

SANCTUM OF SAVOURS: A TREATISE ON GASTRONOMIC VOYAGES AND THE ESSENCE OF IDENTITY

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ABSTRACT

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Sudirman Street, Bandung, represents a unique urban phenomenon where a non-halal culinary district thrives within a predominantly Muslim population. This study examines the interaction between cultural tolerance, religious identity, and economic dynamics using Social Identity Theory and the "Gastronomic City" concept. Methodologically, the research combines a literature review with intensive field observation conducted over one week (November 2–9, 2024). The observation focused on spatial social dynamics and visitor interactions to map cultural negotiation processes. Findings indicate that tolerance in the area is pragmatic, maintained through strict spatial segmentation between halal and non-halal zones and social norms of mutual respect. Consequently, Sudirman Street functions as more than a culinary hub; it is a vital social negotiation space where culinary exploration facilitates identity flexibility and urban societal harmony.

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1. Introduction

Culinary tourism has emerged as an increasingly popular trend in the tourism industry, with travelers eagerly seeking authentic local food experiences to immerse themselves in the cultural fabric of a destination (Hall & Sharples, 2003; Richards, 2002). In the city of Bandung, West Java, Indonesia, one culinary hub that has attracted attention from both locals and visitors is Sudirman Street. Although the majority of Bandung's population is Muslim, a group traditionally prohibiting the consumption of pork (Oemar et al., 2020), Sudirman Street has evolved into a thriving center for pork-based culinary delights, transforming it into a unique tourist attraction offering a distinct cultural experience (Haryanto, 2014). This research paper aims to explore how Sudirman Street has developed from merely a culinary tourist spot into an integral part of Bandung's cultural identity, examining the complex interplay between religious norms, local traditions, and the city's evolving gastronomic landscape (Bessiere, 1998; L. Long, 1998).

Despite the existing literature on Bandung's general gastronomic appeal, there is a distinct research gap regarding the socio-spatial negotiation that allows a non-halal culinary district to thrive within a predominantly Muslim urban environment. Previous studies often overlook the pragmatic mechanisms of tolerance that facilitate this coexistence. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by investigating how identity flexibility and spatial segmentation transform a contested culinary space into a harmonious cultural landmark. The primary objective is to analyze the transformation of Sudirman Street from a niche market into an integral component of Bandung's identity through the lenses of Social Identity Theory and the Gastronomic City concept.

Bandung, a vibrant and bustling city located in the fertile highlands of West Java, has long been renowned for its rich and diverse culinary landscape (Rusnandar, 2010). The city's food culture is deeply rooted in local production systems, dietary environments, culture, and traditions, making it a prime destination for culinary tourists seeking authentic and immersive experiences (Croce & Perri, 2017). From traditional Sundanese dishes passed down through generations to fusion creations blending local and international influences, Bandung's culinary offerings have captivated the hearts and palates of both locals and visitors (Haryanto, 2014).

In this evolving culinary ecosystem, Sudirman Street stands out as a unique and compelling destination. Located in the heart of Bandung, this street has become a hub for various food vendors, restaurants, and culinary enterprises, each offering distinct flavors and culinary experiences (Haryanto, 2014). What makes Sudirman Street particularly intriguing is the fact that it has become a popular destination for pork-based dishes, despite the majority of Bandung's population being Muslim, a religious group traditionally prohibiting pork consumption.

