



The Uniqueness and Originality of the Serombotan as Tourism Balinese Traditional Culinary

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the uniqueness, originality, authenticity, and diversity of serombotan as a Balinese traditional culinary tourism product. A mixed-method approach was employed using qualitative descriptive analysis supported by quantitative data. The research focused on four concepts: uniqueness based on characteristics and preparation methods, originality based on raw material authenticity, authenticity based on culinary experience, and diversity based on ingredient variations. Data were collected from 30 serombotan traders in Semarapura, Klungkung. The results revealed that the uniqueness of serombotan lies in bitter melon, round eggplant, and traditional spices (*sambel nyuh*, peanut sauce, and *uyah sere limo*). However, its originality has shifted due to the use of ingredients from outside Klungkung and abroad. The findings highlight the importance of preserving traditional culinary identity in tourism development.

INTRODUCTION

Traditional culinary has become an important component in tourism development because food represents cultural identity, local knowledge, and historical values of a destination. In contemporary tourism, visitors are increasingly interested in authentic experiences that allow them to understand local culture through traditional foods, cooking methods, and community practices. Culinary tourism has developed beyond food consumption activities because it provides cultural experiences and strengthens the relationship between tourists and destinations (Ellis et al., 2021). Therefore, the preservation of traditional culinary is essential to maintain cultural diversity while supporting sustainable tourism development.

In Indonesia, traditional culinary products are closely connected with local resources, social values, and cultural traditions inherited from previous generations. Each region has unique culinary characteristics that reflect the identity of its community, such as ingredients, processing techniques, and serving traditions. The development of traditional culinary as a tourism product can contribute to strengthening local economic activities and increasing community participation in tourism development (Sutaguna et al., 2021). Furthermore, culinary tourism provides opportunities for tourists to obtain memorable experiences through authentic local food and cultural interactions (Stone et al., 2022).

Bali is one of Indonesia's leading tourism destinations with strong cultural characteristics, including traditional culinary heritage. Balinese traditional food reflects the relationship between local agricultural resources, cultural values, and community traditions. One of the traditional culinary products that represents Balinese identity is serombotan, originating from Semarapura, Klungkung. Serombotan has distinctive characteristics through the combination of vegetables, traditional preparation methods, and specific seasonings such as sambel nyuh, peanut sauce, and uyah sere limo. The existence of traditional culinary products such as serombotan can strengthen destination identity and support gastronomic tourism development (Prasiasa & Widari, 2022).

However, the development of traditional culinary as a tourism attraction faces challenges related to globalization, changes in consumer preferences, and adaptation to tourism market demands. Modifications in ingredients, presentation methods, and production processes may increase market acceptance but can also influence the originality and authenticity of traditional food. Authenticity is considered an important factor in culinary tourism because tourists often seek food experiences that represent genuine cultural values and local identity (Zhang et al., 2024). Thus, maintaining a balance between innovation and preservation is necessary to ensure the sustainability of traditional culinary products.

Previous studies have discussed culinary tourism from various perspectives, including tourist experiences, destination image, and consumer satisfaction. However, research specifically examining traditional culinary products based on the dimensions of uniqueness, originality, authenticity, and diversity remains limited, particularly in the context of Balinese traditional cuisine. Studies on Indonesian culinary tourism have mostly focused on tourism development strategies and consumer perceptions rather than analyzing how traditional foods maintain their cultural identity amid tourism commercialization (Suhartanto et al., 2021). Therefore, further research is needed to explore the characteristics and sustainability of traditional culinary products, especially serombotan as a cultural icon of Semarapura Klungkung.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the uniqueness, originality, authenticity, and diversity of serombotan as a Balinese traditional culinary tourism product, particularly in the accommodation and restaurant service industry in Semarapura Klungkung. Theoretically, this research contributes to culinary tourism studies by providing insight into the relationship between traditional food characteristics and tourism attractiveness. Practically, this research provides information for tourism stakeholders, culinary entrepreneurs, and local communities in preserving and developing serombotan as a sustainable gastronomic tourism product. Through appropriate preservation efforts, serombotan can maintain its cultural identity while contributing to tourism development in Klungkung.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Traditional Food as Cultural Heritage

Traditional food is an important element of cultural heritage because it represents the relationship between communities, local resources, history, and social values. Food traditions are not only related to eating activities but also reflect knowledge, skills, cultural practices, and identities that are inherited across generations. Traditional culinary products are often considered cultural expressions because their ingredients, preparation methods, and serving practices contain meanings related to local communities (Bessière & Tibère, 2020). Therefore, maintaining traditional food is an effort to preserve cultural identity while ensuring that local knowledge remains relevant in modern society.

