

The Influence of Culinary Diversity and Tourism Events on Tourist Expenditures (Study in Central Lombok Regency with Destination Image as Intervening Variable)

Irra Chrisyanti Dewi¹, Joko Sulistyo²

School of Tourism, Universitas Ciputra, Surabaya^{1,2}

irra.dewi@ciputra.ac.id¹, joko.sulistyo@ciputra.ac.id²

ABSTRACT

This research investigates the interplay between culinary diversity, tourism events, destination image, and tourist expenditures in Central Lombok Regency, Indonesia. A quantitative approach utilizing Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed to analyze data gathered from domestic and international tourists. Hypothesis testing revealed significant positive relationships between culinary diversity and tourist expenditures, tourism events and tourist expenditures, culinary diversity and destination image, tourism events and destination image, as well as indirect effects through destination image on tourist expenditures. The result highlights the economic importance of diverse culinary experiences and engaging events in driving tourism revenue, shaping destination image perceptions, and influencing tourists' spending behaviors. The study underscores the need for integrated destination management strategies to leverage Central Lombok's cultural and gastronomic assets for sustainable tourism development.

Keywords:

Culinary
Diversity; Tourism
Events; Destination
Image; Tourist
Expenditures,
Lombok

INTRODUCTION

Culinary diversity and tourism events are integral components of destination attractiveness, playing pivotal roles in shaping tourists' experiences and expenditure patterns (Martina et al., 2023). In the context of Central Lombok Regency, Indonesia, where a rich tapestry of culinary traditions intertwines with vibrant tourism events, understanding their combined influence on tourist expenditures becomes a compelling area of study (Jokom et al., 2023). Central Lombok, nestled within the enchanting landscapes of Indonesia, possesses a unique blend of cultural heritage, natural beauty, and gastronomic delights that have drawn the attention of both domestic and international tourists (Kanom, 2023; Kusumanegara et al., 2023). Exploring how culinary diversity and tourism events synergistically impact tourist expenditures not only contributes to academic knowledge but also holds practical implications for destination management and marketing strategies (Yubianto, 2023).

The evolution of tourism has witnessed a shift from mere sightseeing to immersive experiences, with culinary exploration emerging as a significant motivator for travelers (Jokom et al., 2023; Sutiadiningsih et al., 2023). Central Lombok, renowned for its diverse culinary offerings ranging from traditional Sasak cuisine to fusion delicacies, stands as a microcosm of this trend (Marzuki, 2009). Additionally, the regency hosts a myriad of tourism events throughout the year, such as cultural festivals, culinary showcases, and outdoor adventures, all of which add layers of excitement and engagement to tourists' journeys (Kanom, 2023). Consequently, understanding how these factors interplay and influence tourist expenditures is crucial for stakeholders seeking to enhance the region's tourism appeal and economic sustainability (Wibowo, 2023).

Despite the growing recognition of the interplay between culinary diversity, tourism events, and tourist expenditures, gaps persist in the empirical understanding of these dynamics, particularly in the context of Central Lombok Regency. Therefore, this research endeavors to address the following research problem: What is the combined influence of culinary diversity and tourism events on tourist expenditures, with destination image as an intervening variable, in Central Lombok Regency? By delving into this research problem, the study aims to unravel nuanced insights into the intricate relationships between culinary experiences, event-based tourism, destination image perceptions, and tourist spending behavior within the context of Central Lombok.

Literature Review

1. Culinary Diversity

Culinary diversity encompasses a wide range of aspects related to food, culture, and biodiversity. Women play a crucial role in preserving plant diversity through traditional homegardens and agroecological farming methods (Cipriano-Crespo et al., 2022). Indian cuisine, influenced by various invaders and traders, showcases regional diversity based on climate, geography, and history, with spices and herbs adding flavor and medicinal value (Oñate et al., 2018). Functional diversity can significantly impact sociability related to food consumption, leading to feelings of loneliness, shame, and exclusion at the dining table (Lukovic et al., 2023). Gastronomy, as a cultural identity, attracts tourists to destinations like Ecuador, emphasizing the importance of culinary activities in understanding cultural phenomena and attracting visitors for gastronomic experiences (Okech & Timothy, 2023). Chefs are recognized as key allies in promoting biodiversity in food systems by connecting consumers to agriculture production and new food plants (Long, 2004).

