

## **Gastronomic Potential in the Development of Tourism in Gorontalo**

Yesi Pandu Pratama Wibowo DC <sup>1)</sup>, Jati Paras Ayu <sup>2)</sup>, Ayu Rakhmi Tiara Hamdani <sup>3)</sup>, Dewi Rachmawati <sup>4)</sup>, Siti Adelita Raif Khadijah <sup>5)</sup>

LSPR Institute of Communication and Business <sup>1, 2, 3, 5</sup>  
Institute of Communication and Business <sup>4)</sup>

\*) Corresponding author: Yesi.ppw@lspr.edu

### **Abstract**

This study examines the potential of gastronomic tourism in Gorontalo City, highlighting opportunities for its development as a key attraction. Employing a qualitative approach, data are presented in descriptive narratives and analyses. The study site, Gorontalo City, was selected due to its rich culinary and gastronomic heritage, which offers unique opportunities to attract visitors. Primary data were obtained through field observations, in-depth interviews with culinary and gastronomy experts, and focus group discussions (FGDs) to validate findings. Secondary data were derived from online documents, literature, and scientific journals. A purposive sampling method was applied to select culinary items based on historical and cultural significance, accessibility to food preparation processes, and popularity among local and visiting tourists. The collected data were analyzed through stages of data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing, supported by relevant theories and concepts. A SWOT analysis was conducted to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to gastronomic tourism in Gorontalo and a TOWS Matrix to generate strategies based on the findings from a SWOT analysis. Findings reveal that while Gorontalo offers strong symbolic culinary traditions and community-based tourism models, several barriers persist, including weak documentation, underdeveloped beverage traditions, limited digital promotion, and fragile MSME ecosystems, particularly for women-led enterprises. Nonetheless, emerging initiatives, such as food festivals, immersive homestays, and government-supported culinary hubs, indicate growing interest in gastronomic tourism. This paper recommends a multi-sectoral strategy that includes the development of a culinary heritage certification, innovation in traditional beverages, digital storytelling campaigns, and capacity-building for MSMEs. The integration of sustainability principles, through eco-friendly practices and community participation, is emphasized as a foundation for long-term success. Gorontalo's culinary identity, if strategically developed and promoted, holds significant potential to become a catalyst for cultural preservation, inclusive economic growth, and regional tourism competitiveness.

**Keyword: Culinary, Cultural; Gastronomic; Gorontalo; Tourism**

### ***Potensi Gastronomi dalam Pengembangan Pariwisata di Gorontalo***

#### **Abstrak**

Penelitian ini mengkaji potensi pariwisata gastronomi di Kota Gorontalo, dengan menyoroti peluang pengembangannya sebagai daya tarik utama. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, data disajikan dalam bentuk narasi dan analisis deskriptif. Lokasi penelitian, yaitu Kota Gorontalo, dipilih karena memiliki warisan kuliner dan gastronomi yang kaya, yang menawarkan peluang unik untuk menarik kunjungan wisatawan. Data primer diperoleh melalui observasi lapangan, wawancara mendalam dengan para ahli kuliner dan gastronomi, serta diskusi kelompok terarah (FGD) untuk memvalidasi temuan. Data sekunder berasal dari dokumen daring, literatur, dan jurnal ilmiah. Metode purposive sampling digunakan untuk memilih item kuliner berdasarkan signifikansi historis dan budaya, aksesibilitas terhadap proses pembuatan makanan, serta popularitas di kalangan wisatawan lokal dan pendatang. Data yang dikumpulkan dianalisis melalui tahapan reduksi data, penyajian, dan penarikan kesimpulan, dengan dukungan teori dan konsep yang relevan. Analisis SWOT dilakukan untuk mengidentifikasi kekuatan, kelemahan, peluang, dan ancaman yang berkaitan dengan pariwisata gastronomi di Gorontalo, serta Matriks TOWS digunakan untuk merumuskan strategi berdasarkan hasil analisis SWOT. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa meskipun Gorontalo memiliki tradisi kuliner simbolik yang kuat dan model pariwisata berbasis komunitas, masih terdapat berbagai hambatan, termasuk kurangnya dokumentasi, tradisi minuman yang belum berkembang, promosi digital yang terbatas, dan ekosistem UMKM yang rentan, khususnya bagi usaha yang dipimpin oleh perempuan. Meskipun demikian, berbagai inisiatif yang mulai bermunculan, seperti festival makanan, program homestay imersif, dan pusat kuliner yang didukung pemerintah, menunjukkan adanya minat yang berkembang terhadap pariwisata gastronomi. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan strategi multisektoral yang mencakup pengembangan sertifikasi warisan kuliner, inovasi dalam minuman tradisional,



*kampanye digital storytelling, dan penguatan kapasitas bagi pelaku UMKM. Integrasi prinsip keberlanjutan, melalui praktik ramah lingkungan dan partisipasi masyarakat, ditekankan sebagai fondasi untuk kesuksesan jangka panjang. Identitas kuliner Gorontalo, jika dikembangkan dan dipromosikan secara strategis, memiliki potensi besar untuk menjadi katalis pelestarian budaya, pertumbuhan ekonomi yang inklusif, dan daya saing pariwisata daerah.*

**Kata Kunci:** *Kuliner, Budaya, Gastronomi, Gorontalo, Pariwisata*

## INTRODUCTION

Gorontalo, located in northern Sulawesi, presents a rich tapestry of tourism potential encompassing natural beauty, cultural heritage, and artificial attractions. Despite these assets, the region remains relatively undiscovered, highlighting an urgent need for collaboration among stakeholders—academia, businesses, government, and media—to enhance its tourism sector (Hendriyani, 2024a). As reported by the Gorontalo Provincial Tourism Office in 2024, the region boasts at least 71 marine tourism destinations, 28 natural sites, and a variety of cultural, historical, and special interest tourism locations (Fikri, 2024). The provincial government has identified key tourist attractions, such as Fort Otanaha and Bolihutuo Beach, with the aim of increasing visitor numbers and promoting sustainable tourism development (Rizkiyah & Faridi, 2022). The discussion surrounding the enhancement of international tourist visits to Gorontalo has gained traction, particularly in recent gubernatorial election debates. Here, tourism is positioned as a critical avenue for improving community welfare and bolstering the local economy (Husuna, 2024). Central to this narrative is Gorontalo's vibrant cultural tourism potential, which is underscored by its unique customs and local products, capable of drawing in visitors. Cultural tourism emphasizes the significance of local culture as a primary attraction, while culinary tourism offers an avenue for tourists to immerse themselves in regional cuisines, fostering a deeper appreciation for local food (Raj, 2013; Besra, 2015; Prasiasa, 2013) (Rizkiyah & Faridi, 2022). By harnessing this cultural richness, Gorontalo can create memorable experiences for tourists, thereby enhancing the region's appeal. Culinary tourism, in particular, holds substantial promise in Gorontalo. Traditional foods, such as Apangi, are highlighted during festivals, showcasing the region's gastronomic heritage (Solihin, 2024). Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy, Sandiaga Salahuddin Uno, has advocated for Gorontalo to join the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, recognizing the culinary sector as a crucial driver of creative economic potential (Hendriyani, 2024b). Hallet et al. (2003) (Indra, et al., 2022), classify food tourism into three levels based on tourists' motivations for visiting a destination: 1) **Gastronomic Tourism:** This level involves a high motivation to try specific foods or drinks in designated areas, often associated with luxury experiences such as fine dining, wineries, and festivals. 2) **Culinary Tourism:** This category focuses on visiting local festivals, markets, or plantations where food plays a part in the cultural experience rather than being a luxury. 3) **Rural/Urban Tourism:** Here, food is viewed as a basic necessity, with tourists generally less concerned about the quality or flavor of the food, yet still willing to try it.

