

Beyond Words: Indigenous Hospitality and Linguistic Landscaping in NTT Food Truck Entrepreneurship

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Abstract

This study examines the operationalization of translingual repertoires and the indigenous tekno ta'ek hospitality philosophy as mechanisms for competitive differentiation in the food truck sector at Lasiana Beach, Kupang. Utilizing a multisited ethnographic design over an eight-week period, the researchers gathered data through participatory observations and semi-structured interviews with 15 key stakeholders, including tourism officials, business owners, and suppliers. Data analysis followed the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) framework, ensuring methodological rigor through source triangulation. Findings indicate that the systematic integration of regional vocabulary—such as Dawan, Tetun, and Rote—into menu naming increases customer interaction duration by 35% and purchase conversion by 20%. Furthermore, the institutionalization of tekno ta'ek values through Ama/Ina kinship protocols transforms transactional service into relational exchange, significantly enhancing brand loyalty and yielding an average revenue increase of 30%. The study introduces the concept of "embodied culinary capital," demonstrating how micro-enterprises in peripheral regions can mitigate growth stagnation by leveraging intangible heritage as a dynamic capability. These results provide a scalable framework for inclusive regional development, linking local food biodiversity directly to the tourism value chain.

Keywords: *tekno ta'ek, translingual repertoires, heritage entrepreneurship, food trucks, brand equity.*

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INTRODUCTION

The failure to optimize East Nusa Tenggara's (NTT) endemic food biodiversity—comprising 47 varieties—represents a significant commercial gap in the regional culinary ecosystem. While millennial travelers increasingly seek authentic cultural narratives and demonstrate a willingness to pay a 20–30% price premium, 84.7% of culinary business actors in Kupang continue to experience growth stagnation. This economic inertia persists because local micro-enterprises rely on conventional marketing methods that ignore the symbolic value of the region's socio-cultural capital. At Lasiana Beach, the emergence of food trucks offers a mobile and flexible business format, yet these ventures have not systematically operationalized the indigenous tekno ta'ek

hospitality philosophy or the region's complex multilingual communication systems as competitive differentiation mechanisms.

Current tourism literature argues that heritage entrepreneurship serves as a strategic framework for creating differentiated value by weaving culture, place, and storytelling into viable business models (Kumar, 2023; Kusio, 2023; Tham & Chin, 2024). Scholars emphasize that the co-creative integration of local heritage with contemporary gastronomy can catalyze unique experiences, allowing micro-enterprises to capture premium demand while sustaining cultural integrity (Lestariningsih et al., 2023; Mousa et al., 2024; Tham & Chin, 2024). Previous models emphasize that narrative design—the capacity to translate raw ingredients into intergenerational knowledge—remains central to destination branding and tourist engagement across Southeast Asia (Dawo et al., 2025; Munjal, 2023; Silva & Pedrosa, 2024).

However, these foundational models often overlook the translingual repertoires utilized by micro-entrepreneurs in peripheral coastal zones (Lestariningsih et al., 2023; Yusra, 2023). Most hospitality management theories adopt Western paradigms that prioritize professional distance and standardized efficiency, which fail to capture the essence of indigenous relational ethics. This static assumption becomes problematic when applied to the Timorese context, where hospitality is rooted in *teknok ta'ek*—a kinship system that reframes customers as guests within a communal relational universe. While existing research discusses linguistic landscapes in destinations like Lombok or Bali, there is a lack of evidence regarding how fluid movement between regional dialects, such as Dawan and Tetun, functions as a form of "embodied culinary capital" to drive economic resilience (Lestariningsih et al., 2023; Tam & Tsang, 2024; Yusra, 2023).

Therefore, this study aims to conceptualize how translingual communication patterns and *teknok ta'ek* values redefine modern service standards and create value at Lasiana Beach. Utilizing a multisited ethnographic design, this research examines the integration of local dialects into menu naming and customer interactions across five food truck nodes. The study specifically targets the relationship between these linguistic-hospitality strategies and the formation of brand equity for micro-enterprises operating in resource-constrained environments. By investigating the transition from transactional service to relational exchange, this study fills the epistemic gap between cultural assets and commercial performance.

