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Strengthening Gastronomic Tourism in Surakarta City through a Google Earth-Based Tourism Route Model

RR Erna Sadiarti Budiningtyas^{1*}, Yeremia Victor Rondonuwu¹

¹ Universitas Pignatelli Triputra, Surakarta, Indonesia

* Corresponding author: RR Erna Sadiarti Budiningtyas (sabinaerna70@gmail.com)

Abstract

Besides being a city of culture, Surakarta is also known for its culinary delights. Many tourists come to Surakarta simply to enjoy its culinary delights. Recent developments in tourism have shifted tourist preferences beyond simply enjoying the culinary delights to gastronomic tourism. This study aims to identify the authentic gastronomy of Surakarta and develop a system for developing a gastronomic tourism itinerary in Surakarta, making it easier for tourists to plan their own gastronomic tourism itinerary. The research method employed a qualitative approach. Data collection involved tourists or food connoisseurs in Surakarta, cultural experts, tourism entrepreneurs, and tourism associations in Surakarta. Data collection used a questionnaire to determine tourist preferences for Surakarta's gastronomy. This was followed by interviews with cultural experts, observation, and documentation. FGDs were conducted with several tourism organizations in Surakarta to obtain input on previous results. The results of this research provided data on authentic food, snacks, and restaurant locations that serve these dishes, which were then compiled into a web-based system that can be accessed by anyone in Surakarta City. The impact is a Surakarta gastronomic database that can be used as a guide for gastronomic tourists and can be developed for other destinations.

Keywords

Gastronomic Tourism, Google Earth, Surakarta Gastronomy, Tourist Routes, Tourism Strengthening.

1. Introduction

Tourism is one of the strategic sectors promoted by the government to stimulate regional economic growth while empowering local communities. In this context, tourism promotion plays a crucial role in attracting visitors (Achmad et al., 2023; Cairo et al., 2025). In line with global trends, tourist preferences have shifted from conventional recreational activities toward more authentic and meaningful experiences, including gastronomic tourism. This phenomenon is evident in Surakarta City, which, in addition to being well-known as a cultural city and batik city, is also renowned for its rich culinary heritage. Many tourists visit not only to enjoy local dishes but also to understand the cultural values embedded within them (Yu et al., 2023; Bailey & Williams, 2024).

The concept of gastronomy, however, remains relatively unfamiliar among tourism practitioners in Indonesia. The more commonly used term is food tourism, which tends to focus primarily on the act of consumption. In contrast, gastronomy encompasses a broader perspective, including historical, philosophical, traditional, and preparatory aspects of food (Hall et al., 2003; Lee et al., 2015; Rachao et al., 2019). In the context of Surakarta, each dish serves not merely as sustenance but also as a representation of Javanese cultural identity, rich in symbolic meaning (Adi, 2024). Therefore, the development of gastronomic tourism is essential to enhance destination competitiveness while preserving local cultural heritage.

Furthermore, the experience of enjoying local cuisine along with its associated elements, such as ambiance, storytelling, and social interaction, has evolved into a valuable cultural experience for tourists. This condition highlights the urgency of systematically and integratively packaging Surakarta's gastronomic potential to deliver optimal tourist experiences. One potential approach is the development of structured gastronomic tourism routes. Such routes can facilitate tourists accessing authentic culinary options, stimulate the local economy through increased visitation to culinary businesses, and support the local government in promoting tourism and culture. Moreover, gastronomic tourism promotion should not only introduce traditional foods but also convey the cultural values embedded within them (Wijaya, 2019).

Nevertheless, previous studies by Papadopoulos et al. (2025) and Juniarta and Suta (2025) have largely focused on identifying culinary potential or examining tourist preferences without integrating these insights into interactive, technology-based promotional systems. In addition, the utilization of digital technologies, particularly geospatial platforms such as Google Earth, remains limited in tourism promotion in Indonesia. In fact, such technology offers significant potential to present destination information in a visual, interactive, and accessible manner (Mwangi & Mwalongo, 2023; Vukolic et al., 2025). This research gap indicates that limited attention has been given to developing gastronomic tourism route models integrated with digital platforms to support independent travel planning.

