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Cognitive Ergonomics Approach In Food Packaging Design Influence On Purchase Decisions Among Klang Valley Consumers, Malaysia  
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*Rozita Naina Mohamed, Mohd Saifullah Rusli and Mior Harris Mior Harun*

Motivations Influencing Caffeine Consumption Behaviours And Habitual Caffeine Intake In Relation To Sleep Quality Of Public University Students In Peninsular Malaysia  
*Muhamad Afizi and Asma' Ali*

Pengistilahan Al-Waqful 'Ajil Biqardhil Hasan (Waqh) Sebagai Satu Instrumen Kewangan Sosial Bagi Membiayai Projek Berkaitan Kepentingan Awam  
*Mohd Amim Othman*

Pengaruh Alat Pemasaran Hijau Terhadap Tingkah Laku Pembelian Pengguna Di Selangor  
*Nor Shafika Zulkepli dan Jasmine Leby Lau*

Corak Pengambilan Dan Perbelanjaan Makanan Serta Penerimaan Menu Rahmah Dalam Kalangan Pelajar IPTA Di Lembah Klang  
*Shamsul Azahari Zainal Badari dan Nurul Haziqah Jamli*

Natural Dyes And Eco-Print Techniques Elevate The Art Of Nature And Local Culture  
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Faktor Yang Mempengaruhi Tingkah Laku Penggunaan Kod Qr Dalam Aktiviti Pembayaran Oleh Pelajar Universiti Awam Di Lembah Klang <i>Nur Fazlin Fazrina Rashdan dan Zuroni Md Jusoh</i>	1
Kajian Kualitatif Terhadap Kaedah Perkongsian Untung Kepada Peserta Dalam Takaful <i>Md Azmi Abu Bakar dan Nuradli Ridzwan Shah Mohd Dali</i>	21
Cognitive Ergonomics Approach In Food Packaging Design Influence On Purchase Decisions Among Klang Valley Consumers, Malaysia <i>Irwan Syah Md Yusoff, Azhari Md Hashim and Tai Jia Yi</i>	38
Exploring The Impact Of Local Food Consumption Values And Tourist-Local Interactions On Revisit Intention In Malaysia's Culinary Tourism – A Conceptual Paper <i>Rozita Naina Mohamed, Mohd Saifullah Rusli and Mior Harris Mior Harun</i>	60
Motivations Influencing Caffeine Consumption Behaviours And Habitual Caffeine Intake In Relation To Sleep Quality Of Public University Students In Peninsular Malaysia <i>Muhamad Afizi and Asma' Ali</i>	80
Pengistilahan Al-Waqful 'Ajil Biqardhil Hasan (Waqh) Sebagai Satu Instrumen Kewangan Sosial Bagi Membiayai Projek Berkaitan Kepentingan Awam <i>Mohd Amim Othman</i>	98
Pengaruh Alat Pemasaran Hijau Terhadap Tingkah Laku Pembelian Pengguna Di Selangor <i>Nor Shafika Zulkepli dan Jasmine Leby Lau</i>	119
Corak Pengambilan Dan Perbelanjaan Makanan Serta Penerimaan Menu Rahmah Dalam Kalangan Pelajar Ipta Di Lembah Klang <i>Shamsul Azahari Zainal Badari dan Nurul Haziqah Jamli</i>	141
Natural Dyes And Eco-Print Techniques Elevate The Art Of Nature And Local Culture <i>Irwan Syah Md Yusoff, Zulhelmy Hamdan, Mohamad Fakrol Zaini, Amer Syazwan Mohd Anuar and Azhari Md Hashim</i>	166
The Influence Of Service Fairness On Students' Satisfaction Towards Library Services <i>Siti Khadijah Ismail and Monizaihasra Mohamed</i>	177
Integrating Indigenous Aesthetic Knowledge In Upcycling Used Wood Furniture <i>Nurin Adlina Azmi, Siti Mastura Md Ishak, Roziya Ibrahim, Raja Ahmad Azmeer Raja Ahmad Effendi and Maszura Abdul Ghafar</i>	190

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# EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF LOCAL FOOD CONSUMPTION VALUES AND TOURIST-LOCAL INTERACTIONS ON REVISIT INTENTION IN MALAYSIA'S CULINARY TOURISM – A CONCEPTUAL PAPER

## *(MENEROKA KESAN NILAI PENGGUNAAN MAKANAN TEMPATAN DAN INTERAKSI PELANCONG-TEMPATAN TERHADAP NIAT MELAWAT SEMULA DALAM PELANCONGAN KULINARI MALAYSIA – KERTAS KONSEPTUAL)*

Mohd Saifullah Rusli<sup>1</sup>  
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### Abstract

