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Integrating Food Involvement and Destination Experiential Performance into the Gastronomic Place Attachment Framework

Puji Isyanto*[1], Sri Yanthy Yosepha[2], Dini Yani [5]
[1,3] Universitas Buana Perjuangan Karawang, Indonesia
[2]Universitas Dirgantara Marsekal Suryadarma, Indonesia

Corresponding: puji.isyanto@ubpkarawang.ac.id

Abstract

Gastronomic tourism has evolved from a supplementary activity into a primary driver of destination satisfaction and tourist behavior. Grounded in the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework, this research examines the mechanical transition from internal psychological traits to sustained destination loyalty. Specifically, the study investigates the structural relationships between Food Involvement (FI), Perceived Authenticity (PA), Gastronomic Sensory Appeal (GSA), Destination Experiential Performance (DEP), Gastronomic Place Attachment (GPA), and Revisit Intention (RI). Utilizing a quantitative, cross-sectional design, data were collected from 300 tourists in Bandung, Indonesia, and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results indicate that all seven hypothesized relationships are statistically supported. Food involvement serves as a potent internal stimulus that dictates the intensity of both cognitive authenticity and sensory appraisals. These organismic states collectively determine the experiential performance of the destination, which functions as the primary bridge to forming emotional place attachment and revisit intentions. Notably, the findings reveal that while sensory appeal provides physiological gratification, the cognitive validation of authenticity remains the dominant driver of experiential performance for highly involved tourists, functioning as an application of their gastronomic literacy. These insights provide a strategic framework for Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) to leverage culinary heritage as a tool for building destination brand equity and long-term tourist loyalty.

Keywords: *Gastronomic Tourism, Food Involvement, S-O-R Model, Place Attachment, SEM-PLS*

INTRODUCTION

Gastronomic tourism has transitioned from a supplementary travel activity to a primary determinant of destination selection and tourist satisfaction (Chendraningrum & Suryana, 2025; Mamta et al., 2026). As travelers increasingly seek meaningful engagement with local cultures, food serves as a tangible manifestation of ethnic identity and tradition. Within this context, the internal psychological state of the tourist, specifically their level of interest and engagement with food, dictates how they perceive and evaluate culinary offerings. This study examines the structural relationship between food involvement, perceived authenticity, sensory appeal, and the resulting behavioral intentions through a multi-stage mediation framework.

Food involvement represents the level of importance an individual assigns to food-related activities and the intensity of their interest in culinary experiences (Bell & Marshall, 2003). In the tourism context, highly involved individuals are not passive consumers; they actively seek out gastronomic stimuli and are more sensitive to the nuances of local cuisine (Hashemi et al., 2025).

This heightened sensitivity suggests that food involvement functions as a fundamental antecedent that shapes both cognitive and sensory evaluations. Specifically, it is expected that involved tourists possess a greater capacity to recognize perceived authenticity—the degree to which a culinary experience is viewed as genuine and rooted in tradition (Wang et al., 2025)—and are more receptive to the gastronomic sensory appeal, encompassing the aesthetic and organoleptic qualities of the meal (Fernández Gallardo & Hernandez Rojas, 2025).

While existing literature has explored these variables in isolation, there is a lack of research integrating them into a holistic performance model. Most studies focus on satisfaction as a broad construct, yet this research proposes destination experiential performance (DEP) as a more precise metric for evaluating the success of a gastronomic encounter. Without a comprehensive experiential framework, destinations risk falling into the 'commodity trap,' where they fail to differentiate their offerings by focusing exclusively on physical taste rather than a holistic performance. DEP reflects the functional and educational value derived from the interaction between the tourist and the destination's culinary landscape (M Suryana et al., 2025). High levels of DEP are hypothesized to foster a deep psychological bond, categorized as gastronomic place attachment (GPA). This attachment transcends simple satisfaction, creating a sense of place identity and dependence that serves as the most potent driver for revisit intention (RI).

Despite the logical flow from involvement to behavior, empirical evidence regarding the sequential mediation through authenticity, sensory appeal, and place attachment remains fragmented. This study fills this gap by utilizing an SEM-PLS approach to analyze how these constructs interact within a single structural model. By mapping the transition from internal motivations to emotional attachment, this research provides actionable insights for destination management organizations (DMOs) seeking to optimize their gastronomic brand equity and ensure long-term tourist loyalty.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework: The Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Model

The theoretical architecture of this research is constructed upon the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework, a foundational environmental psychology paradigm established by (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). This model posits that specific environmental or internal triggers—defined as stimuli—initiate an internal evaluation process within the individual—the organism—which subsequently generates a behavioral outcome—the response. Within the context of gastronomic tourism, the S-O-R framework provides a systematic logic to examine the mechanical transition from personal predispositions to destination loyalty.

In this study, Food Involvement (FI) is conceptualized as the internal stimulus. Unlike external destination attributes, FI reflects the inherent psychological intensity and personal relevance a tourist assigns to culinary activities (Bell & Marshall, 2003). This stimulus dictates the depth of engagement and serves as a determinant for how a tourist processes subsequent information. Once the tourist interacts with the destination's culinary landscape, the 'Organism' stage is activated. A dual-path internalization represents this stage: the cognitive evaluation of Perceived Authenticity (PA) and the sensory appraisal of Gastronomic Sensory Appeal (GSA) (Fernández Gallardo & Hernandez Rojas, 2025). These organismic states are further synthesized into Destination Experiential Performance (DEP), a constituent metric that evaluates the functional and aesthetic success of the encounter (Chendraningrum & Suryana, 2025).

The 'Response' stage encapsulates the behavioral manifestations resulting from these internal states. When the experiential performance is successfully internalized, it facilitates a relational bond identified as Gastronomic Place Attachment (GPA) (Wang et al., 2025). This attachment functions as the final psychological bridge to Revisit Intention (RI). By adopting the S-O-R logic, this research avoids simplistic linear assumptions, instead examining the sequential mechanism

where internal stimuli are transformed through cognitive, sensory, and relational filters into sustained behavioral commitment (Hashemi et al., 2025; Mamta et al., 2026).

