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EXTENDING THEORY OF CONSUMPTION VALUES IN CULINARY TOURISM: A VALUE–INTERACTION– SATISFACTION FRAMEWORK FOR REVISIT INTENTION IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract:

Culinary tourism has become an important source of destination differentiation, as local food experiences allow tourists to engage directly with culture, authenticity, and everyday social life in a destination. Although research in this area has expanded, the literature remains conceptually fragmented, particularly in explaining how local food experiences translate into tourist loyalty and revisit intention in multicultural settings. To address this gap, this paper develops an integrated conceptual framework that explains revisit intention in culinary tourism by linking local food consumption values to loyalty outcomes through satisfaction. Drawing on the Theory of Consumption Values, Expectancy–Disconfirmation Theory, and Social Exchange Theory, the framework conceptualises functional, emotional, social, epistemic, and conditional values as key antecedents of tourist satisfaction, and positions satisfaction as a central mediating mechanism leading to revisit intention. In addition, tourist–local interactions are incorporated as an experiential component that strengthens value evaluation and satisfaction

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formation, while destination image is proposed as a contextual boundary condition that moderates the satisfaction–revisit intention relationship. Based on an integrative conceptual analysis of prior literature, the paper advances theoretical propositions that clarify the roles of consumption values, social exchange, and destination-level perceptions in shaping loyalty-related outcomes. The study contributes by offering a holistic application of consumption values in culinary tourism, embedding tourist–local interactions within value-based explanations, and extending the role of destination image beyond a direct antecedent. Practical implications are also outlined for destination managers and policymakers seeking to strengthen culinary tourism strategies to support sustainable tourism development, and the framework provides a foundation for future empirical testing.

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Keyword:

Culinary Tourism, Destination Image, Local Food Consumption Values, Tourist Satisfaction, Tourist–Local Interactions, Revisit Intention.



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Introduction

Culinary tourism has become an increasingly prominent dimension of contemporary travel, as food experiences often serve as a key medium through which tourists engage with a destination’s culture, identity, and authenticity (Ellis et al., 2018; Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016). Food is no longer treated merely as sustenance; instead, it is widely recognised as an experiential component that can strengthen cultural immersion and enhance memorability in tourism experiences (Kivela & Crofts, 2005; Wondirad et al., 2021). Local food consumption can also evoke emotions, stimulate learning, and support social connection, and these elements shape tourists’ overall evaluations as well as their post-visit behavioural responses (Sheth et al., 1991; Pandža Bajcs, 2015). As destinations pursue sustainable tourism development, there is therefore increasing scholarly and practical interest in how culinary experiences influence tourist satisfaction and revisit intention (Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Chen et al., 2020).

Malaysia provides a particularly relevant context for examining culinary tourism due to its multicultural society and diverse gastronomic heritage, shaped by Malay, Chinese, Indian, Peranakan, and indigenous traditions. This diversity creates strong potential for experiential differentiation through food and positions Malaysia as a promising culinary tourism destination (Wondirad et al., 2021). However, despite the richness of its culinary offerings, local food experiences have not been fully leveraged as a strategic driver of tourist loyalty. Tourism initiatives in Malaysia have often prioritised destination promotion and attraction development,

while the experiential mechanisms connecting local food consumption to tourist satisfaction and revisit intention remain insufficiently theorised within the Malaysian context (Roslina et al., 2023).

From a theoretical perspective, the Theory of Consumption Values (TCV) offers a comprehensive explanation of consumer choice by proposing that behaviour is shaped by five interrelated value dimensions: functional, emotional, social, epistemic, and conditional values (Sheth et al., 1991). TCV has been widely applied in tourism and food-related research to explain how tourists evaluate experiences and derive value through consumption (Williams & Soutar, 2009; Suhartanto et al., 2022). Nevertheless, applications of TCV in culinary tourism have frequently been partial. Many studies emphasise functional and emotional values while giving limited attention to the full configuration of consumption values that may be particularly salient in multicultural culinary destinations such as Malaysia. In addition, the process through which value perceptions translate into loyalty outcomes, including revisit intention, remains conceptually fragmented in the existing literature (Wondirad et al., 2021).

Culinary tourism experiences are also inherently social. Interactions between tourists and local actors—such as food vendors, service staff, and residents—can shape perceptions of authenticity, emotional engagement, and experiential meaning (Blau, 1964; Pandža Bajs, 2015). Grounded in Social Exchange Theory, such encounters can be understood as reciprocal exchanges that build trust, encourage cultural learning, and generate emotional bonds (Blau, 1964). Despite their importance, tourist–local interactions are often treated as peripheral variables rather than as integral elements of value creation in culinary tourism. Destination image represents another important factor: it has been widely recognised as a determinant of tourist behaviour that influences satisfaction, loyalty, and revisit intention (Tasci & Gartner, 2007; Chen et al., 2020). However, its role as a contextual condition shaping the satisfaction–revisit intention relationship remains underexplored in culinary tourism research, particularly in non-Western, multicultural settings.

Taken together, these gaps suggest the need for an integrated theoretical framework that explains how consumption values, social interactions, and destination-level perceptions jointly shape tourist satisfaction and revisit intention in culinary tourism contexts. Addressing this need is especially important for destinations such as Malaysia, where cultural diversity and food heritage offer substantial experiential potential but require clearer theoretical articulation to guide effective tourism strategies (Wondirad et al., 2021; Roslina et al., 2023).

Accordingly, this paper develops a conceptual framework to explain revisit intention in Malaysian culinary tourism. Drawing on the Theory of Consumption Values (Sheth et al., 1991), Expectancy–Disconfirmation Theory (Oliver, 1980), and Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), the framework conceptualises local food consumption values as key antecedents of tourist satisfaction, incorporates tourist–local interactions as an experiential factor that enriches value evaluation, and positions destination image as a contextual condition influencing revisit intention. By integrating these perspectives, the paper extends the application of TCV in a multicultural culinary tourism setting, clarifies the mediating role of satisfaction in the value–loyalty relationship (Yoon & Uysal, 2005), and offers a more holistic explanation of culinary tourism experiences. The proposed framework also provides a foundation for future empirical research and practical insights for destination managers seeking to leverage culinary tourism as a driver of sustainable tourism development.