Bandung, nestled in the fertile highlands of West Java, has long captivated with its culinary offerings, which are not just diverse but a reflection of the rich culture and deep flavors (Handoyo, 2019). The culinary landscape of Bandung is intrinsically linked to local production systems, dietary environments, culture, and traditions, making it a prime destination for culinary tourists seeking authentic experiences (Rahmawati, 2021; Suyono, 2020). The gastronomic potential of West Java, with its elegant culinary treasures such as nasi timbel, tahu telur, and soto Bandung, has been strengthened by the role of educational institutions such as the Bandung Institute of Tourism in promoting and preserving these Sundanese culinary traditions (Rahmawati, 2021; Suyono, 2020). The diverse food scene in Bandung, encompassing both traditional dishes and innovative fusion creations, has captured the hearts and palates of both locals and visitors, transforming the city into an emerging hub for culinary tourism (Hall & Sharples, 2003; Richards, 2002). Culinary tourism has become an increasingly popular trend in the tourism industry, as more and more travelers seek to immerse themselves in the cultural fabric of their destination through local food offerings (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016; Hall & Sharples, 2003; Richards, 2002). Bandung's culinary landscape, with its blend of traditional Sundanese dishes and fusion creations incorporating international influences, has become a key driver in attracting visitors from around the world who wish to experience the unique flavors and cultural experiences the city offers (Damayanti et al., 2020). The rise of culinary tourism in Bandung can be attributed to a confluence of factors, including the city's rich gastronomic heritage, its vibrant food scene, and the efforts of local educational institutions and tourism authorities to promote the region's culinary offerings (Yulita, Subandi, & Kantawijaya, 2023).

In the evolving culinary ecosystem of Bandung, Sudirman Street stands out as a unique and intriguing destination (Resmi et al., 2023). Located in the city center, Sudirman Street has become a hub for various food vendors, restaurants, and culinary institutions, each offering distinct flavors and culinary experiences (Resmi et al., 2023). What makes Sudirman Street particularly fascinating is its emergence as a popular destination for pork-based dishes, despite the fact that the majority of Bandung's population is Muslim, a religious group that traditionally prohibits the consumption of pork (Rachmad & Kho, 2021).

This dynamic highlights the complexity of the interaction between religious norms, local traditions, and the evolving gastronomic landscape in Bandung (Resmi et al., 2023). While pork consumption may be taboo in the broader Muslim context, Sudirman Street has emerged as a culinary oasis where pork-based dishes have become a celebrated part of the city's cultural identity. This transformation can be attributed to a combination of factors, including the influence of Bandung's diverse population, the city's reputation as a center for culinary innovation, and the persistent demand for pork-based dishes among both locals and visitors (Wijaya et al., 2021).

To analyze this phenomenon, the social identity theory proposed by (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) can be applied. This theory suggests that individuals derive a sense of identity and self-esteem from the social groups they belong to, and engage in in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination to maintain a positive social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Mervia & Kho, 2024). In the context of Sudirman Street, Bandung's diverse population has embraced pork-based culinary offerings as a means of constructing a shared cultural identity that transcends traditional religious boundaries (Wijaya et al., 2021). The process of identity formation can be understood through the lens of social identity theory, which provides a framework for analyzing how Sudirman Street has become an integral part of Bandung's cultural landscape.

The proliferation of pork-based dishes on Sudirman Street, despite the religious norms of the predominantly Muslim population, underscores the complex and dynamic nature of culinary tourism in Bandung (Rachmad & Kho, 2021; Suriyanto, Kho, Gunarti, Fensi, & Limbong, 2025). The transformation of the street into a culinary hub that celebrates pork cuisine can be seen as evidence of the city's ability to embrace diversity and create a shared cultural identity that is inclusive of various dietary preferences and religious backgrounds. The evolution of Sudirman Street from a culinary tourism attraction to a fundamental part of Bandung's cultural identity can be understood through various theoretical frameworks.

The concept of a "gastronomy city" provides a useful lens to understand the transformation of Sudirman Street. Bandung, with its rich history, culture, and diverse gastronomic offerings, has the potential to be developed into a "gastronomy city" — a destination that attracts visitors through unique culinary experiences and integrates local food as a key part of its cultural identity (Forleo & Benedetto, 2020). The emergence of Sudirman Street as a culinary tourism hub and its integration into Bandung's cultural identity aligns with this idea, where the city's gastronomic offerings become a central part of its identity and overall appeal.

