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# THE MEDIATING EFFECTS OF TOURISM EXPERIENCE AND DESTINATION PERCEIVED VALUE IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TOURISM IMAGE, FOOD STORYTELLING, AUTHENTICITY, AND TOURISTS' BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS

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## ABSTRACT

*This study aims to explain the value creation mechanism in gastronomy tourism by examining the roles of tourism image, food storytelling, and authenticity as antecedents shaping tourism experience, destination perceived value, and tourist behavioral intention. Data were collected from tourists who participated in gastronomy tourism activities and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results confirm that gastronomy tourism image, food storytelling, and authenticity have significant positive effects on tourism experience, with gastronomy tourism image exerting the strongest influence. Tourism experience, in turn, has a strong positive effect on destination perceived value. However, tourism experience does not directly influence tourist behavioral intention. Instead, destination perceived value fully mediates the relationship between tourism experience and behavioral intention. Further mediation analysis reveals that tourism experience serves as a key mechanism through which gastronomy tourism image, food storytelling, and authenticity influence destination perceived value. The assessment of predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ) demonstrates that the model has strong predictive capability, particularly for tourism experience and destination perceived value. In addition, the Importance-Performance Map Analysis (IPMA) highlights tourism experience and gastronomy tourism image as highly important constructs with moderate performance, indicating substantial opportunities for strategic improvement. Overall, the findings suggest that gastronomy tourism does not generate behavioral intention through experience alone, but through tourists' evaluation of destination value. This study contributes to the gastronomy tourism literature by clarifying how experiential, symbolic, and cultural elements are transformed into perceived value, which ultimately drives tourist behavioral intention. The results also provide practical insights for destination managers and policymakers seeking to develop sustainable and value-oriented gastronomy tourism strategies.*

**KEYWORDS:** Gastronomy Tourism, Tourism Experience, Destination Perceived Value, Tourist Behavioral Intention, Tourism Image, Food Storytelling, Authenticity.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past decades, gastronomy tourism has gained increasing recognition as a distinctive form of tourism that connects travel experiences with local culture, identity, and ways of life. Food is no longer viewed merely as a basic component of tourism consumption; rather, it functions as a cultural medium through which destinations communicate meanings, values, and local narratives. Consequently, gastronomy tourism has become an important context in which tourists construct experiences and evaluate the overall value of destinations (UNWTO, 2019).

Phuket Province represents one of Thailand's prominent destinations with strong potential in gastronomy tourism. The local cuisine of Phuket reflects a rich combination of cultural influences, historical backgrounds, and community lifestyles, shaped by its multicultural heritage and long-standing trading history. These culinary characteristics allow food to serve not only as a tourism product but also as a core experiential element that differentiates the destination and enhances its competitiveness in the tourism market.

In the tourism context, tourists commonly evaluate destinations through tourism image, which comprises both cognitive and affective components. Tourism image influences tourists' expectations prior to travel and shapes their perceptions and evaluations during and after their visits (Gartner, 1993; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Within gastronomy tourism, images associated with local food, culinary culture, and the atmosphere of dining experiences contribute to tourists' initial impressions and guide how they interpret and engage with the destination. However, tourism image alone does not determine tourists' behavioral responses; rather, its influence is realized through tourists' lived experiences at the destination.

Beyond tourism image, food storytelling plays a vital role in enriching gastronomy tourism experiences. Storytelling that conveys the origins, cultural identity, and contextual background of local food enables tourists to interpret culinary encounters more deeply and meaningfully. Through narratives embedded in food preparation, presentation, and consumption, tourists are able to emotionally connect with local culture and communities. This perspective is consistent with experiential tourism theory, which emphasizes that meaning-making, emotional engagement, and personal involvement are central to the creation of valuable tourism experiences (Moscardo, 2010).

Similarly, authenticity is a key concept in

explaining the value derived from gastronomy tourism. Authenticity reflects tourists' perceptions of originality, sincerity, and their connection with local ways of life (Wang, 1999). In gastronomy tourism, perceptions of authentic food, traditional cooking methods, and genuine cultural practices enhance the quality of tourism experiences and strengthen tourists' emotional and symbolic attachment to the destination. Authentic experiences allow tourists to perceive gastronomy not merely as consumption, but as participation in local culture.

Importantly, tourism image, food storytelling, and authenticity do not directly translate into tourists' behavioral intentions. Instead, their effects are largely transmitted through tourism experience and destination perceived value. Tourism experience represents tourists' holistic evaluations of their encounters with food, services, atmosphere, and cultural interactions at the destination. These experiences serve as the immediate outcomes of image, storytelling, and authenticity, shaping how tourists assess what they gain from their visits.

From a value-based perspective, destination perceived value refers to tourists' overall assessment of a destination based on a comparison between perceived benefits and perceived sacrifices, encompassing functional, emotional, and social dimensions (Zeithaml, 1988).

Prior tourism research has consistently demonstrated that positive tourism experiences enhance destination perceived value, which in turn plays a critical role in shaping tourists' behavioral intentions, such as revisit intention and word-of-mouth recommendation (Chen & Chen, 2010). Thus, perceived value functions as a key psychological mechanism linking experiences to behavioral outcomes.

Accordingly, this study aims to examine the structural relationships among tourism image, food storytelling, authenticity, tourism experience, destination perceived value, and tourists' behavioral intentions, using Phuket Province as the empirical context.

Specifically, the study investigates the mediating roles of tourism experience and destination perceived value in explaining how gastronomy-related factors influence tourists' behavioral intentions. By elucidating these value-creation mechanisms, the study seeks to contribute to the literature on gastronomy tourism and to provide practical insights for destination managers and policymakers in supporting the sustainable development of gastronomy tourism in Phuket.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. *Concept of Gastronomy Tourism (GT)*

Gastronomy tourism, also referred to as food cultural tourism, is a form of tourism in which food plays a central role in shaping travel experiences by linking cuisine with local culture, identity, and ways of life. Tourists engage with destinations through activities such as tasting local dishes, participating in food festivals, and visiting food production sites, allowing them to experience cultural meanings embedded in food (Hall et al., 2003). Gastronomy tourism has emerged as a global phenomenon that contributes positively to national economies and supports the preservation of cultural heritage (Shalini & Duggal, 2015; UNWTO, 2019). Food often serves as a key travel motivator and a core component of high-quality tourism experiences, through which tourists consume and interpret local culture (Pullphothong & Sopa, 2012). Moreover, local cuisine enhances destination differentiation, strengthens destination image, and influences tourists' perceived value and behavioral responses, thereby contributing to sustainable tourism competitiveness (Henderson, 2009; Chen & Chen, 2010).

### 2.2. *Concept of Tourism Image (TI)*

Tourism image refers to the overall set of beliefs, impressions, feelings, and evaluations that tourists hold toward a destination, formed through information sources, personal experiences, and social influences (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). The literature consistently recognizes tourism image as a multidimensional construct that significantly influences tourists' decision-making, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions (Kotler, 2003). Foundational studies identify two primary dimensions of tourism image: cognitive image, which reflects tourists' rational evaluations of destination attributes, and affective image, which captures emotional responses and feelings toward the destination (Gartner, 1993; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Together, these dimensions play a crucial role in shaping perceived value and future behavioral responses, particularly in cultural and gastronomy tourism contexts.

