
Food Tourism: Authenticity and Local Development Evidence from Pujon Kidul Village, Malang Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how local culinary practices support sustainable tourism development in Pujon Kidul Tourism Village, Malang Regency, Indonesia, by analyzing the interrelationship among authenticity, community empowerment, and environmental sustainability. It addresses the underutilization of local culinary assets for sustainable tourism development. A qualitative case study was conducted and supplemented by a descriptive visitor feedback survey involving 100 visitors selected through convenience sampling. Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews with culinary entrepreneurs, community leaders, tourism village managers, local government representatives, and tourists, visitor feedback forms, and document analysis. The findings show that authentic local taste was the most frequently reported reason for revisiting the village, identified by 82% of respondents. Culinary authenticity is maintained through locally sourced ingredients, inherited recipes, rural dining settings, and cultural storytelling. Community participation, cooperative coordination, capacity building, and local governance enable these cultural resources to generate shared economic benefits, while organic sourcing, waste management, composting, and reduced use of single-use plastics support environmental sustainability. The study proposes a Sustainable Local Culinary Development Model that explains the interdependence of cultural authenticity, community empowerment, and environmental responsibility in an agricultural-based tourism village. The model offers an adaptive framework for rural destinations seeking to develop food tourism without separating economic benefits from cultural continuity and ecological stewardship. Sustainable local culinary development therefore requires cross-sector collaboration, participatory governance, and sustained protection of local resources.

A. INTRODUCTION

Food tourism is increasingly recognized as one of the most rapidly expanding sectors on a global scale, functioning not only as a leisure activity but also as a medium for cultural promotion and a driver of local economies. Over the past few decades, regional cuisines have become a magnet for both domestic and international travelers, offering unique and authentic experiences that cannot be replicated elsewhere (Cohen & Avieli, 2004). Indonesia, as a nation with remarkable cultural diversity, holds vast potential to develop food tourism rooted in local distinctiveness. When managed effectively, culinary products can become an integral part of sustainable tourism development strategies.

Among Indonesia's various culinary destinations, rural tourism villages play an essential role in preserving and promoting traditional gastronomy. Pujon Kidul Village, located in Malang Regency, East Java, stands as an exemplary case where local culinary heritage is integrated into a comprehensive tourism package. The area is well known for its food products based on locally sourced agricultural and livestock produce, managed collectively by community members. The village's success lies not only in its physical appeal but also in its ability to maintain the authenticity of flavors and the cultural narratives embedded in its dishes.

Authenticity remains a central concept in tourism studies, particularly in culture-based and food tourism destinations. MacCannell (1973) introduced the notion of staged authenticity to explain how tourism experiences may be adapted to visitors' expectations while still drawing on local cultural values. In contemporary food tourism, however, authenticity is not understood merely as the preservation of an original recipe. It is also constructed through the relationship between local ingredients, traditional knowledge, cooking practices, culinary narratives, and visitors' experiences. Recent research on slow food tourism shows that authenticity is strengthened when culinary products are connected to local identity, place-based stories, and community participation in food production and presentation (Baimoratova et al., 2023). Therefore, in this study, authenticity refers to the consistency between the origins of ingredients, traditional culinary practices, cultural meanings, and the dining experience offered in Pujon Kidul Village.

Previous studies have highlighted the dual role of food tourism, functioning both as a tool for cultural preservation and as an economic engine for regional development (Ellis et al., 2018). Research in Thailand, for instance, demonstrates that the success of culinary destinations depends heavily on the integration of dining experiences with local cultural elements (Jiménez-Beltrán et al., 2016). In Indonesia, studies in Yogyakarta and Bali underline the importance of maintaining authenticity in food tourism to avoid excessive commercialization that could erode cultural values (Putra & Pitana, 2010).

Nonetheless, most prior research has concentrated on urban culinary destinations or areas with well established infrastructure. Studies on rural tourism villages that manage local culinary assets through participatory approaches remain limited, particularly in the context of East Java. This presents an opportunity to explore community based culinary development models that maintain authenticity while stimulating economic growth. Given its socio-cultural characteristics and abundant natural resources, Pujon Kidul Village provides an ideal setting to address this gap.

The current state of research reveals a paradigm shift from simply selling culinary products to creating immersive culinary experiences. The contemporary development of community-based tourism also highlights that local participation should extend beyond involvement in operational activities. Meaningful community-based tourism requires local residents to participate in decision-making, benefit distribution, product development, and the protection of cultural and environmental resources. Recent studies indicate that the sustainability of community-based tourism depends on the capacity of local communities to exercise control over tourism development while maintaining equitable access to its economic benefits (Ngo & Creutz, 2022; Reindrawati, 2023). This perspective is particularly relevant for rural food tourism because culinary products are closely connected to local agricultural practices, family knowledge, social relations, and community identity.

