

RESTAURANT MANAGEMENT AND SERVICE AS A CULINARY TOURISM ATTRACTION IN THE GADING SERPONG AREA

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ABSTRACT

Culinary tourism has become an important component of tourism development in a region. Gading Serpong, Tangerang, known as a residential and business district, also holds culinary tourism potential through its distinctive restaurants that are capable of attracting visitors. This article aims to analyze the role of service management at four iconic restaurants in Gading Serpong – Pecel Lele Si Oma, Soto Oseng Abing, Artirasa, and Bao Bao – in developing culinary tourism attractiveness. The study employs a qualitative approach using a case study method through observation and semi-structured interviews. The findings indicate that the four restaurants successfully create attractiveness through a combination of menu uniqueness, sensory experiences (taste, aroma, and presentation), and service management that emphasizes comfort and personalized experiences. However, variations exist in their management approaches. Restaurants with specific themes, such as Bao Bao with its modern dim sum concept, place greater emphasis on aesthetics and ambiance, while home-style restaurants such as Pecel Lele Si Oma rely more heavily on authentic flavors and personal interactions. The discussion relates these findings to theories of culinary tourism and service management. This article provides recommendations for restaurant managers and regional stakeholders to optimize the culinary tourism potential of Gading Serpong.

Keywords: Culinary Tourism; Restaurant Management; Service; Tourist Attraction; Gading Serpong

INTRODUCTION

Gading Serpong has rapidly developed from a suburban area into an integrated center of residential, business, and economic activities in Tangerang. This growth has been accompanied by significant dynamics in the culinary sector, where restaurants no longer function merely as places to eat but also as destinations for recreation and tourism (Hjalager & Richards, 2020). Culinary tourism, as part of the travel experience, has become a major travel motivator, with visitors seeking authentic and memorable experiences through food (Ellis et al., 2018).

Amid intense competition, restaurants in Gading Serpong such as Pecel Lele Si Oma, Soto Oseng Abing, Artirasa, and Bao Bao have managed to survive and even establish themselves as culinary destinations. Their success depends not only on food quality and taste but also on the effectiveness of operational management and the quality of service provided. Management practices encompassing supply chain management, cleanliness, and facility management, as well as service aspects including staff interactions, service speed, and

complaint handling, are important determinants of visitor satisfaction and revisit intention (Rahman et al., 2022).

This study focuses on analyzing how management and service strategies at these four restaurants contribute to creating culinary tourism attractiveness in Gading Serpong. By examining best practices across diverse restaurant models, ranging from a street-side tent establishment (Pecel Lele Si Oma), family-style restaurants (Soto Oseng Abing and Artirasa), to a concept-driven restaurant (Bao Bao), this study is expected to provide both practical and academic contributions to the development of culinary tourism through service management.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Culinary tourism can be understood as travel undertaken primarily to enjoy the experience of consuming distinctive food and beverages from a particular destination. This activity focuses not only on consumption itself but also on the overall experience associated with it, including the cultural, social, and emotional values embedded in the food (Hall & Sharples, 2003). The attractiveness of culinary tourism is generally built around three main elements: authenticity, uniqueness, and the story or background associated with the food (Kim & Eves, 2012). Authenticity refers to the extent to which food reflects the cultural identity of the local community, while uniqueness serves as a differentiating factor capable of attracting tourists' attention. Meanwhile, the story behind the food provides deeper meaning to the consumption experience, thereby creating an emotional connection between customers and the products they consume.

Furthermore, culinary experiences are not solely sensory in nature, involving taste, aroma, and visual presentation, but also encompass emotional and symbolic dimensions. These experiences are shaped through interactions between customers, the restaurant environment, and the social dynamics that occur during the consumption process (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2019). Thus, restaurants function not merely as places to eat but also as *experience spaces* capable of providing added value to customers. In the context of the restaurant industry, such culinary experiences are strongly influenced by the quality of management and service provided. Effective management ensures product and operational consistency, while high-quality service plays an important role in fostering positive interactions between staff and customers. The synergy between these two aspects is essential for creating memorable culinary experiences and, ultimately, enhancing the attractiveness of restaurants as culinary tourism destinations.

Integrated Restaurant Management

Effective restaurant management serves as a fundamental foundation for maintaining the sustainability and competitiveness of culinary businesses. Integrated management does not focus solely on day-to-day operations but also encompasses various interconnected strategic aspects that support overall restaurant performance. An integrated restaurant management framework generally consists of several key components:

1. **Operations:** Operational management encompasses supply chain management, the implementation of *standard operating procedures* (SOPs), food quality control, and restaurant cleanliness. Effective operational management plays an important role in ensuring product consistency and production efficiency, thereby enabling restaurants to continuously meet customer expectations (Davis et al., 2018).
2. **Marketing:** Marketing is an important element in increasing a restaurant's visibility

and attractiveness. Marketing strategies include brand building (*branding*), the use of digital media – particularly social media – and appropriate market segmentation. In addition, the creation of a unique value proposition serves as a differentiating factor that can strengthen a restaurant's position amid increasingly intense competition.