### 2.3. *Concept of Food Storytelling (FS)*

refers to the process of conveying structured narratives embedded with meaning and emotion in order to create understanding, engagement, and shared memories between storytellers and audiences. Rooted in the concepts of experiential consumption and the experience economy, storytelling emphasizes that consumers value experiences, emotions, and meanings

beyond functional benefits (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1983; Pine & Gilmore, 1999). In tourism contexts, storytelling functions as a key mechanism for constructing place meaning and destination identity by linking stories, places, activities, and people (Chronis, 2012). High-quality storytelling facilitates cultural interpretation, emotional engagement, and deep learning, thereby enhancing memorable tourism experiences and value co-creation. Prior studies consistently indicate that storytelling positively influences perceived value, emotional attachment, and tourists' future behavioral intentions, such as revisit intention and positive word-of-mouth (Kim, 2014; Pera, 2017; Bassano et al., 2019).

### 2.4. *Concept of Authenticity (AUT)*

Authenticity refers to the degree to which tourists perceive food, experiences, or narratives as being consistent with the original cultural origins, ways of life, and traditional contexts of local communities, without excessive commodification or distortion that diminishes their original identity. The concept of authenticity has been widely recognized as a central theme in cultural tourism research. MacCannell (1973) proposed that tourists seek "authentic experiences" of host cultures rather than staged or artificially constructed experiences designed solely for tourism consumption. Extending this perspective, Wang (1999) conceptualized authenticity as a multidimensional construct, arguing that authenticity in tourism is not limited to objects or activities alone, but also encompasses existential authenticity, which reflects tourists' subjective perceptions and personal feelings of what is experienced as "real" and meaningful to them. Authenticity in tourism comprises objective authenticity (genuineness of tangible and cultural elements), constructive authenticity (socially constructed perceptions), and existential authenticity (tourists lived and emotional experiences), all of which shape perceived value and meaningful tourism experiences (MacCannell, 1973; Wang, 1999).

### 2.5. *Concept of Tourism Experience (TE)*

Quan and Wang (2004) proposed a conceptual framework to explain tourism experience as a multidimensional process rather than a single, isolated phenomenon. They identified two core dimensions: peak touristic experience and supporting consumer experience. This framework explains why certain moments of a trip are vividly remembered, while other experiences, although less salient, play a crucial role in supporting the overall experience.

The peak touristic experience represents the core motivation for travel and the moments to which tourists

attach the greatest meaning. It is characterized by strong emotional intensity, high memorability, and a lasting impression, and it plays a central role in shaping the meaning and identity of the tourism experience. Quan and Wang (2004) further associated peak touristic experience with hedonic experience and identified it as a key component of memorable tourism experiences (MTEs).

In contrast, supporting consumer experience refers to secondary, functional experiences that occur throughout the travel process. Although not the primary purpose of travel, these experiences provide the foundation that enables peak experiences to occur smoothly. When of low quality, supporting experiences can diminish the value of peak experiences; when of high quality, they enhance the coherence and completeness of the overall tourism experience. Quan and Wang (2004) emphasized that, while supporting experiences may not be strongly remembered, they form the essential foundation of the tourism experience.

## 2.6. Concept of Destination Perceived Value (DPV)

Destination perceived value refers to tourists' overall evaluation of the worth of a destination, based on a comparison between the benefits received and the costs incurred, such as money, time, effort, and risk (Zeithaml, 1988). This concept was further expanded to include experiential and subjective dimensions, emphasizing that value is not only functional but also emotional and social in nature (Holbrook, 1994; Sheth et al., 1991). Sweeney and Soutar (2001) developed the widely used PERVAL scale, which conceptualizes perceived value through three core dimensions: functional value, emotional value, and social value. In tourism research, these dimensions have been extensively adapted to the destination context, where perceived value plays a central role in shaping tourists' satisfaction, place attachment, and behavioral intentions, such as revisit intention and word-of-mouth recommendation (Williams & Soutar, 2009; Chen & Chen, 2010).

## 2.7. Concept of Tourist Behavioral Intention (TBI)

Tourist behavioral intention refers to the degree of an individual's commitment or likelihood to engage in future behaviors toward a destination after experiencing tourism services, reflecting the relationship between attitudes, experiences, and behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Oliver, 2010). In tourism research, behavioral intention is widely recognized as a key predictor of destination loyalty and long-term market performance. Prior studies commonly conceptualize tourist behavioral intention

through three core dimensions: willingness to pay, revisit intention, and recommendation intention (Zeithaml et al., 1996; Baker & Crompton, 2000; Chen & Tsai, 2007). Empirical evidence consistently indicates that destination image, perceived value, and tourist satisfaction positively influence behavioral intentions, leading to repeat visitation and positive word-of-mouth in the tourism context.

## 2.8. Relationships Among Variables

### 2.8.1. Tourism Image (TI) And Tourism Experience (TE)

Numerous domestic and international studies have confirmed the role of destination image as an antecedent of tourism experience. For example, a study of international tourists in Bangkok found that destination image and perceived value are significant predictors of tourism experience across all destination dimensions (Prougestaporn & Batra, 2018). Similarly, research conducted in the Litchi Bay historical district in China demonstrated that destination image plays a crucial role in explaining tourists' satisfaction and experiential evaluations, together with authenticity and tourist engagement (Lu et al., 2015). In addition, Zhang et al. (2018), Kutlu and Ayyıldız (2021) provided empirical evidence that destination image serves as an antecedent of memorable tourism experiences (MTEs) and indirectly influences tourists' revisit intentions. In the Thai context, Chuamuangphan et al. (2025) further reported that Dvaravati heritage tourism image has a positive effect on the memorability of tourism experiences, which in turn leads to tourists' intention to revisit. Based on the above literature, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H1:** Tourism image positively influences tourism experience in the context of gastronomy tourism.

### 2.8.2. Food Storytelling (FS) And Tourism Experience (TE)

Numerous empirical studies have clearly confirmed the role of storytelling in shaping tourism experiences, particularly in terms of experiential value and trip memorability. For example, Leong et al. (2024), in a cultural heritage tourism context, found that historical storytelling delivered by tour guides enhances tourists' interactions with guides and their perceptions of place authenticity. These factors, in turn, significantly increase tourists' perceived experiential value across educational, entertainment, experiential, and emotional dimensions. Similarly, Feng et al. (2024), applying the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework to tourists visiting the Mogao Grottoes, demonstrated

that historical storytelling enhances tourists' tourism experience, destination image, and perceived value, as well as their satisfaction and engagement, ultimately leading to revisit intention. Furthermore, Campos et al. (2023) examined storytelling tours in museums and reported that storytelling strengthens emotional engagement, stimulates imagination, and makes cultural heritage experiences more memorable from visitors' perspectives. In addition, Jing and Su (2024) showed that digital storytelling platforms have a positive influence on visitors' engagement and perceived cultural value in the context of cultural tourism, which the authors interpreted as an enhancement of tourism experience quality in the digital era. Based on the above literature, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H2:** Food storytelling positively influences tourism experience in the context of gastronomy tourism.