International events offer a valuable opportunity to promote local culinary heritage as part of national tourism branding. This strategy has proven effective, with 88% of guests responding positively to the culinary experience (Hamdani, et al. 2025). Gastronomic tourism thus plays an essential role in promoting culinary heritage, fostering cultural preservation, and enhancing the local economy by attracting visitors and encouraging collaboration between the local government and stakeholders in the creative industry (Hendriyani, 2024b). Current trends indicate a growing awareness of the importance of gastronomic tourism in Gorontalo, as travelers increasingly seek authentic culinary experiences. Modern travelers prioritize food as a key element of their journeys, with many willing to travel great distances to sample local dishes that enhance their cultural understanding (Kastenholz and Davis, 1999; Gyimothy et al., 2000; Joppe et al., 2001; Denizer, 2015; & Güler et al., 2016 in Sormaz, 2017 & Ichsan, et al, 2023). Consequently, gastronomy emerges as a pivotal factor in the competitiveness of tourist destinations, transforming food into a tangible manifestation of intangible cultural heritage (Huertas-Lopez et al., 2019 in Nomishan, et al., 2024). Gorontalo's cuisine reflects its geographical and historical context, showcasing a diverse array of natural products and local agricultural practices. A distinctive aspect of Gorontalo culture, which remains strong today, is the philosophy of its people that embodies the notion of "Bumi Serambi Madinah," or the "Porch of Madinah," signifying a city that upholds Islamic values while also celebrating its cultural heritage (Supriyadi, 2017 in Hatibie & Priyambodo, 2019). Evidence of this cultural legacy is found in traditional food practices that have persisted since ancient times. Traditional food heritage forms an integral part of the cultural tradition, reflecting a transcendent appreciation for the belief in a powerful force that transforms their lives (Rahman, 2012 in Hatibie & Priyambodo, 2019). Despite the richness of Gorontalo's traditional culinary heritage, which includes staples like corn, sago, and rice, along with seafood specialties such as tuna, this potential has yet to be fully integrated into the region's tourism narrative (Ichsan, et al., 2023; Ramadhania, 2024).

The coastal location of the region yields an abundance of seafood and agricultural produce, which enriches its culinary offerings (Noho, et al., 2020). However, many traditional dishes, such as Bubur Diniyohu and Kue Apangi, are becoming increasingly rare and are typically reserved for special occasions, limiting their exposure to

a broader tourist audience (Ibrahim, 2024). By emphasizing its culinary heritage and local flavors, Gorontalo has the potential to attract visitors keen on gastronomic tourism. This strategy not only highlights the region's unique culinary identity but also fosters cultural exchange and deeper connections between tourists and the local community (Anugrah, 2018). With supportive initiatives from the Ministry of Tourism, such as the planned spice tour, Gorontalo can position itself as a significant player in the culinary tourism market, drawing attention to its rich flavors and diverse dishes. By capitalizing on its culinary resources and cultural heritage, Gorontalo can cultivate a more robust tourism sector that resonates with modern travelers (Anugrah, 2018). Gastronomy acts as a bridge between cultural tourism and contemporary practices of cultural heritage, underscoring the importance of high-quality experiences and healthy eating (Ichsan, et al., 2023). Tourism training and outreach programs are beneficial for increasing the knowledge and skills of local communities. These efforts enable people to develop new sources of income within the tourism sector and reduce reliance on a single income stream, thereby contributing to greater economic stability (Wibowo, et al., 2024). Moreover, local culinary initiatives can significantly bolster the community's economy, generate employment opportunities, and enhance the welfare of small-scale culinary vendors. Gastronomy presents considerable advantages for tourism, including differentiating destinations, effective marketing, motivation for travel, and increased tourist satisfaction (Yilmaz, 2015 in Çalışkan & Yilmaz, 2016). Additionally, gastronomic tourism provides economic benefits for farmers, ranchers, fishermen, and the food service sectors, enriching local cuisines and promoting regional food culture on both national and international stages (Kastenholz and Davis, 1999; Gyimothy et al., 2000; Joppe et al., 2001; Denizler, 2015; & Güler et al., 2016 in Sormaz, 2017). Research by Rizkiyah and Faridi (2022) highlights the importance of local culinary offerings in supporting tourism, identifying key factors that can enhance the potential of regional cuisines to attract visitors (Rizkiyah & Faridi, 2022). By integrating culinary heritage into tourism strategies, regions can distinguish themselves and foster deeper cultural exchanges through gastronomic experiences.

Although several studies have discussed culinary culture and tourism potential, most research has focused separately on cultural promotion or local culinary products. Limited studies have specifically examined Gorontalo's gastronomic potential from a strategic tourism development perspective. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the development strategies of gastronomic tourism in Gorontalo using SWOT and TOWS analyses. This study differs from previous research by offering a strategic analysis that integrates gastronomy, cultural preservation, and regional tourism development. The novelty of this study lies in its integrated approach that positions gastronomy not only as a cultural attraction, but also as a strategy for strengthening destination competitiveness and local economic development. This study also contributes practical insight for tourism stakeholders and policymakers in developing gastronomy-based tourism in Gorontalo. The primary objectives of this research are to explore the potential of gastronomic tourism in Gorontalo, identify the existing culinary heritage, and strategies for developing a sustainable gastronomic tourism that can attract visitors while fostering local economic growth and cultural preservation.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1. Tourism Destination**

A tourist destination is a place that attracts visitors, encouraging them to stay for a period of time by offering various attributes that support this attraction, often providing experiences different from those in the visitor's place of origin (Leiper, 1979, in Tripon & Cosma, 2018). It can be seen as a physical space, with or without administrative boundaries, offering products, services, activities, and experiences within the tourism value chain. It serves as a basic unit of tourism analysis, involving various stakeholders and potentially forming larger networks of destinations. Additionally, a tourist destination has an intangible aspect through its image and identity, which can influence its market competitiveness (World Tourism Organization, 2016, Tripon & Cosma, 2018). A tourist destination is a concept that has both theoretical and functional implications. It can be viewed from different perspectives: geographically and economically, as a physical area with or without administrative boundaries that unites and stimulates various sectors of the tourism industry. It can also be understood from a marketing-management perspective, either as the identity of a place or as a macro-product that includes services and facilities aimed at satisfying tourist needs. Additionally, recent studies emphasize the client's perspective, where the interaction between guests and hosts leads to the co-creation and co-production of experiences (Tripon & Cosma, 2018).