This research offers two primary contributions. Theoretically, it introduces the concept of "embodied culinary capital," demonstrating how translingual hospitality norms function as a "relational glue" that exceeds transactional expectations (Bovensiepen, 2024; Yusra, 2023). Practically, it produces contextual communication protocols and hospitality standards—such as the *Ama/Ina* kinship greeting—that enable MSME actors to command premium pricing without sacrificing cultural authenticity. These findings provide a scalable model for inclusive development, linking upstream suppliers, such as the Oesao farmer groups, directly to the tourism value chain. The following sections detail the multisited ethnographic methodology, present findings regarding linguistic differentiation and economic impacts, and conclude with policy recommendations for indigenous-led culinary tourism development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Heritage Entrepreneurship and Narrative-Driven Gastronomy: A Value Creation Framework

The global hospitality and culinary landscape is currently transitioning from standardized, product-centric offerings toward narrative-driven experiences that integrate local heritage with contemporary innovation (Dawo et al., 2025; Kusio, 2023; Mousa et al., 2024). This paradigm shift frames heritage, language, and place as strategic assets rather than mere background elements in the service encounter (Kumar, 2023; Tham & Chin, 2024). Scholars emphasize that heritage-based entrepreneurship serves as a critical mechanism for creating differentiated value by weaving culture and storytelling into viable business designs that appeal to travelers seeking

authentic engagement (Chitrakar & Kang, 2023; Kusumowidagdo et al., 2024; Mousa et al., 2024). By moving beyond the physical attributes of food, this approach allows micro-enterprises to capture premium demand through the construction of a distinctive regional identity (Anggadwita et al., 2023; Lestariningsih et al., 2023; Munjal, 2023).

Heritage entrepreneurship acts as a conceptual bridge between the stewardship of cultural memory and the generation of economic value through innovative business models (Kumar, 2023; Kusio, 2023). In the context of micro-ventures, this framework leverages social and cultural capital to transform local biodiversity and traditional practices into distinctive experiential packages (Baiocco & Paniccia, 2023; Gallage & Laferriere, 2023; Mousa et al., 2024). This process of narrative design—translating indigenous ingredients and culinary rituals into intergenerational knowledge—enables business actors to command premium pricing for authentic experiences (Dawo et al., 2025; Hidayat et al., 2024; Tham & Chin, 2024). Furthermore, the integration of local knowledge systems into product lines ensures that the venture remains anchored in its cultural roots while meeting contemporary consumer expectations (Anggadwita et al., 2023; Hasanah et al., 2023).

The success of culturally anchored gastronomy hinges on the entrepreneur's embeddedness within the local ecosystem and their ability to synchronize internal capabilities with external resource environments, such as destination dynamics and governance networks (Kumar, 2023; Mousa et al., 2024; Scapini & Vergara, 2024). Evidence from the Indonesian context suggests that indigenous-led ventures can effectively translate a "sense of place" into competitive market offerings when supported by collaborative networks and institutional governance (Anggadwita et al., 2023; Chitrakar & Kang, 2023; Kusumowidagdo et al., 2024). In peripheral regions like East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), heritage-led entrepreneurship functions as more than an economic activity; it serves as a model for sustainable regional development that preserves intangible heritage through active commercial participation (Mousa et al., 2024; Munjal, 2023).

Pathways for translating these cultural assets into tangible value require deliberate design logics. Narrative packaging elevates endemic foods from mere commodities to core elements of a place-based experience, leveraging social capital to cultivate premium perceptions (Munjal, 2023; Tham & Chin, 2024). In modern markets, digital channels amplify these local narratives, enabling micro-entrepreneurs to reach global audiences like Millennials through authentic storytelling on platforms such as Instagram (Putra et al., 2023; Said et al., 2023; Silva & Pedrosa, 2024). Crucially, the embodied hospitality ethos—such as the Timorese *teknok ta'ek* kinship logic—provides a relational frame that transforms transactional exchanges into relational experiences (Bovensiepen, 2024; Yusra, 2023). By codifying kinship-inflected greetings (*Ama/Ina*) into service scripts, micro-enterprises at Lasiana Beach can generate "embodied culinary capital" that facilitates stronger customer-brand relationships and repeat visit intentions (Bovensiepen, 2024; Tusinski, 2024; Yusra, 2023).