### 2.8.3. *Authenticity (AUT) And Tourism Experience (TE)*

A substantial body of empirical research has confirmed that authenticity is a critical antecedent of tourism experience, particularly in the context of heritage and intangible cultural heritage tourism. For example, Lu et al. (2015), in their study of Kunqu Opera tourism in China, found that perceived authenticity has a significant positive effect on tourists' experience quality, which subsequently leads to higher perceived value, satisfaction, and revisit intention. Similarly, Domínguez-Quintero et al. (2019) reported that both objective authenticity and existential authenticity exert direct and positive influences on the quality of the experience, and that high-quality experiences stimulate positive emotions and satisfaction in cultural heritage destinations.

In addition, Li et al. (2016) and Rasoolimanesh et al. (2021) further confirmed that tourists perceived authenticity positively influences both experience quality and memorable tourism experiences (MTEs), which subsequently extend to tourists' behavioral intentions, such as revisit intention and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM).

**Based on the above literature, the following hypothesis is proposed:**

**H3:** Authenticity positively influences tourism experience in the context of gastronomy tourism.

### 2.8.4. *Tourism Experience (TE) And Destination Perceived Value (DPV)*

A substantial body of empirical research has demonstrated that tourism experience is a key antecedent influencing destination perceived value.

Chen and Chen (2010), in their study of heritage tourists in Taiwan, found that experience quality has a significant positive effect on perceived value, which subsequently functions as a central mechanism leading to tourists' satisfaction and behavioral intentions. Similarly, Song et al. (2015), examining spiritual tourism in the form of temple-stay programs, reported that tourism experiences across multiple dimensions significantly enhance tourists' functional and emotional perceived value. In addition, Jin et al. (2015) showed that the quality of tourism experience exerts a clear positive influence on both destination perceived value and destination image. Meanwhile, Brochado et al. (2022) revealed that memorable tourism experiences (MTEs) increase perceived value across multiple dimensions, including economic, quality, emotional, and social value. Furthermore, Haji et al. (2021), in their study of island destinations in Indonesia, confirmed that tourism experience quality has a direct and positive effect on destination perceived value. Based on the above literature, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H4:** Tourism experience positively influences destination perceived value in the context of gastronomy tourism.

### 2.8.5. *Destination Perceived Value (DPV) And Tourist Behavioral Intention (TBI)*

A growing body of empirical research consistently confirms the positive relationship between destination perceived value and tourist behavioral intention. Kim et al. (2024) demonstrated that multiple dimensions of perceived value, particularly emotional and experiential value, significantly enhance tourists' future behavioral intentions, including revisit and recommendation intentions, in the context of wellness tourism. Similarly, Qian and Li (2024) found that perceived value positively influences behavioral intention in rural tourism through sustainable development mechanisms.

Rasoolimanesh et al. (2023) further confirmed that perceived value significantly affects revisit intention among both domestic and international tourists. Recent evidence from heritage tourism also indicates that perceived value directly strengthens tourists' behavioral intentions (Li et al., 2016), consistent with the seminal findings of Chen and Chen (2010), who established perceived value as a key determinant of tourists' behavioral responses.

**Based on the above literature, the following hypothesis is proposed:**

**H5:** Destination perceived value positively influences tourists' behavioral intention in the context of gastronomy tourism.

### 2.8.6. Destination Perceived Value (DPV) And Tourist Behavioral Intention (TBI)

A growing body of empirical research consistently confirms the positive relationship between destination perceived value and tourist behavioral intention. Kim et al. (2024) demonstrated that multiple dimensions of perceived value, particularly emotional and experiential value, significantly enhance tourists' future behavioral intentions, including revisit and recommendation intentions, in the context of wellness tourism. Similarly, Qian and Li (2024) found that perceived value positively influences behavioral intention in rural tourism through sustainable development mechanisms. Rasoolimanesh et al. (2023) further confirmed that perceived value significantly affects revisit intention among both domestic and international tourists. Recent evidence from heritage tourism also indicates that perceived value directly strengthens tourists' behavioral intentions (Li et al., 2016), consistent with the seminal findings of Chen and Chen (2010), who established perceived value as a key determinant of tourists' behavioral responses.

**Based on the above literature, the following hypothesis is proposed:**

**H6:** Destination perceived value positively influences tourists' behavioral intention in the context of gastronomy tourism.

### 2.8.7. Moderating Role

Tourism image plays a crucial role in shaping tourists' experiences, and such experiences serve as a key mechanism leading to destination perceived value. Chen and Tsai (2007) explained that destination image can positively influence trip quality or travel experience, and that the quality of such experiences directly affects tourists perceived value in terms of both value for money and the benefits derived from the destination. Similarly, Chen and Chen (2010) found that experience quality is a critical antecedent through which tourists evaluate the value of their trips, with perceived value functioning as a central mechanism linking tourism experience to satisfaction and behavioral intentions toward the destination. In addition, Jin et al. (2015) further confirmed that high-quality tourism experiences exert significant positive effects on both destination perceived value and destination image.

Collectively, this body of literature indicates that tourism image can enhance destination perceived value through the role of tourism experience, which acts as an essential mechanism that transforms image-based perceptions into tourists' overall value evaluations of a destination.

**Based on the above literature, the following**

**hypothesis is proposed:**

**H7:** Tourism image positively influences destination perceived value through the mediating role of tourism experience.

Storytelling is a powerful tool for enriching tourists' experiences and plays a meaningful role in shaping their evaluation of destination value. Feng et al. (2024) demonstrated that historical storytelling enhances both destination image and perceived value, arguing that high-quality narratives enable tourists to experience destinations in deeper, more meaningful, and memorable ways—ultimately contributing to more positive value assessments of the destination. Similarly, Leong et al. (2024) found that storytelling positively influences tourists' co-creation of experiential value by strengthening their interactions with tour guides and enhancing their perceptions of place authenticity. Moreover, synthesis studies suggest that storytelling functions as a mechanism through which cultural information and meanings are transformed into lived experiences that tourists can interpret and engage with, leading them to perceive their travel as more valuable and worthwhile.

**Based on the above literature, the following hypothesis is proposed:**

**H8:** Food storytelling positively influences destination perceived value through the mediating role of tourism experience.

Authenticity is widely recognized as a key component that shapes both tourism experience and tourists' evaluations of destination value. Su et al. (2020), in their study on intangible cultural heritage tourism featuring puppet shows in Quanzhou, found that authenticity experience significantly enhances experience quality, which in turn positively affects perceived value. Their analysis further revealed a full mediation effect, indicating that perceived authenticity does not directly increase perceived value but exerts its influence through high-quality tourism experiences. These findings are supported by additional studies showing that perceived authenticity has a positive influence on perceived value in various destination and event tourism contexts (e.g., Akhoondnejad, 2016; Kovačić et al., 2023; Atasoy and Eren (2023).

