto needs to be directed towards development that focuses not only on the product but also encompasses production processes, packaging design, and promotional strategies aligned with the characteristics of modern consumers.

From a destination development perspective, various international forums and studies on gastronomic tourism emphasize the importance of innovation, collaboration and sustainability in building a gastronomic ecosystem capable of delivering economic and social benefits to local communities. The UNWTO (2022) identifies innovation, community empowerment and cultural preservation as the main pillars of sustainable gastronomic tourism development. Furthermore, the success of gastronomy-based destinations is also determined by the ability of various stakeholders to collaborate in designing authentic tourism experiences and strengthening the region's cultural identity (Ellis et al., 2018; UNWTO, 2022). Consequently, the development of local cuisine in Mojokerto Regency must be undertaken through an integrated approach, combining aspects of cultural authenticity, product and process innovation, strengthened marketing, and multi-stakeholder collaboration within a single sustainable development model.

This analysis demonstrates that this research is essential to produce a model for the development of local culinary innovation capable of supporting the strengthening of cultural tourism and the creative economy in Mojokerto Regency. This study aims to identify and map the potential of Mojokerto Regency's local cuisine that possesses cultural value and has the potential to become a tourist attraction; to analyze the factors determining the success of local culinary innovation, covering aspects of product, process, packaging, marketing, cultural narratives, and collaboration among stakeholders; and to formulate a practical model for the development of local culinary innovation that is integrated with cultural tourism experiences and creative economy strategies. Consequently, this study focuses on the profile of Mojokerto's local culinary potential, the factors influencing the success of culinary innovation as a tourist attraction, and the design of its development model.

This research is expected to make a theoretical contribution by enriching studies in gastronomy, cultural tourism, and the creative economy, particularly in the development of a model for culinary innovation based on local culture. In practical terms, the research findings are expected to yield actionable recommendations for local government, MSME operators, tourism destination managers, and other stakeholders in developing local culinary potential through product innovation, strengthening cultural narratives, improving packaging quality, and implementing integrated digital marketing strategies. These efforts are expected to enhance the competitiveness of tourist destinations whilst providing sustainable economic benefits for the community. This research is limited to local culinary SMEs in Mojokerto Regency that are linked to cultural values or heritage and have the potential to become products that support tourist destinations. The research outputs consist of a culinary innovation development model, prototypes or innovation concepts such as packaging

development, menu variations, and storytelling narratives as well as implementation recommendations that can be applied in the development of cultural tourism and the creative economy in Mojokerto Regency.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Experience-Based Tourism and Culinary Experiences

Developments in modern tourism have seen a paradigm shift from an attraction-based approach towards an experience-based approach (experience-based tourism). From this perspective, the tourism experience is understood as a complex and holistic process involving the cognitive, affective and behavioral dimensions of tourists as they interact with the destination environment. Tourists no longer act as passive consumers who merely enjoy tourist attractions, but become active participants who interpret, make sense of, and construct experiences through interaction with the local culture, community and environment. Consequently, the quality of the experience gained by tourists has become one of the key factors determining the level of satisfaction, loyalty and success of a tourist destination.

The concept of the 'Experience Economy', introduced by Pine and Gilmore (2021), explains that economic value is increasingly shifting from the mere provision of products and services towards the creation of unique, personalized and memorable experiences. In the context of tourism, experiences that are authentic, emotional, educational and transformational hold greater value than the mere consumption of tourism products. Consequently, tourist destinations need to be designed not merely as places to visit, but as spaces for experiences capable of imparting meaning and leaving a deep impression on tourists.

Within this framework, transformative tourism experiences have been shown to increase travelers' emotional attachment to a destination, enhance satisfaction, and create long-term memories that influence loyalty and the intention to return (Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017). Consequently, destination management must not merely focus on providing infrastructure and physical facilities, but must also prioritize the design of experiences that are relevant to local cultural characteristics and identity.

One tangible form of experience-based tourism is culinary tourism (or gastronomy tourism). Local cuisine serves as a medium for direct interaction between tourists and the local culture, as through food tourists can gain an understanding of the history, traditions, social values and identity of a region's community. Research indicates that memorable culinary tourism experiences contribute significantly to the formation of a destination's image, increased visitor satisfaction, and the intention to return (Hurdawaty et al., 2025). Furthermore, local cuisine has the ability to communicate cultural identity in a way that is more readily accepted by tourists than other forms of cultural attractions, as it involves sensory experiences that are directly felt (Fernández & Irimia-Diéguez, 2025).

Ellis et al. (2018) explain that gastronomic tourism is not merely about the consumption of food, but also encompasses elements of cultural heritage, authenticity, sustainability, social interaction, and a multidimensional tourism experience. Consequently, local cuisine can be positioned as a source of a destination's competitive advantage, capable of creating differentiation and strengthening its tourism appeal in a sustainable manner.