Culinary tourism has become a key pillar of Malaysia's tourism sector, attracting international tourists seeking culturally immersive experiences through local food. Despite its growing significance, there is limited research on how Local Food Consumption (LFC) values—including authenticity, cultural significance, quality, and sensory experience—integrated with tourist-local interactions, shape tourists' revisit intentions. This paper addresses this research gap by proposing a conceptual framework that incorporates LFC values into the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), Quality-Satisfaction-Behavior (QSB) Theory, and Theory of Consumption Value (TCV), with tourist satisfaction acting as a mediating variable. Although no empirical data has been collected, the framework is grounded in an extensive literature review and theoretical synthesis. The proposed research design involves a quantitative approach, using structured questionnaires to gather data from international tourists. Findings are expected to offer practical recommendations for tourism stakeholders in Malaysia, such as promoting authentic food experiences and fostering tourist-local interactions to improve tourist satisfaction and encourage repeat visits. Future research should empirically test this framework and explore additional variables, such as accommodation quality and destination image, that may influence revisit intention.

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**Keywords:** Culinary Tourism, Local Food Consumption Values, Tourist-Local Interactions, Revisit Intention, Tourist Satisfaction, Authenticity, Cultural Immersion, Food Quality, Malaysia Tourism, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

## **Abstrak**

*Pelancongan kulineri telah menjadi tonggak utama dalam sektor pelancongan Malaysia, menarik pelancong antarabangsa yang mencari pengalaman budaya mendalam melalui makanan tempatan. Walaupun kepentingannya semakin meningkat, kajian yang menyelidik bagaimana Nilai Penggunaan Makanan Tempatan (Local Food Consumption - LFC)—termasuk keaslian, kepentingan budaya, kualiti, dan pengalaman sensori—bersama interaksi antara pelancong dan penduduk tempatan membentuk niat pelancong untuk kembali masih terhad. Bagi mengisi jurang penyelidikan ini, kertas kerja ini mencadangkan kerangka konseptual yang mengintegrasikan Teori Tingkah Laku Terancang (Theory of Planned Behavior - TPB), Teori Kualiti-Kepuasan-Tingkah Laku (Quality-Satisfaction-Behavior - QSB), dan Teori Nilai Penggunaan (Theory of Consumption Value - TCV) untuk meneroka hubungan ini, dengan kepuasan pelancong sebagai pembolehubah pengantara. Walaupun data empirikal belum dikumpul, kerangka ini dibangunkan berdasarkan ulasan literatur yang meluas dan sintesis teori. Reka bentuk penyelidikan yang dicadangkan akan menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif, dengan pengumpulan data melalui soal selidik berstruktur yang akan diedarkan kepada pelancong antarabangsa. Dapatan daripada kajian ini dijangka menawarkan cadangan praktikal kepada pihak berkepentingan dalam industri pelancongan di Malaysia, seperti mempromosikan pengalaman makanan yang autentik dan menggalakkan interaksi antara pelancong dan penduduk tempatan untuk meningkatkan kepuasan pelancong dan menggalakkan lawatan berulang. Penyelidikan masa depan harus menguji kerangka ini secara empirikal dan meneroka pembolehubah lain seperti kualiti penginapan dan imej destinasi yang mungkin turut mempengaruhi niat pelancong untuk kembali.*

**Kata Kunci:** *Pelancongan Kulineri, Nilai Penggunaan Makanan Tempatan, Interaksi Pelancong-Penduduk Tempatan, Niat untuk Kembali, Kepuasan Pelancong, Keaslian, Penghayatan Budaya, Kualiti Makanan, Pelancongan Malaysia, Pemodelan Persamaan Struktur (SEM).*

## **Introduction**

Culinary tourism is rapidly growing as a significant global tourism industry driver, attracting travelers eager to experience immersive cultural encounters through local food. It provides a gateway for tourists to explore the cultural identity of destinations, where local cuisine serves as an attraction and a representation of the country's heritage (Kim et al., 2022). Malaysia, with its rich and diverse culinary traditions—

spanning Malay, Chinese, Indian, and indigenous cuisines—has the potential to capitalize on this trend (Elshaer & Marzouk, 2024). Its vibrant food culture appeals to international tourists looking for unique gastronomic experiences that reflect the country's multicultural makeup.

However, despite Malaysia's potential as a culinary destination, limited research has been conducted to explore how Local Food Consumption (LFC) values, such as authenticity, cultural significance, food quality, and sensory experience, impact tourists' revisit intentions (Ishak et al., 2023). Moreover, the role of tourist-local interactions in enhancing tourists' cultural immersion and satisfaction, particularly in Malaysia, has received insufficient academic attention (Phisunt et al., 2020; Wang & Li, 2023).