**Based on the above literature, the following hypothesis is proposed:**

**H9:** Authenticity positively influences destination perceived value through the mediating role of tourism experience.

Prior empirical studies consistently indicate that destination perceived value functions as a key mediating mechanism linking experiential attributes to tourists' behavioral intentions. Mohammed Ahmed (2023) demonstrated that both cognitive and affective

destination image significantly influence revisit intention through perceived value. Similarly, Atasoy and Eren (2023) confirmed that perceived value mediates the relationship between destination image and tourists' behavioral intentions, while Li & Jiang (2024) further showed that destination image enhances loyalty and revisit intention indirectly via perceived value.

**Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:**

**H10:** Tourism image positively influences tourists' behavioral intention through the mediating role of destination perceived value.

Empirical evidence also supports the mediating role of perceived value in the relationship between storytelling and behavioral outcomes. Feng et al. (2024) found that historical storytelling positively affects revisit intention through perceived value, while Song and Ahn (2021) and Huertas (2023) demonstrated that storytelling enhances destination brand value and tourist loyalty via perceived value, particularly through functional and emotional value dimensions.

**Thus, this study proposes:**

**H11:** Food storytelling positively influences tourists' behavioral intention through the mediating role of destination perceived value.

Finally, prior research highlights authenticity as a critical antecedent of behavioral intention, operating indirectly through perceived value. Atasoy and Eren (2023) showed that perceived authenticity affects behavioral intention via perceived value, while Kim and Huang (2021) and Zhu et al. (2022) confirmed that authenticity related to food, service, and environment strengthens perceived value, which subsequently drives revisit intention and positive word-of-mouth.

**Based on this evidence, the following hypothesis is proposed:**

**H12:** Authenticity positively influences tourists' behavioral intention through the mediating role of destination perceived value.

A substantial body of tourism research has consistently demonstrated that tourism experience is a key antecedent shaping tourists' evaluation of destination perceived value, and that such value perceptions serve as a crucial mechanism leading to tourist behavioral intention. Haji et al. (2021), in their study of island tourism in Indonesia, found that experience quality has a positive effect on perceived value and behavioral intention, with perceived value partially mediating the relationship between experience quality and behavioral intention. Similarly, Maulina et al. (2022), examining heritage tourism in Jakarta's Old Town, confirmed that experience quality enhances destination perceived value, which in turn positively influences tourists' revisit intention. In addition, Rosid (2024), in the context of adventure tourism, reported that tourists' experiences play a significant role in increasing perceived value, which subsequently leads to revisit intention.

**Based on this evidence, the following hypothesis is proposed:**

**H13:** Tourism experience positively influences tourist behavioral intention through the mediating role of destination perceived value.

From the study of these theories, the researcher developed a conceptual framework to illustrate the relationships between all variables and links them to hypotheses, as shown in the figure.1

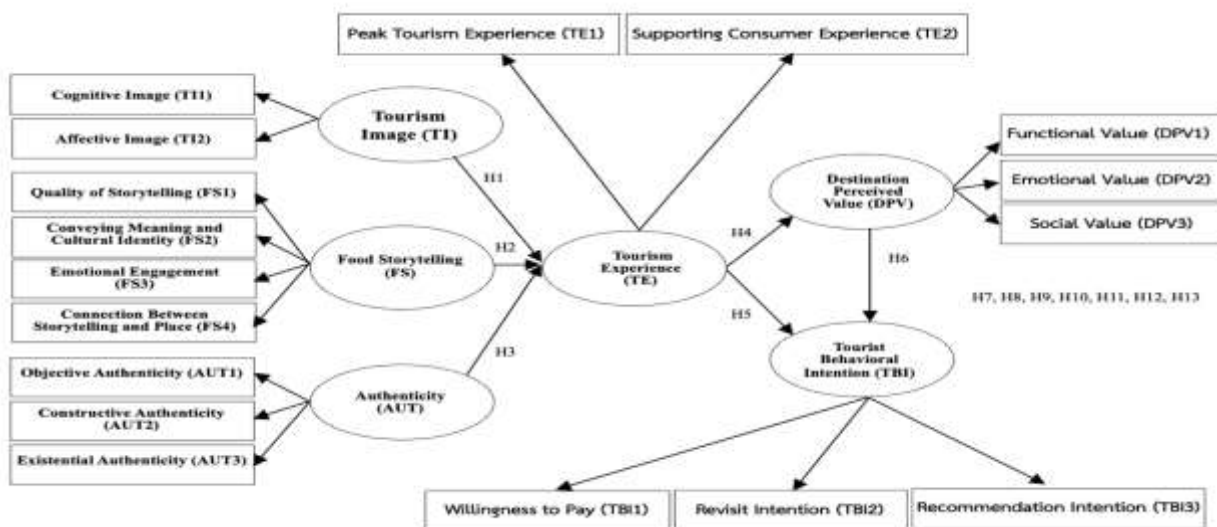


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework Showing Proposed Hypothesis.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Data Collection and Sampling

The population of this study consisted of Thai tourists participating in gastronomy tourism in Phuket Province, including visits to local food production sites, local food festivals, traditional restaurants, and experiential food tourism activities involving food and beverage tasting integrated with cultural and historical learning. The unit of analysis was at the individual level. Regarding sample size determination for causal structural equation modeling with latent variables, Wiratchai (1999) suggested that an appropriate sample size should be at least 10–20 times the number of observed variables, or alternatively, based on the Hoelter index, which should exceed 200 (Hoelter, 1983). In this study, there were 17 observed variables, indicating that a suitable sample size should range between 200 and 340 respondents. Accordingly, this study employed a sample of 260 respondents, selected using probability sampling through simple random sampling.

### 3.2 Measure of Constructs

The development and validation of the research instruments were based on the proposed conceptual framework and operational definitions. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, which was divided into five sections.

Section 1 measured tourism image, consisting of two dimensions: (1) cognitive image and (2) affective image.

Section 2 assessed food storytelling, comprising four dimensions: (1) story quality, (2) cultural meaning and identity transmission, (3) emotional engagement, and (4) story-place connection.

Section 3 measured authenticity, including three dimensions: (1) objective authenticity, (2) constructive authenticity, and (3) existential authenticity.

Section 4 measured tourism experience, including two dimensions: (1) Peak Touristic Experience, (2) Supporting Consumer Experience.

Section 5 evaluated destination perceived value, consisting of three dimensions: (1) functional value, (2) emotional value, and (3) social value.

Section 6 measured tourists' behavioral intention, represented by three observed variables: (1) willingness to pay, (2) revisit intention, and (3) recommendation intention.

All items in Sections 1–5 were measured using a five-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree / not at all, 5 = strongly agree / very much). The measurement items were adapted and modified from validated instruments in previous studies to ensure their suitability for the context of this research.

### 3.3. Data Analysis

To validate the proposed research model, this study employed partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM), also referred to as composite-based structural equation modeling. PLS-SEM is widely used in exploratory and predictive research, as it allows for more flexible assumptions and robust estimation compared to covariance-based SEM (Hair et al., 2017). The PLS path model analysis was conducted using SmartPLS version 4 (SmartPLS GmbH, Bönningstedt, Germany).