Food Involvement (FI) as a Psychological Driver

Food involvement (FI) constitutes a stable psychological trait that dictates the level of cognitive and physical effort an individual invests in food-related stimuli (Bell & Marshall, 2003). Within the S-O-R framework, FI operates as the internal stimulus that filters how tourists perceive destination attributes. Unlike general food consumption, high levels of involvement signify a proactive interest in the cultural, social, and technical aspects of gastronomy (Hashemi et al., 2025). This trait functions as a determinant for gastronomic literacy, where tourists with higher involvement levels demonstrate a superior capacity to differentiate between standardized tourist offerings and genuine culinary traditions.

The mechanism of FI influences the organism's internal states through two distinct pathways. First, it heightens the individual's sensitivity to the organoleptic qualities of a dish, directly impacting the Gastronomic Sensory Appeal (GSA) (Fernández Gallardo & Hernandez Rojas, 2025). High-involvement tourists pay closer attention to flavor profiles, ingredients, and presentation techniques, transforming a simple meal into a sophisticated sensory evaluation. Second, FI serves as a prerequisite for the identification of Perceived Authenticity (PA). Tourists who prioritize food are more likely to seek constructive authenticity—a state where the culinary experience is validated against the tourist's existing knowledge of local traditions (Lee et al., 2024).

The cumulative effect of FI ensures that the subsequent Destination Experiential Performance (DEP) is measured against a rigorous set of internal standards. This heightened engagement prevents the experiential evaluation from becoming a superficial satisfaction metric. Instead, it ensures that the experience is internalized as a meaningful interaction with the destination's identity (Mamta et al., 2026). Thus, FI acts as the catalyst that initiates the sequential mediation process, shifting the tourist from basic interest to deep emotional and behavioral commitment.

The Dual Processing of Gastronomic Perception

Within the S-O-R framework, the processing of culinary stimuli involves a dual-path mechanism where cognitive and sensory evaluations operate as parallel organismic states. This study categorizes these internalizations into perceived authenticity and gastronomic sensory appeal. Together, these constructs form the evaluative foundation that determines the overall performance of the gastronomic encounter.

Perceived authenticity serves as the cognitive dimension of the gastronomic experience, representing the tourist's validation of a culinary offering against established cultural markers. Authenticity is not an inherent property of the food itself but a social construct internalized by the observer (Wang et al., 2025). In the context of tourism, this construct is often categorized into object-based authenticity—focusing on original ingredients and traditional preparation methods—and existential authenticity, which relates to the personal meaning derived from the encounter. For tourists with high food involvement, the search for authenticity is a primary driver of destination engagement (Chendraningrum & Suryana, 2025; Marceilla Suryana, Susanto, Chendraningrum, et al., 2025). These individuals utilize their gastronomic literacy to evaluate whether a dish conforms to perceived traditional standards. This cognitive validation functions as a prerequisite for positive experiential evaluations, as the recognition of genuine tradition enhances the perceived value of the destination (Wang et al., 2025). Consequently, PA operates as a fundamental cognitive filter that determines the legitimacy of the gastronomic performance.

Specifically, this study operationalizes perceived authenticity primarily as constructive authenticity. It is not measured as an objective, absolute property of the food itself, but rather as the tourist's cognitive validation of the culinary experience against established cultural markers and personal gastronomic knowledge. In contrast to the cognitive nature of authenticity,

gastronomic sensory appeal (GSA) represents the immediate organoleptic appraisal of the culinary stimulus. GSA encompasses the aesthetic and physical attributes of the meal, including visual presentation, aroma, texture, and flavor complexity (Fernández Gallardo & Hernandez Rojas, 2025). Within the S-O-R model, sensory appeal functions as the physical stimulus that triggers immediate organismic reactions. The sensory dimension is a primary constituent of the tourist experience, as culinary consumption is inherently a multisensory activity. High levels of sensory appeal facilitate the internalization of the experience, directly influencing the tourist's evaluative state (Hashemi et al., 2025). When a destination successfully delivers high GSA, it provides the physical gratification necessary to complement the cognitive satisfaction derived from authenticity (Fernández Gallardo & Hernandez Rojas, 2025; Mamta et al., 2026). Thus, GSA and PA function as parallel mediators, ensuring that the gastronomic encounter is evaluated through both intellectual and physical lenses.

Destination Experiential Performance (DEP)

Destination Experiential Performance (DEP) serves as a holistic metric to evaluate the efficacy of the interaction between tourists and the gastronomic offerings of a destination. While traditional research often utilizes satisfaction as a general indicator, DEP provides a more technical assessment by internalizing the functional, educational, and aesthetic components of the encounter (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). This construct functions as the central organismic state where cognitive validations of authenticity and organoleptic appraisals of sensory appeal are synthesized into a definitive performance score.

The manifestation of DEP is dependent on the successful integration of parallel perceptual inputs. As tourists process the Perceived Authenticity (PA) and Gastronomic Sensory Appeal (GSA) of local cuisine, they form a collective judgment regarding the quality of the experiential delivery (Hashemi et al., 2025). High levels of DEP indicate that the destination has effectively transformed its culinary assets into meaningful experiences that resonate with the tourist's internal standards (Yun et al., 2026). This performance level is not a static attribute but a dynamic outcome of the co-creation process between the tourist's involvement and the destination's service delivery (Sukthankar et al., 2025).

Within the structural model, DEP operates as a critical antecedent to emotional and behavioral responses. It acts as the prerequisite for the formation of Gastronomic Place Attachment (GPA), as a superior experiential performance facilitates the transition from rational evaluation to emotional bonding (H. K. Sharma et al., 2026). Furthermore, DEP directly dictates the probability of Revisit Intention (RI), as tourists are more likely to return to destinations that demonstrate consistent excellence in their culinary experiential performance (Fernández Gallardo & Hernandez Rojas, 2025; Thi Tuyet et al., 2025). By positioning DEP as the core evaluative construct, this research identifies the specific performance metrics that DMOs must prioritize to maintain long-term competitiveness in the gastronomic market.