## **Problem Statement**

Malaysia's tourism industry has shown encouraging signs of recovery post-pandemic, as evidenced by 2023 tourist arrival statistics. However, a significant overall decline of 22.8% compared to pre-pandemic levels in 2019 indicates that while recovery is underway, the industry still faces considerable challenges in returning to its pre-COVID-19 performance. Countries such as Singapore, Indonesia, and Thailand remain key source markets, with positive growth percentages between 59% and 109% compared to 2022. However, steep declines in tourist arrivals from crucial markets such as China (-52.7%) and South Korea (-40.4%) highlight the volatility and uncertainty of international tourism in the wake of the pandemic.

Given these trends, understanding the drivers behind revisit intentions is critical for sustaining and accelerating the recovery of Malaysia's tourism industry. As Malaysia seeks to return to pre-pandemic tourism levels, enhancing tourists' experiences by focusing on LFC values and meaningful tourist-local interactions is crucial. These elements contribute to tourist satisfaction and play a pivotal role in fostering return visits, particularly as international competition among tourist destinations intensifies in the post-pandemic landscape. This study addresses the gap by examining how LFC values and tourist-local interactions influence revisit intentions in Malaysia's culinary tourism sector. Focusing on these specific drivers of satisfaction and repeat visits, this research provides valuable insights for tourism stakeholders seeking to enhance Malaysia's positioning as a premier culinary destination.

**Table 1: Tourist Arrivals to Malaysia by Country Of Nationality December 2023**

Rank	Country	Dec 2023 Arrivals	2023 Arrivals	2022 Arrivals	2019 Arrivals	Growth % (2023/2022)	Growth % (2023/2019)	Overall Decline
1	Singapore	734,577	8,308,230	5,222,991	10,163,882	59.1	-18.3	
2	Indonesia	273,906	3,108,165	1,481,739	3,623,277	109.8	-14.2	
3	China	124,670	1,474,114	212,603	3,114,257	593.4	-52.7	
4	Brunei	52,881	811,833	301,757	1,216,123	169	-33.2	
5	Thailand	121,347	1,551,282	715,528	1,884,306	116.8	-17.7	
6	India	52,310	671,846	324,548	735,309	107	-8.6	
7	Australia	29,652	343,438	152,265	368,271	125.6	-6.7	
8	South Korea	27,473	400,853	146,384	673,065	173.8	-40.4	
9	Philippines	30,845	339,282	159,442	421,908	112.8	-19.6	
10	United Kingdom	21,837	272,297	134,667	346,485	102.2	-21.4	
	<b>Overall</b>		<b>20,141,846</b>	<b>10,070,964</b>	<b>26,100,784</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>-22.8</b>	<b>22.8% decline</b>

## Research Gap

The gap in current research is substantial. Despite the global significance of culinary tourism, there is a lack of comprehensive studies that examine how LFC values—such as authenticity, cultural significance, quality, and sensory experiences—integrate with established behavioral theories, such as the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), Quality-Satisfaction-Behavior (QSB) Theory, and Theory of Consumption Value (TCV), to shape revisit intentions jointly. While existing studies predominantly focus on Western tourism markets, Malaysian cuisine remains underexplored, especially considering the country's multicultural and gastronomically rich environment. Furthermore, while tourist satisfaction is often considered a mediator of revisit intentions, little is understood about how LFC values and tourist-local interactions influence satisfaction within this framework. Addressing this gap is crucial for developing sustainable tourism strategies that foster tourist retention through culturally immersive culinary experiences in Malaysia.

## Research Objectives:

- To examine the influence of LFC values (authenticity, cultural significance, quality, and sensory experiences) on tourist satisfaction and revisit intention.
- To investigate how tourist-local interactions enhance cultural immersion and influence tourist satisfaction.
- To assess the mediating role of tourist satisfaction in the relationship between LFC values, tourist-local interactions, and revisit intention (Kim et al., 2010; Ishak et al., 2023).

## Literature Review

The literature review explores the theoretical underpinnings of tourist behavior in the context of culinary tourism, the role of satisfaction in determining revisit intention, and the gaps that remain in current research. This review is grounded in key behavioral theories, existing research on culinary tourism, and an exploration of the uncharted territory within the Malaysian context.

## Key Theories

### Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991) has been extensively applied to understand various forms of human behavior, including tourist decision-making and revisit intention. TPB suggests that a person's behavior is influenced by three core components: attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. This theory has been adapted in tourism studies to explain why tourists revisit a destination

based on their attitudes, social influences, and perceived control over the travel decision (Ajzen, 2011).

In the context of culinary tourism, positive experiences with LFC values, such as authenticity, quality, and sensory appeal, can foster favorable attitudes toward the destination, which, combined with positive tourist-local interactions, can significantly boost the intention to revisit (Kim et al., 2022). TPB further posits that if tourists believe their friends or family value culinary experiences or if locals exert positive social influence, it can strengthen their intention to return to (Elshaer & Marzouk, 2024). Thus, both personal and social dimensions contribute to the formation of revisit intentions, making TPB a critical framework for understanding behavior in culinary tourism.