Furthermore, Long's (2013) work on culinary tourism can also be applied to the case of Sudirman Street. Long suggests that culinary tourism can serve as a means of cultural exchange, where sharing food and culinary traditions fosters a deeper understanding and appreciation of local culture (Long, 2013). In the context of Sudirman Street, the street's popularity as a culinary destination has facilitated the sharing of Sundanese culinary

traditions with both locals and visitors, thereby contributing to the development of a shared cultural identity centered around food.

Additionally, the concept of "food literacy" proposed by (Hernandez et al., 2021) is also relevant to the transformation of Sudirman Street. The authors emphasize the importance of developing a comprehensive understanding of food, including its cultural, social, and environmental dimensions, to preserve culinary traditions and promote sustainable food systems (Hernandez et al., 2021). The integration of Sudirman Street's culinary offerings into Bandung's cultural identity can be seen as a manifestation of this food literacy, where the local community has embraced and celebrated the diverse gastronomic heritage of the street as a means of preserving and promoting their cultural identity.

Referring to social identity theory Tajfel & Turner (1979), the transformation of Sudirman Street can also be understood as a process of in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination. As the pork-based culinary offerings at Sudirman Street have become integrated into Bandung's cultural identity, the local community has engaged in the process of building a sense of identity and solidarity centered around this culinary tradition. This identity formation process, as suggested by Tajfel & Turner (1979), has allowed Bandung's residents to gain a sense of self-esteem and social status from their affiliation with Sudirman Street's unique culinary offerings.

To bridge these theoretical frameworks with empirical indicators, this study maps Social Identity Theory onto the "identity flexibility" observed among visitors who navigate this space through pragmatic tolerance. The "gastronomy city" framework is operationalized via the indicator of strict spatial segmentation observed during the field study (November 2–9, 2024), where the physical separation of halal and non-halal zones acts as a catalyst for urban harmony. Finally, the concept of "food literacy" is linked to the empirical indicator of mutual respect and social norms shared between diverse vendors and consumers, proving that cultural negotiation is a lived practice on Sudirman Street.

To bridge these theoretical frameworks with empirical indicators, this study proposes to examine the ways in which Social Identity Theory manifests through the "identity flexibility" shown by visitors who navigate this space through pragmatic tolerance. It further explores how the "gastronomy city" framework is operationalized via the indicator of strict spatial segmentation, and the degree to which the concept of "food literacy" connects to the social norms shared between diverse vendors and consumers. By addressing these links, the study establishes a foundation for the research question, "How has Sudirman Street transformed from a culinary tourism attraction to an integral part of Bandung's identity?" which can be answered through the complex interaction of factors, including the city's reputation as a center for culinary innovation, the influence of its diverse population, and the persistent demand for pork-based dishes among both locals and visitors.

The community's acceptance of Sudirman Street's culinary offerings, despite the religious norms of the predominantly Muslim population, highlights the city's ability to create an inclusive cultural identity that accommodates various dietary preferences and religious backgrounds. This identity formation process can be understood through the lens of social identity theory, which suggests that individuals derive a sense of identity and self-esteem from the social groups they belong to, and engage in in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination to maintain a positive social identity.

Additionally, the theoretical framework of the "gastronomy city" and the concept of "food literacy" provide further insights into the transformation of Sudirman Street. The

emergence of the street as a culinary tourism hub and its integration into Bandung's cultural identity aligns with the idea of a gastronomy city, where the city's gastronomic offerings become a central part of its identity and overall appeal. Moreover, the community's acceptance of Sudirman Street's culinary traditions can be seen as a manifestation of food literacy, where the local community has cultivated a comprehensive understanding of food and its cultural, social, and environmental dimensions.

2. Method

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive method to understand the phenomenon of culinary tourism at Sudirman Street, Bandung. This method was selected because it provides an in-depth understanding of social interactions, culinary practices, and the cultural values that emerge in this setting. By using this approach, the study aims to explore how Sudirman Street functions as a culinary hub that reflects the diversity of social norms and cultural identity.