Background and Research Gap

Culinary tourism research has expanded considerably over the past two decades, reflecting growing recognition of food as a central component of tourist experience and destination differentiation. Prior studies have examined a wide range of food-related attributes, including food quality, authenticity, cultural representation, and experiential value, and their influence on tourist satisfaction and behavioural intentions (Ellis et al., 2018; Alderighi et al., 2016; Kivela & Crofts, 2005; Pandža Bajcs, 2015; Wondirad et al., 2021). Despite this growing body of work, existing research remains fragmented in terms of contextual focus, theoretical application, and model integration, limiting a comprehensive understanding of how culinary tourism experiences translate into revisit intention (Wondirad et al., 2021).

From an empirical and contextual perspective, much of the existing culinary tourism literature has focused on Western destinations or well-established food tourism hubs in East Asia, with comparatively limited attention given to Southeast Asian contexts, particularly Malaysia. Studies conducted in Malaysia have frequently emphasised general destination attributes or service quality rather than the specific role of local food consumption in shaping tourist evaluations and loyalty behaviour (Roslina et al., 2023). Moreover, international tourists—who represent a critical segment for culinary tourism development—have often been underrepresented in empirical investigations, resulting in an incomplete understanding of how culturally diverse visitors perceive and derive value from Malaysian culinary experiences (Wondirad et al., 2021). This contextual imbalance restricts the generalisability and practical relevance of existing culinary tourism models for multicultural destinations.

At the theoretical level, the Theory of Consumption Values (TCV) has been widely adopted to explain consumer decision-making in tourism and hospitality contexts (Sheth et al., 1991; Williams & Soutar, 2009). However, its application in culinary tourism research has often been selective rather than holistic. Many studies prioritise functional and emotional values, such as food quality, taste, and enjoyment, while underexploring social, epistemic, and conditional values that are particularly salient in food-based travel experiences (Pandža Bajcs, 2015; Suhartanto et al., 2022). Culinary tourism inherently involves social interaction, cultural learning, and situational influences, yet these dimensions are frequently treated as secondary or omitted altogether. Consequently, existing research does not fully capture the multidimensional value structure proposed by TCV, thereby limiting its explanatory power in complex culinary tourism settings (Sheth et al., 1991).

In addition to selective theory application, prior research exhibits notable limitations in model integration. While numerous studies have established direct relationships between food-related attributes and behavioural intentions, fewer have explicitly theorised the mechanism through which consumption values influence loyalty outcomes. Tourist satisfaction is widely acknowledged as a key determinant of revisit intention in tourism research (Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Chen et al., 2020); however, its mediating role in the value–loyalty relationship remains insufficiently articulated within culinary tourism studies. Furthermore, contextual boundary conditions such as destination image—which shape tourists’ interpretations of experiences and post-visit behaviour—are rarely incorporated into integrated frameworks (Tasci & Gartner, 2007). The absence of models that simultaneously account for mediation and moderation effects has resulted in oversimplified explanations of tourist decision-making processes.

Culinary tourism experiences are also inherently relational, involving continuous interactions between tourists and local actors such as food vendors, service personnel, and residents. Grounded in Social Exchange Theory, these tourist–local interactions contribute to perceptions of authenticity, emotional engagement, and value co-creation (Blau, 1964). However, existing research has largely treated such interactions as peripheral elements rather than as central components of the culinary tourism experience. The limited theoretical integration of tourist–local interactions into value-based and loyalty-oriented models represents a further gap, particularly in destinations where food consumption is deeply embedded in social and cultural exchange, such as Malaysia (Pandža Bajs, 2015; Wondirad et al., 2021).

Taken together, these empirical, theoretical, and model-level gaps indicate the need for a more integrated conceptual approach to understanding revisit intention in culinary tourism. Specifically, there remains a lack of frameworks that holistically apply all dimensions of consumption values, clearly articulate the mediating role of tourist satisfaction, incorporate destination image as a contextual condition, and recognise tourist–local interactions as a core experiential component. Accordingly, this paper seeks to address these gaps by developing an integrated conceptual framework that explains how local food consumption values, tourist–local interactions, and destination image jointly influence tourist satisfaction and revisit intention within the context of Malaysian culinary tourism. By doing so, the paper advances theory by offering a more comprehensive and contextually grounded explanation of culinary tourism experiences and their loyalty outcomes.

Literature Review

Culinary tourism research has grown considerably, highlighting local food as a key element shaping tourist experience and destination differentiation. However, existing studies remain fragmented in terms of constructs, theoretical lenses, and contextual focus, with limited integration of consumption values, satisfaction mechanisms, social interactions, and destination-level perceptions. Accordingly, this literature review synthesizes prior work on (i) local food consumption values, (ii) tourist satisfaction, (iii) tourist–local interactions, and (iv) destination image to provide a coherent theoretical basis for the proposed conceptual framework and propositions.

Theoretical Foundations

The development of a robust conceptual framework for explaining revisit intention in culinary tourism requires a strong theoretical foundation that captures value perception, experiential evaluation, and social interaction. To achieve this, the present study draws on three complementary theories: the Theory of Consumption Values (TCV), Expectancy–Disconfirmation Theory (EDT), and Social Exchange Theory (SET). Together, these theories provide a comprehensive lens for understanding how tourists evaluate local food experiences, how such evaluations translate into satisfaction, and how social interactions within the destination context shape loyalty-related outcomes (Sheth et al., 1991; Oliver, 1980; Blau, 1964).

The Theory of Consumption Values (TCV) serves as the primary theoretical foundation of this study. Originally proposed to explain consumer choice behaviour, TCV posits that consumption decisions are driven by multiple value dimensions rather than by purely functional considerations (Sheth et al., 1991). Specifically, TCV identifies five distinct but interrelated

values: functional, emotional, social, epistemic, and conditional values. This multidimensional perspective is particularly relevant to culinary tourism, where food consumption involves not only utilitarian assessments such as taste, quality, and price, but also emotional enjoyment, social symbolism, learning experiences, and situational influences (Williams & Soutar, 2009; Pandža Bajš, 2015).