2.2. The Creative Economy and the Culinary Sub-sector

The creative economy is one of the strategic sectors that is playing an increasingly important role in modern economic development. This sector not only generates economic added value through innovation and creativity, but also contributes to cultural preservation, job creation and improved social welfare. According to UNCTAD (2022), the creative economy has great potential to drive inclusive and sustainable economic growth, particularly when supported by conducive policies, human resource capacity building, the utilization of technology, and adequate market access.

In the context of tourism, the creative economy plays a vital role as a means of destination differentiation. Creativity enables unique and distinctive local resources to be developed into products and experiences of high economic value. One of the creative economy subsectors most closely linked to the tourism sector is the culinary subsector. Local culinary products serve not only as economic commodities but also as representations of cultural identity capable of strengthening the image and character of a tourist destination (Richards, 2012).

The culinary sub-sector has a high multiplier effect as it involves various other sectors such as agriculture, trade, services, and SMEs. The development of local cuisine can increase demand for local raw materials, create new business opportunities, expand employment opportunities, and generate value-added tourism experiences. Therefore, local cuisine not only contributes to economic activity but also serves as an instrument for destination branding and the shaping of a tourist destination's identity (Richards, 2012).

Furthermore, local cuisine forms part of cultural resources that make a significant contribution to enhancing a destination's competitiveness. Lucia and Segre (2026) emphasize that the creative utilization of cultural resources can create authentic tourism experiences that differ from those of other destinations, thereby enhancing a region's competitive value. Consequently, the development of local cuisine must be understood as an integral part of strategies for creative economic development and the strengthening of culture-based tourist destinations.

In Indonesia, policy directions for tourism and creative economy development also prioritize the culinary sub-sector. The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (2024) emphasizes that improving product quality, fostering innovation, digitalizing marketing, and strengthening collaboration among stakeholders are key factors in enhancing the competitiveness of national culinary products in both domestic and global markets. Consequently, the development of local cuisine requires an integrated approach encompassing cultural, economic, technological and marketing aspects.

2.3. Innovations in Local Culinary Products

Product innovation is one of the key factors in enhancing the competitiveness of local cuisine amidst changing consumer preferences and increasingly competitive market dynamics. In the context of culture-based cuisine, innovation is not understood as a change that undermines a product's authenticity, but rather as an effort to create added value through adaptation to market needs without compromising the local identity that characterizes the product.

Local culinary innovation encompasses various aspects, ranging from product innovation, production process innovation, packaging innovation, to marketing innovation. Product innovation can be achieved through the development of flavors, menu variations, presentation techniques, or the more creative use of local raw materials. Meanwhile, process innovation focuses on improving quality, efficiency, food safety, and production

standardization. On the other hand, packaging and marketing innovation serve to enhance aesthetic value, strengthen brand identity, and expand market reach.

Research by Sok et al. (2016) shows that an integrated approach to innovation is more effective in enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs than innovations carried out in isolation. The combination of product innovation, packaging development, and the use of digital marketing have been shown to increase product visibility, expand market access, and boost sales performance for food businesses. Furthermore, packaging innovation plays a vital role as a brand communication medium capable of conveying a product's value, quality and characteristics to consumers, both directly and via digital platforms.

The success of food innovation is also significantly influenced by the level of consumer acceptance of the changes implemented. Products that manage to preserve cultural authenticity whilst meeting the needs of modern consumers have a greater chance of being accepted by the market (Nunes et al., 2021). In the context of culinary tourism, traditional products that retain their local cultural identity actually hold greater value as they are seen to represent the characteristics and cultural heritage of a region (Bessiere & Tibere, 2013).

Therefore, the development of local culinary innovations must strike a balance between authenticity and market adaptation. This approach enables culinary products to remain relevant to evolving consumer trends without losing the cultural value that is the source of their uniqueness and primary appeal. Thus, culinary innovation serves not only as a strategy to enhance product competitiveness but also as a tool for strengthening a destination's identity and ensuring the sustainability of the local economy.

2.4. Conceptual Framework

Based on the theoretical and empirical analysis outlined above, this study identifies local culinary innovation as a key factor in the development of cultural tourism and the creative economy in Mojokerto Regency. Culinary innovation is understood as a multidimensional concept encompassing product innovation, process innovation, packaging, digital marketing, and the strengthening of cultural narratives (storytelling). The successful implementation of these various dimensions of innovation is influenced by the level of collaboration amongst stakeholders, including local government, MSME operators, cultural communities, academics, and tourism destination managers.

