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## Seruit and the Construction of Lampungese in Digitalized Multicultural Urban Setting

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### **Abstract**

*This paper examines how a particular cultural product (cuisine) from a demographically minority ethnic group is transformed within a multicultural social setting. The expanding process of commodification and the development of the urban culinary industry, supported by innovations in digital technology and media, provide opportunities for ethnic cuisines to compete with other culinary traditions in the market. This research aims to determine how the cultural identity embedded in specific cuisines (seruit) is established in the market, and how the intrinsic value of its culinary traditions is transformed in multiethnic societies. The theory used is food culture and food habits (Foster and Anderson 1978; Jerome, Kandel, and Pelto 1980). This study used qualitative research methods with ethnographic approach. Data was collected through interviews, observations, and the author's participant observation as a citizen of the city under study. The study found that togetherness is an intrinsic value of Lampung's seruit commensality that is adaptive amidst socio-cultural transformation into a multicultural society. Sharing meals (seruit commensality) can promote harmony among in Lampung multiethnic urban society. The representation of seruit in digital media becomes an arena for constructing Lampungese within multiethnic urban society and growing commercial economy.*

**Keywords:** commensality, ethnic identity, local cuisine, Lampung

**Paper type:** Research paper

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Received: 16 February 2024; Received in revised form 27 April 2024; Accepted: 27 April 2024; Available online: 28 April 2024

**Cite this document:** Nurdin, Bartoven Vivit. et al. (2024). Seruit and the Construction of Lampungese in Digitalized Multicultural Urban Setting. *The Journal of Society and Media*, 8(1), 104-127. DOI: 10.26740/jsm.v8n1.p104-127.



## **INTRODUCTION**

In the last decade, culinary businesses have mushroomed in Indonesian cities. The Central Bureau of Statistics recorded that there were 10,900 culinary businesses spread across Indonesia in 2022, growing by 20.76% compared to 2021 (BPS 2023). This condition reflects the significant growth of Indonesia's food and beverage industry, despite a decline during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, quickly recovered the following year and is expected to increase by 5% in 2023 (CRIF 2023). The food and beverage industry contributed the highest revenue contribution from the non-oil and gas sector at 37.82% of GDP in 2022 (MOI 2022) and generated a 30% increase in foreign investment or around 90 trillion IDR in 2022 (IBP 2023). The culinary business now promises attractive economic opportunities for both small, medium, and large companies.

From a cultural perspective, one of the distinctive features of the growing food and beverage industry is the increasing variety of cuisines from global, foreign, and local traditional cultures in the Indonesian food market. In this culinary competition, identity branding plays an important role, and food often becomes a medium of representation of a culture. Food is consumed not only because it is fulfilling biological needs but also because socio-culturally (Foster and Anderson 1978). Food is also related to identity in multicultural societies (Reddy & Dam, 2020). As market relations and the commodification of cultural products deepen, the marketing of a particular cuisine (as a product of a particular culture) as a commodity is often associated with a certain form of cultural identity where the food comes from. Identity in the culinary business is important not for the "stomach" but for the "mind" of market consumers for the sake of product sales.

Observing the transformation of ethnic cuisines in an increasingly commercial and plural society is particularly interesting in Lampung. Lampung is a pioneering region in the country's demographic engineering from the colonial to the postcolonial periods. Its indigenous Lampungese population became a minority due to massive waves of migration from Java, Bali, Madura, Lombok, and other parts of Sumatra. Historically, the relationship between Lampungese and migrants, especially Javanese, Balinese, and Chinese, has been characterized

by tension and harmony (Barron and Madden 2004; Elmhirst 2001). Although there have been many studies concerned with the dynamics of inter-ethnic relations in the context of Lampung, an examination from the angle of food is rarely found.

This article describes how ethnic identity is reconstructed in the culinary market in a multi-ethnic society. Through observation of the case of Seruit, a typical dish of Lampung ethnicity, we examine how Lampung's ethnic cuisine is commodified and how the social value inherent in the practice of commonality is transformed amidst the depth of market relations and in inter-ethnic relations. The study found that togetherness is an intrinsic value of Lampung's suit commensality that is adaptive amidst socio-cultural transformation into a multicultural society. Seruit becomes an arena for the construction of Lampungese in the midst of a multiethnic urban society and growing commercial economy. We argue that the modes of commensalities inherent in the eating practices of an ethnic group can transcend cultural boundaries and become a common language within inter-ethnic relations. This suggests that food and eating practices may serve as a plural means of bridging differences in the process of social integration in multi-ethnic societies. In this case, multi-ethnic communities, as a result of transmigration in Lampung, have a way of adapting to Lampung food; this is also called resilience. Likewise, the Lampung ethnic group is facing changes in urban society (Berding-Barwick 2024).