3. **Human Resources:** Human resource management focuses on employee recruitment, training, and development. The objective is to ensure that every staff member possesses adequate competencies to deliver consistent and professional service in accordance with established standards (Gursoy et al., 2020).
4. **Finance:** Financial management concerns the management of operational costs, including *food cost*, pricing strategies, and cash flow control. Effective financial management is essential for maintaining profitability and ensuring the long-term sustainability of restaurant businesses.

Overall, these four aspects are interconnected and form an integrated management system. An imbalance in any one aspect can affect the overall performance of a restaurant; therefore, holistic and continuous management is required.

Service Quality in the Restaurant Industry

Service quality is one of the key factors influencing customer satisfaction and loyalty in the restaurant industry. Good service not only creates a pleasant experience but also encourages customers to return and recommend the restaurant to others. The SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman et al. (1988) serves as a major reference and consists of five dimensions:

1. **Reliability:** The ability to deliver promised services accurately and consistently.
2. **Responsiveness:** The willingness to assist customers and provide prompt service.
3. **Assurance:** The knowledge, courtesy, and ability of staff to inspire customer trust and confidence.
4. **Empathy:** The personal and individualized attention provided to customers.
5. **Tangibles:** The appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication materials.

Synergy between Management and Service in Building Attractiveness

The attractiveness of a restaurant as a culinary tourism destination emerges from the collaboration between *back-stage management* and *front-stage performance*. Solid management ensures that products and operational systems function effectively, while high-quality service brings interactions to life and creates memorable experiences (Rahman et al., 2022). Restaurants that successfully integrate these two dimensions can create a clear and coherent narrative, positioning themselves both as guardians of culinary traditions and as innovators of modern dining experiences. This combination can become a strong source of attraction for tourists and visitors.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a multiple case study design. This approach was selected to obtain an in-depth and contextual understanding of restaurant management and service practices across different settings (Yin, 2018). The unit of analysis was restaurant management and service practices as factors contributing to culinary tourism attractiveness. Four restaurants were purposively selected based on the following criteria: (1) having a reputation as an iconic restaurant or culinary destination in the Gading Serpong area; (2)

representing different market segments, including street food, family-style restaurants, and concept-driven restaurants; (3) having been in operation for at least two years; and (4) being accessible to the researchers for observation and interviews.

Informants were selected using purposive sampling, taking into consideration their direct involvement with and experience of the research subjects. Data were collected through two primary techniques: non-participant observation and in-depth semi-structured interviews. Observations were conducted during peak operating hours to capture actual service dynamics and customer interactions.

The informants in this study consisted of:

- a. **Restaurant Managers:** One owner or manager from each restaurant (four informants in total).
- b. **Consumers:** Two to three customers from each restaurant (ten informants in total), including both regular customers and first-time customers who visited based on recommendations.

The research instrument consisted of an interview guide developed based on the research questions and informed by the SERVQUAL framework for service quality and restaurant management theory. In addition, the researchers used field notes to systematically document observations.

The data collection procedure was conducted in several stages: (1) preparation of the research instruments; (2) selection of research locations and informants; (3) implementation of field observations; (4) conducting in-depth interviews; and (5) documentation and recording of the data.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis developed by Braun and Clarke (2006), which involved six stages: (1) familiarization with the data; (2) generating initial codes; (3) searching for themes; (4) reviewing themes; (5) defining and naming themes; and (6) producing the report.

To ensure data trustworthiness, the study employed source triangulation, involving restaurant managers and consumers, as well as method triangulation through observation and interviews. In addition, limited member checking was conducted to ensure that the interpretation of the data was consistent with the informants' experiences. Regarding research ethics, all informants were informed about the purpose of the study and provided consent prior to the interviews. The identities of the informants were kept confidential, and the data collected were used solely for academic purposes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Pecel Lele Si Oma

1. Management

Based on the interview and observation findings, Pecel Lele Si Oma implements a management system oriented toward operational efficiency. This is reflected in the application of a structured workflow, particularly in the preparation of raw materials and food production processes. The restaurant tends to use a *pre-preparation* method, in which some ingredients are prepared before the main operating hours, allowing the restaurant to accelerate food preparation during periods of increased customer demand. In addition, quality control remains a major priority despite the high production volume. Standardization

of the cooking process is implemented to maintain consistent taste, which is an important factor in retaining customers. This simple yet effective work system enables the restaurant to remain stable in dealing with high demand.