Gastronomic Place Attachment (GPA)

Gastronomic place attachment (GPA) describes the emotional and symbolic bond that tourists establish with a specific geographical location through its culinary offerings. Grounded in the broader theory of place attachment, GPA is a multidimensional construct consisting of place identity—the degree to which the destination's food culture reflects the tourist's self-concept—and place dependence, which refers to the perceived uniqueness and functional superiority of the destination's gastronomic landscape (Williams & Vaske, 2003; B. Zhao et al., 2024). Within the S-O-R framework, GPA represents a relational response resulting from the positive internalization of experiential stimuli.

The formation of GPA is inherently linked to the quality of the prior evaluative states. When a tourist perceives a high level of Destination Experiential Performance (DEP), the cognitive and

sensory gratifications are transformed into a lasting psychological connection (Chu et al., 2026). This transition occurs because food serves as a tangible vehicle for cultural immersion, allowing tourists to incorporate the destination's heritage into their personal experience. Consequently, GPA acts as an emotional anchor that distinguishes a destination from its competitors, making it a prerequisite for long-term loyalty (Wang et al., 2025).

Recent literature suggests that place attachment in the gastronomic context is not a static state but an evolving relational outcome. Tourists who develop a strong GPA demonstrate a higher tolerance for service failures and a greater willingness to engage in pro-environmental behaviors within the destination (B. Zhao et al., 2024). Furthermore, GPA functions as the critical link between experiential evaluation and behavioral response, as emotional bonds are more reliable predictors of future actions than rational satisfaction alone (Chu et al., 2026; Wang et al., 2025). By identifying the determinants of GPA, this research provides a framework for understanding how culinary experiences are converted into enduring destination-tourist relationships.

Revisit Intention (RI)

Revisit intention (RI) denotes the behavioral outcome within the S-O-R framework, representing the probability of a tourist returning to a specific destination to engage in further gastronomic activities. It serves as a fundamental indicator of destination loyalty and long-term economic sustainability (Fernández Gallardo & Hernandez Rojas, 2025). In the context of gastronomic tourism, RI is not merely a consequence of general satisfaction but a result of the successful internalization of experiential performance and the subsequent formation of emotional bonds (F. Yang et al., 2026).

The determinants of RI are hierarchical and sequential. Superior Destination Experiential Performance (DEP) functions as the primary prerequisite for repurchase behavior, as it validates the functional and educational utility of the culinary encounter (Sukthankar et al., 2025; Thi Tuyet et al., 2025). However, the influence of performance on RI is often mediated by the relational state of the tourist. Individuals who manifest a high degree of Gastronomic Place Attachment (GPA) demonstrate a more consistent intention to revisit, as their commitment is rooted in personal identity and emotional dependence rather than purely rational evaluation (I. Sharma et al., 2026; Z. Zhao & Chen, 2025).

Empirical findings suggest that revisit intentions are intensified when the gastronomic experience is perceived as unique and irreplaceable. Tourists who internalize the experience as a constituent part of their self-concept are more likely to exhibit positive word-of-mouth and a sustained commitment to the destination (Hashemi et al., 2025). Within this structural model, RI represents the final manifestation of the transition from internal stimuli (food involvement) to emotional internalization (place attachment), providing a definitive measure of the destination's ability to maintain its competitive advantage in the global gastronomic market (Fernández Gallardo & Hernandez Rojas, 2025).

Conceptual Model and Hypotheses Development

The conceptual framework of this study integrates the internal stimulus of Food Involvement (FI) with the organismic evaluations of Perceived Authenticity (PA), Gastronomic Sensory Appeal (GSA), and Destination Experiential Performance (DEP), leading to the relational and behavioral responses of Gastronomic Place Attachment (GPA) and Revisit Intention (RI). This structural sequence is illustrated in Figure 1. Individuals with high levels of Food Involvement (FI) demonstrate a heightened sensitivity toward culinary stimuli, which dictates their evaluative intensity (Bell & Marshall, 2003). Within the S-O-R framework, FI functions as the internal stimulus that filters how destination attributes are processed. Highly involved tourists proactively seek constructive authenticity, utilizing their gastronomic knowledge to validate the genuineness of a

meal (Kim & Lee, 2024). Furthermore, FI enhances the organoleptic appraisal of culinary offerings, as involved individuals pay closer attention to flavor complexity and presentation (Fernández Gallardo & Hernandez Rojas, 2025).

