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Gastronomic Tourism and the Politics of Identity: How 'Pecinan' Bogor (Chinatown) Fosters Interethnic Cohesion in a Multicultural Community?

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ABSTRACT

Urban Chinatowns in Southeast Asia are often framed as heritage tourism enclaves, commodified for cultural consumption while their contemporary social functions remain underexplored. This article addresses this gap by examining Pecinan Bogor (Chinatown), Indonesia, not merely as a heritage destination but as a lived urban space where gastronomic tourism mediates interethnic and interfaith relations. The study investigates how culinary encounters within this historic district foster social cohesion and enable the negotiation of identity and belonging in a multicultural urban community. Drawing on the conceptual frameworks of contact zone and the politics of belonging, this research employs qualitative discourse analysis, digital ethnography, and document analysis. Data are derived from tourism promotion materials, social media content, visitor reviews, and municipal policy narratives that construct Pecinan as a culinary destination. The findings reveal that gastronomic tourism in Pecinan Bogor functions as a symbolic social interface where diverse groups, including Chinese Indonesians, Sundanese Muslims, and visitors from varied backgrounds, engage in everyday practices of tolerance, cultural exchange, and negotiated coexistence. Culinary representations in digital and promotional spaces frame the district as a site of harmony while simultaneously serving as an arena for identity negotiation and the production of shared urban belonging. This study contributes to debates on tourism and urban diversity in the Global South by demonstrating that gastronomic tourism can operate as an infrastructure of social cohesion rather than merely a form of cultural commodification. By foregrounding Pecinan Bogor as a digitally mediated contact zone embedded in everyday urban life, the article advances a nuanced understanding of how tourism practices reshape pluralism and reconfigure the politics of identity in contemporary Indonesian cities.

Keywords: *Gastronomic tourism; Identity politics; Interethnic relations; Interfaith coexistence; Multicultural urban community.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Urban Chinatowns in Southeast Asia have long been framed as heritage tourism enclaves, frequently reduced to curated spaces of cultural consumption. Within dominant tourism imaginaries, these districts are constructed as repositories of ethnic authenticity, where culinary practices, architecture, and ritual performances are selectively packaged and staged for visitors. Such representations are deeply embedded in broader processes of urban branding and neoliberal place-making, in which culture is mobilized as an economic resource to attract tourism and investment [1]. While these processes contribute to economic growth and the visibility of minority cultures, they often obscure the lived realities of these spaces as dynamic arenas of everyday interaction, negotiation, and coexistence. This reflects a broader limitation within tourism scholarship, which has tended to privilege analyses of commodification while under examining the socio-political and relational dimensions embedded within tourism practices [2].

The tendency to frame Chinatowns primarily through the lens of commodification is particularly evident in Southeast Asia, where cultural diversity is frequently incorporated into national and urban tourism strategies. In this context, cultural practices including food, festivals, and religious expressions are transformed into consumable experiences for both domestic and international visitors [3]. As argued by Arjun Appadurai (1986), commodities are not merely economic objects but

are embedded within complex social and cultural relations that shape their meanings and circulation. The commodification of culture, therefore, does not simply involve the transformation of traditions into products; it also entails a reconfiguration of how communities represent themselves and how they are perceived by others [4]. In many cases, this process results in the selective representation of culture, privileging narratives of harmony, exoticism, and authenticity while marginalizing histories of conflict, inequality, and contestation.

Within the Indonesian context, Pecinan districts represent historically layered urban formations shaped by migration, colonial governance, and postcolonial identity politics. During the colonial period, spatial segregation policies institutionalized ethnic divisions, positioning Chinese communities within distinct urban enclaves that were both economically significant and socially bounded. In the postcolonial era, these dynamics were further complicated by nationalist discourses and state policies that alternated between assimilation and exclusion, particularly during the New Order period. As a result, the position of Chinese Indonesians has been characterized by a persistent ambivalence: they have played central roles in economic life while simultaneously remaining vulnerable to stigmatization and episodic marginalization.

In contemporary urban Indonesia, however, there has been a gradual reconfiguration of these dynamics. Since the post-Reformasi period, policies promoting multiculturalism and cultural recognition have contributed to the revalorization of Chinese Indonesian heritage, particularly within urban tourism development. Pecinan districts have increasingly been repositioned as sites of cultural heritage and economic opportunity, with culinary practices emerging as a central element of this transformation. In cities such as Bogor, gastronomic tourism has become a key strategy for revitalizing urban spaces, attracting visitors, and constructing new narratives of inclusivity and diversity.