The case of Pujon Kidul Village provides an opportunity to examine the relationship between authenticity, community-based tourism, and sustainable food tourism in culinary management. Sustainable food tourism is increasingly associated with the use of local and seasonal ingredients, short food supply chains, reduced food waste, cultural heritage protection, and the equitable distribution of economic benefits within host communities (Pramezwarly et al., 2022). In Pujon Kidul, the involvement of local residents in sourcing ingredients, preparing dishes, serving visitors, and communicating culinary stories demonstrates how food tourism can function as both an economic activity and a mechanism for sustaining local cultural resources. This approach is also consistent with sustainable tourism principles that emphasize long-term social, economic, and environmental benefits for local communities (UNWTO, 2017).

The novelty of this study does not lie merely in combining authenticity, community empowerment, and sustainability as separate analytical concepts. Its contribution is to explain how these dimensions operate as an integrated local value-creation process in a rural food tourism village. In Pujon Kidul, locally sourced ingredients, inherited recipes, cultural storytelling, and rural dining settings provide the material and experiential basis of authenticity. Community participation, cooperative coordination, capacity building, and village-level governance transform this authenticity into shared economic opportunities. At the same time, organic sourcing, waste management, composting, and the reduction of single-use plastics protect the environmental resources that sustain culinary tourism. This study therefore proposes a context-sensitive Sustainable Local Culinary Development Model that identifies the interdependence among cultural value, community benefit, and environmental responsibility within an agricultural and livestock-based tourism village.

A central research problem is how to maintain the authenticity of local cuisine amid tourism commercialization pressures that risk altering both flavors and cultural meanings. Another challenge involves ensuring that culinary development delivers equitable economic benefits to the community while avoiding overdependence on tourism. In Pujon Kidul, these challenges are compounded by infrastructure limitations and competition from other destinations within the Greater Malang area. Hence, adaptive management strategies that remain grounded in local values are essential.

This research problem is also linked to shifting tourist behavior, as travelers increasingly value sustainability and authenticity. Contemporary tourists seek authentic experiences rather than merely consuming products (Richards, 2015). This demands that tourism providers in Pujon Kidul design culinary experiences that are not only rich in flavor but also culturally meaningful. This context makes the study highly relevant to rural food tourism development.

Globally, destinations that successfully preserve culinary authenticity tend to enjoy stronger competitive advantages. Studies in Italy and Japan demonstrate that protecting traditional recipes and setting quality standards can significantly enhance food tourism appeal (Everett & Aitchison, 2008a). In Indonesia, few rural destinations have systematically adopted such measures. Pujon Kidul Village holds potential to become a local model for implementing these principles.

Local-based culinary development also has important environmental implications. The use of locally sourced and environmentally friendly ingredients strengthens the local economy while reducing carbon emissions associated with extended food supply chains (Hall & Sharples, 2004). With its foundation in organic farming and small-scale livestock production, Pujon Kidul is well positioned to leverage this approach as an added value for its tourism appeal. The integration of environmental stewardship and culinary authenticity reinforces the village's image as a sustainable destination.

Conceptually, this study integrates authenticity theory, community-based tourism, and sustainable food tourism as complementary analytical perspectives. Authenticity theory, rooted in MacCannell (1973), is used to examine the cultural integrity of culinary products, including ingredients, cooking methods, narratives, and dining settings. Community-based tourism, drawing on Murphy (1985), is used to analyze the role of local residents in culinary planning, production, management, and

benefit distribution. Meanwhile, sustainable food tourism provides a framework for assessing the economic, social, cultural, and environmental implications of culinary development, particularly through local sourcing, community welfare, cultural preservation, and ecological responsibility (Pramezwarly et al., 2022). The integration of these perspectives enables this study to examine food tourism in Pujon Kidul not only as a tourism attraction but also as a locally governed development process that links cultural authenticity, community empowerment, and long-term sustainability. Accordingly, this research seeks to contribute not only to academic literature but also to practical recommendations for rural tourism managers and policymakers. The findings are expected to inform strategies for developing local culinary sectors that maintain authenticity while improving community welfare. The evidence-based approach drawn from Pujon Kidul can be replicated in other rural areas with similar characteristics.

Although the foundational concepts used in this study originate from earlier tourism scholarship, they remain relevant because contemporary research continues to apply and refine them in response to changing tourism practices. Recent studies increasingly position authenticity as a relational and experience-based construct, community-based tourism as a mechanism for inclusive local governance, and sustainable food tourism as an approach that connects gastronomy, rural livelihoods, cultural heritage, and environmental responsibility (Baimoratova et al., 2023; Ngo & Creutz, 2022; Reindrawati, 2023). Thus, the present study combines foundational theories with contemporary perspectives to provide a more contextual analysis of local culinary development in Pujon Kidul Village. In light of this background and literature review, the objectives of this study are to analyze the role of authenticity in developing food tourism in Pujon Kidul, to identify community empowerment strategies in culinary management, and to formulate a sustainable, locally based culinary development model. This research is expected to advance knowledge in the field of food tourism and serve as a reference for rural tourism development in Indonesia.

B. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study design, supplemented by descriptive visitor feedback data. The qualitative component served as the primary analytical strategy and was used to explore culinary authenticity, community empowerment, and sustainable local development within the socio-cultural context of Pujon Kidul Village. The visitor feedback data were used only as supporting descriptive evidence to identify selected motivations for revisiting the destination. They were not intended to test causal relationships or make population-level generalizations.

The research site was Pujon Kidul Village, located in Malang Regency, East Java, known as a tourism village with culinary potential based on locally produced agricultural and livestock products. The location was selected through purposive sampling, considering that the village has integrated its culinary assets into a community-based tourism framework. The uniqueness of the site lies in the active involvement of the community in every stage of production, from ingredient sourcing and processing to serving food to visitors.

Data sources in this study consisted of both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with culinary practitioners, village tourism managers, community leaders, local government representatives, and tourists; participant observation; and structured visitor feedback forms. The visitor feedback forms were distributed to visitors after they had completed culinary tourism activities in Pujon Kidul Village. Secondary data were gathered from official documents, government reports, academic publications, and media articles relevant to the research topic (Bungin, 2008). The combination of these two data sources aimed to provide a comprehensive picture of the dynamics of culinary management in the tourism village.

The primary data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted using semi-structured interview guides, enabling the

researcher to direct the discussion toward the research objectives while allowing informants to express their views freely (Moleong, 2010). Participant observation was carried out to directly observe the culinary production process, interactions between the community and tourists, and the dining experience at the tourism site. Documentation was used to record visual and textual data that supported the field findings.

To complement the qualitative findings, structured visitor feedback forms were administered to 100 visitors in December 2025. Respondents were selected using convenience sampling because the forms were distributed to visitors who had completed their culinary tourism activities and were willing to participate. The instrument contained five closed-response items related to motivations for revisiting Pujon Kidul Village, namely authentic local taste, scenic rural environment, hospitality of local residents, affordable prices, and unique culinary experiences. Respondents were allowed to select more than one motivation. The feedback data were analysed using descriptive frequencies and percentages, with 100 completed forms used as the denominator.

The research procedure began with the preparation stage, which involved reviewing the literature, defining the research focus, and developing interview and visitor feedback instruments. Field data were collected through three weeks of site visits conducted between October and December 2025. During this period, the researchers conducted interviews, participant observation, documentation, and the visitor feedback survey. Interview results were subsequently transcribed, while visitor feedback forms were tabulated to support the descriptive analysis.

Data were analysed interactively using the model proposed by Miles et al. (2014), which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved selecting and focusing on information relevant to the themes of culinary authenticity and local development. Data display was presented in the form of matrices, descriptive narratives, and direct quotations from informants. The final stage was drawing conclusions, conducted iteratively by re-examining the data and findings to ensure interpretative validity.

To ensure data credibility, the study applied source and method triangulation techniques (Patton, 2002). Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information from various informants, while method triangulation was achieved by combining interviews, observations, and documentation. Furthermore, member checking was performed by asking informants to verify the interpretations of the collected data. These strategies were intended to enhance the validity of the findings and ensure that the research can serve as a reference for developing community based food tourism.

C. RESEARCH FINDING AND DISCUSSION

4.1. The Role of Authenticity in Food Tourism Development in Pujon Kidul Village

Authenticity is a central element of the culinary tourism experience in Pujon Kidul Village and differentiates the destination from other rural tourism areas. The local culinary offerings are rooted in traditional recipes and cooking methods that have been preserved for generations, reflecting the agricultural identity of the community. This strong attachment to heritage cuisine not only enhances the sensory appeal of the food but also creates an emotional connection between visitors and the local culture (Sims, 2009). As a result, authenticity becomes both a cultural asset and a competitive advantage in attracting tourists.

Field observations revealed that traditional dishes such as nasi jagung, urap sayur, and wedang jahe are prepared using locally sourced ingredients, mostly harvested from community farms. The use of fresh and organic produce ensures quality and reinforces the perception of authenticity among visitors. This practice also aligns with sustainable tourism principles by reducing the carbon footprint associated with food supply chains (Everett & Aitchison, 2008b). Highlighting local elements cultivates a strong sense of pride within the community, encouraging them to maintain traditional farming and cooking practices. A local culinary entrepreneur explained,

“To maintain the authentic taste, we always use fresh ingredients harvested directly from the residents' own farms, especially for dishes like nasi jagung, urap sayur, and wedang jahe. The use of fresh and organic produce is very important to us.” (CE-1, personal communication, October 2025).

Interviews with local food entrepreneurs indicated that authenticity is deliberately incorporated into the presentation and storytelling of each dish. Tourists are often informed about the origins of the ingredients, the history of the recipes, and the cultural significance of the meals they consume. One culinary entrepreneur stated,

“Certainly, tourists are often informed about the origins of the ingredients, the history of the recipes, and the cultural significance of the meals they consume. This narrative-based approach transforms their dining experience into a cultural learning opportunity.” (CE-1, personal communication, October 2025)

This narrative-based approach enriches the dining experience and transforms it into a cultural learning opportunity (Cohen & Avieli, 2004). By embedding cultural narratives into culinary offerings, Pujon Kidul cultivates a distinctive identity that appeals to culturally curious travelers.

