

Culinary tourism and architectural heritage in Malang and Binondo: integrating heritage conservation and gastronomic identity through the tourism competitiveness model

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

architectural heritage, culinary tourism, gastronomic tourism, sustainable tourism, tourism competitiveness model

Katakunci:

model daya saing pariwisata, pariwisata berkelanjutan, warisan arsitektur, wisata kuliner, wisata gastronomi

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.26905/jpp.v11i1.16716>

Received **January 30, 2026**

Review **February 2, 2026**

Accepted **April 17, 2026**

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HOW TO CITE ITEM

Risfandini, A., Concepcion, C. B., Yumikura, M. V. B. F., & Navarra, N. L. (2026). Culinary tourism and architectural heritage in Malang and Binondo: integrating heritage conservation and gastronomic identity through the tourism competitiveness model. *Jurnal Pariwisata Pesona*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.26905/jpp.v11i1.16716>

ABSTRACT

Culinary tourism has emerged as a strategic avenue for strengthening destination competitiveness by integrating cultural identity, heritage conservation, and experiential value. This study aims to explore the interplay between culinary tourism and architectural heritage in Malang City, Indonesia, and Binondo District, Manila, Philippines, through the lens of the Tourism Competitiveness Model (TCM). Using a qualitative comparative approach, the research analyzes how tangible heritage (historic urban fabric and colonial-era architecture) and intangible heritage (culinary traditions, storytelling, and food practices) interact as core resources, destination management mechanisms, and pull factors within each destination. Findings reveal that Malang's structured colonial urban planning system, particularly the Bouwplan heritage, enables adaptive reuse of historic spaces for culinary tourism, supported by local governance and community-based initiatives. In contrast, Binondo's competitiveness is anchored more strongly in its intangible culinary heritage—especially panciteria traditions—amid ongoing challenges of urban congestion and limited formal heritage zoning. Despite differing urban morphologies, both destinations demonstrate that the integration of gastronomic identity with heritage conservation enhances authenticity, visitor engagement, and socio-economic resilience. The study underscores the importance of adaptive reuse policies, heritage-based gastronomic routes, and community participation in sustaining tourism competitiveness. By applying the TCM framework, this research contributes to tourism and heritage literature by illustrating how cities with diverse historical trajectories can strategically align culinary heritage and architectural conservation to support sustainable urban tourism development.

ABSTRAK

Wisata kuliner menjadi salah satu strategi penting dalam meningkatkan daya saing destinasi melalui integrasi identitas budaya, pelestarian warisan, dan penciptaan pengalaman wisata yang autentik. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengkaji hubungan antara wisata kuliner dan warisan arsitektur di Kota Malang, Indonesia, dan Distrik Binondo, Manila, Filipina, dengan menggunakan kerangka Tourism Competitiveness Model (TCM). Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif komparatif

melalui analisis berbagai sumber sekunder, termasuk literatur akademik, dokumen kebijakan, laporan pelestarian warisan, dan publikasi pariwisata. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Malang memanfaatkan warisan tata kota kolonial, khususnya konsep Bouwplan, sebagai sumber daya inti yang mendukung pengembangan wisata kuliner melalui pemanfaatan adaptif bangunan dan kawasan bersejarah. Pengelolaan destinasi yang didukung pemerintah daerah dan partisipasi masyarakat turut memperkuat daya tarik wisata kota. Sebaliknya, daya saing Binondo lebih bertumpu pada warisan kuliner takbenda, terutama tradisi panciteria, yang menjadi identitas gastronomi utama meskipun menghadapi tantangan berupa kepadatan perkotaan dan keterbatasan zonasi warisan. Meskipun memiliki karakteristik dan sejarah perkembangan yang berbeda, kedua destinasi menunjukkan bahwa integrasi antara identitas gastronomi dan pelestarian warisan mampu meningkatkan autentisitas, keterlibatan wisatawan, serta ketahanan sosial-ekonomi. Penelitian ini menegaskan pentingnya kebijakan pemanfaatan adaptif, pengembangan rute gastronomi berbasis warisan, dan partisipasi masyarakat dalam mendukung daya saing pariwisata perkotaan yang berkelanjutan.

INTRODUCTION

Culinary tourism has emerged as a significant dimension of contemporary tourism, providing visitors with authentic opportunities to engage with local culture, history, and community life. Beyond satisfying basic consumption needs, food serves as a powerful medium for cultural expression, communicating narratives of place, heritage, and identity that enrich tourists' experiences. Consequently, destinations around the world increasingly utilize gastronomy not only as a tourism attraction but also as a strategic tool for cultural preservation, economic resilience, and destination competitiveness (Savelli *et al.*, 2022; Okumuş, 2020). As tourism markets become more experience-oriented, the integration of culinary heritage into destination development has gained growing attention among scholars and practitioners seeking sustainable approaches to tourism growth.