The novelty of this study lies in the development of a Google Earth-based gastronomic tourism route model integrated with an itinerary planning system. This model not only provides comprehensive data on authentic dishes, traditional snacks, and restaurant locations in Surakarta but also enables tourists to design their own gastronomic travel plans more effectively and personally. Through this approach, tourism promotion evolves from conventional methods into a more interactive, informative, and experience-oriented system.

Therefore, this study aims to identify Surakarta's authentic culinary expertise and to develop an integrated and accessible gastronomic tourism itinerary system. Employing a qualitative approach involving tourists, cultural experts, tourism entrepreneurs, and relevant associations, this research is expected to produce a comprehensive gastronomic database of Surakarta. The findings are anticipated to

serve not only as a practical guide for gastronomic tourists but also as a scalable model for the development of gastronomic tourism destinations in other regions.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Gastronomic Tourism

Gastronomic tourism remains insufficiently recognized within the tourism industry, as travelers are generally more familiar with the terms food tourism or culinary tourism (Hall et al., 2003; Lee et al., 2015; Rachao et al., 2019). Despite terminological debates, gastronomic tourism has emerged as one of the fastest-growing sectors in the global tourism industry (Bardolet-Puigdollers & Fusté-Forné, 2023). It refers to a form of tourism that emphasizes the exploration of local food and beverages as an integral component of the travel experience. Data from the World Food Travel Association (2024) indicates that 85% of travelers consider sampling local cuisine an essential part of their cultural experience during travel. Many tourists are motivated to travel in order to experience local gastronomy, positioning it as a key attraction at destinations (Stone & Migacz, 2016; Niedbała et al., 2020; Aisyah et al., 2024).

Local food and its associated cultural attributes constitute unique assets that can promote regional identity and heritage, including the broader national identity of Indonesia (Rahman, 2018; Reddy & van Dam, 2020). Suansri (2013) emphasized that effective tourism destination development requires strong collaboration among food enterprises, local communities, and government institutions to stimulate local economic growth. In this context, Javanese culture possesses substantial potential for the development of gastronomic tourism routes capable of attracting both domestic and international visitors. However, this potential remains underutilized due to several constraints, including limited stakeholder coordination, weak branding of local cuisine, and insufficient digital marketing strategies (Pradipta, 2021; Wasita, 2024). Furthermore, many small and medium-sized culinary enterprises lack certification and do not meet contemporary tourism service standards, thereby constraining their capacity to accommodate larger tourist markets (Adi, 2024).

2.2. Information Technology-Based Tourism Route

Promotion of tourist destinations is a critical instrument for increasing tourist arrivals, particularly through enhancing destination attractiveness. In this regard, gastronomic tourism as a form of tourist attraction requires broader and more intensive promotion, as appropriate strategies can effectively highlight its potential to strengthen local cultural identity (Wijaya, 2019; Komariah, 2020). One strategic initiative that can be developed is the formulation of a promotional model through the design of gastronomic tourism routes utilizing Google Earth. Digital technology has been widely acknowledged as a key enabler in tourism promotion, particularly through the application of Geographic Information Systems (GIS), including platforms such as Google Earth, which facilitate spatial visualization and mapping of destinations (Gretzel, 2020). Through this approach, Google Earth can be employed to develop interactive, spatially integrated gastronomic tourism routes.

An effective tourism promotion strategy not only increases tourist arrivals but also supports cultural preservation, local economic empowerment, and the strengthening of regional identity. However, several challenges persist, including weak branding of local cuisine and the limited implementation of effective digital marketing strategies. These challenges are further compounded by the absence of a comprehensive gastronomic database, the lack of a structured gastronomic tourism route model, and the underutilization of Google Earth technology for tourism promotion, despite its advanced capabilities in presenting three-dimensional spatial information, including locations, building structures, road networks, traffic

conditions, and geographic coordinates. Although previous studies have demonstrated the significance of information technology in supporting tourists, policymakers, and tourism practitioners, its application remains relatively limited. For example, Google Earth imagery has been utilized for coastal mapping in Padang City by Desmayani and Rahman (2022), while other studies by Wahyudi and Santoso (2022) have focused on the development of gastronomic tourism guide applications. Nevertheless, the integration of Google Earth in the development of gastronomic tourism routes in Surakarta remains underexplored.

