EXPOSING CONSUMERS TO GASTRONOMY TOURISM DESTINATIONS AND MODERATING THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

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Abstract

The perception of a destination's image significantly enhances tourist satisfaction and fosters loyalty. Positive emotions are indicative of a more enjoyable holiday. Research indicates that the perception of a place significantly enhances tourist pleasure. Tourists evaluate areas based on their subjective viewpoints. Tourist behaviour is significantly impacted by happiness. Consequently, the contentment of tourists and their opinion of a site will serve as catalysts for subsequent trips. Modern clients may experience information overload from multiple sources. It entails the retrieval of information from memory or acquiring knowledge from alternative sources. Both internal and external sources are utilized to conduct information retrieval. Internal data encompasses both personal and historical data. External information searches encompass the utilization of both conventional and digital media, personal recommendations, and intermediaries involved in marketing. It was believed that well-informed purchasers would disregard alternative sources. This study employed quantitative research methodology to survey a sample of 400 visitors within the age range of 20 to 50 years old. The collected data was then analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Tourist choices are shaped by previous encounters and a sense of familiarity with a particular destination. In situations where there is a lack of internal resources, individuals seek assistance from external sources. Marketers can assist individuals in developing a favorable perception of a certain location and locating authentic social media content by providing positive information. Research indicates that social media platforms facilitate the connection

between customers, providers, and third parties, hence influencing the formation of images. Tourists' impression and inclination to visit were influenced by symbolic signals such as gourmet restaurant advertisements and social cues like recommendations from friends and family. Therefore, utilizing social media platforms can facilitate the establishment in achieving worldwide acclaim and transforming into a renowned tourist destination. Numerous companies utilize social media platforms to establish a favorable reputation in the eating industry. They achieve this by providing enticing travel information and promoting positive word-of-mouth. Online resources assist travelers in selecting a destination and tailoring their holiday to their preferences. The extent and substance of information that visitors get during the process of decision-making significantly impacts their inclination to visit.

Keywords: *Factors, Consumer Behaviour, Gastronomy, Tourism, Destination*

Introduction

Tourism is the act of escaping from a repetitive routine and journeying to distant locations in search of amusement, recreation, rest, and enjoyment. Throughout this procedure, individuals make use of the services offered by enterprises (Moon & Chan, 2019; Kaur & Kaur, 2020). This pertains to the process through which individuals are entranced by the tranquility of nature as a means of escaping the monotonous nature of their demanding profession and materialistic way of life (Yang, Xu & Hannam, 2019). Hence, the dominant mentality of the general population has greatly influenced the rapid growth and diverse structure of the tourism industry as a social framework (Hassan et. al., 2019). According to Meo et.al. (2020), the expansion of tourism in advanced and developed countries has led to favorable economic outcomes and increased employment opportunities. Several nations are currently benefiting from the tourist sector, which includes advantages such as heightened inflow of foreign currency, amplified employment prospects, and a favorable influence on the nation's gross domestic product. The aim of this study is to gain understanding of the tourism prospects in Malaysia and examine how the tourism industry can be efficiently promoted via social media platforms. According to Rahman et al. (2020), social media or social networking sites can significantly influence the expansion of the tourism business in the current digital age since they are extensively and efficiently utilized. Social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and personal blogs, exert a significant impact on the perspectives of clients who are interested in leisure travel to specific areas. These platforms have empowered the general population to acquire comprehensive awareness and understanding about the places, along with the

unique experiences that may be experienced there. These platforms offer substantial exposure for tourist locations and hotels, facilitating the expansion of their businesses.

Gastronomy and tourism are converging as rural regions strategically allocate resources to gastronomy products and tourism in response to significant economic changes. Rural areas are motivated by the fact that food and beverages account for one-third of tourism revenue, a substantial sum that garners the interest of both enterprises and governments. The culinary aspect, serving as a tourist attraction that embodies the essence and customs of a particular region, possesses the ability to entice individuals to explore and engage with it. Therefore, it has become a crucial element of cultural and heritage tourism (Moral-Cuadra). Gastronomy tourism is a type of specialized tourism that focuses on the desire to discover and experience different types of food. The degree of engagement or interest in this form of tourism varies, spanning from a lack of interest in food beyond its fundamental role of nourishment, to a broad interest in discovering rural or urban regions through their culinary offerings, to a particular curiosity in experiencing diverse cuisines, and ultimately to a heightened level of interest in gastronomy, which encompasses the exploration of cuisine, gastronomy, or gourmet experiences (Stone, Migacz & Wolf, 2020). According to Sutheeshna (2019), the "spatial fixity" of gastronomy tourism is crucial since travelers must physically visit the place where the food is produced in order to properly enjoy and understand the meal, thereby becoming food tourists. Advocates argue that food tourism involves