Co-evolutionary Business Model Innovation (BMI) in Micro-Tourism

Sustainable value creation in the hospitality sector emerges through the mutual shaping of micro-entrepreneurs, local ecosystems, and destination governance (Baiocco & Paniccia, 2023; Dawo et al., 2025; Kumar, 2023). A co-evolutionary perspective on business model innovation (BMI) suggests that firm success hinges on a reciprocal process where internal capabilities and external environmental conditions co-adapt over time (Baiocco & Paniccia, 2023; Francesco Santarsiero et al., 2024). Unlike static frameworks, a co-evolutionary approach emphasizes multilevel adaptation where firm-level decisions respond to and influence the broader entrepreneurial ecosystem (Baiocco & Paniccia, 2023; Marasco et al., 2024). This dynamic alignment allows micro-enterprises to generate novel value propositions and adaptive networks that facilitate scaling within resource-constrained environments (Baiocco & Paniccia, 2023; Marasco et al., 2024; Francesco Santarsiero et al., 2024).

Within the micro-tourism sector, this alignment is fundamental as vendors embed place-based resources—such as local biodiversity, indigenous knowledge, and language practices—into their core service portfolios (Dawo et al., 2025; Kumar, 2023; Rodrigues et al., 2024). For food truck operators at Lasiana Beach, BMI involves an ongoing dialogue between operational choices and destination-level shifts, including seasonal tourist flows and evolving policy signals (Baiocco & Paniccia, 2023; Francesco Santarsiero et al., 2024). Data from the field indicates that these micro-enterprises leverage their inherent flexibility to pivot from conventional inventory selling toward narrative-driven relational exchanges. For instance, business actors adapt to low-season fluctuations by diversifying revenue streams, such as selling frozen food or office catering packages. Such transitions effectively address modern traveler expectations for authenticity, transforming hospitality from a mere transaction into a form of cultural immersion (Gallage & Laferriere, 2023; Hasanah et al., 2023; Lopes et al., 2024).

The co-evolutionary framing further clarifies how entrepreneurial embeddedness in distinctive places supports economic resilience (Dawo et al., 2025; Rodrigues et al., 2024). In the East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) context, micro-entrepreneurs succeed when they are deeply integrated into local networks, allowing for the transmission of tacit know-how and trust that sustains heritage-inspired offerings (Hasanah et al., 2023; Lopes et al., 2024; Marasco et al., 2024). This embeddedness catalyzes the co-evolutionary processes necessary to translate cultural-linguistic assets—such as the *teknok ta'ek* kinship ethics—into tangible venture viability. By aligning service design with community-led governance, food truck operators have achieved a significant multiplier effect, including an average income increase of 30% and a 31% rise in business turnover.

Furthermore, the integration of digital storytelling serves as a modern mechanism to amplify these local narratives and support premium positioning (Lopes et al., 2024; Marasco et al., 2024; Said et al., 2023). Digital narratives—comprising multilingual menus, ingredient histories, and culturally resonant visuals—strengthen authenticity signals and widen the reach to target demographics seeking culturally anchored experiences. Consequently, BMI in this setting functions as a responsive mechanism that links firm-level innovation with broader sustainability imperatives, ensuring that the culinary ecosystem of Lasiana Beach co-evolves with global tourism trends while maintaining its indigenous identity.

Translingual Repertoires and the Linguistic Landscape

The linguistic landscape (LL) in tourism destinations serves as a symbolic construction of public space, where the visibility of regional languages facilitates a distinctive sense of place (Lestariningsih et al., 2023). Scholars argue that integrating local languages into the marketplace constitutes a fundamental differentiation strategy that can increase brand equity by up to 40%. In the context of Lasiana Beach, the LL is not merely a static display of signage but a dynamic environment where the use of Dawan, Tetun, and Rote vocabulary in menu naming functions as a primary competitive mechanism. This strategic use of regional terminology, such as *Bose Rica* or *Lu'at* Delight, captures tourist attention by signaling cultural authenticity and exclusivity.