3. Methods

This study was conducted in Surakarta, a city widely recognized for its rich and diverse culinary heritage and frequently referred to as a culinary tourism destination. With its strong cultural foundations, Surakarta holds considerable potential to be further developed as a gastronomic tourism destination. This research adopts a qualitative approach aimed at systematically exploring and developing a gastronomic tourism itinerary. The research design is exploratory and descriptive in nature, integrating multiple data sources to generate a comprehensive understanding of Surakarta's authentic culinary assets. The study population includes tourists or culinary enthusiasts, cultural experts, tourism practitioners, and tourism-related organizations in Surakarta.

Data collection was conducted through several systematic stages to ensure the validity and depth of the findings. The initial stage involved a literature review of various written sources to identify authentic Surakarta dishes, resulting in the identification of 12 main dishes and one dessert. Based on these findings, a structured questionnaire was developed and distributed to 100 respondents to capture tourist preferences regarding local gastronomy. The results of the questionnaire were then used as a preliminary basis for constructing a gastronomic database. Subsequently, a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted involving representatives from tourism organizations such as ASPPI, HPI, PHRI, BPPD, ASITA, as well as tour and travel agency owners. This stage aimed to enrich and validate the database while identifying additional culinary items considered authentic, including those influenced by other cultures but widely recognized as part of Surakarta's culinary identity. To further enhance data validity, in-depth interviews were conducted with cultural experts, Tourism Awareness Groups (*Kelompok Sadar Wisata/Pokdarwis*), and cultural observers to confirm the authenticity and cultural significance of the identified culinary elements.

In terms of data analysis, this study employs the qualitative analysis framework proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The results from the FGD and interviews were systematically analyzed to refine and finalize the gastronomic database. Based on this database, a web-based information system was developed to generate personalized gastronomic tourism routes. The system was designed using a dynamic PHP-based platform, enabling users to interact with the database and customize their travel itineraries according to their preferences. Through this system, tourists can curate individualized gastronomic experiences while accessing structured and comprehensive information about Surakarta's culinary offerings. This methodological approach integrates qualitative inquiry with digital system development to support both academic analysis and practical applications in tourism development.

4. Results

4.1. Surakarta Authentic Culinary Expertise

As a cultural city with two traditional administrative centers, the Kasunanan Surakarta and the Mangkunegaran Palace Surakarta, it possesses a distinctive historical trajectory shaped by prolonged interaction with Dutch colonial authorities and Chinese immigrant communities. These historical encounters have significantly influenced the formation of Surakarta's gastronomic identity, resulting in a rich culinary acculturation reflected in its food, beverages, and traditional snacks. Within the context of gastronomic tourism, such cultural hybridity constitutes a valuable asset, as gastronomy extends beyond mere consumption to encompass the historical, cultural, and symbolic meanings embedded in culinary practices (Hall et al., 2003; Wijaya, 2019). Therefore, identifying authentic culinary expertise in Surakarta represents a crucial step in understanding and developing its gastronomic tourism potential.

