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DO THEY RETURN FOR FOOD? EXPLORING THE ROLE OF MEMORABLE FOOD EXPERIENCES AND DESTINATION IMAGE

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ABSTRACT

The study investigates the intricate relationships among local food experiences, memorable tourism experience, destination image and tourists' revisit intentions. The research employed a quantitative research design. Data collection was conducted between January and March 2024 and analysed with structural equation modelling. Results indicate that while local food may not directly impact revisit intentions, it significantly shapes memorable tourism experiences and destination image. Memorable experiences, in turn, strongly predict revisit intentions. Local food serves a crucial role in enhancing destination image, contributing to overall attractiveness. However, the direct influence of destination image on revisit intentions could have been more conclusive, warranting further investigation into mediating factors and contextual influences. The study emphasizes the importance of integrating local food into destination branding and management strategies to enhance tourists' perceptions and increase revisit intentions. Future research should explore additional factors influencing revisit intentions and clarify the complex relationships between local food, memorable experiences, destination image and tourist behaviour.

KEYWORDS

local food, memorable tourism experience, destination image, revisit intention

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1. INTRODUCTION

Discussion of revisit intentions is extensively explored in diverse academic literature within the framework of tourist behaviour due to its capacity to foster favourable traveller opportunities in the future. This statement aligns with planned behaviour theory, which explains that attitudes and intentions have a significant influence on individual behaviour. Within the tourism context,

the revisit intention signifies tourists' positive future engagement by returning to the same destination. Revisit intention is the most dependable predictor of revisit decisions (Fatmawati & Olga, 2023) as it reflects their contentment with the preceding service (Chan, 2018; Johari & Anuar, 2020).

Revisiting can shape positive tourist behaviour, boost revenue streams, enhance profitability and sustain operational continuity within a business framework



(Fatmawati & Olga, 2023; Rusdin & Rashid, 2018). A traveller's revisit intention not only shapes return visits but also serves as a pull factor for others, thereby potentially mitigating the expenses associated with attracting new tourists, diminishing travellers' susceptibility to price fluctuations, increasing long-term customer value, and erecting entry barriers for prospective competitors (Torabi et al., 2022). Consequently, amid the progressively competitive landscape of tourist destinations and evolving patterns in tourist conduct, it becomes imperative for destination managers to identify the determinants influencing the propensity to revisit tourist destinations¹.

Consuming local food emerges as a significant undertaking among tourists during their visit to a destination. Prior studies explain that a substantial portion of the travelling budget is allocated to catering for food and beverage requirements (Achmadi et al., 2023; Birch & Memery, 2020; Pezenka & Weismayer, 2020). Indeed, expenditure on food and beverages may encompass 25% to 35% of the total outlay and demonstrates a sustained upward trend, highlighting its increasing importance (Stone et al., 2018). Local food comprises food crafted from indigenous ingredients representative of a specific locality (Sthapit, 2017) and such food tends to boast distinctive, authentic flavours specific to the region, making it unique (Crespi-Vallbona et al., 2019). Consuming local food goes beyond satisfying physical hunger; it is seen as an escape from their daily lives becoming immersed in the local culture, which leads to more practical knowledge (Suntikul et al., 2020).

Local food availability is an important determinant influencing tourists' propensity for repeat visits to a destination (Alderighi et al., 2016; Min, 2014). Furthermore, Chen and Huang (2019) explain how local food offerings can serve as a sustainable marketing instrument for a destination as its unique character has the potential to attract tourists, inspiring them to consider returning in the future. In many instances, this immersive gastronomic experience becomes the primary motivator prompting tourists to return and savour the destination's distinctive cuisine once more². Moreover, local cuisine serves as a meaningful expression of a region's culture and heritage, offering a valuable avenue for tourists to immerse themselves in the local way of life. Engaging with traditional dishes allows visitors to deepen their understanding of the historical, cultural and customary characteristics that define an indigenous community (Sengel et al., 2015). Local food consumption not only affords visitors a way to taste the rich and diverse culture of the destinations they visit (Adongo et al., 2015) but also produces a positive travel experience, fostering appreciation and forming enduring memories, thereby strengthening the likelihood of return

visits (Alderighi et al., 2016; Nguyen et al., 2019) and subsequent recommendations to others (Gupta et al., 2023). A favourable food experience significantly heightens engagement with a destination (Hsu & Scott, 2020), as mentioned by the similar research findings of Alderighi et al. (2016), emphasizing that an interesting product experience and strong appreciation can increase revisit intentions. Thus, local food serves as a potent catalyst in enhancing the attraction of a destination (Bravi & Gasca, 2014).