This transformation raises an important analytical question within tourism and urban studies: does gastronomic tourism merely reproduce processes of cultural commodification, or can it also function as a socially embedded mechanism that facilitates meaningful encounters across ethnic and religious boundaries. Existing scholarship has largely emphasized the commodifying tendencies of tourism, often portraying it as a force that flattens cultural differences and reduces social relations to market transactions. While this perspective is valuable, it risks overlooking the ways in which tourism practices are experienced and negotiated in everyday life.

To situate this study empirically, it is essential to contextualize the historical and socio-cultural significance of Pecinan Bogor, particularly the Suryakencana corridor, which constitutes the primary site of analysis. Pecinan Bogor refers to a historically embedded urban enclave centered along Jalan Suryakencana, a major commercial artery in the city of Bogor, West Java. The formation of this area cannot be separated from broader colonial urban planning and migration dynamics in the Dutch East Indies. The development of the Great Post Road (Grote Postweg) under Governor-General Daendels in the early nineteenth century played a crucial role in structuring urban growth across Java, including Bogor, where Suryakencana emerged as a key commercial corridor [5].

The presence of Chinese communities in Bogor is closely linked to patterns of migration and colonial governance that positioned Chinese populations as intermediaries in trade and economic activities. Following the reorganization of urban populations in the colonial period particularly after episodes of anti-Chinese violence in Batavia in the eighteenth century. Chinese settlers increasingly established themselves in secondary urban centers such as Bogor [6]. Over time, these communities formed concentrated settlements characterized by commercial activity, residential clustering, and the establishment of socio-religious institutions. One of the most significant markers of this historical presence is Vihara Dhanagun (Hok Tek Bio), which remains a central cultural and religious site for the Chinese Indonesian community in Bogor and reflects the continuity of communal life across generations [7].

During the colonial period, the spatial organization of cities in the Dutch East Indies was structured along ethnic lines, with Chinese communities often confined to designated quarters. These forms of segregation, while initially imposed, also facilitated the development of dense economic networks and cultural institutions within Pecinan areas [8]. However, in the postcolonial period particularly following the gradual dismantling of formal segregation policies these spaces underwent significant transformation. In Bogor, Pecinan evolved into a more socially integrated urban environment, where Chinese Indonesians, Sundanese Muslims, and other groups coexist and interact within shared spaces of commerce and everyday life [9].

What makes Pecinan Bogor particularly distinctive is not merely its historical longevity, but the way in which it has developed as a site of continuous intercultural interaction and adaptation. Rather than functioning as an isolated ethnic enclave, the area represents a hybrid urban space shaped by processes of acculturation and everyday negotiation. This hybridity is especially visible in the culinary domain, where Chinese culinary traditions have been adapted to local tastes, ingredients, and religious norms, including the incorporation of halal practices to accommodate the predominantly Muslim population. As food scholars have noted, culinary practices are deeply embedded in processes of identity formation and cultural exchange, serving as sites where cultural boundaries are both maintained and reconfigured [10].

In contemporary Bogor, Jalan Suryakencana has become widely recognized as a major gastronomic destination, often described as a “culinary corridor” that attracts both local residents and visitors. The area is characterized by a dense concentration of street vendors,

traditional eateries, and long-established family businesses, many of which have operated for decades and are deeply embedded in local social networks. Importantly, the culinary landscape of Pecinan Bogor reflects a high degree of inclusivity and adaptation, with a diverse range of food offerings that cater to different cultural and religious preferences. This inclusivity not only enhances its appeal as a tourism destination but also reinforces its role as a shared urban space where diverse groups interact through everyday practices of consumption [11].

At the same time, the increasing prominence of Pecinan Bogor as a tourism destination has been accompanied by efforts to preserve and rebrand the area as a site of cultural heritage. Local government initiatives and tourism promotion strategies have emphasized its historical architecture, culinary diversity, and multicultural character, positioning it as a symbol of urban pluralism. However, as scholars have argued, such representations are often selective, highlighting narratives of harmony while downplaying underlying tensions and inequalities [12]. This dual character as both a lived space and a curated site of representation makes Pecinan Bogor a particularly compelling case for examining the complex relationship between tourism, identity, and social interaction.