### **Quality-Satisfaction-Behavior (QSB) Theory**

The Quality-Satisfaction-Behavior (QSB) Theory posits that high-quality service or product experiences lead to greater satisfaction, which, in turn, fosters repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth recommendations (Parasuraman et al., 1988). This theory is especially relevant in the context of culinary tourism, where the quality of local food plays a vital role in shaping the tourist experience.

For culinary tourists, food quality—whether in terms of freshness, presentation, or adherence to traditional methods—directly impacts their satisfaction with the overall experience (Ishak et al., 2023). Additionally, interactions with local residents and food vendors often enhance the cultural richness of the experience, deepening tourists' satisfaction and making them more likely to return (Li et al., 2022). In this regard, the QSB theory aligns with the idea that providing high-quality, authentic food experiences can lead to increased tourist loyalty to the destination (Chen et al., 2023).

### **Theory of Consumption Value (TCV)**

The Theory of Consumption Value (TCV), introduced by (Sheth et al., 1991), explores the multiple dimensions through which consumers derive value from a product or experience. These dimensions include functional value, emotional value, social value, epistemic value, and conditional value. In the context of culinary tourism, these values help explain why tourists engage with local food experiences.

For example, functional value relates to the basic need for nourishment. Still, in a culinary tourism context, it may also encompass the desire for high-quality food prepared using authentic techniques. Emotional value derives from the sensory and emotional satisfaction of consuming local cuisine. In contrast, social value refers to local food's cultural and social identity aspects (Joshi et al., 2015). By offering rich

sensory experiences and a connection to local culture, Malaysian cuisine has the potential to satisfy these multiple dimensions of consumption value, influencing tourists' revisit intentions (Kim et al., 2010).

## **Existing Research on Revisit Intention in Culinary Tourism**

Research on revisit intention in culinary tourism suggests that tourist satisfaction plays a central role in shaping whether a visitor will return to a destination. Several key factors typically influence satisfaction in culinary tourism: the food's quality and authenticity, the cuisine's cultural significance, and the social interactions during dining experiences (Raji et al., 2020).

Authentic food experiences, where tourists can immerse themselves in the local culture through taste, have been shown to enhance the emotional connection between the tourist and the destination (Li et al., 2022). For example, research in Thailand and Vietnam has revealed that local food experiences are pivotal in attracting repeat tourists (Hai et al., 2023). However, similar studies focusing on Malaysia's culinary tourism sector remain limited despite its rich multicultural food landscape (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020).

Existing literature also highlights the importance of tourist-local interactions in shaping overall satisfaction, particularly in culinary settings where the local culture is expressed through food. These interactions allow tourists to gain deeper insights into the traditions behind the cuisine, fostering a more profound cultural connection (Phisunt et al., 2020). Nonetheless, while tourist satisfaction is well-documented as a predictor of revisit intention, there is a lack of research explicitly examining how LFC values and tourist-local interactions influence satisfaction and, consequently, revisit intention in Malaysia (Joshi et al., 2015).

## **Gaps in the Literature**

Despite significant advancements in culinary tourism, several gaps still need to be addressed in the literature, particularly in the Malaysian context.

## **Cultural Context**

While the influence of LFC values on tourist satisfaction has been extensively studied in Western contexts, more research should focus on Southeast Asia and Malaysia in particular. Malaysia's unique food landscape, characterized by its multicultural heritage, offers a rich context for exploring how LFC values—such as authenticity, food quality, and sensory experience—are integrated with behavioral theories like the TPB, QSB Theory, and TCV to shape both tourist satisfaction and revisit intentions (Nian et al., 2023). Investigating these factors in a Malaysian context can offer

valuable insights into how cultural diversity in food influences tourism behavior and revisit intentions.