Local food constitutes a significant component in shaping the reputation and image of tourist destinations (Gupta et al., 2018). Its significance as a pivotal element derives from its capacity to summarize a region's identity and rich cultural heritage, thereby positioning it as an integral aspect of its culinary legacy (Timothy & Ron, 2013; Zain et al., 2018). The preservation of traditional recipes, the use of indigenous ingredients, and the application of cooking techniques transmitted across generations hold deep significance in reinforcing cultural identity. As a result, the significance of local cuisine is instrumental in shaping and enhancing a destination's overall image. This finding supports those of Lin et al. (2011), who describe that food can mirror the distinctive attributes of a destination and constitute a pivotal instrument in cultivating its image.

Destination image shapes positive tourist behaviour, enhancing revisit intentions to the destination and recommending it to others (Gupta et al., 2023). The destination's image plays a crucial role in shaping cognitive perceptions and while also stimulating revisit intentions (Ćulić et al., 2021). Personal experiences significantly contribute to forming a destination's image, thereby playing an important role too. Nam et al. (2022) further emphasize that the destination image has a substantial impact, particularly concerning its naturalness, diversity and overall attractiveness.

Creating memorable tourist experiences is essential for destination managers because it can enhance competitiveness. This statement is based on the idea that memorable travel experiences generate positive emotions and promote future favourable behaviours among tourists (Chen et al., 2020). Furthermore, memorable experiences are more likely to encourage positive behaviour than service quality or satisfaction (Adongo et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2012). This finding aligns with the study of Zhang et al. (2018), which explains the positive and consequential impact of memorable travel experiences on revisit intentions, given their status as the foremost predictive factors for future destination selection.

Prior research states that local food catalyses destination selection (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2017), makes recommendations to others (Adongo et al., 2015) and becomes an important factor in creating

travel memories (Adongo et al., 2015; Huang et al., 2019). Local food shows the local culture and reminds people of happy and nostalgic memories (Huang et al., 2019). Tung and Ritchie (2011) explain how consuming local food enriches the tourism experience and makes it more memorable. These findings are supported by Piramanayagam et al. (2020), who highlight the positive impact of consuming local food in creating memorable tourism experiences.

Numerous studies have explored the impact of local food on revisit intentions, either directly or mediated by destination images or memorable travel experiences. However, research has yet to simultaneously examine such experiences and destination image in relation to the influence of local food on revisit intentions. Recognizing the importance of this relationship, the researchers aimed to examine how local food influences revisit intentions, with destination image and memorable tourist experiences acting as mediators.

2. RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN VARIABLES

The experience of consuming local cuisine significantly influences tourists' intentions to revisit a destination (Alderighi et al., 2016). It was found that both the quality of the product experience and the level of appreciation it evokes are positively associated with the likelihood of returning to a destination. Likewise, DiPietro and Campbell (2014) underscore the significance of local food attributes in heightening pleasure and fostering intentions to revisit. The following hypothesis was put forward:

H₁: Local food positively influences a revisit intention.

Tourists' recollections of their trips are closely linked to the local food and culinary experiences in tourist destinations (Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2013). Numerous studies have indicated that engaging with local food can create favourable, memorable tourism experiences (Sthapit, 2018), and furthermore, food souvenirs are tangible reminders of travellers' journeys and dining experiences (Lin & Mao, 2015). Local food can enhance conventional travel experiences, particularly for individuals seeking novelty and diverse experiences (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016). The research of Tsai (2016) elaborates on how local food consumption contributes to creating enduring positive memories. The hypothesis put forward is:

H₂: Local food positively influences memorable travel experiences.

The outcomes of a study on domestic tourists in Malacca indicate that the tourists' experience plays a significant role as a predictor in influencing revisit intentions (Johari & Anuar, 2020). This viewpoint

is further supported by the findings of Barnes et al. (2016) from research on safari park tourists, suggesting that memorable tourist experiences can positively impact revisit intentions. The following hypothesis was put forward:

H₃: Memorable travel experiences positively affect a revisit intention.