The relationship between food and ethnic groups has been a long concern (Holtzman 2006). Particularly for indigenous people, the environment, political, and economic conditions and changes have a significant impact on the food production and practices of ethnic communities (Abdulgani, Zulfikar, and Nurdin 2021; Darmanto 2020; Nurdin and Bustami 2015). In the context of globalization, significant worldwide events have influenced how people produce, distribute, and consume food, as exemplified in Covid-19 pandemic (Vos, McDermott, and Swinnen 2022). The growth of mass tourism has created competition between tourists and traditional food (Long 2024), as well as question related to inequality (Shostak 2023) and identity formation embedded in certain food more important (Ren and Fusté-Forné 2024). Political situation within country has also influence the changing food practices (Nabeesa and Prasanna 2023).

In today's expanding food and beverage industry, the commercialization of food that is particular to a culture is accelerating and the digital media plays a major role in influencing eating habits. According to (Onorati and Giardullo 2020) the food industry has benefited from the travel platform media, such as TripAdvisor, which promotes tourism. Today's food habits among certain social groups is shaped by digital and social media particularly among young people (Pennell 2018). The widespread use of digital photography integrated into social media platforms like Instagram has altered modern culinary cultures (Walsh and Baker 2020).

This study specifically examine one of Lampung's ethnic cuisines, called *seruit*. *Seruit* is a daily food, it consists of rice, fish, vegetables, and sambal. What sets *seruit* distinctive are the sambal and the unique way of eating it, known as *nyeruit*. The key ingredient in sambal *seruit* is *terasi* (shrimp paste) (Herlina and Setiarto 2024), which is produced in the coastal areas of Lampung. Additionally, sambal *seruit* is often enjoyed with fruits grown in Lampungese agroforest, such as durian and mango *kweni*. Lampung is renowned for its durian production, and the locals have a special fermentation technique for preserving durian called *tempoyak* (Anggadhania et al. 2023). *Seruit* is deeply intertwined with the identity of Lampung, much like *pempek* is to Palembang (Wargadalem, Wasino, and Yulifar 2023), or *megono* rice to Batang and Pekalongan in Java (Sofyan 2020).

Based on the literature review above, we argue that the construction of identity embedded in particular ethnic cuisine needs to be contextualized regarding to the position of ethnic communities within increasingly plural society and the deepening influence of globalization, among others, driven by the role of the media and the internet. The first section describes the context of Lampung's ethnic groups and their history in the formation of Lampung's multiethnic society. The next section describes Lampung's ethnic culinary traditions, which are divided into two sub-traditions. The last section describes identity issues related to the marketing and representing *seruit* in digital media, as well as *nyeruit* practices in urban multicultural setting.

## METHODS

This study used qualitative methods with an ethnographic approach. (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Kaur 2023). Primary data on Lampung culinary traditions were obtained from field studies in two Lampung Peminggir (Sai Batin) communities in Semaka, Tanggamus (July 2023), and Way Urang, South Lampung (2017). Data were collected through interviews, observations, and visual documentation. Secondary data were collected from social media searches, news, blogs, and statistics. In addition, the author's experience as a city resident related to traditional Lampung restaurants, common practices of *nyeruit*, and informal conversations about eating practices in interethnic relations were also used as supporting data. The data were interpreted using a cultural approach to food. (Oum 2005), especially in relation to identity construction (Avieli 2016).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Lampung's Demographic History and Dynamics of Inter-ethnic Relations**

Lampung Province, at the southern tip of the island of Sumatra, is a pioneer area for the implementation of the first demographic engineering policy in the modern Indonesian era. Lampung has been a destination for migration since the time of the Banten Sultanate. Around the century XVI-XVII, The Sultanate of Banten designated Lampung as a deportation area for people categorized as criminals and outcasts. However, since medieval times, Lampung has played an important role in the Banten sultanate's economy as a producer and supplier of pepper, a valuable commodity in the international market. The sultanate consolidated power relations with Lampung's local elites to guarantee pepper transactions, and in return, Banten provided protection, recognition to local elites, and other necessities such as boats and war equipment. The strong relationship between Lampung and Banten was also marked by the spontaneous migration of Banteng people to Lampung and vice versa. We can recognize this artifact in the toponymy of places in Bandar Lampung city, where some areas have Sundanese names, such as Enggal and Pasir Gintung. The ethnic classification of the population in Bandar Lampung also recognizes the Jaseng or Serang Javanese group, which refers to people from the Banten region.