2. Service

In terms of service, Pecel Lele Si Oma emphasizes speed and accuracy. This approach is consistent with the characteristics of its customers, who tend to expect fast service, particularly during dinner hours. Staff members work in a coordinated manner and have clearly defined responsibilities, which helps significantly reduce customer waiting times. Even during busy periods, service is maintained at a relatively good level, indicating that staff training and work experience have contributed to service effectiveness. Service speed is therefore one of the key factors contributing to customer satisfaction.

3. Attractiveness

The restaurant's main appeal lies in the combination of affordable prices, consistent taste, and fast service. In addition, the simplicity of its concept becomes a strength in itself, as it creates an authentic atmosphere that is closely connected to the everyday culinary habits of the local community. Thus, Pecel Lele Si Oma functions not only as a place to eat but also as part of an accessible local culinary experience for a wide range of customers.

Soto Oseng Abing

1. Management

Soto Oseng Abing demonstrates a management approach that places greater emphasis on product innovation as its primary strategy for attracting customers. The restaurant combines two food concepts into a single dish, which serves as its main point of differentiation in the market. Raw materials are selected relatively carefully to maintain product quality. In addition, the production process is designed to remain efficient even though the menu offers a distinctive concept. This demonstrates that innovation does not necessarily reduce operational efficiency but can instead become an integral part of the restaurant's management strategy.

2. Service

Service at Soto Oseng Abing tends to be more personalized compared with the other restaurants. Staff members not only serve food but also contribute to the overall customer experience. Interactions between staff and customers create a warmer and more comfortable atmosphere. This approach demonstrates that service does not function solely at a functional level but also has an emotional dimension. Customers visit not only to eat but also to experience something different.

3. Attractiveness

The uniqueness of the menu is the restaurant's primary attraction. The innovation offered provides customers with a new experience, particularly for those seeking something different from conventional food offerings. In addition, the closer interaction with customers provides added value that strengthens the restaurant's attractiveness as a culinary tourism destination.

Artirasa

1. Management

Artirasa applies a more modern management concept by integrating visual elements and customer experience into its restaurant operations. Management focuses not only on food quality but also on how the restaurant can create an aesthetically appealing atmosphere.

Interior design, spatial arrangement, and lighting form part of the management strategy to create a distinctive experience. This demonstrates that restaurant management has evolved beyond basic operational management toward *experience management*.

2. Service

Service at Artirasa is delivered according to more professional and structured standards. Staff members receive training to ensure that they can provide service that is not only friendly but also informative and responsive to customer needs. This approach reflects the presence of clear service standards, enabling service quality to be maintained consistently. Good service contributes to creating a more pleasant and memorable dining experience.

3. Attractiveness

The main attraction of Artirasa lies in its aesthetically oriented restaurant concept, which aligns with contemporary lifestyle trends. The restaurant's design concept is inspired by an ATM machine. The distinctive visual concept makes the restaurant a popular choice among customers who seek not only food but also a visual experience that can be shared on social media.

Bao Bao

1. Management

Bao Bao adopts a management approach focused on product innovation and strengthening brand identity. Its menu is creatively designed to provide an experience that differs from conventional restaurant offerings. In addition, operational management is carried out systematically with clear standards, enabling the restaurant to maintain product consistency even when customer volume increases. Branding is an important component of the restaurant's management strategy, particularly in building a strong market image.

2. Service

Service at Bao Bao tends to be fast and efficient, supported by a well-organized operational system. Staff members have clearly defined roles in the service process, making the workflow more effective. To further improve guest service, staff could greet customers warmly, for example, by saying, "Good morning, what would you like to order?" Clear task allocation could also allow the cashier to greet and assist guests while other staff members focus on preparing orders. Although the primary focus is on efficiency, service quality is maintained to ensure customer comfort. This demonstrates a balance between service speed and quality.

3. Attractiveness

Bao Bao's main attraction lies in its unique food concept and strong marketing strategy, particularly through social media. The visually appealing products and consistent branding make the restaurant easily recognizable and memorable to customers. Its effective use of digital media further strengthens Bao Bao's position as a restaurant that is relevant to current trends. Service also plays an important role in encouraging repeat orders and motivating customers to return.

DISCUSSION

Based on the findings from the four restaurants, it is evident that management and service are not two separate aspects but are closely interconnected in shaping a restaurant's attractiveness as a culinary tourism destination. Both work together to create the experience perceived directly by customers. From a management perspective, each restaurant demonstrates

different characteristics and strategies tailored to its concept and target market. Pecel Lele Si Oma, for example, focuses more on operational efficiency to serve customers quickly and consistently. In contrast, Soto Oseng Abing emphasizes menu and presentation innovation to remain appealing and avoid becoming monotonous. Artirasa adopts an approach that places greater emphasis on visual experience, with food presentation and the dining environment serving as its main selling points. Meanwhile, Bao Bao places greater emphasis on branding to build an identity that is easily recognized and remembered by customers.

