

# Integrating gastronomic potential in tourism destinations: A case study of the Likupang special economic zone, North Minahasa, Indonesia

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**Abstract:** This research aims to analyze the integration stages of gastronomic tourism in the Likupang Special Economic Zone. Several potential culinary icons have been identified and can be developed as gastronomic tourism attractions for the SEZ Likupang. The research method used is qualitative. The data collection techniques used include field observations, in-depth interviews, and literature studies to obtain a complete picture of the efforts to integrate gastronomic tourism in the development of the SEZ Likupang destination. In-depth interviews were conducted during observations with 7 key informants across SEZ Likupang stakeholders, namely the government, entrepreneurs, and culinary practitioners. This research aims to identify key factors influencing gastronomic tourism integration in the Likupang SEZ and measure its feasibility through stakeholder perspectives and policy alignment. Specifically, it evaluates the level of current integration efforts and identifies the economic and cultural impact of gastronomic tourism on the local community. The purpose of this research is to analyze the conditions and identify the potential so that it can provide strategic recommendations for the central and regional governments to initiate the integration stages of gastronomic tourism using the methodological framework developed by the UNWTO. The results of this study indicate that the SEZ Likupang is still in the early stages of destination development and has not made systematic efforts to integrate its gastronomic tourism potential. In addition, there are also 14 culinary icons and 10 recommendations for the integration strategy stages of gastronomic tourism that can be developed and implemented in the development of the SEZ Likupang.

**Keywords:** gastronomic, integration strategy, local culinary, tourism destination, tourist village, SEZ Likupang

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## Introduction

Gastronomic tourism is an essential element in the development of a tourism destination, as it is considered to contribute to the length of stay and tourist expenditure, thereby simultaneously stimulating economic growth at the local, regional, and even national scales (Nugroho et al., 2021; Pakpahan et al., 2023; Sutanto et al., 2022). In addition to the economic impact of tourism, the integration of gastronomic tourism with a destination can also provide added value and create a separate market for tourists, and can even be used as an identity or brand for the destination (Latifah & Damayanti, 2016). However, the local community needs to be involved from the beginning of the destination development strategy formulation to facilitate the integration process of the existing local culinary characteristics with the development plan, as well as to provide a comprehensive and unique experience for tourists in the future (Sutanto et al., 2022; Zakharia et al., 2021). The integration process of local cuisine with a destination is needed to consider which one the core area and the buffer area (Ma, 2018; Zakharia et al., 2021).

Similarly, in the development of a Special Economic Zone for Tourism the core area will be the center of tourism activities, while the buffer area plays a role in supporting and complementing the tourist experience in the core area (Feng, 2017; Sutoni et al., 2021). These two areas can play a role in the division of tourism attraction management, distribution of tourism attractions, and the development of the quality of life in the local community (Name, 2009). Specifically in the buffer area, a destination or Tourism Special Economic Zone can also be the exploration area of gastronomic identity, as the local community living in the buffer area can play a role as the preserver of gastronomy and other cultural heritage of the Tourism Special Economic Zone (Chaigasem, 2021).

Therefore, the exploration of the design and development strategy of the Likupang Special Economic Zone for Tourism in North Minahasa, Indonesia in integrating its culinary potential as a means of strengthening gastronomic identity is important. The designation of Likupang as part of the 5 National Strategic Tourism Destinations was driven by the growing trend of tourism to North Minahasa, with international tourist arrivals increasing significantly from 8,901 people in 2011 to 93,964 people in 2019 (Patadjenu et al., n.d.). In addition to the increasing trend of international tourist visits, According to the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, tourism contributed 3,8% to Indonesia's GDP, with an estimated 5,47 million international arrivals in 2022 (Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS), 2023; Indonesia.go.id, 2025). In the 3 years since Likupang was designated as a Special Economic Zone, the number of domestic tourists was recorded at 3,078,151 tourists, reinforcing the need for structured gastronomic tourism development (Zonautara.com, 2024). The 2022 Special Economic Zone Development Report also explained that the Likupang SEZ has its advantages in the tourism sector, particularly in the themes of resorts and cultural tourism (Dewan Nasional Kawasan Ekonomi Khusus, 2023). In terms of marine potential, Likupang, which is not far from the Bunaken National Park, is also part of the Coral Triangle Area with high marine biodiversity and even become a concentration area for 30% of the world's marine biota. In addition to the Coral Triangle Area, the location of the Likupang SEZ is also close to the Wallace Conservation Center, which provides an overview of the diversity of fauna and flora.

