Journal of Tourism, Hospitality and Environment Management
JTHEM
EISSN: 0128-178X
Volume 10 Issue 42 (December 2025) PP. 183-196
DOI 10/35631/JTHEM.1042012

JOURNAL OF TOURISM, HOSPITALITY AND ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT (JTHEM)
www.jthem.com

UNLOCKING DESTINATION APPEAL: A SCALE VALIDATION OF INNOVATION PRACTICES IN FOOD TOURISM CONTEXTS

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Article Info:

Article history:
Received date: 27.10.2025
Revised date: 09.11.2025
Accepted date: 04.12.2025
Published date: 10.12.2025

To cite this document:

Alias, M. S. M., Rani, Z. M., & Ariffin, H. F. (2025). Unlocking Destination Appeal: A Scale Validation of Innovation Practices in Food Tourism Contexts. *Journal of Tourism Hospitality and Environment Management, 10* (42), 183-196.

DOI: 10.35631/JTHEM.1042012

Abstract:

This paper aims to investigate the scale validation of innovation practices, focusing on the tourist destination image in the context of food tourism in Malaysia. By using a quantitative approach, data were collected through various methods, including online and self-administered at KLIA1 and KLIA2 or any other public hub station. A total of 650 responses were obtained from both domestic and international tourists. The data were then analysed by using SPSS to validate the Cronbach's Alpha for coefficient alpha analysis and exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to measure the validity of item used. To examine the scale validation of innovation practices, the study employs structural equation modelling (SEM). The analysis includes key procedures such as first-order confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to validate the constructs and its respective items. For this particular procedure, the scale measurement focusing only on innovation practices. Based on the construct, innovation practices were measured by using five dimensions namely; product, service, process, organizational, and marketing innovation. The construct is a crucial part in measuring the relationship between tourist destination image and its influence on food tourism in Malaysia.

Keywords:

Destination Image, Revisit Intention, Innovation Practices, Tourist's Perception, Tourism Innovation

Journal of Tourism, Hospitality and Environment Management
JTHEM
EISSN: 0128-178X
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Introduction

Innovation has become a defining element of contemporary tourism competitiveness, particularly in destinations seeking to differentiate themselves through experiential and value-driven offerings (Pinhal et al., 2025). As global travel markets increasingly emphasise authenticity, cultural immersion, and memorable experiences, food tourism has emerged as a strategic avenue for strengthening national tourism identity and enhancing destination attractiveness. Within this context, innovation practices reflected in new or enhanced products, services, processes, marketing approaches, and organisational capabilities play a central role in shaping how tourists perceive and evaluate destinations (Hassan, et al., 2019; Islam, et al., 2019).

In Malaysia, food tourism has gained significant policy attention, underscored by the government's allocation of RM550 million in Budget 2025 to enhance tourism infrastructure and strengthen destination positioning ahead of Visit Malaysia Year 2026 (New Straits Times, 2024). While such investments reflect national priorities, empirical evidence on how innovation practices contribute to tourists' perceptions of Malaysian food destinations remains limited. Previous studies highlight the importance of innovation in improving service delivery, operational efficiency, and customer experience (Hjalager, 2022; Lee et al., 2016), yet conceptual and measurement clarity within food tourism contexts in Asia remains underdeveloped.

A critical conceptual gap persists in the literature, although destination image is recognised as a key determinant of satisfaction, revisit intention, and loyalty, limited research has examined how innovation practices serve as antecedents that shape these cognitive and affective evaluations (Mohamed et al., 2021; Nguyen et al., 2022). Many studies treat innovation outcomes and destination perceptions interchangeably (Tassiello & Tillotson, 2020; Lita, et al., 2020), resulting in construct ambiguity. This study addresses this gap by clearly distinguishing between innovation practices as organisational capabilities, destination image as tourists' perceptual outcomes, and broader food tourism impacts in the context of food tourism in Malaysia (Abdullah, et al., 2023; Hjalager, 2022). Through this clarification, the study proposes that innovation practices function as foundational inputs that enhance visitors' experiential evaluations, thereby influencing destination image.