Within this context, architectural heritage plays an important role in enhancing culinary experiences by providing historical and cultural settings that reinforce perceptions of authenticity and place identity. Heritage buildings, traditional urban landscapes, and historic districts contribute to the sensory and emotional dimensions of gastronomic encounters, enabling visitors to connect food consumption with the historical narratives of a destination (Mwangi & Mwalongo, 2023; Vuković *et al.*, 2021). The combination of culinary traditions and architectural heritage therefore represents a valuable tourism asset capable of differentiating destinations in an increasingly competitive global market.

In Asia, culinary tourism has become an important instrument for urban regeneration, cultural diplomacy, and destination branding. Rapid urbanization and economic transformation have encouraged cities to leverage food culture as a means of strengthening local identity and enhancing tourism attractiveness (Okumuş, 2020). Food festivals, traditional markets, and heritage dining districts have evolved beyond recreational attractions into platforms for cultural exchange, social cohesion, and community engagement (Zarębski & Zwęglińska-Gałęcka, 2020; Tham & Chin, 2024). Accordingly, the integration of culinary innovation with heritage preservation has become a strategic response to the dual objectives of tourism development and cultural conservation. Nevertheless, this integration is not without challenges. The commercialization of traditional cuisine and excessive development of heritage areas may dilute cultural authenticity, weaken local identity, and threaten long-term sustainability (Putri & Wijoyo, 2023). To address these concerns, scholars have advocated for slow tourism and ethical gastronomy approaches that emphasize meaningful visitor engagement, cultural respect, and community well-being (Fusté-Forné & Jamal, 2020).

Although previous studies have demonstrated the importance of gastronomy and heritage in destination development, much of the existing literature tends to examine culinary tourism, heritage conservation, and tourism management as separate domains. As a result, limited attention has been given to understanding how these dimensions interact to collectively shape destination competitiveness. Furthermore, comparative studies involving Southeast Asian heritage cities remain relatively scarce, despite the region's rich cultural diversity and rapidly growing tourism sector. This gap highlights the need for an integrative analytical framework capable of explaining the interrelationships among cultural resources, destination governance, and tourism experiences.

To address this gap, the present study adopts the Tourism Competitiveness Model (TCM) as a comprehensive framework for examining how culinary identity and architectural heritage contribute to destination competitiveness. The TCM provides a holistic perspective by emphasizing the interaction between core resources, destination management, and pull factors in generating sustainable tourism advantages (Noermijati *et al.*, 2023; Risfandini *et al.*, 2022; Sani, & Anam, 2022). Through this framework, the study investigates how tangible and intangible cultural assets are managed and transformed into distinctive tourism experiences that enhance destination attractiveness.

Malang City in East Java, Indonesia, and Binondo District in Manila, Philippines, provide compelling comparative cases for exploring the integration of culinary culture and architectural heritage. Both destinations possess rich historical legacies shaped by colonial influences, multicultural interactions, and evolving urban development. Malang, often referred to as the “Paris of East Java,” reflects a layered colonial history expressed through its urban morphology, culinary diversity, and multicultural social structure. The city’s development was guided by eight Bouwplan blueprints that established an organized urban system characterized by boulevards, garden-city principles, and ethnically differentiated districts, many of which remain important cultural and tourism assets today (Mulyadi *et al.*, 2020). Similarly, Binondo, recognized as the world’s oldest Chinatown, embodies a unique fusion of Chinese, Spanish, and Filipino influences that have shaped its cultural landscape and culinary traditions. Historically, the district was even compared to Venice because of its canal system (Aguilar, 1998). Despite the impacts of war, modernization, and urban transformation, Binondo continues to maintain its reputation as a prominent gastronomic destination, attracting both domestic and international visitors through its rich food heritage.

The comparison between Malang and Binondo offers a valuable opportunity to examine how two culturally distinct urban destinations utilize heritage and gastronomy to strengthen tourism competitiveness. While both destinations share historical and multicultural characteristics, they differ in their governance structures, tourism development trajectories, and heritage management approaches. Investigating these similarities and differences can generate deeper insights into the mechanisms through which heritage preservation and culinary identity contribute to sustainable tourism development.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the integration of architectural heritage and culinary identity in Malang and Binondo through the lens of the Tourism Competitiveness Model (TCM) (Noermijati *et al.*, 2023; Risfandini *et al.*, 2022). Specifically, the study examines how heritage resources, destination management practices, and experiential pull factors interact to create distinctive tourism identities and enhance destination competitiveness. By comparing the experiences of Malang and Binondo, this research contributes to the growing literature on culinary tourism and heritage-based destination development while providing practical insights for policymakers and tourism stakeholders seeking to balance competitiveness, authenticity, and sustainability.

Theoretical Framework: Tourism Competitiveness Model (TCM)

The Tourism Competitiveness Model (TCM) developed by Risfandini *et al.* (2022) and Noermijati *et al.* (2023) provides a conceptual foundation for understanding how destinations create and sustain competitive advantages. The model comprises three interrelated dimensions—core resources, destination management, and pull factors—which together define a destination’s ability to attract visitors while ensuring cultural and environmental sustainability.

- a. Core Resources refer to the foundational elements that constitute the intrinsic appeal of a destination, including natural landscapes, cultural heritage, and historical identity.
- b. Destination Management encompasses governance, community engagement, and the strategic management of tourism assets.
- c. Pull Factors involve the experiential and promotional dimensions—those features that emotionally and symbolically draw visitors, such as storytelling, gastronomy, and hospitality experiences.