both the act of eating and establishing a sense of location, while also enjoying local culinary options.Gastronomy tourism, classified as a specialized form of tourism by Christia & Fine (2019), has become a significant driver of economic growth and employment in several countries. According to Wondirad, Kebete, and Li (2019), the growth and advancement of gourmet tourism present multiple opportunities for hospitality and tourism firms. According to Kivela and Crotts (2006), gourmet tourism should be considered a crucial marketing strategy, whose importance is determined by the historical or unconventional background of exceptional food and wine. This has highlighted the significance of recognizing this niche tourism industry as a significant contributor to the country's economic prosperity. In 2019, Malaysia's tourism industry remained prosperous despite the COVID-19 outbreak, drawing in a total of 26.1 million tourists and generating MYR86.14 billion in revenue (tourist Malaysia, 2019). The food and beverage sector in Malaysia experienced a 1.6% increase in expenditures, reaching MYR11.46 billion, compared to the previous year. These findings indicate that cuisine could have a substantial impact on the country's ability to attract tourists. According to Wondirad, Kebete, and Li (2019), the increasing interest in cuisine and local food research significantly affects tourism revenue and offers public and financial

assistance to the local population. Moreover, the consumption habits of both residents and tourists have changed as a result of heightened consciousness regarding food quality, health and dietary considerations, widespread food promotion on various social media and platforms, and an expanding curiosity in experimenting with different cuisines (Hakim, Suryantoro & Rahardjo, 2019). Moral-Cuadra et. al. (2020) endorses the idea that gastronomy is crucial in augmenting the attractiveness of a tourist destination. The Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board (MTPB) has undertaken many tourism initiatives to augment the influx of international tourists to Malaysia. In order to promote Malaysia as a gastronomic tourism hotspot, marketers and the Malaysian government have prioritized showcasing the local food in promotional materials such as travel guides, brochures, and websites (Osman, 2019; Jamaluddin & Ghani, 2019; Nair, 2019; Cakir, M. U., & Özbay, 2019). Moreover, Malaysian cuisine has been depicted as extremely desirable in numerous cooking-focused television programs, such as those broadcasted on the Asian Food Channel (Osman, 2020). Uncertainties remain over the efficacy of the Malaysian government's endeavors to globally sell and promote local cuisine, as well as the depiction of the Malaysian culinary identity. Despite several studies demonstrating positive outcomes in terms of tourists' acceptance and perceptions of Malaysian food and cuisine (Kebete, & Li 2019; Kebete & Li 2019), Malaysian cuisine has not attained the same degree of worldwide acknowledgment as Japanese or Thai cuisine. Salman and Hasim (2012) assert that Malaysia is internationally recognized for its scenic natural landscapes and modern urban architecture, rather than its culinary offerings. The aim of this study was to discover the factors that influence the purchasing decisions of consumers who are considering Malaysia as a destination for gourmet tourism. The study aimed to evaluate the efficacy of marketing strategies, including promotional materials and domestic tour itineraries, in enticing tourists to visit Malaysia. This study utilized quantitative content analysis to investigate the factors that affect culinary tourism and their potential impact on tourists' inclination to visit following a pandemic. Moreover, the study examined how social media marketing affects the connection between the factors influencing culinary tourism and the likelihood of visitors visiting post-pandemic.

Literature Review

Zhang, Lu, Huang, and Zhang (2019) assert that tourism has experienced growth in specific destinations. Nevertheless, the distribution of this industry is not evenly spread throughout countries, regions, and localities. Mass tourism, characterized by a large number of individuals engaging in sun-and-sea activities, is both seasonal and geographically concentrated. According to Islamovna (2019), beach resorts offer a wide range of tourism amenities. This model employs a

theoretical framework, however, Hussain (2018) cautions against its application in the context of tourism development. It emphasizes the importance of destinations adapting to new challenges in order to survive. Fakfare, Lee, and Han (2019) differentiate between the "old tourist" and the "new tourist." The former refers to inexperienced, conventional, and mass visitors who have a preference for package holidays, while the latter encompasses spontaneous, original, and ecologically sensitive individuals.

According to Kattiyapornpong, Ditta-Apichai, and Chuntamara (2018), tourists who favor a laid-back eating experience are attracted to the local food. Hence, it transcends the confines of a mere tourism specialty. Moral-Cuadra, Solano-Sánchez, Menor-Campos, and López-Guzmán (2019) discovered in a prior investigation that when culinary-gastronomic cuisine is presented and experienced appropriately, it has the potential to enhance visitor pleasure and behaviour. The studies revealed that those with a strong interest in food and culinary experiences exhibited a higher level of cultural awareness and tended to prolong their stays compared to other tourists. The results indicate that gourmet tourists are sought after in various other areas. The gastronomic tourist profile has been delineated by research organizations (Stone, 2019; Chiu & Huang, 2019; Wan & Choi, 2019). Based on the study, culinary tourists often fall into the age ranges of 30-50 and 51-64. These visitors had superior financial resources and educational backgrounds compared to other travelers. They are courageous and seasoned explorers with a greater inclination towards immersing themselves in the local culture. Expenditures on gourmet travel experiences constitute a larger portion of their overall travel budget. The researchers discovered little demographic and travel preference disparities between culinary and non-culinary tourists, suggesting that these factors had negligible influence on food tourism. Nevertheless, there were variations in food tourism reasons, culinary evaluations, and individuals' self-perception as gastronomic tourists (Campón-Cerro et al., 2019). Vukolic, Gajić, and Penic (2018) assert that contemporary market segmentation theory prioritizes 'values or benefits' rather than conventional demographic factors. Food tourists may be overstated unless non-food-related factors are taken into account. Choosing a destination is a challenging task that involves evaluating both tangible and intangible factors.