## **Tourist-Local Interactions**

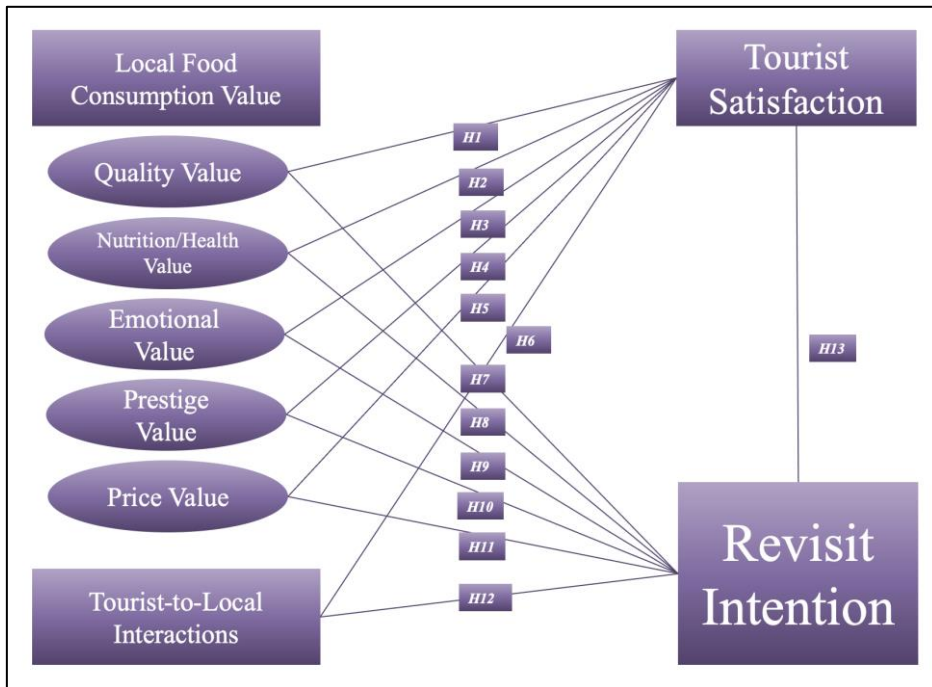
Another underexplored area in tourism research is the role of tourist-local interactions in shaping satisfaction and revisiting intention. In culinary tourism, meaningful interactions with locals—such as dining at family-owned restaurants or learning traditional cooking methods—can significantly enhance the tourist experience. However, existing research tends to focus predominantly on food quality, with few empirical studies investigating how interactions with locals when viewed through the lenses of TPB, QSB, and TCV, influence revisit intention through the mediating role of satisfaction (Hansen et al., 2024; Wang & Li, 2023). Integrating these interactions with established theories could help explain how social and cultural exchanges foster greater tourist satisfaction and repeat visitation.

## **Mediating Role of Satisfaction**

Although tourist satisfaction is widely acknowledged as a critical factor in determining revisit intention, its role as a mediator between LFC values, tourist-local interactions, and revisit intention must be explored within theoretical frameworks like TPB, QSB, and TCV. Understanding how satisfaction mediates these relationships is essential for developing a comprehensive framework for culinary tourism. Moreover, this knowledge gap is particularly pronounced in non-Western destinations such as Malaysia, where integrating diverse culinary traditions into the tourism experience can offer unique opportunities for enhancing satisfaction and encouraging repeat visitation (Ishak et al., 2023).

## **Conceptual Framework**

This study proposes a conceptual framework that explores the relationships between LFC values, tourist-local interactions, and tourist satisfaction and revisits intention within Malaysia's culinary tourism context. The framework integrates several key theories, providing a comprehensive model for understanding how food experiences and social interactions drive tourists' intentions to return.



**Figure 1: Model Framework Showing the Relationships Between the Construct and Hypothesis Proposed (Elshaer & Marzouk, 2024; Praswati et al., 2021b; Wang & Li, 2023).**

### Local Food Consumption (LFC) Values

LFC values refer to the significance that tourists attach to various attributes of local cuisine during their travels. These values are critical in shaping tourists' overall experiences, particularly culinary tourism, where food is a central cultural immersion component. This study focuses on four critical dimensions of LFC values:

- **Authenticity** is the extent to which the food reflects traditional recipes, ingredients, and preparation methods, greatly influencing tourist satisfaction (Kim et al., 2022).
- **Cultural Significance:** Food's ability to represent a destination's cultural heritage enhances tourists' understanding and appreciation of the local culture (Joshi et al., 2015).
- **Quality:** The perceived freshness, taste, and presentation of the food, all of which are critical in determining satisfaction (Elshaer & Marzouk, 2024).
- **Sensory Experience:** The multi-sensory aspects of food consumption, including taste, smell, and visual appeal, create a holistic and memorable culinary experience (Ishak et al., 2023).

These values significantly impact tourists' emotional and behavioral responses. In particular, high-quality and authentic food offerings increase tourist satisfaction, making visitors more likely to return to the destination (Wang & Li, 2023).

## **Tourist-Local Interactions**

Tourist-local interactions refer to the meaningful exchanges between tourists and residents, often in culinary settings such as markets, street food stalls, and cooking classes. These interactions are vital to enhancing cultural immersion and contribute significantly to tourists' satisfaction (Hansen et al., 2024). The study posits that such interactions deepen the tourists' understanding of local traditions and foster a sense of connection to the culture, increasing the likelihood of revisiting the destination (Phisunt et al., 2020).

## **Tourist Satisfaction (Mediator)**

Tourist satisfaction is central in mediating the relationship between LFC values, tourist-local interactions, and revisit intention. When tourists perceive high levels of authenticity, cultural significance, and food quality, their satisfaction with the overall experience increases, subsequently enhancing their desire to return to the destination (Zhou & Yu, 2022). Similarly, positive interactions with locals during food-related experiences contribute to higher satisfaction levels, reinforcing the likelihood of recommending the destination to others and making repeat visits (Yeap et al., 2020).