Primary data will be collected through direct observation at Sudirman Street for approximately one week. This observation will include various elements such as:

- **Culinary Activities:** Observing the types of food offered, particularly pork-based dishes, and how these dishes are received by visitors, both local and from outside the region.
- **Social Interactions:** Examining interactions between vendors and customers, as well as between visitors. This focus is important for understanding the social dynamics formed around the culinary offerings.
- **Environment and Atmosphere:** Noting the ambiance at Sudirman Street, including space design, cleanliness, and available facilities, which may influence the culinary experience of visitors.
- **Response to Social Norms:** Identifying how religious and local cultural norms interact with the culinary offerings, as well as whether there are shifts or adaptations to these norms.

The observation will be conducted systematically, with detailed notes on events and interactions occurring during the observation period. This aims to provide a deeper understanding of how Sudirman Street functions as an inclusive culinary space.

- As secondary data, the study will also involve a review of relevant literature. This literature will include academic articles, books, and reports on:
- **Culinary Tourism:** Exploring the concepts and trends in culinary tourism that are relevant to the context of Bandung and Sudirman Street.
- **Gastronomy Cities:** Reviewing literature on the development of gastronomic cities, including the factors that contribute to the formation of a region's culinary identity (Forleo & Benedetto, 2020).
- **Food Literacy:** Investigating a broader understanding of food and how communities integrate this knowledge into their daily culinary practices (Hernandez et al., 2021)

By combining data from direct observation and literature review, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of Sudirman Street in Bandung's culinary tourism, as well as how social norms and cultural identities are interwoven in this culinary experience. This qualitative approach allows the researcher to explore the nuances and complexities of social interactions that cannot be measured using quantitative methods.

The qualitative data obtained from both the field notes and the literature review will be analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. This process begins with open coding, where raw observational data is labeled to identify initial patterns in visitor behavior and spatial usage. These codes will then be categorized through axial coding to establish connections between empirical indicators—such as spatial segmentation and social norms—and the study's core themes. Finally, a thematic interpretation will be conducted to synthesize these findings into a narrative that explains the transformation of the street through the lens of Social Identity Theory and Gastronomy City concepts.

Methodologically, this study acknowledges certain limitations. Firstly, the data collection is restricted to a specific one-week observation period, which may not capture long-term changes or seasonal variations in tourist demographics. Secondly, as a qualitative case study focused exclusively on Sudirman Street, the results prioritize contextual depth and "thick description" over statistical generalizability to other regions. Lastly, while steps were taken to maintain objectivity through data triangulation with established literature, the researcher acknowledges the inherent subjectivity present in descriptive field observations.

Thus, the findings of this study are expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of culinary tourism in Bandung and its implications for the cultural identity of the local community.

3. Results and Discussion

Sudirman Street in Bandung offers a unique depiction of the intersection of religious, cultural, and economic identities within the city's culinary ecosystem. As a culinary district that offers both halal and non-halal food, Sudirman Street creates a space that challenges and invites diverse perspectives on tolerance and diversity. For Bandung, a predominantly Muslim city, this area presents an intriguing example of social harmony through the boundaries of tolerance. Henri Tajfel and John Turner's Social Identity Theory helps us understand how groups with distinct identities—whether religious or cultural—can coexist in a shared public space. The concept of a gastronomic city also aids in understanding Sudirman Street's role in shaping the city's culinary culture that transcends traditional boundaries.

Boundaries of Tolerance as a "Guardian of Diversity"

In Sudirman Street, tolerance is manifested through clearly defined boundaries that preserve diversity without compromising group identities. These boundaries are reflected in the physical separations between halal and non-halal food areas, the use of disposable utensils for Muslim workers, and the explicit labeling of halal and non-halal food (including noting the presence of pork in specific dishes).



Figure 1 : Signage Separating Halal and Non-Halal Areas in Sudirman Street

The signage seen in figure 1 exemplifies how Sudirman Street maintains clear demarcations between halal and non-halal food sections, serving as a sophisticated spatial management strategy that ensures the coexistence of diverse patrons without compromising religious convictions. Far from being mere restrictive barriers, these markers function as symbolic bridges that allow visitors to navigate the same culinary ecosystem through a pragmatic form of tolerance, where boundaries act as the foundation for an inclusive public life. This careful calibration of separation and integration underscores the dynamic nature of tolerance in public spaces, where boundaries are established not to isolate, but to foster an environment where diversity is respected and celebrated within the urban fabric.