Applied to Malang and Binondo, the TCM framework elucidates how a city’s architectural heritage (core resource), urban governance and community participation (destination management), and culinary storytelling and festivals (pull factors) interact to create a distinctive tourism identity. The synergy among these dimensions forms the analytical foundation for integrating heritage preservation and gastronomic development as mutually reinforcing strategies.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative comparative case study design to investigate how culinary tourism and architectural heritage contribute to destination competitiveness in Malang City, Indonesia, and Binondo District, Manila, Philippines. A comparative case study approach was selected because it enables an in-depth examination of complex socio-cultural phenomena within their real-world contexts while facilitating the identification of similarities and differences across destinations. Malang and Binondo were purposively selected as case studies due to their shared

characteristics as heritage-rich urban destinations with strong culinary identities, yet differing historical trajectories, governance structures, and tourism development contexts. This comparison provides an opportunity to explore how heritage resources and gastronomic assets are integrated to support tourism competitiveness.

Data were obtained from multiple secondary sources to ensure a comprehensive understanding of both destinations. These sources included peer-reviewed journal articles, books, government tourism reports, heritage conservation documents, planning publications, historical archives, tourism promotional materials, and official websites. Data selection was guided by three criteria: (1) relevance to culinary tourism, architectural heritage, destination management, or tourism competitiveness; (2) focus on Malang, Binondo, or comparable heritage destinations; and (3) publication credibility, including academic publications and official institutional documents. Sources that lacked sufficient contextual information or could not be verified were excluded from the analysis.

The data collection process was conducted in three stages. First, relevant literature and documentary sources were systematically identified and compiled. Second, information related to culinary attractions, heritage assets, tourism governance, and visitor experiences was extracted and organized into thematic categories. Third, documented observations from heritage districts, adaptive reuse initiatives, culinary corridors, and tourism development programs reported in the literature and official documents were incorporated to enrich contextual understanding and facilitate cross-case comparison.

Data analysis followed an iterative thematic content analysis procedure. In the first stage, all collected documents were reviewed and subjected to open coding to identify key concepts related to culinary heritage, architectural heritage, destination management, community participation, tourism experiences, and destination competitiveness. In the second stage, similar codes were grouped into broader themes and sub-themes through axial coding. In the third stage, the identified themes were compared across the two cases to determine recurring patterns, distinctive characteristics, and contextual differences. This process enabled the development of a comprehensive interpretation of how culinary and architectural heritage interact within each destination.

The Tourism Competitiveness Model (TCM) developed by Risfandini *et al.* (2022) and Noermijati *et al.* (2023) served as the primary analytical framework guiding data interpretation. Specifically, the analysis categorized findings into three interrelated dimensions of the model: core resources, destination management, and pull factors. Architectural heritage, historical identity, and cultural resources were analyzed as core resources; governance mechanisms, community participation, and heritage management initiatives were examined under destination management; while culinary experiences, storytelling, festivals, and destination branding activities were evaluated as pull factors. The TCM framework provided a structured lens for examining how these dimensions interact to influence destination competitiveness and sustainable tourism development.

To ensure trustworthiness, the study adopted Lincoln and Guba's criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was enhanced through triangulation across multiple data sources and contextual settings. Transferability was supported by providing rich descriptions of the historical, spatial, and culinary characteristics of each destination. Dependability was achieved through a systematic and transparent coding procedure that was consistently applied across both cases. Confirmability was strengthened through the maintenance of an audit trail documenting data sources, coding decisions, analytical procedures, and interpretations, thereby reducing potential researcher bias (Risfandini & Mustika, 2023). Collectively, these procedures enhance the rigor, transparency, and reliability of the comparative analysis and provide a robust basis for understanding the role of culinary and architectural heritage in shaping tourism competitiveness.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Figure 1 presents the Tourism Competitiveness Model (TCM) as the analytical framework used to interpret the comparative findings from Malang, Indonesia, and Binondo, Philippines. The analysis revealed that tourism competitiveness in both destinations emerges from the interaction between three interconnected dimensions: core resources, tourism destination management, and tourism pull factors. Rather than operating independently, these dimensions reinforce one another in shaping destination attractiveness, visitor experiences, and long-term sustainability.

Core Resources: Architectural Heritage as the Foundation of Competitiveness

The findings indicate that architectural heritage functions as the primary core resource in both destinations, although its role is expressed differently. In Malang, competitiveness is strongly influenced by the preservation of the Bouwplan heritage system, which provides a coherent urban structure and reinforces the city's historical identity. The heritage landscape contributes to visitors' perceptions of authenticity through well-preserved colonial architecture, urban planning characteristics, and multicultural historical narratives. In contrast, Binondo's core resource is rooted in the integration of architectural heritage with living cultural traditions, particularly the historic *panciteria* culture and

Chinatown identity. While Malang emphasizes spatial and urban heritage, Binondo derives competitiveness from the continuous interaction between heritage buildings, commercial activities, and culinary practices. This finding demonstrates that architectural heritage alone does not automatically generate tourism competitiveness. Instead, heritage becomes valuable when it serves as a platform through which local identity and cultural narratives are communicated to visitors. The comparative analysis suggests that Malang relies more heavily on heritage-based place identity, whereas Binondo benefits from the active utilization of heritage spaces as living cultural environments.