Local food experiences significantly impact a tourist's memorable experience, satisfaction level and revisit intention (Piramanayagam et al., 2020). This influence is further shaped by social interactions and satisfaction, contributing to enduring experiences and behavioural intentions (Sthapit, 2018). Engaging and remarkable food-related experiences can foster loyalty towards local products and destinations (Hernández-Mogollón et al., 2020). However, the effect of specialized local food on revisit decisions can vary, with quality of product experiences positively affecting the likelihood of return (Alderighi et al., 2016). Tsai (2016) asserts that indulging in local food enables tourists to find positive, unforgettable memories, strengthening their connection to local attractions and influencing their future behaviour. The following hypothesis was put forward:

H₄: Local food positively influences a revisit intention and is mediated by memorable travel experiences.

Local food holds a substantial role in promoting a tourist destination (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016) due to its intrinsic connection to the culture and identity of a region (Rousta & Jamshidi, 2020). Local food, as part of cultural assets, can significantly impact tourists' perceptions of a destination's image (Zain et al., 2018). The hypothesis put forward is:

H₅: Local food positively influences the image of a destination.

Prior empirical research indicates that the destination image significantly influences the creation of tourist satisfaction, thereby fostering an intention to make repeat visits (Abdullah & Lui, 2018). Destinations with a robust positive image are more likely to be selected for tourist visits and to stimulate repeat visits (Junaedi & Harjanto, 2020). The following hypothesis was put forward:

H₆: The image of a destination positively affects a revisit intention.

The positive or negative perceptions of local food significantly shape an individual's overall impression of a destination. Consequently, these impressions influence the probability of revisiting the destination. For instance, favourable perceptions of local food among tourists can enhance their overall perception of a destination, thereby increasing the likelihood of their return (Alderighi et al., 2016; Rousta & Jamshidi, 2020). The hypothesis put forward is:

H₇: Local food positively influences a revisit intention mediated by the image of a destination.

Memorable travel experiences play an important role in shaping tourists' perceptions of a destination. Travellers with positive experiences will leave favourable reviews and recommend the destination to others and these positive testimonials build a favourable image and enhance the destination's attractiveness. A quantitative study conducted in Greece explains that memorable and unforgettable experiences play a pivotal role in shaping the positive image of a destination within the tourism context (Kladou et al., 2022). Similarly, Iordanova and Styliadis (2019) underscore that the greater the intensity of memorable experiences, the more favourable the cognitive and affective evaluation of a destination's image. These findings underscore the critical importance of traveller experiences in forming a destination's image. The following hypothesis was put forward:

H₈: Memorable travel experiences positively affect the image of a destination.

This study presents a conceptual framework that explores how local food influences memorable tourist experiences, destination image, and revisit intention, as shown in Figure 1.

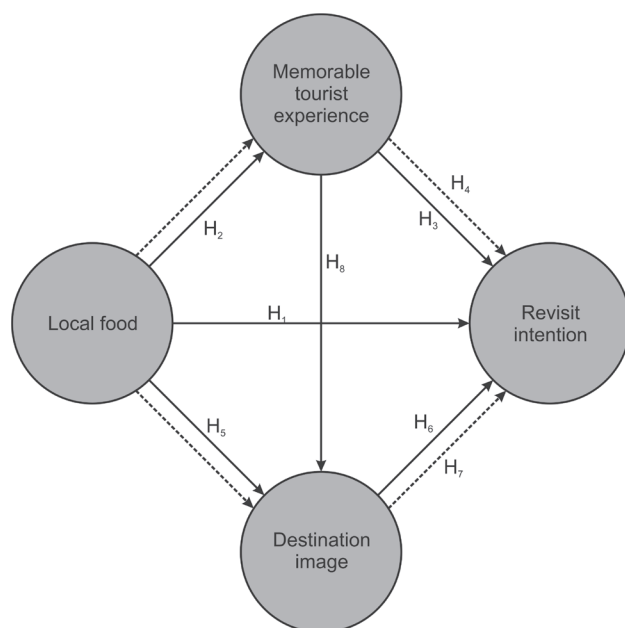


Figure 1. Research model

Source: authors

3. METHODS

The research employed a quantitative design utilizing cross-sectional surveys to collect data which aligns with the study's objective of testing hypotheses regarding variable relationships (Stockemer, 2019) and generating more objective findings (Grech, 2019; Mehrad & Zangeneh, 2019). The study was conducted from January to March 2024.