The large potential for marine and natural diversity in the Likupang Special Economic Zone is also an entry point to explore the culinary potential that can be developed into its gastronomic identity. In addition to natural and environmental factors, gastronomic identity can also refer to an integral part of the cultural heritage of a region, which not only includes traditional and regional specialties, but also the history, cooking techniques, local ingredients, and cultural values associated with the region's cuisine. Demographically, in the Academic Manuscript of the North Minahasa Regency Spatial Planning Document 2021-2025, it is explained that the Minahasa culture is the dominant culture as the ethnic group, especially the Tonsea sub-ethnic group, is the largest population (Dinas Pariwisata Kabupaten Minahasa Utara, 2023). Apart from the Minahasa ethnic group, there are also North Nusa cultural traditions, cultural practices, or ceremonies carried out by the North Nusa community, including the tulude ceremony which is held in several villages, including the villages within the Likupang Special Economic Zone, such as Marinsow Village, Pulisan Village, and Kinunang Village.

In practice, the combination of environmental and cultural factors in gastronomic identity can provide a unique tourism experience and differentiate one destination from another (Dalem, 2021; Manaf, 2020; Raji et al., 2020). Programs offered by gastronomic tourism can include cooking classes, food tours, and cultural performances that provide tourists with a comprehensive experience of the richness of local gastronomy (Hjalager & Richards, 2003; Kivela & Crofts, 2006; Lin et al., 2011). Therefore, if the strategy of integrating gastronomic potential can be carried out from the early stages of the Likupang SEZ development process, not only the economic impact of tourism will be obtained, but also the simultaneous growth of the social and cultural conditions of the community.

Based on the description above, the focus of this research is to analyze the stages of integration of gastronomic tourism in the Likupang SEZ and identify the potential of culinary icons, both in the core area and the buffer area, to be developed into the identity and gastronomic tourism attraction for the Likupang SEZ. This research is also expected to provide recommendations for the development strategy of gastronomic tourism based on the methodological stages of gastronomic tourism integration designed by the United Nations World Tourism Organization in 2019, by utilizing the collaboration of the core area and the buffer area of the Likupang SEZ.

To achieve these objectives, this research is guided by the following research questions: (1) What are the key challenges and opportunities in integrating gastronomic tourism in the Likupang SEZ? (2) How does the relationship between core and buffer areas influence gastronomic tourism development? (3) What strategic actions should be taken to enhance gastronomic tourism integration in the region? Furthermore, this study contributes to the growing body of research on sustainable tourism by offering practical insights into how gastronomic tourism can be integrated into an emerging tourism hub. The findings will provide policymakers, local businesses, and tourism stakeholders with strategic recommendations to enhance the cultural and economic value of Likupang SEZ as a gastronomic destination.

## Methodology

A qualitative approach using the case study method was employed in this research to explore the potential and unravel the complexities of identifying the development of integrated gastronomic

tourism potential in the Likupang Special Economic Zone (SEZ). The research was conducted in three main locations, divided into two buffer areas and one core area. The buffer areas include the City of Manado and North Minahasa Regency, while the Likupang SEZ serves as the core area of the research. The research was conducted over a six-month period from June to December 2023. The initial phase involved literature reviews and stakeholder mapping (June-August), followed by field observations and interviews September. Data analysis and interpretation were conducted in October, with final reporting completed in December. Two types of data were used namely primary and secondary data. Interviews and direct observation methods were employed as techniques for collecting primary data.