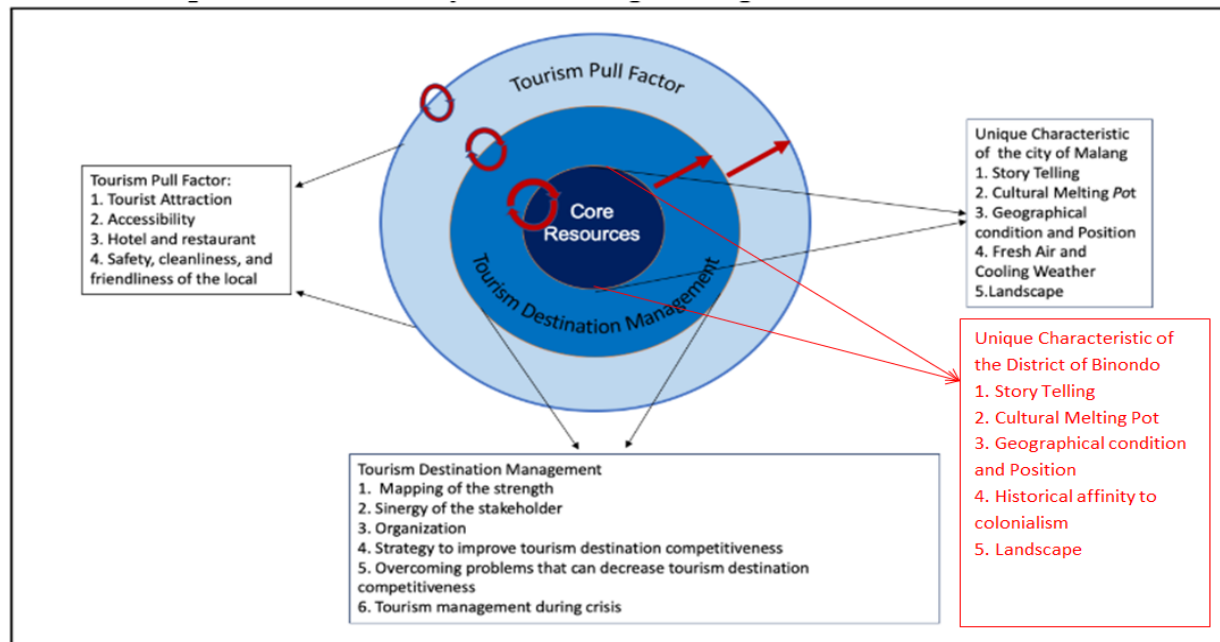


Figure 1. Tourism Competitiveness Model
(Risfandini et al, 2022; Noermijati et al., 2023, Concepcion & Yumikura, 2025)

Tourism Destination Management: The Mechanism Transforming Heritage into Tourism Value

The analysis further revealed that destination management acts as the critical mechanism connecting heritage resources with tourism outcomes. In both destinations, stakeholder collaboration, community participation, and heritage preservation strategies play significant roles in sustaining competitiveness. However, the management approaches differ. In Malang, destination management is characterized by efforts to preserve urban heritage through planning instruments, heritage zoning, and the promotion of cultural identity. The emphasis is placed on maintaining the integrity of historical assets while supporting tourism development. Conversely, Binondo demonstrates a more dynamic model in which heritage preservation is integrated with ongoing commercial and culinary activities. The adaptive reuse of heritage buildings and the continued operation of traditional food establishments enable heritage resources to remain economically relevant while preserving cultural significance. These findings support the TCM proposition that destination management functions as an enabling factor that transforms core resources into competitive tourism products. More importantly, the comparison reveals that competitiveness is strengthened when management strategies balance preservation objectives with contemporary economic and tourism demands.

Tourism Pull Factors: Creating Meaningful Visitor Experiences

The analysis identified several tourism pull factors that distinguish the visitor experiences offered by each destination. In Malang, storytelling, multicultural heritage, well-planned urban conditions, fresh air, and a comfortable climate enhance the attractiveness of the destination. These elements create a tourism experience that emphasizes historical exploration, urban aesthetics, and cultural appreciation. Binondo, on the other hand, attracts visitors primarily through its gastronomic reputation, Chinatown identity, proximity to colonial heritage sites, and vibrant urban atmosphere. Culinary experiences are deeply embedded within the destination's historical environment, enabling visitors to simultaneously engage with food, culture, and heritage. The comparison indicates that while both destinations leverage heritage assets, they employ different experiential strategies. Malang utilizes architectural heritage to create a sense of place and historical continuity, whereas Binondo uses culinary heritage as the primary medium through which historical narratives are experienced. This finding extends the TCM framework by illustrating

that destinations may achieve competitiveness through different combinations of pull factors despite relying on similar heritage-based resources.