To advance theoretical and methodological rigour, this paper validates a multidimensional scale of innovation practices within the Malaysian food tourism setting through first-order confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The validated scale provides a robust foundation for future hypothesis-driven studies and strengthens empirical understanding of the innovation–image linkage. By refining construct boundaries and offering a validated measurement model, the study contributes to both food tourism scholarship and innovation research, and provides practical insights for enhancing Malaysia's destination image through innovation-led strategies.

Literature Review

Innovation Practices in Tourism

Innovation in tourism encompasses the development, improvement, and implementation of novel ideas, methods, products, and processes that enhance competitiveness and visitor experiences (Islam et al., 2019). Although earlier research emphasised technological or

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JTHEM
EISSN: 0128-178X
Volume 10 Issue 42 (December 2025) PP. 183-196
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process-focused innovation, tourism innovation is more complex because it is co-created through service interactions, cultural elements, and experiential components (Elzek et al., 2020; Campos et al., 2018; Hjalager, 2022).

The OECD taxonomy of innovation identifies five dimensions relevant to service sectors; product, service, process, marketing, and organisational innovation (OECD, 2005; Hjalager, 2010). These dimensions require contextual adaptation in tourism, where intangible experiences and cultural value shape visitor perceptions more than physical products (Campos et al., 2018; Neuhofer et al., 2015). Empirical studies confirm that restaurants and food tourism providers adopt innovation to enhance operational efficiency, improve customer satisfaction, and differentiate their offerings (Santos et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2016; Najib et al., 2020). In Malaysian food tourism, innovation also reflects creative culinary interpretation, integration of technology in service delivery, digital marketing, and organisational responsiveness to shifting visitor preferences (Abdullah et al., 2024; Alias et al., 2021).

Despite increasing interest in innovation within hospitality and tourism studies, scale development remains inconsistent, with many studies operationalising innovation narrowly (Phang et al., 2019; Chowdhury et al., 2020). Limited work exists on validating innovation practices specifically within food tourism contexts in Malaysia, signalling the need for robust measurement refinement.

Destination Image in Food Tourism

Destination image refers to tourists' holistic mental representation of a place, comprising cognitive evaluations such as food quality, hygiene, accessibility, cultural richness and affective responses such as excitement, comfort, and satisfaction. A favourable destination image strongly predicts satisfaction, revisit intention, recommendation behaviour, and loyalty (Setiawan & Shiratina, 2023; Cheng et al., 2020).

Food tourism plays an integral role in shaping destination image, as culinary experiences often contribute substantially to tourists' impressions of local culture, identity, and hospitality. Positive evaluations of food-related elements such as authenticity, taste quality, service professionalism, and food safety significantly enhance the overall destination image (Boon et al., 2021). In Malaysia, food is deeply intertwined with cultural heritage, making gastronomic experiences central to destination branding and visitor expectations (Najib et al., 2020).

Despite the clear conceptual boundary between innovation inputs and destination image outcomes, many studies conflate the two constructs. This highlights the need for empirical models that distinctly examine how innovation practices influence tourists' perceptual evaluations (Phang et al., 2019; Chowdhury et al., 2020).

Linking Innovation Practices to Destination Image

Innovation practices shape destination image by influencing the quality, novelty, and memorability of food tourism experiences (Bee, et al., 2019). Product innovation particularly creative reinterpretations of traditional dishes, enhances cognitive perceptions of distinctiveness and culinary excellence (Boon et al., 2021; Najib et al., 2020). Service and process innovations improve operational smoothness, hygiene, reliability, and interaction quality, which directly influence affective and cognitive evaluations. Marketing innovations, especially digital and content-based strategies, shape tourists' expectations before arrival and

Journal of Tourism, Hospitality and Environment Management
JTHEM
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reinforce positive perceptions during visitation. Organisational innovation ensures consistency, service culture, and internal capabilities aligned with visitor preferences (Hall, 2009; Hjalager, 2010; Varis & Littunen, 2010).

Collectively, these innovations create value propositions that strengthen the destination's gastronomic identity. Prior studies show that innovation can positively influence satisfaction and revisit intentions (Lita et al., 2020; Abdullah et al., 2023), but empirical validation of the link between innovation practices and destination image particularly in Malaysian food tourism is still scarce (Nor, et al., 2020). This study positions innovation practices as antecedents to destination image and validates a multidimensional measurement scale to support future theoretical development and structural model testing.