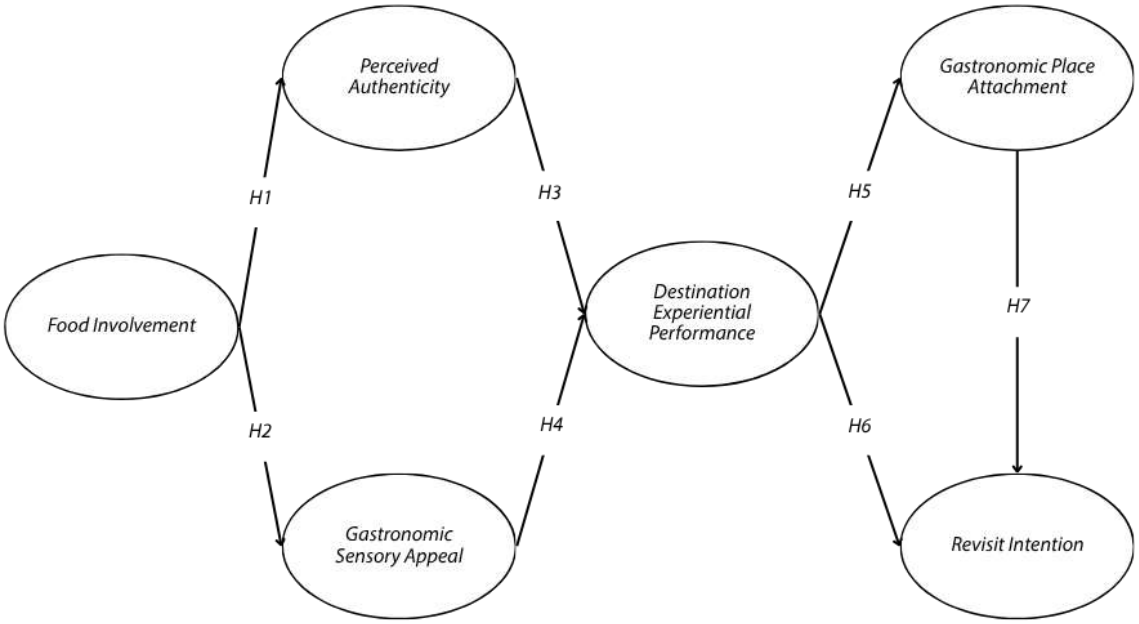


Figure 1. Proposed Framework
Source: Research data, 2026

Destination Experiential Performance (DEP) is established through the synthesis of cognitive and physical inputs. As tourists perceive a culinary encounter as authentic, they assign a higher functional and educational value to the experience. Similarly, the physiological gratification derived from high Gastronomic Sensory Appeal (GSA) serves as a constituent of the overall performance evaluation (Hashemi et al., 2025). When both authenticity and sensory appeal are present, the tourist internalizes the encounter as a superior experiential delivery (Yun et al., 2026). Therefore, we propose:

Superior Destination Experiential Performance (DEP) facilitates the transition from rational evaluation to emotional bonding. When the gastronomic encounter exceeds internal standards, it fosters a sense of place identity and dependence, manifesting as Gastronomic Place Attachment (GPA) (Chu et al., 2026; B. Zhao et al., 2024). Furthermore, high performance levels directly encourage the intention to return to the destination (Thi Tuyet et al., 2025). Finally, tourists who manifest a strong emotional bond through GPA are more likely to exhibit sustained loyalty (Wang et al., 2025). Thus, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H1: Food Involvement has a positive effect on Perceived Authenticity.
H2: Food Involvement has a positive effect on Gastronomic Sensory Appeal.
H3: Perceived Authenticity has a positive effect on Destination Experiential Performance.
H4: Gastronomic Sensory Appeal has a positive effect on Destination Experiential Performance.
H5: Destination Experiential Performance has a positive effect on Gastronomic Place Attachment.
H6: Destination Experiential Performance has a positive effect on Revisit Intention.
H7: Gastronomic Place Attachment has a positive effect on Revisit Intention.

METHODS

Research Design and Context

This study utilizes a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to examine the structural relationships within the proposed gastronomic framework. The primary objective is to evaluate the sequential mediation effect of experiential and relational constructs on revisit intentions. The research context is situated in Bandung, Indonesia, a prominent culinary destination characterized by a diverse gastronomic ecosystem. This setting provides a representative environment for analyzing the internalization of authenticity and sensory appeal among domestic and international tourists. The study employs a deductive approach, testing a series of hypotheses derived from the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework.

Sampling and Data Collection

Data collection was executed using a purposive sampling technique to ensure that participants possessed the requisite experience to evaluate the target constructs. Eligible respondents were defined as tourists who had engaged in local gastronomic activities within the previous six months. To determine the minimum sample size required for robust estimation using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), this study applied the 10-times rule and conducted a G*Power analysis. These methods ensure sufficient statistical power to detect meaningful effect sizes within the structural model.

The survey instrument was developed through a rigorous back-translation procedure to ensure linguistic equivalence between the original scales and the Indonesian version. The initial stage of the survey incorporated a series of filtering questions designed to verify respondent eligibility and obtain informed consent. Data were collected through digital distribution channels, targeting individuals with a documented interest in gastronomic travel. To maintain data integrity, the survey included an explicit ethics statement affirming that participation was voluntary and that all responses remained anonymous and confidential.

Ethical Considerations and Consent

The data collection process adhered to established ethical standards for human subject research. Before accessing the survey instruments, all potential respondents were presented with an informed consent form detailing the study's objectives, the voluntary nature of participation, and the right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. To ensure data privacy, the survey was conducted anonymously, with no personally identifiable information (PII) recorded. Respondents were required to explicitly confirm their consent by selecting a mandatory checkbox before proceeding to the filtering questions. This procedure ensures that the final dataset consists exclusively of participants who are fully aware of the research context and have voluntarily agreed to provide their perspectives for academic analysis.

Instrumentation and Measurement

The measurement instrument was developed by adapting established scales from existing literature to fit the gastronomic context of this study. All constructs are measured using reflective indicators on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). This approach ensures that the measurement model can be rigorously evaluated for reliability and validity using PLS-SEM. The scale for Food Involvement (FI) focuses on the psychological importance of food activities and is adapted from the seminal work of (Bell & Marshall, 2003). Perceived Authenticity (PA) and Gastronomic Sensory Appeal (GSA) are measured using items that evaluate cognitive genuineness and organoleptic quality, respectively, drawing from (Fernández Gallardo & Hernandez Rojas, 2025). Destination Experiential Performance (DEP) items are designed to assess the functional and aesthetic success of the culinary encounter. Finally, Gastronomic Place Attachment (GPA) and Revisit Intention (RI) scales measure the emotional

bond and behavioral commitment to the destination. Table 1 provides a summary of the measurement items and their respective sources.