To obtain primary data for this study, the researcher used a non-probability sampling technique, specifically snowball sampling, This sampling approach was chosen due to the limited availability of documented experts and practitioners in gastronomic tourism development in Likupang. By using snowball sampling, we ensured that key informants with deep industry knowledge and practical experience were included in the study. The interviews followed a semi-structured format, consisting of open-ended questions focusing on three main themes: (1) stakeholders' perceptions of Likupang's gastronomic tourism potential, (2) existing integration strategies and challenges, and (3) recommendations for future development. Sample questions included: 'What are the most significant challenges in promoting Likupang as a gastronomic destination?' and 'What policies or infrastructure improvements do you think are necessary for enhancing gastronomic tourism in Likupang SEZ? Seven key informants from various stakeholders were interviewed to gather data on the potential and integration process of gastronomic tourism in the core and buffer areas of the Likupang SEZ. The list of 7 informants can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1.** List of informant (self-research)

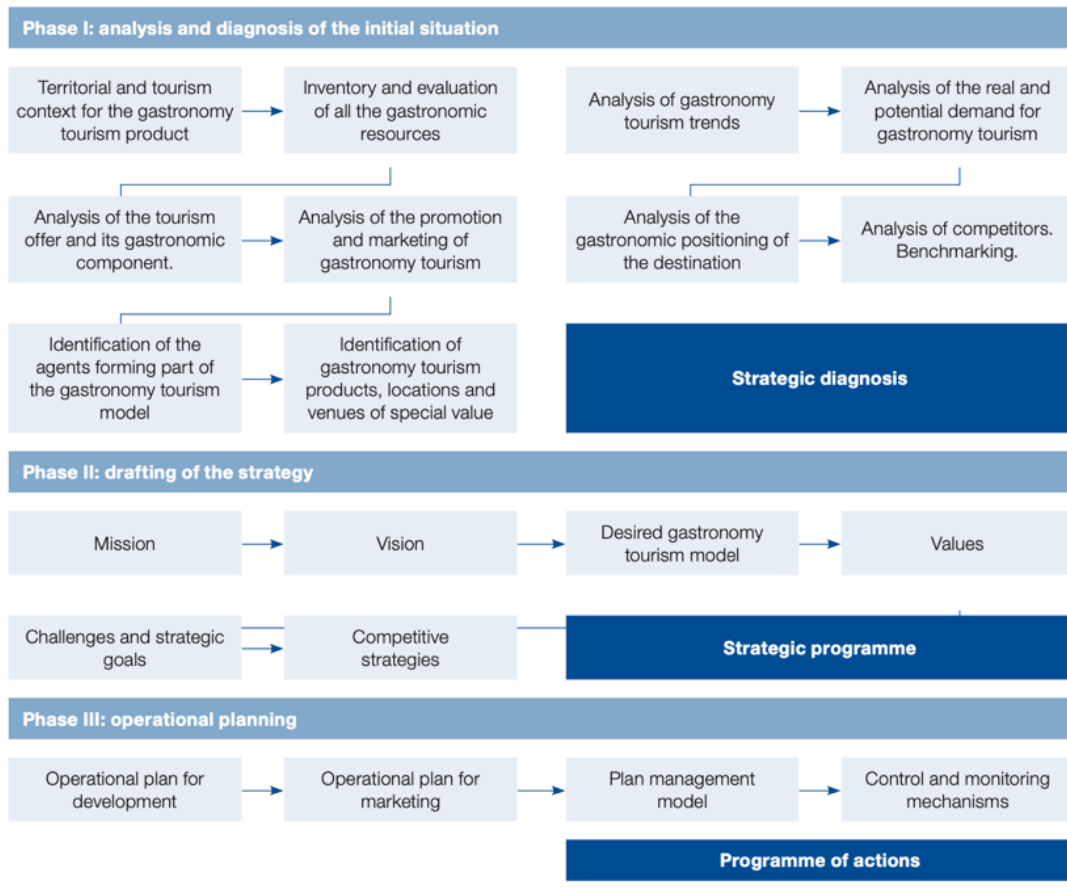
Informant	Name	Agency/Business	Information
1	Henry W Kaitjily	North Sulawesi Provincial Tourism Office	Head of Tourism
2	Chef Jeanli Wangke	Indonesia Chef Association (ICA) North Sulawesi	Head of Association
3	Diane Pangow	North Minahasa Culture and Tourism Office	Head of Tourism and Culture
4	Benny Towoliu	Manado State Polytechnic	Lecturer
5	Jessica Bawekes	Marinsow Village	Head of Village
6	Teddy Tabaluyan	Wakeke Tinutuan Restaurant	Owner
7	Eduard Nani	Pondok Hijau Restaurant	Owner