Furthermore, authenticity in Pujon Kidul is not limited to food preparation but extends to the dining environment. Many eateries are designed to reflect rural Javanese aesthetics, using bamboo structures, open-air seating, and views of surrounding rice fields. This immersive atmosphere allows tourists to experience a holistic sense of place, enhancing the perceived value of the culinary experience (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010). Such environmental authenticity supports the overall tourism experience by integrating visual, spatial, and gustatory elements. A tourism manager explained,

“We design the eateries to reflect rural Javanese aesthetics, using bamboo structures, open-air seating, and views of the surrounding rice fields. This atmosphere allows tourists to experience a holistic sense of place.” (TM-1, personal communication, November 2025).

To complement the qualitative evidence, structured visitor feedback forms were completed by 100 visitors in December 2025. Respondents were selected using convenience sampling after completing their culinary tourism activities in Pujon Kidul Village. As respondents were allowed to identify more than one reason for revisiting, the percentages presented in Table 1 do not total 100 percent. Authentic local taste was the most frequently reported motivation, selected by 82 respondents, followed by the scenic rural environment selected by 74 respondents and the hospitality of local residents selected by 69 respondents. This pattern suggests that visitors value Pujon Kidul not only for its food products but also for the wider rural atmosphere and social interaction that accompany the culinary experience. These findings should be interpreted as descriptive contextual support for the qualitative results rather than as evidence of a causal relationship.

Table 1. Visitor Motivations for Revisiting Pujon Kidul Village, Multiple Responses Allowed (n = 100)

Motivation Factor	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Authentic local taste	82	82
Scenic rural environment	74	74
Hospitality of locals	69	69
Affordable prices	63	63
Unique culinary experience	58	58

Source: Primary visitor feedback survey conducted by the authors, December 2025.

4.2. Identification of Community Empowerment Strategies in Culinary Management

The empowerment of local communities in Pujon Kidul Village serves as a pivotal element in the development of its food tourism sector. The research findings reveal that empowerment efforts are implemented through participatory approaches involving local residents at every stage of planning, implementation, and evaluation of culinary programs (Saragih & Pratama, 2020). This participatory model ensures that the local population does not merely act as passive beneficiaries but becomes active agents in managing culinary products and services. Such an approach fosters a sense of ownership among local residents. This sense of ownership is crucial for ensuring the long-term viability of culinary tourism programs. A community representative noted,

“Local residents are involved at every stage of planning, implementation, and evaluation of culinary programs. The local population does not merely act as passive beneficiaries but becomes active agents in managing culinary products and services.” (CL-1, personal communication, October 2025).

One of the key strategies identified is the capacity-building program that equips residents with culinary management skills, food hygiene knowledge, and marketing capabilities (Setiawan et al., 2019). These training sessions are conducted both by local government agencies and tourism-related NGOs, aiming to professionalize culinary services while preserving the authenticity of traditional dishes. The balance between skill enhancement and cultural preservation becomes a distinctive advantage of Pujon Kidul’s food tourism. A local government representative stated,

“We conduct capacity-building programs that equip residents with culinary management skills, food hygiene knowledge, and marketing capabilities. The aim is to professionalize culinary services while preserving the authenticity of traditional dishes.” (LG-1, personal communication, November 2025).

Community-based cooperatives also play a crucial role in facilitating the equitable distribution of benefits from food tourism. These cooperatives manage raw material procurement, standardize recipes, and oversee quality control to maintain consistency across various culinary outlets. Through this cooperative system, local farmers, food processors, and culinary entrepreneurs can collaborate more effectively, reducing operational costs and strengthening market bargaining power. A tourism manager explained,

“Community-based cooperatives manage raw material procurement, standardize recipes, and oversee quality control. Through this cooperative system, local farmers and culinary entrepreneurs can collaborate more effectively, reducing operational costs.” (TM-1, personal communication, November 2025).

Marketing strategies are likewise integrated into community empowerment initiatives. Training programs focus on both digital marketing, such as social media promotion, and offline methods like participation in food festivals and tourism expos (Kusuma & Widiyanto, 2020). The use of digital platforms not only expands the market reach but also enables storytelling that communicates the cultural narratives behind each dish, thus enhancing the overall food tourism experience. An important dimension of empowerment is the encouragement of female entrepreneurship in the culinary sector. Women in Pujon Kidul are actively involved as key actors in food preparation, product innovation, and customer service (Yuliani et al., 2021). This involvement not only improves household income but also strengthens social cohesion by promoting gender inclusivity in economic activities.

In addition to skill development, empowerment efforts include the revitalization of traditional recipes that had previously been neglected. Local elders are engaged to share knowledge on ancestral cooking methods and indigenous ingredients (Prasetyo & Hidayat, 2019). These cultural exchanges not only safeguard culinary heritage but also create a unique selling point for Pujon Kidul’s tourism products. Partnership-building with external stakeholders is another identified strategy. Collaborations with universities, private companies, and tourism agencies help in accessing new technologies,

packaging innovations, and market intelligence (Lestari & Suryadi, 2020). These partnerships ensure that local culinary businesses remain competitive while still anchored in local values.

