

PROMOTING CULINARY TOURISM : A STUDY IN PANTAI LOSARI

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Abstract

This study aims to identify the challenges and opportunities in the management of culinary tourism at Losari Beach, as well as its contribution to the local economy. In addition, the study analyzes effective promotion strategies to enhance the appeal of culinary tourism at Losari Beach in supporting sustainable tourism development in Makassar. This research applies a qualitative method with data collected through direct field observations, documentation as supporting material, and interviews involving tourism managers, local business actors, and visitors as informants. This approach provides a comprehensive picture of how culinary tourism functions not only as a cultural expression but also as a driver of the local economy. The findings reveal that current promotional strategies remain limited, relying mainly on simple social media usage, word-of-mouth, and user-generated content on platforms such as TikTok that occasionally go viral. Although these approaches can increase public awareness, they are inconsistent and unsustainable in reaching a wider audience. Furthermore, several challenges persist, including inconsistency in service quality, hygiene issues, waste management problems, and the presence of street performers, beggars, and people soliciting money in the tourism area. Their presence often causes discomfort among visitors and negatively impacts the overall image of the destination. These conditions highlight the need for more structured promotion strategies and stronger collaboration among stakeholders. Nevertheless, the opportunities for developing culinary tourism at Losari Beach remain significant. Iconic dishes such as pisang epe, complemented by other popular street foods like es pisang ijo, grilled meatballs, and roasted corn, enrich the visitor experience. These culinary offerings not only preserve local food traditions but also contribute to economic activity by supporting small-scale vendors. The strategic location of Losari Beach on the seafront further enhances its appeal, allowing tourists to enjoy dining experiences with a beautiful sunset view. With well-designed promotional strategies, improved service quality, and solutions to existing social challenges, Losari Beach has great potential to strengthen its position as one of Indonesia's leading culinary tourism destinations.

Keywords: culinary tourism, losari beach, promotion strategies, sustainable tourism, local economy, Makassar

1. INTRODUCTION

Culinary tourism in Pantai Losari showcases the opportunities and challenges present in the growth of Makassar's tourism industry. Recognized as the city's waterfront symbol, Pantai Losari has been linked to its lively food culture, presenting traditional meals like pisang epe, coto Makassar, pallubasa, and an array of seafood specialties. Each evening, the shore transforms into a bustling gastronomic hub as food vendors and cafés establish stalls to cater to both residents and visitors. This ambiance turns Pantai Losari into more than just a sunset viewing spot; it also serves as a cultural hub where food takes center stage.

The current state of culinary tourism at Pantai Losari demonstrates significant potential as a tourism offering, but it is still not fully maximized. The variety of cuisine available creates a distinct cultural experience, yet promotional initiatives remain restricted, especially in digital marketing and branding. Numerous vendors depend on word-of-mouth or in-person sales, neglecting online platforms to connect with larger audiences. Challenges like varying service quality, hygiene levels, and waste management can also impact tourist satisfaction.

In spite of these constraints, Pantai Losari remains a popular destination for tourists thanks to its easy access, famous setting, and rich food culture. Visitors frequently link the region with genuine and budget-friendly dining experiences, reinforcing Makassar's reputation as a food hub. Yet, without organized promotion and ongoing management, Pantai Losari's complete potential as a culinary hotspot cannot be realized. Enhancing culinary tourism necessitates cooperation between local authorities, suppliers, and the community to tackle issues and improve the visitor experience.

Promoting culinary tourism at Pantai Losari requires a comprehensive strategy that combines branding, digital marketing, event promotion, service improvement, and stakeholder collaboration. Strengthening a unique culinary brand by highlighting icons such as pisang epe and coto Makassar is essential to position Pantai Losari as a culinary landmark. At the same time, maximizing digital platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and travel blogs can increase global visibility and attract younger audiences. Culinary festivals and cultural events along the coastline should be organized regularly to showcase food diversity and stimulate tourist engagement. Improving vendor service quality, hygiene, and waste management is also necessary to ensure visitor satisfaction and sustainability. Finally, collaboration between local government, vendors, and the community must be prioritized to create a unified promotion strategy that supports economic growth, preserves cultural heritage, and strengthens Makassar's identity as a culinary city. This paper aims at 1) describing actual condition of culinary tourism at Pantai Losari, including the types of food offered, visitor experiences, and the current state of facilities and services; 2) to identify the main challenges and opportunities in developing culinary tourism at Pantai Losari, particularly in relation to service quality, hygiene, waste management, and the potential of iconic local food; and 3) to analyze effective strategies for promoting culinary tourism as part of sustainable tourism in Makassar.