Discussion: Integrating Heritage, Culinary Tourism, and Destination Competitiveness

The findings demonstrate that tourism competitiveness is not determined solely by the presence of heritage resources but by the effectiveness with which those resources are integrated into visitor experiences and destination management systems. This observation aligns with previous studies suggesting that tourists increasingly seek authentic experiences that reflect local culture and identity (Savelli *et al.*, 2022; Córdova-Buiza *et al.*, 2021; Mohamed *et al.*, 2021). In both Malang and Binondo, culinary tourism functions as a mechanism through which cultural heritage becomes accessible and meaningful to visitors. The results further support the argument that heritage architecture contributes significantly to perceptions of authenticity and cultural immersion (Yoo *et al.*, 2022; Rachão *et al.*, 2020; Lin *et al.*, 2021). However, the comparative analysis suggests that the value of architectural heritage extends beyond its aesthetic function. In Malang, heritage architecture serves primarily as a symbol of historical identity and urban character, while in Binondo it operates as an active component of everyday cultural and economic life. This distinction highlights different pathways through which heritage assets contribute to competitiveness.

The findings also reinforce previous studies emphasizing the role of architectural heritage in enhancing sensory and experiential dimensions of tourism (Mwangi & Mwalongo, 2023; Vuković *et al.*, 2021). Similar to destinations such as Kyoto, Singapore, and Penang, both Malang and Binondo demonstrate that heritage preservation can generate cultural continuity while simultaneously supporting economic vitality. However, this study contributes additional insight by showing that the relationship between culinary tourism and heritage preservation is mediated by destination management practices. Without effective governance, stakeholder collaboration, and adaptive heritage utilization, the potential of cultural assets to generate sustainable competitiveness may remain unrealized.

Table 1. Application of the Tourism Competitiveness Model (TCM) to Malang's and Binondo's Heritage and Gastronomy

TCM Dimension	Heritage and Gastronomy Linkages in Binondo and Malang	Illustrative Examples in Malang	Illustrative Examples in Binondo
Core Resources	Tangible and intangible heritage assets, including colonial-era buildings, spatial designs, and diverse culinary traditions	Ijen Boulevard's symmetrical colonial villas; local dishes such as <i>Cwie Mie Malang</i> , <i>Bakso Malang</i> , and <i>Tahu Campur Lamongan</i>	Shophouses, postwar buildings, Binondo church; local dishes such as <i>Pancit Canton</i> , <i>Pancit Bihon Guisado</i> , <i>Pancit Sotanghon</i> , <i>Pancit Luglug</i> , and <i>Beef Lamien</i>
Destination Management	Governance and collaboration between government, MSMEs, and communities; heritage zoning, adaptive reuse incentives, and tourism festivals	City revitalization projects, Kayutangan Heritage program, culinary event management involving PHRI and local entrepreneurs	National Government's Pasig River Development Project, Old Manila Heritage Tours, Streetscapes improvements, restoration partnership with schools and heritage groups such as Renacimiento Manila and Escolta Commercial Association
Pull Factors	Culinary storytelling, atmospheric dining in historical settings, and cross-cultural fusion that appeal to emotional and sensory experiences	Heritage cafés and restaurants along Ijen Boulevard and Alun-Alun Merdeka; food festivals highlighting traditional recipes and heritage narratives	Binondo food crawls, Chinese festivals and Feast of San Lorenzo Ruiz along Binondo Church and Ongpin Street, after church family gatherings to panciterias, restored heritage buildings along Juan Luna Street (banks and cafes)

Source: Authors Analysis, 2025

From a theoretical perspective, the study extends the Tourism Competitiveness Model by demonstrating how architectural heritage and culinary traditions function together as interconnected resources rather than separate tourism assets. The comparative findings reveal that competitiveness emerges through the interaction of tangible heritage,

intangible cultural practices, destination management capabilities, and experiential pull factors. Consequently, the study provides empirical evidence that sustainable tourism competitiveness in heritage destinations depends not only on the quality of resources but also on the capacity to transform those resources into authentic and engaging visitor experiences.

Table 1 clarifies how TCM offers a conceptual framework to analyze the synergistic relationship between heritage preservation and culinary tourism. It demonstrates that sustainable competitiveness emerges not from isolated attractions but from the integrated management of tangible and intangible cultural assets.

Culinary and Heritage Destination: Malang and Binondo

Malang's urban character reflects the layered influences of its colonial past, agricultural economy, and multicultural population. The city's evolution as a tourism destination is closely tied to its distinctive urban design and culinary culture, both of which contribute to its sense of place and competitiveness within Indonesia's tourism landscape. Meanwhile, known as the oldest Chinatown in the world (Features, 2024), Binondo's cultural landscape is shaped by the different nations that once governed and participated in various coastal trade. Similar to Malang, the culmination of cultures are interwoven with indigenous practices such as the inculturation of Catholic practices and various Chinese beliefs and indigenized Chinese food such as *pansit* (Mercado & Andalecio, 2020), and *siopao* (De Leon, 2016).