The findings also indicate that economic empowerment is directly linked to environmental sustainability. Training on sustainable farming practices, organic ingredient sourcing, and waste management is integrated into the culinary empowerment programs (Susanto, 2018). This holistic approach aligns economic benefits with ecological preservation, strengthening the resilience of the food tourism system. A culinary entrepreneur stated,

“We receive training on sustainable farming practices, organic ingredient sourcing, and waste management. We also introduce composting and reducing single-use plastics to align with eco-friendly principles.” (CE-3, personal communication, December 2025).

A notable outcome of these strategies is the enhancement of local food branding. Culinary products from Pujon Kidul are now marketed under a unified brand identity, which reinforces consumer trust and increases repeat visitation (Putra & Rahayu, 2020b). This branding strategy combines product quality assurance with narratives about the village’s cultural and agricultural heritage.

Social empowerment also emerges as a crucial factor. By fostering networks among culinary entrepreneurs, farmers, and artisans, the village creates a collaborative ecosystem where knowledge, resources, and innovations are shared (Rahman et al., 2021). This synergy enhances collective problem-solving capacity and reduces dependency on external actors.

In terms of governance, the research identifies the establishment of a Village Food Tourism Committee as a significant institutional innovation. This committee coordinates activities, mediates conflicts, and ensures that tourism development remains community-oriented (Hadi & Setiono, 2019). Such governance structures provide legitimacy and transparency in decision-making processes.

Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are also embedded within empowerment strategies. Regular community meetings and feedback sessions enable continuous improvement and adaptation to market changes (Syamsudin & Prabowo, 2018). This reflexive approach ensures that empowerment remains responsive to both internal needs and external opportunities.

The integration of cultural narratives into culinary experiences is perhaps the most unique empowerment outcome. Local guides and food vendors are trained to share stories about the origins of dishes, agricultural traditions, and local festivals (Wibowo & Anwar, 2020). These narratives enhance visitor engagement, turning a simple meal into a cultural encounter.

Table 2. Key Community Empowerment Strategies in Culinary Management in Pujon Kidul

Strategy	Key Activities	Outcomes
Capacity Building	Culinary training, hygiene workshops, marketing courses	Professionalized services, higher product quality
Cooperative System	Raw material procurement, recipe standardization	Cost efficiency, quality consistency
Digital & Offline Marketing	Social media promotion, festival participation	Expanded market reach, brand visibility
Female Entrepreneurship	Women-led culinary ventures	Increased household income, gender inclusivity
Cultural Revitalization	Recipe preservation, traditional cooking methods	Cultural heritage protection, unique selling points
Partnerships	Collaboration with universities, agencies	Access to technology and wider markets

Strategy	Key Activities	Outcomes
Environmental Sustainability	Organic sourcing, waste management	Eco-friendly production, long-term resilience
Governance Structure	Village Tourism Committee	Transparent and participatory decision-making

Source: Researcher Data Processing, 2025

Overall, the research concludes that community empowerment in Pujon Kidul's food tourism is multidimensional, combining skill development, cultural preservation, environmental sustainability, and market integration. These strategies not only generate economic benefits but also reinforce the village's identity as a sustainable food tourism destination.

4.3. Sustainable Local-Based Culinary Development Model

The sustainable local-based culinary development model in Pujon Kidul Village is built on the integration of three interconnected pillars: cultural authenticity, community empowerment, and environmental sustainability. Cultural authenticity provides the foundation of the model through the use of local ingredients, traditional recipes, rural dining settings, and culinary storytelling. These elements enable local food to function not only as a product but also as a representation of village identity and agricultural heritage.

Community empowerment functions as the mechanism through which cultural resources generate locally distributed value. Participation in culinary production, service delivery, cooperative coordination, and village-level decision-making enables residents to become active actors in the food tourism value chain. This arrangement helps ensure that the benefits of culinary tourism are not concentrated in a limited group of actors but circulate among farmers, culinary entrepreneurs, service providers, and community organisations.

Environmental sustainability protects the resource base that supports the long-term continuity of food tourism. Local sourcing, organic production, composting, waste management, and the reduction of single-use plastics are integrated into culinary activities to reduce ecological pressure. The three pillars are connected through local governance, regular community meetings, and partnerships that support monitoring, adaptation, and accountability. Thus, the model presents sustainable culinary tourism as an integrated system in which cultural preservation, community welfare, and environmental responsibility mutually reinforce one another.

The integration of cultural preservation, community empowerment, and environmental responsibility is also reflected in the accounts of local actors. One culinary entrepreneur explained, "To maintain the authentic taste, we always use fresh ingredients harvested directly from the residents' own farms." (CE-1, personal communication, October 2025).

A community leader added,

"The local population does not merely act as passive beneficiaries but becomes active agents in managing culinary products and services." (CL-1, personal communication, October 2025).