In addition to conducting field observations and interviewing seven key informants, the researcher also conducted a document study related to the development of the Likupang SEZ to analyze the tourism development strategies of the Likupang SEZ. The list of the documents can be seen in Table 2.

**Table 2.** List of document study (self-research)

Number	Title
1	Final Report of the SEZ 2022
2	Academic Manuscript of the North Minahasa Regency Tourism Development Master Plan (RIPPARKAB)
3	Regional Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD) 2021-2026 of North Minahasa Regency
4	North Minahasa Regency in Figures 2023

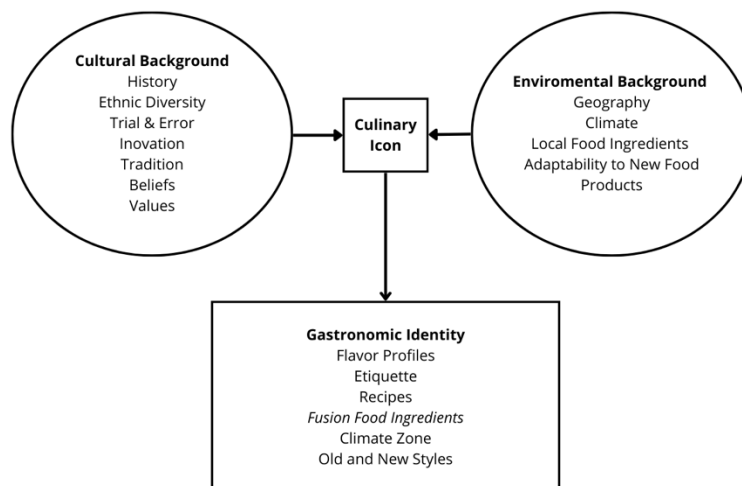
Thematic analysis was employed to analyze qualitative data, with responses categorized into key themes aligned with the UNWTO gastronomic tourism integration framework. Data triangulation was applied by comparing interview insights with document analysis to ensure reliability and validity. The methodological steps for developing a strategic plan for gastronomic tourism from UNWTO are illustrated in Figure 1.



(Source: UNWTO, 2019)

**Figure 1.** Methodological stages of developing a gastronomy tourism strategic plan

To explore the culinary icons of the Likupang SEZ that can be developed into a gastronomic identity, the researcher used the conceptual framework as illustrated in Figure 2.



(Source: Gastronomic Identity Harrington, 2006)

**Figure 2.** Elements of gastronomy

## Results and Discussions

### Diagnosis of Gastronomic Tourism Integration in the Likupang Special Economic Zone

Likupang is one of the 5 Super Priority Destinations designated by the Indonesian government in 2019 and is also part of the National Strategic Tourism Area supported by the stipulation of Government Regulation Number 84 of 2019 (Firmansyah, 2021). The development of Likupang, which is administratively located in North Minahasa Regency, North Sulawesi Province, is also part of the mandate of Government Regulation Number 50 of 2011 concerning the National Tourism Development Master Plan for 2010 – 2025 (Patadjenu et al., n.d.). The designation of Likupang as a Special Economic Zone for Tourism is based on Government Regulation Number 84 of 2019. The concept of smart and sustainable tourism that highlights Minahasa culture as a distinctive feature will differentiate Likupang from other destinations in Indonesia in the future (Dewan Nasional Kawasan Ekonomi Khusus, 2023). Until now, the development of the Likupang Special Economic Zone is considered to have had a multiplier effect on the surrounding community, starting from the establishment of homestays in 3 tourist villages, namely Kinunang, Marinsow, and Pulisan, to the construction of community centers for tour guide training, hospitality service, craft, and local arts training, as well as venues for art and cultural performances. There are at least 4 stakeholders who directly manage the Likupang Special Economic Zone, including PT. Minahasa Permai Resort Development is the Developer and Management Agency, the North Sulawesi Provincial Government, the North Minahasa Regency Government, and the National Special Economic Zone Council.