The Urban Fabric - Malang's Bouwplan Heritage

Malang's Bouwplan system, developed between 1916 and 1935, is a hallmark of its urban identity and a key cultural asset. These eight blueprints—unique among Indonesian cities—demonstrate a high level of urban planning sophistication during the Dutch colonial period (Mulyadi et al., 2020). The plans established zoning systems, residential areas, and green corridors that continue to shape the city's morphology and tourism potential.

- a. Bouwplan I (Celaket–Rampal, 1916–1917): European residential area with wide roads and symmetrical layouts.
- b. Bouwplan II (Alun-Alun Tugu, 1922): Military and government housing surrounding the circular Tugu Monument.
- c. Bouwplan III (Sukun Cemetery, 1919–1920): Public burial grounds and memorial sites, later integrated into heritage trails.
- d. Bouwplan IV (Celaket–Lowokwaru, 1920): Lower-middle-class housing with mixed ethnic composition.
- e. Bouwplan V (Ijen Boulevard, 1924–1925): Iconic European-style boulevard with villas and palm-lined medians.
- f. Bouwplan VI (Chinatown Expansion, 1932) and Bouwplan VII (1932): Expansion of elite residential and commercial zones.
- g. Bouwplan VIII (Kuto Bedah, 1935): Industrial area with direct railway access.

These plans emphasized green spaces, boulevards, and aesthetics, shaping Malang's identity as a “Garden City.” The preservation of these urban forms—especially Ijen Boulevard and Boering Street—offers opportunities to integrate architectural heritage with modern culinary tourism. Restaurants, cafes, and boutique hotels operating within these historical structures now function as living museums that connect visitors with the city's colonial and postcolonial narratives.

Binondo's Five Eras of Heritage Exchange

Binondo was established in 1594 as a settlement for Christianized Chinese traders, its early layout developed organically along the Pasig River, centered on the Binondo Church and characterized by mixed-use shophouses and narrow streets. The planning transitioned from organic streets that followed the trade routes along the Pasig river and *esteros* (canals) to high-density, low-maintenance areas with heritage value overshadowed by congestion.

- a. Spanish Colonial Period (1594-1898): Binondo as a commercial-residential district with organic development that follows Pasig River and *esteros* yet functional street networks driven by commerce rather than state planning (Weightman, 1986), (Ocampo, 1992), (Lico & De Viana, 2017)
- b. American and Japanese Colonial Period (1898-1946): Improvement of roads, bridges, modern facilities, and drainage systems that was connected to the new financial district in Escolta, pedestrian-oriented but the beginning of traffic and density issues, start of modern commercial architecture (Lico & De Viana, 2017), (Ocampo, 1992)
- c. Postwar Reconstruction (1946-1970's): The bombing of Manila damaged Binondo, shifted its architectural identity with the combination of remaining colonial elements and utilitarian postwar buildings, streets

became more congested, and informal vending began to thrive (Ocampo, 1992), (Jimenez, Funo, & Umetani, 2015)

- d. Late 20th Century (1980's-1990's): Other cities in the Philippines emerged as business centers that shifted Binondo from finance to trade but retained its Chinese-Filipino cultural identity (Guéguen, 2010), (Perez, 2017)
- e. Contemporary Era (2000's-Present): tension between modernization and preservation: local government and private organization's efforts of heritage restoration and vision of being a part of "heritage-cultural corridor" (Manila Bulletin, 2024) but emerging high-rise condos and hotels exists within the urban fabric (China Banking Corporation, 2020), (Yulu & Kapan, 2020) (Department of Agriculture, 2021)

Binondo's heritage is a vibrant but complex urban landscape where historical continuity meets contemporary urban challenges. In 2021, the Pasig government conducted Re-TERRA project, an architectural design contest to creatively showcase innovative ways of maximizing urban agriculture in the metropolis (Department of Agriculture, 2021). Currently, the government's effort to address the current issues is to revitalize the Pasig River through a creation of a network of parks for neighboring towns, safe bike lanes and walks along the banks, and a greener corridor through The Pasig Bigyang Buhay Muli (PBBM).

Culinary Heritage and Urban Experience: Malang and Binondo

Culinary tourism is one of Malang's strongest attractions, anchored in a variety of traditional dishes that have evolved through cross-cultural interactions. Local specialties such as Cwie Mie Malang, Bakso Malang, Tahu Campur Lamongan, and Tahu Telor showcase influences from Chinese, Javanese, and Madurese culinary traditions. These dishes, while originating from diverse regions, have become deeply rooted in Malang's food identity, reflecting the city's pluralistic history.

The adaptation and reinvention of culinary traditions mirror the city's social composition. For instance, Cwie Mie Malang—a noodle dish of Chinese origin—has been indigenized to suit local tastes, while Nasi Buk Madura, introduced by Madurese migrants, highlights Malang's role as a cultural melting pot. Similar to Hainanese Chicken Rice in Singapore or The Halal Guys in New York, these hybrid cuisines illustrate how migration and cultural exchange enrich a city's gastronomic landscape. The city's tempe-based foods, such as mendol, tempe chips, and menjes, further reinforce the connection between local agriculture and gastronomy. Bakso Malang, in particular, stands out as a culinary icon with numerous creative variations that distinguish it from similar dishes like Bakso Solo. The city's diverse food scene—ranging from street vendors to high-end heritage restaurants—enhances its appeal to both domestic and international tourists (Mariana & Sunaryo, 2020; Riyadi et al., 2024; Sukartini et al., 2024).