The analysis followed a two-step approach. First, the measurement model was evaluated. Items with factor loadings below the recommended threshold of 0.70 were removed. The remaining indicators were then assessed for internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Reliability was examined using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR), while convergent validity was assessed through the average variance extracted (AVE), with values exceeding 0.50 indicating adequate validity. Discriminant validity was evaluated by comparing the square root of AVE for each construct with its inter-construct correlations, ensuring that the square root of AVE was greater than the corresponding correlation coefficients.

In the second step, the structural model was estimated to test the proposed hypotheses. The significance of the path coefficients was examined using the bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples at a 95% confidence level, thereby providing robust estimates for hypothesis testing.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1. Evaluation of the Measurement Model

The results indicate that the mean values of all observed variables range from 3.77 to 4.09, suggesting that respondents reported moderately high to high perceptions regarding tourism image, food storytelling, authenticity, tourism experience, destination perceived value, and tourist behavioral intention. The standard deviation values range from 0.41 to 0.59, indicating acceptable variability and consistency in respondents' answers. Furthermore, the skewness and kurtosis values fall within acceptable thresholds, suggesting no serious deviation from normality and supporting the suitability of the data for PLS-SEM analysis.

All indicator loadings exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70, ranging from 0.814 to 0.961, demonstrating strong relationships between the observed variables and their corresponding latent



constructs. In addition, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values range from 0.768 to 0.893, exceeding the minimum recommended value of 0.50. These results confirm adequate convergent validity for all constructs.

The reliability of the measurement scales is well supported. Cronbach's alpha values range from 0.801 to 0.949, composite reliability (PC) values range from 0.908 to 0.963, and rho\_A (PA) values range from 0.811 to 0.951, all of which exceed the recommended

thresholds. These findings indicate strong internal consistency and high reliability of the measurement instruments.

Overall, the results presented in Table 1 confirm that all constructs in the model exhibit satisfactory levels of reliability and validity. The data distribution is appropriate, and the measurement model is well established, providing a solid foundation for subsequent structural model analysis. Details are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Presents The Results of Descriptive Statistics, Normality Assessment, And the Evaluation of Measurement Validity and Reliability for All Latent Constructs in the Research Model.**

Validity	Mean	SD.	Kurtosis	Skewness	Loading	R-sq	Cronbach's alpha	P <sub>A</sub>	P <sub>C</sub>	AVE
TI1	3.799	0.582	-0.492	0.138	0.914	0.835	0.817	0.819	0.916	0.845
TI2	3.992	0.423	1.208	0.044	0.924	0.854				
FS1	3.883	0.486	0.569	-0.116	0.961	0.924	0.949	0.951	0.963	0.868
FS2	3.903	0.51	0.29	-0.229	0.957	0.916				
FS3	3.983	0.447	1.03	-0.302	0.850	0.723				
FS4	3.883	0.475	0.679	-0.201	0.955	0.912				
AUT1	3.938	0.591	-0.033	-0.155	0.863	0.745	0.876	1.188	0.908	0.768
AUT2	3.932	0.587	0.05	-0.052	0.844	0.712				
AUT3	3.897	0.451	0.104	-0.366	0.921	0.848				
TE1	3.773	0.58	-0.485	0.163	0.900	0.810	0.801	0.811	0.909	0.833
TE2	4.022	0.415	1.027	0.235	0.925	0.856				
DPV1	4.09	0.461	1.075	0.236	0.814	0.663	0.863	0.866	0.917	0.787
DPV2	3.776	0.567	-0.523	0.122	0.946	0.895				
DPV3	4.035	0.411	1.054	0.258	0.897	0.805				
TBI1	3.962	0.504	0.166	-0.092	0.959	0.920	0.94	0.942	0.961	0.893
TBI2	3.982	0.446	0.851	-0.066	0.942	0.887				
TBI3	4.018	0.516	0.35	0.041	0.933	0.870				

The assessment of discriminant validity using the Fornell-Larcker criterion. According to this criterion, discriminant validity is established when the square root of the Average Variance Extracted ( $\sqrt{AVE}$ ) of each latent construct (diagonal values) is greater than its correlations with other constructs.

The results indicate that the  $\sqrt{AVE}$  values for all constructs – tourism image (TI = 0.919), food storytelling (FS = 0.932), authenticity (AUT = 0.876), tourism experience (TE = 0.913), destination perceived value (DVP = 0.887), and tourist behavioral intention (TBI = 0.945) exceed the corresponding inter-construct correlations. This demonstrates that each construct shares more variance with its own

indicators than with other constructs, thereby confirming adequate discriminant validity.

Notably, the correlation between tourism experience (TE) and destination perceived value (DVP) is relatively high ( $r = 0.935$ ), reflecting a strong conceptual linkage between these constructs. Nevertheless, since the  $\sqrt{AVE}$  values for both constructs remain higher than the inter-construct correlation, discriminant validity is still supported. This strong association aligns with the theoretical framework, which posits tourism experience as a key antecedent of destination perceived value. Details are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Discriminant Validity.**

Variables	Fronell-Larcker criterion					
	TI	FS	AUT	TE	DPV	TBI
TI	0.919					
FS	0.421	0.932				
AUT	0.466	0.325	0.876			
TE	0.866	0.448	0.49	0.913		
DPV	0.877	0.402	0.462	0.935	0.887	
TBI	0.59	0.394	0.44	0.678	0.682	0.945

#### 4.2. Evaluation of Yhe Structural Model

The predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ) of the proposed

model, assessed using the Stone–Geisser criterion obtained through the blindfolding procedure in PLS-SEM. The results show that all Q<sup>2</sup> values are positive, indicating that the model possesses adequate predictive relevance.

Regarding cross-validated redundancy, which reflects the predictive capability of the structural model for endogenous constructs, the Q<sup>2</sup> values for tourism experience (TE) and destination perceived value (DVP) are at a high level, while tourist behavioral intention (TBI) also demonstrates high predictive relevance according to the recommended thresholds (Q<sup>2</sup> > 0.35). These findings confirm that the structural relationships specified in the model

provide strong predictive power for the key outcome variables.

In terms of cross-validated communality, which evaluates the quality of the measurement model, all latent constructs exhibit medium to high Q<sup>2</sup> values, suggesting that the constructs effectively explain the variance of their respective indicators.

Overall, the Q<sup>2</sup> results in Table 3 provide strong evidence that the proposed model demonstrates high predictive relevance, supporting its suitability for explaining value creation mechanisms and tourist behavioral intention in the context of gastronomy tourism. Details are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3: Predictive Relevance (Q-Sq).**

	Cross-validated redundancy Q-sq	Cross-validated communality Q-sq
TI		0.788
FS		0.199
AUT		0.229
TE	0.758	0.888
DPV	0.761	0.899
TBI	0.374	0.487

The results of the Goodness-of-Fit (GOF) assessment for the proposed PLS-SEM model, based on the approach suggested by Tenenhaus et al. (2005), which combines the average Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and the R<sup>2</sup> values of the endogenous constructs to evaluate the overall model fit.