This visual segmentation is actively animated by social interactions that transform static signs into vital psychological safety signals, as evidenced by Muslim visitors who exhibit a brief moment of spatial hesitation before proceeding with confidence once the green "No Pork No Lard" signage is identified. This transition from hesitation to spatial agency illustrates how the environment empowers religious patrons to occupy the space without anxiety, a dynamic further reinforced by pork-stall vendors who act as custodians of institutionalized hospitality by politely redirecting visitors toward appropriate sections. Such proactive mutual respect confirms that the boundary is not a line of exclusion, but a tool for cultural negotiation where vendors act as guardians of the spatial boundary to ensure the patron's religious requirements are met.

The integrity of this spatial negotiation extends even to the "backstage" dynamics of the district, where cleaning staff follow ritualistic protocols to handle waste and utensils separately between halal and non-halal zones. This lived practice among the workers who sustain the environment demonstrates that the boundaries are not merely a superficial display for tourists but are deeply integrated into the district's core operations. Collectively, these multifaceted interactions facilitate a state of negotiated proximity, a condition where diverse groups share the same physical air while successfully maintaining the distinctiveness of their social and religious identities.

The cultural fusion observed at Sudirman Street extends beyond the dishes themselves. Interactions among visitors—both locals and tourists—occur naturally, transcending rigid social barriers while adhering to the dynamic tolerance boundaries of Sudirman Street. This aligns with Tajfel and Turner's ideas on social identity, where individuals can adapt their group identities within broader social contexts. Here, identity is no longer confined to normative social rules but blends into a culinary ecosystem that celebrates diversity.

The continuous evolution of this culinary landscape is fundamentally driven by commercialization and shifting consumer demands. The adaptations visible in these stalls are not merely organic cultural shifts but strategic business decisions designed to maximize market reach:

- **Market Expansion through De-stigmatization:** By creating a "Gohyong Halal," vendors effectively remove the religious barrier that previously excluded the majority of the local population from experiencing this dish. This commercial maneuver transforms a niche ethnic snack into a mass-market product, satisfying the demand of Muslim consumers who seek variety in their street food experiences.
- **Niche Targeting and Premiumization:** The reinterpretation of Soto Mie into a non-halal version caters to a specific consumer demand for pork-based "fusion" food that is often marketed as a specialty or premium street food delicacy in the Bandung night market. Vendors utilize the symbolic "Non-Halal" identity as a branding tool to attract specific demographics seeking a unique twist on a national staple.
- **Economic Synergy:** The high concentration of diverse stalls creates a "one-stop" destination that satisfies the varied dietary requirements of multi-ethnic groups. This economic reality incentivizes vendors to innovate constantly, ensuring that cultural boundaries are blurred to capture every segment of the visiting market.

In this context, cultural fusion serves as a profitable engine for the Sudirman Street economy, proving that social tolerance and commercial success can be mutually reinforcing.

Social and Cultural Impact of Tolerance in the Culinary Ecosystem

Sudirman Street is not just a culinary tourism hotspot; it also symbolizes the harmonious convergence of diverse cultures. The tolerance cultivated here has a far-reaching social impact, offering a model for other communities to understand how differences can be celebrated without compromising core values. For the local population, the street serves as an educational example of openness and respect for differences. For tourists, Sudirman Street offers a unique experience, showcasing how Indonesia's diverse society can live together peacefully.