The research instrument comprises questionnaires designed to obtain tourists' perceptions of the research variables. Questionnaires are deemed the most suitable data collection tool for measuring perception due to their ability to reach a wide audience swiftly, offer flexibility in timing, and provide more objective data (Nabi, 2018). The questionnaire items were formulated based on the underlying theoretical framework and the local food variable was elaborated into five values: quality/taste, health, price, emotional and prestige (Rousta & Jamshidi, 2020). Destination image was evaluated through three indicators: natural attraction, cultural attraction and tourism facilities (Zhang et al., 2018). Memorable tourism experiences were defined using indicators such as hedonism, novelty, local culture, refreshment, meaningfulness, involvement and knowledge, drawing from the perspectives of Kim et al. (2012). The variable of revisit intentions was constructed around three indicators: the inclination to revisit, a revisit intention and the likelihood of revisiting in the near future, as outlined by Zhang et al. (2018). The measurement scale employed in the questionnaire was the Likert scale, featuring five levels of value based on items ranging from *strongly disagree* (score 1) to *strongly agree* (score 5).

A robust data collection tool is significant to ensure high-quality data acquisition. A pilot test was performed with a sample of 30 tourists to validate the questionnaire. Subsequently, validity was assessed using the Pearson product-moment formula, with an item being considered valid if the calculated value exceeds the critical value (0.361) at a significance level of 5%. The validity testing results indicated that the calculated values of all items were valid because their values exceeded 0.361. Furthermore, reliability testing was conducted using the Cronbach's alpha formula, with a critical value of 0.7 indicating acceptable reliability (Hair et al., 2017). The reliability testing revealed that the local food variable yielded the lowest α value of 0.848, which exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.7, affirming the reliability of all variables. These validation and reliability analyses were performed using SPSS version 22 software.

The study encompassed an unspecified number of tourists within its population. A sample size of 278 respondents with a confidence level of 95% was determined as sufficient for the research sample (Adam, 2020). Data analysis was performed utilizing partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) with the support of SmartPLS software. The SEM-PLS method is widely favoured due to its capability to estimate intricate models comprising numerous constructs, indicators and structural paths without imposing strict assumptions regarding data normality, thus yielding robust results (Hair et al., 2017).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents to understand the context and generalizability of the study's findings.

Table 1. Respondents' profile

Variables		<i>n</i> (%)
Sex	Male	106 (38.13)
	Female	172 (61.87)
Age	<25	71 (25.54)
	25–45	86 (30.94)
	>45	121 (43.52)

Source: authors.

The data processing results reveal a higher number of female respondents compared to male. This finding aligns with a previous study that participants on culinary tours predominantly consist of women who are highly educated and possess an established economic status (Robinson & Getz, 2014) who seek

diverse and authentic experiences. Additionally, most respondents were over 45, noting that older adults have the time and resources to seek new experiences, including local food (Balderas-Cejudo et al., 2019).

The analysis of measurement models aims to clarify the relationships between latent constructs and their observed indicators by assessing validity and reliability which employ multi-criteria approaches to minimize measurement errors and enhance measurement outcomes. Validity testing includes convergent and discriminant validity criteria. Convergent validity analysis evaluates the factor loading, which comprises the correlation value between the construct and the indicators, and the average variance extracted (AVE). An ideal factor loading exceeds 0.7, signifying the construct's adeptness in explaining the indicator effectively (Hair et al., 2017). Nevertheless, a factor loading value exceeding 0.5 is considered acceptable in numerous empirical research findings (Chen & Tsai, 2007). An AVE value exceeding 0.5 is sufficient for validating latent variable constructs, as it elucidates over half of the indicator variance (Hair et al., 2017). The test outcomes revealed that all factor loadings exceed 0.5 (see Table 2).

Table 2. Measurement model testing

Variables			Factor loading	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (CR)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Destination image	DI1	Natural attraction	0.861	0.818	0.891	0.733
	DI2	Cultural attraction	0.837			
	DI3	Tourism facilities	0.869			
Local food	LF1	Quality/ taste value	0.675	0.815	0.871	0.575
	LF2	Health value	0.713			
	LF3	Price value	0.769			
	LF4	Emotional value	0.816			
	LF5	Prestige value	0.808			
Memorable tourism experience	MTE1	Hedonism	0.863	0.935	0.948	0.721
	MTE2	Novelty	0.847			
	MTE3	Local culture	0.862			
	MTE4	Refreshment	0.850			
	MTE5	Meaningfulness	0.849			
	MTE6	Involvement	0.841			
	MTE7	Knowledge	0.831			
Revisit intention	RI1	Inclination to revisit	0.947	0.937	0.960	0.889
	RI2	Revisit intention	0.947			
	RI3	Likelihood to revisit in the near future	0.934			

Source: authors.