In relation to environmental responsibility, another culinary entrepreneur stated,

"We also introduce composting and reducing single-use plastics to align with eco-friendly principles." (CE-3, personal communication, December 2025).

One of the fundamental aspects of this model is the preservation of traditional culinary knowledge, which is passed down through generations. This process involves documenting recipes,

cooking techniques, and traditional food narratives that reflect the community's cultural identity (Santich, 2021). Culinary training programs are conducted to ensure younger generations are engaged, which helps maintain authenticity while adapting to modern hygiene and presentation standards. This approach strengthens the intergenerational transfer of cultural capital.

Economic empowerment is implemented through community-based business models where profits are fairly distributed among members involved in culinary production and services. The cooperative system allows local farmers, food processors, and service providers to benefit directly from tourism activities (Wang et al., 2013). This reduces economic leakage and fosters financial independence, creating a self-sustaining local economy. In turn, the community becomes more resilient to market fluctuations.

Environmental sustainability is incorporated by promoting the use of locally sourced and organic ingredients. The model encourages reduced food miles, seasonal menu planning, and sustainable farming practices that minimize the ecological footprint (Altieri & Nicholls, 2017). Waste management systems, including composting and reducing single-use plastics, are also introduced to align with eco-friendly principles. This ensures that food tourism growth does not come at the expense of environmental degradation.

The integration of cultural narratives into the culinary experience serves as a unique selling proposition for Pujon Kidul Village. Tourists are not only served food but also immersed in the history, symbolism, and rituals behind each dish (Bessière, 2013). This experiential approach increases visitor satisfaction, fosters cultural appreciation, and differentiates the destination from competitors. The storytelling element enhances the perceived authenticity of the culinary offerings.

Institutional support from local government and tourism agencies strengthens the model's sustainability. Policies promoting local entrepreneurship, skills training, and infrastructure development create an enabling environment for food tourism growth (Baimoratorova et al., 2023). Collaborative governance ensures that decision-making involves multiple stakeholders, including community leaders, tourism operators, and policymakers. This inclusive governance structure enhances community trust and participation.

Technology plays a pivotal role in promoting Pujon Kidul's culinary identity to a wider market. Social media campaigns, virtual culinary tours, and digital booking systems facilitate wider reach and customer engagement (Sigala, 2020). The digital presence of local food brands helps attract younger travelers who seek unique, authentic, and Instagram-worthy experiences. Online visibility also supports off-season demand, ensuring stable income for culinary entrepreneurs.

Capacity building programs, such as culinary workshops and entrepreneurship training, equip community members with the skills needed to manage and expand their businesses sustainably (Hall & Gössling, 2016). Training covers aspects such as food safety, branding, customer service, and financial management. These programs not only enhance service quality but also encourage innovation while maintaining local authenticity.

Partnerships with educational institutions and research organizations further support the refinement of the development model. Universities and culinary schools contribute by providing research, product innovation, and market analysis (Getz et al., 2014). This academic collaboration ensures that the model evolves in line with market trends while staying rooted in cultural heritage. Data-driven decision-making helps optimize product offerings.

The sustainability of the model also depends on community cohesion and collective vision. Shared values, strong social networks, and communal decision-making contribute to the effective implementation of the model (Pretty, 2003). Regular community meetings allow for feedback, evaluation, and adaptation of strategies to changing conditions. This participatory approach increases ownership and accountability among residents.

Taken together, these accounts demonstrate that the proposed model operates as an integrated system rather than as a collection of separate tourism interventions. Cultural authenticity provides the local value base through culinary heritage, ingredients, and storytelling. Community empowerment transforms this value into shared economic opportunities through participation and cooperative coordination, while environmental sustainability safeguards the resources on which culinary tourism depends. The interaction among these three pillars is supported by local governance, regular community meetings, and external partnerships, as illustrated in Figure 1.

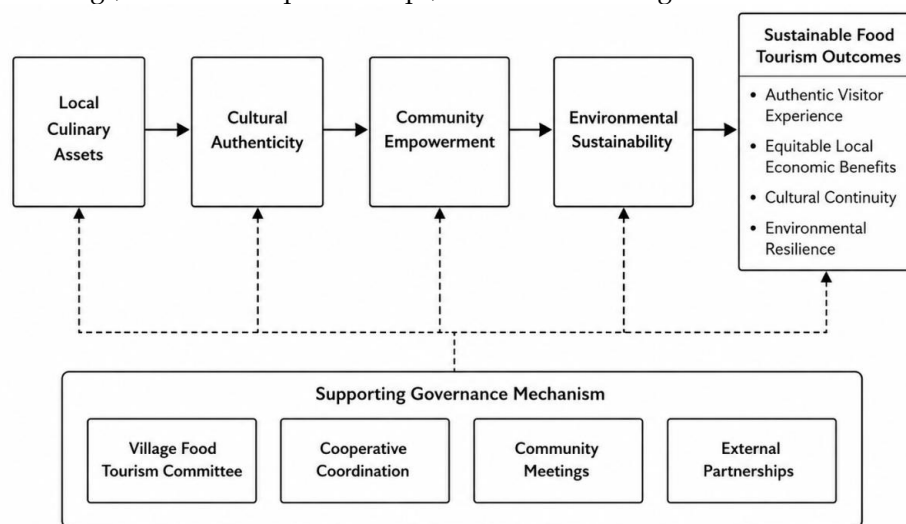


Figure 1. Sustainable Local Culinary Development Model of Pujon Kidul Village

Source: Authors' analysis based on field observations, interviews, and document review, 2025.