Theoretical Foundation

This study is grounded in three complementary theoretical perspectives: Innovation Theory, Resource-Based View (RBV), and Dynamic Capability Theory (DCT). Together, these frameworks provide a comprehensive rationale for how and why innovation practices influence destination image within food tourism.

Innovation Theory

Innovation Theory (Schumpeter, 1952) posits that organisations create value and competitiveness by developing new or improved products, services, processes, and business practices (Hall, 2009; Hjalager, 2010; Varis & Littunen, 2010). In tourism, innovation drives the novelty and experiential richness that visitors seek. Food tourism innovation includes creative menu development, digital ordering, immersive tasting experiences, and new modes of culinary storytelling. These innovation-driven enhancements shape tourists' cognitive and affective evaluations, laying the foundation for positive destination image formation.

Resource-Based View (RBV)

RBV conceptualises innovation capabilities as strategic resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable ((Barney, 1991; Wernerfelt, 1984)). For food tourism providers such as restaurants, hawkers, and culinary SMEs innovation practices represent internal capabilities that differentiate them from competing destinations. By investing in innovation across product, service, process, marketing, and organisational functions, providers enhance the quality of visitor experiences, which in turn positively influences destinations' perceived value and image.

Dynamic Capability Theory (DCT)

DCT extends RBV by explaining how organisations adapt, integrate, and reconfigure their resources to meet evolving market demands (Teece et al., 1997). In the fast-changing tourism environment, dynamic capabilities enable food tourism providers to innovate continuously in response to shifting visitor preferences, technological changes, and cultural expectations. Through this responsiveness, destinations project a modern, competent, and visitor-centric image (Nguyen et al., 2022; Teece et al., 1997).

Integrated Theoretical Model

Integrating these theories, the model proposes that, innovation theory explains the mechanisms through which innovation practices generate value. RBV positions innovation practices as core capabilities that enhance competitiveness and tourist experience quality. Meanwhile, DCT

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EISSN: 0128-178X
Volume 10 Issue 42 (December 2025) PP. 183-196
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explains how these capabilities are transformed into adaptive strategies that align with changing tourism expectations. Together, they provide a strong conceptual foundation for hypothesising that Innovation practices function as strategic, adaptive capabilities that shape tourists' cognitive and affective evaluations, thereby strengthening destination image in the food tourism context. This integrated theoretical model advances previous literature by offering a clearer, more coherent explanation of the innovation destination image relationship for this current study.

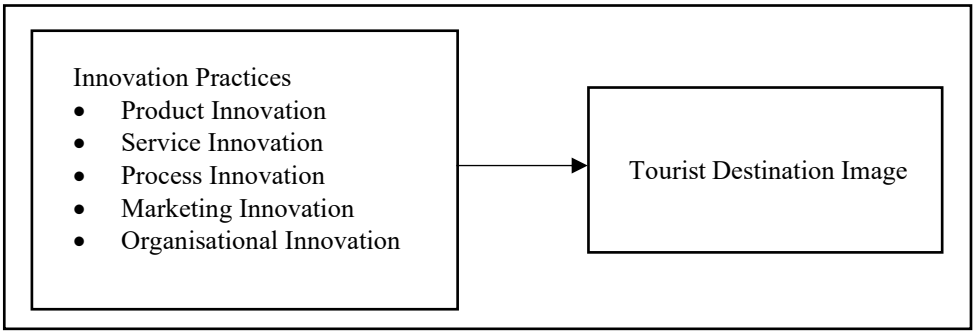

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Objectives

In connection of this background, the objective of this paper is as follows:

1. To identify the dimensions of innovation practices in the context of Malaysian food tourism industry.
2. To validate the dimensions of innovation practices in the context of Malaysian food tourism industry.