In tourism contexts, food consumption is rarely a neutral or purely instrumental activity. Tourists frequently seek culinary experiences that reflect local culture, provide novelty, and allow meaningful engagement with the destination (Kivela & Crofts, 2005; Wondirad et al., 2021). Functional value in culinary tourism refers to the perceived quality, freshness, authenticity, and reliability of local food offerings. Emotional value captures feelings of pleasure, excitement, comfort, or nostalgia associated with food experiences. Social value reflects the extent to which consuming local food enhances social identity, social approval, or a sense of belonging, particularly when food consumption is shared or socially visible. Epistemic value relates to curiosity, learning, and novelty, as tourists use food as a means to explore unfamiliar cultures and traditions. Conditional value reflects the influence of situational factors such as travel context, festivals, promotions, or environmental conditions that shape food consumption decisions (Sheth et al., 1991; Pandža Bajš, 2015).

Although TCV has been widely applied in tourism and hospitality research, its application in culinary tourism has often been partial. Many prior studies emphasise functional and emotional values while giving limited attention to social, epistemic, and conditional values (Williams & Soutar, 2009; Suhartanto et al., 2022). This selective application constrains the explanatory power of TCV, particularly in multicultural destinations where food consumption is deeply embedded in social interaction and cultural learning. A holistic application of all five consumption values is therefore necessary to capture the complexity of culinary tourism experiences and their influence on tourist evaluations and behavioural intentions (Sheth et al., 1991; Wondirad et al., 2021).

While TCV explains how tourists perceive and derive value from food consumption, it does not explicitly account for how these value perceptions translate into post-consumption evaluations. To address this limitation, Expectancy–Disconfirmation Theory (EDT) is incorporated to explain the evaluative process leading to tourist satisfaction. EDT posits that satisfaction arises from a comparison between prior expectations and actual experience performance (Oliver, 1980). When perceived performance meets or exceeds expectations, positive disconfirmation occurs, resulting in satisfaction; when performance falls short of expectations, dissatisfaction emerges.

In culinary tourism, tourists form expectations regarding food quality, authenticity, cultural significance, and overall dining experiences prior to consumption. These expectations are shaped by destination image, prior experiences, marketing communications, and social influence (Tasci & Gartner, 2007; Chen et al., 2020). Consumption values derived from local food experiences represent the perceived performance against these expectations. Tourist satisfaction therefore functions as a critical psychological mechanism linking value perceptions to behavioural outcomes such as revisit intention (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). By integrating EDT, the present framework positions satisfaction as a mediating construct that explains how multidimensional consumption values influence loyalty-related intentions rather than assuming a direct and unconditional relationship.

Culinary tourism experiences are not only evaluative but also relational, as food consumption frequently involves interaction with local actors. Social Exchange Theory (SET) is therefore employed to capture the social dimension of culinary experiences. SET posits that social behaviour results from reciprocal exchanges in which individuals seek to maximise benefits and minimise costs (Blau, 1964). In tourism settings, interactions between tourists and locals—such as food vendors, restaurant staff, and residents—constitute social exchanges that can generate emotional rewards, trust, and mutual appreciation (Pandža Bajs, 2015).

Within culinary tourism, tourist–local interactions can enhance experiential value by fostering authenticity, facilitating cultural learning, and creating a sense of personal connection with the destination (Wondirad et al., 2021). Positive interactions may reinforce emotional and social value perceptions, strengthen satisfaction, and encourage favourable behavioural intentions. Conversely, negative or superficial interactions may undermine perceived value and weaken loyalty outcomes. Despite their importance, tourist–local interactions have often been treated as peripheral variables in culinary tourism research rather than as integral components of experiential value creation. Integrating SET into the framework allows tourist–local interactions to be conceptualised as a meaningful experiential factor that complements value perception and satisfaction formation (Blau, 1964; Pandža Bajs, 2015).

By combining TCV, EDT, and SET, this study advances a theoretically integrated approach to understanding revisit intention in culinary tourism. TCV explains the multidimensional nature of value derived from local food consumption, EDT clarifies the evaluative mechanism through which these values influence satisfaction, and SET captures the relational context in which culinary experiences unfold. This integration provides a strong conceptual foundation for the proposed framework and offers a more comprehensive explanation of how culinary tourism experiences shape tourist satisfaction and revisit intention, particularly in multicultural destination contexts such as Malaysia (Wondirad et al., 2021).

Local Food Consumption Values

Local food consumption represents a central element of culinary tourism, as food serves not only as a basic service component but also as a medium through which tourists experience local culture, traditions, and lifestyles. In tourism contexts, local food consumption extends beyond physical nourishment to encompass symbolic, emotional, and experiential meanings (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016; Ellis et al., 2018; Kivela & Crofts, 2005; Wondirad et al., 2021). As such, understanding how tourists perceive and evaluate local food experiences requires a multidimensional perspective that captures the diverse values derived from food consumption (Sheth et al., 1991).

The Theory of Consumption Values (TCV) provides a comprehensive framework for examining local food consumption by proposing that consumer behaviour is influenced by multiple value dimensions rather than a single evaluative criterion (Sheth et al., 1991). Within culinary tourism, local food consumption values reflect tourists' subjective assessments of the benefits obtained from engaging with local cuisine during travel. These values shape overall experience evaluation and influence post-consumption outcomes such as tourist satisfaction, loyalty, and revisit intention (Williams & Soutar, 2009; Pandža Bajs, 2015).

Functional value refers to the perceived utilitarian benefits associated with local food consumption, including food quality, taste, freshness, safety, and price fairness. In culinary tourism, functional value is often the most immediate and tangible aspect of food experience evaluation. Tourists expect local food to meet basic standards of quality and hygiene while offering distinctive flavours and preparation methods that differentiate it from familiar cuisine (Kivela & Crofts, 2005). Prior research consistently indicates that functional attributes such as taste and quality are foundational to positive food experiences; however, functional value alone is insufficient to explain the complexity of tourists' culinary evaluations, particularly in experiential tourism settings (Alderighi et al., 2016; Rahman et al., 2018; Pandža Bajš, 2015; Wondirad et al., 2021).

Emotional value captures the affective responses elicited by local food consumption, such as pleasure, enjoyment, excitement, comfort, or nostalgia. Food consumption can evoke strong emotional reactions, as tastes, aromas, and dining environments often trigger personal memories and emotional attachment (Sheth et al., 1991). In tourism contexts, emotional value is closely linked to experiential enjoyment and plays a critical role in shaping tourist satisfaction (Williams & Soutar, 2009). Local food experiences that generate positive emotions can enhance tourists' overall perception of the destination and strengthen their desire to relive the experience through repeat visits (Yoon & Uysal, 2005).