The results indicate that the AVE values of all latent constructs range from 0.768 to 0.893, with a mean value of 0.832, demonstrating a strong measurement model with substantial explanatory power for the indicators. In addition, the R<sup>2</sup> values for the endogenous constructs – tourism experience (TE = 0.765), destination perceived value (DVP =

0.874), and tourist behavioral intention (TBI = 0.478) yield a mean R<sup>2</sup> of 0.705, indicating moderate to high explanatory power of the structural model.

By combining the mean AVE and mean R<sup>2</sup>, the calculated GOF value is 0.766, which exceeds the recommended threshold for a high level of model fit (GOF > 0.36). This result confirms that the proposed model demonstrates a high overall goodness-of-fit and is well suited for explaining the relationships among tourism image, food storytelling, authenticity, tourism experience, destination perceived value, and tourist behavioral intention. Details are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: Goodness-of-Fit (GO) results.**

Variables	AVE	R-sq
TI	0.845	
FS	0.868	
AUT	0.768	
TE	0.833	0.765
DPV	0.787	0.874
TBI	0.893	0.478
Mean value	0.832	0.705
Multiply of mean value	0.587	
GOF	0.766	

**4.3 Path Analysis and Hypothesis Testing**

The results of the path analysis and hypothesis testing using PLS-SEM, including path coefficients (β), t-values, p-values, and effect sizes (f<sup>2</sup>).

The results indicate that tourism image (TI) has a strong and significant positive effect on tourism

experience (TE) (β = 0.785, p < 0.001), with a very large effect size (f<sup>2</sup> = 1.841). These finding highlights tourism image as the most influential antecedent shaping tourists’ experiences. In addition, food storytelling (FS) (β = 0.086, p = 0.043) and authenticity (AUT) (β = 0.096, p = 0.001) also exert

significant positive effects on tourism experience, although their effect sizes are relatively small, suggesting complementary roles in enhancing experiential quality.

Furthermore, tourism experience (TE) has a strong and significant positive effect on destination perceived value (DVP) ( $\beta = 0.935$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), with a very large effect size ( $f^2 = 6.938$ ), indicating that tourism experience is a key mechanism through which tourists evaluate the overall value of a destination. However, tourism experience does not have a significant direct effect on tourist behavioral intention (TBI) ( $\beta = 0.324$ ,  $p = 0.057$ ); therefore, Hypothesis H5 is not supported.

In contrast, destination perceived value (DVP) has a significant positive effect on tourist behavioral intention ( $\beta = 0.379$ ,  $p = 0.026$ ), confirming that tourists' behavioral intentions—such as revisit intention and recommendation—are primarily driven by value evaluations rather than experience alone.

Regarding indirect effects, the results demonstrate that tourism experience significantly mediates the relationships between tourism image,

food storytelling, and authenticity and destination perceived value (H7–H9 are supported). However, the indirect paths from these antecedents to tourist behavioral intention through tourism experience alone (H10–H12) are not significant, indicating that tourism experience must be transformed into perceived value before influencing behavioral intention.

Importantly, the sequential mediation effect of tourism experience  $\rightarrow$  destination perceived value  $\rightarrow$  tourist behavioral intention is significant (H13:  $\beta = 0.355$ ,  $p = 0.030$ ). This finding supports a value-creation process in which tourism experience enhances destination perceived value, which in turn drives tourists' behavioral intentions.

Overall, the results confirm that the proposed model effectively explains the value-creation mechanism in gastronomy tourism, whereby tourism image, food storytelling, and authenticity shape tourism experience; tourism experience leads to destination perceived value; and destination perceived value ultimately determines tourist behavioral intention. Details are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5: Results of Path Analysis and Hypothesis Testing.**

H	Path	B	STDEV	t-test	P value	f-sq	Supported
H1	TI $\rightarrow$ TE	0.785	0.050	15.572	0.000	1.841	Yes
H2	FS $\rightarrow$ TE	0.086	0.043	2.028	0.043	0.026	Yes
H3	AUT $\rightarrow$ TE	0.096	0.029	3.291	0.001	0.03	Yes
H4	TE $\rightarrow$ DVP	0.935	0.017	54.810	0.000	6.938	Yes
H5	TE $\rightarrow$ TBI	0.324	0.170	1.902	0.057	0.025	NO
H6	DVP $\rightarrow$ TBI	0.379	0.171	2.225	0.026	0.035	Yes
H7	TI $\rightarrow$ TE $\rightarrow$ DPV	0.733	0.055	13.222	0.000		Yes
H8	FS $\rightarrow$ TE $\rightarrow$ DPV	0.081	0.039	2.084	0.037		Yes
H9	AUT $\rightarrow$ TE $\rightarrow$ DPV	0.090	0.027	3.309	0.001		Yes
H10	TI $\rightarrow$ TE $\rightarrow$ TBI	0.254	0.131	1.937	0.053		NO
H11	FS $\rightarrow$ TE $\rightarrow$ TBI	0.028	0.024	1.161	0.246		NO
H12	AUT $\rightarrow$ TE $\rightarrow$ TBI	0.031	0.019	1.605	0.109		NO
H13	TE $\rightarrow$ DPV $\rightarrow$ TBI	0.355	0.164	2.168	0.030		Yes

The results of the structural model estimated using PLS-SEM. The results show that tourism image (TI) has a strong and significant positive effect on tourism experience (TE) ( $\beta = 0.785$ ), making it the most influential antecedent in shaping tourists' experiences. Food storytelling (FS) ( $\beta = 0.086$ ) and authenticity (AUT) ( $\beta = 0.096$ ) also exert positive effects on tourism experience, although with smaller magnitudes, suggesting their complementary roles in enhancing experiential quality.

The  $R^2$  value for tourism experience (TE) is 0.765, indicating that tourism image, food storytelling, and authenticity jointly explain 76.5% of the variance in tourism experience, which reflects a high level of

explanatory power.

Furthermore, tourism experience (TE) has a very strong positive effect on destination perceived value (DVP) ( $\beta = 0.935$ ), resulting in an  $R^2$  value of 0.874 for DVP. These finding highlights tourism experience as the primary mechanism through which tourists form value evaluations of the destination.

Regarding tourist behavioral intention (TBI), the results indicate that destination perceived value (DVP) significantly influences behavioral intention ( $\beta = 0.379$ ), whereas the direct effect of tourism experience on TBI ( $\beta = 0.324$ ) is not statistically significant. This suggests that positive experiences alone are insufficient to drive behavioral intention

unless they are translated into perceived value.

The R<sup>2</sup> value for TBI is 0.478, indicating that tourism experience and destination perceived value explain a moderate to substantial proportion of the variance in tourist behavioral intention.

Overall, the structural model clearly demonstrates a sequential value-creation process in

gastronomy tourism, whereby tourism image, food storytelling, and authenticity shape tourism experience; tourism experience enhances destination perceived value; and destination perceived value ultimately drives tourist behavioral intention. Details are shown in figure 2.