Demographic engineering in the form of systematic migration was initiated by the Dutch colonial government as a form of implementation of the Ethical Policy. The Dutch government issued a policy of colonization, which was

to move the population from the crowded island of Java that was considered by the colonial government as a way to answer the challenges of population density, poverty, and potential political instability (peasant rebellion) in Java. The first group of migrants from Java were sent to Gedong Tataan, where the government provided land for houses and rice paddy cultivation. Since then, attempts to migrate people from Java to Lampung were continued by the government of the Republic of Indonesia, both during the Soekarno presidency (1945-1966) and at its peak during the Soeharto presidency (1966-1998).

The transmigration program has changed the demographic landscape of Lampung and positioned the indigenous population as a minority in terms of numbers. Furthermore, during the New Order, as elsewhere in Indonesia, indigenous groups were economically and politically marginalized. In relation to land, for example, almost all forest areas outside Java were given state land status (a legacy of the Dutch colonial system: *domein verklaring*) despite the fact that forests are part of the living space of many indigenous communities. The strong military and centrally-controlled bureaucratic networks (Jakarta) have repressed indigenous political aspirations, as reflected in the centrally organized elections of regional heads, most of whom are Javanese and military. For a long period of time, starting from the colonial period, Lampungese ethnic groups have been marginalized.

Generally, in Indonesia, although transmigration is considered by the state as an instrument to integrate the nation, it is often the setting for outbreaks of inter-ethnic conflict (Barron and Madden 2004; Davidson and Henley 2007; Levang 2003). Transmigration-driven intercultural community encounters are intertwined with issues of access to resources, livelihoods, and indigenous local political aspirations that sometimes lead to tensions between migrants and local residents. In Lampung, harmony and tension also characterize the dynamics of interethnic relations, especially between Lampungese and, Javanese and Balinese. In the 1950s, Lampungese resistance to transmigration arose due to government policies that over-prioritized transmigrants, especially with regard to land issues (Budianto 2020). The implementation of Local Transmigration in the 1980s also documented Lampungese resistance to the determination of land for

transmigration, leading to negative sentiments towards transmigrants (Elmhirst 1999, 2001). In 2011, conflict broke out between the Lampungese and the Balinese in South Lampung, causing deaths (Zulfa, 2013). In rural areas, latent conflict persists even today in the form of negative stereotypes of Lampungese among Javanese migrants.

The decentralization policy in the Reformasi era since 1999 contributed to changes in the inter-ethnic dynamics in Lampung. As in other regions, decentralization opened the way for Lampung people to enter the political arena (Davidson and Henley 2007). Since then, Lampungese started to gain political positions as regional heads either at the city/district or provincial level, although in some cases, the elected or candidates collaborated with Javanese (Warganegara and Waley 2021). Various aspirations of Lampungese that had been repressed during the New Order could be expressed. Some symbolic expressions rooted in Lampung culture were formalized through regional regulations, such as the Local Government Regulation of Lampung Province No. 2/2008, which suggests the use of typical Lampung greeting (*tabik puun*) in public formal speech and the requirement to display a *siger* (crown for Lampung brides) in public buildings. Various formal activities, especially government, are also often featured in Lampung cultural performances (music and dance).

In an urban context such as Bandar Lampung, although the use of Lampung language in daily inter-ethnic communication is rare (note that in Yogyakarta or Bandung, for example, migrant students are often encouraged to learn the local language because of the intense use of the local language in social groups where the majority are of local ethnicity), expressions of Lampung-ness as reflected in the greeting *tabik puun* are commonly practiced by residents of non-Lampung ethnicity. This also applies to the *nyeruit* as a form of Lampung's commonality, which has become a common language in inter-ethnic relations, as will be discussed later.