## **Revisit Intention (Dependent Variable)**

Revisit intention is defined as the likelihood of tourists returning to a destination based on their previous experiences. Positive culinary experiences, shaped by LFC values and tourist-local interactions, significantly influence tourists' intention to revisit. Tourists who are highly satisfied with the food and the interactions they experience are more likely to return for future visits (Elshaer & Marzouk, 2024).

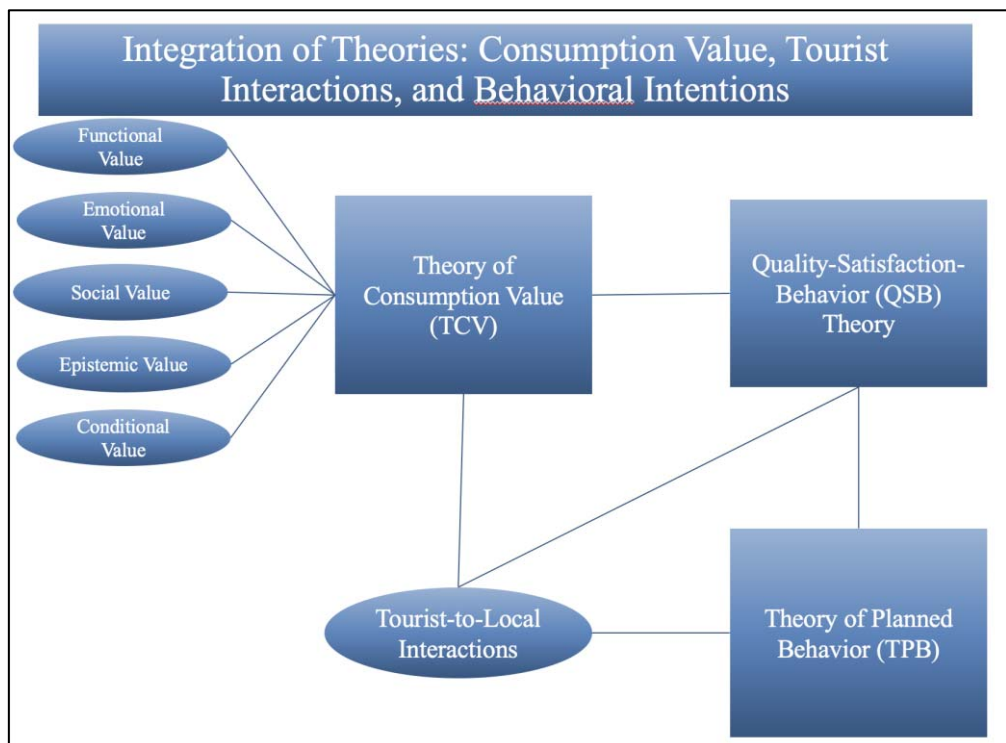
## **Proposed Model**

The proposed conceptual model illustrates the direct and indirect effects of LFC values and tourist-local interactions on revisit intention, with tourist satisfaction as a mediator. The model integrates insights from the TPB, the QSB Theory, and the TCV:

- **Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB):** TPB is applied to explain how tourists' attitudes toward local food (LFC values), subjective norms (influence from family or friends), and perceived control over their culinary experience influence revisit intention. Positive attitudes toward local food and supportive social influences increase the likelihood of revisiting Malaysia.

- Quality-Satisfaction-Behavior (QSB) Theory: This theory is used to describe the direct relationship between the quality of food and tourist satisfaction. The model assumes that higher food quality (e.g., freshness, taste, presentation) leads to increased satisfaction, which fosters repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth recommendations.
- Theory of Consumption Value (TCV): TCV is applied to identify how different dimensions of value (functional, emotional, and social) derived from local food experiences influence tourist satisfaction. Tourists gain functional value through nourishment, emotional value from sensory pleasure, and social value through meaningful interactions with locals. These combined values are key tourist satisfaction drivers, mediating revisit intention.

By integrating these theories, the model provides a holistic understanding of how local food experiences and local interactions affect tourist satisfaction and revisit intention.



**Figure 2: Integration of Theories; (Hashemi et al., 2023; Kassim et al., 2023; Praswati et al., 2021b)**

## Application of the Framework

The proposed conceptual framework can be applied to real-world scenarios within Malaysia's culinary tourism sector to assess how local food experiences and tourist-local interactions influence revisit intention. Tourism stakeholders can enhance tourists' overall satisfaction and foster repeat visits by focusing on key elements such as authenticity, cultural diversity, and sensory appeal (Chan et al., 2022).