Taken together, these historical and socio-cultural characteristics position Pecinan Bogor as more than a heritage tourism site; it is a dynamic urban assemblage in which history, culture, and social relations are continuously negotiated. Its long-standing role as a site of intercultural contact, combined with its contemporary transformation into a gastronomic tourism hub, provides a unique empirical setting for analysing how everyday practices such as eating, gathering, and circulating through urban space mediate broader processes of identity formation and belonging in a multicultural society.

Emerging research on gastronomic tourism suggests that food-based encounters can create opportunities for interaction, communication, and the formation of social bonds. As argued by Richards [13], food tourism is not only about consumption but also about participation, experience, and engagement. Similarly, Hjalager and Richards [14] highlight the role of culinary practices in shaping place identity and facilitating interactions between visitors and local communities. Food, in this sense, operates as a socially embedded medium through which individuals engage with difference, negotiate meanings, and construct a sense of belonging. However, these interactions are not inherently harmonious or egalitarian; they are shaped by broader social structures, power relations, and cultural norms that influence who participates, how they interact, and what meanings are produced.

This article seeks to contribute to this emerging field by explore description that Pecinan Bogor not merely as a heritage tourism destination, but as a lived urban space in which gastronomic practices mediate interethnic and interfaith relations. Rather than treating culinary tourism as a passive form of cultural consumption, the study conceptualizes it as an active social process through which identities are performed, negotiated, and reconfigured. In doing so, it shifts the analytical focus from representation alone to the interplay between representation, practice, and meaning, thereby addressing a key gap in existing scholarship.

The analysis is guided by the overarching question of how gastronomic tourism in Pecinan Bogor operates as a site where identity and belonging are constructed, negotiated, and represented within a multicultural urban context. To address this inquiry, the study proceeds along three interrelated dimensions. First, it examines how Pecinan Bogor is discursively constructed as a culinary tourism destination within digital platforms and policy narratives, and how such constructions embed particular imaginaries of multicultural harmony. Second, it explores how everyday gastronomic encounters facilitate interethnic and interfaith interactions among diverse social groups within the district. Third, it investigates how these interactions shape processes of identity negotiation and the politics of belonging, while critically assessing the extent to which dominant narratives of harmony may obscure underlying asymmetries, exclusions, or tensions.

Theoretically, this study draws on the concept of the contact zone, as developed by Mary Louise Pratt [15], to conceptualize Pecinan Bogor as a space of encounter where cultures meet, interact, and negotiate under conditions shaped by historical and contemporary power relations. The notion of the contact zone emphasizes that such encounters are not neutral but are structured by asymmetries of power, making it particularly relevant for analyzing interactions within postcolonial and multicultural contexts. This perspective is complemented by the framework of the politics of belonging, which focuses on how boundaries of inclusion and exclusion are constructed and contested in social life. Together, these frameworks enable a nuanced understanding of how gastronomic tourism operates not only as a cultural practice but also as a political process that shapes who belongs, who is excluded, and under what conditions.

Importantly, encounters within urban tourism spaces are always embedded within broader socio-political structures. As Valentine (2008) argues, proximity does not automatically lead to social cohesion; rather, interactions across difference are mediated by existing inequalities, stereotypes, and power relations. Similarly, Wilson highlights that tourism spaces can simultaneously enable and constrain encounters, producing both moments of connection and forms of exclusion. These insights underscore the need for a critical approach that moves beyond celebratory narratives of multicultural harmony and instead examines the complexities and contradictions inherent in tourism-mediated interactions [16].

By foregrounding the lived and digitally mediated dimensions of culinary encounters, this study contributes to broader debates on tourism, urban diversity, and social cohesion in the Global South. It argues that gastronomic

tourism can function not only as a mechanism of cultural commodification but also as an infrastructure of social interaction, enabling forms of engagement that reshape how difference is experienced and negotiated in urban life. At the same time, it emphasizes that these processes remain entangled with broader structures of inequality and power, requiring careful analysis of both their integrative and exclusionary dimensions.