2. RESEARCH & METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative method because it provides a deeper and more holistic understanding of culinary tourism at Pantai Losari. A qualitative approach is considered suitable for this study since the main focus is to explore community experiences, visitor perceptions, and the role of culinary vendors in supporting tourism, rather than measuring numerical data. Pantai Losari was chosen as the research site because it is an iconic destination in Makassar, widely known as the city's culinary hub where local specialties such as pisang epe and es pisang ijo are closely tied to cultural identity and tourist attraction. Its status as both a cultural symbol and a tourism landmark makes it highly relevant for analyzing challenges, opportunities, and promotion strategies in culinary tourism.

The research was conducted directly at Pantai Losari, Makassar, South Sulawesi, with the involvement of key informants such as food vendors, local tourism managers, and visitors. Data collection primarily relied on semi-structured interviews, which allowed flexibility in exploring respondents' perspectives while still maintaining focus on the research objectives. This interview method was chosen to gain first-hand insights about service quality, promotion efforts, and tourist satisfaction. Informants were selected purposively to ensure the representation of various stakeholders who directly engage with culinary tourism activities at the site.

To support the interview findings, data was also gathered through direct observation and documentation. Field observations were carried out by monitoring food stalls, vendor interactions, tourist behavior, and the overall condition of the site, including hygiene and waste management. Documentation in the form of photographs and written notes was used as supplementary evidence. The data collected was then validated using triangulation, ensuring that information from interviews, observations, and documentation complemented one another, thereby producing reliable results. This systematic process strengthened the analysis of the current conditions and promotion strategies of culinary tourism at Pantai Losari.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Overview of Culinary Tourism in Losari Beach

Findings from the study indicate that Losari Beach has developed into a prominent culinary hotspot that reflects the cultural identity of Makassar. Each afternoon until late evening, the waterfront transforms into a bustling open-air dining space where rows of vendors line the promenade, offering a variety of traditional dishes. Among the most popular are *pisang epe*, *es pisang ijo*, grilled meatballs, and roasted corn, which are enjoyed not only by local residents but also by domestic and international tourists. The diversity of food options creates a dynamic and informal atmosphere, highlighting Makassar's culinary richness and giving Losari Beach a distinctive identity as both a gastronomic and cultural landmark.

Beyond the food itself, Losari Beach offers visitors a memorable ambiance that combines gastronomy with scenic views. The experience of dining while enjoying the sunset is often regarded as one of the main attractions of the site. This combination of natural beauty and culinary indulgence enhances the value of the tourist experience. Moreover, the vibrant coastal setting encourages direct interactions between vendors and visitors, allowing tourists to learn more about local food traditions while engaging in casual conversations. Such interactions contribute to the cultural depth of the visit, making culinary tourism at Losari Beach not merely about eating, but about recreation, relaxation, and cultural immersion.

Culinary activity in this area also contributes significantly to the local economy. The presence of small and medium-scale vendors provides jobs and income for many families. Tourists who visit do more than purchase food—they also support other sectors such as transportation, souvenir shops, and nearby services. This shows that culinary tourism functions as an economic driver that benefits both individual vendors and the wider community.

The economic significance of this culinary activity is also substantial. The presence of small and medium-scale vendors provides a source of livelihood for many families in Makassar. Tourists who spend money on food also indirectly support related sectors, including transportation, souvenir shops, beverage stalls, and nearby services. This multiplier effect illustrates how culinary tourism acts as an economic driver that stimulates local development. For many vendors, Losari Beach is not only a workplace but also a platform for sustaining their businesses and improving their family's income, thereby reinforcing the socio-economic role of tourism in the community.

Culinary activities in Losari Beach also function as a social meeting point where diverse groups come together. Visitors, local residents, and food vendors interact in an open and informal manner, creating a dynamic social environment in which food serves as a medium of connection and exchange. This aspect of culinary tourism highlights its role beyond consumption: it fosters social cohesion, strengthens local identity, and encourages cultural appreciation among people from different backgrounds. Food thus becomes both a unifying element and a channel for intercultural dialogue.

Another important aspect observed in this study is the significance of visitor comfort and environmental sustainability. Cleanliness, the availability of public facilities, and the proper management of open spaces all play a crucial role in shaping the quality of tourist experiences. When these factors are well maintained, Losari Beach can function not only as a culinary center but also as a welcoming public space for both locals and travelers. However, when neglected, they can negatively affect satisfaction and reduce the destination's appeal. Therefore, maintaining a balance between gastronomy, social interaction, and environmental care is essential to ensure that culinary tourism at Losari Beach remains sustainable.

Taken together, these findings suggest that Losari Beach is more than just a place to enjoy traditional food. It represents a living cultural space where gastronomy, economy, community, and environment intersect. This integration provides the foundation for Losari Beach to be recognized as one of Makassar's most iconic attractions, capable of sustaining its reputation while continuously adapting to the evolving needs of both residents and tourists.