Integrated culinary innovation is projected to create authentic, memorable and value-added culinary-cultural tourism experiences for visitors. These experiences act as a mediating variable that strengthens the destination's image, enhances visitor satisfaction, and fosters loyalty and the intention to return. Furthermore, improvements in the tourist experience and destination image are expected to have a positive impact on the development of the local creative economy, as demonstrated by increases in tourist visitation numbers, length of stay, tourist spending levels, and the growth of local culinary businesses (Hurdawaty et al., 2025; Richards, 2012).

Thus, the conceptual framework of this study emphasizes that the development of local culinary innovations serves not only as a strategy to enhance the competitiveness of SMEs but also as a strategic instrument in strengthening cultural identity, improving the quality of the tourism experience, and promoting the sustainable development of cultural tourism and the creative economy.

In a global perspective, experience-based tourism emphasizes the creation of authentic and meaningful experiences through the interaction of tourists with local culture and communities. In the context of culinary tourism, the co-creation process between tourists and local actors can produce innovation while strengthening the destination's gastronomic identity (Park & Widyanta, 2022). In the context of Indonesia, this approach is relevant because local

culinary has the potential to strengthen tourism experience and support the sustainability of culture-based tourism. This is shown by Hendra et al. (2023) who found that traditional Majapahit food can be developed as part of a sustainable culinary tourism experience, while Jokom et al. (2025) showed that culinary and destination experience contribute to tourist behavioral intention. Thus, culinary innovation in Mojokerto needs to integrate product renewal with experience, cultural identity, and local community involvement in order to increase destination attractiveness while supporting creative economy development.

3. Methods

3.1. Research Type and Approach

This study employs a qualitative research method using a descriptive approach and a case study design. The qualitative approach was chosen as it provides an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of local culinary innovation within its surrounding social, cultural and economic context. Meanwhile, the case study design was applied to comprehensively examine the process of developing local culinary innovation in Mojokerto Regency as a phenomenon influenced by various factors, such as regional cultural characteristics, the role of MSME actors, stakeholder support, and the dynamics of tourism destination development. The research framework, data collection procedures, and analysis process were structured in accordance with the principles of qualitative research, which emphasize the exploration of meaning, interpretation, and contextual understanding of the phenomenon under study (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

The location selection was not only based on the richness of the cultural heritage and history of the Majapahit Kingdom, but also considered the local economic potential and the development of tourism activities in Mojokerto Regency. The existence of MSMEs and developing creative economy activities, as well as the potential of tourism destinations based on history, culture, and nature, provide a relevant context for examining the development of local culinary as part of tourism experience and the strengthening of the community's economy.

3.2. Research Location, Subjects and Timeframe

The research was conducted in Mojokerto Regency, East Java, which was selected because it has local culinary potential related to Majapahit cultural heritage as well as MSME-based creative economy development. The research location focused on culinary business centers and cultural tourism areas related to gastronomic tourism development.

Informants were selected purposively, including culinary MSME actors, tourism destination managers, cultural communities, local government, creative economy actors, and tourists experienced in consuming local culinary. The number of informants was estimated at 20 to 30 people and was determined based on data saturation, that is, when information has shown a repeated pattern and no new substantive themes are found (Malterud et al., 2016).

The research was planned to take place over five months, from February to June 2026, covering the preparation stage, data collection and analysis, development of the model, and preparation of the research report.

3.3. Data Collection Techniques

Data collection was carried out using several techniques to obtain comprehensive and in-depth information regarding the development of local culinary innovations in Mojokerto Regency. Firstly, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with key informants to explore their perceptions, experiences, strategies, challenges and opportunities in the

development of local cuisine as a support for cultural tourism and the creative economy. Secondly, field observations were carried out to directly observe the conditions of culinary businesses, production processes, product presentation, packaging design, marketing activities, and the relationship between culinary products and cultural tourist attractions in the research location. Thirdly, document analysis was used to supplement and verify the data obtained from the interviews and observations. The documents analyzed included MSME business profiles, promotional materials, social media content, local government program reports, and various supporting documents relating to the development of local cuisine and cultural tourism.

3.4. Data Analysis Techniques

The research data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach, which aims to identify, organize and interpret the main themes emerging from the research data. This method was chosen because it is capable of systematically revealing patterns of meaning that emerge from the informants' experiences and perspectives.

The analysis process was carried out in several stages, namely: (1) familiarization with the data through reading and understanding all data from interviews, observations and documentation; (2) initial coding to identify relevant units of information; (3) searching for themes by grouping codes that share similar meanings; (4) reviewing themes to ensure the consistency and relevance of the themes identified; (5) defining and naming themes; and (6) compiling a research report that integrates the main themes with the theoretical framework employed (Braun & Clarke, 2023). The analysis process also follows the principles of reflexive thematic analysis to enhance the quality of interpretation and the depth of the research findings.