In doing so, the article advances a more nuanced understanding of urban tourism as a socio-political phenomenon, highlighting the ways in which everyday practice, such as eating, interacting, and sharing space contribute to the ongoing reconfiguration of identity and belonging. By situating Pecinan Bogor within these broader theoretical and empirical debates, the study not only addresses a gap in existing scholarship but also provides insights into how multicultural urban communities navigate difference in increasingly complex and mediated environments.

1.1. Problem of Statement

Despite the growing prominence of urban Chinatowns as key sites of heritage tourism in Southeast Asia, existing scholarship has predominantly framed these spaces through the lens of cultural commodification, emphasizing their role as curated enclaves designed for consumption. While this perspective has generated important insights into the economic and representational dimensions of tourism, it remains limited in its capacity to capture the lived and relational dynamics that unfold within these spaces. In particular, insufficient attention has been paid to how tourism practices especially those centred on everyday activities such as food consumption function as arenas of social interaction, negotiation, and meaning-making within multicultural urban contexts.

This limitation is especially significant in the context of Indonesia, where Pecinan districts are not only sites of tourism but also historically embedded spaces shaped by complex trajectories of migration, exclusion, and cultural negotiation. The rearticulation of these districts as gastronomic tourism destinations raises critical questions about the socio-political implications of such transformations. While culinary tourism is often celebrated for promoting cultural exchange and social cohesion, it may also reproduce selective representations of harmony that obscure underlying inequalities, power asymmetries, and unresolved tensions between social groups.

Accordingly, there is a need for a more nuanced analytical framework that moves beyond dichotomous understandings of tourism as either commodification or cohesion. Such a framework must account for the ways in which gastronomic tourism operates simultaneously as a site of representation, a space of interaction, and a process of negotiating identity and belonging. By situating Pecinan Bogor within this analytical perspective, this study seeks to address a critical gap in the literature and to contribute to broader debates on tourism, urban diversity, and the politics of coexistence in the Global South.

1.2 Research Question

Building on the foregoing discussion, this study seeks to move beyond conventional approaches that frame urban Chinatowns solely as sites of cultural commodification. Instead, it positions Pecinan Bogor as a socially embedded and dynamically mediated urban space in which tourism practices intersect with everyday forms of interaction, identity construction, and negotiations of belonging.

By foregrounding the role of gastronomic tourism as both a representational and relational process, the study aims to capture the complex ways in which meanings of diversity, coexistence, and inclusion are produced and experienced. In doing so, it adopts a multi-layered analytical approach that integrates discourse, practice, and power, thereby enabling a more nuanced understanding of how tourism functions not only as an economic activity but also as a socio-political process. Accordingly, the following research questions are formulated to guide the analysis as follow:

1. How is Pecinan Bogor discursively constructed as a gastronomic tourism destination within digital platforms and policy narratives?.
2. In what ways do gastronomic encounters in Pecinan Bogor facilitate interethnic and interfaith interactions among diverse social groups?.
3. How do these interactions shape the negotiation of identity and the politics of belonging, and to what extent do dominant representations of harmony obscure underlying power asymmetries and social tensions?

1.3 Research Objectives

To building upon the research questions outlined above, this study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of gastronomic tourism in Pecinan Bogor by examining its representational, relational, and socio-political dimensions. Specifically, the study seeks to understand how tourism practices are constructed, experienced, and negotiated within a multicultural urban context, while also critically engaging with the ways in which identity, belonging, and power relations are embedded within these processes. Accordingly, the objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To analyses how Pecinan Bogor is constructed and represented as a gastronomic tourism destination within digital and policy discourses, and how these representations shape dominant imaginaries of multiculturalism and urban harmony.
2. To decribing how gastronomic encounters in Pecinan Bogor function as a socially mediated space of interaction that facilitates interethnic and interfaith engagement, and to critically assess how these interactions contribute to the negotiation of identity and the politics of belonging within a multicultural urban context.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Urban Chinatowns have long occupied a central position in debates on heritage, identity, and tourism, particularly within rapidly transforming cities in Southeast Asia. Much of the existing literature has approached these spaces through the lens of cultural commodification, emphasizing how urban ethnic enclaves are reconfigured into sites of consumption for tourism and economic development. Early foundational works by Greenwood [17] and MacCannell [18] conceptualize tourism as a process that transforms local culture into staged authenticity, where everyday practices are selectively re-presented for external audiences. This perspective has been further developed in urban studies.