Table 1. Instrument Development

Construct	Code	Measurement Items	Source
Food Involvement (FI)	FI1	I enjoy finding out about the stories behind local food.	(Bell & Marshall, 2003; Hashemi et al., 2025)
	FI2	Local food is a very important part of my travel experience.	
	FI3	I am interested in the ingredients and preparation of local dishes.	
Perceived Authenticity (PA)	PA1	The food I consumed reflects the true local culinary tradition.	(Wang et al., 2025)
	PA2	The preparation methods used appeared genuine and traditional.	
	PA3	The culinary experience felt like an original part of the culture.	
Gastronomic Sensory Appeal (GSA)	GSA1	The local food has an appealing visual presentation.	(Fernández Gallardo & Hernandez Rojas, 2025)
	GSA2	The taste and aroma of the food are distinctive and pleasant.	
	GSA3	The texture of the local dishes meets my expectations.	
Destination Experiential Performance (DEP)	DEP1	The gastronomic activities provided educational value about the culture.	(Marceilla Suryana, Susanto, & Chendraningrum, 2025; Utomo & Susanto, 2025)
	DEP2	The culinary encounter was a high-quality performance of local life.	
	DEP3	The overall culinary experience was functionally superior.	
Gastronomic Place Attachment (GPA)	GPA1	I feel a strong emotional bond with this destination through its food.	(Chu et al., 2026; Z. Zhao & Chen, 2025)
	GPA2	This destination's food culture reflects my personal identity.	
	GPA3	I would feel a sense of loss if I could not experience this food again.	
Revisit Intention (RI)	RI1	I intend to return to this destination for its gastronomic offerings.	(Thi Tuyet et al., 2025; H. Yang et al., 2025)
	RI2	I will recommend this destination's food to others.	
	RI3	This destination is my first choice for my next culinary trip.	

Source: Research data, 2026

Data Analysis Procedure

Statistical analysis is conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS software. PLS-SEM is selected due to its efficacy in analyzing complex structural models involving multiple mediation pathways and its ability to handle predictive research objectives. The evaluation follows a two-stage approach: the assessment of the measurement model (outer model) to ensure reliability and validity, followed by the assessment of the structural model (inner model) to test the hypothesized relationships and path significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile

The demographic characteristics of the 300 respondents were examined to ensure sample representativeness within the gastronomic tourism context. Analysis of the gender distribution indicates a balanced sample, with Male respondents accounting for 51% (n=153) and Female respondents representing 49% (n=147). This distribution ensures that gender-specific predispositions do not skew the evaluative data for gastronomic experiences. Age distribution reflects a concentration within the productive and mobile demographic segments. The largest group consists of individuals aged 26–35 years (40%, n=120), followed by the 36–45 years cohort

(24.3%, n=73). Younger adults aged 18–25 years represent 20.7% (n=62) of the sample. Middle-aged and senior cohorts, including 46–55 years (8.7%, n=26) and those above 55 years (6.3%, n=19), constitute the remainder. This age profile aligns with the typical consumer base of urban gastronomic destinations, where young and middle-aged professionals are primary participants. Regarding origin, the sample is dominated by Domestic tourists (83.3%, n=250), while International tourists represent 16.7% (n=50). Furthermore, the Visit Frequency data indicates high levels of destination engagement; 43.7% (n=131) of respondents have visited 2–3 times, and 18% (n=54) are frequent visitors with more than 3 visits. First-time visitors account for 38.3% (n=115). The significant presence of repeat visitors provides a robust foundation for examining long-term relational constructs such as place attachment and revisit intentions. Table 2 provides a technical summary of the respondent profile.

Table 2. Summary of Respondent Demographic Profile

Category	Sub-category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	153	51.0
	Female	147	49.0
Age (Years)	18–25	62	20.7
	26–35	120	40.0
	36–45	73	24.3
	46–55	26	8.7
	> 55	19	6.3
Origin	Domestic	250	83.3
	International	50	16.7
Visit Frequency	First time	115	38.3
	2–3 times	131	43.7
	> 3 times	54	18.0

Source: Research data, 2026

Measurement Model Assessment

The evaluation of the measurement model follows the established protocols for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), focusing on internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. This assessment ensures that the latent constructs are accurately represented by their respective reflective indicators before examining the structural relationships. Convergent validity is examined through factor loadings, Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). As shown in Table 3, all standardized factor loadings range from 0.795 to 0.896, significantly exceeding the minimum threshold of 0.708. This indicates that the indicators share a high proportion of variance with their intended latent constructs.

Cronbach's Alpha and CR values confirm internal consistency. All constructs demonstrate Cronbach's Alpha values between 0.753 and 0.861, while CR values range from 0.858 to 0.915. These results surpass the recommended 0.70 threshold, indicating high reliability. Furthermore, the AVE for each construct ranges from 0.669 to 0.783, exceeding the 0.50 requirement. This confirms that the latent variables explain more than 50% of the variance of their indicators, establishing robust convergent validity.

Table 3. Results of Convergent Validity and Reliability Analysis

Construct	Indicator	Loadings	α	ρA	CR	AVE
Food Involvement (FI)	FI1	0.880	0.861	0.863	0.915	0.783
	FI2	0.879				
	FI3	0.896				
Perceived Authenticity (PA)	PA1	0.849	0.836	0.839	0.901	0.753

Construct	Indicator	Loadings	α	ρA	CR	AVE
	PA2	0.885				
	PA3	0.868				
Gastronomic Sensory Appeal (GSA)	GSA1	0.853	0.801	0.807	0.883	0.716
	GSA2	0.795				
	GSA3	0.848				
Destination Experiential Performance (DEP)	DEP1	0.865	0.820	0.820	0.893	0.735
	DEP2	0.854				
	DEP3	0.853				
Gastronomic Place Attachment (GPA)	GPA1	0.867	0.779	0.791	0.871	0.693
	GPA2	0.861				
	GPA3	0.809				
Revisit Intention (RI)	RI1	0.826	0.753	0.759	0.858	0.669
	RI2	0.795				
	RI3	0.832				

Source: Research data, 2026

Discriminant validity is evaluated using the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio, which provides a more rigorous assessment than traditional criteria. As illustrated in Table 4, all HTMT values are below the conservative threshold of 0.85. The highest ratio observed is 0.848 (between Revisit Intention and Gastronomic Sensory Appeal), confirming that each construct is empirically distinct from the others within the framework.