Culinary tourism, as highlighted by Vukolic, Gajić, and Penic (2017), is a significant sector that has the potential to foster customer loyalty. Therefore, it can serve as a feasible substitute for developing places that are unable to capitalize on the conventional "sun and sea" tourism model or lack the essential natural and cultural assets to allure tourists, including well-established tourist destinations. Investing in initiatives to enhance and promote food offers can assist destinations in

revitalizing tourist arrivals and expanding market presence, if food has the capacity to impact the travel decisions of a significant market group (Yu et al., 2016). According to Dewi and Nugroho (2019), the connection between the product and the traveler is crucial in gourmet tourism. Gastronomy tourism necessitates the physical presence of tourists at the spot where food or drink is being produced. Although it is feasible to export and consume local produce in foreign countries, gastronomy tourism mostly emphasizes the act of indulging in local cuisine and immersing oneself in the local culture and surroundings.

The culinary traditions of a place are a reflection of its culture, environment, and unique characteristics. Embracing the characteristics of natural or traditional cuisine is inherent in its consumption (Suanpang et al., 2017). Local cuisine plays a significant role in conveying intricate meanings and abstract concepts that reflect the distinctiveness of a location. Moreover, it contributes to the establishment of a tourist destination's identity (Panas et al., 2016). The Mediterranean diet and traditional Mexican cuisine have been recognized as intangible cultural heritage by Unesco, owing to their profound cultural value. Diverse national cuisines are seeing a trend towards globalization and homogenization, which is detrimental to their distinctiveness. The culinary aspect of a place can play a crucial role in redefining its image and creating a unique identity at both the national and regional levels. This is because modern tourism is increasingly centered around authentic, locally sourced experiences (OECD, 2012). Recreating historical events, revisiting lost elements, and actively contributing to the process of creation, innovation, and embracing change are integral to the concept of "individual, collective, and territorial identity." One way to achieve this is by preserving and promoting a particular gourmet product, along with its associated skills and techniques. Studies indicate that travelers' travel choices are closely linked to the perception of a destination, encompassing lesser-known factors such as positive encounters with unique cuisine. According to Del Pilar Leal Londoño, Georgescu-Paquin, and Arcos-Pumarola (2017), a remarkable culinary experience has the potential to enhance connections with the local area. Therefore, the consumption of local food and cuisine enables travelers to get knowledge about the specific location and enhances their whole travel experience. Patronizing local gastronomy also enhances tourists' engagement with the local population, increasing the likelihood of their return and recommendation of the destination. Ultimately, the author asserts that delving into regional gastronomy fosters enduring recollections and a genuine affinity with local landmarks. Prior to reaching their intended location, individuals on culinary vacations evaluate their experiences based on their pre-trip expectations, which encompass factors such as the taste and variety of cuisine, the ambiance, and the quality of customer service (UNWTO, 2012).

Consequently, tourists who appreciate the cuisine of a particular place tend to be devoted and more likely to revisit, thereby enhancing its standing. Kattiyapornpong, Ditta-Apichai, and Chuntamara (2015) examined the correlation between visitors' travel itineraries and their perceptions of the cuisine in different countries. Tourists evaluated cuisine, dining establishments, food-related tourism, and activities such as unique cultural experiences and street markets, as well as cooking classes or farm visits. Based on their assessments, we drew conclusions about their perceptions of In their study, Ningsih, Urgarini, and Nurussahar (2017) propose the examination of the alignment of cuisine, food, and tourism with the economic development objectives of a particular area when formulating a gastronomy tourism plan. Engage relevant organizations and conduct rigorous research and evaluation from many culinary and tourist angles to comprehensively comprehend the economic influence of food tourism. Conducting research is crucial for comprehending various aspects of tourism, including the characteristics of tourists, their countries of origin, gastronomic and tourism choices, as well as the supply and value networks involved. Dixit and Prayag (2016) highlight the significance of this thesis, demonstrating that every scenario, including this dissertation, requires distinctiveness. An analysis was conducted on the knowledge and experience of food tourism in Norway and Tuscany, Italy. The growth of gastronomy tourism relied on scientific culinary skill and global managerial/political knowledge. In contrast, Italy focused on utilizing local food and managerial/political knowledge. Therefore, it is essential for food tourism programs to be developed taking into account the unique physical, social, and environmental characteristics of each terroir (Roy & Gretzel, 2017). Mohammad, Rahman, and Mayor-Vitoria (2016) argue that the combination of tourism and exceptional agricultural practices has the potential to foster a more ecologically sustainable future for rural regions and their inhabitants. Their investigation revealed a scarcity of well-structured food and tourism production networks in central regions. In order to cater to tourists, it is essential that high-quality cuisine is associated with its specific 'terroir', allowing the origin of the product to be easily identified. This connection between production and place is of utmost importance (p. 1482). In order to achieve success, it is imperative for all parties involved in the "terroir" industry, including farmers, entrepreneurs, and communities, to work together and cooperate in setting and carrying out objectives at every stage of production. Sanchez-Caizares and Castillo-Canalejo (2015) also discovered this in Slovenia and Spain. Effective collaboration among restaurants, travel agencies, hotels, locals, and tourists are essential for establishing a culinary tourism management system that enhances the competitiveness of destinations and promotes regional development. The interactions between dining establishments and other stakeholders are of utmost importance. In addition, Guell et al. (2017) conducted a study that analyzed a successful