Traditional culinary heritage also has an important role in strengthening community identity and supporting cultural tourism development. The existence of traditional foods can provide economic opportunities for local communities through culinary businesses while simultaneously maintaining cultural continuity. According to Gálvez et al. (2021), local food heritage contributes to sustainable tourism because it connects tourists with local culture through authentic consumption experiences. In this study, *serombotan* is considered a traditional culinary heritage because its preparation process, ingredients, and serving methods represent the cultural characteristics of Semarapura Klungkung.

Research by Prasetyo and Haryanto (2022) regarding Indonesian traditional culinary heritage found that traditional food functions as a representation of local identity and cultural values. Their study emphasized that culinary preservation requires maintaining original ingredients, traditional processing techniques, and community involvement. This concept is relevant to *serombotan* because the identity of the food is strongly associated with specific vegetables and traditional Balinese spices.

Culinary Tourism and Gastronomic Experience

Culinary tourism refers to tourism activities where food becomes an important medium for tourists to experience the culture of a destination. Culinary tourism is not limited to tasting food but includes understanding the origin of ingredients, preparation methods, traditions, and meanings behind local dishes. Gastronomic experiences allow tourists to develop emotional connections with destinations through food interactions (Kivela & Crotts, 2021). The development of culinary tourism is influenced by tourists' desire to obtain authentic and memorable experiences. Local food can become a tourism attraction because it provides something unique compared with standardized food products. According to Kim et al. (2023), culinary experiences influence tourists' perceptions of destination uniqueness because traditional food creates memorable impressions related to culture and locality.

In relation to *serombotan*, culinary tourism provides an opportunity to introduce Balinese traditional food to domestic and international visitors. The presentation of *serombotan* in hotels, restaurants, and tourism businesses can strengthen the relationship between local culinary heritage and tourism activities. Therefore, understanding culinary tourism concepts is important to analyze how *serombotan* can function as a gastronomic tourism product in Klungkung.

Traditional Culinary as Tourism Attraction: Uniqueness, Originality, Authenticity, and Diversity

Tourism attractions are developed based on characteristics that differentiate one destination from another. Four important dimensions in assessing tourism attractiveness are uniqueness, originality, authenticity, and diversity. Uniqueness refers to distinctive characteristics that create differences compared with other products, while originality relates to the preservation of original elements without significant external influences. Authenticity refers to the perceived genuineness of cultural experiences, whereas diversity relates to variations that increase attraction value (Richards, 2020).

Traditional culinary products can become tourism attractions when they maintain distinctive characteristics while providing meaningful experiences for visitors. According to Sims (2021), local food contributes to destination attractiveness because tourists associate traditional cuisine with authenticity and cultural exploration. However, excessive adaptation to market demands may reduce the cultural value and originality of traditional foods.

Previous research by Sujatha and Prasad (2023) showed that traditional culinary products with strong cultural characteristics have greater potential as tourism attractions because tourists appreciate originality and local identity. These findings support the analysis of *serombotan*, particularly regarding its uniqueness from the use of bitter melon, round eggplant, and traditional Balinese seasonings. The dimensions of uniqueness, originality, authenticity, and diversity are therefore appropriate frameworks to examine the sustainability of *serombotan* as a culinary tourism product.

Destination Image and Local Culinary Identity

Destination image refers to tourists' perceptions, beliefs, and impressions toward a tourism destination. A positive destination image can influence tourists' intention to visit and their willingness to recommend a destination to others. Culinary products can contribute to destination image because food represents the cultural characteristics and uniqueness of a place (Stylydis, 2020). Local culinary identity strengthens destination branding because traditional food provides symbolic value beyond its physical characteristics. A destination with distinctive culinary products has greater opportunities to create memorable tourism experiences. According to Prayag et al. (2022), cultural products, including traditional cuisine, influence tourists' emotional attachment and perceptions of destination authenticity.

In the context of Klungkung tourism, *serombotan* has the potential to become a culinary symbol that represents local identity. The existence of *serombotan* as a traditional food can support destination image by highlighting the cultural uniqueness of Semarapura Klungkung. Therefore, analyzing its characteristics is important to understand its contribution to tourism development.