### **2. Culinary Categories**

In the study by Indra et al. (2022), the development of gastronomic tourism begins with the identification of culinary potential, which includes categories such as appetizers, soups, main courses, salads, desserts, and souvenirs. Similarly, Rizkiyah and Faridi (2022) classified local culinary offerings based on village specialties, which encompass rice, vegetables, side dishes, satay, traditional snacks, and chips/crackers. Additionally, types and examples of traditional foods are grouped into four categories: 1) main dishes, 2) vegetables, 3) snacks, and

4) beverages (Noho, Husain, & Kadir, 2020). Furthermore, the inventory of food and beverages is categorized into main dishes, single-plate meals, snacks, souvenirs, sauces, and drinks (Riano et al., 2021).

### **3. Gastronomy Tourism**

The term "gastronomy" derives from Greek words meaning "stomach" and "law," signifying a comprehensive understanding of diverse social cultures, historical elements, heritage aspects, and nutritional significance centered around the art & science of food that shape a region's identity (UNWTO, Williams, Williams, & Omar, 2014; Turgarini & Sari, 2017 in Sormaz, 2017; Hasnah & Nugroho, 2021). While culinary tourism often highlights the flavors of dishes, gastronomic tourism offers a more holistic experience—encompassing the entire journey from production and preparation to consumption, from the locally source ingredients reduces dependence on imports but also emphasizes the unique culinary traits shaped by local geography and culture, cooking processes, and transform into traditional dishes with traditions passed down through generations (Indra, et al., 2022; Ichsan, et al., 2023; Nomishan, et al., 2024; Ningrum, et al., 2014). Additionally, traditional cuisine is closely linked to customs, beliefs, and social structures, making it a fundamental aspect of cultural identity (Hasmah, 2020, pp. 173-174 in Ningrum, et al., 2014). Gastronomy plays a vital role in distinguishing destinations by showcasing their unique culinary characteristics, such as local foods, beverages, and preparation techniques (Nomishan, et al., 2024). Through gastronomic tourism, travelers have the opportunity to immerse themselves in local cuisines, cultures, and distinct eating practices, offering a deeper experience compared to traditional culinary tourism. Activities like food festivals, farm visits, and cooking classes enhance travelers' understanding of local food production, cooking methods, and cultural contexts (Long, 1998; Richards, 2002; Deneault, 2002; Hall & Mitchell, 2001, 2005; Santich, 2004; Ignatov & Smith, 2006; Chang, Kivela, & Mak, 2010; Silkes, 2012; Silkes, Cai, & Lehto, 2013, in Çalıřkan & Yilmaz, 2016).

Gastronomic tourism includes activities such as visiting food producers, attending festivals, and participating in cooking demonstrations. Key attractions for tourists include dishes made with local ingredients, traditional cooking methods, and presentations by individuals in traditional attire, all of which contribute to enhancing a nation's image through its gastronomic experiences (Sormaz, 2017).

### **4. Gastronomic Elements**

The scope of gastronomic studies typically encompasses four elements (Ketaren, 2017 in Putra, 2021):

1. History: This includes the origins of raw materials, encompassing how and where they are cultivated.
2. Culture: This pertains to factors influencing local communities in their food consumption choices.
3. Geographical Landscape: This refers to environmental factors (both natural and ethnic) affecting how communities prepare their food.
4. Cooking Methods: This focuses on general cooking processes rather than specific techniques, as a gastronomer does not necessarily need to be an expert cook.

Table 1. Research Focus

| Elements                      | Evidences                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Food                          | To identified traditional appetizers, staple food, animal-based side dish, plant-based side dish, salad, desserts, snacks, traditional delicacies, and souvenirs existing in Gorontalo                                                                                      |
| Beverages                     | To identified non-alcoholic traditional drinks that are unique to the region, often hold cultural and ceremonial importance, locally sourced ingredients, and using traditional preparation methods, include herbal teas, fruit juice, milk-based drinks, or infused water. |
| History                       | This includes the origins of raw materials, encompassing how and where they are cultivated.                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Culture                       | This pertains to factors influencing local communities in their food consumption choices.                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Geographical Landscape        | This refers to environmental factors (both natural and ethnic) affecting how communities prepare their food.                                                                                                                                                                |
| Cooking Methods               | This focuses on general cooking processes rather than specific techniques, as a gastronomer does not necessarily need to be an expert cook                                                                                                                                  |
| Gastronomic Tourism Activites | To identified Food Festivals, Farm Visits, Cooking Classes, Visiting Food Producers existing in Gorontalo                                                                                                                                                                   |

Source: Researcher, 2024

This study conceptualizes gastronomic tourism as an integration between culinary heritage, community participation, and tourism development. Culinary heritage, including traditional food, beverages, cooking methods,

and cultural values, serves as the primary attraction in gastronomic tourism. Community participation is also considered essential in preserving culinary traditions and supporting authentic tourism experiences through local culinary activities and cultural practices. In the context of tourism development, gastronomic tourism is often associated with destination attractiveness, cultural identity, and local economic activities. Several studies further indicate that the integration on culinary heritage and community-based tourism activities may support sustainable tourism development through preservation and local economic empowerment.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the gastronomic tourism potential of Gorontalo and examine its opportunities and challenges for tourism development. Qualitative research was considered appropriate because it allows an in-depth understanding of cultural practices, local culinary experiences, and community perspectives related to gastronomic tourism (Creswell, 2013). This study was conducted in Gorontalo Province, Indonesia, due to its rich traditional culinary heritage and emerging gastronomic tourism initiatives. Primary data were collected through field observations, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussion (FGDs). Field observations enabled the researchers to examine food preparation process, restaurant and community culinary practices, presentation methods, and interactions between culinary actors and visitors in gastronomic settings. In addition, observations of culinary promotion through social media platforms were conducted to understand the digital representation and visibility of Gorontalo's culinary products.