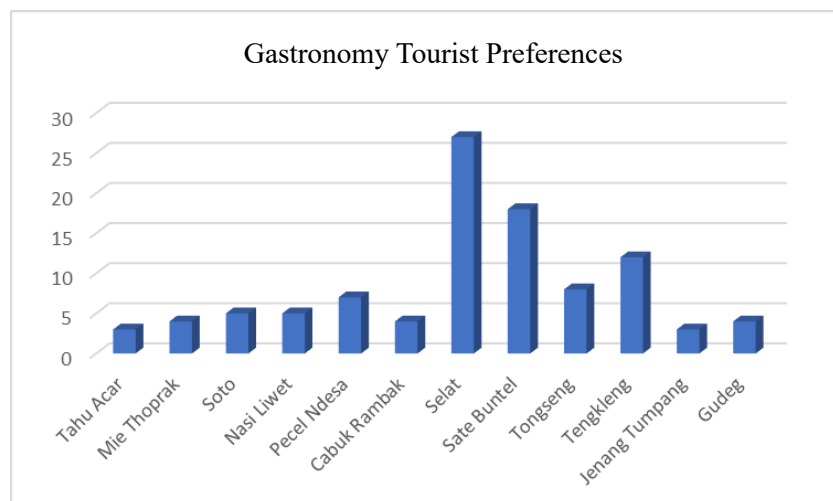


Figure 1. Gastronomic Tourism Preferences in Surakarta

Based on Figure 1, the results of the tourist preference survey, 12 gastronomic dishes were identified as representative of Surakarta's culinary landscape. *Selat segar solo* ranked highest, followed by *sate buntel*, *tengkleng*, and *tongseng*, all of which are widely recognized as iconic local dishes. These foods not only reflect local taste preferences but also illustrate distinctive cultural practices, such as the consumption of *sate*, *tongseng*, and *tengkleng* for breakfast, a characteristic unique to the Surakarta community. In addition to main dishes, a variety of traditional snacks and beverages were identified, including *fried intip*, *orion mandarijn bread*, *ganep's kecil*, *merani pongge bread*, *dudi apem*, *balong bakpia*, and *tentrem ice cream*. Traditional delicacies such as *lenjongan*, comprising *klepon*, *black sticky rice*, *red sticky rice*, *tirwul*, and *ongol-ongol*, as well as *darwet kemangi*, reinforce the role of traditional markets as central spaces for gastronomic experiences. Other notable items include *sisis solo*, *lekker* (a Dutch-influenced snack), and *serabi solo*, which differs significantly from its Bandung counterpart in both taste and presentation. These findings indicate that Surakarta's gastronomy is deeply rooted in both tradition and processes of cultural acculturation (Rahman, 2018).

The diversity of acculturated cuisine in Surakarta is closely linked to its historical role as a center of Javanese governance under colonial influence, where the *Keraton* Surakarta and Mangkunegaran operated under Dutch supervision (Reddy & Dam, 2020). This interaction facilitated the incorporation of European culinary elements into local food traditions. Likewise, the presence of Chinese communities has

contributed significantly to the diversification of Surakarta's gastronomy, particularly through hybrid culinary techniques and flavors. Another important aspect of Surakarta's gastronomic culture is the tradition of *wedangan*, formerly known as Special Village Dishes (*Hidangan Istimewa Kampung /HIK*), which functions not only as a place for food consumption but also as a social space for community interaction. The emergence of contemporary *wedangan*, often located in buildings with Indies or traditional Javanese architectural styles, further reflects the dynamic evolution of Surakarta's gastronomic landscape.

To further strengthen the identification of authentic culinary expertise, a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted involving representatives from tourism-related organizations, including PHRI, HPI, BPBD, ASPPI, ASITA, and tourism business operators. The FGD results expanded the list of identified culinary items by incorporating dishes recognized as authentic by practitioners and experts. These include *tahu kupat*, widely acknowledged as a distinctive Surakarta specialty, *bestik solo*, an adaptation of Dutch steak adjusted to local taste, and *wedang ronde*, a Chinese-influenced beverage that has been localized in both ingredients and presentation. Additional items include *bakso solo*, which differs from other regional variants, *timlo*, a soup characterized by diverse ingredients and a distinctive clove aroma, *sate kere*, made from *tempe gembus*, and *gempol pleret*, a traditional beverage with historical roots tracing back to the Mataram era, as documented in *serat tjentini*. Further culinary items such as *brambang asem*, *ledre larweyan*, and *sop matahari* enrich the diversity of Surakarta's gastronomy, with *sop matahari* symbolizing prosperity and commonly served at wedding ceremonies (Pavlidis & Markantonatou, 2020).