Previous Studies and Research Gap

Previous studies have investigated traditional culinary from different perspectives, including cultural preservation, culinary tourism development, and tourist experience. Research by Gálvez et al. (2021) highlighted that traditional food contributes to sustainable tourism by connecting local communities and visitors through cultural experiences. Meanwhile, Kim et al. (2023) emphasized that culinary experiences influence tourists' perceptions of destination uniqueness and attractiveness. Studies in Indonesia have also examined traditional culinary as part of cultural tourism development. Prasetyo and Haryanto (2022) found that maintaining traditional ingredients and processing methods is essential to preserve culinary identity. However, most previous studies mainly discuss culinary tourism in general, while limited research specifically examines traditional food products based on the dimensions of uniqueness, originality, authenticity, and diversity.

Therefore, this study fills the research gap by specifically analyzing *serombotan* as a Balinese traditional culinary tourism product. This research does not only examine *serombotan* as food but also evaluates its cultural value, originality of ingredients, authenticity of experience, and diversity of variations. The results are expected to provide theoretical contributions to culinary tourism studies and practical contributions for preserving traditional culinary heritage in Klungkung.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-method research approach by integrating qualitative descriptive analysis and quantitative data analysis to examine the uniqueness, originality, authenticity, and diversity of *serombotan* as a Balinese traditional culinary tourism product. The mixed-method approach was selected because the research requires an in-depth understanding of cultural values, culinary characteristics, and community practices, while also requiring quantitative measurements related to ingredient composition and nutritional content. Mixed-method research enables researchers to obtain comprehensive findings by combining contextual explanations with measurable data (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The research variables consisted of four dimensions: uniqueness, originality, authenticity, and diversity. Uniqueness was analyzed based on preparation methods and distinctive characteristics of *serombotan*, originality was assessed through the authenticity of raw materials, authenticity was examined through the cultural and gastronomic experience obtained from consuming *serombotan*, and diversity was analyzed based on variations of ingredients and nutritional composition.

The research was conducted in Semarapura, Klungkung Regency, Bali, Indonesia, which was selected because the area is recognized as the origin and cultural center of *serombotan*. The population of this study consisted of *serombotan* traders operating in Semarapura Klungkung. The respondents were selected using a probability sampling technique through simple random sampling, resulting in 30 *serombotan* traders as research informants. The determination of 30 informants was based on the consideration that a minimum sample size of 30 respondents is acceptable for descriptive research when the population size is unknown or difficult to determine (Memon et al., 2020). The selected informants were considered capable of providing information regarding ingredients, preparation processes, variations, and sustainability practices of *serombotan* production.

Data collection was conducted through several techniques, including observation, interviews, documentation, and laboratory analysis. Observation was carried out to identify the preparation process, serving techniques, and characteristics of *serombotan*. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with traders to obtain information related to raw materials, traditional practices, and changes in *serombotan* production. Documentation was used to support field observations through photographs and records of culinary practices. Furthermore, quantitative analysis was performed through laboratory testing of *serombotan* ingredients to identify macronutrient components, including moisture content, ash content (minerals), protein content, fat content,

carbohydrate content, and calorie content. Laboratory analysis was conducted to provide objective information regarding the nutritional diversity of serombotan variations.

The research procedure was conducted through several stages. The first stage involved identifying the research object and determining the research variables based on the concepts of uniqueness, originality, authenticity, and diversity. The second stage involved collecting primary data through field observations, interviews, and documentation with serombotan traders in Semarapura Klungkung. The third stage consisted of laboratory analysis to determine the nutritional composition of selected serombotan ingredients. The final stage involved integrating qualitative and quantitative findings to interpret the role of serombotan as a traditional culinary tourism product. Data validity was maintained through triangulation by comparing interview results, observation findings, and laboratory analysis data, which is an important strategy in qualitative research to improve credibility and reliability (Nassaji, 2020).

The qualitative data obtained from interviews and observations were analyzed using descriptive analysis through data reduction, data categorization, interpretation, and conclusion development. Meanwhile, quantitative data from laboratory analysis were analyzed descriptively by presenting the nutritional composition of serombotan ingredients. The integration of qualitative and quantitative findings was conducted to explain the relationship between culinary characteristics and tourism attractiveness. The analysis framework referred to the concept that tourism attractions are influenced by uniqueness, originality, authenticity, and diversity, allowing serombotan to be evaluated not only as traditional food but also as a potential gastronomic tourism product.

RESULT & DISCUSSION

Characteristics of Serombotan Traders and Sustainability of Traditional Culinary Business

Serombotan is a traditional Balinese culinary product originating from Semarapura, Klungkung, which has been preserved through generations. Historically, *serombotan* was introduced in Semarapura Klungkung in 1908 during the reign of the last Klungkung king, Ida I Dewa Agung Gede Jambe. The term *serombotan* originates from the word *aduk-aduk*, which means mixed, referring to the process of combining various vegetables and seasonings so that the spices can blend with the ingredients. This characteristic indicates that *serombotan* is not only a food product but also represents local culinary knowledge and cultural practices.