The profile of the Likupang Special Economic Zone in the 2022 SEZ Report is described as a tourist area with geostrategic advantages, with the theme of resorts and cultural tourism. In the researcher's view, resorts can also function as showcases for various cultural potentials that have been packaged as tourist attractions, including gastronomic tourism. In addition to culture, according to Harrington, the elements that shape gastronomic identity are the environment. Therefore, each gastronomic identity that will be developed must refer to its forming elements, namely culture and environment.

*"Culinary in this area, in my view, should be promoted as optimally and as well as possible. This is due to the existence of abundant marine natural resources in Likupang, which has a fairly extensive coastline." (Jeanli Wanke, Chairman of Indonesia Chef Association, Sulawesi Utara)*

In addition to the abundant potential of marine products and the typical North Sulawesi seafood dishes that can be integrated with the Likupang SEZ, there are also several other natural potential products from gardens and forest products.

*"This tradition has been passed down from generation to generation. Although I am not sure exactly, this food is said to come from the people living in the rural areas, especially around the forest. They have to rely on the vegetables that grow in the forest to survive. They pick the vegetables and cook them into porridge. Porridge alone feels lacking, so they try various vegetable combinations to add flavor." (Teddy Tabaluyan, Owner of RM Takeke)*

With the potential of marine and other natural products, the development of a gastronomic tourism development map in the Likupang SEZ is also related to the division of areas and regions of tourism activities, including culinary tourism, both in the core and buffer areas of the destination. The interaction between the core and buffer areas plays a critical role in tourism sustainability. While the core area functions as the primary tourist attraction, the buffer area supports supply chains, including agricultural and seafood production. A well-structured core-buffer synergy can enhance visitor experiences while ensuring equitable economic distribution.

In the Regional Regulation Draft of North Sulawesi Province, there is already a regulation and division of areas or regions of tourism activities, including in the Likupang SEZ. The document also explains that the Likupang SEZ will be integrated with 5 Regencies/Cities, namely Manado, Bitung, Tomohon, Minahasa, and North Minahasa. This can also be interpreted as a division of the geographical

area of tourism activities, with the Likupang SEZ as the core area and the surrounding areas as the buffer area.

Furthermore, when reviewing the geographical data related to the number of restaurants in the buffer area of the Likupang SEZ, there is a trend of increase from 2019 to 2021, although there was a significant decline in 2022 due to the pandemic. Table 1 provides an overview that the majority of the restaurant population is located in the capital of North Minahasa Regency, namely the city of Airmadidi, which is 49.7 km from the Likupang SEZ and can be reached in 1 hour and 18 minutes by land travel.

**Table 3.** Number of restaurants in North Minahasa regency, 2019 – 2022

Sub-District	2019	2020	2021	2022
Kema	3	3	3	1
Kauditan	10	10	10	2
Airmadidi	36	36	36	32
Kalawat	12	12	20	11
Dimembe	12	12	12	15
Talawaan	-	4	5	6
Wori	-	1	4	2
Likupang Barat	-	2	5	3
Likupang Timur	2	2	10	5
Likupang Selatan	-	1	2	-
Total	75	83	107	77

(Source: Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Minahasa Utara, 2023)

Next, the initial integration efforts of gastronomic tourism in the Likupang SEZ can also be seen from the collaboration carried out by the Tourism and Culture Office with several other Regional Government Work Units.

*"So, the production and marketing of the products are in the area. Likewise, there are plans to establish a training center for creative economy actors in the Likupang area. Currently, in the Zero Points area built by the Trade Office, there are facilities used to support Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises, especially in the culinary sector. Culinary products are displayed in the food court managed by the Trade Office. When people come to Likupang, especially in the North Likupang region, this also hosts various programs." (Diane Pangouw, Head of Creative Economy, Tourism and Culture Department North Minahasa Regency)*

The emphasis on the importance of collaboration in the process of exploring and identifying the gastronomic potential in the buffer and core areas indicates the initial efforts to integrate gastronomic tourism in the Likupang SEZ. There are at least 3 tourism villages in the core area of the Likupang SEZ that can be encouraged to become showcases for gastronomic tourism.