### **Lampung Culinary Tradition**

In the classification of ethnic groups in Indonesia, Lampung is among the most complex, which includes sub-ethnic, sub-sub-ethnic, and sub-sub-sub-ethnic groups with different names. The Lampung ethnic group has two sub-ethnic

groups, *Pepadun* and *Peminggir (Sai Batin)*. *Pepadun* consists of four sub-sub-ethnic groups: *Siwo Migou*, *Megow Pak Tulang Bawang*, *Buay Lima*, and *Pubian*. *Peminggir* also has four sub-sub-ethnics: *Peminggir Semangka*, *Melinting Rajabasa*, *Teluk*, and *Sekala Brak*. *Peminggir Sekala Brak* has further sub-sub-ethnic groups, namely *Bunga Mayang* and *Abung*. The 2010 population census recorded a total ethnic Lampung population of 1.381.660 or 13,54%, compared to Javanese, which amounted to 4,856,805 or 64,06% of the total population (Ananta et al. 2015:44, 79).

**Table 1.**  
**Lampung population by Ethnic Group, 2010.**

Rank	Ethnic Group	Males	Females	Total	Per cent	Sex Ratio
1	Javanese	2,499,577	2,357,228	4,856,805	64.06	1.032
2	Lampung	524,323	502,369	1,026,692	13.54	1.239
3	Sundanese	376,338	352,377	728,715	9.61	1.036
4	Bantenese	90,541	81,830	172,371	2.27	1.045
5	Malay	81,033	79,997	161,030	2.12	1.077
6	Palembang	73,620	70,893	144,513	1.91	1.211
7	Ogan	54,416	52,253	106,669	1.41	1.192
8	Balinese	54,358	50,248	104,606	1.38	1.428
9	Minangkabau	35,932	33,720	69,652	0.92	1.629
10	Batak	28,007	24,304	52,311	0.69	1.176
11	Others	83,029	75,555	158,584	2.09	1.367
	Total	3,901,174	3,680,774	7,581,948	100.00	1.088

Source: Ananta (2015, 99) calculated from BPS statistics.

It is written in the regional logo of Lampung province: *sang ruwa dua jurai*, which means one earth, two traditions. This expression refers to the differences in customs (*adat*) related to geography between Lampung communities living in coastal areas, known as Lampung Peminggir, and

communities who live in the hinterland, known as Lampung Pepadun. Lampung Peminggir or Sai Batin adopts a social hierarchy pattern determined by blood (descent). Sai Batin custom recognizes only one king in a *kepaksian* group consisting of groups of courtiers and tribes. Meanwhile, the Pepadun applies achievement status, where a person can have a title to mark a certain social status and customary position if they are able to fulfill the conditions set by *adat* (Hadikusuma 1989).

Both Pepadun and Peminggir people practice subsistence-oriented swidden agriculture (*ngumo*). The abundance of land before the transmigration era allowed communities to move from one location to another to open agricultural fields. Settlements, both in Lampung Peminggir and Pepadun, were always established on the side of or near rivers because, in the past, rivers were transportation routes. Moreover, rivers also provide clean water and food sources. We can see that Lampung cuisine is actually very rich in river fish cuisine. For the Peminggir people, the sea is also a source of food. Lampung people also cultivate mixed gardens, which are mainly planted with commercial crops, especially pepper, and later, during the colonial period, coffee. Besides commodity crops, gardens are also a source of plant-based food, both vegetables and fruits. Thus, geographical and ecological conditions are the basis of agrarian livelihood patterns and, at the same time, the preconditions for Lampung's culinary tradition.

An examination of Lampung's culinary traditions shows the importance of the interrelated concepts of cooking, cuisine, and commensality. The three notions are merged in the terms *seruit* and *nyeruit*. *Seruit* is often used for two meanings, referring to the general type of cuisine (a combination of staple foods, side dishes, and vegetables; a combination of specific cooking) and referring to a specific type of cooking, chili paste or sambal (*sambal seruit*). However, in the second interpretation, the way *sambal seruit* is consumed will illustrate its concept as a whole type of cuisine (with side dishes and vegetables). *Seruit* as a noun turns into *nyeruit* as a verb, which means to eat together, and what is eaten is fruit.