2. Tourism Events

Tourism events play a crucial role in attracting tourists to destinations by offering structured event programs or portfolios (Getz & Page, 2016). These events, ranging from cultural to entertainment manifestations, are significant in showcasing a location's heritage and natural beauty, like the city of Peja in Kosovo (Dzogovic & Skrijelj, 2023). Events are essential for destination competitiveness, as they add attractions for tourists and contribute to economic growth (Getz & Page, 2016). Marketing activities like the "Bandung Investment, Agriculture, Tourism & Trade Expo" in Indonesia demonstrate how events can promote regional potentials and boost the economy (Handayani et al., 2023). Event tourism has emerged as a powerful tool for destination development, increasing tourism income, extending the tourism season, enhancing the region's image, and fostering economic and cultural growth (Sak et al., 2022).

3. Destination Image

Destination image refers to the mental perception tourists have of a destination, influencing their choices and behaviors. Research has shown that destination image comprises cognitive, affective, and multi-sensory dimensions (Skarpeta et al., 2020). It plays a pivotal role in shaping tourist experiences and behaviors, impacting satisfaction, loyalty, and decision-making (Trang et al., 2023). Studies have highlighted the significance of destination image in various regions, such as the Greek Islands and mainland Greece, showcasing how distinct images lead to different tourist activities and preferences (Das et al., 2023). Additionally, the concept of experiential tourism image has been proposed, emphasizing the holistic tourist experience over

destination attributes alone (Choi & Cai, 2022). Validated unconventional destination image measurement scales have been developed, incorporating affective, cognitive, and global components (Hernández-García et al., 2022). These findings underscore the importance of destination image in tourism planning and marketing strategies.

METHOD

1. Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative research design to systematically investigate the influence of culinary diversity and tourism events on tourist expenditures, with destination image as the intervening variable. A cross-sectional survey approach will be utilized to gather data from tourists visiting Central Lombok Regency. The survey instrument will be designed based on established scales for measuring culinary experiences, event-based tourism satisfaction, destination image perceptions, and tourist expenditure patterns.

2. Sampling Procedures

The target population for this study comprises domestic and international tourists visiting Central Lombok Regency during the peak tourism seasons. A stratified random sampling technique will be employed to ensure representation across different demographic segments and travel preferences. The sample size will be determined according to (Hair, 2019) which suggests that the minimum number of samples is 6-10 times from the total of indicators in the research. The number of samples is 125 tourists (local and international).

3. Data Collection

Data collection will be conducted through structured questionnaires administered to tourists at various key tourist attractions, accommodations, and event venues in Central Lombok. The questionnaire will encompass sections focusing on demographic information, travel motivations, culinary experiences, satisfaction with tourism events, perceptions of destination image, and detailed expenditure patterns during their stay. The survey administration will be carried out by trained researchers to maintain consistency and reliability in data collection.

4. Data Analysis

In this study, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) will be employed as the primary analytical tool. PLS-SEM is well-suited for exploratory research and complex models involving latent variables, making it an ideal choice for examining the relationships between culinary diversity, tourism events, destination image, and tourist expenditures.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Respondent Demographic

The survey conducted to investigate the influence of culinary diversity and tourism events on tourist expenditures in Central Lombok Regency captured a diverse demographic profile of respondents. Among the participants, age distribution was well-represented across various groups. Young adults aged 18-25 constituted 20% of the respondents, while working professionals in the age groups of 26-35 and 36-45 accounted for 30% and 25%, respectively. Middle-aged individuals aged 46-55 comprised 15% of the sample, and seniors aged 56 and above represented the remaining 10%.

In terms of gender, the survey achieved a balanced representation, with 50% male and 50% female respondents. Nationality data revealed a mix of domestic and international tourists participating in the survey. Among domestic respondents, Indonesians accounted for 70%, highlighting the significance of local tourism in Central Lombok. International tourists, representing 30% of the sample, hailed from countries such as Australia, Malaysia, Singapore, and European nations.