Within Southeast Asia, these dynamics are further complicated by colonial histories and postcolonial nation-building processes. As Reid (2010) and Colombijn (2010) demonstrate [19], urban spaces in the region have been historically shaped by patterns of migration, segregation, and socio-political stratification, particularly in relation to Chinese diaspora communities. In this context, Chinatowns are not merely cultural enclaves but historically contingent formations embedded within broader structures of power and inequality. However, when incorporated into tourism narratives, these complexities are often simplified into representations of cultural harmony and diversity, aligning with what Shepherd describes as the selective commodification of heritage. While such representations are effective for tourism promotion, they tend to obscure the contested and negotiated nature of these urban spaces [20].

At the same time, a growing body of literature on gastronomic tourism has begun to shift attention toward the experiential and relational dimensions of tourism practices. Food is increasingly understood not only as an object of consumption but as a medium through which social meanings are produced and shared. As Arjun Appadurai argues, culinary practices are deeply embedded in social life, functioning as markers of identity and as arenas of cultural negotiation. This perspective is echoed by Bell and Valentine, who emphasize that eating is inherently social, connecting individuals to networks of meaning, memory, and belonging. Building on this, Richards and Hjalager and Richards suggest that gastronomic tourism provides opportunities for interaction between visitors and local communities, enabling forms of engagement that extend beyond passive consumption [21].

Nevertheless, despite this shift toward relational approaches, much of the gastronomic tourism literature remains focused on issues of authenticity, destination development, and economic impact. The micro-level dynamics of interaction within culinary spaces particularly in relation to interethnic and interfaith relations remain underexplored. Moreover, existing studies often adopt a normative assumption that food-based encounters naturally foster social cohesion, without sufficiently interrogating the power relations and inequalities that may shape these interactions.

To address these limitations, the concept of the contact zone offers a productive analytical framework for understanding the complexity of social encounters within tourism spaces. Originally introduced by Mary Louise Pratt [22], the contact zone refers to social spaces where cultures meet, interact, and negotiate under conditions of asymmetrical power. Rather than assuming harmonious coexistence, this framework foregrounds the tensions, conflicts, and negotiations that characterize intercultural encounters. In urban contexts, this perspective has been further developed by scholars such as Valentine, who argues that spatial proximity does not automatically translate into meaningful interaction or social cohesion. Instead, encounters across difference are mediated by existing social hierarchies, prejudices, and power relations, producing outcomes that are often ambivalent and uneven [23].

Complementing this perspective, the concept of the politics of belonging provides a critical lens for examining how identities and boundaries are constructed and contested within social life. As articulated by Nira Yuval-Davis [24], belonging is not simply an individual feeling of attachment but a political process that involves the negotiation of inclusion and exclusion. This process operates across multiple levels, from everyday interactions to institutional and discursive practices, shaping who is recognized as part of a community and under what conditions. In the context of urban tourism, the politics of belonging becomes particularly salient, as representations of place and identity often privilege certain narratives while marginalizing others. As a result, tourism spaces can simultaneously function as sites of inclusion and exclusion, enabling interaction while reproducing existing inequalities.

Bringing these strands of literature together highlights several important limitations in current scholarship. While studies on Chinatowns have provided valuable insights into processes of commodification and representation, they have tended to treat these spaces as static objects of analysis rather than as dynamic environments of everyday social interaction. Similarly, although the literature on gastronomic tourism has begun to recognize the importance of food as a social and cultural medium, it has not sufficiently examined how culinary encounters operate as sites of negotiation across lines of difference, particularly in relation to ethnicity and religion. Furthermore, theoretical frameworks such as the contact zone and the politics of belonging, while widely used in cultural and social theory, have rarely been systematically applied to the study of tourism practices in Southeast Asian urban contexts.

This gap is particularly evident in the case of cities such as Bogor, where historical processes of migration, segregation, and integration intersect with contemporary forms of tourism development. Existing research has yet to fully explore how gastronomic tourism in such contexts functions as a socially mediated space in which representation, interaction, and power converge. Moreover, there remains a tendency within the literature

to adopt either a celebratory perspective that emphasizes social cohesion or a critical perspective that foregrounds commodification, without adequately bridging these approaches.