Figure 4 : Muslim Woman Dining in the Non-Halal Section

Figure 4, the image of a woman wearing a hijab and dining in the non-halal section of Sudirman Street encapsulates the inclusive spirit of the area, showcasing how individuals from different religious backgrounds can interact and coexist within a shared space. It highlights the social harmony that is nurtured by the boundaries of tolerance in Sudirman Street, where cultural and religious diversity are not only respected but embraced. In this particular moment, the Muslim woman enjoying a meal in the non-halal area symbolizes the seamless fusion of cultures that Sudirman Street represents. The image underscores that tolerance in this context is not merely about accepting differences, but about celebrating them as part of a collective identity that strengthens the community. The blending of religious and cultural identities within Sudirman Street creates a dynamic public space where everyone, regardless of their background, can participate without feeling marginalized. This portrayal mirrors the values of unity embedded in Indonesia's Pancasila, where diversity is viewed as a source of strength, enriching the local culture and fostering a spirit of togetherness.

While the visible interactions at Sudirman Street suggest a seamless fusion, a deeper sociological lens reveals that this harmony is often maintained through silent negotiations and invisible boundaries. The observed social cohesion is frequently the result of a strict, albeit unspoken, social contract where "HALAL" and "NON-HALAL" signage acts as a risk-management tool. However, these symbols also serve as symbolic barriers that delineate where an individual "belongs," potentially reinforcing a sense of "othering" where interaction feels safe only because boundaries are rigidly defined. This leads to a tension between the performance of tolerance and true integration; while a Muslim woman dining in a non-halal section serves as a powerful symbol of openness, it may be a performative exception rather than a common occurrence. Visitors often navigate "invisible walls"—a silent pressure to remain within designated dietary zones to avoid social judgment from their own in-groups, illustrating the complexities of Social Identity Theory.

Furthermore, there is a risk of commodified harmony, where tolerance becomes a "unique selling point" for tourism, potentially suppressing underlying ethnic or religious tensions to protect the ecosystem's commercial viability and creating a "fragile peace". Finally, the space may become economically exclusive as rising prices marginalize the local populations who originally fostered this diversity, replacing organic community interaction with curated, consumer-driven experiences. Ultimately, these reflections shift the narrative from one of "effortless peace" to one of intentional negotiation, highlighting the active effort required by the community to maintain such a complex social fabric.

4. Conclusion

Sudirman Street embodies the values of diversity that have long been upheld in Indonesia. This area teaches us that identity does not have to be exclusive but can adapt to a wide array of social and cultural contexts. The culinary ecosystem in Sudirman Street demonstrates how cultural and religious diversity can coexist peacefully without generating conflict. The boundaries of tolerance applied in this area are not barriers, but rather bridges that allow each group to celebrate their identity in an atmosphere of togetherness.

Thus, Sudirman Street has become a symbol of unity and tolerance, highly relevant to Indonesia's pluralistic society. This area shows us that the economy and identity can go hand in hand, and that tolerance is not just about accepting differences but also about celebrating them as part of a larger collective identity. As part of Bandung's culinary ecosystem, Sudirman Street illustrates that local cultural uniqueness does not need to be separate from diversity but can instead merge within one space, creating an authentic and inclusive culinary experience.

While this review provides qualitative insight into the social dynamics of Sudirman Street, certain academic limitations exist that offer fertile ground for further inquiry. The current study is primarily based on a cross-sectional observation of visible interactions and signage, which may not fully capture the nuanced internal motivations of stakeholders or the long-term impact on original local residents. Additionally, as a temporal "snapshot," this analysis may not account for how social boundaries shift during periods of heightened socio-political tension or major religious holidays.

To deepen the understanding of this "Third Space" phenomenon, future studies should explore longitudinal research to track the evolution of Sudirman Street over several years, determining if cultural fusion is sustainable or if commercialization eventually dilutes authentic identities. Furthermore, comparative studies between Sudirman Street and other multi-ethnic culinary hubs—such as Pasar Semawis in Semarang or Glodok in Jakarta—could reveal whether this model of tolerance is unique to Bandung's social fabric or part of a broader national trend. Finally, digital interaction studies are suggested to investigate how social media platforms and food-vlogging influence the "performance of tolerance," providing fresh insights into how modern technology mediates physical social interactions.

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