On the other hand, reliability testing is conducted to ascertain the internal consistency of latent constructs using composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha. Composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha values should exceed 0.7 (Hair et al., 2017). The test results indicated that all CR and Cronbach's alpha values were above 0.7 (see Table 2).

The measurement model, which illustrates the factor loadings and the relationships among constructs and their indicators, is depicted in Figure 2.

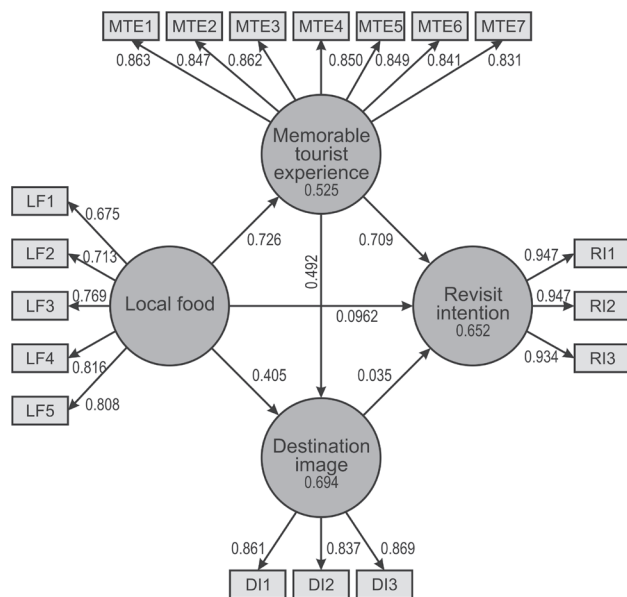


Figure 2. Measurement model

Source: author

Discriminant validity testing is conducted to assess the correlation between indicators and constructs, employing the Fornell-Larcker criterion. According to this, discriminant validity is deemed satisfactory if the square root of a construct's AVE exceeds its correlations with other latent variables. This criterion is met when the AVE value on the diagonal line of the matrix is greater than the AVE values below it. The test outcomes indicated no issues with discriminant validity, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Table of discriminant validity testing with Fornell-Larcker criteria

Variables	DI	LF	MTE	RI
Destination image (DI)	0.856	–	–	–
Local food (LF)	0.762	0.758	–	–
Memorable tourism experience (MTE)	0.786	0.726	0.849	–
Revisit intention (RI)	0.666	0.637	0.806	0.943

Source: authors.

Multicollinearity testing is conducted to assess the potential for collinearity among constructs, as indicated by the variance inflation factor (VIF), which should ideally be less than 5 (Hair et al., 2017). The test outcomes revealed that all constructs exhibited VIF values below 5, concluding that multicollinearity was not a concern (see Table 4).

Table 4. Table multicollinearity testing

Variables	DI	LF	MTE	RI
Destination image (DI)	–	–	–	3.286
Local food (LF)	2.114	–	1.000	2.652
Memorable tourism experience (MTE)	2.114	–	–	2.910
Revisit intention (RI)	–	–	–	–

Source: authors.

The goodness of fit model testing using the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) value should be less than 0.80 (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The research data yielded SRMR values of 0.060, below the critical threshold of 0.80, indicating a satisfactory model fit (see Table 5).

Table 5. Model fit

Measure	Saturated model	Estimated model
Standardized root mean square residual (SRMS)	0.060	0.060

Source: authors.

The evaluation of the model's predictive capacity demonstrated through R^2 values, verifies the exogenous constructs' efficacy in elucidating the variability of endogenous constructs. The test outcomes indicated that local food and memorable tourism experience collectively accounted for 69.4% of the variance in the destination image, categorized as a strong association. Moreover, local food capability as an antecedent variable to explicate the variability in memorable tourism experience reached 52.5%, classified as a moderate association. Overall, the collective ability of the exogenous variables to expound the diversity of revisit intentions amounted to 65.2%, denoting a strong and statistically significant relationship (see Table 6).

Table 6. Table of R^2 values

Variables	R^2 adjusted	t -statistic	p -value
Destination image (DI)	0.694	22.234	0.0000
Memorable tourism experience (MTE)	0.525	12.506	0.0000
Revisit intention (RI)	0.652	17.781	0.0000

Source: authors.