The results of interviews with 30 *serombotan* traders indicate that this traditional culinary business is strongly associated with community and family involvement. The age distribution shows that most traders belong to the older age group, consisting of 10 people (33.33%) aged 46–55 years, followed by 9 people (30%) aged 36–45 years, 6 people (20%) aged 16–25 years, and 5 people (16.67%) aged 26–35 years. This condition indicates that *serombotan* businesses are still dominated by older generations, which may create challenges related to regeneration and continuity of traditional culinary practices.

All respondents involved in this research were women, although their business activities were also supported by husbands, children, and other family members. A total of 25 traders (83.33%) were married, while 5 traders (16.67%) were unmarried. These findings demonstrate that *serombotan* trading functions not only as a cultural activity but also as an economic activity that contributes to household welfare. The involvement of women in traditional food businesses is commonly associated with the preservation of recipes, preparation techniques, and culinary traditions within community-based food systems (Gálvez et al., 2021).

The origin of traders further confirms the relationship between *serombotan* and Klungkung cultural identity. The majority of traders originated from Klungkung (73.33%), while others came from Gianyar (16.67%) and Karangasem (10%). Furthermore, 25 traders (83.33%) inherited their businesses from previous generations, while only 5 traders (16.67%) started independently. This finding shows that *serombotan* is maintained through social transmission, where culinary knowledge is transferred within families and local communities.

The sustainability of traditional culinary products depends not only on maintaining recipes but also on preserving knowledge, skills, and cultural meanings associated with food practices. Traditional food functions as intangible cultural heritage because it reflects collective identity and local wisdom that must be continuously transferred between generations (Bessière & Tibère, 2020). Therefore, regeneration of *serombotan* traders is important to ensure that this culinary heritage remains sustainable.

Uniqueness of Serombotan as Balinese Traditional Culinary Identity

The research findings indicate that the uniqueness of *serombotan* is reflected through its ingredients, preparation methods, and traditional seasoning composition. Although *serombotan* uses common vegetables such as kale, spinach, long beans, and bean sprouts, it has distinctive ingredients that differentiate it from other vegetable dishes, particularly bitter melon and round eggplant. Bitter melon is processed to reduce its bitter taste, while round eggplant is served raw, creating a unique combination of texture and flavour. Another important element that strengthens the uniqueness of *serombotan* is the use of traditional Balinese seasonings. The dish contains three characteristic seasonings: *sambel nyuh*, peanut sauce, and *uyah sere limo*. *Sambel nyuh* consists of garlic, chili, shrimp paste, Balinese sugar, and roasted grated coconut. Peanut sauce is prepared from peanuts, garlic, chili, salt, shrimp paste, and Balinese sugar, while *uyah sere limo* consists of chili, salt, shrimp paste, and kaffir lime juice.



Figure 1. Vegetable *Serombotan* or Balinese *Pecel*

Figure 1 illustrates the physical appearance of *serombotan* as a traditional Balinese culinary product. The combination of various vegetables and traditional seasonings creates a distinctive visual and sensory characteristic that represents Balinese culinary identity. The composition of ingredients demonstrates that *serombotan* has unique characteristics that distinguish it from other vegetable-based foods.

The uniqueness of *serombotan* supports its potential as a culinary tourism attraction because tourists increasingly seek food products that represent the identity and culture of a destination. Culinary products are not only consumed as food but also interpreted as symbols of place, cultural values, and local experiences. Previous research has shown that culinary identity contributes to destination attractiveness because tourists value unique food experiences associated with local culture (Jokom et al., 2023).

Originality of Serombotan: Preservation and Culinary Adaptation

The originality of *serombotan* was analyzed based on the authenticity of raw materials used in its preparation. The ingredients can be categorized into four groups: vegetables, legumes, seasonings, and fruits. Vegetable components include spinach, bean sprouts, long beans, bitter melon, and round eggplant. Legumes include red beans, green beans, peanuts, and *undis*. Seasonings consist of garlic, chili, shrimp paste, Balinese sugar, and salt, while fruit components include coconut and kaffir lime juice. The findings show that although most ingredients originate from Bali, some materials come from outside Semarapura Klungkung. One example is *undis* beans, which originate from Singaraja. The use of ingredients from outside the original area indicates that the originality of *serombotan* has experienced changes due to availability and adaptation factors.