food tourism strategy that relied on active involvement of stakeholders. The authors conclude that there is a lack of coordination between food and tourism in delivering successful policy outcomes, based on the principles of sustainability and a model of emerging gastronomic tourism themes such as knowledge exchange and networking, supply chain constraints, fear of change, regionalization of governing bodies, and marketing. Therefore, the incorporation of food tourism, marketing, distribution, and policy integration has the potential to enhance social capital (Janiszewska et al., 2015). Based on the unique characteristics and promotional efforts of the location. According to the research conducted by Janiszewska et al. (2017), it is important for visitors to have a clear understanding of the origins of food. Their aim is to illustrate the importance of educating visitors about cuisine, highlighting that "language and the utilization of words" can be equally vital as taste. Gourmet tourism entails a deep understanding of the geographical origin, manufacturing process, and culinary traditions associated with food. It emphasizes a cultural perspective on gastronomy that takes into account the contributions of farmers, animals, and plants, as well as the rural origins of gastronomy (Janiszewska et al., 2016). They impart knowledge to tourists regarding local cuisine, as individuals are more inclined to establish an emotional bond with a destination's culture when they are introduced to its historical, geographical, economic, and culinary aspects. Seyedabolghasemi et al. (2017) defines 'gastro speak' as a form of communication that encompasses all spoken and written expressions related to gastronomy. It aims to commodify and highlight a specific gastronomic identity, emphasizing the infusion of knowledge.

Promoting a destination's cuisine is crucial and requires a variety of approaches tailored to specific goals. In a study conducted by Bolles (2016), Schmuckel (2014), and Oxenford et al. (2016), four Caribbean islands - Aruba, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, and Martinique - were found to employ different marketing and promotional strategies. Martinique, for instance, emphasizes the authenticity, history, and fusion of its cuisine, as well as organic farming and agri-tourism. The other islands, to varying degrees, focus on strategies employed by other Caribbean destinations. The researchers also highlighted the importance of considering the strategies of the islands' tourism organizations in order to fully realize their potential as gastronomic destinations.

The authors present a set of issues that key stakeholders suggested for an ideal gastronomy tourism initiative, recognizing that success requires a mix of quantitative (economic impacts) and qualitative (visitor satisfaction, return intentions, and cultural sustainability) indicators (Bolles,2018). These include literature-mentioned indicators. The authors conclude that a clear

strategy, strong stakeholder cooperation, unifying leadership, and provisions for revitalising the region's profile, communicating quality standards, and promoting regions as tourists perceive them are essential for the strategic process until it is implemented (Oxenford et al., 2017). Valentina, Turgarini, and Indriastri (2016) highlight the need of cooperating with government, businesses, and local inhabitants to develop marketing plans that maximise a destination's diverse resources and unique local traits. in destination context. Since a destination product is a complex mix of stakeholders and components, Fyall & Leask (2007) emphasize cooperation. Destination management organizations should serve as a unifying force, bringing together all components of the destination to promote effective collaboration (Cankül, & Altıntaş,2016). Iakovou, Wardana, GdeSukaatmadja, and Setini (2015) devised a gourmet tourism plan for Central Macedonia, Greece, utilizing a SWOT analysis. The first aspect highlights the region's culinary assets, which can attract the desired market segment, while the second aspect empowers local food suppliers by establishing robust collaborative networks. The latter action is also deemed crucial, as per Kokkranikal and Carabelli (2017), since gastronomy tourism products and services, along with the provision of local meals with profound cultural significance, necessitate specialized training in the hospitality industry. The tourism business defines "tourism marketing activities" as national tourist organizations and/or tourist firms' systematic and coordinated international, national, and local efforts. These efforts are done to maximize visitor group and individual satisfaction for sustained tourism growth (Marta, Melnyk & Baran, 2017). Thus, tourist marketing promotes tourism and creates related services to increase it. Tourism marketing relies on an accurate information system to attract customers and encourage them to spend money, enhance local revenues, and promote cyclical cash flow through reinvestigations (Matiza & Slabbert, 2016). Tourism marketing has increasingly relied on market segmentation in recent years. As the foundation of tourism marketing strategies, segmentation has many benefits, including increasing the competitiveness of destinations, attracting a more refined market, revealing market gaps in which new touristic product occasions can be delivered, and discovering new potential customers. Tourism goods are designed to meet tourist needs, which is the ultimate goal. Tourism marketing must create a want or want that drives visitors to choose the place, starting with segmentation. Tourist decisions are affected by several factors, including the economy, thus this impact is limited. Discussing the marketing mix is crucial after segmentation. Tourism uses the 4Ps (Product, Promotion, Price, and Place), although only the first two are important (Sailm, 2018). To maximise profits and entice buyers, the 4Ps of tourism marketing have been changed (Achmad, Wulandari & Marcelino, 2019). Even yet, the 4Ps model cannot fully understand the sector. Tourism marketing