In response to these gaps, this study conceptualizes Pecinan Bogor as a gastronomic contact zone in which everyday culinary encounters mediate the negotiation of identity and belonging within a multicultural urban setting. By integrating insights from tourism studies, urban sociology, and cultural theory, the study seeks to move beyond reductive dichotomies and to offer a more nuanced understanding of how tourism practices simultaneously produce cohesion and exclusion, harmony and tension. In doing so, it contributes to a growing body of scholarship that repositions tourism not merely as an economic or representational phenomenon, but as a complex socio-political process embedded in the everyday life of the city.

3. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design based on library research to explore the role of gastronomic tourism in mediating identity and belonging within the context of Pecinan Bogor. Rather than relying on primary fieldwork data, the study draws on a systematic analysis of existing scholarly literature, policy documents, and secondary data sources to construct a theoretically informed and empirically grounded interpretation of the phenomenon under investigation.

Library research is particularly appropriate for this study as it enables the integration of diverse bodies of knowledge across tourism studies, urban sociology, and cultural theory. As argued by Creswell (2014), qualitative research is well suited for exploring complex social phenomena where meaning, interpretation, and context are central. In this case, the study seeks not to measure tourism practices quantitatively, but to understand how gastronomic tourism operates as a socially mediated process through which identity and belonging are constructed and negotiated. By synthesizing existing literature, the study is able to identify patterns, conceptual linkages, and theoretical insights that may not be visible within single empirical cases.

The data for this study consist of three main categories of sources. First, academic literature, including peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and theoretical works, is used to establish the conceptual framework and situate the study within existing debates on cultural commodification, gastronomic tourism, contact zones, and the politics of belonging. Key works from scholars such as Appadurai, Pratt, and Yuval-Davis are employed to develop a multi-layered analytical perspective. Second, policy documents and official publications related to tourism development in Bogor are examined to understand how Pecinan Bogor is constructed and promoted as a culinary destination within institutional discourse. Third, secondary materials such as online articles, tourism narratives, and publicly available descriptions of the Suryakencana area are utilized to provide contextual insights into the historical development and contemporary significance of Pecinan Bogor.

The analytical approach adopted in this study is qualitative and interpretive, drawing on principles of discourse analysis. Discourse analysis allows for the examination of how meanings, identities, and social realities are constructed through language and representation (Fairclough, 1995). In this study, it is used to analyse how Pecinan Bogor is framed within tourism narratives and policy discourses, as well as how these representations reflect broader assumptions about multiculturalism, harmony, and urban identity. At the same time, the analysis is informed by a relational perspective that considers how these discourses intersect with everyday practices, particularly in the context of gastronomic encounters.

To ensure analytical rigor, the study adopts a systematic approach to source selection and evaluation. Sources are selected based on their relevance to the research questions, their academic credibility, and their contribution to theoretical and empirical understanding. Preference is given to peer-reviewed publications and widely cited theoretical works. Triangulation is achieved by comparing insights across different types of sources, allowing the study to identify convergences and divergences in how gastronomic tourism and Pecinan Bogor are understood and represented. This process enhances the validity of the analysis by reducing reliance on single perspectives or isolated interpretations.

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this methodological approach. As a library-based study, the research does not include direct observation or interviews with participants, which may limit its ability to capture the full complexity of lived experiences within Pecinan Bogor. However, this limitation is partially addressed through the use of diverse secondary sources and the integration of multiple theoretical perspectives. Moreover, the purpose of this study is not to provide an exhaustive empirical account, but to develop a conceptual and analytical framework that can inform future empirical research.

By employing a qualitative library research approach, this study provides a theoretically grounded and critically informed analysis of gastronomic tourism as a socio-political process. It demonstrates how secondary data, when systematically analysed and theoretically integrated, can offer valuable insights into the dynamics of identity, belonging, and social interaction within multicultural urban contexts.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study in relation to the three research questions, focusing on how Pecinan Bogor is represented, experienced, and negotiated as a gastronomic tourism space. By integrating discourse analysis and theoretical interpretation, the discussion highlights the complex interplay between representation, social interaction, and

the politics of belonging within this multicultural urban setting.