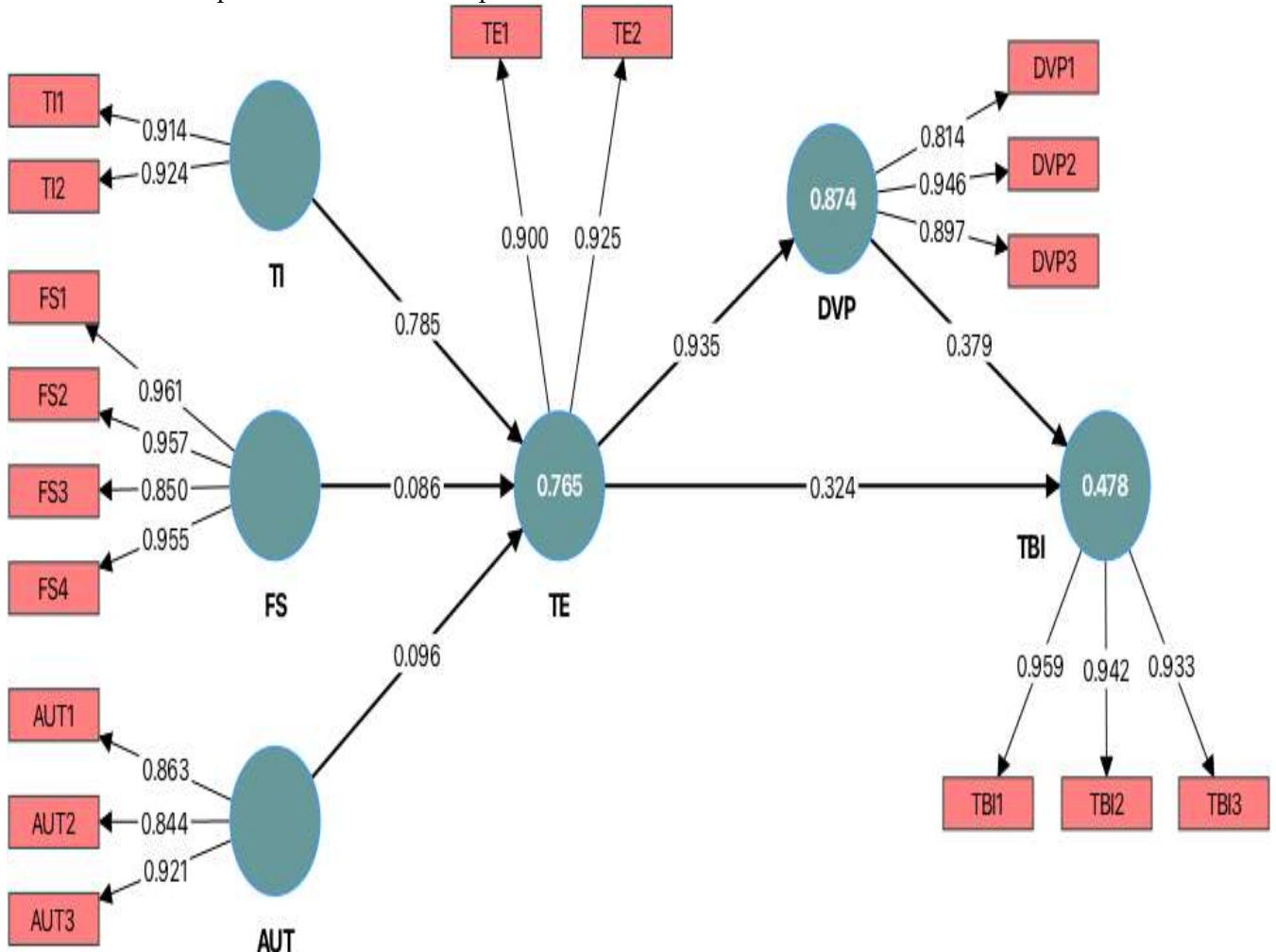


Figure 2: Measurement Model.

The results of the Importance–Performance Map Analysis (IPMA), which evaluates the relative importance (based on total effects) and perceived performance of key latent constructs with respect to the target outcome.

The results indicate that tourism experience (TE) and gastronomy tourism image (TI) exhibit the highest importance values among the constructs, highlighting their critical roles as primary drivers of the model's outcome. However, their performance levels are only moderate, suggesting substantial room for improvement. This positioning implies that enhancing tourism experience and strengthening the gastronomy tourism image would yield the greatest gains in overall outcomes.

In contrast, destination perceived value (DVP) demonstrates moderately high importance combined with relatively strong performance. This indicates that DVP is currently well managed and effectively perceived by tourists, and its performance should be maintained to sustain favorable behavioral outcomes.

Meanwhile, authenticity (AUT) and food storytelling (FS) show relatively low importance but moderate performance levels. These findings suggest that, while these constructs play supportive roles in the model, they are not immediate priorities for resource allocation. Nevertheless, they remain important complementary factors that enrich tourism experience and enhance destination

differentiation. Details are shown in figure 3.

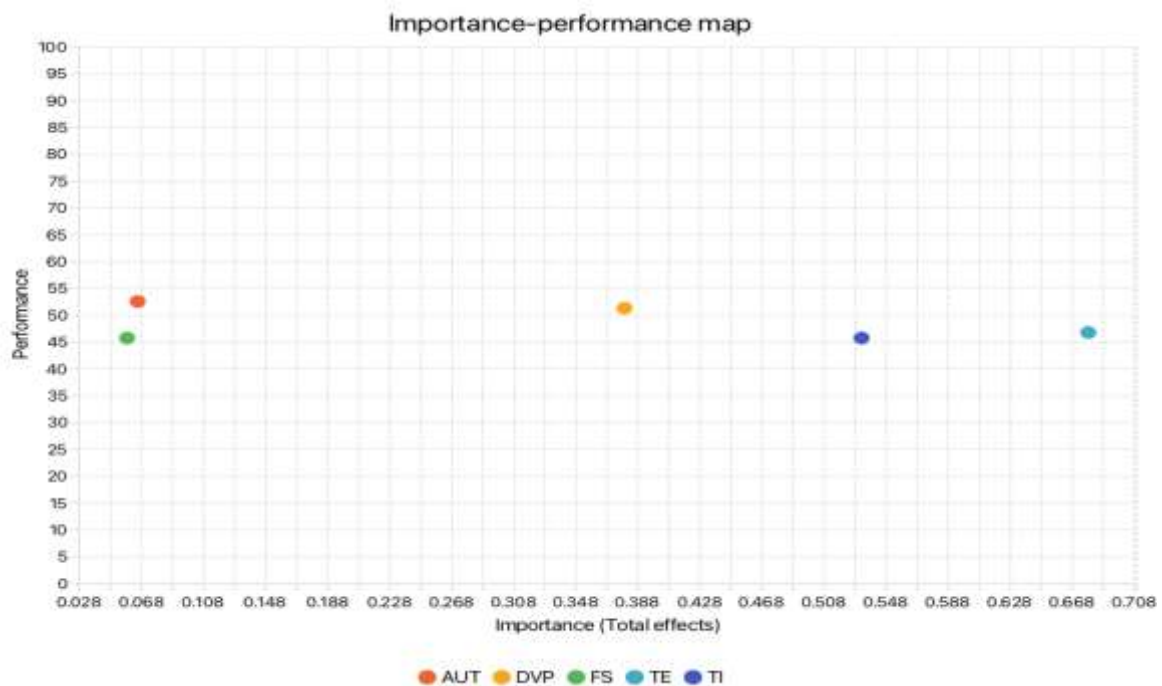


Figure 3: Results of Importance-Performance Map Analysis (IPMA).