*"The hope is that the efforts initiated by the central government, particularly for Marinsow, can produce products, such as souvenirs or culinary items, that can be promoted at major events. For example, typical dishes like sambal dabu-dabu and sambal roa have already become attractions in Manado, as well as fried banana dishes in Pantai Pal that are usually served with sambal dabu-dabu and sambal roa. In addition, there is great potential in snack products such as fish chips that can be made from bananas or sweet potatoes, as well as other souvenirs. All of these are potentials that exist in Marinsow Village, and the main hope is that this can develop into a substantial asset so that Marinsow Village can become more advanced, independent, and prosperous." (Jessica Bawekes, Secretary of Marinsow Village)*

As one of the tourism villages located in the core area of the Likupang SEZ, the acceptance of the local community of Marinsow towards destination development is very important. The local community can become agents who shape the model of gastronomic tourism in the future. However, the integration efforts undertaken are also not without obstacles, support is still needed from both the

provincial and central governments, as well as the private sector, to accelerate existing gastronomic tourism activities.

*"As the government in North Minahasa, we want to further support the culinary subsector, especially in terms of developing their own products and marketing efforts so that these products are better known, not only abroad but also in other regions. We also hope to assist them in improving the processing of their products by using more sophisticated technology and more modern equipment." Diane Pangouw, Head of Creative Economy, Tourism and Culture Department North Minahasa Regency)*

The findings obtained at the North Minahasa Regency level are also in line with the results of document studies and interviews obtained at the North Sulawesi provincial level as illustrated in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Culinary-related words in government documents (self-research)

Title	Gastronomy	Culinary	Context
Final Report of the SEZ 2022	0	1	Culinary Sector
Academic Manuscript of the North Minahasa Regency Tourism Development Master Plan (RIPPARKAB)	0	1	Culinary Tourist Attraction
Regional Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD) 2021-2026 of North Minahasa Regency	0	2	Culinary Tourist Attraction

Therefore, based on the diagnosis obtained through interviews and document studies on the development plan of the Likupang SEZ, it can be said that the process of integrating the potential of gastronomic tourism has not yet been carried out optimally. When viewed using the methodological framework of the UNWTO's gastronomic tourism integration strategy, the condition is still in the early stage of Phase 1, particularly the stage of determining the context of a tourism area and identifying the culinary potential to be developed.

A detailed SWOT analysis of gastronomic tourism potential reveals several insights. Strengths include a rich culinary heritage, diverse seafood-based dishes, and government support for tourism development. Weaknesses involve inadequate infrastructure, limited stakeholder coordination, and an underdeveloped culinary branding strategy. Opportunities arise from the increasing demand for authentic food tourism experiences and the potential to integrate local cuisine into broader tourism packages. Threats include competition from other well-established gastronomic destinations and environmental sustainability concerns regarding seafood.

While preliminary efforts have been made to integrate gastronomy into tourism, current strategies remain fragmented. The lack of a centralized policy framework and minimal private sector involvement indicate that integration is still in its infancy. Comparisons with successful models such as Thailand gastronomic tourism development suggest that strong multi-stakeholder collaboration and infrastructure investment are crucial for sustainable growth (Muangasame & Park, 2019). A comparative analysis with other successful gastronomic tourism initiatives, such as Penang, Malaysia, and San Sebastián, Spain, reveals key success factors: strong branding, government incentives, and well-developed food trails (Carral, 2020; Fusté-Forné et al., 2021; Seyitoğlu & Ivanov, 2020; UNWTO, 2019). Likupang could adopt similar models by leveraging its unique cultural and environmental assets.