The integration of survey results and FGD findings ultimately resulted in the identification of 22 main dishes, which, when combined with 13 traditional snacks and *wedangan* menu items, form a comprehensive database of 35 authentic culinary products of Surakarta. This systematic identification aligns with the primary objective of this study, namely to identify authentic culinary expertise in Surakarta as a foundation for the development of gastronomic tourism. By comprehensively documenting and validating these culinary elements, this study contributes not only to the preservation of cultural heritage but also to the development of structured gastronomic tourism routes. Furthermore, the findings reinforce the role of gastronomy as a strategic medium for promoting local identity and enhancing tourism competitiveness in culturally rich destinations such as Surakarta (Stone & Migacz, 2016).

4.2. Integrated and Accessible Gastronomic Tourism Itinerary System

Surakarta City offers a rich and distinctive gastronomic landscape. However, tourists continue to face several challenges in planning and fully experiencing gastronomic tourism. The lack of structured information, limited availability of clear route guidance, and the absence of integrated culinary data constitute major obstacles to developing effective travel itineraries. In response to these issues, this study establishes a comprehensive gastronomic database of Surakarta as a foundational step in supporting the development of gastronomic tourism. The resulting database comprises 35 authentic culinary items from Surakarta, identified through a systematic research process. This database was subsequently expanded into a curated collection of culinary destinations that are well recognized by both residents and tourists. In total, 129 dining locations were identified, consisting of restaurants, food outlets, and traditional markets. This classification aims to provide diverse options for tourists while reflecting the variety of gastronomic experiences available in Surakarta (Rahman, 2018).

To facilitate independent travel planning, this study also developed a web-based information system that enables tourists to design their own gastronomic itineraries. The system is designed to be interactive and flexible, allowing users to customize their travel routes based on individual preferences. The resulting website, named

Solo Gastronomy Tour, is accessible at <https://sologastronomitour.com>. Through this platform, tourists can access structured culinary information and develop more efficient and personalized gastronomic travel routes.



Figure 2. Solo Gastronomy Tour Website Homepage

Figure 2 shows the main page of the “Solo Gastronomy Tour” website, featuring a brightly colored city background and typical tourist icons. In the center is the title “Explore Authentic Culinary in Solo!”, inviting users to discover a variety of dining options, from traditional snacks to renowned restaurants. A “Start Exploring” button serves as the primary access point for exploration. The bottom also states that this site is funded by a 2025 DPPM grant from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology.

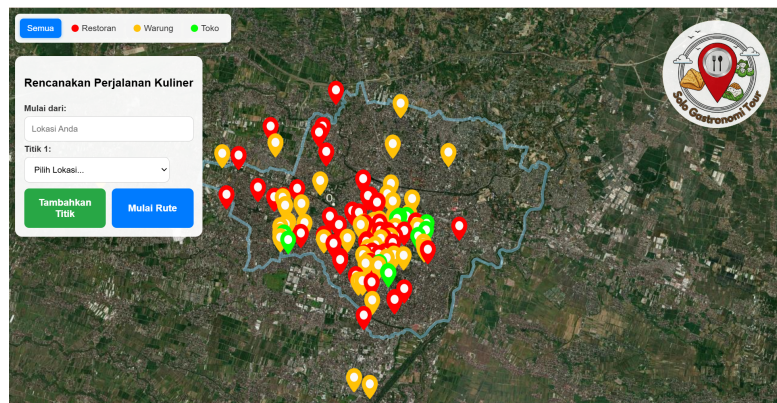


Figure 3. Website Explore Page Solo Gastronomy Tour

Based on Figure 3, tourists can search for information on desired culinary items and independently construct their travel itineraries. The system provides a default starting point located in Surakarta City, thereby facilitating users who are already in the area to design their gastronomic routes more conveniently. Consistent with its intended function, the website exclusively features Surakarta’s gastronomy and includes only restaurants, food outlets, and traditional markets that have been integrated into the established database (Rahman, 2018).