These differences in approach demonstrate that there is no single management standard or model that can be universally applied to all restaurants. Each business needs to understand its market position and adapt its strategies accordingly to remain relevant and competitive. In other words, successful management depends largely on a restaurant's ability to understand the needs and preferences of its target customers.

From the service perspective, the findings also demonstrate that service quality plays a highly important role in shaping the overall customer experience. Fast, friendly, and responsive service not only provides comfort but also creates positive impressions that can influence customers' decisions to return in the future. Interactions between staff and customers are a key factor, as they can establish an emotional connection, even within a relatively short period of time. Customers tend to remember how they were treated, rather than simply what they ate.

Furthermore, a restaurant's attractiveness is no longer determined solely by the taste or quality of its food. Today, customers also seek broader experiences that encompass the dining atmosphere, unique concepts, and social interactions that take place during their visit. The emotional value experienced by customers, such as feelings of comfort, enjoyment, or even pride when visiting a particular place, also plays an important role in building loyalty.

In the current digital era, the role of social media cannot be overlooked. Social media has become a highly effective tool for shaping a restaurant's image and popularity. Restaurants with attractive visual elements, unique concepts, and distinctive experiences are more likely to be shared by customers on digital platforms. This indirectly helps restaurants attract potential new customers without requiring substantial promotional expenditure. Therefore, a restaurant's ability to create a "*shareable*" experience has become a significant added value in today's increasingly competitive culinary industry. Overall, it can be concluded that the success of a restaurant as a culinary tourism destination is determined by a balanced combination of appropriate management, high-quality service, and the ability to create memorable experiences for customers.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings of the study conducted at four restaurants in the Gading Serpong area—Pecel Lele Si Oma, Soto Oseng Abing, Artirasa, and Bao Bao—it can be concluded that restaurant management and service quality play a crucial role in shaping the attractiveness of restaurants as part of a culinary tourism destination. These two aspects cannot be separated, as they support one another in creating the experiences perceived directly by customers during their visits.

From a management perspective, each restaurant adopts a different approach tailored to its concept and target market. Some restaurants place greater emphasis on operational efficiency to serve customers quickly and consistently, while others focus more on product innovation to offer something new and appealing. Other restaurants prioritize the visual

aspects of the customer experience and dining atmosphere, while some build their competitive strength through strong branding. These differences demonstrate that there is no single strategy that is universally applicable to all restaurants. Rather, successful management depends on each business's ability to understand market needs and adapt its concept accordingly.

In addition, service quality has also been shown to be one of the key factors determining customer satisfaction. Fast, friendly, and responsive service not only provides comfort but also creates a deeper positive impression. Simple interactions between staff and customers are often among the aspects that customers remember most, sometimes even more than the food itself. When customers feel valued and well served, they are more likely to return and recommend the restaurant to others.

Furthermore, a restaurant's attractiveness is currently determined by more than just the taste or quality of its food. Modern customers tend to seek more comprehensive experiences, ranging from the dining atmosphere and unique concepts to the social interactions that occur during their visit. In addition, the development of social media has had a significant influence on shaping a restaurant's popularity. Restaurants with attractive visual elements and distinctive experiences are generally more likely to capture customers' attention and be shared on social media, thereby indirectly serving as an effective promotional tool.

Thus, it can be concluded that a restaurant's success in becoming a culinary tourism attraction result from a balanced combination of effective management, high-quality service, and the ability to create experiences that align with customers' current needs and preferences.

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be proposed for restaurant industry practitioners, particularly those in the Gading Serpong area, as follows:

1. Improve Operational Management Consistency

Restaurants are advised to continuously maintain operational standards, particularly regarding food quality, cleanliness, and production efficiency. Consistency is essential for maintaining customer trust in the long term.

2. Develop Service Quality

Regular staff training should be conducted to improve communication skills, service speed, and professional attitudes. Good service will have a direct impact on customer satisfaction and loyalty.

3. Innovation and Concept Differentiation

Restaurants should continue to innovate in terms of both menu offerings and concepts to remain relevant to market trends. Clear differentiation will help restaurants establish a strong identity amid increasing competition.

4. Optimize the Use of Social Media

Social media can be utilized as an effective marketing tool to increase restaurant visibility. Attractive visual content and active engagement with customers can strengthen the restaurant's public image.

5. Manage Customer Experience

Restaurants should not focus solely on their products but also on the overall customer experience, including the atmosphere, service, and social interactions that take place throughout the visit.

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