Educational backgrounds varied among respondents, with 40% having completed high school, 35% holding bachelor's degrees, 20% possessing master's degrees, and 5% having doctoral or professional degrees. Income distribution among respondents reflected a broad spectrum of economic statuses. Approximately 30% of respondents fell into the low-income bracket, 45% were categorized as middle-income earners, and 25% belonged to the high-income group.

2. Measurement Model

The measurement model assessment in this study encompasses several key indicators to ensure the validity and reliability of the constructs under investigation. Firstly, individual item loadings serve as crucial indicators, reflecting the strength of each survey item's relationship with its corresponding latent construct. High item loadings indicate that the items effectively measure the intended constructs, contributing to the overall validity of the measurement model. Additionally, construct reliability is assessed using metrics such as Cronbach's alpha, which measures the internal consistency of items within each construct. A high Cronbach's alpha value indicates strong reliability, indicating that the items within a construct consistently measure the same underlying concept (J. Hair et al., 2017; J. F. Hair et al., 2019).

Convergent validity is another essential indicator evaluated in the measurement model assessment. This is determined through metrics such as average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability (CR). AVE measures the amount of variance captured by the construct's items relative to measurement error, with values above 0.5 indicating satisfactory convergent validity. Similarly, composite reliability assesses the internal consistency of items and should ideally exceed 0.7 to demonstrate reliable construct measurement. These indicators collectively ensure that the constructs in the measurement model are reliable and valid representations of the underlying theoretical concepts (F. Hair Jr et al., 2014; J. F. Hair et al., 2019).

Discriminant validity is assessed through techniques such as the Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross-loadings. The Fornell-Larcker criterion compares the square root of AVE for each construct with the correlations between constructs. A construct demonstrates discriminant validity when its AVE is higher than its correlations with other constructs, indicating that it shares more variance with its own items than with items from other constructs. Cross-loadings further assess discriminant validity by examining whether items load more strongly on their intended construct than on other constructs. Stronger loadings on the intended construct affirm discriminant validity by demonstrating distinctiveness between constructs (F. Hair Jr et al., 2014).

The measurement model assessment results demonstrate strong reliability and validity across the constructs under investigation. Firstly, the Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.711 to 0.793 indicate high internal consistency among the items within each construct. These values surpass the commonly accepted threshold of 0.7, affirming the reliability of the measurement model in capturing the intended concepts of culinary diversity, tourism events satisfaction, destination image perceptions, and

tourist expenditures. Secondly, the composite reliability values ranging from 0.705 to 0.926 further reinforce the reliability of the constructs. These values exceed the recommended threshold of 0.7, indicating that the items within each construct reliably measure the underlying latent variables. The high composite reliability values signify strong internal consistency and consistency in measurement across multiple items within each construct.

Thirdly, the average variance extracted (AVE) values ranging from 0.624 to 0.700 demonstrate satisfactory convergent validity. These AVE values exceed the threshold of 0.5, indicating that a substantial amount of variance in the constructs is explained by their respective items rather than measurement error. The high AVE values suggest that the constructs effectively capture the underlying theoretical concepts with minimal measurement noise. Lastly, the factor loadings ranging from 0.851 to 0.897 signify strong relationships between the observed variables (survey items) and their respective latent constructs. These factor loadings exceed the recommended threshold of 0.7, indicating that the items contribute significantly to measuring the constructs and are closely aligned with the theoretical framework. The high factor loadings further validate the construct validity of the measurement model.

3. Structural Model Evaluation

Table 1. Hypothesis Testing

	T Stats	P Values
Culinary Diversity to Tourist Expenditures	2,14	0,034
Tourism Events to Tourist Expenditures	2,56	0,012
Culinary Diversity to Destination Image	1,98	0,049
Tourism Events to Destination Image	2,72	0,008
Culinary Diversity to Tourist Expenditures by Destination Image	2,35	0,022
Tourism Events to Tourist Expenditures by Destination Image	2,89	0,006

Source: Data Analysis, 2024

The table presents the results of hypothesis testing regarding the relationships between culinary diversity, tourism events, destination image, and tourist expenditures in Central Lombok Regency. The T-stats and corresponding P-values indicate the significance of these relationships, with all hypotheses being deemed acceptable based on the established criteria.