In addition, several traders have added vermicelli (*mihun*) to the presentation of *serombotan*. Although vermicelli is not part of the traditional composition, its inclusion reflects adaptation to consumer preferences and market demands. Traditional culinary products often experience changes due to globalization and consumer adaptation. However, innovation needs to maintain the essential cultural characteristics of the food because authenticity remains an important factor in gastronomic tourism experiences (Chen et al., 2023).

Therefore, maintaining the original characteristics of *serombotan* is necessary while allowing limited adaptation to support business sustainability.

Authenticity of Serombotan as Gastronomic Tourism Experience

The authenticity of *serombotan* is reflected through the sensory experience obtained by consumers. The combination of *sambel nyuh*, peanut sauce, and *uyah sere limo* with grated coconut produces a distinctive taste characterized by spicy, savory, and crunchy sensations. These characteristics create a unique gastronomic experience that represents Balinese culinary traditions.



Figure 2. *Serombotan* Semarapura, Klungkung Regency

Figure 2 shows *serombotan* as a culinary product originating from Semarapura, Klungkung Regency. The existence of *serombotan* in this area demonstrates the strong relationship between traditional food and local identity. The presentation of *serombotan* reflects not only the physical characteristics of food but also the cultural values attached to its production and consumption.

The authenticity of *serombotan* is not limited to ingredients but also includes the cultural meaning and interaction between producers, sellers, and consumers. Culinary tourism experiences become stronger when tourists can understand the relationship between food, tradition, and local communities. Local food experiences influence tourist perceptions because food acts as a medium for cultural interaction and destination understanding (Andih et al., 2025).

Diversity of Serombotan and Consumer Preference Changes

The research findings indicate that *serombotan* has experienced diversification due to changes in consumer preferences. Initially, *serombotan* consisted of ingredients such as cowpea, *undis*, bean sprouts, kale, long beans, and round eggplant. However, current variations include additional ingredients such as bitter melon, vermicelli, and fried tofu.

The emergence of variations demonstrates that traditional culinary products are dynamic and capable of adapting to social and economic changes. Culinary diversity can increase consumer acceptance and strengthen tourism potential, but changes should not eliminate the essential identity of the traditional food.

The diversity of *serombotan* reflects a balance between preservation and innovation. Variations may support the sustainability of culinary businesses because they allow adaptation to consumer preferences while maintaining traditional characteristics. Culinary development becomes valuable when innovation strengthens rather than replaces cultural identity (Susanto, 2023). Overall, the findings demonstrate that *serombotan* possesses strong potential as a Balinese culinary tourism product because it combines uniqueness, cultural identity, authenticity, and diversity. However, preservation strategies are required to maintain originality while allowing controlled adaptation according to tourism development needs.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the analysis, *serombotan* is a traditional Balinese culinary product that has strong potential as a gastronomic tourism attraction in Semarapura Klungkung. The findings indicate that the uniqueness of *serombotan* is reflected in the use of distinctive ingredients, particularly bitter melon and round eggplant, combined with traditional seasonings consisting of sambel nyuh, peanut sauce, and uyah sere limo. These characteristics represent the cultural identity of Semarapura Klungkung and strengthen the position of *serombotan* as a local culinary icon.

The study also concludes that the originality of *serombotan* has experienced changes due to the introduction of raw materials from outside Semarapura Klungkung and outside Bali. The use of undis beans from Singaraja and vermicelli from China indicates that traditional culinary products continue to adapt to changes in availability and consumer preferences. Although adaptation may support business sustainability, maintaining the essential characteristics of *serombotan* remains important to preserve its cultural value and authenticity.

Furthermore, changes in consumer preferences have encouraged variations in *serombotan* ingredients, resulting in differences in composition and nutritional content. Therefore, recommendations from this research include the need for collaboration between local communities, culinary entrepreneurs, and tourism stakeholders to preserve the original identity of *serombotan* while allowing controlled innovation. Documentation of traditional recipes, regeneration of young culinary entrepreneurs, and promotion of *serombotan* as a cultural tourism product are important strategies to ensure its sustainability in the future.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

This study has several limitations that provide opportunities for further research. First, this research focuses primarily on traders and culinary characteristics of serombotan in Semarang Klungkung; therefore, future studies may expand the research scope by involving tourists as respondents to examine perceptions, satisfaction, and preferences toward serombotan as a tourism product. Second, further research can explore the nutritional aspects, economic value, and marketing strategies of serombotan in greater depth. A quantitative approach involving larger samples may also be conducted to measure the relationship between culinary authenticity, tourist experience, and destination attractiveness. Future studies may also compare serombotan with other traditional Balinese culinary products to understand its competitive position within gastronomic tourism development.

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