relies on understanding potential customers' behaviours, tastes, and travel reasons (Aljubori, 2019). Marketing a destination to tourists should also incorporate its intangible cultural heritage (ICH), which allows visitors to interact with various cultures and fully appreciate the region's cultural attractions (Mooney & Gewinner, 2019). Thus, a successful tourist destination must provide a favorable experience to attract repeat visits and referrals. Tourist marketing must also consider post-visit behavioural attitudes, which predict effective conduct. The Theory of Rational Action (TRA) is a prominent psychological theory of behavioural intention. The Theory of Reasoned Action by Ajzen and Fishbein (1988) predicts behaviour based on attitudes and goals. The outcomes they expect from a behaviour determine their choice (Srivastava et al., 2019). Ajzen & Fishbein 1988 define the theory as behavioural aim, attitude, and subjective criteria. According to the TRA model, behavioural intention, which precedes action, is linked to an individual's attitudes and subjective standards for a certain

behaviour (Han, 2019). A behavioural action-oriented attitude and subjective behaviour expectancies are reliably associated, according to the TRA (Nguyen, Thanh & Nguyen, 2019). Purpose strength determines behaviour (Loureiro, Guerreiro & Han, 2019). TRA explores how cognitive processes affect behaviour (Ulker-Demirel & Ciftci, 2019). The approach also emphasizes that context variables can change behaviour and attitudes. The concept states that age, gender, race, education, and other factors divide the population into classes with dramatically different life experiences. Thus, different groups may have different views on behaviour (Lama, Pradhan & Shrestha, 2019). TRA, founded 20 years ago, continues to provide a comprehensive framework for marketing studies, particularly on consumers' perceptions that they should or should not consume certain products for reasons other than product quality. It helps devise approaches to change behaviour by explaining why people do it. People choose a behaviour based on its effects and their expectations (Passafaro, 2019). Conceptual Framework as figure 1 below:
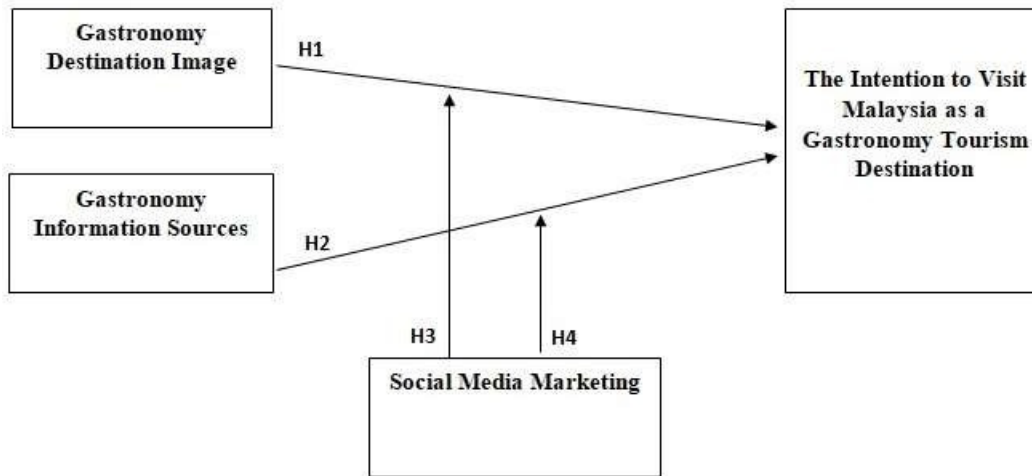
Figure1 Conceptual Framework

To assess the reliability of each item, it is necessary to estimate the factor loading. As per the findings of Ringle et al. (2023), a threshold value of 0.7 or higher for the loading of each item is deemed to be reliable. Furthermore, it is necessary for both the Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability scores to be at least 0.7. In addition, the average variance extracted (AVE) is calculated by taking the mean of the squared loadings of the items associated with the construct. It is a commonly used metric to assess convergent validity. An AVE score of 0.5 or higher indicates that the construct explains more than 50% of the variability in its elements (Ringle et. al.,2023). Table 1 demonstrates that the Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability values exceed 0.7, whereas the AVE values surpass 0.5. Therefore, the convergent validity of the constructs has been confirmed.