The informants were selected using purposive sampling based on their knowledge, experience, and involvement in culinary and tourism activities in Gorontalo. The informants consisted of representatives from the Gorontalo Provincial Tourism Office, the Gorontalo Provincial Education and Culture Office, culinary academics, culinary business owners, and traditional culinary practitioners. Data collection was conducted from 13 to 17 May 2025. Interviews lasted approximately 30 to 60 minutes, while the FGDs lasted approximately 90 minutes. To ensure data credibility and trustworthiness, this study applied source triangulation by comparing findings from observations, interviews, FGDs, social media observations, and secondary data such as documents and scientific literature. The collected data were analyzed using an interactive qualitative analysis process, including data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Furthermore, the SWOT analysis was employed and the findings were subsequently elaborated through TOWS analysis to formulate strategic recommendations for sustainable gastronomic tourism development. The identification of culinary items in this study was based on three criteria: (1) historical and cultural significance, (2) accessibility of observing food preparation processes, and (3) popularity among local communities and tourists.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. The Diversity and Depth of Traditional Culinary Categories

Gorontalo offers a wealth of culinary diversity that reflects the region's cultural identity and natural resources. However, the gastronomic potential of this region remains largely untapped due to several structural and practical challenges. Gorontalo's culinary offerings span a wide spectrum—from daily meals to festive delicacies. In the category of traditional foods. One such example is *Binte Buluhuta* or *Milu Siram*, the dish primarily features sweet corn, along with shredded coconut, basil leaves, and seafood such as skipjack tuna or shrimp soup often consumed for breakfast. Although corn is widely cultivated in the region, rice remains the dominant staple food in Gorontalo, and the dish itself lacks a strong historical narrative that connects it to local identity. The name *Binte Biluhuta* is derived from the Gorontalo language, where *binte* means corn and *biluhuta* means to pour or splash, referring to the method of serving the dish by pouring hot broth over the ingredients. Historically, Binte Biluhuta was served during traditional ceremonies and community gatherings, symbolizing unity and togetherness. The dish is believed to have played a role in reconciling two feuding kingdoms in the 15th century, serving as a diplomatic gesture through shared meals. In 2016, Binte Biluhuta was recognized as an Indonesian Intangible Cultural Heritage by the Ministry of Education and Culture, underscoring its cultural importance.

Similarly, *Ayam Iloni*, a spicy, thick-soup chicken dish made from Free-Range Chicken or Ayam Kampung. The name "iloni", which translates to "grilled" or "roasted" in the Gorontalo language, refers to the cooking method: chicken is marinated in a rich blend of local spices and coconut milk, then grilled until tender and aromatic. The result is a dish characterized by its bold flavors and thick, savory sauce, reflecting the intricate use of indigenous ingredients and techniques. Ayam Iloni has become an integral part of Gorontalo's cultural and ceremonial life. It is commonly served at traditional gatherings, family celebrations, and other significant social events, symbolizing not only hospitality but also local identity. Despite its strong association with Gorontalo, however, the dish lacks a clearly documented origin story within the region's culinary history. It is more often understood as a lived tradition—transmitted orally and through practice—rather than a codified cultural artifact. Interestingly, similar chicken dishes exist in neighboring regions such as Palu and Minahasa, each with their own adaptations and flavor

profiles. While these regional variations share common elements—particularly the use of coconut milk and spices—the Gorontalo version is often regarded by locals as the "authentic" or definitive form. This perception is not necessarily due to the exclusivity of ingredients or technique, but rather to the deep cultural attachment and sense of place associated with preparing and consuming Ayam Iloni in Gorontalo.



**Figure 1. Ayam Iloni**

Source: Researcher, 2025

In contrast, Ilabulo, a traditional dish made from sago flour mixed with chicken liver, spices, and sometimes egg, wrapped in banana leaves, and either steamed or grilled using coconut shells, impart a distinctive smoky aroma. Ilabulo has been a part of Gorontalo's culinary heritage since the 15th century. Historically, it was served during royal feasts and diplomatic gatherings among kings, symbolizing unity and peace. The name "Ilabulo" is derived from the Gorontalo language, meaning "*totombowata*," which translates to "togetherness" or "unity," reflecting its role in fostering harmony among diverse groups. The *Ilabulo* song is a cultural expression from Gorontalo that celebrates the traditional dish Ilabulo as a symbol of unity and local identity. Through its lyrics and melody, the song not only introduces the dish, but also emphasizes the communal values embedded in its preparation and consumption. Serving as both a form of cultural preservation and education, the song highlights the importance of maintaining culinary traditions as a living part of Gorontalo's heritage.