For instance, Malaysia's hawker centers, local restaurants, and food festivals are critical touchpoints where tourists engage with the rich cultural heritage of the country's cuisine. Meaningful interactions between tourists and local food vendors, chefs, or cooking instructors offer opportunities for cultural exchange, allowing tourists to gain a deeper appreciation of Malaysian culinary traditions (Abdullah & Azam, 2021). The framework can be empirically tested using structured questionnaires distributed to international tourists who have participated in culinary experiences in Malaysia. These data can be analyzed to determine how LFC values and tourist-local interactions contribute to tourist satisfaction and revisit intention (Kassim et al., 2023). Insights from this analysis can help tourism authorities, restaurant owners, and other stakeholders refine their strategies for promoting Malaysia as a leading culinary destination, thus increasing both visitation and repeat visitation (Abbasi et al., 2021).

## Methodology

This study employs a quantitative research design to explore the relationships between LFC values, tourist-local interactions, and tourist satisfaction and revisit intention in Malaysia's culinary tourism sector. By integrating the TPB, QSB Theory, and TCV, the research aims to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how food experiences and social interactions shape tourists' intention to revisit. The study focuses on key culinary tourism locations across Malaysia, where data will be gathered using structured questionnaires distributed to international tourists. These questionnaires are designed to measure perceptions of local food experiences, interactions with locals, overall satisfaction, and likelihood of return visits. The collected data will be analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test the proposed hypotheses and evaluate the relationships between the key variables.

## Sample Selection

The target population for this study consists of international tourists who have experienced Malaysia's culinary offerings, which encompass the diverse range of local foods and beverages unique to Malaysia's multicultural heritage. These offerings include traditional dishes from Malay, Chinese, Indian, and indigenous cuisines, street food, hawker stalls, and festivals that showcase authentic regional

flavors. The study focuses on tourists who have engaged in these culinary experiences during their visit to Malaysia. Given the practical constraints of accessing this population, a non-probability sampling method will be employed, combining convenience and snowball sampling approaches to recruit participants. Convenience sampling allows selecting tourists to easily access critical culinary locations, such as popular street food markets, hawker centers, and cultural food festivals. This ensures a diverse representation of tourist demographics, including different nationalities, age groups, and prior culinary experiences in Malaysia. Snowball sampling will extend the reach by asking initial participants to refer other international tourists who have also experienced Malaysia's culinary offerings, helping to recruit participants who may not be immediately accessible. This combination is appropriate for obtaining a broad range of respondents and allows for more efficient participant recruitment, especially in locations with high tourist turnover.

Enumerators will distribute questionnaires at these key locations, and a sample size of 330 participants is deemed appropriate. This follows guidelines for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), which requires a minimum sample size based on the conceptual model's number of variables and paths.

## **Data Collection**

Primary data will be collected using self-administered questionnaires designed to capture respondents' perceptions of:

- LFC values (e.g., authenticity, cultural significance, quality, and sensory experiences),
- Tourist-local interactions, and
- Tourist satisfaction and revisit intention.

The questionnaire will employ a 7-point Likert scale (ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree") to measure respondents' agreement with statements related to their culinary experiences in Malaysia. This scale allows for a more significant differentiation of responses, providing nuanced insights into tourist behavior.

## **Data Analysis**

The collected data will be analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), a robust statistical technique that allows for the simultaneous examination of multiple relationships between variables. For this study, SmartPLS-SEM was selected due to its suitability for complex models involving latent variables, such as those used in this research, to explore the relationships between LFC values, tourist-local interactions, tourist satisfaction, and revisit intention. SmartPLS-SEM is particularly effective for studies with modest sample sizes, as it can handle sample sizes that may be considered insufficient for traditional covariance-based SEM (Sarstedt et al., 2021). The sample size of 330 participants is considered adequate for SEM based on

established guidelines (Kline, 2023). Additionally, SmartPLS-SEM is well-suited for assessing both direct and indirect effects, which is essential for understanding the mediating role of tourist satisfaction in this framework (Ringle et al., 2012). This method provides a robust approach for estimating relationships and testing the hypotheses in this study.

The analysis will begin by assessing the measurement model, focusing on the validity and reliability of the constructs using Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and convergent validity (Hair et al., 2019). Afterward, the structural model will be evaluated to test the hypothesized relationships between the variables using path coefficients and R-squared values. At the same time, bootstrapping techniques will be applied to assess the significance of these relationships (Henseler et al., 2015). This comprehensive approach ensures that the results are theoretically meaningful and provide valuable insights for stakeholders involved in Malaysia's culinary tourism sector.

## **Discussion**

### **Theoretical Contributions**

This study advances the understanding of tourist behavior by integrating LFC values and tourist-local interactions into a unified framework, with tourist satisfaction as a mediator. Prior research has focused on food quality and authenticity in shaping tourist behavior. Still, fewer studies have examined how LFC values, such as authenticity, cultural significance, and sensory experience, combined with social interactions with locals, contribute to satisfaction and subsequent revisit intentions (Ajzen, 2011; Gallarza et al., 2018). By incorporating LFC values into the framework, this study provides a more nuanced understanding of how tourists' sensory and cultural experiences influence their decision-making processes.