Beyond simple nomenclature, business actors employ "translingual repertoires"—the fluid movement between indigenous dialects, Indonesian, and English—to mediate commercial transactions and build emotional rapport (Tam & Tsang, 2024; Yusra, 2023). Rather than treating languages as separate entities, these micro-entrepreneurs utilize their full communicative range to negotiate meaning and perform cultural identity. Data indicate that this translingual approach serves as a symbolic resource that facilitates organic cultural learning, encouraging tourists to engage deeply with the gastronomic narrative. For instance, terms like *bose* and *maren* go beyond referential functions; they encapsulate communal values of the Timorese people, transforming a meal into a shared cultural experience.

The economic impact of these linguistic strategies is measurable and significant. The institutionalization of multilingual promotion increases customer interaction duration by 35% and purchase conversion by 20%. Furthermore, the implementation of local language strategies has contributed to an increase in destination ratings on digital platforms, reaching an average of 4.6/5. Tourists report that linguistic authenticity enhances the "local atmosphere," making the experience feel more distinct compared to other destinations. This "embodied culinary capital" is further amplified through digital storytelling, such as QR codes that link menus to the history of ingredients and traditional cooking methods.

However, the use of regional languages also presents comprehension challenges for non-local visitors. Business actors overcome these barriers through compensatory mechanisms, including contextual visualization, bilingual-trilingual translations, and the use of positive body language. This adaptive capacity suggests that in multicultural tourism zones, code-switching does not diminish cultural authenticity but rather facilitates a dialogue between locality and globality (Tam & Tsang, 2024). Consequently, the linguistic landscape at Lasiana Beach functions as an integrated communication infrastructure that supports both heritage preservation and economic resilience.

Teknok Ta'ek: Epistemology of Indigenous Relational Hospitality

Indigenous hospitality in the Timorese context is rooted in the philosophy of *teknok ta'ek*, a kinship-inflected ethic that frames service as a relational obligation rather than a commercial transaction. Unlike Western service models that prioritize professional distance and standardized efficiency, *teknok ta'ek* symbolically incorporates the stranger—the tourist—into the local family structure. This epistemological foundation transforms the marketplace into a space of communal belonging, where the host's primary objective is to ensure the guest's comfort through sincerity and reciprocity. Scholars conceptualize these ritualized hospitality norms as "social technologies" that reframe service encounters as relational belonging, allowing micro-ventures to translate cultural knowledge into distinctive experiential packages (Bovensiepen, 2024; Gallage & Laferriere, 2023; Tusinski, 2024).

The most visible manifestation of this philosophy in Lasiana Beach food trucks is the standardized use of kinship terminology in verbal greetings. Business operators utilize the terms *Ama* (father/sir) and *Ina* (mother/ma'am) to address customers, effectively internalizing Timor's traditional social structure within modern commercial encounters. Data confirm that this protocol serves as a "relational glue," humanizing interactions and reducing the psychological barrier between provider and consumer. This practice demonstrates that indigenous value systems can be transformed into standardized service excellence without experiencing commodification that eliminates cultural authenticity (Tusinski, 2024; Yusra, 2023). Such "embodied culinary capital" arises when these culturally resonant service norms are incorporated into everyday encounters, turning hospitality into a relational exchange (Bovensiepen, 2024; Tusinski, 2024).

The institutionalization of *teknok ta'ek* is further supported by formal capacity-building initiatives, such as the "Timor Smile Workshop" and "Local Hospitality" training programs. These programs teach operators how to welcome guests with traditional ethics while maintaining professional competencies (Marasco et al., 2024; F Santarsiero et al., 2024). The resulting service standards integrate operational efficiency—such as response times of less than five minutes—with cultural aesthetics, including the use of traditional bamboo containers and banana leaf mats for presentation. This hybrid model proves that "friendliness without exaggeration" creates a superior service environment compared to impersonal, mechanistic experiences.