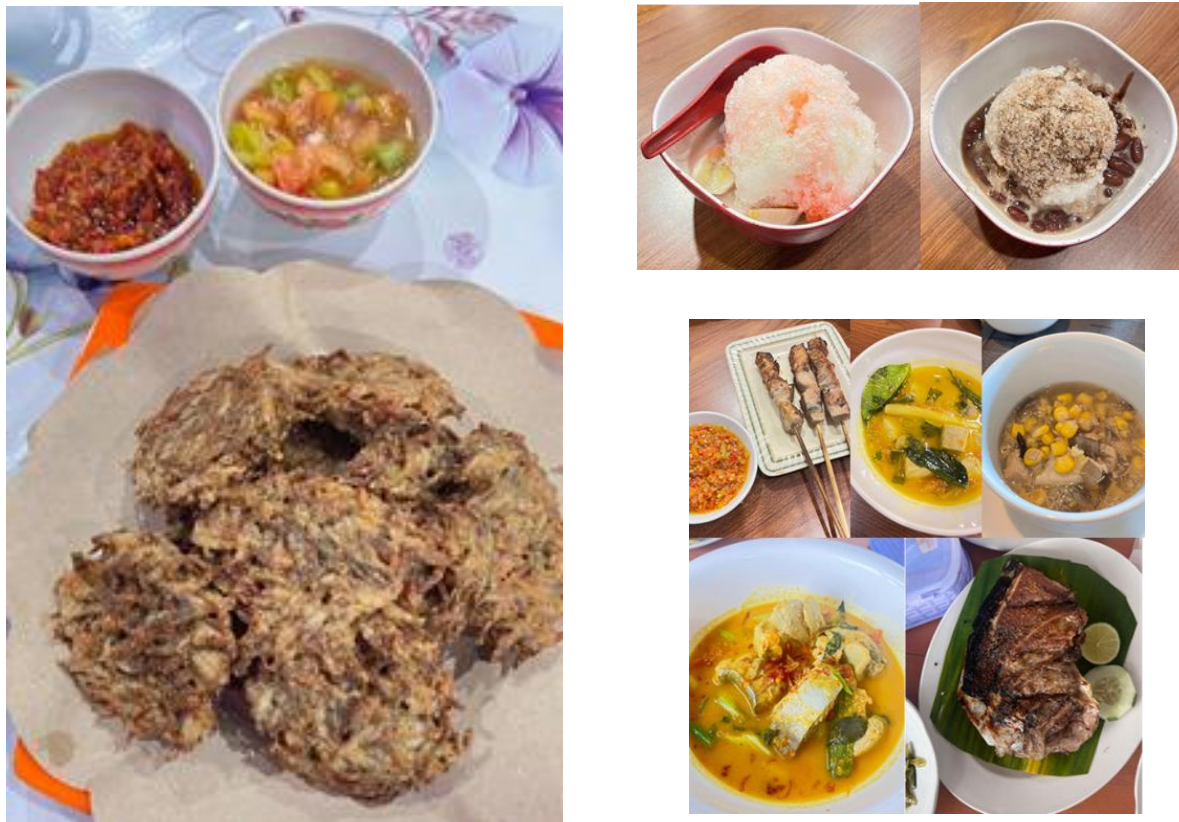
**Figure 2. Ilabulo**

Source: Researcher, 2025

Other traditional items such as *Tiliaya*—a sweet coconut-based dessert—are seasonal and mainly found during Ramadan, while *Nike Fish* is a regional delicacy available only during specific lunar phases, used in dishes like *perkedel nike* (fish cakes). *Tiliaya* is a traditional dessert from Gorontalo, characterized by its soft, pudding-like texture and sweet flavor. Made primarily from eggs, palm sugar, and coconut milk, it is often flavored with pandan leaves and steamed to perfection. Historically, *Tiliaya* has been associated with various cultural and religious ceremonies, including Ramadan, weddings, and traditional rituals like *molontalo* (ancestral homage) and *tahlilan* (commemorative prayers). During Ramadan, it is commonly served during *sahur* and *iftar*, symbolizing unity and gratitude. Nike fish is a regional delicacy unique to Gorontalo's coastal waters, especially around Lake Limboto and Teluk Tomini. This tiny, transparent fish appears in large numbers only during specific lunar phases, particularly the *Perbani* phase between the waning and new moon, making its harvest a highly anticipated seasonal event. Nike fish are typically used in dishes like *perkedel nike* (fish cakes), where they are mixed with spices and deep-fried.

Palu Butung (sometimes spelled *pala butung*), though originally from South Sulawesi and deeply rooted in Makassarese cuisine, has also become a familiar dessert in Gorontalo. Its combination of steamed banana, sweet coconut milk sauce, and vibrant syrup makes it a popular choice. Its name derives from the Makassarese words *palu* (to cook) and *butung* (banana), literally meaning "cooked banana." While Gorontalo has adopted the dish

into its local food culture. Es Brenebon has become a common offering in Gorontalo restaurant as well, a sweet iced dessert made with red beans, originates from Manado in North Sulawesi and is derived from the Dutch-influenced savory soup *brenebon* (“*bruine bonen*” or “brown beans”). While its roots are not in Gorontalo, the dessert version—featuring sweetened red beans, shaved ice, syrup, and sometimes milk.



**Figure 3. Perkedel Nike, Palu Butung, Tuna-based Food (Tuna Belly Satay, Tuna Kua Asam, Grilled Tuna Jaw)**

Source: Researcher, 2025

Other dishes like Goroho (banana) Sticks, Grilled Oci Fish, Tuna Satay, Grilled Tuna Jaw, Tuna *Kua Asam* (Sour Tuna Soup), Tuna Woku, and Bilendango reflect rich local cooking methods and ingredients. However, the origin of some dishes remains ambiguous, Goroho for example, is also claimed by North Sulawesi. Goroho sticks, a traditional Gorontalo snack made from deep-fried unripe banana slices, are commonly served warm accompanied by sambal (chili-based condiments), which complement the snack’s characteristic crunchy texture and subtle tartness. While freshly prepared Goroho sticks are typically consumed warm to maintain their optimal texture and sensory qualities, packaged versions are also commercially available to accommodate broader distribution and consumption. Tuna satay in Gorontalo is distinctively prepared using tuna belly, prized for its rich flavor and tender texture. The belly meat is marinated with local spices before being skewered and grilled, resulting in a dish that exemplifies the region’s coastal culinary traditions. Additionally, tuna jaw, a highly regarded delicacy in Gorontalo, is simply grilled without heavy seasoning, allowing the natural taste and texture of the meat to be fully appreciated. Both preparations highlight the community’s emphasis on utilizing different parts of the tuna fish, reflecting sustainable practices and a deep connection to the marine environment.

Gorontalo’s culinary potential is not limited to traditional dishes. Several well-known restaurants have developed efficient packaging methods for take-home products, including vacuum-sealed and frozen foods. However, while these restaurants have reached a certain level of culinary professionalism, they often hesitate to open their kitchens to tourists, limiting opportunities for interactive gastronomy tourism. In contrast, some local communities, like those in Torosiaje, welcome tourists into their homes to witness and even participate in cooking processes, offering a more authentic and immersive experience. The traditional beverage category, however, is notably underdeveloped. Field findings suggest that Gorontalo does not yet possess a well-defined traditional drink that is unique, culturally symbolic, or widely produced. This absence creates a gap in the culinary ecosystem and presents an opportunity for innovation, especially for local herbal infusions, milk-based drinks, or fermented beverages that can reflect regional flavors and traditions. The relative culinary uniformity across Gorontalo Province reflects

shared cultural values, common natural resources, and strong social cohesion, which aids in promoting a unified provincial food identity beneficial for tourism and heritage preservation. However, this homogeneity also indicates limited exploration of subcultural culinary variations, where unique local dishes from distinct districts or ethnic groups could foster gastronomic innovation and niche tourism. The lack of such localized culinary diversity suggests that Gorontalo's food culture has yet to develop distinct regional specialties that could enrich and diversify the province's overall culinary landscape.