In general, in both Lampung Pepadun and Sai Batin communities, the service menu contains rice, fish, vegetables, and *sambal*. The most commonly used fish are river fish such as snakehead (*bang*), catfish (*patin*), and tilapia, but can also be sea fish such as blackjack (*Simba*) and skipjack (*tongkol*). Vegetables can be of various kinds, generally eggplant, cucumber, dogfruit (*jengkol*), bitter

bean (*petai*), wild cosmos leaves, cashew leaves, *julang-jaling*, cassava leaves, and vary further depending on the type of local vegetation that can be consumed. Finally, sambal is an important part of seruit. Generally, sambal terasi is used, which can be combined with tempoyak (fermented durian), mango *kweni*, or poured with hot coconut milk (called *pekhos pati*). We illustrate *seruit* from Lampung *Sai Batin*, in Semangka, Tanggamus, as Below

Picture. 1

***Seruit* cuisine from Semangka, Tanggamus.**

Name		Source & ingredient	Cooking technique
<i>Gulai taboh</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sea fish (skipjack)</li> <li>- melinjo/ <i>sekhada</i></li> <li>- coconut cream</li> <li>- red and white onion, spices</li> </ul>	Smoked Boiled
<i>Jakkan</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sea fish (swordfish)</li> <li>- Red &amp; white onion, spices, herbs, palmsugar</li> </ul>	Boiled
<i>Khemas</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- River fish (tilapia)</li> <li>- Sambal <i>terasi</i> (chili, shrimp paste, red onion, cheery tomato)</li> <li>- Boiled coconut cream</li> </ul>	Smoked Roasted Poured
<i>Taboh thokh</i> ( <i>gule balak</i> ) <i>Thokh</i> = sweet		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fish or chicken</li> <li>- Jackfruit or bamboo shots</li> <li>- Coconut cream</li> <li>- Red &amp; white onion, spices</li> </ul>	Fried Roasted Boiled

Sambal		Red & white onion, chili, cherry tomato, shrimp paste, salt	Roasted and grind
Sambal <i>tempoyak</i>		Red & white onion, chili, cherry tomato, shrimp paste, lemongrass, salt, palmsugar, <i>tempoyak</i> (fermented durian)	Fermented Roasted Grind
Vegetables		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wild cosmos leaves (<i>kenikir</i>)</li> <li>- Cucumber</li> <li>- Basil leaves</li> <li>- Eggplant</li> <li>- Dogfruit (<i>jengkol</i>)</li> <li>- Pumpkin</li> </ul>	Raw Boiled

Source: Photo by Fuad Abdulgani (2023).

The illustration above shows that seruit is a complete menu consisting of a variety of more specific dishes. The specificity of the dishes in a seruit is highly contextualized depending on local food sources. In the Sai Batin community of Marga Legun, South Lampung, where fishermen collect seaweed, there is a seaweed-based dish called *luluk lumai*.

Picture. 2



***Lukuk lumai*** from Marga Legun, South Lampung.

*Source: Photo by Bartoven Vivit (2017).*

Among the Lampung Pepadun community, the composition of seruit is basically the same as Sai Batin, with rice, side dishes and vegetables. However, the most common fish dish is grilled, boiled (*pindang*), or steamed (*pepes*) river fish. No sea fish is found due to the influence of different food sources with Sai Batin in the Pesisir. However, shrimp paste is more apparent in Lampung Pepadun. The city of Menggala, located on the Tulang Bawang River, was once known as a shrimp paste producer. The use of coconut milk in specific cooking is also relatively low in Pepadun seruit.

**Picture. 3**



**Type of Pepadun-Style Seruit.**

*Source: Seruit Buk Lin in GoFood account.*

It could be said that *nyeruit* is a common Lampungese fact in both Lampung Pepadun and Sai Batin. *Nyeruit* is a communal activity where people eat together. Even in the urban context of Bandar Lampung, whenever there is an