To determine the discriminant validity, it is necessary to assess the Fornell-Larcker criterion, cross loadings, and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio. According to the Fornell-Larcker criterion, the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) for each variable should be greater than the correlation across latent variables. This condition is satisfied in the current investigation, as indicated in Table 3. In relation to cross loadings, it is necessary for the loading of each indicator to be greater than the loadings of the indicators of its related variables. According to Table 2, we can see that the cross loadings requirement is met (Ringle et al., 2023). To confirm the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT), it is necessary to ensure that the value is below 0.85. Table 3 demonstrates that the HTMT criterion is satisfied, confirming the establishment of discriminant validity.

Table 1; CR, CA, and AVE

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Gastronomy Destination Image (GDI)	0.957	0.958	0.966	0.752
Gastronomy Information Source (GIS)	0.963	0.963	0.971	0.770
Social Media Marketing (SMM)	0.947	0.950	0.960	0.726
Intention to Visit (ItV)	0.966	0.966	0.974	0.782

Table 2: Discriminant Validity

	GDI	GIS	SMM	ItV
GDI	0.823			
GIS	0.905	0.833		
SMM	0.962	0.880	0.809	
ItV	0.830	0.903	0.843	0.839

Table 3: HTMT

	GDI	GIS	SMM	ItV
GDI				
GIS	0.843			

SMM	0.710	0.820		
ItV	0.864	0.736	0.881	

Table 4: Direct Relationship

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
GTI -> ItV	0.371	0.375	0.078	4.760	0.000
GIS -> ItV	0.330	0.332	0.077	4.278	0.000

The initial hypothesis posited that there is a correlation between the image of a gourmet destination and the intention to visit this destination. The results shown in Table 4 demonstrate a significant link, as evidenced by the score ($\beta = 0.371$, t = 4.760, p < 0.001). Therefore, hypothesis 1 has been verified. Hypothesis 2 proposed that there is a correlation between sources of gastronomy information and the intention to visit a culinary destination. The findings shown in Table 4 demonstrate a statistically significant result, with a β score of 0.303, a t-value of 4.278, and a p-value less than 0.001.

Table 5: Moderating effect

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
SMM * GTI -> ItV	0.087	0.066	0.071	1.239	0.216
SMM * GIS -> ItV	0.204	0.016	0.065	2.068	0.000

The influence of social media marketing on the connection between gastronomy destination image and intention to visit gastronomy destination is not statistically significant, as indicated by the score ($\beta = 0.087$, t = 1.239, p < 0.001). These findings indicate that hypothesis 3 lacks statistical significance. Social media marketing has a crucial role in influencing the connection between the image of a gastronomic location and the intention to visit that destination. This is supported by the

statistical findings, with a score of $\beta = 0.204$, $t = 2.068$, $p < 0.001$. Therefore, it can be inferred that hypothesis 4 has been validated.

Discussion

Contemporary consumers may experience a sense of being inundated by the vast quantity of information accessible through various channels (Song, 2018). It requires purposefully activating memory or collecting knowledge from other sources (Martins et al., 2019). Information retrieval behaviour encompasses both internal and external sources (Zaman, Hasan & Shams, 2017). Internal data might be influenced by individual, personal, and historical experiences. External information search encompasses several sources such as print and electronic media, word of mouth, and marketing intermediaries (Tlabela et al., 2016). Consumers possessing sufficient internal data were believed to disregard alternative sources (Kaurav & Gursoy, 2015). Hence, the decisions of visitors were influenced by their previous experiences and location information. In the absence of sufficient internal resources, individuals would seek external sources for information. According to Bernard et al. (2019), individual motivation can be characterized as a combination of "push and pull" factors. Individuals were conflicted by both internal and external factors. These factors influenced individuals' inclination towards specific locations (Li & Cao, 2014). Two individual characteristics can also influence preferences for information. Demography mostly influences the behaviour of individuals in obtaining knowledge. This may vary on age or socioeconomic status (Cai et al., 2017). The second element comprised the individual's travel attributes, encompassing the duration of their stay, previous travel background, and group characteristics. All of these factors affect information search effort and sources. Travelers utilize information sources based on the criteria of costs and benefits, as stated by Mohammad, Rahman, and Mayor-Vitoria (2017). Zhan et al. examine the various sources of information and how individuals perceive them as potential threats. The study conducted in 2018 by al. demonstrates a significant correlation. In order to reduce the perceived risk associated with purchasing intangible things, individuals can enhance their method of retrieving information. In their study, Majeed and Ramkissoon (2016) discovered that individuals tend to reduce their efforts in searching for information when there is a fee involved. Consumers' information search activities are significantly influenced by the perceived risk and expense associated with specific products. This approach prioritizes the process of acquiring knowledge rather than the actual action itself. This entails the collection and utilization of data for the purpose of making informed judgments. Panas et al. (2015) investigated the influence of geographical, temporal, and operational aspects on customer behaviour. Geographical factors influence both the internal and exterior search for information. This tendency may be