**Figure 4. Banana (Goroho)-based Food**  
Source: Researcher, 2025

## 2. Analyzing the Core Elements of Gorontalo's Gastronomy



**Figure 5. The Process of Food Preparation**  
Source: Researcher, 2025

The gastronomic identity of Gorontalo is closely tied to its natural resources, cultural practices, and geographical conditions. In terms of historical connections, ingredients such as corn, sago, banana, and fish (especially tuna and nike) dominate the foodscape. Yet, few of these ingredients are deeply embedded in written or oral histories that highlight their role in Gorontalo's cultural evolution. This lack of documentation poses a challenge to building a strong gastronomic narrative. The absence of a distinctive traditional beverage indicates that Gorontalo's gastronomic tourism development remains uneven across culinary categories. From a destination competitiveness perspective, traditional beverages may function not only as complementary products, but also as cultural representations that strengthen destination identity and enrich gastronomic tourism experiences. Cultural influences are seen in the way certain foods are consumed seasonally or ceremonially. Dishes like *Tiliaya* appear predominantly during religious months, while food preferences tend toward bold, spicy flavors reminiscent of the broader Sulawesi region. Gender roles also play a part in the local food economy—many women initiate culinary micro-enterprises, though these often fade over time due to competing responsibilities at home and a lack of structural support. Gorontalo's geographical landscape also plays a key role in shaping food habits. Coastal communities specialize in seafood-based dishes such as *Ikan Bakar Oci*, *Sate Tuna*, and *Rahang Tuna*, while inland areas rely more on agriculture for ingredients like corn, banana, and chili. In terms of cooking methods, Gorontalo cuisine relies on simple yet effective techniques. Most dishes are grilled, steamed, or fried, using minimal but aromatic seasoning typically a blend of salt, citrus, and shallots.

Well-known restaurants such as Mawar Sharron and Ohara, play a significant role in delivering local culinary experiences with modern quality standards. Operating since 2013, Ohara Restaurant has advanced in food

packaging and delivery, offering vacuum-sealed and frozen products suitable for tourists. However, despite their culinary excellence, not all restaurants allow visitors into their kitchens, which limits the development of live cooking demonstrations or gastronomic tourism experiences. In contrast, Torosiaje, a village inhabited by the Bajau people, offers a more community-driven model of gastronomy tourism. Here, tourists can experience traditional cooking by visiting local homes, engaging directly with community members, and participating in the preparation of authentic dishes. This model fosters cultural exchange and provides a deeper understanding of Gorontalo's culinary heritage. These community-based culinary experiences support the idea that authenticity and local participation are important components of destination competitiveness in gastronomic tourism. Interactive experiences such as traditional cooking activities and local market visits may enhance tourists' emotional connection with the destination and differentiate Gorontalo from other culinary destinations. This finding supports previous studies emphasizing that authenticity, cultural identity, and local interaction are central elements in gastronomic tourism experiences and destination differentiation.

### **3. SWOT ANALYSIS IN GASTRONOMIC TOURISM DEVELOPMENT**

The culinary tourism potential is supported by several key strengths, including a rich culinary heritage, strong cultural and symbolic values, simple and transferable cooking methods, a community-based tourism model, and integration with cultural events. These strengths provide a solid foundation for developing culinary experiences that are authentic, meaningful, and closely connected to local communities. However, several weaknesses remain, such as the lack of signature traditional beverages, insufficient formal documentation and storytelling, limited regional culinary diversity, restaurants that are not yet tourism-oriented, and the absence of sustainable training programs for MSMEs. At the same time, there are various opportunities that can be utilized to strengthen culinary tourism development. These include the upcoming ASEAN Food Event, the development of culinary souvenir products, immersive culinary tourism experiences, innovation in traditional beverage development, and cross-sector collaboration among government institutions, businesses, communities, and educational organizations. Nevertheless, several threats need to be anticipated, including disputes over dishes that are also claimed by neighboring regions, the vulnerability of MSMEs—particularly those managed by women—inadequate tourism infrastructure, low digital marketing literacy that reduces product visibility, and changing preferences among younger travelers toward fast food and fusion cuisine.

From the SWOT analysis above, it can be seen that Gorontalo possesses strong gastronomic tourism potential through its rich culinary heritage and cultural identity. However, several weaknesses remain, particularly the lack of distinctive traditional beverages and limited culinary storytelling. At the same time, opportunities such as the upcoming ASEAN-level food event and the growing demand for immersive culinary experiences provide strategic potential for tourism development. Nevertheless, challenges including external culinary claims, limited digital promotion, and changing food preferences among younger consumers may affect the sustainability and competitiveness of Gorontalo's gastronomic tourism.

#### **a. SO Strategy**

- Promote heritage-rich dishes during the ASEAN Food Event 2026
- Develop culinary souvenir lines from existing traditional products (improve packaging, branding, and storytelling to create market-ready culinary souvenirs)
- Expand community-based tourism models (replicate successful initiatives like Torosiaje and Mimin Homestay to other areas)
- Integrate gastronomy with creative economy events by organizing themed food fairs

#### **b. ST Strategy**

- Promote Gorontalo's food identity as intangible cultural heritage and promoting them through official platforms
- Use food narratives to attract modern consumers via social media and storytelling-based branding
- Highlight authenticity to position Gorontalo's food as experience-based rather than just consumption-based
- Partner with tourism influencers and content creators

#### **c. WO Strategy**

- Develop and innovate traditional beverages
- Improve documentation (digital and print resources: cookbooks, online course, YouTube content) and formal culinary education
- Train local chefs and homestay operators in tourism standards
- Create regional culinary mapping to explore underrepresented dishes and food practices, and to enrich culinary diversity

#### **d. WT Strategy**

- Develop continuous support systems for MSMEs, especially for women-led culinary initiatives
- Improve tourism infrastructure (road, signage, accommodation) in rural culinary destinations
- Launch digital literacy and storytelling workshops for local culinary actors
- Develop Gorontalo Culinary Heritage certification to assert authenticity and protect local dishes from external claims.

The TOWS matrix indicates that the development of gastronomic tourism in Gorontalo requires integrated strategies that combine cultural preservation, community participation, tourism promotion, and innovation. The proposed strategies emphasize not only the promotion of traditional culinary products, but also the importance of strengthening destination identity. These findings suggest that gastronomic tourism development in Gorontalo should be approached through cross-sector collaboration involving government institutions, local communities, tourism stakeholders, and creative industry actors.