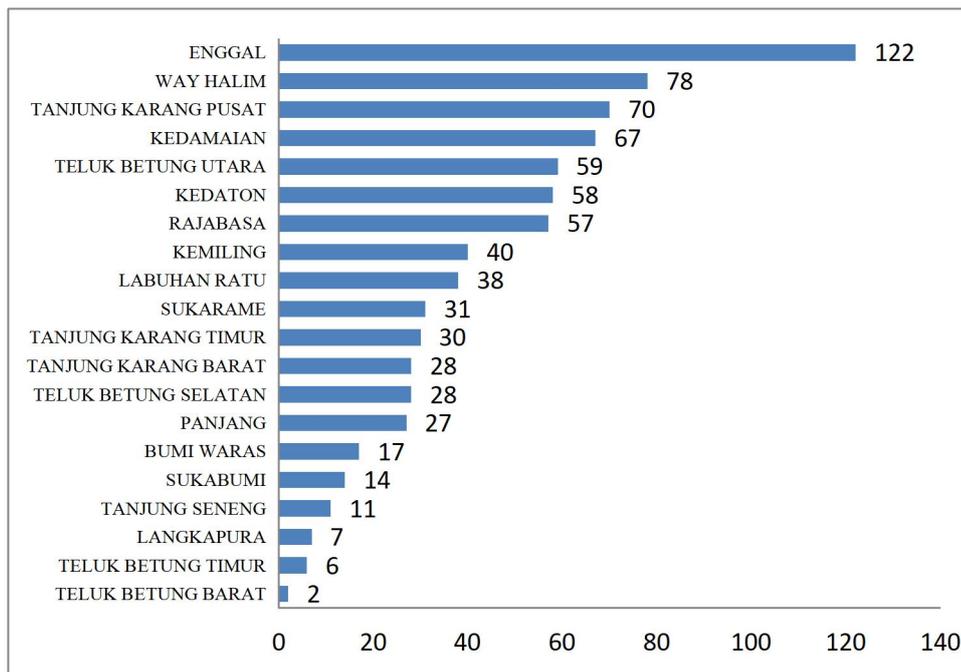
invitation to *nyeruit*, people associate it with eating *seruit* together, whatever the context, whether it is a meal with family, colleagues, or friends. However, for Lampungese, who grew up in the Lampung community, *nyeruit* is associated with eating *seruit* with family, whether it is on weekdays or holidays. Togetherness and social status within the family are reflected in the serving of *seruit*. In the Lampung Pepadun community, the way to eat *seruit* starts by mixing eggplant, fish meat, *tempoyak*, and a little bit of fish soup, then stir it with *sambal* by hand. The person who mixes and stirs the ingredients is the elder in the family. Usually, the head of the family reflects respect for the elders as well as togetherness, as expressed in the practice of eating. After the ingredients are mixed, all participants in the meal take the *sambal* to their plates, which are to be eaten with fish and vegetables. Thus, family togetherness and respect for the elders are intrinsic values in the practice of *nyeruit* and are inseparable from *seruit* as Lampung cuisine.

### ***Seruit* and the construction of Lampungese in digital media**

Similar to other cities experiencing growth in the culinary industry, Bandar Lampung is no exception. Based on our observations, the culinary business in Bandar Lampung began to grow rapidly in 2017 and increased again after the COVID-19 pandemic in 2022. In the food category, we can observe a culinary landscape that varied in its cultural origins, consisting of cuisines from foreign cultures such as Korea and Japan, hybrid cuisines such as ayam geprek (American flour fried chicken combined with Javanese onion chili sauce), “Indonesian” cuisines from various regions (Minangkabau, Java, Batak, Bali), and traditional-local cuisine (Lampung cuisine). In the beverage category, coffee shops are most prevalent since Lampung is one of the important coffee producers. However, from a spatial viewpoint, the growth of these culinary businesses tends to be concentrated in the city center, namely the Enggal sub-district, with numbers far above other sub-districts.

#### **Graph. 1**

#### **Culinary Small and Medium Enterprise in Bandar Lampung, 2021.**



Source: Arinda 2020, 7. Data based on Dinas Koperasi dan UMKM Kota Bandar Lampung 2021.