The measurable impact of this relational branding is reflected in high levels of consumer loyalty and satisfaction. Tourists report a maximum satisfaction score of 5/5, citing the warmth of personal interactions and the feeling of being "accepted" as primary reasons for their positive

perception. By recognizing regular customers and personalizing communication, food truck operators create an emotional connection that facilitates repeat visits and organic word-of-mouth promotion. Consequently, *teknok ta'ek* serves as a sustainable competitive advantage, demonstrating that authentic cultural hospitality is a fundamental driver of brand equity in emerging tourist destinations.

METHODS

This study applied a qualitative multisited ethnographic design to examine the operationalization of translingual repertoires and *teknok ta'ek* hospitality within the food truck sector. The researchers conducted data collection over eight weeks at Lasiana Beach, Kupang, a coastal destination selected as the statistical population boundary for this inquiry. This design facilitated an in-depth exploration of verbal and non-verbal interaction patterns across multiple micro-enterprise nodes to identify substantive patterns in cultural-linguistic value creation.

The study utilized purposive sampling to recruit 15 key informants who met specific criteria related to their direct involvement in the local culinary ecosystem. The researchers prioritized informants with relevant knowledge of indigenous hospitality and experience in multilingual commercial transactions. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the informant categories and their roles in the study.

Table 1. Profile of Research Informants

Informant Category	Code	Quantity	Selection Criteria
Tourism Office Staff	DP-01– DP-03	3	Strategic involvement in regional tourism policy and MSME capacity-building programs.
Food Truck Owners	FT-01– FT-05	5	Direct operation of local-food-based trucks at Lasiana Beach for a minimum of one year.
MSME Local Food Suppliers	S-01–S- 04	4	Consistent provision of endemic NTT ingredients (e.g., <i>bose corn</i> , <i>moringa</i> , <i>lu'at chili</i>).
Tourists / Visitors	W-01– W-03	3	Direct consumers of food truck services with diverse demographic backgrounds.
Total Informants		15	Sampling Method: Purposive Sampling.

Source: Research data, 2025

The researchers employed a triangulation of three primary data collection methods to ensure internal validity: 1) Participatory Observation: Observations were conducted on five selected food trucks to document code-switching patterns between Dawan, Tetun, Indonesian, and English during service encounters; 2) Semi-Structured Interviews: The researchers conducted in-depth interviews using a protocol focused on three variables: language strategy, hospitality practices, and economic perceptions. Interviews were recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim for analysis; and 3) Document Analysis: Analysis included physical menus, digital promotional materials (Instagram), and aggregate institutional reports. 4) Note on Quantitative Metrics: To resolve methodological ambiguity regarding the percentages cited in the findings (e.g., "30% revenue increase"), the researchers clarify that these figures are derived from aggregate institutional reports provided by the Kupang City Tourism Office (2023–2024) and are supplemented by self-reported estimates from the five food truck owners.

This study applied the qualitative thematic analysis model developed by (Miles et al., 2013) to process the gathered ethnographic data. The researchers utilized this framework to ensure a rigorous, non-linear progression through three concurrent activity flows: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. First, Data Condensation: The researchers selected, focused, and simplified the raw data extracted from 15 verbatim interview transcripts and eight weeks of participatory field observations. This stage prioritized the identification of substantive patterns regarding culture-based marketing strategies, the adoption of regional vocabulary in

menus, and the manifestation of teknok ta'ek philosophy in contemporary hospitality standards. Second, Data Display: To facilitate a systematic analysis of linguistic nuances and cultural meanings, the researchers organized the condensed data into category matrices and multilingual communication flow diagrams. This step mapped specific ta'ek values against standardized service practices to identify the relationship between cultural narratives and brand equity formation. Third, Conclusion Drawing and Verification: The researchers verified initial findings through member checking with the five food truck owners and source triangulation between Tourism Office institutional data and traveler narratives. This final stage ensured that the interpretations concerning economic impact, such as the 30% average revenue increase, were validated by multiple data points to maintain descriptive and interpretive integrity.

To ensure the integrity of the findings, the researchers implemented member checking, allowing informants to review transcripts for accuracy. All regional terms (Ama, Ina, teknok ta'ek) were verified by cultural experts from the NTT Cultural Institute to prevent cultural misrepresentation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Multilingual Communication Strategies in Food Truck Marketing

The systematic integration of the regional linguistic landscape (LL) serves as a primary mechanism for competitive differentiation among food truck micro-enterprises at Lasiana Beach. As presented in Table 2, the adoption of indigenous East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) vocabulary in menu naming functions as a symbolic attractor for tourists seeking cultural authenticity.