3.2 Challenges and Opportunities of Culinary Tourism at Losari Beach

Culinary tourism at Losari Beach has become one of the most recognizable attractions in Makassar. The area is not only known for its iconic waterfront views but also for the diversity of street foods that reflect the cultural identity of the city. The presence of local delicacies, together with the stunning seafront environment, makes Losari Beach a symbolic representation of Makassar's identity. However, while culinary activities bring positive impacts to the local economy and community, there are also several challenges that must be addressed to ensure its sustainability and long-term competitiveness as a tourism hub.

One of the primary challenges is related to cleanliness and waste management. The high number of visitors each day results in large amounts of plastic waste and food packaging, which are often not handled properly. Piles of garbage along the coast create an unpleasant impression for tourists and threaten the natural beauty of the beach. The sight of trash left after peak hours has the potential to discourage repeat visits, especially from tourists who prioritize environmental quality. This issue highlights the need for stronger environmental management policies, increased coordination with cleaning services, and active participation from vendors and visitors alike in adopting eco-friendly habits.

Another difficulty involves infrastructure and facilities. Limited seating areas, insufficient parking space, and poor lighting in certain spots can reduce the comfort of visitors. Tourists often have to sit on the seawall or bring their own mats to enjoy their food, which is not always convenient. The absence of organized and well-maintained seating arrangements creates a less professional image compared to other culinary tourism destinations in Indonesia. In the long term, these limitations may discourage potential visitors if not addressed by local authorities through urban planning, public-private partnerships, or targeted investment in infrastructure improvements.

Food hygiene and safety also remain important concerns. Since many vendors operate in open-air stalls, the risk of contamination is higher compared to indoor restaurants. Not all vendors follow standardized hygiene practices, such as proper handwashing, food storage, or waste disposal. This situation can potentially harm visitors' trust and even create negative publicity if foodborne illness cases are reported. To maintain the reputation of Losari Beach as a culinary destination, training and monitoring related to food safety are crucial. In addition, collaborations with local health departments could help vendors improve their practices and adopt consistent standards across stalls.

Another challenge lies in the uneven quality of services provided by vendors. Some vendors offer excellent hospitality, while others are less responsive to customer needs. Inconsistent service quality creates a varied visitor experience, which may influence perceptions of the culinary sector at Losari Beach as a whole. The lack of professional customer service training reflects the informal nature of many vendors' businesses. Vendor capacity-building programs, perhaps supported by local government or universities, could help reduce these disparities and create a more unified image of Losari Beach as a professional and visitor-friendly culinary hub.

Competition from other culinary destinations also poses a challenge. As Makassar develops, new cafés, restaurants, and food courts have emerged across the city, offering more comfortable facilities and modern concepts. While Losari Beach has the advantage of being iconic, it risks losing its competitiveness if it does not innovate or improve its overall service quality. Visitors today often seek not just good food but also ambience, cleanliness, and modern facilities. Without continuous improvement, Losari Beach could face a decline in visitor numbers over time.

On the other hand, Losari Beach also presents strong opportunities for the growth of culinary tourism. Its strategic location in the heart of Makassar makes it easily accessible to both domestic and international tourists. The site already enjoys strong branding as a cultural and culinary icon, which serves as a foundation for wider promotion. This recognition positions Losari Beach as a competitive destination within Indonesia's urban tourism market and gives it an advantage over newer competitors that have yet to establish similar reputations.

The diversity of culinary offerings is another key opportunity. Traditional snacks like pisang epe and es pisang ijo coexist with modern street foods and beverages, creating a culinary landscape that appeals to different age groups and cultural backgrounds. This mixture of old and new allows Losari Beach to continually attract repeat visitors seeking variety and authenticity. Moreover, the

open-air setting combined with the sound of waves creates a unique experiential value that cannot easily be replicated by modern indoor restaurants. This experiential uniqueness strengthens its position as a must-visit destination in Makassar.

Economically, the culinary sector provides significant benefits to local communities. Many small-scale vendors depend on the income generated from daily sales, and the presence of tourists supports not only food stalls but also nearby businesses such as transportation, souvenir shops, and accommodations. Strengthening entrepreneurial skills among vendors could further maximize this economic potential and reduce local unemployment. Furthermore, government programs that provide microfinance opportunities or training in digital marketing could help vendors expand their businesses and attract broader customer bases.

There are also promising opportunities to integrate culinary tourism with cultural events. Organizing food festivals, cooking competitions, or cultural performances could enrich the tourist experience and strengthen the identity of Losari Beach. For example, a festival highlighting traditional Makassar cuisine could be paired with music and dance performances, making the experience more immersive. Such initiatives would also create new income sources for vendors and promote Makassar's cultural heritage to a broader audience, positioning the city as a leading destination for cultural and culinary tourism in Eastern Indonesia.