### Culinary Icon of the Likupang Special Economic Zone

Based on interviews, field observations, and literature studies, 14 culinary icons can be developed into the gastronomic identity of the Likupang Special Economic Zone, as shown in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Culinary icons of the Likupang special economic zone based on raw material sources

No	Culinary Icon	Seafood-Based	Other Resource-Based
1	Bubur Tinutuan		V
2	Klappertaart		V
3	Dabu-Dabu Roa	V	
4	Woku Belanga	V	

5	Panada	V
6	Ikan Rica-Rica	V
7	Es Brenebon	V
8	Sayur Bunga Pepaya	V
9	Perkedel Nike	V
10	Nasi Jaha	V
11	Pisang Goroho	V
12	Abon Cakalang	V
13	Nasi Kuning Cakalang	V
14	Cakalang Fufu	V

The local culinary assets identified in the Likupang SEZ, both in the core and buffer areas, have great potential to be integrated into the development of gastronomic tourism. This can be done by optimizing the opportunities provided by the existing regulations, collaboration between stakeholders, and empowering the local community (Araujo, 2016; Manaf, 2020; Sukardi et al., 2022; Zakharia et al., 2021).

In Table 4, seafood-based dishes dominate the local culinary icons. This is due to the geographical location of the Likupang Special Economic Zone, which is located in North Minahasa Regency, near the coastal areas. This region has easy access to abundant marine raw materials such as fish, shrimp, and shellfish, making them the main commodities in local culinary production. Furthermore, the local community has inherited traditional knowledge and skills in processing marine products into distinctive regional dishes.

The Likupang Special Economic Zone possesses a rich culinary heritage intimately tied to its abundant marine resources, reflecting a strong coastal gastronomic tradition. Seafood-based dishes such as Dabu-Dabu Roa, Woku Belanga, Panada, Ikan Rica-Rica, Perkedel Nike, Nasi Kuning Cakalang, and Cakalang Fufu not only showcase the distinctive flavors of North Sulawesi, but also illustrate how the local community has inherited and preserved these culinary practices over generations. For instance, Woku Belanga is often prepared during traditional celebrations or thanksgiving events, where the cooking process is carried out collectively by the community as a form of respect for ancestors and nature. Similarly, Panada is frequently served during family gatherings or religious rituals as a symbol of community and blessings.

Facing the era of modern tourism, there is a significant opportunity to harmonize the wealth of these traditions with culinary innovations, such as more visually appealing presentations or more environmentally sustainable packaging, in order to enhance the tourism appeal and reinforce the local cultural identity. Innovative developments can also be applied to Nasi Kuning Cakalang, which is traditionally served during important events like birthday celebrations or thanksgiving ceremonies. Although this dish is deeply rooted in tradition, adaptations in presentation or flavor variations can attract the interest of the younger generation and tourists seeking unique yet authentic gastronomic experiences. By integrating innovative elements without compromising the authenticity of the taste and tradition, these seafood-based cuisines can become the primary attraction for tourists in Likupang.

In addition to its abundance of seafood, the Likupang Special Economic Zone is also rich in other natural products that are processed into distinctive and equally appealing local cuisines, reflecting the wealth of its terrestrial culinary traditions. Bubur Tinutuan, Klappertaart, Es Brenebon, Sayur Bunga Pepaya, Nasi Jaha, and Pisang Goroho are examples of dishes that utilize natural ingredients such as vegetables, legumes, coconut, and bananas. For instance, Bubur Tinutuan is often served during traditional ceremonies or family gatherings as a symbol of health and well-being. Similarly, Nasi Jaha, which is cooked in bamboo through a roasting method, is commonly prepared for weddings or thanksgiving events as a symbol of community and resilience.

This culinary tradition not only showcases the diversity of natural resources in Likupang but also demonstrates the creativity and innovation of the local community in utilizing the available land-based produce. Klappertaart, although influenced by Dutch culture, has been adapted and become part of the local tradition, often served during Christmas celebrations or other important events. Likewise, Pisang Goroho is frequently presented as part of certain traditional rituals, where the banana is believed to bring good fortune. By combining traditional techniques with innovative approaches, such as the development of new recipes or the use of more modern processing technologies, these land-based cuisines can continue to evolve into flagship products that support environmental and local economic sustainability, while also enriching the culinary tourism experience in Likupang.