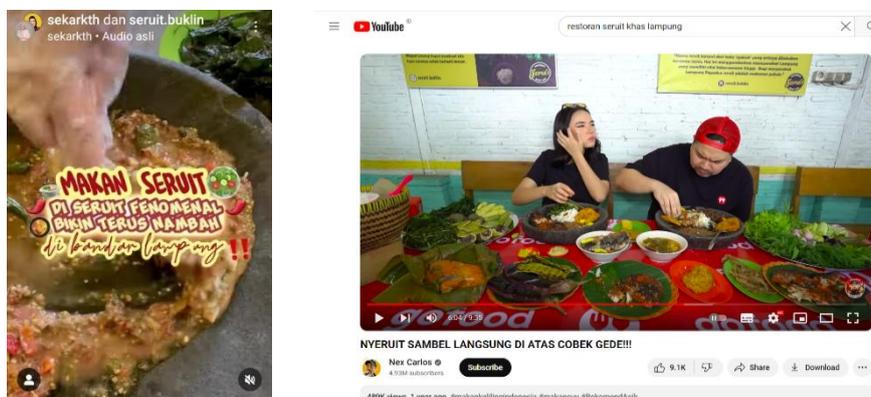
The growth of the culinary industry today is influenced by digital marketing innovations thanks to advanced communication technology. Many studies have found a positive effect of optimizing digital marketing, especially social media, on the income of small and medium enterprises, including culinary businesses in Indonesia (Nurdin & Bustami, 2015)). In this case, it is important to see how the discourse about a (product) cuisine is constructed in the media. The practice of eating is not just a biological matter but is strongly influenced by social construction (Foster & Anderson, 1986; Jerome, Kandel & Peltó, 1980). In accordance with the theory of Foster & Anderson (1986) that food is a cultural construction. Also, the theory from Jerome, Kandel & Peltó (1980) that the main element of food is culture, not just a biological need. In other aspects, media, marketing, and identity formation play a significant role in shaping consumer perceptions to achieve product sales targets. (Bell 2023). In this context, we look at how the identity of seruit is shaped in social media related to the ethnic identity of its culture of origin (Lampung). Furthermore, we also look at how the intrinsic value of *nyeruit* as a Lampung commonalities lives within a multi-ethnic society and inter-ethnic relationship.

The growth of *seruit* restaurants in recent years marks a new phase in the commodification of traditional Lampung cuisine. *Seruit* restaurants have existed since the previous decades in Lampung cities such as Bandar Lampung, Metro, and Menggala, although not as many as warungs or restaurants serving other cultural cuisines such as Javanese (pecel lele, fried chicken), Minangkabau (nasi padang), Chinese (bakmi), South Sumatran (pempek) or Malay (nasi uduk). Although today these old-established *seruit* restaurants today can be traced on the internet, via maps, reviews, or news reports, they are products of the pre-internet era in terms of the absence of digital marketing attempts and the need for product branding as a marketing concern in the present digital era. This is a distinguishing feature from the *seruit* restaurants that have emerged in the current social media era.

Based on observations on several social media such as Instagram, Youtube, blogs, and feature news, we found four topics that are presented when people talk about *seruit*. First, the distinctiveness of the flavors. Notably on Instagram as a digital marketing platform, *seruit* restaurants and foodbloggers/content creators prioritize its distinctive taste and this is centered on sambal. There are many types of sambal in Indonesia and it is well known that Indonesians are passionate lovers of sambal. The highlight of *seruit* is the sambal and its distinctive way of eating (mixing sambal with eggplant, fish meat, fish soup, and tempoyak or mango *kweni*). Enjoying food with sambal indicates a high level of deliciousness for Indonesians. In fact, it is quite common for Indonesians to consider a meal to be less delicious without sambal.

#### Picture. 4

#### Foodblogger eating *seruit*.



Source: (left) *seruit.buklin* Instagram account, (right) *NexCarlos* Youtube account.

Second, seruit as a signature Lampung culinary. In all types of social media, seruit is always associated with Lampung's identity. Such identity refers primarily to geography rather than culture (ethnicity) in relation to the classification of provinces in Indonesia. The claim of seruit as a specialty of Lampung demonstrates the problem of external identity and internal identity (Avieli 2016: 42-43). When dealing with other cultures, the seruit narrative generalizes the complexity of Lampung culture, which consists of sub-ethnic and sub-sub-ethnic (clan), into a single identity (Lampung). Therefore, the complexity of the culture becomes vague in the eyes of outsiders, replaced by a "new" cultural manifestation (Lampung seruit). In the view of members of Lampung culture, of course, the assessment of seruit will refer to which customary tradition the dish comes from. For instance, the Pepadun people would not recognize jakkan as part of their culinary tradition because it is typical of the Sai Batin tradition. The narrative of "Lampung culinary signature" is also shows the complexity of local identity that is marked by local food (Avieli 2016: 132). Buk Lin restaurant serves Pepadun-style seruit, despite being sold in a region traditionally belonging to the Sai Batin (coastal). The complexity of Lampung's ethnic identity, which consists of two sub-ethnics and many clans (sub-sub-ethnics), each of which has its own culinary traditions, is melted into a single identity when seruit as local food becomes a commodity in competition with dishes derived from the culinary traditions of other cultures.