Binondo was the birthplace of the *panciteria*, a small type of eatery from Chinese migrants for cooking and selling noodle dishes that were adapted to local tastes. The term *pancit* is from Hokkien, "pian i sit," that means something conveniently cooked and evolved under Spanish influence into *panciteria*. These establishments became spaces of cultural negotiation where Chinese ingredients, Spanish terms, and Filipino diners merge. The walls of Binondo once were an exclusive home to Christianized Chinese traders called *sangleys* to regulate their businesses and not be considered as a national threat during the Spanish Colonial. Mercado and Andalecio (2020) discussed that Binondo is unique for preserving the *pancit* heritage that reflects Chinese-Filipino cultural hybridity. Some of the noodle archetypes are *Pancit Canton*, *Pancit Bihon Guisado*, *Pancit Luglug/Palabok*, *Pancit Sotanghon*, and *Beef Lamien*. *Pancit Canton* are stir-fried egg noodles with soy sauce, vegetables, meat or seafood. *Pancit Bihon Guisado* is a Filipino version of Chinese rice vermicelli that contains thin rice noodles sauteed with meat and vegetables. *Pancit Sotanghon* is a localized Chinese mung bean noodle and it is made with glass noodles served either dry or broth, often with chicken or seafood. *Palabok*, also known as *Pancit Luglug*, is thick noodles with shrimp sauce and toppings, inspired by Chinese sauces. *Beef Lamien* made with wheat noodles pulled by hand and served with beef broth. It is directly rooted in traditional Chinese noodle-making.

Interplay Between Culinary Tourism and Architectural Heritage: Malang and Binondo

The interaction between Malang's culinary and architectural heritage exemplifies the synergy envisioned in the Tourism Competitiveness Model. The city's colonial-era buildings serve as core resources, providing the physical and symbolic infrastructure for tourism. Through destination management, these assets are preserved and adapted for new uses—cafes, restaurants, or event venues—while maintaining their historical integrity. Finally, pull factors such as storytelling and gastronomic festivals generate emotional engagement and brand differentiation.

The efforts to revitalize the architectural heritage in Binondo is a continuous fight against the increased demand of urban space. Venida (2000) emphasized that the areas occupied by old buildings are ideal locations for commercial and office buildings which will have better revenue in a shorter period of time rather than resorting to

conservation. Due to these factors, the core resources are anchored on the intangible heritage of pancit making. The context of Binondo being the oldest Chinatown, however, is still under the crucial lens of sturdy through destination management. Some of these assets aside from the local *panciterias* are prioritized and underwent preservation such as Chinabank (China Banking Corporation, 2020) or the first privately owned local commercial bank, and Cafe 1919 and an adaptive reuse of the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, currently known as Cafe 1919 (Yulu & Kapan, 2020). One of the best ways to experience Manila's Chinatown is through a "food crawl," showing the pancit heritage as a pull factor.

Storytelling through Built Heritage

Storytelling is central to transforming heritage architecture into an immersive culinary experience. Historical buildings, when coupled with narratives about their past, create an evocative setting that enhances visitors' sensory and emotional connection to food. In Malang, cafes and restaurants situated in heritage zones—particularly along Ijen Boulevard and around Alun-Alun Merdeka—leverage their colonial architecture to evoke nostalgia and authenticity. These venues often integrate narratives about former owners, construction dates, or the evolution of street names (e.g., *Jalan Pahlawan Trip*) to add interpretive depth.

The old *panciterias* are located in Ongpin Street near the Binondo Church, a catholic institution that has an octagonal five-tier bell tower resembling a Chinese pagoda. During colonial Binondo, the marginalized such as cigar and tobacco makers known as *cigarreras* would often eat in these *panciterias* during lunchtime instead of returning to their homes. The restaurants also catered to *illustrados* (educated elites) and merchants, making the dish a culinary and social bridge that connects the Chinese working class to the marginalized and educated Filipinos. While Binondo's cultural landscape is defined by its historical significance, it lacks formal heritage-zone designation and may not enjoy the same legal protection and regulation as a declared heritage zone would under the Heritage Conservation Act or RA 10066. While Ongpin Street is not a heritage zone, the art of pancit-making and other food practices is preserved and contribute to the whole identity of Binondo. The evolution of street names (e.g., from Calle Sacristia to Ongpin Street) also adds to the layer of the district's rich history (The Chinatown Museum, 2020).