influenced by previous experiences. For example, someone who has utilized a product will retain it in their memory. This technique facilitates introspection and enables comprehension of past occurrences. When clients are dissatisfied with their own experiences, they will actively seek external expertise. Individuals are motivated to pursue external information in order to alleviate feelings of emptiness (Panas et al., 2016; Kotler & Armstrong, 1994; Murray, 1991). When initiating a search, whether it be ongoing or for the purpose of acquiring further knowledge, individuals employ the temporal dimension search technique. This occurs irrespective of the intended objective of the search. At this level, the act of seeking knowledge is motivated by the recognition of a need (Mohammad et al., 2017). Consumers engage in research to acquire further knowledge about unfamiliar products. In contrast, individuals who already possess knowledge about the products may actively seek further information in order to make more informed selections regarding pricing and quality. The study conducted by Liu et al. in 2016. Furthermore, the information search can be utilized to facilitate future product acquisitions. Customers who possess knowledge about the products may not feel the need to acquire additional information (Liang et al., 2017). Once an information source is chosen, operational information retrieval is employed. The data utilized has the potential to impact customers' choices (Liang et al., 2017). Family and friends serve as personal sources, while salesmen and marketing messages serve as commercial sources. Magazines and newspapers, on the other hand, function as public sources. Lastly, personal sources can also include observation and product testing. The authors Sun, Law, and Luk published a work in 2015, which references the previous work of Kotler and Armstrong from 1994. The study conducted by Bui et al. (2016) shown that customer demographics had an impact on the effectiveness of information sources. Prospective vacationers have to conduct thorough research on their desired location prior to making a reservation. The research needs are contingent upon the specific things that are to be acquired. Extensive research is crucial, particularly in global markets, when dealing with more expensive products (Sano & Romão, 2019). Discerning customers also actively pursue additional information prior to making a decision (Berto & Murwani, 2017). Presently, tourists are required to conduct thorough investigations on excursions and other tourism-related endeavors (Yuan et al., 2016). In the present era of abundant information, successful marketing campaigns and promotions need to comprehend the proactive information-seeking behaviour of clients (Yang et al., 2019). The provision of pertinent information enables clients to make informed judgments (Briez, Ezzat & Abd Eljalil, 2017).

Credible sources encompassed both print and online advertisements. The formal sources of

information mentioned cater to specific demographics (Panas et al., 2016). Previous research indicates that the choice of information source is influenced by multiple factors. Song (2015) posited that specialists have a greater inclination towards acquiring additional knowledge compared to non-experts. Intellectually proficient individuals conducted extensive research across various information repositories. These individuals have the ability to utilize both print and digital forms of media (Wang & Li, 2017). According to them, individuals possess varying degrees of inquisitiveness when it comes to the knowledge they desire. Certain consumers actively seek external knowledge, whereas others depend on their own skills. The efficacy of the system hinges upon the client's characteristics, proficiency in the product, and the availability of things (Sano & Romão, 2018). According to Wang and Li (2015), the choice of tourist objects and trip aims plays a crucial role in determining the information and communication channels used. In a separate investigation conducted by Oshriyeh, Ghaffari, and Nematpour (2016), it was found that the characteristics of travel groups, the inclusion of extended family and friends, previous visits to the destination, and familiarity with the place all have an impact on individuals' information-seeking behaviour.

Certain travelers utilize both internal and exterior sources (Oshriyeh, Ghaffari, & Nematpour, 2019). Senior and non-senior passengers have distinct approaches to accessing information. Older individuals exhibit a reduced propensity for acquiring knowledge to the same extent as their younger counterparts. In 2019, he emphasized the use of market-driven consumer information search trends. The required information must be both accurate and comprehensive. Customers that conduct research on vacations prior to making a booking enhance their overall experience (Nam, 2018). Therefore, well-informed travelers will have more satisfaction. Customers can be classified based on their information search behaviour and the sources they rely on (Tudoran, 2016). Luo et al. (2017) discovered that German, French, British, and Japanese tourists visiting the United States employed distinct strategies when seeking information.