Hypotheses

In this paper, innovation practices are discussed to analyze whether the dimension used can be confirmed through the analysis tools namely SPSS and SEM. By focusing on SEM, first-order confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) shows the exact value from the measurement. The hypotheses are as follows:

H1: Confirming the innovation practices dimensions:
H1(a): Product is confirmed as innovation practices dimension.
H1(b): Service is confirmed as innovation practices dimension.
H1(c): Process is confirmed as innovation practices dimension.
H1(d): Organizational is confirmed as innovation practices dimension.
H1(e): Marketing is confirmed as innovation practices dimension.

These dimensions are organized to validate innovation practices construct for this particular study with its dimensions; product innovation, service innovation, process innovation, organizational innovation, and marketing innovation.

Research Methodology

This paper focuses solely on validating the innovation practices scale as the first step of a larger perspective. Destination image is treated as an outcome variable to be tested in subsequent structural modelling in future studies. This study employed a quantitative research design using structured questionnaires to validate the measurement scale for innovation practices. A

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JTHEM
EISSN: 0128-178X
Volume 10 Issue 42 (December 2025) PP. 183-196
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convenience sampling approach was adopted targeting domestic and international tourists with food-related experience in Malaysia. The sample size exceeded recommended thresholds for CFA and SEM where 650 respondents were obtained from the initial data collection. A 10-point Likert scale was used suggested by Awang et al. (2016) to capture nuanced responses and enhance measurement sensitivity. A higher point scales are reported to improve reliability and capture more variability. Prior to data analysis, normality, outlier detection, and multicollinearity tests were conducted to ensure assumptions were met. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using SEM AMOS was employed to assess validity and reliability, including discriminant validity, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE). Ethical consent and confidentiality were observed throughout data collection.

Populations and Sample

This paper aims to include a large population, focusing on domestic tourists and international arrivals who travel to Malaysia and have tried Malaysian food. Based on the statistical data from Tourism Malaysia, the significant number of tourists is employed. Recent studies elaborated on this topic, where measuring significant changes in tourism activities from the mobility of tourist is crucial to gain their perspective on the development. The use of these particular populations is considered reliable in accordance to study perspectives and characteristics that related to the purpose of the study (Fitrizal, et al., 2021).

Other than that, other scholar mentioned about the difficulty in drawing the actual population of tourist (Bayih & Singh, 2020). This kind of method is useful to get the population needed for the purpose. Statista has reported that in 2023, 213.74 million domestic tourists recorded have travelled around Malaysia (Siddharta, 2024). On the other hand, Tourism Malaysia reported that in 2023, there were approximately 20.1 million international arrivals from all over the world. From the number, 11.8 million were from Southeast Asia. These numbers indicated that domestic and international tourist have significant motive to travel to Malaysia whether it is because of education, business, visit friends and relatives, or even for food tourism. Thus, the sample in this study are coming from domestic and international tourists.

Furthermore, the criteria for respondents to participate legally are that they must be in the age of 18 years old and above (Halpern, et al., 2021). Furthermore, the method uses in this quantitative study is convenience sampling. In non-probability sampling, convenience sampling is the data collection process from a research population that is reachable (Golzar & Tajik, 2022; Rahi, 2017). Previous scholar defined convenience sampling as a technique which allow researcher to go to the public location and ask the passer-by to participate as respondent (MacNealy, 1999). In this study, convenience sampling is considered applicable as it has several benefits; (1) the researcher can minimize effort in selecting respondents, (2) the sampling process is cost-effective and requires minimal financial resources, (3) less time is needed to manage and administer the sample, and (4) the researcher is required to prepare a comprehensive list on the entire population.

Research Tools

This paper monopolizing survey conducts by referring to the quantitative research approach. This study uses questionnaire for data collection as it suggested as one of the strategies to gather the data. Sekaran and Bougie (2020) asserted that questionnaire distribution is the most practical way to gain the data from the convenience respondent.