3.5. Data Validity and Reliability

To ensure the credibility and validity of the data, this research used source triangulation and method triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information from MSME actors, local government, cultural communities, and tourists, while method triangulation was conducted by comparing data obtained through interviews, observations, and document analysis. This comparison was used to identify consistency and differences in information between sources and methods before the data were interpreted.

Furthermore, this study employed 'member checking', a process of confirming preliminary findings with several key informants to ensure that the researcher's interpretations align with their experiences and perspectives. The study also utilized an audit trail through systematic documentation of the entire research process, including the recording of analytical decisions, changes to categories, and the development of research themes. These measures were implemented to enhance the transparency, consistency, and reliability of the research findings.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Research Findings

4.1.1. Profile of Local Culinary Potential in Mojokerto Regency

The research findings indicate that Mojokerto Regency possesses a highly diverse range of local culinary potential, which is closely linked to the history, culture and economic activities of the local community. The existence of various traditional culinary products, such as Mojokerto *onde-onde*, snail satay, Mojokerto-style *pecel*, *keripik tempe*, various cassava-

based dishes, and a range of food products made from local agricultural produce, demonstrates that the culinary sector plays a strategic role in supporting the development of cultural tourism and the region's creative economy.

This research was located in Mojokerto Regency, East Java, which has regional characteristics and local potential that support the development of culinary-based tourism. The research location and coverage area of Mojokerto Regency are shown in figure 1.



Figure 1. Location of the Research on the Mojokerto Local Culinary Centre

Based on the results of field observations, the majority of these culinary products are already well known to the local community and domestic tourists, but have not yet been fully developed as part of an integrated tourist attraction. Most business operators remain focused on selling products as consumer goods, meaning that the potential of the local cuisine as part of the tourist experience has not yet been optimally utilized. Interviews with MSME operators revealed that the main appeal of Mojokerto's culinary offerings lies in the use of recipes passed down through generations, local ingredients, and their connection to local traditions.

The interview results show that tourists show interest in the stories and cultural context behind the culinary products they consume. In the context of Mojokerto Regency, the historical heritage of the Majapahit Kingdom, particularly the Trowulan area, can become a cultural context that supports the development of narratives and promotion of local culinary. However, this research did not find adequate historical evidence to state that products such as *onde-onde*, *sate kerang*, *pecel*, or *keripik tempe* are foods that originated from or were directly consumed during the era of the Majapahit Kingdom. Therefore, the relationship between local culinary and Majapahit heritage in this research is understood as an opportunity for developing cultural themes in tourism, not as a genealogical relationship or historical origin of these culinary products.

In addition to its culinary potential, Mojokerto Regency also possesses strengths in the area of cultural destinations that can support the development of gastronomic tourism. In addition to having culinary potential, Mojokerto Regency also has historical and cultural resources that can support the development of gastronomic tourism. The Trowulan area, which has various archaeological remains related to the Majapahit Kingdom, provides an important historical context for the development of tourism experience in Mojokerto Regency. In this research, the existence of Majapahit heritage is not positioned as evidence that the local culinary products existing today have a direct origin from the Majapahit era. Instead, this heritage can be utilized as a thematic framework in the presentation, interpretation, and promotion of local culinary so that the experience of enjoying culinary can be combined with historical and cultural experience without making claims about the historical origin of the product that are not yet supported by evidence.

4.1.2. Factors Determining the Success of Local Culinary Innovation

Based on the results of a thematic analysis of data from interviews, observations and documentation, six key factors were identified that influence the success of local culinary innovation in Mojokerto Regency. These factors include product innovation, process innovation, packaging innovation, digital marketing, cultural storytelling, and multi-stakeholder collaboration.

In the conceptual framework of this research, these six factors do not stand as separate business development aspects, but are interrelated in forming culinary tourism value. Product and process innovation strengthens the quality and sustainability of local culinary products, while packaging innovation and digital marketing increase the attractiveness and reach of the products to tourists. At the same time, cultural storytelling gives historical and cultural meaning to the products, while collaboration between stakeholders enables this culinary potential to be integrated with cultural tourism attractions and experiences. Thus, each innovation factor contributes to the transformation of culinary from merely a consumption product into part of the tourism experience, which in turn can strengthen the destination's image and competitiveness.

A. Product Innovation

The research findings indicate that product innovation was the factor most frequently cited by informants as a key determinant of success in the development of culinary businesses. MSME operators recognize that changing consumer tastes demand the development of more varied and appealing products without losing their local identity. Forms of innovation identified include the development of new flavor variants, adjustments to portion sizes, improvements in presentation quality, and the diversification of products based on local ingredients. Nevertheless, the majority of informants emphasized that authenticity must be maintained so that products do not lose the cultural value that characterizes them.