Table 4. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	DEP	FI	GPA	GSA	PA
FI	0.636				
GPA	0.576	0.709			
GSA	0.716	0.510	0.497		
PA	0.697	0.714	0.539	0.577	
RI	0.698	0.500	0.456	0.848	0.571

Source: Research data, 2026

Structural Model Assessment

The assessment of the structural model follows the verification of the measurement model to evaluate the hypothesized relationships among the constructs. This stage involves examining the collinearity, the significance of path coefficients, the explanatory power (R^2), effect size (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2). The finalized results are illustrated in Figure 2.

Prior to testing the hypotheses, the internal Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) is examined to detect potential multicollinearity among the predictor variables. The results indicate that all inner VIF values range from 1.000 to 1.294, remaining well below the conservative threshold of 5.0 (Hair et al., 2022). This confirms the absence of multicollinearity issues within the structural model. The structural relationships were tested using a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples. The analysis demonstrates that all seven hypotheses are statistically supported at the 95% confidence level ($p < 0.05$).

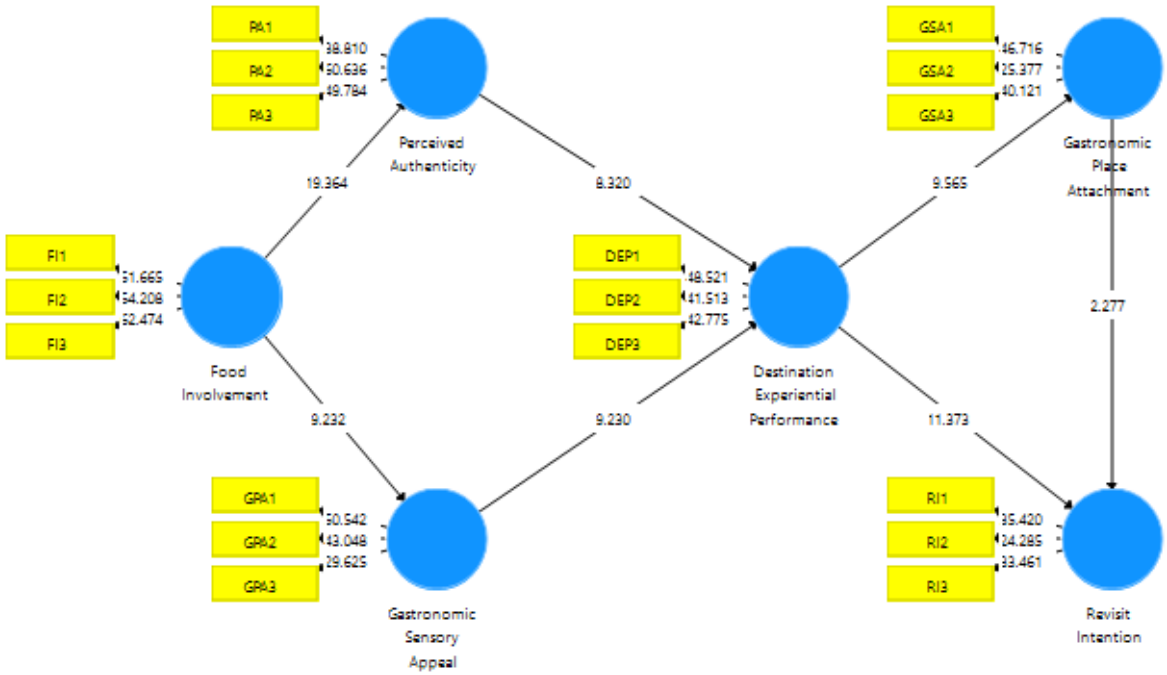


Figure 2. Evaluated Model

Source: Research data, 2026

Food Involvement (FI) shows a significant positive effect on Perceived Authenticity (PA) (β = 0.607, t = 19.364, p = 0.000) and Gastronomic Sensory Appeal (GSA) (β = 0.428, t = 9.232, p = 0.000), supporting H1 and H2. Both PA (β = 0.390, t = 8.320, p = 0.000) and GSA (β = 0.395, t = 9.230, p = 0.000) significantly influence Destination Experiential Performance (DEP), confirming H3 and H4. Furthermore, DEP serves as a strong determinant for Gastronomic Place Attachment (GPA) (β = 0.464, t = 9.565, p = 0.000) and Revisit Intention (RI) (β = 0.492, t = 11.373, p = 0.000), supporting H5 and H6. Finally, GPA exhibits a significant positive impact on RI (β = 0.128, t = 2.277, p = 0.023), supporting H7.

Table 5. Results of Hypothesis Testing

Hyp.	Relationship	β	T Statistics	P Values	Result
H1	FI → PA	0.607	19.364	0.000	Supported
H2	FI → GSA	0.428	9.232	0.000	Supported
H3	PA → DEP	0.390	8.320	0.000	Supported
H4	GSA → DEP	0.395	9.230	0.000	Supported
H5	DEP → GPA	0.464	9.565	0.000	Supported
H6	DEP → RI	0.492	11.373	0.000	Supported
H7	GPA → RI	0.128	2.277	0.023	Supported

Source: Research data, 2026

The model demonstrates substantial explanatory power, with R^2 values indicating the proportion of variance explained in the endogenous constructs. Destination Experiential Performance (DEP) has an R^2 of 0.454, while Perceived Authenticity (PA) and Revisit Intention (RI) show values of 0.369 and 0.317, respectively. These values indicate a moderate to substantial level of predictive accuracy in the context of behavioral tourism research. Analysis of effect sizes (f^2) reveals that the impact of FI on PA is the strongest within the model (f^2 = 0.584), representing a large effect. The effects of PA on DEP (f^2 = 0.215) and GSA on DEP (f^2 = 0.221) are categorized as medium. Conversely, the influence of GPA on RI (f^2 = 0.019) constitutes a small effect. The

predictive relevance of the model is confirmed by the Q^2 values derived from the blindfolding procedure. All endogenous constructs exhibit Q^2 values greater than zero, specifically DEP (0.330), PA (0.273), and RI (0.206). These results confirm that the structural model possesses significant predictive relevance for the observed indicators.

