
EXPLORING THE POTENTIAL OF LOCAL FOOD TO OPTIMIZE AS A TOURIST ATTRACTION IN CAUB KARANGSALAM VILLAGE

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Abstract

As the main attractions, scenery and culinary have been integrated into tourism communities, which positively impact the local economy. This study examines the potential of local food in Caub Karangsalam Village as a strategic component in the growth of culinary tourism focused on the community. Using a qualitative approach with a purposive sampling technique, data were gathered through extensive interviews with all parties involved, including village administrators, tourism awareness groups, culinary micro and small enterprises (MSME) actors, and tourists. The study's findings demonstrate the importance of local food, especially dishes such as mendoan and robusta coffee, in shaping the gastronomic identity of Caub Karangsalam. It examines how traditional preparation techniques, such as frying mendoan to achieve a tender yet slightly crispy texture and serving it with soy sauce and sliced chili peppers, create a well-balanced flavor profile that enhances the overall taste experience. The study also emphasizes the significance of savoring these warm delicacies in the chilly highland climate of the area, which intensifies their appeal to visitors. Results indicate that the combination of traditional techniques for cooking, high-quality local ingredients, and the natural ambiance contributes not only to the sensory enjoyment of these foods but also to their cultural value and role in promoting local tourism and economic development.

Keywords: Beautiful Scenery, Local Food, Culinary Tourism, and Local Economic Contribution

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INTRODUCTION

Rural tourism has been shown to have a positive impact on local economies. By developing tourist villages, residents can utilize the surrounding resources to create new income opportunities (Firdaus, 2022). This type of village tourism is gaining popularity worldwide, as tourists seek authentic experiences that combine local cultural attractions, natural scenery, and opportunities to engage and learn about village life (Lwoga & Maturo, 2020).

Data from the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy in 2023 shows that visits to tourist villages have increased by 50% over the past two years, especially in areas such as Central Java, East Java, and West Java. For example, Tinalah Tourism Village in Kulonprogo Regency, Yogyakarta, experienced significant growth in the number of visitors, increasing from 3,300 in 2021 to 6,000 in 2022 (Kemenparekraf, 2023).

This research examines how the local culinary delights of Caub Karangsalam contribute to enhancing the economy of local food entrepreneurs. In addition to boosting the local economy through direct sales and entrepreneurship opportunities, these food entrepreneurs provide a unique cultural and economic appeal that attracts tourists. This increased tourism significantly enhances the value of Caub Karangsalam as a destination that authentically represents Central Java's culinary identity.

The development of culinary-driven tourism brings several positive impacts for local residents, including the creation of sustainable job opportunities in food preparation, service, and hospitality sectors. It also raises awareness of the Club Karangsalam area among the general public through effective social media promotion strategies, which have been proven to be 98.2% effective as communication channels.

Notable attractions for visitors include traditional dishes such as mendoan, celebrated as one of the finest offerings from Banyumas, and locally grown robusta coffee, which showcases the agricultural advantages of the region. These elements attract visitors who seek to experience authentic local food against the

backdrop of spectacular mountain views. This creates a synergistic relationship between cultural preservation and economic development.

This multifaceted approach to culinary tourism illustrates how traditional food culture can be leveraged to create sustainable economic models that effectively integrate both cultural preservation and tangible economic benefits for the local community.

METHOD

The method employed in this research is a qualitative approach, primarily using direct, extensive interviews with local culinary sellers operating in Caub Karangsalam. Data collection was facilitated through the use of a smartphone, which served as both a recording device for documentation and a tool for conducting interviews. The research team prepared some semi-structured questions designed to elicit comprehensive insights regarding several key aspects: the characteristics of local food, its appeal to tourists, and its broader influence on the local economy. Special attention was given to understanding the significance of iconic local foods, such as mendoan, and the unique methods of preparation and presentation that contribute to their popularity among visitors.

In addition to culinary aspects, the research also investigated the socioeconomic impact of culinary tourism on the livelihoods of Karangsalam residents. Questions were posed to gather information about business operations, including ownership structures, employment practices, and workforce composition.