### Picture. 5

#### Lampung Pepadun seruit origin.



Source: *seruit.buklin* Instagram account.

Third, togetherness in eating practices. This form of expression is always associated with *seruit*. As it can be found on many Youtube or Instagram account, including "ordinary people" account (not content creators or business people), it emphasizes *nyeruit* as a means of gathering with family. For instance, the video from SAIRI Sai Youtube, it shows *nyeruit* being eaten at home and attended by all family members. In the blog Dunia Indra, a blogger and promoter of Lampung culture, he refers to childhood memories of *nyeruit* with family (from Menggala). Authentic *nyeruit* can be found here, with parents stirring the *sambal* and other family members picking up the *sambal* to eat. In our conversations with other Lampungese, this memory is often expressed when they talk about *seruit*. This shows the intrinsic value of *nyeruit* in its culture of origin. For Lampungese living in urban contexts with hybrid cultures, *seruit* commensalities are linked to the collective memory of their place of origin.

### Picture. 6

Documenting *nyeruit* in his family.



Source: *SAIRI Sai* Youtube account.

Fourth, *nyeruit* as a means of cross-cultural communication. Although food choice is a socio-cultural construction, in inter-ethnic relationships in urban Bandar Lampung, *nyeruit* is considered a common language that serves to strengthen cross-ethnic interpersonal relations. *Nyeruit* transforms into an invitation to eat together and becomes a language of hospitality in cross-cultural communication in the urban context. Even though not everyone is suitable for the way of eating *seruit* itself (mixing sambal with fish and others). *Seruit* is a food of intercultural diplomacy, as often demonstrated in formal gatherings where certain social groups, such as the government, invite officials or figures from other ethnic groups to eat together. In this context, the intrinsic value of togetherness in *nyeruit* emerges as a way of strengthening inter-ethnic relations.

**Picture. 7**

**Ganjar Pranowo, a 2024 Presidential Candidate who is Javanese, was Invited to *Nyeruit* with Lampung Traditional Elites**



Source: <https://kabarsiger.com/read/ganjar-pranowo-nyeruit-bareng-tokoh-adat-lampung>.

Seruit as a cuisine reflects the wealth of natural resources, geography and modes of livelihood of Lampung people based on shifting cultivation, rivers and gardens. The intrinsic value of the cuisine is togetherness, as a manifestation of collective labor and a form of consumption of the results of shared labor. This value grows within family and kin relations where the collective work of production and reproduction of Lampung people takes place through kinship relations. As demographic changes due to transmigration and market relations deepen, *seruit* is commodified as a cultural product sold in the urban culinary market. Through the development of mass media and especially today's digital media, the existence of *seruit* and its relation to the identity of Lampung is reshaped. In terms of cuisine, *seruit*, especially its *sambal* (chili sauce), is presented in a distinctive manner to distinguish itself from other types of *sambal* from other regions in Indonesia.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has illustrated how the cuisine of an ethnic group (Lampung) has been transformed through social change related to the development of a multi-ethnic society and the culinary industry in urban areas. The analysis of cuisine is interconnected with ways of eating and socio-cultural constructions related to the identity of the cuisine and its cultural origin. The images of *seruit* in the context of the culinary market has formed a single Lampung identity that obscures the complexity of the ethnic group, forming an external identity. *Seruit* has also become a shared language in inter-ethnic relations in Lampung as well as a means of cultural communication when dealing with other ethnic people from outside Lampung. Finally, although economic, social and cultural realities have changed, the intrinsic value of togetherness of *nyeruit* has survived and adapted to various contexts. *Seruit/nyeruit* contains cultural values which may serve as a plural means of bridging differences in the process of social integration in multi-ethnic societies, both within Lampung itself, and between Lampungese and outsiders.

## Funding Acknowledgement

We thank to the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Lampung for funding this research in 2023.

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