The first finding reveals that Pecinan Bogor is discursively constructed as a harmonious multicultural culinary destination within both digital narratives and policy frameworks. Tourism representations consistently emphasize diversity, heritage, and inclusivity, framing Jalan Suryakencana as a "culinary corridor" where different cultural traditions coexist seamlessly. These narratives align with broader tourism discourses that commodify culture by transforming everyday practices into consumable experiences [25]. The emphasis on culinary diversity ranging from Chinese-Indonesian dishes to halal-adapted local cuisine serves as a key marker of this constructed inclusivity.

However, this representation is not neutral. It reflects what Shepherd describes as the selective commodification of culture, in which certain elements are highlighted while others are obscured. In the case of Pecinan Bogor, narratives of harmony tend to downplay the historical complexities of Chinese Indonesian identity, including experiences of marginalization and socio-political exclusion. Instead, the area is framed as a symbol of successful multicultural coexistence, aligning with contemporary urban branding strategies that promote diversity as an asset [26]. This finding suggests that the representation of Pecinan Bogor is shaped not only by cultural realities but also by institutional and economic interests that seek to position it as an attractive tourism destination.

The second finding demonstrates that gastronomic encounters in Pecinan Bogor function as a socially mediated space of interaction that facilitates everyday forms of interethnic and interfaith engagement. Unlike abstract representations of multiculturalism, these encounters occur through routine practices such as eating, ordering food, and sharing space within crowded culinary settings. These interactions bring together diverse groups, including Chinese Indonesians, Sundanese Muslims, and visitors from various backgrounds, creating opportunities for informal and embodied forms of contact.

This finding supports the argument of Arjun Appadurai that food practices serve as a medium through which social relations are constructed and negotiated [27]. In Pecinan Bogor, culinary spaces operate as accessible and inclusive environments where cultural boundaries become permeable, allowing individuals to engage with difference in relatively low-risk settings. The availability of halal-certified or Muslim-friendly food, for instance, enables broader participation among Muslim visitors, illustrating how culinary adaptation facilitates inclusion within a diverse social context.

At the same time, these interactions are not necessarily deep or transformative. As Valentine argues, proximity and contact do not automatically lead to meaningful social integration. In many cases, interactions within gastronomic spaces remain transactional and fleeting, limited to moments of consumption rather than sustained engagement [28]. Nevertheless, even these brief encounters play an important role in normalizing the presence of difference and fostering a sense of shared urban space. In this sense, gastronomic tourism in Pecinan Bogor can be understood as a form of "everyday multiculturalism," where coexistence is practiced through routine activities rather than formal dialogue or institutional intervention.

The third finding highlights that these everyday interactions contribute to the ongoing negotiation of identity and the politics of belonging, while also revealing underlying asymmetries and tensions that are often obscured by dominant narratives of harmony. The framing of Pecinan Bogor as an inclusive culinary destination creates a sense of openness and accessibility, allowing visitors from different backgrounds to feel temporarily included within the space. However, this sense of belonging is situational and contingent, shaped by broader social and cultural dynamics.

Drawing on the concept of the contact zone proposed by Mary Louise Pratt, Pecinan Bogor can be understood as a space where cultural encounters are structured by unequal power relations. While culinary practices enable interaction, they do not necessarily eliminate existing hierarchies or stereotypes [29]. For example, the adaptation of Chinese cuisine to halal standards reflects both inclusivity and asymmetry, as it requires the modification of minority cultural practices to align with dominant norms. This dynamic illustrates how inclusion often operates through processes of negotiation and compromise rather than through equal recognition.

Similarly, the framework of the politics of belonging, as developed by Nira Yuval-Davis, helps to illuminate how boundaries of inclusion and exclusion are constructed within this context. While Pecinan Bogor is discursively positioned as a space of shared belonging, not all forms of identity are equally visible or valued. The emphasis on harmony and diversity may obscure subtle forms of exclusion, such as the marginalization of less marketable cultural expressions or the persistence of stereotypes in everyday interactions [30].

These findings suggest that gastronomic tourism in Pecinan Bogor operates as a double-edged phenomenon. On the one hand, it creates opportunities for interaction, exchange, and the formation of shared experiences across difference. On the other hand, it reproduces certain power relations and inequalities, particularly through selective representation and the commodification of culture. This duality challenges simplistic narratives that portray tourism either as a force of social cohesion or as a mechanism of exploitation, highlighting instead its ambivalent and context-dependent nature.