Mediation Analysis

The mediation analysis is performed to examine the indirect pathways through which Food Involvement (FI) influences Revisit Intention (RI). Following the S-O-R framework, this study evaluates the mediating roles of perceived authenticity, sensory appeal, experiential performance, and place attachment. The results for the specific indirect effects, derived from the bootstrapping procedure, are summarized in Table 6. The results confirm that the influence of Food Involvement (FI) on Destination Experiential Performance (DEP) is significantly mediated by both cognitive and sensory filters. The indirect effect of FI → PA → DEP (β = 0.237, t = 6.917, p = 0.000) is stronger than the FI → GSA → DEP path (β = 0.169, t = 6.251, p = 0.000). This indicates that while sensory attraction is a significant driver, the cognitive validation of authenticity remains the primary mechanism through which involved tourists assess the performance of the destination.

The findings demonstrate several sequential mediation pathways leading to Revisit Intention (RI). Specifically, the relationship between Destination Experiential Performance (DEP) and RI is significantly mediated by Gastronomic Place Attachment (GPA) (β = 0.059, t = 2.201, p = 0.028). This suggests that a superior culinary experience does not solely lead to repeat visits through rational evaluation but also by fostering an emotional bond with the destination. The longest sequential pathways involving the entire S-O-R chain are also statistically significant. The path FI → PA → DEP → GPA → RI exhibits a significant indirect effect (β = 0.014, t = 2.052, p = 0.040). Similarly, the path FI → GSA → DEP → GPA → RI is significant at the threshold level (β = 0.010, t = 1.959, p = 0.050). These results indicate that the transformation of food involvement into long-term loyalty is a complex process that requires the successful integration of sensory appeal, authentic perception, and emotional internalization.

Table 6. Summary of Specific Indirect Effects

Mediation Path	β	T Statistics	P Values	Result
FI → PA → DEP	0.237	6.917	0.000	Significant
FI → GSA → DEP	0.169	6.251	0.000	Significant
PA → DEP → GPA	0.181	5.814	0.000	Significant
GSA → DEP → GPA	0.183	6.642	0.000	Significant
PA → DEP → RI	0.192	6.792	0.000	Significant
GSA → DEP → RI	0.194	6.399	0.000	Significant
DEP → GPA → RI	0.059	2.201	0.028	Significant
FI → PA → DEP → RI	0.117	5.850	0.000	Significant
FI → GSA → DEP → RI	0.083	4.957	0.000	Significant
FI → PA → DEP → GPA → RI	0.014	2.052	0.040	Significant
FI → GSA → DEP → GPA → RI	0.010	1.959	0.050	Significant

Source: Research data, 2026

Discussion

The empirical results confirm the robust applicability of the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework in explaining the complexities of gastronomic tourism behavior. By positioning Food Involvement (FI) as the internal stimulus, this study successfully captured the subsequent organismic transformations into cognitive and sensory states. Unlike traditional models that treat satisfaction as a singular evaluative state, the current model validates that the Organism phase is

composed of parallel and sequential layers—specifically Perceived Authenticity (PA), Gastronomic Sensory Appeal (GSA), and Destination Experiential Performance (DEP). This hierarchical structure aligns with the seminal environmental psychology principles established by (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974), demonstrating that environmental stimuli (in this case, culinary attributes) are internalized through affective and cognitive appraisals before manifesting as behavioral responses.

The validation of H1 (β = 0.607) and H2 (β = 0.428) highlights the critical role of the tourist's psychological state prior to consumption. The empirical data indicate that individuals with high food involvement utilize their expertise and interest as a primary filter for evaluating destination attributes. The stronger relationship between FI and PA suggests that involved tourists are more concerned with the cultural legitimacy and traditional roots of the food than its immediate physical appeal. This finding supports the contentions of (Bell & Marshall, 2003), who argue that food involvement functions as a form of gastronomic literacy. Highly involved tourists do not merely consume; they validate. Consequently, the identification of genuine traditional markers becomes a prerequisite for their engagement with the destination's culinary offerings.

A central finding of this research is the successful evaluation of the dual-path mediation leading to Destination Experiential Performance (DEP). The support for H3 (β = 0.390) and H4 (β = 0.395), coupled with the significant indirect effects, confirms that gastronomic performance is a synthesized outcome of both the head and the senses. While Gastronomic Sensory Appeal (GSA) provides the necessary physiological gratification as described by (Fernández Gallardo & Hernandez Rojas, 2025), Perceived Authenticity (PA) provides the cognitive depth required to elevate a meal into a memorable experience. The R^2 of 0.454 for DEP indicates that nearly half of the variance in experience performance is dictated by these two organismic states. This dialectic with existing literature suggests that for high-involvement tourists, a meal that is sensory-pleasing but cognitively inauthentic will fail to achieve high experiential performance scores.

The transition from evaluation to behavior is evidenced by the support for H5 (β = 0.464), H6 (β = 0.492), and H7 (β = 0.128). The results indicate that Destination Experiential Performance (DEP) is the most significant antecedent for both Gastronomic Place Attachment (GPA) and Revisit Intention (RI). While the influence of GPA on RI is statistically significant, its small effect size (f^2 = 0.019) suggests that in the pragmatic context of tourism, functional performance remains the primary driver of return behavior. However, the significance of the sequential mediation path (DEP → GPA → RI) validates the theory of (Williams & Vaske, 2003), which posits that superior performance facilitates an emotional incorporation of the place into the individual's identity. This emotional bond, though a smaller direct driver of revisit, serves as a critical relational anchor that distinguishes the destination in a competitive market, transforming a transactional visit into a long-term psychological connection as proposed by (Chu et al., 2026; Z. Zhao & Chen, 2025).

Theoretical Implications

The theoretical contributions of this study extend the existing literature on gastronomic tourism by providing a nuanced decomposition of the tourist's internal evaluative processes. The following implications are derived from the validated structural model: Refinement of the S-O-R Framework in Tourism: While the Stimulus-Organism-Response model is widely utilized in environmental psychology (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974), its application in gastronomic tourism often oversimplifies the Organism phase. This research advances the framework by demonstrating that organismic evaluations are composed of a dual-path mechanism—integrating cognitive validation (Perceived Authenticity) and physiological gratification (Gastronomic Sensory Appeal). The validation of this structure suggests that organismic states in culinary tourism are multi-layered rather than monolithic.