Table 2. Regional Language Integration and Consumer Response

Linguistic Asset	Cultural Origin	Functional Implementation	Observed Consumer Impact
<i>Bose</i>	Timor (Dawan)	Menu Naming (<i>Bose Rica</i>)	Stimulates curiosity regarding regional flavors and reflects communal dining traditions.
<i>Lu'at</i>	NTT Regional Icon	Brand Identity (<i>Lu'at Delight</i>)	Establishes a symbolic icon of regional authenticity for non-local tourists.
<i>Maren</i>	Timorese Tradition	Menu Narrative (<i>Bose Maren</i>)	Encapsulates communal values and collective identity within the product narrative.
Slogan Usage	Dawan / Indonesian	Visual Banners (<i>Makan Bae, Senyum Bae</i>)	Enhances the perceived "local atmosphere" and reinforces cultural identity.

Source: Research data, 2025

Data from field observations and interviews indicate that these naming patterns exceed mere referential functions. For instance, Informant FT-01 noted that the term *Bose* reflects the collective dining traditions of the Timorese people, thereby internalizing communal values within the commercial product. Similarly, the use of the term *Maren* (tradition of eating together) serves to encapsulate specific cultural narratives that differentiate the offerings from conventional urban culinary models.

Furthermore, business actors utilize "translingual repertoires"—the fluid movement between Dawan, Tetun, Indonesian, and English—to mediate cultural learning and build emotional rapport with diverse tourist segments. As shown in the observed interaction patterns, vendors employ code-switching strategies tailored to customer demographics. Informant FT-04 reported using mixed Dawan-Indonesian captions on social media to maintain linguistic authenticity while ensuring accessibility for non-local visitors. This adaptive communication style transforms the culinary transaction into an organic cultural exchange, extending the duration of consumer engagement.

The measurable impact of these multilingual strategies is significant according to aggregate institutional data. According to the Kupang City Tourism Office (2024), the implementation of 2–

3 regional languages in marketing materials correlates with a 35% increase in customer interaction duration and a 20% rise in purchase conversion rates. Additionally, digital platform metrics reflect a positive consumer reception, with Lasiana Beach's culinary tourism rating reaching 4.6/5 following the systematic application of local language branding. Tourists consistently reported that linguistic authenticity made the "local atmosphere more felt," providing a distinct identity that differentiates the Lasiana ecosystem from other domestic destinations.

Hospitality Practices Based on Teknok Ta'ek Values

The institutionalization of tekнок ta'ek values represents a systematic standardization of indigenous hospitality within modern food truck operations. As indicated in Table 3, service quality metrics demonstrate high performance across all measured cultural variables, with satisfaction scores ranging from 4.5 to 5.0 on a 5.0 scale.

Table 3. Performance Metrics for Teknok Ta'ek-Based Hospitality Services

Hospitality Variable	Mean Satisfaction Score	Implementation Protocol	Data Source
Kinship Greetings	5.0 / 5.0	Mandatory use of <i>Ama</i> (sir) and <i>Ina</i> (ma'am)	Informant W-01, W-03
Personal Interaction	4.7 / 5.0	Recognition of regular customers and favorite menus	Informant W-02
Service Responsiveness	4.8 / 5.0	Digital response < 5 minutes; immediate replacement of complaints	Informant FT-05, W-02
Cultural Aesthetics	4.5 / 5.0	Use of bamboo containers and banana leaf presentation	Informant FT-02, FT-03

Source: Research data, 2025

Kinship protocols utilizing *Ama* and *Ina* terminology transition the service encounter from a transactional exchange to a relational one, effectively humanizing the commercial interaction. The researchers observed that these *sapaan* protocols act as a primary driver for the 100% recommendation rate identified among tourist informants. This relational branding strategy facilitates an atmosphere of communal belonging, where the guest is symbolically positioned within the local kinship structure.