Lastly, sustainable tourism practices present both a challenge and an opportunity. If environmental issues such as waste management are properly addressed, Losari Beach could serve as a model of eco-friendly culinary tourism. Combining food experiences with sustainability efforts—such as reducing plastic use, introducing eco-packaging, or developing a “green vendor” certification program—would not only improve the quality of the destination but also enhance its appeal to environmentally conscious travelers. In today's tourism market, sustainability is increasingly valued, and Losari Beach has the potential to capitalize on this trend while simultaneously preserving its natural and cultural assets.

3.3 Strategies for Effective Promotion of Culinary Tourism

Promoting culinary tourism at Losari Beach requires more than just showcasing local food; it involves creating a well-structured strategy that connects cultural heritage, digital platforms, and visitor experience. Current promotional efforts have mainly relied on word-of-mouth and occasional viral posts on social media. While these approaches help to raise awareness, they are not sustainable in reaching wider markets or establishing Losari Beach as a consistent culinary destination.

One effective strategy is to strengthen digital marketing campaigns. Utilizing platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube can significantly enhance visibility, particularly among younger generations who rely heavily on social media for travel inspiration. Professional content featuring food preparation, vendor stories, and the sunset ambiance of Losari Beach could help create a strong emotional connection with potential visitors. Equally important is the development of a unified culinary brand for Losari Beach. Rather than promoting vendors individually, the area should be marketed as a collective culinary hub with signature dishes such as *pisang epe* and *es pisang ijo*. This branding effort would not only highlight the uniqueness of Losari's culinary identity but also differentiate it from other food destinations in Indonesia. Culinary events and festivals can also serve as powerful promotional tools. Organizing regular events, such as food fairs, cooking competitions, or cultural performances, would attract both locals and tourists while enhancing visitor engagement. Seasonal or thematic events—such as a “Pisang Epe Festival” or “Sunset Culinary Week”—could further increase media coverage and create memorable experiences for visitors.

Collaboration between stakeholders is another essential strategy. Local government, tourism boards, vendors, and community groups must work together to design and implement promotional programs. Through joint initiatives, such as integrated tour packages that combine culinary experiences with cultural or historical attractions, Losari Beach can position itself as more than a food destination—it becomes part of a broader tourism journey in Makassar.

Improving vendor capacity and service quality is also a critical part of promotion. Positive visitor experiences often translate into organic promotion through reviews, recommendations, and

user-generated content. Training vendors in customer service, food hygiene, and business management will not only improve customer satisfaction but also create a consistent image of professionalism and reliability. The integration of technology can further enhance promotional strategies. Creating official websites, mobile apps, or online maps that highlight food stalls, recommended dishes, and nearby attractions would make it easier for tourists to navigate the area. Partnerships with travel apps and food delivery platforms could also extend market reach beyond physical visitors, allowing Losari's culinary products to gain recognition even outside Makassar.

In addition, partnerships with influencers and travel bloggers can amplify promotion. Collaborating with content creators who have strong audiences in culinary and travel niches can bring global attention to Losari Beach. Their storytelling, visuals, and recommendations often carry more credibility among potential visitors than official advertisements. Sustainability should also be integrated into promotion strategies. Highlighting eco-friendly practices, such as waste reduction and the use of environmentally friendly packaging, could appeal to socially conscious travelers. This approach not only improves the destination's image but also ensures that promotion aligns with global tourism trends that emphasize responsible travel. In conclusion, effective promotion of culinary tourism at Losari Beach requires a multi-layered approach. Digital engagement, branding, events, stakeholder collaboration, vendor training, influencer partnerships, and sustainable practices all contribute to building a strong and lasting identity. By combining these strategies, Losari Beach has the potential to transform from a popular local gathering spot into a recognized culinary tourism landmark in Indonesia and beyond.

4. CONCLUSION

This study highlights the important role of culinary tourism at Losari Beach in shaping Makassar's tourism identity. Culinary activities not only offer unique food experiences but also contribute significantly to the local economy by supporting small-scale vendors and preserving traditional dishes. However, several challenges such as waste management, inconsistent service quality, and limited facilities still need attention to ensure visitor satisfaction and sustainability.

At the same time, the opportunities for development remain promising. The strategic location, strong cultural identity, and diverse culinary offerings provide a solid foundation for positioning Losari Beach as a leading culinary destination in Indonesia. Effective promotion strategies—through digital engagement, unified branding, events, stakeholder collaboration, and sustainable practices—are essential to enhance its competitiveness and global visibility.

In conclusion, the development of culinary tourism at Losari Beach requires a balance between preserving cultural authenticity, improving infrastructure and service quality, and implementing innovative promotion strategies. With stronger collaboration among stakeholders and greater commitment to sustainable tourism, Losari Beach has the potential to become not only a culinary landmark for Makassar but also an internationally recognized tourism attraction.

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