In the context of cultural tourism, product innovation does not only function to meet changing consumer taste, but can also become a means to introduce Mojokerto's culinary identity to tourists. The development of variants, presentation, and diversification of products made from local ingredients allows traditional culinary to become part of the tourism experience without eliminating the cultural character inherent in the product.

The findings on product innovation also show that the direction of Mojokerto's culinary development has characteristics that are in line with efforts to innovate traditional culinary in various other regions in Indonesia. One example is Mojokerto *onde-onde*, which is not only maintained as a traditional product, but also has the opportunity to be developed through variations in taste, size, presentation, and packaging. This approach has similarities with the development of traditional culinary in other regions that adjust products to modern consumer preferences. However, in the context of Mojokerto, the development of *onde-onde* has a distinguishing opportunity through its relationship with the historical and cultural identity of the Majapahit area. Thus, *onde-onde* innovation is not only directed at product renewal, but also at strengthening culinary identity as part of the cultural tourism experience.

Some examples of local culinary products that show the potential and forms of this innovation are presented in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Potential Local Culinary Products of Mojokerto Regency

B. Process Innovation

Research findings indicate that standardized production processes are a key factor in maintaining product quality. Some MSMEs that have implemented more systematic production procedures demonstrate a higher level of product consistency compared to businesses that still rely on traditional methods without clear operational standards. The implementation of food hygiene and sanitation is also beginning to receive attention from business operators, particularly those that have reached a wider market. However, there are still a number of MSMEs that require guidance in implementing food safety standards and quality control.

The production and processing activities of local culinary products include several stages, starting from raw material preparation, processing, product formation, to frying and product finishing. These activities show the involvement of local business actors in maintaining traditional culinary practices while adjusting the production process to market needs. As shown in Figure 3, the production and processing process of local culinary products is carried out directly by the community through various stages of traditional product processing.



Figure 3. Production and Processing of Local Culinary Products

In relation to cultural tourism, consistency in the production process is important because the products offered to tourists need to maintain their quality and traditional character. Thus, process innovation not only increases business efficiency, but also supports the sustainability of local culinary as a reliable product in the tourism experience.

C. Packaging Innovation

Packaging is one area that has seen significant development in recent years. Observations show that SMEs using modern and informative packaging tend to have greater market appeal than products with simple packaging. Packaging not only serves to protect the product but also acts as a means of communication capable of conveying brand identity, product information and the cultural values embodied within it. Therefore, packaging innovation is regarded as a key strategy for enhancing the competitiveness of local culinary products.

In addition to development in the production aspect, local culinary business actors also innovated in the aspect of product packaging. Changes in packaging can be seen from the shift from previously relatively simple packaging to packaging that is more attractive, informative, and has commercial appeal. As shown in Figure 4, packaging innovation includes changes in design, packaging material, labeling, and product presentation, showing efforts by business actors to increase the attractiveness and competitiveness of local culinary products.

In the perspective of cultural tourism, the function of digital marketing is not only limited to increasing sales, but also to the ability to introduce culinary as part of the destination's identity before tourists make a visit. Visual content about the product, production process, history, and local character can build tourist interest in the culinary experience available in Mojokerto.



Old packaging New Packaging Old packaging New Packaging
Figure 4. Packaging Innovations for Local Culinary Products

D. Digital Marketing

Advances in digital technology offer significant opportunities for food-related MSMEs to expand their market reach. Research findings indicate that the majority of business owners have utilized social media as a promotional tool, although the extent of its use still varies. Social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok and WhatsApp Business are the most widely used for introducing products to consumers. In addition, some business owners have also utilized online marketplaces and food delivery services to improve market access. Informants stated that digital marketing helps to increase product visibility and expand customer networks at a relatively affordable cost.

The use of digital media has also become one of the strategies in introducing and promoting Mojokerto's local culinary products to a wider community. Promotion is carried out through social media platforms, particularly Instagram, by displaying information about the product, packaging, flavor variants, and local characteristics inherent in the product. The use of digital media allows local culinary business actors to reach consumers without being limited to the physical location of sale. One form of digital promotion of Mojokerto's local culinary products can be seen in figure 5, which shows the use of Instagram to introduce local processed products to consumers. This strategy shows that digital media not only functions as

a marketing communication tool, but also as a medium to strengthen the visibility and identity of local culinary products.