These culinary icons can be developed through the management of tourism villages, such as Marinsow Village, Pulisan Village, and Kinunang Village, which are located within the core area of the Likupang Special Economic Zone. The development of these culinary icons can be carried out in various ways, such as the establishment of culinary training centers, the formation of culinary communities, the organization of culinary festivals, and the inclusion of culinary elements in tourism packages (Setiawan et al., 2022; Sukardi et al., 2022). In addition, efforts to increase the added value of these culinary icons can be done through the use of digital technology, such as the creation of culinary-based mobile applications and social media promotions (Ishak et al., 2023; Schimperna et al., 2020).

### **Recommended Strategy for Integrating Gastronomic Tourism in the Likupang Special Economic Zone**

The management and development of local food ingredients for the local culinary icons of the Likupang Special Economic Zone needs to be carried out comprehensively by involving various relevant parties. The local government as the policymaker and coordinator of destination development can take strategic steps that refer to the methodological stages of preparing a gastronomic tourism strategic plan developed by the UNWTO, as shown in Figure 1.

10 other recommended integration strategy points are in line with Phase 1 of the UNWTO framework, including:

1. Determining the tourism area according to its gastronomic products, such as the center of the seafood area in the Likupang SEZ.
2. Conducting an inventory of the resources forming the developed gastronomic icons, such as the fish auction center, the skipjack smokehouse, or natural product plantations.
3. Analyzing the existing activity offerings to align with their gastronomic components.
4. Analyzing the appropriate promotion and marketing for the gastronomic tourism of the Likupang SEZ.
5. Identifying the parties that can be involved in the development and implementation of the gastronomic tourism model, including the Marinsow Tourism Village, Kinunang Tourism Village, and Pulisan Tourism Village.
6. Identifying locations and areas that can provide added value to gastronomic tourism products.
7. Analyzing gastronomic tourism trends that are in line with the development of the Likupang SEZ.
8. Analyzing the potential demand for gastronomic tourism in the Likupang SEZ.
9. Conducting an analysis related to the bargaining position of gastronomy from the Likupang SEZ.
10. Conducting a competitor analysis for the development of gastronomic tourism in the Likupang SEZ.

This study is limited by its qualitative nature, focusing on a single SEZ. Future research should incorporate quantitative analysis and comparative case studies to enhance generalizability. Additionally, potential biases in stakeholder interviews may influence findings, necessitating broader survey methods.

### **Conclusion**

This study highlights the untapped potential of gastronomic tourism in the Likupang Special Economic Zone (SEZ), emphasizing the need for structured policy interventions, stakeholder collaboration, and branding efforts. While the integration of gastronomy has not yet been a top priority, there is growing awareness among local governments—from the provincial to the village level—regarding its potential as a key tourism attraction. Initial steps have been taken to explore existing culinary assets, yet a more comprehensive identification of gastronomic tourism potential is required to formulate strategic development recommendations.

The establishment of core and buffer areas in a tourism destination significantly influences tourism management, particularly in infrastructure development, resource allocation, and attraction enhancement (Mottiar & Ryan, 2007). In this regard, collaboration among stakeholders—spanning government agencies, entrepreneurs, media, local communities, and academics—is essential from the planning phase to continuous monitoring (Islahuddin et al., 2022). Furthermore, the integration of

locally sourced food and products with geographical indications plays a crucial role in strengthening the identity of gastronomic tourism (Pamukçu et al., 2021).

For the Likupang SEZ, a strategic approach should involve not only the identification of core area resources but also the consideration of buffer zones that share similar cultural and environmental characteristics. This broader perspective can aid in defining a distinct gastronomic identity for the region. The insights from this study suggest that future development efforts should focus on creating integrated tourism attraction packages that blend cultural and environmental elements with local gastronomic icons.

Future studies should explore the economic impact of gastronomic tourism on local employment, conduct longitudinal assessments of policy effectiveness, and investigate consumer behavior trends to refine marketing strategies. A holistic approach, integrating culinary heritage with sustainable tourism practices, will be key to positioning Likupang as a premier gastronomic destination in Southeast Asia.

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