Social value reflects the extent to which consuming local food enhances social identity, social approval, or a sense of belonging. In culinary tourism, food consumption is frequently a social activity, involving shared meals, social interaction, and symbolic participation in local culture (Pandža Bajš, 2015). Tourists may perceive social value when local food consumption allows them to connect with travel companions, gain recognition within social networks, or signal cultural openness and authenticity. Social value is particularly salient in destinations where food practices are deeply embedded in communal traditions and everyday social life (Wondirad et al., 2021).

Epistemic value refers to the perceived benefits derived from novelty, curiosity, and learning. Culinary tourism provides opportunities for tourists to explore unfamiliar ingredients, cooking techniques, and cultural practices through food. For many tourists, local cuisine serves as an entry point for understanding a destination's history, traditions, and way of life (Sheth et al., 1991; Kivela & Crofts, 2005). Epistemic value is therefore closely associated with experiential learning and cultural discovery, making it especially relevant in multicultural destinations where culinary diversity offers rich opportunities for exploration and knowledge acquisition (Wondirad et al., 2021).

Conditional value represents the influence of situational and contextual factors on consumption decisions. In culinary tourism, conditional value may arise from specific travel circumstances such as festivals, special events, time constraints, promotional offers, or environmental conditions (Sheth et al., 1991). Tourists' evaluations of local food experiences may vary depending on when, where, and under what conditions consumption occurs. Conditional value acknowledges that food consumption behaviour is not static but shaped by dynamic situational contexts that interact with other value dimensions (Pandža Bajš, 2015).

While prior culinary tourism research has examined selected aspects of food-related value, many studies have focused narrowly on functional and emotional dimensions, overlooking the broader value configuration proposed by TCV (Williams & Soutar, 2009; Suhartanto et al.,

2022). Such selective treatment limits the ability to capture the full experiential richness of local food consumption, particularly in destinations characterised by cultural diversity and social interaction. A holistic consideration of all five consumption values is therefore essential for understanding how local food experiences contribute to tourist satisfaction and behavioural intentions (Sheth et al., 1991; Wondirad et al., 2021).

In the context of Malaysian culinary tourism, the multidimensional nature of local food consumption values is especially pronounced due to the coexistence of diverse culinary traditions and cultural influences. Tourists engaging with Malaysian cuisine may simultaneously derive functional benefits, emotional enjoyment, social connection, cultural learning, and situational relevance from their food experiences (Roslina et al., 2023). Accordingly, conceptualising local food consumption values as a multidimensional construct provides a more nuanced and theoretically grounded basis for explaining how culinary experiences influence tourist satisfaction and revisit intention.

Destination Image

Destination image is a central concept in tourism research and has long been recognised as a key determinant of tourists' perceptions, evaluations, and behavioural intentions (Tasci & Gartner, 2007; Chen et al., 2020). It refers to the overall set of beliefs, impressions, and emotional responses that tourists hold about a destination. These perceptions are formed through a combination of information sources, including prior experiences, marketing communications, media exposure, and word-of-mouth (Tasci & Gartner, 2007). In tourism contexts, destination image functions as both a cognitive and affective lens through which tourists interpret their experiences and make post-visit decisions.

In culinary tourism, destination image plays a particularly important role, as food experiences are closely tied to broader perceptions of culture, authenticity, and destination attractiveness (Kivela & Crofts, 2005; Wondirad et al., 2021). A positive destination image can enhance tourists' expectations regarding local cuisine, dining environments, and cultural encounters, thereby shaping how food-related experiences are evaluated. Conversely, a weak or negative destination image may constrain the extent to which even high-quality culinary experiences translate into favourable overall evaluations and loyalty-related outcomes (Chen et al., 2020). From an evaluative perspective, destination image influences tourist satisfaction by framing expectations prior to consumption and by shaping interpretations of actual experiences. Tourists who hold a favourable image of a destination are more likely to interpret experiences positively, attribute minor shortcomings to situational factors, and experience higher levels of satisfaction (Tasci & Gartner, 2007). This evaluative role aligns closely with Expectancy–Disconfirmation Theory, which suggests that satisfaction results from the comparison between expectations and perceived performance (Oliver, 1980). Destination image thus acts as an important contextual factor that conditions how satisfaction is formed and how it subsequently influences behavioural intentions (Yoon & Uysal, 2005).

While destination image has been widely examined as a direct antecedent of satisfaction and revisit intention, its role as a contextual boundary condition has received comparatively less attention, particularly in culinary tourism research. Many studies assume a uniform relationship between satisfaction and revisit intention, overlooking the possibility that this relationship may vary depending on tourists' overall perceptions of the destination (Chen et al., 2020). In reality, tourists who perceive a destination as attractive, distinctive, and culturally rich may be more

inclined to translate satisfaction into revisit intention than those whose destination image is weak or ambiguous (Tasci & Gartner, 2007).

In the context of culinary tourism, destination image may be closely intertwined with perceptions of local food culture. A destination known for culinary diversity, authenticity, and cultural vibrancy is likely to amplify the positive effects of satisfying food experiences on loyalty-related outcomes (Wondirad et al., 2021). In contrast, when destination image is poorly defined or lacks strong culinary associations, even satisfying food experiences may have limited impact on tourists' intentions to return. This suggests that destination image functions not merely as an antecedent but as a moderator that shapes the strength of the satisfaction–revisit intention relationship (Stylos et al., 2016; Chan et al., 2022; Chen et al., 2020).

Malaysia's multicultural identity and rich gastronomic heritage contribute to a complex and multifaceted destination image. The coexistence of diverse culinary traditions offers strong potential for positioning Malaysia as a distinctive culinary destination (Wondirad et al., 2021). However, variations in how this image is perceived by international tourists may influence the extent to which positive culinary experiences translate into loyalty. Tourists who associate Malaysia with cultural diversity, food authenticity, and experiential richness may be more responsive to satisfying culinary encounters, while those with less developed destination images may exhibit weaker loyalty responses (Roslina et al., 2023).

Accordingly, incorporating destination image into a conceptual framework of culinary tourism provides a more nuanced understanding of tourist behaviour. By positioning destination image as a contextual condition influencing the satisfaction–revisit intention relationship, the present study acknowledges that loyalty outcomes are shaped not only by immediate experiences but also by broader destination-level perceptions. This perspective extends existing culinary tourism research by highlighting the moderating role of destination image and by integrating experiential, evaluative, and contextual factors into a single explanatory framework (Tasci & Gartner, 2007; Chen et al., 2020).