Figure 1 illustrates the integrated mechanism of sustainable local culinary development in Pujon Kidul Village. Local culinary assets, including agricultural products, traditional recipes, and rural cultural narratives, form the basis of cultural authenticity. Community empowerment enables residents to transform these assets into shared economic value through participation, cooperative coordination, and village-level decision-making. Environmental sustainability protects the agricultural and cultural resources that support food tourism through local sourcing, organic production, waste management, composting, and reduced use of single-use plastics. Supporting governance mechanisms, including the Village Food Tourism Committee, cooperative coordination, community meetings, and external partnerships, facilitate monitoring, adaptation, and accountability across the model.

Discussion

Beyond confirming that authenticity, community participation, and sustainability are important in food tourism, this study demonstrates the mechanism through which these dimensions reinforce one another in Pujon Kidul Village. Local ingredients and inherited culinary knowledge establish the basis of authenticity, while cultural storytelling and the rural dining environment translate these resources into meaningful visitor experiences. Participatory governance, cooperative coordination, and local capacity building enable the economic value generated from these experiences to circulate among community members. Environmental practices then sustain the agricultural and cultural resources on which the tourism experience depends. This integrated configuration distinguishes the Pujon Kidul case from approaches that treat authenticity, empowerment, and sustainability as independent tourism interventions

The results highlight authenticity as a core element driving the growth of food tourism in Pujon Kidul Village. The integration of local ingredients, traditional cooking techniques, and cultural narratives creates a distinctive culinary identity that differentiates the destination from others (Choe & Kim, 2018). This supports previous studies indicating that authenticity significantly enhances tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty (Choe & Kim, 2018). Furthermore, authenticity here is not only related to the physical product but also to the storytelling and local wisdom embedded in the dining experience.

The research also confirms that community empowerment is a crucial driver in managing sustainable food tourism. Local communities actively participate in production, service, and promotion activities, strengthening their role as both actors and beneficiaries (Scheyvens, 1999). This aligns with literature emphasizing that community-based tourism fosters socio-economic resilience while preserving local heritage (Goodwin, 2021). In Pujon Kidul, empowerment strategies include skill development, culinary entrepreneurship, and cooperative-based marketing, ensuring inclusive benefits.

Furthermore, the integration of cultural narratives into culinary experiences enriches the overall tourism value proposition. Storytelling about local traditions, rituals, and agricultural heritage adds depth to the dining experience and builds emotional connections with visitors (Marschall, 2017). Such narratives not only enhance perceived authenticity but also act as tools for cultural preservation. This dual benefit economic and cultural strengthens the case for embedding cultural storytelling into tourism development policies.

The proposed sustainable local culinary development model contributes a context-sensitive framework for rural food tourism development. Its distinctive feature is the specification of how culinary authenticity is converted into local value through community participation, cooperative coordination, cultural storytelling, and environmentally responsible production practices. Rather than presenting a fixed blueprint, the model serves as an adaptive framework that can guide other tourism villages in identifying their own local food assets, community capacities, governance arrangements, and environmental priorities. This approach enables destinations to pursue economic development without separating tourism growth from cultural continuity and ecological responsibility.

However, challenges remain in scaling up such initiatives while maintaining quality and authenticity. As demand increases, there is a risk of commercialization that could dilute the cultural and environmental values at the heart of Pujon Kidul's food tourism. Addressing this requires strong governance, regular quality audits, and community-led monitoring mechanisms. This ensures that growth does not compromise the integrity of the culinary identity.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the discourse on sustainable tourism by integrating authenticity, community empowerment, and sustainability into a single development model. This holistic approach addresses gaps in prior studies that often treat these elements separately (Bessiere & Tibere, 2013). It also demonstrates the importance of adapting global sustainability frameworks to local cultural contexts, which increases relevance and effectiveness.

In practical terms, the results offer actionable insights for policymakers, tourism managers, and community leaders. Implementing structured training, facilitating cooperative marketing, and embedding sustainability into tourism policy can help replicate Pujon Kidul's success in other rural destinations. Future research should examine the proposed model through comparative and longitudinal designs. Comparative studies involving several rural tourism villages with different agricultural resources, governance arrangements, levels of tourism maturity, and socio-cultural characteristics could test whether the relationship among authenticity, community empowerment, and environmental sustainability operates consistently across destinations. Quantitative or mixed-methods studies may further operationalise the model's key dimensions and examine their association with visitor satisfaction, revisit intention, local income distribution, and environmental performance. In

addition, longitudinal research conducted across multiple tourism seasons would be valuable for assessing the long-term effects of food tourism development on community livelihoods, cultural continuity, waste reduction, and the resilience of local agricultural supply chains. Future studies may also evaluate the effectiveness of specific interventions, such as culinary quality standards, cooperative strengthening, digital storytelling, or village-level food tourism roadmaps.