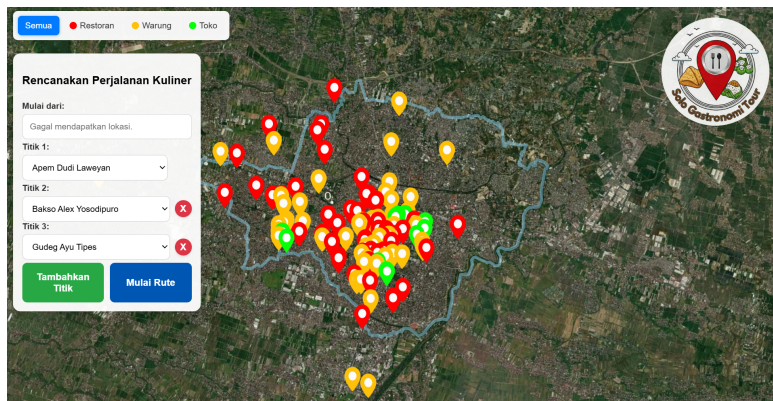


Figure 4. Route Point Arrangement

Through this platform, users can enter their preferred gastronomic destinations. For example, tourists may choose locations such as Apem Dudi Laweyan, Bakso Alex on Yosodipuro Street, and Gudeg Ayu on Bhayangkara Street in Tipes. The system subsequently processes these selected points to generate a personalized gastronomic route, enabling tourists to experience Surakarta’s culinary offerings in a more structured, efficient, and tailored manner, as illustrated in Figure 4.

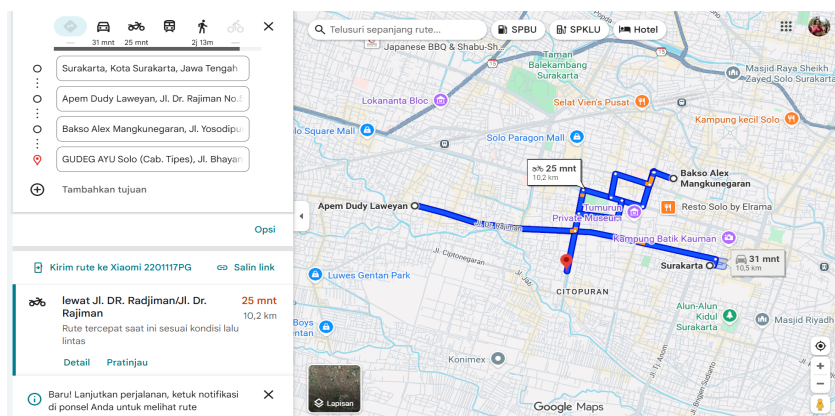


Figure 5. Surakarta City Gastronomic Tourism Route

Figure 5 illustrates an example of a gastronomic tourism route in Surakarta City generated by the system. The route is visualized through a digital mapping platform, demonstrating the integration of multiple culinary destinations into a single, coherent travel path (Komariah, 2020). Based on the figure, the starting point is located in Surakarta City, followed by selected gastronomic destinations, namely Apem Dudi Laweyan, Bakso Alex on Yosodipuro Street, and Gudeg Ayu on Bhayangkara Street. The system automatically calculates the optimal route connecting these locations by considering both distance and travel time. The estimated travel duration is approximately 25 minutes, covering a distance of around 10.2 km, depending on traffic conditions.

The route is displayed with clear navigation lines, enabling users to easily understand the sequence of destinations and the directions required to reach each location. In addition, the system provides step-by-step navigation, which is particularly beneficial for tourists who are unfamiliar with the Surakarta area. This visualization demonstrates that the developed system effectively facilitates the creation of personalized and integrated gastronomic tourism itineraries. Consequently, tourists are able to experience Surakarta’s culinary offerings in a more structured, efficient, and optimized manner (Adi, 2024).

5. Discussion

The findings show that Surakarta has a rich and diverse gastronomic heritage that goes beyond conventional culinary tourism toward a more holistic experience. The identification of 35 authentic dishes, including main courses, traditional snacks, and *wedangan* menus, reflects a culinary landscape deeply rooted in cultural history and shaped by cross-cultural acculturation. Influences from Javanese, Dutch, and Chinese traditions have formed a distinctive gastronomic identity, highlighting food as a medium of cultural expression rather than mere consumption. This supports previous studies emphasizing gastronomy's role in representing regional identity and enhancing cultural tourism appeal (Hall et al., 2003).