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Data Collection

The settings of the questionnaire to be administered was at Kuala Lumpur International Airport 1 and 2 or any public transportation hubs as it is reliable for the researcher to gather the data (Phoon, 2021). In accordance to the sampling method, questionnaires were distributed to 650 respondents to measure the data. In selecting data analysis for this study, CB-SEM is used to validate the first-order of CFA scale of innovation practices, large dataset over 500 samples is required (Hair, et al., 2019; Memon, et al., 2020). The suggested number of samples is taken as consideration. It is reliable for the data to be measured and analysed by using the appropriate methodology. For research instrument, innovation practices construct consists of five dimensions and 25 items in total measured using 10-Likert scale. As mentioned by previous scholar, 10-point Likert scale is efficient in operating measurement model and more reliable to the metrics analysis (Awang, et al., 2016). Based on the statement by the justification mentioned, a scale without label is suggested in the current study ranges from 1 (Strongly Disagree) and 10 (Strongly Agree).

Data Analysis

In this particular study, the analysis of research data is focusing on CB-SEM to validate the first-order of CFA. This procedure is mentioned by scholars as the main structure to analyze convergent and discriminant validity (Watkins, 2018). Furthermore, CFA is used to evaluate reliability and variance after a new scale was developed.

Hair, et al. (2017) supported with the elaboration of CFA that uses fit indices to measure the satisfactory fit. This study is focusing on the chi-square statistics that is the traditional analysis to measure overall model fit. Meanwhile, from past studies indicated that, a good model fit would be stated as $p>0.05$ (Byrne, 2010; Pallant, 2010).

For convergent validity, the data must undergo further testing. To determine the goodness of fit, the measurement can be classified into two different breakdowns; (1) small x2- values represent the bad fit and large x2- values represents a good fit. The common practice to assess the goodness of fit is previewed as CMIN/df, GFI, P, and RMSEA. Table 1 below shows the assessment of the above statement:

Table 1: Assessment of Goodness-of-Fit

Indices	Abbreviation	Acceptable Level
Chi-Square	(χ2) (df/p)	$p > 0.05$ at $\alpha = 0.05$
Goodness of Fit	GFI	GFI > 0.90
Probability	P	> 0.05
Root Mean Squared of Approximation	RMSEA	< 0.80

Source: Kline (1996); Hair et al. (2017); Byrne (2010); Ernest (2008)

The procedure to measure the goodness of fit is one of the procedures that is needed for the analysis. Campbell and Fsike (1959) explained about convergent validity are related to the latent variable that measures a several components namely values between variables and indicators. The process is done to observe whether the indicator used is suitable for the construct or otherwise, need to be removed. As stated by Gaskin (2016), an appropriate result should be prioritized in convergent validity and if there is no converge in the item, removal of the item is needed.

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On the other hand, discriminant validity is the requirement for the system to be processed. It looked upon coefficient and correlation among the components used (Gaskin, 2016). The scale validation for innovation practices construct is shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Results of First Order CFA of Innovation Practices Dimensions

Variables	Chi-Square ($\chi 2$)	(df)	GFI	RMSEA	P-Value
Product	14.582	6	0.972	0.064	***
Service	4.380	2	0.989	0.068	***
Process	11.726	7	0.978	0.031	***
Organizational	4.000	3	0.990	0.059	***
Marketing	7.561	4	0.982	0.040	***

After analysis by using CFA, the results were clearly shown in the Table 2. There were a few items that need to be removed to get a fit model. For product innovation and process innovation dimensions, all items are considered fit within the first order of CFA. However, for service innovation, SRV5 was dropped to get a good fit for the model. For organizational innovation and marketing innovation, one item ORG5 and MKT1 were dropped to get the model validated.

As mentioned by Nijssen and Douglas (2004), the item dropped is not necessarily unfit, but it is through a sensible validation to get a good model fit. It is one of the procedures in CFA that can be taken into consideration. Table 3 below shows the result from the estimated parameters between latent variables and indicators:

Table 3: Estimated Parameters Between Latent Variables and Indicators

Latent	Indicator	Standardized Reg. Weight	S. E.	C. R.	P
Product	PRD1	0.919	0.052	8.977	***
	PRD2	0.973	0.027	6.762	***
	PRD3	0.963	0.033	7.634	***
	PRD4	0.961	0.034	7.805	***
	PRD5	0.946	0.052	8.401	***
Service	SRV1	0.899	0.084	8.818	***
	SRV2	0.611	0.071	5.809	***
	SRV3	0.729	0.209	10.911	***
	SRV4	0.832	0.144	9.646	***
Process	PRS1	0.919	0.052	9.721	***
	PRS2	0.973	0.027	8.977	***
	PRS3	0.963	0.033	7.634	***
	PRS4	0.961	0.034	7.805	***
	PRS5	0.946	0.052	8.401	***
Organizational	ORG1	0.939	0.057	7.489	***
	ORG2	0.950	0.067	7.900	***
	ORG3	0.969	0.033	6.245	***
	ORG4	0.936	0.059	7.591	***
Marketing	MKT2	0.891	0.103	9.046	***
	MKT3	0.922	0.064	8.558	***
	MKT4	0.975	0.036	5.125	***
	MKT5	0.966	0.041	6.300	***

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JTHEM
EISSN: 0128-178X
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Based on the Table 3 above, referred to standardized regression weight in SEM AMOS, the magnitude of all indicators must be 0.40 and above (Hatcher, 1994). Meanwhile, the standard error (S.E.) recorded for all items were balance which the value is not too large and not too small (Byrne, 2013). The critical ratio (C.R.) values that have been listed show the significance parameters which exceeded the benchmark of ±1.96. Therefore, for these particular dimensions, the values have achieved the minimum acceptable values as mentioned by Fornell and Larcker (1981).

Findings and Results

CFA results demonstrated acceptable fit, with all fit indices meeting recommended thresholds. Standardised factor loadings exceeded acceptable minimum values, indicating strong representation of observed variables within each dimension. Convergent validity was achieved based on AVE values exceeding recommended thresholds that comprises the dimension of product, service, process, marketing and organisational innovation with 0.811 total variance.

CFA confirmed a five-dimension model with 20 retained items, with AVE ranging from 0.60 to 0.799 and CR from 0.873 to 0.960. Awang et al. (2017); Afthanorhan (2013) mentioned that the validity of AVE is achieved when all items in a measurement model are statistically significant and above the AVE recommended threshold (AVE >0.50). While composite reliability (CR) confirmed internal consistency based on the Table 4 below.

Sekaran (2011) emphasised on the value of internal consistency must be above > 0.60. Overall, the findings validate the multidimensional scale of innovation practices within the food tourism context in Malaysia. The validated scale provides researchers with a reliable context for future hypothesis testing studies examining innovation relationship with antecedents, mediators, and tourism related outcomes. The AVE, CR, and internal consistency are shown in Table 4 below:

Table 4: Results of AVE, Internal Consistency, and CR

Latent	AVE	Internal Consistency	C. R.
Product	0.731	0.940	0.940
Service	0.600	0.873	0.873
Process	0.779	0.946	0.946
Organizational	0.799	0.960	0.960
Marketing	0.732	0.925	0.925

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to validate a multidimensional scale of innovation practices in the context of Malaysian food tourism. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis provide strong empirical evidence that innovation practices comprise five distinct but interrelated dimensions; product innovation, service innovation, process innovation, marketing innovation, and organisational innovation. All measurement indices met established thresholds, including factor loadings, composite reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE), indicating that the adapted scale demonstrates sound psychometric properties.

The findings support the theoretical argument that innovation is not a single, uniform activity but rather a multidimensional capability aligned with RBV, Innovation Theory, and Dynamic Capability Theory. These results not only support past research, but also reflect what is

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EISSN: 0128-178X
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happening on the ground in Malaysia's food tourism scene, where creativity, service quality, and digital engagement are becoming increasingly important. Consistent with Hjalager (2010) and Lee et al. (2016), this study demonstrates that the experiential and cultural characteristics of food tourism require innovations that extend beyond technological advancements to include experiential design, culinary creativity, digital communication, and organisational responsiveness.

One of the most interesting outcomes is how consistently the items performed across all five dimensions. This suggests that tourists today expect innovation to show up in many aspects of their food experiences, not just in the food itself, but also in how it is presented, how it is served, how the business operates, and how the destination communicates its culinary identity. These findings align with the broader shift in tourism where travellers search for novelty, authenticity, and memorable encounters rather than traditional or routine offerings.