Study Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. First, the research was conducted as a single case study in Pujon Kidul Village. Therefore, the findings are intended to provide analytical insights and transferability rather than statistical generalisation to all rural food tourism destinations. Second, the fieldwork was conducted over a three-week period, which may not fully capture seasonal variations in visitor flows, culinary demand, agricultural production, and community participation. Third, the visitor feedback survey involved 100 respondents selected through convenience sampling and was used only as descriptive supporting evidence.

The survey results should therefore not be interpreted as representative of the entire visitor population or as evidence of causal relationships. Finally, the qualitative findings were based on informants' experiences and perceptions, which may be influenced by social desirability or institutional interests. Despite these limitations, the combination of interviews, observation, document review, and visitor feedback data provides a contextual understanding of how authenticity, community empowerment, and environmental sustainability interact in Pujon Kidul Village.

D. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

This study identified three main pillars underpinning food tourism development in Pujon Kidul Village: authenticity, community empowerment, and sustainability. Authenticity is reflected in the use of locally sourced ingredients, traditional cooking techniques, and the integration of cultural narratives into the tourism experience. This approach not only strengthens the local culinary identity but also enhances the destination's appeal to travelers seeking genuine and immersive experiences.

Findings reveal that active community participation across the entire food tourism value chain is a key driver of success. Local residents are involved not only as producers and service providers but also as custodians of cultural values and environmental stewardship. This synergy fosters a reciprocal relationship between cultural preservation and the improvement of community livelihoods.

The incorporation of cultural storytelling into culinary presentation enriches the visitor experience and strengthens their emotional connection to the destination. This strategy not only increases the added value of culinary products but also supports the preservation of local traditions and knowledge. As a result, cuisine becomes an effective medium for conveying cultural identity in a sustainable manner.

The proposed sustainable local culinary development model offers a strategic framework that integrates economic, social, and environmental dimensions. This model holds relevance for adoption in other tourist destinations with similar characteristics, provided it is adapted to local contexts. Such an approach ensures a balance between economic growth and the preservation of cultural and natural resources.

Overall, this research underscores that sustainable food tourism requires close collaboration among communities, government agencies, and tourism industry stakeholders. The success of Pujon Kidul illustrates that community-based development centered on authenticity and sustainability can generate long-term positive impacts. These findings highlight the urgency of mainstreaming sustainability principles into regional tourism policy.

Recommendations

While the findings offer practical guidance for rural food tourism development, the recommendations should be applied with attention to local conditions and the limitations of this single-case study. The findings suggest that local governments should position food tourism as an integrated rural development agenda rather than as a stand-alone promotional activity. This can be implemented through a village-level food tourism roadmap that links culinary heritage preservation, local agricultural supply, small-business development, destination marketing, and environmental management. The roadmap should include measurable priorities, such as the documentation of traditional recipes, the proportion of ingredients sourced from local producers, the number of community members receiving culinary and digital marketing training, and the growth of community-based culinary enterprises. Such an approach would enable local governments to monitor whether tourism growth produces tangible benefits for local residents while maintaining cultural and environmental integrity.

For tourism village managers, the study highlights the importance of establishing a Local Culinary Quality and Authenticity Standard. This standard should include guidelines for the use of local ingredients, recipe documentation, hygiene and food safety practices, visual presentation, visitor service, and the communication of cultural narratives. Rather than standardizing culinary products in a way that removes their local character, the standard should protect the essential features that make the food distinctive. Managers can also develop simple storytelling materials, such as menu descriptions, food cards, or short guided explanations, to help visitors understand the origins, ingredients, and cultural meanings of local dishes.

Community groups and culinary cooperatives should strengthen transparent benefit-sharing mechanisms across the food tourism value chain. Farmers, food processors, culinary vendors, guides, and tourism managers need to have clearly defined roles and access to fair economic opportunities. A cooperative-based arrangement can support collective procurement, quality control, joint branding, and transparent revenue allocation. This mechanism is important because the sustainability of food tourism depends not only on visitor demand but also on the willingness of community members to continue preserving local culinary knowledge and participating in tourism activities. The model developed in Pujon Kidul can be adapted by other rural destinations, but replication should not be treated as direct copying. Before applying the model, destination managers should conduct a local assessment of culinary assets, agricultural resources, community readiness, institutional capacity, and environmental risks. The implementation process can then begin with a small pilot program involving selected local dishes and community enterprises, followed by periodic evaluation of visitor satisfaction, local income distribution, cultural preservation, and waste reduction. This staged approach allows other tourism villages to adapt the model according to their own socio-cultural and resource conditions.

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