Heritage and Gastronomy as Cultural Capital

The coexistence of diverse cuisines and architectural styles in Malang and Binondo both reflect the city's multicultural legacy. By preserving this hybridity, Malang and Binondo can be a destination of living heritage. Culinary tourism does not merely involve food consumption; it embodies cultural participation, where tasting local dishes becomes an act of engaging with the city's history and identity (Yoo et al., 2022; Lin et al., 2021). The use of restored colonial buildings for gastronomic purposes thus symbolizes a reconciliation between preservation and modernization. The historical framework of Binondo is reflected in its diverse architectural styles and the evolution of its indigenized cuisines. Internationally recognized as the world's oldest Chinatown, the district is renowned for its rich culinary heritage and localized cultural practices. Despite contemporary challenges such as vehicular congestion, high population density, and rapid modernization, Binondo maintains a distinct and resilient identity. Its enduring character continues to narrate the district's history, even in the absence of formal recognition of an official heritage zone.

Malang's Unique Cultural Identity

Malang's distinctiveness lies in three interrelated dimensions: storytelling, cultural pluralism, and urban design (Noermijati et al., 2023; Risfandini et al., 2022).

- a. Storytelling preserves Malang's history as a coffee trade hub that attracted diverse ethnic groups—Madurese, Javanese, Chinese, and Arabs—forming a pluralistic society rooted in tolerance.
- b. Cultural pluralism is reflected in its food and architecture, where Arek, Mataraman, and Pendalungan influences coexist harmoniously, visible in both cuisine and places of worship around Alun-Alun Merdeka.
- c. Urban planning, shaped by the , gives Malang its well-organized spatial character, blending European garden-city design with local elements. Iconic areas such as Ijen Boulevard and Boering Street exemplify this enduring elegance.

These dimensions collectively reinforce Malang's tourism competitiveness by linking tangible and intangible heritage. The city's narrative of coexistence, expressed through both its physical landscape and culinary culture, differentiates it from other destinations in Java and provides a strong foundation for sustainable tourism development.

Binondo's Unique Cultural Identity

1. Storytelling preserves Binondo's history as the Oldest Chinatown and birthplace of panciterias that attract historians and tourists.
2. Cultural pluralism is reflected in the different types of indigenized noodles called pancit, and through the preservation of architecture such as the neoclassical buildings, and the ongoing fight to conserve the oldest documented panciteria that represented its golden age as symbol of refined taste and upward mobility during the late Spanish Period, known as Panciteria Macanista de Buen Gusto
3. Urban planning, shaped by the five eras of cultural exchange. The unique planning of the district that started to organically follow Pasig River and transformed to a cultural hub enforces the district's history. The intangible heritage of the food practices and colonization is also reflected by the different architecture and district zones. The city being a Chinatown contributes as one of the many identities of the Philippines.

Challenges and Policy Implications

While Malang's and Binondo's heritage and culinary assets offer substantial potential, their integration poses several challenges. One key issue is balancing commercialization and authenticity. Rapid urban development risks diluting historical integrity, while unregulated tourism activities may lead to cultural commodification (Putri & Wijoyo, 2023). Furthermore, adaptive reuse of heritage buildings often faces bureaucratic hurdles and financial constraints. To address these challenges, city planners and policymakers should consider several strategies:

1. Incentivize Adaptive Reuse – Provide tax benefits or grants for entrepreneurs who preserve and repurpose heritage buildings for culinary enterprises.
2. Develop Heritage-Based Gastronomic Routes – Curate walking trails linking historical landmarks and culinary sites, using interpretive signage and digital storytelling tools.
3. Strengthen Community Involvement – Encourage local participation in heritage tourism initiatives to ensure authenticity and equitable benefit distribution (Deffinika *et al.*, 2022).
4. Implement Sustainability Guidelines – Integrate environmental considerations, such as waste reduction and local sourcing, within the tourism management framework (Fusté-Forné & Jamal, 2020).

CONCLUSION

This study examined how architectural heritage and culinary tourism contribute to destination competitiveness in Malang, Indonesia, and Binondo, Philippines, through the lens of the Tourism Competitiveness Model (TCM). The findings reveal that tourism competitiveness in both destinations is shaped by the interaction of three key dimensions: core resources, destination management, and tourism pull factors. While both destinations utilize heritage assets as foundations for tourism development, they employ different pathways to create competitive advantages. Malang relies primarily on its Bouwplan heritage and urban identity to strengthen place authenticity, whereas Binondo leverages its living culinary traditions and Chinatown heritage to create immersive cultural experiences. In both cases, destination management plays a critical role in transforming heritage resources into meaningful tourism products through preservation efforts, community participation, and heritage-based tourism initiatives.

The study contributes to the tourism competitiveness literature by demonstrating how tangible heritage assets and intangible culinary traditions function as interconnected resources rather than separate attractions. By applying the TCM in a comparative context, the study highlights how different combinations of heritage resources, management strategies, and experiential pull factors can support destination competitiveness. The findings also provide practical insights for policymakers and destination managers seeking to integrate heritage preservation and culinary tourism into sustainable tourism planning.

Future research should validate these findings through primary empirical data, including stakeholder interviews and visitor surveys. Comparative studies involving additional heritage destinations and mixed-method approaches would further enhance understanding of how heritage-based culinary tourism contributes to destination competitiveness across different cultural and urban contexts.

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