Formal training initiatives implemented in 2024 by the Tourism Office and Kupang Polytechnic have codified these traditional ethics into professional competencies. The data suggests that these programs enable business actors to maintain cultural authenticity while achieving operational efficiency, such as team task division between plating and service to ensure rapid delivery. Efficiency metrics further confirm high responsiveness, with complaint resolution occurring without debate and digital inquiries addressed within a maximum five-minute threshold. Consequently, the integration of tekнок ta'ek into service recovery protocols creates a distinctive hospitality model that balances cultural warmth with measurable performance standards.

Socio-Economic Impact and Local Supply Chain Integration

As presented in Table 4, the implementation of localized food truck strategies yielded quantifiable economic outcomes. Aggregate data from the Kupang City Tourism Office indicates a 31% increase in business turnover and an 18% contribution rise to the regional culinary tax revenue. At the enterprise level, individual operators reported revenue escalations ranging from 20% to 40%, with a calculated average of 30%.

Table 4. Aggregate Socio-Economic Metrics of the Lasiana Beach Food Truck Ecosystem

Economic Indicator	Quantitative Value	Data Source
Average Revenue Increase	30%	Informant FT-01–05
Business Turnover Growth	31%	Tourism Office Report 2024
Regional Tax Contribution (PAD)	18%	Tourism Office Report 2024
Total Employment Positions	65–78	Aggregate Analysis
Local Raw Material Utilization	75%–90%	Informant FT-01, FT-02
Upstream MSME Demand Increase	30%–40%	Informant S-01, S-02

Source: Research data, 2025

The micro-enterprise model generated approximately 78 new employment positions, primarily involving individuals within the 20–35 age cohort. Each food truck unit typically sustains between two and four permanent or part-time workers, providing viable income streams for residents. Local supply chain integration reflects high utilization rates of indigenous raw materials, with 80% to 90% of ingredients sourced from local farmer and fisherman cooperatives, such as the Oesao and Oesapa groups. This structural alignment resulted in a 25% to 50% escalation in demand for endemic ingredients like bosc corn and moringa. Local MSME traders reported demand surges of 30% to 40%, confirming a multiplier effect in the upstream sector. Furthermore, data indicate that 100% of tourists surveyed expressed a willingness to recommend the destination, citing culinary specificity as a primary driver. Consequently, the integration of cultural-linguistic assets with indigenous supply chains facilitates a sustainable entrepreneurial model that supports regional economic resilience.

Discussion

The findings of this ethnographic inquiry demonstrate that the economic resilience of micro-tourism enterprises in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) is not a byproduct of conventional price competition or digital automation. Instead, growth and sustainability depend on the systematic mobilization of "embodied culinary capital"—the active performance of indigenous identity through translingual repertoires and *teknok ta'ek* kinship ethics. By moving beyond a transactional logic, food truck operators at Lasiana Beach have effectively transformed a mobile business format into a space for cultural immersion. This transition suggests that in peripheral tourism destinations, the "soul" of the offering—manifested through linguistic and ethical authenticity—functions as the primary driver of brand equity and premium positioning.

Beyond the sensory attributes of the food, the integration of a multilingual linguistic landscape serves as a powerful authenticity signal. This result reinforces the arguments of (Lestariningsih et al., 2023; Yusra, 2023), who posit that local languages in tourism signage and branding facilitate a distinctive symbolic construction of space. However, while previous models often treat language as a static asset, our findings suggest a more dynamic mechanism. Translingual repertoires—the fluid movement between Dawan, Tetun, Indonesian, and English—act as a "cultural bridge" that encourages organic learning among tourists. This mechanism explains the identified 35% increase in interaction duration; tourists are not just consuming a product, they are participating in a linguistic narrative. Unlike the standardized, English-dominant branding typical of globalized tourism hubs, the "Kupang model" utilizes regional dialects to establish a "safe" yet exotic cultural space that justifies higher price points.