Conceptual Framework Development

Building on the preceding literature review and theoretical foundations, this study develops an integrated conceptual framework to explain revisit intention in culinary tourism. The framework synthesises insights from the Theory of Consumption Values (TCV), Expectancy–Disconfirmation Theory (EDT), and Social Exchange Theory (SET) to capture the multidimensional, experiential, and relational nature of local food consumption in tourism contexts (Sheth et al., 1991; Oliver, 1980; Blau, 1964). Specifically, the framework proposes that local food consumption values influence revisit intention through tourist satisfaction, while tourist–local interactions and destination image function as experiential and contextual factors that shape this process.

At the core of the framework are local food consumption values, conceptualised as a multidimensional construct comprising functional, emotional, social, epistemic, and conditional values. These values represent tourists' overall evaluation of the benefits derived from engaging with local cuisine during travel (Sheth et al., 1991). In culinary tourism, food experiences serve as key touchpoints through which tourists assess quality, enjoyment, social meaning, learning opportunities, and situational relevance (Kivela & Crofts, 2005; Pandža Bajs, 2015). Consistent with the Theory of Consumption Values, the framework posits that

these value dimensions collectively shape tourists' post-consumption evaluations rather than operating in isolation (Sheth et al., 1991).

Tourist satisfaction is positioned as a central mediating mechanism linking local food consumption values to revisit intention. Drawing on Expectancy–Disconfirmation Theory, satisfaction is conceptualised as the outcome of tourists' comparison between prior expectations and perceived performance of culinary experiences (Oliver, 1980). When local food consumption delivers high functional quality, emotional enjoyment, social connection, and epistemic enrichment under favourable conditions, tourists are more likely to experience positive disconfirmation, leading to higher satisfaction (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). By incorporating satisfaction as a mediator, the framework moves beyond direct value–loyalty assumptions and provides a clearer theoretical explanation of how culinary experiences translate into revisit intention.

The framework also explicitly incorporates tourist–local interactions as a key experiential component of culinary tourism. Guided by Social Exchange Theory, tourist–local interactions are conceptualised as social exchanges that can enhance or diminish the perceived value of culinary experiences (Blau, 1964). Positive interactions with local vendors, service staff, and residents can reinforce emotional, social, and epistemic values by fostering authenticity, trust, and cultural understanding (Pandža Bajš, 2015; Wondirad et al., 2021). Within the framework, tourist–local interactions are viewed as an experiential enhancer that strengthens tourists' overall evaluation of local food consumption and contributes to satisfaction formation.

In addition, the framework recognises the importance of destination image as a contextual factor influencing loyalty outcomes. Destination image reflects tourists' overall perceptions and emotional impressions of a destination and shapes how experiences are interpreted and remembered (Tasci & Gartner, 2007). In the proposed framework, destination image is positioned as a moderating condition that influences the strength of the relationship between tourist satisfaction and revisit intention. A favourable destination image is expected to amplify the impact of satisfaction on revisit intention, as positive perceptions of the destination increase tourists' willingness to return and re-engage with its culinary offerings (Chen et al., 2020). Conversely, a weaker destination image may constrain the translation of satisfaction into revisit intention, even when culinary experiences are evaluated positively.

Taken together, the proposed conceptual framework offers a holistic explanation of revisit intention in culinary tourism by integrating value perception, experiential evaluation, social interaction, and contextual influence. By linking local food consumption values to revisit intention through satisfaction, and by incorporating tourist–local interactions and destination image into this process, the framework directly addresses key gaps identified in prior research (Sheth et al., 1991; Wondirad et al., 2021). It provides a theoretically grounded basis for understanding how culinary tourism experiences contribute to tourist loyalty, particularly in multicultural destinations such as Malaysia, where food consumption is deeply intertwined with culture and social exchange.

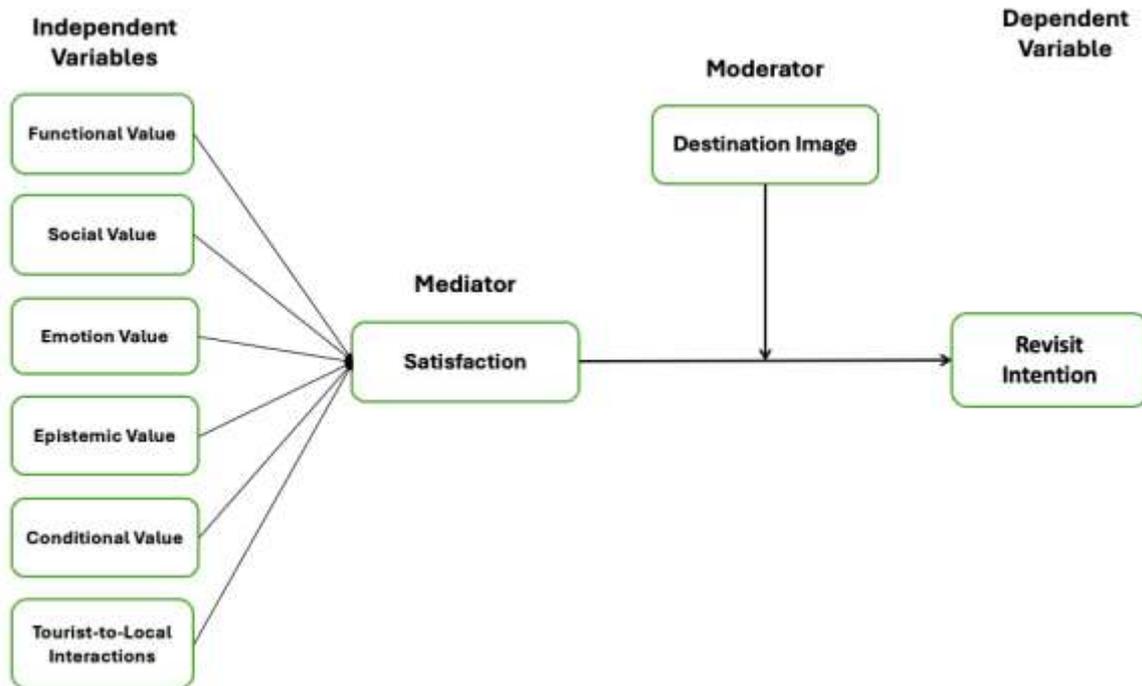


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework Linking LFC Values, Tourist-Local Interactions, Satisfaction, Destination Image, And Revisit Intention (As A Contextual Extension of The Theory of Consumption Values)

Description for Figure 1: The framework illustrates the relationships among local food consumption values (functional, emotional, social, epistemic, and conditional), tourist satisfaction, tourist–local interactions, destination image, and revisit intention. Local food consumption values influence revisit intention indirectly through tourist satisfaction. Tourist–local interactions function as an experiential component that enhances value evaluation and satisfaction, while destination image moderates the relationship between tourist satisfaction and revisit intention.