#### **4. Opportunities and Implementation Challenges in Gastronomic Tourism in Gorontalo**

Gorontalo has begun incorporating gastronomic elements into its tourism offerings, though they are still in early stages. Several initiatives have been identified. Culinary-themed events, such as regional food festivals in which *Milu Siram* is featured as a flagship dish, serve as platforms to promote local cuisine and foster community engagement in cultural expression. In parallel, these festivals are often tied to broader collaborative programs such as *Gebyar UMKM*, supported by Bank Indonesia, and the *Art & Craft Festival*, have successfully integrated food, craft, and fashion, thereby enhancing the visibility of Gorontalo's creative economy within a holistic cultural framework. At the grassroots level, several promising initiatives have emerged. Immersive culinary tourism in Gorontalo is exemplified by initiatives such as Mimin Homestay in Telaga, which offers guests authentic local experiences. Guests are taken to traditional markets using *Bentor* (local motorized tricycles) to purchase fresh ingredients, providing a hands-on introduction to regional cuisine. This approach not only educates visitors about local food but also supports the local economy by promoting small-scale vendors and traditional foodways. However, such immersive experiences remain relatively rare in the region, limiting the potential for broader culinary tourism development. Cooking activities exist informally in community homestays (e.g., *Torosiaje*), where guests can watch or participate in traditional cooking. However, this is not yet standard practice in restaurants or structured tourism packages.

Efforts to formalize and institutionalize gastronomic tourism are underway. The planned development of a culinary hub in Botubarani, under the regional branding initiative "*One Visit, Seven Destinations*", represents a strategic step toward integrated tourism development. Nonetheless, the sustainability of these initiatives faces notable challenges. Training programs for MSMEs have been conducted, covering topics such as food packaging, pricing strategies, and hygiene standards. However, these initiatives often lack continuity and long-term mentoring support. Many participants exhibit initial enthusiasm that fades over time, often due to insufficient follow-up support, limited financial resources, and a lack of professional mentoring structures. The forthcoming ASEAN-level food event in 2026, which is expected to draw approximately 10,000 international visitors, presents a significant opportunity for Gorontalo to showcase its culinary heritage on a broader platform. However, capitalizing on this potential will require strategic coordination, inter-institutional collaboration, and long-term capacity building. Positioning gastronomic tourism as a cross-sectoral development strategy aligns well with Gorontalo's regional priorities, which include fisheries, agriculture, the creative economy, tourism, and infrastructure. Traditional food products such as *Ilabulo*, *Lalampa*, *Dodol Pocong*, and *Pia Saronde* possess substantial potential as culinary souvenirs. To realize this potential, improvements in product standardization, branding, and narrative marketing are necessary. Furthermore, support from local institutions—such as *BUMDes*—can facilitate the transition from sporadic, competition-driven participation to sustainable culinary entrepreneurship. Gorontalo's traditional dishes reflect both everyday consumption patterns and ceremonial functions, indicating that local gastronomy is closely embedded within social and cultural practices. Food such as *Ilabulo*, *Tiliaya*, and *Binte Biluhuta* are commonly associated with rituals and celebrations, while tuna-based dishes and *Goroho* snacks are more frequently consumed in daily life.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Based on findings, Gorontalo possesses significant potential for the development of gastronomic tourism, rooted in its diverse culinary heritage, cultural symbolism, seasonal food traditions, and community-based practices. Traditional dishes such as *Ilabulo*, *Binte Biluhuta*, *Ayam Iloni*, and *Perkedel Nike* reflect not only local food culture, but also social values, ritual practices, and regional identity. However, several challenges remain, including limited culinary documentation, the absence of distinctive traditional beverages, weak MSME support continuity, and low digital visibility. At the same time, opportunities such as immersive culinary experiences, culinary festivals, and the upcoming ASEAN-level food event provide strategic potential for tourism development.

Strengthening collaboration among government institutions, tourism stakeholders, local communities, and MSMEs is important to support sustainable gastronomic tourism in Gorontalo. Theoretically, this study contributes to gastronomic tourism literature by emphasizing that gastronomic tourism is shaped not only by food products, but also by authenticity, storytelling, and community interaction. From managerial perspective, the findings highlight the importance of culinary branding, digital promotion, traditional beverage innovation, and tourism-oriented culinary training. Unlike previous studies that mainly position culinary products as tourism attraction, this study highlights the importance of community interaction and storytelling in shaping gastronomic tourism experiences. This study is limited to qualitative findings from selected locations in Gorontalo and does not quantitatively examine tourist perceptions or economic impact. Therefore, future research is recommended to explore tourist experience, economic contributions, and sustainable gastronomic tourism models using quantitative or mixed-method approaches.