The Malaysian context adds another layer of relevance. Food plays an important cultural and social role in the country, and tourists often describe Malaysian cuisine as one of the key highlights of their visit. The strong loadings in product and service innovation reflect this reality: culinary creativity, thoughtful service, cleanliness, and consistency are major contributors to how tourists perceive their overall food journey. Marketing and organisational innovation also proved to be important, showing how digital visibility, branding, and responsive management help shape visitor expectations and perceptions.

Although this paper focuses on measurement validation rather than structural modelling, the findings lay the groundwork for future research exploring how these innovation capabilities influence destination image, satisfaction, and revisit intention. By validating this scale, we open the door to more meaningful discussions on how innovation shapes the emotional and cognitive impressions travellers form about a destination. This is particularly relevant for Malaysia as it prepares for Visit Malaysia Year 2026 (VMY2026), where innovation-driven food experiences could play a major role in strengthening the country's tourism appeal.

Overall, the discussion highlights the methodological contribution of validating a measurement scale tailored to Malaysia's food tourism domain and supports its theoretical relevance for future model testing in destination image and tourism competitiveness research.

Conclusion

This study set out to validate a comprehensive scale of innovation practices in the Malaysian food tourism sector, and the results show that innovation is indeed a multidimensional and meaningful construct. The validated scale provides researchers and practitioners with a reliable way to understand how innovation takes shape across product development, service delivery, operational processes, marketing strategies, and organisational capabilities.

Conceptually, this study helps clear up some of the confusion in past literature, where innovation practices have sometimes been mixed with visitor perceptions such as destination image. By distinguishing these constructs more clearly, the study gives future researchers a more solid foundation for examining how innovation influences the way visitors think and feel about a destination.

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JTHEM
EISSN: 0128-178X
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Practically, the validated scale has strong implications for Malaysia's food tourism industry. It can be used by tourism operators, restaurants, hawkers, and heritage food providers to reflect on their strengths, identify areas for improvement, and design more engaging and innovative culinary experiences. With Malaysia gearing up for Visit Malaysia Year 2026, having a clearer understanding of innovation can help industry players elevate their offerings in ways that resonate with both domestic and international tourists.

In conclusion, this study offers valuable theoretical, methodological, and practical contributions by providing a validated innovation practices scale and by reinforcing the need for innovation-led strategies in destination development and image enhancement.

Recommendations, Limitations and Future Research

As with any study, there are a few limitations worth acknowledging, and they also open the door to meaningful future research. First, this study concentrated on validating the innovation practices scale without testing its relationship with destination image or tourist behavioural outcomes. While this was done intentionally to strengthen the measurement model, future research should take the next step by examining how these validated innovation dimensions influence satisfaction, perceived value, destination image, and revisit intention.

Second, although the sample size was large, it was collected using convenience sampling. This means the findings may not fully represent all tourist groups. Future studies may benefit from using probability sampling techniques or targeting specific segments such as millennials, international tourists, or repeat visitors to see whether perceptions of innovation differ across groups.

Third, the study was carried out in Malaysia, a country with a unique multicultural gastronomic identity. Innovation practices may be perceived differently in countries where food traditions, service norms, and cultural expectations vary. Conducting comparative studies across destinations such as Thailand, Indonesia, South Korea, or Japan would help determine whether the scale performs consistently in different cultural settings.

Fourth, the study relied on self-reported responses. While this is common in tourism research, responses may be influenced by mood, expectations, or prior experiences. Future research could incorporate qualitative interviews, observational methods, or even digital data such as online reviews to enrich the findings.

Finally, this study looked at innovation from the tourist perspective. A valuable direction for future work would be to validate the same scale among food operators and entrepreneurs. Understanding how innovation is interpreted and practiced on the supply side could help bridge the gap between what businesses offer and what tourists value most. Together, these paths offer exciting opportunities to broaden and deepen our understanding of innovation in food tourism.

Acknowledgment

The authors are deeply grateful to all the respondents and participants who kindly shared their experiences and made this study possible. We also appreciate the support of food tourism operators and local communities who assisted during the data collection process. Finally, we thank the editors and reviewers for their invaluable guidance and constructive comments, which played an important role in improving the manuscript.

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JTHEM
EISSN: 0128-178X
Volume 10 Issue 42 (December 2025) PP. 183-196
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