Proposition Development

Based on the proposed conceptual framework and the integration of the Theory of Consumption Values (TCV), Expectancy–Disconfirmation Theory (EDT), and Social Exchange Theory (SET), this section develops a set of theoretical propositions to explain revisit intention in culinary tourism. These propositions articulate the expected relationships among local food consumption values, tourist satisfaction, tourist–local interactions, destination image, and revisit intention. Consistent with the conceptual nature of the study, the propositions are intended to guide future empirical investigation rather than to test relationships directly (Sheth et al., 1991; Oliver, 1980; Blau, 1964).

Local Food Consumption Values and Tourist Satisfaction

Local food consumption values represent tourists’ overall evaluation of the benefits derived from engaging with local cuisine during travel. Drawing on the Theory of Consumption Values, food-related experiences are evaluated through multiple value dimensions, including functional, emotional, social, epistemic, and conditional values (Sheth et al., 1991). In culinary

tourism contexts, these values collectively shape tourists' post-consumption assessments of their experiences (Williams & Soutar, 2009; Pandža Bajš, 2015).

Functional value, reflected in perceptions of food quality, taste, authenticity, and price fairness, provides a fundamental basis for satisfaction (Kivela & Crotts, 2005). Emotional value enhances satisfaction by evoking pleasure, enjoyment, and positive affect associated with food experiences (Sheth et al., 1991; Williams & Soutar, 2009). Social value contributes to satisfaction by enabling social connection, shared experiences, and symbolic participation in local culture (Pandža Bajš, 2015). Epistemic value enhances satisfaction through novelty, curiosity, and learning opportunities, while conditional value acknowledges the role of situational factors that shape food consumption experiences (Sheth et al., 1991). When tourists perceive high levels of value across these dimensions, they are more likely to evaluate their culinary experiences favourably and experience higher satisfaction (Wondirad et al., 2021). Accordingly, the following proposition is advanced:

Proposition 1: Local food consumption values (functional, emotional, social, epistemic, and conditional) are positively related to tourist satisfaction in culinary tourism.

Tourist Satisfaction and Revisit Intention

Tourist satisfaction has long been recognised as a critical determinant of loyalty-related outcomes in tourism research (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Drawing on Expectancy–Disconfirmation Theory, satisfaction is conceptualised as the outcome of a comparison between tourists' expectations and their perceived performance of culinary experiences (Oliver, 1980). When local food experiences meet or exceed expectations, positive disconfirmation occurs, resulting in higher satisfaction.

In culinary tourism, satisfaction reflects tourists' overall evaluation of food-related experiences, including taste, cultural engagement, emotional enjoyment, and social interaction (Pandža Bajš, 2015). Satisfied tourists are more likely to develop favourable attitudes toward the destination, form emotional attachment, and express a willingness to return (Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Chen et al., 2020). Revisit intention thus represents a behavioural outcome of positive experiential evaluation.

Based on this reasoning, the following proposition is proposed:

Proposition 2: Tourist satisfaction is positively related to revisit intention in culinary tourism.

The Mediating Role of Tourist Satisfaction

While local food consumption values provide the foundation for experience evaluation, their influence on revisit intention is not assumed to be direct. Instead, satisfaction is positioned as a central psychological mechanism that explains how value perceptions translate into loyalty-related outcomes (Oliver, 1980). Tourists do not revisit a destination solely because they perceive high value in isolated attributes; rather, revisit intention emerges when these values culminate in an overall satisfying experience (Yoon & Uysal, 2005).

By integrating Expectancy–Disconfirmation Theory into the framework, tourist satisfaction is conceptualised as a mediator linking consumption values to revisit intention. This perspective advances prior culinary tourism research by clarifying the process through which food-related

experiences influence loyalty, rather than assuming a simple direct relationship (Pandža Bajš, 2015; Chen et al., 2020).

Accordingly, the following proposition is advanced:

Proposition 3: Tourist satisfaction mediates the relationship between local food consumption values and revisit intention in culinary tourism.

Tourist–Local Interactions and Tourist Satisfaction

Tourist–local interactions represent a key experiential and relational component of culinary tourism. Guided by Social Exchange Theory, interactions between tourists and local actors are viewed as reciprocal exchanges that generate emotional rewards, trust, and experiential enrichment (Blau, 1964). Positive interactions, such as friendly service encounters, cultural explanations, and personalised recommendations, can enhance tourists’ perceptions of authenticity and deepen their engagement with local food experiences (Pandža Bajš, 2015; Wondirad et al., 2021).

Such interactions are expected to strengthen emotional, social, and epistemic value perceptions, thereby enhancing overall satisfaction. Conversely, negative or impersonal interactions may diminish experiential quality and weaken satisfaction. Recognising tourist–local interactions as an integral component of culinary tourism provides a more holistic explanation of experience evaluation and satisfaction formation (Blau, 1964; Pandža Bajš, 2015).

Based on this reasoning, the following proposition is proposed:

Proposition 4: Tourist–local interactions are positively related to tourist satisfaction in culinary tourism.

The Moderating Role of Destination Image

Destination image reflects tourists’ overall perceptions and emotional impressions of a destination and serves as an important contextual factor shaping behavioural intentions (Tasci & Gartner, 2007). While satisfaction is a key driver of revisit intention, the strength of this relationship may vary depending on how tourists perceive the destination as a whole. A favourable destination image can reinforce positive experiences and increase tourists’ willingness to return, whereas a weaker image may constrain loyalty outcomes (Chen et al., 2020).

In the context of culinary tourism, destination image is closely linked to perceptions of cultural richness, authenticity, and experiential appeal (Wondirad et al., 2021). Tourists who hold a positive image of a destination are more likely to translate satisfaction derived from culinary experiences into revisit intention. Conversely, when destination image is ambiguous or unfavourable, satisfaction alone may be insufficient to generate strong loyalty intentions (Tasci & Gartner, 2007).