The institutionalization of *teknok ta'ek* hospitality protocols represents a significant departure from established service paradigms in mature Indonesian destinations. In the "mechanistic" hospitality models prevalent in Bali or Java, service excellence is often defined by professional distance, standardized scripts, and industrial efficiency. In contrast, the *teknok ta'ek* model functions as an extension of the Timorese kinship system. By utilizing *Ama* and *Ina* greetings, business actors symbolically dissolve the psychological barrier between "provider" and "consumer," reframing the tourist as a guest within a relational universe. This finding extends the work of (Bovensiepen, 2024) by proving that indigenous relational ethics can be codified into

professional service standards without losing their authentic "warmth." The high satisfaction ratings (4.5–5.0) identify that travelers perceive this kinship-based approach as more "sincere" than the commercialized hospitality found in high-traffic urban centers.

Theoretically, this study enriches the Co-evolutionary Business Model Innovation (BMI) framework by identifying "indigenous relational ethics" as a substantive moderator for value creation. While (Baiocco et al., 2023; Kumar, 2023) emphasize the alignment of internal capabilities with destination dynamics, our research specifies that for micro-enterprises in heritage-rich contexts, these "capabilities" are fundamentally cultural and linguistic. We introduce a new dimension to heritage entrepreneurship: the transition from "inventory selling" to "identity performing." This study demonstrates that cultural-linguistic assets are not merely background factors but are dynamic capabilities that allow MSMEs to co-evolve with millennial demands for authenticity, even in resource-constrained environments where traditional infrastructure is lacking.

On a practical level, these findings offer a tactical blueprint for destination management organizations (DMOs) and micro-entrepreneurs. To replicate the success of the Lasiana Beach ecosystem, operators must dismantle rigid, Westernized service scripts that prioritize distance over connection. Instead, they should implement standardized kinship protocols—specifically the Ama/Ina addressing system—as a core component of their service recovery and loyalty programs. For DMOs, the focus should shift from generic digital marketing toward the creation of "Linguistic Landscape Toolkits" that help vendors integrate indigenous vocabulary into menu design and social media content. Furthermore, to sustain the identified multiplier effect, local governments must strengthen "backward linkages" by subsidizing cold-chain logistics between indigenous farmer groups and tourism nodes. This structural shift ensures that the premium prices commanded by "narrative-driven" food trucks directly support the resilience of the entire regional supply chain.

CONCLUSION

The "Kupang Model" establishes that linguistic and ethical authenticity serve as a structural driver of economic resilience for micro-enterprises in peripheral tourism destinations. Translingual repertoires and tekno ta'ek kinship ethics function as "embodied culinary capital," shifting the business logic from inventory selling to identity performance. This research confirms that the systematic mobilization of intangible heritage creates a sustainable competitive advantage, enabling micro-ventures to command premium pricing and secure customer loyalty where conventional, price-based marketing fails. By transforming the commercial encounter into a relational exchange, these enterprises mitigate growth stagnation and secure a stable position within the regional tourism value chain.

Limitations

This study faces specific methodological and contextual boundaries that warrant acknowledgment. First, the ethnographic design and the eight-week observation period provide a detailed snapshot of service encounters but cannot confirm the longitudinal sustainability of these business models over a multi-year trajectory. Second, the research is geographically confined to Lasiana Beach, Kupang, representing a specific coastal-urban-tourism nexus that may differ from the regulatory or social environments of rural or mountainous tourism zones within East Nusa Tenggara. Finally, while the findings report aggregate revenue increases based on institutional data and informant self-reporting, the study did not employ formal econometric modeling to isolate the exact financial return on investment (ROI) specifically attributable to relational hospitality protocols versus other external market fluctuations.

Future Research

To advance the theoretical framework of embodied culinary capital, subsequent studies should adopt a longitudinal approach to track the survival and growth rates of these food trucks over a three-to-five-year period. Scholars should utilize quantitative methodologies, such as partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM), to measure the direct causal relationship between tekno ta'ek protocols and objective financial performance metrics, including net profit margins and customer lifetime value. Furthermore, comparative research is needed to test this model in different cultural environments, specifically contrasting NTT's relational hospitality with the highly professionalized, industrial service models found in major globalized hubs like Bali or Singapore. Such inquiries will determine the scalability of indigenous relational ethics and identify the boundary conditions under which cultural-linguistic assets most effectively drive regional economic development.

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