Figure 5. The Use of Digital Media in the Promotion of Local Cuisine

Source: https://www.instagram.com/reels/DLwC3UBPyg_/ and <https://www.instagram.com/ondelicious.bal/p/DXyaYnYkyR7/>

E. Cultural Narrative (Storytelling)

The research results show that cultural narrative is still an aspect that has not been optimally utilized by most MSME actors. Cultural narrative can be used to convey information about the origin of the product, the ingredients used, processing practices, culinary traditions, and the cultural context surrounding a food. In the context of Mojokerto, the historical heritage of the Majapahit Kingdom, particularly the Trowulan area, can become a potential thematic context in the development of culinary narrative. However, the utilization of Majapahit heritage in cultural storytelling is not intended to state that the local culinary products existing today originated from or were consumed during the era of the Majapahit Kingdom. This historical heritage is positioned as a cultural context that can be used to introduce local culinary while strengthening tourists' understanding of the relationship between food, history, and destination identity.

The integration of culinary products with cultural narrative can increase the experiential value in culinary tourism. Stories about local ingredients, processing traditions, cultural practices, and the historical context of Mojokerto can provide deeper meaning to the food consumed by tourists. Thus, cultural storytelling functions as a link between local culinary products and the destination's cultural heritage, so that the activity of enjoying food is not only consumptive in nature, but also becomes part of the experience of understanding local culture.

F. Multi-stakeholder collaboration

The final factor identified was the importance of collaboration amongst stakeholders. The research findings indicate that the development of gastronomic tourism requires the involvement of various parties, including local government, MSME operators, academics, cultural communities and the tourism industry. The majority of informants considered that the collaboration undertaken to date has been sporadic and has not been optimally coordinated. Therefore, a more structured mechanism for cooperation is required to ensure the sustainable development of local cuisine.

This collaboration is important because the development of culinary tourism cannot be carried out by MSME actors individually. Integration between the government, business actors, cultural communities, academics, and the tourism industry can connect culinary products with destinations, cultural agendas, tour packages, and historical interpretation activities, so that culinary can function as part of Mojokerto's cultural tourism ecosystem.

4.1.3. A Model for the Development of Local Culinary Innovation in Mojokerto Regency

Based on a synthesis of all the research findings, a model for the development of local culinary innovation has been formulated, which positions cuisine as a link between cultural heritage, the tourism experience and the creative economy. The model comprises four main stages: identification of potential, strengthening of innovation, integration with cultural tourism, and strengthening of the creative economy ecosystem.

This model demonstrates that the success of local culinary development is determined not only by product quality but also by the ability to integrate cultural elements, marketing, tourism experiences and multi-stakeholder collaboration into a single, sustainable development system. The research findings indicate that this approach has the potential to enhance the competitiveness of the destination whilst strengthening the culinary sector's contribution to the growth of the creative economy in Mojokerto Regency.

The development of local culinary innovation in Mojokerto Regency is built through the relationship between local culinary potential, product innovation, process innovation, packaging innovation, digital marketing, and cultural storytelling. The integration of these aspects not only increases the added value of culinary products, but also supports the formation of culinary tourism experience, strengthening of destination image, and increasing destination competitiveness. The utilization of innovation and digital strategy also has the potential to expand market reach and strengthen the competitiveness of tourism destinations (Wondirad et al., 2021). Based on the research findings and literature synthesis, the development model of local culinary innovation in Mojokerto Regency is formulated as shown in Figure 6.



Figure 6. Model for the Development of Local Culinary Innovation in Mojokerto Regency

Figure 6 shows that local culinary potential becomes the foundation for the development of innovation which is then directed to form a valuable culinary tourism experience. Product innovation plays a role in increasing the relevance and attractiveness of culinary, process innovation supports quality and sustainability, while packaging innovation strengthens the identity and attractiveness of the product. Digital marketing expands promotional reach, while

cultural storytelling provides historical and cultural meaning to the culinary experience. The integration of these aspects strengthens the culinary tourism experience, which then contributes to the destination's image and competitiveness and supports the development of the regional creative economy.

4.2. Discussion

The research findings indicate that the local cuisine of Mojokerto Regency has strategic potential to be developed as part of efforts to strengthen cultural tourism and the creative economy. The existence of traditional culinary products linked to the history, culture and identity of the local community demonstrates that cuisine can serve not only as a consumer product, but also as a medium for cultural interpretation that enriches the tourist experience. These findings are consistent with the concept of 'traditional food attractiveness', which explains that traditional food can serve as a tourist attraction because it embodies historical value, cultural identity and distinctive local characteristics (Bessiere & Tibere, 2013).