The framework synthesizes the TPB, QSB Theory, and TCV. The integration of these theories shows that tourist behavior is driven not only by attitudes and subjective norms (TPB) but also by the quality of their experiences (QSB) and the multiple dimensions of value they derive from local food (TCV). Including LFC values enhances this integration by highlighting how tourists' perceptions of authenticity, cultural connection, and sensory satisfaction play a central role in shaping their attitudes toward a destination, the social influence they experience, and their overall satisfaction.

This theoretical integration provides significant practical implications for tourism stakeholders. The combined insights from TPB, QSB, and TCV suggest that destination managers can tailor their offerings by focusing on tourists' desires for authenticity, sensory appeal, and meaningful cultural exchanges. By understanding

how LFC values and tourist-local interactions influence satisfaction, stakeholders can design more engaging and immersive experiences, such as guided food tours, cooking classes, or opportunities for tourists to dine with locals. These activities meet tourists' expectations for high-quality and culturally immersive food experiences and foster stronger emotional connections to the destination, leading to increased revisit intentions (Elshaer & Marzouk, 2024).

## Practical Implications

For tourism authorities and industry stakeholders in Malaysia, the conceptual framework proposed in this study offers potential strategies for enhancing culinary tourism experiences. While the study has yet to produce empirical results, these strategies are based on insights drawn from the integration of LFC values, tourist-local interactions, and tourist satisfaction within the theoretical framework:

- **Promote authenticity and cultural significance:** Traditional preparation methods and the cultural narratives behind dishes such as nasi lemak, rendang, and laksa can be emphasized. This can be facilitated through guided food tours, cooking demonstrations, and storytelling sessions by local chefs, helping to create a richer, more immersive experience for tourists (Ishak et al., 2023).
- **Facilitate tourist-local interactions:** Opportunities for tourists to engage with locals through interactive activities like cooking classes, dining in local homes, or participating in food festivals can be encouraged. These interactions foster cultural immersion and enhance overall satisfaction as tourists gain a deeper understanding of local food traditions (Hansen et al., 2024).
- **Enhance food quality and sensory experience:** Focusing on delivering high-quality food experiences across various culinary settings, from street food stalls to fine dining, can significantly impact tourists' perceptions. Ensuring consistency in food quality will help tourists form positive sensory memories of their experiences in Malaysia, making them more likely to return (Phisunt et al., 2020).

## Comparison with Existing Research

The proposed conceptual framework aligns with existing research on the role of food in tourism, particularly studies that emphasize the importance of food quality and authenticity in driving tourist satisfaction and revisiting intention (Leou & Wang, 2023). However, this framework adds a new dimension by focusing on tourist-local interactions as a crucial element in shaping culinary tourism experiences.

In contrast to much of the research conducted in Western contexts, which often focuses on food's sensory and experiential aspects, this study highlights the cultural

and social context in which food is consumed. In a multicultural society like Malaysia, where food is a vital cultural marker, the interactions between tourists and locals during food-related activities add meaning to the culinary experience (Hashemi et al., 2023).

By integrating tourist-local interactions into the theoretical framework, this study offers a more holistic understanding of how food experiences contribute to revisit intention, particularly in non-Western culinary contexts like Malaysia (Prayag & Lee, 2019).

## **Limitations and Future Research**

While this study provides important insights, it has limitations. The focus on culinary tourism means that other potential influencers of revisit intention, such as accommodation quality or overall destination image, were not considered. Future research could examine how these additional factors interact with food experiences to shape tourist satisfaction.

Additionally, this study primarily focuses on international tourists. Future research could explore whether the same factors influence the revisit intentions of domestic tourists or tourists from various cultural backgrounds. Longitudinal studies could also provide insights into how tourist satisfaction and revisit intentions evolve over multiple visits, particularly for those who engage in repeat culinary experiences (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020).

## **Conclusion**

This paper proposes a conceptual framework that examines how LFC values—including authenticity, cultural significance, quality, and sensory experiences—and tourist-local interactions may influence tourists' revisit intentions to Malaysia. The framework is built upon multiple theoretical perspectives, such as TPB, QSB Theory, and TCV. These theories provide a nuanced understanding of the factors driving revisit intention within the context of culinary tourism.

Theoretically, the framework suggests that tourist satisfaction mediates the relationship between LFC values, tourist-local interactions, and revisit intention. Literature highlights the importance of authenticity, quality, and meaningful cultural exchanges with locals in enhancing tourists' overall satisfaction. While the framework is yet to be empirically tested, it offers valuable insights into the potential drivers of tourist behavior in Malaysia's culinary tourism sector.

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