An interesting finding from the interviews was that business owners, such as Bu Fatijah, do not impose strict requirements when hiring workers. The primary criterion is a willingness to work responsibly, with a preference for hiring residents from the Karangsalam area. This inclusive approach not only supports local employment but also fosters a sense of community ownership and pride in the culinary tourism sector. Overall, the interview method proved effective in obtaining rich, firsthand information directly from key stakeholders,

allowing the research team to gain a nuanced understanding of the dynamics that underpin the success and sustainability of culinary tourism in Caub Karangsalam.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Variety of Local Food in Caub Karangsalam

Caub Karangsalam is celebrated for its unique local delicacies, most notably mendoan and robusta coffee, which are both made and served with a local flair. Mendoan, a traditional Banyumas dish made from thinly sliced tempeh dipped in seasoned flour batter and lightly fried, is typically served warm on wooden plates lined with paper or banana leaves. This eco-friendly serving technique not only enhances the rustic dining experience but also reflects the community's commitment to sustainability by minimizing water usage and reducing the need for washing dishes. Grown in the fertile highlands around Caub, robusta coffee, offers a bold, aromatic brew that perfectly complements the region's cool mountain climate. Both delicacies are thoughtfully served warm, providing comfort and warmth to visitors as they enjoy the crisp, refreshing air of Caub Karangsalam.

2. Cultural Meaning Behind Local Food

The preparation and presentation of these local foods are deeply rooted in local culture and tradition. The combination of mendoan with sweet soy sauce and sliced chili peppers is a deliberate culinary choice, designed to create a harmonious balance of savory, sweet, and spicy flavors. This interplay of tastes not only pleases the palate but also symbolizes the community's appreciation for balance and togetherness. Serving food on natural materials such as leaves or wooden plates further emphasizes the community's respect for nature and their resourceful approach to daily living. These culinary traditions are passed down

through generations, reinforcing a sense of identity and pride among the residents of Caub Karangsalam.

3. Local Food as a Cultural Tourism Experience

Beyond their role as culinary delights, local foods in Caub Karangsalam are integral to the area's cultural tourism appeal. The experience of enjoying freshly prepared mendoan and robusta coffee amidst stunning highland scenery is a major draw for tourists seeking authenticity and immersion in local life. These foods not only attract visitors but also serve as economic catalysts, creating job opportunities for residents. Many entrepreneurs in the area prioritize hiring from within the community, thereby supporting local livelihoods and fostering economic resilience. Through these efforts, Caub Karangsalam's culinary heritage becomes both a source of community pride and a sustainable driver of tourism and economic development, offering visitors a taste of local culture in every bite and sip.

4. Visitor Fluctuations and Environmental Challenges at Caub Baturaden

Caub Baturaden, nestled in the highland region at the foot of Mount Slamet, experiences notable fluctuations in visitor numbers, heavily influenced by its unique mountainous microclimate. The area is characterized by frequent rainfall, with weather conditions ranging from light rain to moderate rain, high humidity levels between 74-97%, and temperatures typically ranging from 22 to 28°C. These climatic factors create both an alluring natural environment and operational challenges for Caub Baturaden, especially given its specialization in outdoor camping and recreational activities. The highland weather, while refreshing and scenic, can deter visitors during rainy periods, leading to significant variability in tourist flow. Moreover, the region's weather conditions demand adaptive management to maintain a quality visitor experience despite the environmental unpredictability.

Originally an underutilized village area, Caub Baturaden has been transformed into a thriving camping destination through targeted government revitalization efforts. However, this success brings its challenges, particularly during peak times such as weekends when visitor surges lead to overcrowding. The influx of tourists often results in delayed food service at the on-site food court, limited availability of seating in the gazebo relaxation areas, and congestion at popular amenities like the observation tower and charging stations. These operational bottlenecks highlight the need for effective crowd and facility management to sustain the site's appeal and ensure visitor satisfaction.

5. Strategic Solutions for Sustainable Tourism Management

In response to these challenges, Caub Baturaden has implemented a series of strategic solutions aimed at enhancing both infrastructure and service capacity. One key approach involves hiring additional staff during peak periods to expedite food service and improve overall visitor assistance. This staffing increase helps reduce wait times and manage the higher volume of guests more efficiently. Additionally, expanding the relaxation areas and gazebo facilities provides more comfortable and spacious seating options, alleviating overcrowding and allowing visitors to fully enjoy the serene environment.