Accordingly, the following proposition is advanced:

Proposition 5: Destination image moderates the relationship between tourist satisfaction and revisit intention, such that the relationship is stronger when destination image is favourable.

Summary of Propositions

Taken together, these propositions articulate a coherent and theoretically grounded explanation of revisit intention in culinary tourism. Local food consumption values influence revisit intention indirectly through tourist satisfaction, while tourist–local interactions enhance satisfaction formation and destination image conditions the satisfaction–revisit intention relationship. These propositions provide a clear foundation for future empirical testing and advance understanding of how culinary tourism experiences contribute to tourist loyalty in multicultural destination contexts.

Proposed Research Methodology

Although this article is conceptual in nature, the proposed framework is intended to guide future empirical testing in the Malaysian culinary tourism context. A quantitative, cross-sectional survey design is proposed to examine the relationships among local food consumption values, tourist–local interactions, tourist satisfaction, destination image, and revisit intention.

Research Design.

The study may employ a structured questionnaire administered to tourists who have experienced local Malaysian food during their visit. Structural equation modelling (SEM) is proposed as an appropriate analytical technique to test the multidimensional nature of consumption values, the mediating role of satisfaction, and the moderating effect of destination image.

Population And Sample Size.

The target population consists of international tourists in Malaysia who have consumed local food as part of their travel experience. For SEM-based analysis, a minimum sample size of approximately **200 respondents** is generally recommended, with a larger sample preferred to enhance model stability and statistical power.

Sampling Technique and Sampling Frame.

A purposive sampling approach is proposed, focusing on international tourists who meet the screening criteria (e.g., consumed local food during the current trip). The sampling frame may include major tourism and culinary locations such as airports/arrival halls (where permitted), tourist precincts, hawker centres, food streets, and popular attractions in key destinations (e.g., Kuala Lumpur, Penang, and Melaka).

Proposed Data Collection Procedure.

Data may be collected using on-site intercept surveys and/or an online survey link distributed at selected food and tourism locations. Respondents should first be screened for eligibility, briefed on anonymity and voluntary participation, and then invited to complete the questionnaire measuring the study constructs. The proposed model may subsequently be tested using SEM to assess direct effects as well as the proposed mediation and moderation relationships.

Discussion and Theoretical Contributions

This paper set out to develop an integrated conceptual framework to explain revisit intention in culinary tourism by synthesising insights from the Theory of Consumption Values (TCV), Expectancy–Disconfirmation Theory (EDT), and Social Exchange Theory (SET). By focusing on local food consumption values, tourist satisfaction, tourist–local interactions, and destination image, the proposed framework responds to several persistent gaps in the culinary tourism literature, which has been criticised for fragmented theoretical application and limited model integration (Sheth et al., 1991; Wondirad et al., 2021). The discussion that follows highlights the key theoretical insights generated by the framework and outlines how the study advances existing knowledge.

First, this study contributes to culinary tourism research by offering a holistic application of the Theory of Consumption Values. While prior studies have frequently adopted TCV to explain food-related behaviour, its use has often been partial, with disproportionate emphasis on functional and emotional values (Williams & Soutar, 2009; Suhartanto et al., 2022). By conceptualising local food consumption as a multidimensional construct encompassing functional, emotional, social, epistemic, and conditional values, the present framework captures the full complexity of culinary tourism experiences as originally proposed by Sheth et al. (1991). This comprehensive treatment advances theory by demonstrating that tourists' evaluations of local food are not driven by isolated attributes but by an integrated configuration of value perceptions, particularly in experiential and multicultural tourism contexts (Pandža Bajs, 2015; Wondirad et al., 2021).

Second, the study advances understanding of the value–loyalty relationship by explicitly positioning tourist satisfaction as a mediating mechanism. Drawing on Expectancy–Disconfirmation Theory, the framework clarifies how consumption values translate into revisit intention through evaluative processes rather than through direct effects alone (Oliver, 1980). This conceptualisation addresses a key limitation in prior culinary tourism research, which has often assumed direct relationships between food-related attributes and loyalty outcomes without sufficiently explaining the underlying psychological process (Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Chen et al., 2020). By highlighting satisfaction as a central mechanism, the framework offers a more theoretically coherent explanation of how culinary experiences influence revisit intention.

Third, this study contributes to the literature by integrating the social dimension of culinary tourism through the inclusion of tourist–local interactions. Guided by Social Exchange Theory, tourist–local interactions are conceptualised as reciprocal social exchanges that enhance experiential value and satisfaction (Blau, 1964). This perspective moves beyond narrow interpretations of service encounters and positions interactions as an integral component of value creation in culinary tourism experiences (Pandža Bajs, 2015). By embedding tourist–local interactions within a value-based framework, the study responds to calls for greater recognition of relational and co-creative processes in tourism experiences, particularly in culturally embedded food consumption contexts (Wondirad et al., 2021).

Fourth, the framework extends existing research by reconceptualising destination image as a contextual boundary condition rather than merely a direct antecedent of satisfaction or loyalty. While destination image has traditionally been modelled as an antecedent variable (Tasci & Gartner, 2007), the present study proposes destination image as a moderator of the satisfaction–

revisit intention relationship. This approach acknowledges that loyalty outcomes depend not only on immediate experiential evaluations but also on broader destination-level perceptions that shape how experiences are interpreted and remembered (Chen et al., 2020). This perspective offers a more nuanced understanding of tourist behaviour and highlights the importance of aligning experiential satisfaction with destination branding and image formation. Collectively, these contributions advance culinary tourism theory in several important ways. The framework integrates value perception, experiential evaluation, social interaction, and contextual influence into a single explanatory model, addressing the fragmented nature of prior research in food-based tourism studies (Wondirad et al., 2021). It also extends the applicability of established theories by demonstrating how TCV, EDT, and SET can be combined to explain complex tourism phenomena, particularly in food-based and culturally rich destinations.

By grounding the framework in a multicultural context such as Malaysia, the study further enriches the literature by highlighting the relevance of holistic and socially embedded perspectives in understanding culinary tourism experiences (Roslina et al., 2023). Overall, the proposed conceptual framework provides a theoretically robust foundation for future empirical research and offers a clearer explanation of how culinary tourism experiences contribute to tourist loyalty. By articulating the roles of consumption values, satisfaction, social interaction, and destination image, this study moves beyond descriptive accounts of food tourism and offers a structured theoretical approach to understanding revisit intention in culinary tourism contexts.