Effective destination image management necessitates a comprehensive comprehension of tourist behaviour (Hunter, 2016). Stylidis (2014) asserts that a destination's image plays a crucial role in fostering confidence among passengers towards its various components. According to Choi and Cai (2016), the primary determinant of passengers' choices is the visual aesthetics of a location. Rao et al. provide a definition of destination image as the complete combination of an individual's beliefs, cognitions, and perceptions related to a specific area. According to Al. (2015), destination

image is the combination of factual information, subjective impressions, preconceived notions, imaginative constructs, and emotional concepts related to a specific destination, as perceived by an individual or a group. This concept affirms the notion that we may discern distinctive attributes of a destination's intended audience that might entice them. Destination imagery plays a crucial role in the promotion of a location (Liang & Lai, 2016). Nadeau, Wardley, and Rajabi (2016) contend that the selection of a principal destination image is of paramount importance in the marketing and promotion of a destination to a specific target market. The perception of a destination's reputation significantly influences tourists' choices of travel destinations (Tse and Tung, 2016; Liang & Lai, 2019; Choi & Cai, 2017). It is widely recognized among marketers that the perception of a destination significantly influences customer behaviour (Choi & Cai, 2019). According to Pereira, Gupta & Hussain (2014), the type of picture will be determined by two factors: the distinctiveness or specialization of the site and the strategies employed to attract visitors. Choi & Cai (2015) argue that the visual representation of a holiday place plays a crucial role in the process of selecting a destination. Strategically locating a place to cater to a specific market can distinguish it from others (Hunter, 2016). The perception of a place plays a vital role in comprehending and conveying travel patterns, as well as formulating effective marketing tactics to help destinations thrive in a fiercely competitive market (Rao et al., 2015).

Kovačić (2016) states that research in several academic disciplines shows that sensory signals and human characteristics might impact the perception of a destination. The correlation between inputs, external environment, and prior experience was uncovered. Personality traits were associated with social and psychological behaviour. In their study, Guthrie and Gale (1991) discovered that visuals have a greater influence on consumer decision-making compared to product attributes and impressions. Individuals make decisions based on their perception of the destination. Positive reputations have the ability to draw in visitors. According to Kotler, Bowens, and Makens (2002), enhancing one's image is crucial for achieving competitiveness. Therefore, a favorable perception of a place enhances its likelihood of attracting tourists and effectively competing against competitors. Baloglu and Mangaloglu (2001) discovered that the perceptions of passengers towards a place were influenced by the sources of information they received. Specifically, data from travel agencies was crucial for international travel. The study analyzed the perception, image, socio-demographic characteristics, and previous visits of individuals in the United States. The study categorized passengers into groups with high and low probabilities. The study revealed that the group with a strong inclination had a more positive perception of the United

States compared to the group with a weak inclination. Nevertheless, the prior engagements had little impact on either of the German tourist groups. Wu and Liang (2016) conducted a study on the perceptions of visitors towards wine. The scope of his comprehensive analysis of wine tourism literature was centered on the caliber of its substance. The individual assessed promotional material for wine tourism and identified specific visual characteristics. The author's conclusion posits that the perception of the wine area has transitioned from an industrial focus to one centered around leisure and tourism.

Conclusion

The perception of a destination will enhance the level of satisfaction and loyalty among tourists. Tourists will derive greater enjoyment from their journey when experiencing positive feelings. Research has demonstrated that the perception of a place enhances the enjoyment of visitors. The extent to which tourists derive pleasure from a destination is contingent upon their subjective interpretation of that location. Moreover, visitor satisfaction significantly impacts tourist conduct. Consequently, a high level of tourist satisfaction and a favorable perception of a place will result in an increased number of repeat visits. Contemporary consumers could experience a sense of being inundated with information from many channels. It refers to the deliberate retrieval of information from one's memory or the acquisition of knowledge from external sources. Information search behaviour involves the utilization of both internal and external sources. Personal and historical data could potentially be classified as internal data. An external information search encompasses the utilization of data from conventional and digital media, personal recommendations, and marketing intermediaries. Consumers possessing sufficient information were believed to disregard alternative sources. Research has demonstrated that the judgments made by tourists are influenced by their previous experiences and level of familiarity with a particular region. When individuals lack sufficient internal resources, they rely on other sources. Marketers can assist individuals in creating a favorable perception of a certain place and acquiring reliable social media content by providing good information. Research indicates that social media platforms facilitate the connection between customers, providers, and other third parties, so impacting the process of image development. The perception and desire of tourists to visit a location were influenced by symbolic signals, such as media advertisements promoting gourmet locations, as well as social stimuli, such as recommendations and word-of-mouth from friends and family. Hence, social media platforms might facilitate the location in attaining worldwide visibility and establishing itself as a sought-after resort. Numerous enterprises employ social media platforms to establish a favorable reputation as a

culinary destination. They achieve this by providing enticing travel information and promoting positive word-of-mouth. Travelers utilize several online resources to select a destination and tailor their holiday according to their preferences. The information that visitors acquire during the decision-making process, both in terms of its quality and quantity, has a positive impact on their desire to visit.

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