Infrastructure improvements at the food court are also underway to better accommodate growing visitor numbers, ensuring that local food, which is an important aspect of the Caub experience, can be served quickly and in a welcoming setting. These enhancements not only improve operational efficiency but also elevate the overall tourist experience, encouraging longer stays and repeat visits. Visitors are drawn not only by the natural beauty of the highlands but also by the opportunity to savor local culinary delights while taking in panoramic views of Purwokerto city and the broader Banyumas regency.

Together, these measures reflect a proactive and sustainable approach to managing tourism growth in Caub Baturaden. By addressing environmental challenges and operational constraints through thoughtful planning and investment, the site is well-positioned to maintain its status as a premier highland

camping destination, balancing visitor enjoyment with community benefits and environmental stewardship.

Figure

The artificial tourism destination CAUB (Camp Area Umbul Bengkok), which opened in 2017, saw notable variations in the number of visitors between 2020 and 2023. According to the recorded data, Visits decreased to 33,569 in 2021 from 41,529 in 2020.

- First year after the COVID-19 pandemic: 7.195 visitors
- The next year (2023) there is a reduction in visitors to 5.972.

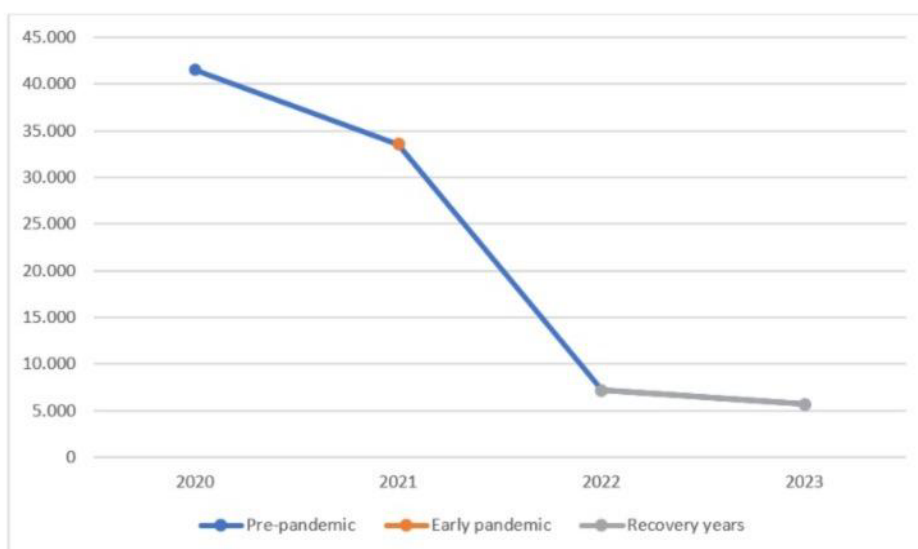


Figure 1. Number of Tourist Visits to CAUB (Camp Area Umbul Bengkok) in Baturraden in the Period 2020-2023

Source: disporapar.jatengprov.go.id

Table

Between 2020 and 2023, there were notable variations in the number of visitors to Camp Area Umbul Bengkok (CAUB), an artificial tourism destination that opened in 2017 (Figure 1). When travel restrictions started, pre-pandemic visits dropped 19.2% to 33,569 in 2021 from 41,529 in 2020. Only a partial recovery to 7,195 visitors by 2023—just 17.3% of pre-pandemic levels—followed the

complete closure (0 visitors) during the peak pandemic period (2022) (Table 1). This stands in stark contrast to Central Java's natural tourism destinations, which saw consistent visits over the same time frame.

Table 1. Data of Tourism Visits to CAUB in the period 2020-2023

Year	Number of Tourists
2020	41.529
2021	33.569
2022	7.194
2023	5.972

Source: disporapar.jatengprov.go.id

CONCLUSION

The findings of this research demonstrate that local tourism destinations like Caub Karangsalam have the potential to transform previously lesser-known areas into unique and vibrant attractions. The development of Caub Karangsalam as a tourism site has generated numerous positive impacts, including significant economic benefits for the local community, increased visibility and recognition of the area among a broader audience, and the wider popularity of traditional local dishes such as Mendoan. This culinary specialty, along with other local foods, not only serves as a gastronomic delight but also embodies a deeper cultural philosophy, whereby the dishes' presentation and deliberate additions heighten their allure and produce a unique experience that appeals to tourists.

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