Furthermore, the results reveal that tourists' preferences tend to focus on iconic and culturally embedded dishes such as *selat solo*, *sate buntel*, and *tengkleng*, suggesting that authenticity and cultural narratives are key determinants in shaping gastronomic interest. This aligns with prior research by Stone and Migacz (2016), Pavlidis and Markantonatou (2020), and Niedbała et al. (2020), indicating that tourists increasingly seek authentic and meaningful culinary experiences as part of their travel motivations. In addition, the presence of traditional markets, street food culture, and communal dining spaces such as *wedangan* enhances the experiential dimension of tourism. This supports the notion that gastronomic tourism is not solely product-oriented but also experience-based, where social interaction and cultural immersion play significant roles (Wijaya, 2019).

Another important finding is the absence of an integrated gastronomic database prior to this study, which has limited stakeholders' ability to systematically promote culinary tourism. The development of a structured gastronomic database, therefore, represents a foundational contribution, as it consolidates fragmented culinary information into a single accessible platform. This finding supports the argument that effective destination development requires coordinated efforts among stakeholders and structured information systems (Suansri, 2013). Moreover, the lack of strong branding and digital promotion identified in this study is consistent with previous findings highlighting the importance of digital marketing and integrated promotion strategies in tourism development (Wijaya, 2019; Komariah, 2020).

The development of a web-based gastronomic route model integrated with Google Earth constitutes a significant innovation in the promotion of tourism in Surakarta. By enabling tourists to design personalized itineraries, the system addresses a critical gap in travel planning and enhances user autonomy. The use of spatial visualization technology improves accessibility and decision-making, allowing tourists to navigate culinary destinations more efficiently. This finding is in line with Gretzel (2020), who emphasizes the growing role of digital technologies and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) in enhancing tourism experiences and destination competitiveness. Similarly, prior studies by Nabilla et al. (2022) and Desmayani and Rahman (2022) have shown that digital platforms and applications can significantly improve tourists' ability to explore and engage with destinations.

However, the study also identifies several limitations in the current system, particularly in terms of route accuracy, the absence of real-time navigation features, and reliance on manual input. These limitations suggest that while the model provides a promising framework, further technological refinement is required to optimize its functionality. This is consistent with broader discussions in the literature that emphasize the need for continuous technological development to ensure the effectiveness of digital tourism tools (Gretzel, 2020). Despite these constraints, the system demonstrates strong potential as a scalable and adaptable model that can be implemented in other destinations, particularly those with rich culinary resources but limited digital integration.

The findings indicate that the development of gastronomic tourism in Surakarta requires not only the identification and preservation of culinary assets but also the

integration of digital technologies to enhance accessibility and promotion (Hall et al., 2003). The combination of cultural richness and technological innovation offers a strategic pathway for strengthening tourism competitiveness, supporting local economic development, and preserving culinary heritage in a sustainable manner.

6. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Surakarta City possesses a rich and diverse gastronomic heritage shaped by the acculturation of Javanese, Dutch, and Chinese cultural influences. The findings successfully identify 35 authentic culinary items, comprising main dishes, traditional snacks, and *wedangan* menus, which reflect the strong linkage between gastronomy and local cultural identity. In addition, this study develops a structured gastronomic database and a web-based system integrated with Google Earth, enabling tourists to independently design their gastronomic travel itineraries. The implications of these findings suggest that the development of gastronomic tourism not only enhances destination attractiveness but also contributes to cultural preservation, strengthens local identity, and supports community-based economic development through the utilization of digital technology.

However, this study is subject to several limitations, particularly in the technical aspects of the system, which still relies on manual input, lacks real-time navigation features, and may have limitations in route accuracy. Therefore, future research is recommended to further develop more advanced systems by integrating real-time navigation technologies, artificial intelligence, and improved user experience design. Subsequent studies may expand the scope by evaluating user satisfaction, assessing economic impacts, and applying similar models to other destinations to examine the scalability and sustainability of technology-based gastronomic tourism development.

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The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval and Originality Statement

Ethical approval was obtained for this study. The manuscript represents original work and has not been previously published, nor is it under consideration by another journal.

Data Disclosure Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.



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