## REFERENCES

- Anugrah, Krishna. (2018). Optimalisasi Usaha Kuliner di Obyek Wisata Hiu Paus Desa Botu Barani Kabupaten Bone Bolango, Gorontalo. *Jurnal Pariwisata Pesona*, 3(2), 191-204. <https://jurnal.unmer.ac.id/index.php/jpp/article/view/2463/1606>
- Çalışkan, O., & Yilmaz, G. (2016). Gastronomy and tourism. In C. Avcıkurt, M. S. Dinu, N. Hacıoğlu, R. Efe, A. Soykan, & N. Tetik (Eds.), *Global issues and trends in tourism* (pp. 33-50). St. Kliment Ohridski University Press. [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Recep-Efe/publication/311952159\\_Global\\_Issues\\_and\\_Trends\\_in\\_Tourism/links/5864ac7b08ae329d6203ac15/Globa-Issues-and-Trends-in-Tourism.pdf?\\_cf\\_chl\\_rt\\_tk=4up3aFq35SPcj0z7n5FqT6iYGPCP8C3aC8TCi9O9OPE-1731821110-1.0.1.1-KpAGcdwZYdK9Nc\\_AuzTvyvQbGtNNyrOzoCfJ6Oh6KAO#page=42](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Recep-Efe/publication/311952159_Global_Issues_and_Trends_in_Tourism/links/5864ac7b08ae329d6203ac15/Globa-Issues-and-Trends-in-Tourism.pdf?_cf_chl_rt_tk=4up3aFq35SPcj0z7n5FqT6iYGPCP8C3aC8TCi9O9OPE-1731821110-1.0.1.1-KpAGcdwZYdK9Nc_AuzTvyvQbGtNNyrOzoCfJ6Oh6KAO#page=42)
- Fikri, D. A. (2024, September 5). *Ini Tantangan Utama dalam Pengembangan Wisata di Gorontalo*. <https://lifestyle.sindonews.com/read/1449395/156/ini-tantangan-utama-dalam-pengembangan-wisata-di-gorontalo-1725462553>
- Hamdani, A.R.T., Rachmawati, D., Wibowo DC, Y.P.P., Ayu, J.P., Raif, S. A. (2025). Analisis Multiplier Effect Pariwisata Berkelanjutan Labuan Bajo sebagai Destinasi Super Prioritas. *Jurnal Altasia*, 7(1), 66-79. DOI:10.37253/altasia.v7i1.10085
- Hasnah, Vivin Afanin, & Nugroho, Setyo Prasiyono. (2021). Gastronomi Makanan Yogyakarta Sebagai Atraksi Wisata Kuliner. *Undergraduate Conference on Language, Literature, and Culture (UNCLE)*, 1(1), 141-154. <https://publikasi.dinus.ac.id/index.php/uncle/article/view/4674>
- Hatibie, Irma Kharisma, & Priyambodo, T. K. (2019). Nilai Historis Pada Makanan Tradisional Tiliaya dalam Konteks Kebudayaan Gorontalo. *TULIP: Tulisan Ilmiah Pariwisata*, 2(1), 29-42. <https://journal.umgo.ac.id/index.php/Tulip/article/view/575/321>
- Hendriyani, I. G. A. D. (2024, September 3). *Siaran Pers: Kemenparekraf Berkolaborasi dengan Pemprov Gorontalo dan Media Publikasikan Pariwisata Berkualitas*. <https://www.kemenparekraf.go.id/berita/siaran-pers-kemenparekraf-berkolaborasi-dengan-pemprov-gorontalo-dan-media-publikasikan-pariwisata-berkualitas>
- Hendriyani, I. G. A. D. (2024, February 27). *Siaran pers: Menparekraf upayakan Gorontalo masuk jaringan kota kreatif UNESCO*. Kementerian Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif. <https://www.kemenparekraf.go.id/berita/siaran-pers-menparekraf-upayakan-gorontalo-masuk-jaringan-kota-kreatif-unesco>
- Husuna, F. (2024, November 20). *4 ide calon gubernur Gorontalo tingkatkan kunjungan wisatawan pada debat pamungkas*. Tribun Gorontalo. <https://gorontalo.tribunnews.com/2024/11/20/4-ide-calon-gubernur-gorontalo-tingkatkan-kunjungan-wisatawan-pada-debat-pamungkas>
- Ibrahim, Arfandi. (2024, November 13). Kue Apangi, Kuliner Tradisional Gorontalo yang Sarat Makna dan Filosofi. *Liputan6*. <https://www.liputan6.com/regional/read/5782701/kue-apangi-kuliner-tradisional-gorontalo-yang-sarat-makna-dan-filosofi>
- Ichsan, T., N., Ihalauw, J. J., & Soeroso, A. (2023). Makanan “Bubur Diniyohu Sebagai Daya Tarik Khas Wisata Gastronomi di Kota Gorontalo”. *Jurnal Darmawisata*, 2(2), 36-42. <https://jurnalvokasi.ung.ac.id/jdw/index.php/jdw/article/view/20/22>
- Indra, F., Julina, Hubner, I. B., & Sitorus, N. B. (2022). Development of Gastronomic Tourism Potential in Pontianak West Kalimantan. *Journal of Information Systems and Management*, 1(5), 28-42. <https://jisma.org/index.php/jisma/article/view/230/39>
- Ningrum, F. C., Turgarini, D., & Bridha, R. L. (2014). Pelestarian Tradisi Nyeruit Sebagai Warisan gastronomi Kota Bandar Lampung. *The Journal Gastronomy Tourism*, 1(2), 85-95. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/367809788\\_Pelestarian\\_Tradisi\\_Nyeruit\\_Sebagai\\_Warisan\\_Gastronomi\\_Kota\\_Bandar\\_Lampung](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/367809788_Pelestarian_Tradisi_Nyeruit_Sebagai_Warisan_Gastronomi_Kota_Bandar_Lampung)

- Noho, Y., Husain, D., & Kadir, R. (2020). Gastronomic Tourism Development in Gorontalo Province. *Proceeding of IICSDGs*, 3(1), 41-47. <https://journals.ubmg.ac.id/index.php/IICSDGs/article/view/54/60>
- Nomishan, T. S., Ololdi, A. J., & Aliyu, B. (2024). Exploring Gastronomy Brands as Value-Based Motivations for Cultural and Heritage Tourism in Nigeria. *Journal of Tourism, Culinary, and Entrepreneurship*, 4(1), 17-32. <https://journal.uc.ac.id/index.php/JTCE/article/view/4195>
- Pariwisata Indonesia (n.d.) 5 Kuliner Khas Gorontalo, Pernah Cobain?. <https://pariwisataindonesia.id/kuliner/5-kuliner-khas-gorontalo-pernah-nyobain/>
- Peta Tematik Indonesia. (2013). Administrasi Provinsi Gorontalo. <https://petatematikindo.wordpress.com/2013/04/07/administrasi-provinsi-gorontalo/>
- Putra, Aditya Nova. (2021). Literature Review of Food Tourism, Culinary Tourism, and Gastronomy Tourism. *Journal of Innovation Research & Knowledge*, 1(4), 517-526. <https://bajangjournal.com/index.php/JIRK/article/view/319>
- Ramadhania, Annisa. (2024, 16 Nov). Nikmatnya Tuna Tindarung ala Alikana Gorontalo. *RRI Kuliner*. <https://www.rri.co.id/kuliner/1123991/nikmatnya-tuna-tindarung-ala-alikana-gorontalo>
- Rizkiyah, N. F., & Faridi, M. I. (2022). Analysis of Local Culinary Potential in Supporting the Tourism Indus try in Gunungsari West Lombok. *International Journal of Applied Sciences in Tourism and Events*, 6(1), 77-95. <https://ojs2.pnb.ac.id/index.php/IJASTE/article/view/318/298>
- Solihin, A. (2024, July 27). Sekda sebut Festival Apangi mengenalkan wisata budaya Gorontalo. Antara News. <https://www.antaranews.com/berita/4221407/sekda-sebut-festival-apangi-mengenalkan-wisata-budaya-gorontalo>
- Sormaz, Ümit. (2017). Gastronomy Tourism Potential of Turkey. *Journal of Tourism Studies and Research in Tourism*, 1(24), 8-15. <http://www.revistadeturism.ro/rdt/article/view/374/246>
- Tropon, Ioana Maria & Cosma, Smaranda Adina. (2018). The Evolution of Tourism Destination: A Review of Literature. *The 14<sup>th</sup> Economic International Conference: Strategies and Development Policies of Territories: International, Country, Region, City, Location Challenges*. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329655682\\_The\\_Evolution\\_of\\_Tourism\\_Destination\\_A\\_Review\\_of\\_Literature/figures?lo=1](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329655682_The_Evolution_of_Tourism_Destination_A_Review_of_Literature/figures?lo=1)
- Wibowo DC, Y.P.P., Ayu, J.P., Hamdani, A. R. T. (2024). Pariwisata dan SDG8 di Pasar Terapung Lok Baintan, Kabupaten Banjar, Kalimantan Selatan. *Journal of Indonesian Tourism, Hospitality, and Recreation*, 7(1), 15-28. <https://doi.org/10.17509/jithor.v7i1.68241>