## 5. DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

The findings of this study provide a systematic explanation of the value creation mechanism in the context of gastronomy tourism. The results highlight the roles of gastronomy tourism image, food storytelling, and authenticity as key antecedents that shape tourism experience, which in turn leads to destination perceived value and ultimately tourist behavioral intention.

First, the findings indicate that gastronomy tourism does not generate behavioral intention directly through tourism experience, but rather through the process of value perception. This value perception emerges from the integration of tourism image, storytelling, and authenticity. Tourism experience therefore functions as a “mediating space” that transforms symbolic and cultural resources into tangible value perceived by tourists. This result deepens the understanding of value creation mechanisms in gastronomy tourism and provides meaningful insights for the sustainable design and development of destination-level tourism experiences.

Second, the results reveal that gastronomy tourism image has a positive and significant influence on tourism experience and represents the most influential antecedent among all independent variables. This finding suggests that tourists’ perceptions of food, culture, and destination

atmosphere serve as an expectation framework that shapes both the nature and quality of the experiences they encounter. This result is consistent with destination image theory (Gartner, 1993; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999) and aligns with empirical studies by Chen and Tsai (2007), Chen and Tsai (2010), and Zhang et al. (2018), which identify destination image as a critical antecedent of tourism experience and memorable tourism experiences.

Third, the findings confirm that food storytelling and authenticity positively influence tourism experience. Although their effects are relatively weaker compared to gastronomy tourism image, these factors play an important qualitative role in enriching the meaningful and emotional dimensions of the tourism experience. This finding is consistent with prior studies by Feng et al. (2024), Leong et al. (2024), and Campos et al. (2023), which demonstrate that storytelling enhances engagement, perceived value, and memorability of tourism experiences. Similarly, the results support authenticity-related literature (Wang, 1999; Domínguez-Quintero et al., 2019; Su et al., 2020), emphasizing authenticity as a fundamental element in shaping high-quality experiences in cultural and gastronomy tourism contexts.

Fourth, the results show that tourism experience has a strong and significant positive effect on destination perceived value, with a very large effect

size. This finding reinforces the notion that tourists evaluate destination value primarily based on what they actually experience, rather than on abstract perceptions alone. This result is consistent with previous studies by Chen and Chen (2010), Song et al. (2015), Jin et al. (2015), and Brochado et al. (2022), which identify experience quality and memorable tourism experiences as major drivers of perceived value.

Fifth, however, the study finds no direct effect of tourism experience on tourist behavioral intention, which represents a noteworthy divergence from some prior research (e.g., Kim et al., 2012; Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2015), where memorable experiences were found to directly influence revisit intention. In the context of gastronomy tourism, the present findings suggest that tourism experience influences behavioral intention only after being transformed into destination perceived value.

Sixth, the mediation analysis confirms that destination perceived value serves as a significant mediating variable between tourism experience and tourist behavioral intention. This result is consistent with studies by Chen and Chen (2010), Haji et al. (2021), and Maulina et al. (2022), which identify perceived value as the key mechanism linking experience to revisit intention and word-of-mouth behavior. The findings suggest that tourists make behavioral decisions based on their evaluation of overall value, rather than on experiential feelings alone.

In summary, the findings demonstrate that tourism experience functions as a meaning-making mechanism, transforming tourism image, storytelling, and authenticity into perceived value. This perceived value, in turn, becomes the decisive factor driving tourist behavioral intention. The study contributes to the gastronomy tourism literature by emphasizing that experience development alone may be insufficient if tourists are unable to clearly perceive the overall value of the destination.

## 6. IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

### 6.1 Theoretical Implications

First, this study contributes to the gastronomy tourism literature by providing a systematic explanation of the value creation mechanism in this context. By integrating gastronomy tourism image, food storytelling, and authenticity as antecedents, and examining their effects through tourism experience and destination perceived value, the findings demonstrate that gastronomy tourism operates as a multi-layered process rather than a direct stimulus-response mechanism. This extends

prior tourism research by clarifying how experiential and symbolic resources are transformed into behavioral outcomes through value perception.

Second, the findings enrich the experiential tourism and value-based tourism literature by showing that tourism experience does not directly lead to tourist behavioral intention, but exerts its influence through destination perceived value. This result helps reconcile inconsistencies in previous studies that reported mixed findings regarding the direct effect of experience on behavioral intention. Consistent with Chen and Chen (2010) and Zeithaml's (1988) value-based perspective, the study emphasizes that tourists' behavioral decisions are primarily driven by their overall value evaluation rather than experiential feelings alone.

Third, this study advances destination image theory by highlighting the strategic role of gastronomy tourism image as the most influential antecedent of tourism experience. Rather than functioning solely as a post-visit perceptual outcome, gastronomy tourism image acts as an expectation-setting framework that shapes the nature and quality of the tourism experience itself. This finding extends the work of Gartner (1993) and Baloglu and McCleary (1999) by positioning food-related destination image as a proactive driver of experiential formation in gastronomy tourism.

Fourth, the confirmation of the positive effects of food storytelling and authenticity on tourism experience contributes to the meaning-making and cultural tourism literature. Although these factors do not directly drive behavioral intention, they play an important supportive role in enriching the emotional, symbolic, and cultural dimensions of tourism experiences. This supports the theoretical perspectives of Wang (1999) and Quan and Wang (2004), which conceptualize tourism experience as a combination of hedonic, symbolic, and functional elements.

### 6.2 Managerial And Practical Implications

From a managerial perspective, the findings suggest that developing gastronomy tourism should go beyond designing enjoyable experiences and focus on enhancing tourists' perceived value. Destination managers and policymakers should ensure that gastronomy experiences are clearly linked to perceptions of value, including quality, authenticity, emotional benefits, and overall worth, in order to effectively stimulate revisit intention and positive word-of-mouth.

Second, the results of the Importance-Performance Map Analysis (IPMA) indicate that

tourism experience and gastronomy tourism image are highly important but exhibit only moderate performance. This suggests that these constructs should be prioritized for strategic improvement. Destination management organizations (DMOs) should invest in experience design and image communication strategies, such as curated food routes, gastronomy festivals rooted in local identity, and coherent digital storytelling that reinforces the destination's culinary image.

Third, for local food businesses, restaurants, and community-based tourism operators, the findings highlight the strategic value of food storytelling and authenticity as tools for enhancing experiential quality. Storytelling should emphasize the origins of

food, local ingredients, traditional knowledge, and community lifestyles to create meaningful experiences that tourists can translate into perceived value, rather than treating storytelling as a purely decorative or promotional element.

Fourth, for destination marketing and management, the findings underscore the importance of integrating image, experience, and value in a unified strategy. Marketing communications should present gastronomy tourism experiences in ways that clearly convey overall value—functional, emotional, and social—thereby strengthening tourists' behavioral intentions, including revisit intention and recommendation

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