An important point that needs clarification is the relationship between Mojokerto Regency's local culinary and the heritage of the Majapahit Kingdom. The results of this research have not yet provided adequate historical evidence to prove that certain products, such as *onde-onde*, *sate kerang*, *pecel*, or *keripik tempe*, originated from or were directly consumed during the era of the Majapahit Kingdom. Therefore, this relationship is not interpreted as a direct relationship based on a culinary historical lineage. In this research, Majapahit heritage, particularly the historical and archaeological context of the Trowulan area, is positioned as a cultural context that can be utilized in the development of cultural storytelling, destination image building, and culinary tourism interpretation. This approach allows local culinary to gain added value through Mojokerto's historical identity without making claims about the product's origin that are not yet supported by historical evidence.

The research results also show that product innovation is a key factor in enhancing the appeal of local cuisine. Such innovation need not compromise the authenticity of traditional products; rather, it should focus on adapting to modern consumer preferences through the development of flavors, presentation, packaging and product diversification. These findings support the view of Guiné et al. (2020), who emphasize that successful food innovation is that which maintains a balance between product authenticity and market demands

Comparatively, the findings on Mojokerto *onde-onde* show that traditional culinary innovation can be developed through two directions that run simultaneously, namely adaptation to market preferences and the preservation of local identity. This pattern has similarities with the development of traditional culinary in various regions of Indonesia, where innovation is carried out through changes in taste, form, presentation, and packaging. However, in the context of Mojokerto, the development of *onde-onde* has the opportunity to gain added value through linking the product with the historical and cultural narrative of the Majapahit area. This comparison shows that the advantage of culinary innovation does not solely lie in the physical change of the product, but also in the ability to connect innovation with the destination's identity and experience.

In addition to product innovation, process and packaging innovation also make a significant contribution to enhancing the competitiveness of culinary businesses. Standardization of production processes, the implementation of food hygiene and sanitation, and the development of attractive and informative packaging have been shown to increase consumer confidence and strengthen product image. These findings demonstrate that product quality and presentation quality are two inseparable aspects in the development of local cuisine.

In terms of marketing, the research indicates that digitalization plays a vital role in expanding market reach and enhancing the visibility of local culinary products. The use of social media, online marketplaces, and various digital platforms enables SMEs to reach a wider consumer base whilst building electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), which can influence tourists' decisions to visit and try local products. These findings are consistent with the research by Nurwitasari et al. (2024), Dwivedi et al. (2023), and Toro et al. (2026), which emphasize the importance of digital marketing in shaping destination image and tourists' purchasing decisions.

The digital transformation undertaken by culinary SMEs is not merely understood as the use of social media for promotion, but also as a comprehensive shift in how business operators create value, deliver value, and capture economic value. Digitalization enables the integration of business activities from promotion, customer communication, and bookings, through to digital payment transactions and customer relationship management in a more effective manner. Consequently, culinary innovation is no longer solely focused on product development, but also on developing digital business models that are more adaptable to changes in consumer behavior.

Research findings indicate that the majority of SME operators have utilized various digital platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, WhatsApp Business, and online marketplaces. However, the use of these technologies remains dominated by promotional activities, meaning that a comprehensive transformation of business processes has not yet been fully realized. This situation indicates that the digital transformation of culinary SMEs in Mojokerto Regency is still at the stage of adopting digital marketing and requires the strengthening of digital capabilities, digital branding, and the development of a digital business ecosystem in order to enhance competitiveness in a sustainable manner.

Cultural storytelling serves as a distinguishing factor that adds value to local culinary products. In the context of Mojokerto, the history of the Majapahit Kingdom is a highly promising source of narratives to be integrated into the culinary experience. The combination of historical, cultural and culinary elements can create a more authentic and meaningful tourism experience, thereby strengthening the identity of the tourist destination. These findings support the research results of Richards (2012) and Fernández and Irimia-Diéguez (2025), which show that culture-based culinary experiences contribute to the formation of a destination's image and tourists' emotional attachment.

The research findings underscore the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration in the development of gastronomic tourism. Local governments, MSME operators, cultural communities, academics and the tourism industry need to build sustainable synergies to create a competitive and sustainable gastronomic ecosystem. These findings are in line with the UNWTO's (2022) perspective, which identifies collaboration as one of the key factors in the successful development of gastronomic destinations.

Theoretically, this research reinforces the concept of the Experience Economy, which states that experiences are the primary source of value creation in tourism activities. Local cuisine has proven capable of serving as a medium for creating authentic, emotional and memorable experiences, thereby contributing to increased tourist satisfaction and loyalty. Furthermore, this study has produced a model for the development of local culinary innovation that integrates product innovation, process innovation, packaging, digital marketing, cultural narratives and multi-stakeholder collaboration within a single framework for culture-based destination development.