Practical Implications

Although this study is conceptual in nature, the proposed framework offers several important practical implications for tourism practitioners, destination managers, policymakers, and culinary stakeholders. By clarifying how local food consumption values, tourist satisfaction, tourist–local interactions, and destination image jointly influence revisit intention, the framework provides guidance for designing and managing culinary tourism experiences in a more strategic and holistic manner (Sheth et al., 1991; Wondirad et al., 2021).

First, the framework underscores the importance of enhancing multiple dimensions of local food consumption value, rather than focusing solely on functional attributes such as food quality or price. While functional value remains essential, destination managers and culinary operators should also emphasise emotional, social, epistemic, and conditional values in the design of food-related experiences (Sheth et al., 1991; Pandža Bajcs, 2015). For example, storytelling, culturally themed dining environments, and experiential elements such as live cooking demonstrations can enhance emotional and epistemic value, while communal dining settings and interactive food events can strengthen social value. Recognising the multidimensional nature of food consumption value allows practitioners to create richer and more memorable culinary experiences that extend beyond basic service provision (Williams & Soutar, 2009).

Second, the framework highlights the critical role of tourist satisfaction as a pathway to loyalty. Culinary tourism strategies should therefore prioritise consistency between tourists' expectations and actual food experiences. This can be achieved through accurate destination marketing, clear communication of culinary offerings, and quality control across food service providers (Oliver, 1980; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). When expectations are managed effectively and culinary experiences deliver on their promises, satisfaction is more likely to occur, increasing the likelihood of revisit intention (Chen et al., 2020).

Third, the framework emphasises the significance of tourist–local interactions in shaping culinary tourism experiences. Destination managers and policymakers can encourage positive interactions by supporting small-scale local food vendors, promoting community-based culinary initiatives, and providing training programmes that enhance interpersonal communication and cultural interpretation skills among food service staff (Blau, 1964; Pandža Bajš, 2015). Creating spaces and opportunities for meaningful interaction allows tourists to engage more deeply with local culture and enhances the perceived authenticity of culinary experiences (Wondirad et al., 2021).

Fourth, the inclusion of destination image as a contextual factor suggests that culinary tourism initiatives should be aligned with broader destination branding strategies. Promoting a coherent and positive image that highlights culinary diversity, cultural richness, and authenticity can amplify the impact of satisfying food experiences on revisit intention (Tasci & Gartner, 2007; Chen et al., 2020). Policymakers and tourism boards should therefore integrate culinary tourism into destination marketing campaigns, positioning local food as a core element of the destination’s identity rather than as a peripheral attraction.

Finally, in the context of multicultural destinations such as Malaysia, the framework suggests that culinary tourism can be leveraged as a strategic tool for sustainable tourism development. By highlighting cultural diversity through food, fostering social interaction between tourists and locals, and reinforcing a positive destination image, culinary tourism initiatives can contribute to repeat visitation, economic resilience, and cultural preservation (Wondirad et al., 2021; Roslina et al., 2023). The framework thus offers practical insights for developing culinary tourism policies and practices that balance experiential quality with long-term destination sustainability.

Future Research Directions

The conceptual framework proposed in this paper opens several directions for future research in culinary tourism. Although the framework integrates consumption values, satisfaction, tourist–local interactions, and destination image, empirical work is needed to validate the proposed relationships and assess their robustness across contexts.

First, future studies should test the framework quantitatively using survey-based designs. Structural equation modelling would be appropriate for assessing the multidimensional structure of consumption values, the mediating role of satisfaction, and the moderating influence of destination image on revisit intention.

Second, researchers may examine whether the proposed relationships vary across tourist segments and settings. Comparative analyses involving domestic versus international tourists, first-time versus repeat visitors, and tourists from different cultural backgrounds may reveal meaningful differences in value perception and interaction experiences. Testing the framework across destination types (e.g., urban food hubs, rural culinary regions, and heritage food destinations) would also enhance generalisability.

Third, qualitative or mixed-method approaches can provide richer insight into how tourists interpret food experiences, construct cultural meanings through consumption, and engage with locals in everyday culinary settings. Interviews, observations, and ethnographic work may uncover mechanisms that are difficult to capture through structured surveys alone.

Fourth, future research could extend the framework by incorporating additional explanatory variables. Moderators such as food neophobia, cultural orientation, travel motivation, and perceived authenticity may capture individual differences, while mediators such as emotional attachment or place identity may further clarify how value perceptions translate into loyalty outcomes.

Finally, longitudinal designs could strengthen understanding of how revisit intention develops over time. Tracking tourists' perceptions before, during, and after travel would help clarify how satisfaction forms, how destination image evolves, and how loyalty-related intentions are sustained or changed.

Conclusion

This paper develops an integrated conceptual framework to explain revisit intention in culinary tourism by synthesising insights from the Theory of Consumption Values, Expectancy–Disconfirmation Theory, and Social Exchange Theory. Addressing key gaps in prior research, the framework positions local food consumption values as antecedents of tourist satisfaction, incorporates tourist–local interactions as a core experiential element, and treats destination image as a contextual condition that shapes loyalty-related outcomes.

By adopting a holistic view of consumption values, the paper clarifies how tourists evaluate culinary experiences and how these evaluations translate into revisit intention. In particular, it explains satisfaction as a central mechanism linking value perceptions to loyalty and emphasises that loyalty formation is influenced not only by what tourists consume, but also by the social exchanges and destination-level perceptions surrounding the experience. As a result, the study offers a more coherent theoretical account than the fragmented explanations that have often characterised culinary tourism research.

Although conceptual in nature, the framework provides a clear agenda for future empirical testing and offers practical guidance for stakeholders seeking to strengthen culinary tourism as a strategic resource for sustainable destination development. By integrating value perception, experiential evaluation, social interaction, and destination image within a single model, this paper contributes to a more nuanced understanding of culinary tourism experiences, particularly in multicultural destinations such as Malaysia.

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Ethics Statement: Option A (For Studies Involving Human Participants)
This study was conducted in accordance with ethical research standards. All procedures involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the UiTM Research Ethics Committee, approval number REC/12/2025 (PG/MR/679). Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. The data collected were used solely for academic purposes.

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