Sequential Mediation of Experiential and Relational Constructs: This study contributes a comprehensive sequential mediation model that bridges the gap between psychological

involvement and behavioral loyalty. By proving the path FI → PA/GSA → DEP → GPA → RI, the research identifies the specific black box mechanisms that transform a generic food stimulus into a localized emotional bond (Williams & Vaske, 2003). This confirms that revisit intention is not merely a product of satisfaction but a result of a sophisticated internalization process.

Food Involvement as a Hierarchical Filter: The significant influence of Food Involvement (FI) on both authenticity and sensory appeal provides empirical evidence for the theory of gastronomic literacy (Bell & Marshall, 2003). The study establishes FI as a high-level psychological antecedent that dictates the intensity of the tourist's evaluative scrutiny. This suggests that the depth of the gastronomic experience is as much a product of the tourist's internal involvement as it is of the destination's external attributes.

The Functional-Emotional Linkage in Place Attachment: By positioning Gastronomic Place Attachment (GPA) as a mediator between performance and intention, this research clarifies the role of culinary heritage in place-making. It proves that food acts as a tangible medium for place identity, confirming that emotional bonds with a destination can be effectively built through functional experiential success (Chu et al., 2026; Z. Zhao & Chen, 2025).

Managerial Implications

The empirical findings provide actionable insights for Destination Management Organizations (DMOs), culinary entrepreneurs, and industry associations. The following strategies are recommended to optimize the gastronomic appeal and long-term loyalty of the destination: Strategic Authenticity Preservation: Given that Perceived Authenticity (PA) exerts a primary influence on experiential performance, stakeholders must prioritize the protection of culinary heritage. This includes maintaining traditional cooking techniques, sourcing local ingredients, and providing behind-the-scenes access to food preparation processes. For destinations like Bandung, certifying local eateries for their adherence to traditional recipes can serve as a powerful cognitive validation for tourists.

Targeted Marketing for High-Involvement Segments: Since Food Involvement (FI) acts as the initial stimulus, marketing campaigns should target foodies and culinary enthusiasts who demonstrate high involvement. Digital platforms and social media should be utilized to provide detailed information regarding food origins, historical narratives, and ingredient profiles to satisfy the information-seeking behavior of this segment. Sensory Experience Engineering: To maximize Gastronomic Sensory Appeal (GSA), DMOs should focus on atmospheric management. This involves optimizing the visual presentation of food and the ambient aromas within culinary hubs. Enhancing the street-scape of culinary districts can trigger positive sensory appraisals, which directly contribute to the overall perceived performance of the destination.

Experience-to-Attachment Programming: To bridge the gap between a single visit and a permanent emotional bond (GPA), destinations should implement experiential programs such as cooking workshops, gastronomic tours, and meet-the-chef sessions. These activities allow tourists to move beyond passive consumption and engage in active co-creation, fostering a sense of place identity and belonging. Digital Integration in Gastronomic Rural Destinations: For rural tourism villages, digital transformation should focus on providing authentic storytelling through AI-driven personalization or QR-code-based food narratives. This ensures that the cognitive need for authenticity is met even in remote locations, thereby enhancing Destination Experiential Performance (DEP) and encouraging revisit intentions.

CONCLUSION

This study successfully validates the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework within the gastronomic tourism domain, identifying the complex psychological pathways that transform internal stimuli into long-term behavioral loyalty. The empirical analysis confirms that

Food Involvement (FI) serves as a potent driver for both cognitive (Perceived Authenticity) and sensory (Gastronomic Sensory Appeal) appraisals. These organismic states collectively determine Destination Experiential Performance (DEP), which functions as the primary antecedent for Gastronomic Place Attachment (GPA) and Revisit Intention (RI). The results underscore that the transition from a culinary encounter to destination loyalty is a multi-layered process involving both functional validation and emotional internalization.

The structural model assessment demonstrates that all seven hypotheses are statistically supported. Specifically, the cognitive validation of authenticity exerts a stronger influence on experiential performance than immediate sensory appeal for high-involvement tourists. Furthermore, while destination performance remains the most significant direct driver of revisit intentions, the inclusion of place attachment as a mediator reveals that emotional bonds provide a critical relational value that enhances the long-term competitiveness of a gastronomic destination. The sequential mediation analysis confirms that the successful integration of sensory attraction, authentic perception, and experiential delivery is necessary to convert initial interest into sustained behavioral commitment.

Despite the rigorous methodological approach, this research possesses certain limitations that should be acknowledged: Geographic Scope: The data collection was limited to tourists visiting Bandung, Indonesia. While Bandung is a representative gastronomic hub, the findings may not be fully generalizable to destinations with different cultural or culinary characteristics. Cross-Sectional Design: This study utilized a cross-sectional approach, capturing respondent perceptions at a single point in time. This prevents the analysis of long-term behavioral shifts or the evolution of place attachment over multiple years. Sampling Method: Although purposive sampling ensured respondent eligibility, the reliance on digital distribution channels may exclude certain demographic segments with limited digital engagement.

To advance the theoretical and practical understanding of gastronomic tourism, future research should consider the following directions: Longitudinal Studies: Implementing a longitudinal research design would allow for the examination of how place attachment and revisit intentions evolve, particularly following multiple return visits. Integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI): Future studies should explore the role of AI-driven personalization and digital experience capabilities in enhancing perceived authenticity and destination performance, especially in rural tourism contexts. Cross-Cultural Analysis: Comparative studies between domestic and international tourists or between different culinary destinations (e.g., urban vs. rural) could provide deeper insights into the varying roles of authenticity and sensory appeal. Inclusion of Regenerative Metrics: Subsequent research should integrate metrics related to holistic experience performance and regenerative tourism practices to evaluate how sustainability-driven experiences influence tourist behavior.

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