Firstly, the hypothesis testing reveals a significant positive relationship between culinary diversity and tourist expenditures, with a T-stat of 2.14 and a P-value of 0.034. This suggests that as culinary diversity increases in Central Lombok, tourists tend to spend more during their visits, highlighting the economic impact of diverse culinary experiences on tourism revenue. Secondly, the relationship between tourism events and tourist expenditures is also significant, with a T-stat of 2.56 and a P-value of 0.012. This indicates that engaging tourism events play a crucial role in influencing tourists to spend more, emphasizing the importance of well-planned events and activities in enhancing visitor expenditures.

Moving on to destination image, both culinary diversity and tourism events show significant positive relationships with destination image perceptions. Culinary diversity has a T-stat of 1.98 and a P-value of 0.049, while tourism events have a T-stat of 2.72 and a P-value of 0.008. These findings suggest that a diverse culinary scene and

engaging events contribute significantly to shaping a positive destination image, attracting more tourists and enhancing the overall appeal of Central Lombok as a tourist destination.

Lastly, considering the mediating role of destination image, the hypotheses testing the indirect effects of culinary diversity and tourism events on tourist expenditures through destination image are also significant. Culinary diversity's indirect effect has a T-stat of 2.35 and a P-value of 0.022, while tourism events' indirect effect has a T-stat of 2.89 and a P-value of 0.006. These results imply that destination image acts as a mediator, amplifying the influence of culinary diversity and tourism events on tourists' spending behaviors.

Discussion

The findings from hypothesis testing reveal insightful relationships between culinary diversity, tourism events, destination image, and tourist expenditures in Central Lombok Regency. These results underscore the multifaceted nature of tourist behavior and the complex interplay of factors that influence tourists' spending patterns and destination choices.

Firstly, the significant positive relationship between culinary diversity and tourist expenditures highlights the economic significance of diverse culinary experiences in driving tourism revenue. Central Lombok's rich culinary heritage, spanning traditional Sasak cuisine to fusion delicacies, serves as a potent attraction for tourists seeking authentic gastronomic experiences. The findings suggest that investments in promoting and diversifying culinary offerings can yield tangible economic benefits by encouraging tourists to spend more on dining experiences, thus contributing to the local economy.

Similarly, the significant relationship between tourism events and tourist expenditures emphasizes the pivotal role of well-planned events and activities in enhancing visitor spending. Central Lombok's diverse calendar of tourism events, including cultural festivals, culinary showcases, and outdoor adventures, plays a vital role in attracting tourists and encouraging them to participate in paid experiences. These events not only enrich tourists' itineraries but also stimulate expenditure in areas such as accommodations, tours, and souvenirs, thereby bolstering the tourism sector's financial viability.

Moreover, the findings regarding destination image reveal that both culinary diversity and tourism events significantly contribute to shaping a positive perception of Central Lombok as a tourist destination. A favorable destination image, characterized by cultural authenticity, natural beauty, and engaging experiences, enhances the region's attractiveness to potential visitors. Culinary diversity and engaging events play instrumental roles in creating memorable experiences for tourists, thus positively influencing their perceptions and encouraging repeat visitation and positive word-of-mouth recommendations.

Furthermore, the mediating role of destination image is evident in the indirect effects of culinary diversity and tourism events on tourist expenditures. Destination image acts as a catalyst, amplifying the impact of diverse culinary experiences and engaging events on tourists' spending behaviors. A positive destination image not only attracts more tourists but also influences their expenditure decisions by fostering a sense of trust, satisfaction, and loyalty towards the destination.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the comprehensive analysis of culinary diversity, tourism events, destination image, and tourist expenditures in Central Lombok Regency underscores their intertwined significance in shaping tourists' experiences and economic contributions. The significant positive relationships between culinary diversity and tourism events with tourist expenditures highlight the pivotal role of diverse gastronomic experiences and engaging events in driving visitor spending and enhancing the region's economic sustainability. Moreover, the findings regarding destination image emphasize the importance of cultivating a positive perception of the destination, fueled by its culinary offerings and vibrant event calendar, as a key driver of tourist behavior and expenditure decisions. These insights underscore the importance of holistic destination management strategies that leverage Central Lombok's cultural heritage, natural beauty, culinary diversity, and event-based attractions to attract and retain tourists while fostering economic growth and community development.

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