Local culinary innovation not only brings about updates to products, processes and packaging but also leads to business model innovation. This innovation is reflected in changes

to how SME operators create value through product diversification, building a culture-based brand identity, utilizing digital marketing, and expanding distribution channels via online platforms. Consequently, the innovations undertaken are no longer focused solely on product development, but also on transforming business models to be more adaptable to changing consumer needs and developments in digital technology. This approach enables SMEs to enhance their value proposition, expand their market reach, and create sustainable competitive advantages.

The research findings also indicate the growth of digital entrepreneurship practices among culinary SMEs. The use of social media, online marketplaces and business communication apps demonstrates that entrepreneurship no longer relies solely on conventional sales activities, but is beginning to integrate digital technology into marketing processes, customer communication and business development. This transformation is encouraging SME operators to be more adaptive to changes in consumer behaviour, accelerate the innovation process, and create new technology-based business opportunities. Consequently, strengthening digital literacy and digital entrepreneurial skills has become a key factor in enhancing the competitiveness of culinary SMEs.

The use of various digital platforms such as social media, online marketplaces and food delivery services indicates that the development of local culinary industries is beginning to enter the platform economy ecosystem. Digital platforms not only serve as promotional tools but also act as a means of connecting SMEs with consumers, logistics partners, digital payment service providers and various other stakeholders. This ecosystem broadens market access, improves transaction efficiency, and accelerates the dissemination of product information through electronic word-of-mouth mechanisms. These conditions indicate that the success of local culinary development is increasingly influenced by business operators' ability to make optimal use of the digital platform ecosystem.

From a digital business management perspective, the research findings suggest that the success of local culinary development requires an integrated digital business strategy. This strategy not only encompasses the use of social media as a promotional tool but also includes strengthening digital branding, customer relationship management (CRM), utilizing customer data as a basis for decision-making, and collaboration via digital platforms. The integration of culinary innovation, cultural heritage and digital business strategy enables SMEs to create higher added value, enhance business competitiveness and strengthen business sustainability in the digital economy era.

In practical terms, the resulting model can serve as a basis for the Mojokerto Regency Government in formulating policies for the development of culture-based gastronomic tourism. For SME operators, this model can be used as a guide in developing innovative products without compromising local cultural identity. Meanwhile, for academics and researchers, this model can serve as a basis for further research into gastronomic tourism and the creative economy in various destinations with similar cultural characteristics. The research findings show that the integration of local culinary innovation, cultural heritage, tourism experience, and digital marketing can become the foundation in developing the proposed conceptual framework to strengthen destination competitiveness and support regional economic growth (Maráková & Očkaik, 2026). This framework is still conceptual in nature and requires further testing and empirical validation before its effectiveness can be confirmed.

5. Conclusion

Mojokerto Regency has significant local culinary potential to support the development of cultural tourism and creative economy through the utilization of traditional culinary richness that has historical, cultural, and local identity value. The research results show that local culinary development is supported by product innovation, process innovation, packaging innovation, digital marketing, cultural storytelling, and multi-stakeholder collaboration involving the government, MSME actors, academics, cultural communities, and the tourism sector. The integration of these various aspects produces the foundation of a culinary innovation development model that can not only increase destination attractiveness and enrich tourist experience, but also strengthen the competitiveness of culinary MSMEs through the utilization of digital technology in promotion, brand development, and market expansion. Thus, local culinary development can contribute to sustainable creative economy growth.

Practically, the local government needs to translate the findings of this research into more concrete and sustainable development programs. These programs can be in the form of product and process innovation training for culinary MSME actors, digital marketing workshops covering social media management, digital branding, marketplace utilization, and content creation, as well as mentoring in packaging design, product labeling, and brand development. The local government also needs to facilitate MSME access to digital platforms, business networks, financing, and promotional activities that connect local culinary products with tourism destinations and cultural activities. These efforts need to be outlined in a gastronomic tourism development roadmap integrated with cultural tourism and creative economy. For MSME actors, priority needs to be directed at improving digital capability, developing attractive and environmentally friendly packaging, strengthening storytelling that highlights local cultural value, and consistently utilizing digital marketing channels to expand market reach.

This research has several limitations. The qualitative approach used provides an in-depth understanding of local culinary development, but has not statistically tested the relationships between variables identified in the development model. In addition, the research focused on Mojokerto Regency so the research results may not fully represent the condition of culinary development in other regions that have different cultural, economic, tourism, and technological characteristics. Therefore, future research is recommended to use a quantitative or mixed method approach to empirically test the resulting model, particularly regarding the influence of digital capability, digital transformation, innovation, and digital business models on the competitiveness of culinary MSMEs and the sustainability of creative economy. Comparative research between regencies or regions is also needed to identify similarities, differences, and region-specific factors that influence the success of culinary tourism development based on local potential.

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