Importantly, the case of Pecinan Bogor demonstrates that tourism practices should be understood not only as economic activities but also as socio-political processes embedded in everyday life. Culinary encounters, while seemingly mundane, play a significant role in shaping how individuals perceive and relate to cultural difference. Through these encounters, identities

are not only expressed but also negotiated, contested, and reconfigured.

In conclusion, the findings of this study contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between tourism, identity, and social interaction in multicultural urban contexts. By conceptualizing Pecinan Bogor as a gastronomic contact zone, the study highlights the importance of everyday practices in mediating processes of belonging and coexistence. At the same time, it underscores the need for critical perspectives that account for the power relations and inequalities embedded within these processes. In doing so, the study advances the argument that gastronomic tourism can function as both an infrastructure of social cohesion and a site of ongoing negotiation, where harmony and tension coexist in complex and dynamic ways.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This study set out to examine how gastronomic tourism in Pecinan Bogor functions as a socially mediated space through which identity and belonging are constructed and negotiated within a multicultural urban context. By moving beyond conventional perspectives that frame urban Chinatowns primarily as sites of cultural commodification, the analysis has demonstrated that Pecinan Bogor operates as a dynamic contact zone where representation, interaction, and power intersect in complex ways.

The findings reveal that Pecinan Bogor is discursively constructed as a harmonious and inclusive culinary destination within both digital and policy narratives. These representations play an important role in shaping public imaginaries of multicultural coexistence, positioning the area as a symbol of diversity and urban vibrancy. However, such narratives are inherently selective, often emphasizing harmony while downplaying historical and structural inequalities. This highlights the need to critically interrogate how tourism representations not only reflect but also produce particular understandings of identity and belonging.

At the level of everyday practice, the study shows that gastronomic encounters function as accessible and socially embedded forms of interaction. Through routine activities such as eating and sharing space, individuals from different ethnic and religious backgrounds engage in forms of everyday multiculturalism that normalize difference and foster a sense of shared urban experience. While these interactions are often brief and situational, they nonetheless contribute to the gradual formation of social familiarity and coexistence.

At the same time, the analysis underscores that these processes are not free from power relations. Drawing on the concepts of the contact zone and the politics of belonging, the study demonstrates that inclusion within gastronomic spaces is often contingent and negotiated. Practices such as culinary adaptation and selective representation reveal underlying asymmetries, where certain identities are accommodated or made visible in ways that align with dominant norms. As such, gastronomic tourism simultaneously enables interaction and reproduces subtle forms of exclusion.

Taken together, these findings suggest that gastronomic tourism should be understood as a socio-political process rather than merely an economic or cultural activity. It operates as an infrastructure of social interaction that shapes how difference is encountered, interpreted, and negotiated in everyday urban life. Importantly, this study challenges binary perspectives that view tourism either as a force of cohesion or as a mechanism of commodification, instead highlighting its ambivalent and context-dependent nature.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature by integrating insights from tourism studies, urban sociology, and cultural theory to conceptualize gastronomic tourism as a contact zone embedded in everyday practices. By applying the frameworks of contact zone and politics of belonging to the study of urban tourism in Southeast Asia, it provides a more nuanced understanding of how identity and social relations are produced within tourism spaces.

Empirically, the study highlights the significance of Pecinan Bogor as a case that illustrates the interplay between history, culture, and contemporary urban transformation. Its long-standing role as a site of intercultural contact, combined with its current positioning as a culinary destination, makes it a valuable lens through which to examine broader processes of urban diversity and coexistence in the Global South.

Nevertheless, this study is not without limitations. As a library-based analysis, it relies on secondary data and does not capture the full depth of lived experiences within Pecinan Bogor. Future research may build on this work by incorporating ethnographic methods, interviews, or participatory approaches to explore how individuals themselves perceive and navigate these spaces. Such approaches would further enrich understanding of the micro-level dynamics of interaction and belonging.

In conclusion, this study argues that gastronomic tourism in Pecinan Bogor represents more than a form of cultural consumption; it is a site of ongoing negotiation where identities are performed, boundaries are contested, and belonging is continuously redefined. Recognizing this complexity is essential for developing more inclusive and critically informed approaches to tourism and urban diversity in contemporary cities.

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