Moreover, a blindfolding analysis is conducted to ascertain the Q^2 value, which assesses the construct model's relevance in prediction accuracy. The Q^2 value assesses the predictive relevance of a construct model by measuring the accuracy of predictions made from exogenous to endogenous variables. The criteria for interpretation are delineated as 0.02 (small), 0.15 (medium), and 0.35 (large). A Q^2 value exceeding 0.5 concludes that the constructed model is relevant, indicating the appropriateness of exogenous variables to predict endogenous variables. Based on the research result, the lowest Q^2 value obtained was 0.374, signifying the suitability of exogenous variables in predicting endogenous variables (see Table 7).

Table 7. Prediction relevance testing

Variables	SSO	SSE	Q^2 (= 1-SSE/SSO)
Destination image (DI)	891.000	443.822	0.502
Local food (LF)	1485.000	1485.000	–
Memorable tourism experience (MTE)	2079.000	1301.389	0.374
Revisit intention (RI)	891.000	380.183	0.573

Note: SSO – sum of squares of observations, SSE – sum of squares of errors, Q^2 – Stone-Geisser's, Q^2 as the predictive relevance measurement.

Source: authors.

Based on Table 8, it can be explained that local food has a direct and significant influence on both memorable tourism experiences and destination image. However, it does not directly influence revisit intentions. These findings are consistent with previous research, which explains that consuming local food while in a particular destination will create positive, memorable experiences (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016; Sthapit, 2018; Tsai, 2016). The positive and significant influence

of local food on destination image also reinforces the opinion that the presence of local food as an identity and cultural element can affect tourists' perceptions of destination image (Rousta & Jamshidi, 2020; Zain et al., 2018). Local food only significantly influences revisit intentions when mediated by memorable tourism experiences. This finding is consistent with the opinion that experiencing local food will create unforgettable positive memories, thus enhancing positive future behaviour (Tsai, 2016). Local food also does not contribute to the revisit intentions when mediated by destination image. Memorable tourism experiences directly and significantly influence revisit intentions and destination image. This reinforces previous research findings that memorable tourism experiences can significantly influence tourists' revisit intentions (Barnes et al., 2016; Johari & Anuar, 2020). Destination image does not directly influence the decision to revisit. The table below also shows that memorable tourism experiences have the strongest influence on the revisit intentions at 70.9%.

The research findings provided insights into the relationships between factors influencing tourist behaviour, including local food, memorable tourism experiences, destination image and revisit intentions. The hypothesis suggesting that local food directly influences tourists' intentions to revisit a destination (H_1) was not supported. This finding implies that while local food may enhance overall tourist experiences, it may not be the sole factor determining whether tourists intend to revisit a destination. One possible explanation is that tourists' intentions to revisit may be influenced by factors beyond food preferences, such as social interactions or unique experiences (Sengel et al., 2015). For instance, studies have shown that tourists' satisfaction and intention to revisit can be positively influenced by their experiences with local food (Rousta & Jamshidi, 2020). Additionally, tourists' perceptions of the value of local food, including taste,

Table 8. Hypothesis testing

Relationship between constructs		Path coefficient	<i>t</i> -statistics	<i>p</i> -value	Conclusion
H_1	LF → RI	0.096	1.532	0.126	Not supported
H_2	LF → MTE	0.726	25.086	0.000	Supported
H_3	MTE → RI	0.709	11.722	0.000	Supported
H_4	LF → MTE → RI	0.515	10.692	0.000	Supported
H_5	LF → DI	0.405	7.688	0.000	Supported
H_6	DI → RI	0.035	0.481	0.631	Not supported
H_7	LF → DI → RI	0.014	0.472	0.637	Not supported
H_8	MTE → DI	0.492	9.779	0.000	Supported

Note: LF – local food, RI – revisit intention, MTE – memorable tourism experience, DI – destination image.

Source: authors.

health, price, emotions and prestige, are positively related to their attitudes toward local cuisine and their revisit intentions (Piramanayagam et al., 2020).

Conversely, hypotheses concerning the impact of local food on memorable tourism experiences (H_2) and the direct effect of memorable tourism experiences on revisit intentions (H_3) were strongly validated. Local food encounters notably shape memorable tourism experiences, satisfaction levels and subsequent behavioural intentions (Piramanayagam et al., 2020). Elements such as the services, novelty-seeking behaviour, co-creation of experiences, choice overload and intensified experiences are pivotal in crafting memorable local food encounters (Sthapit et al., 2019). A substantial body of research consistently illustrates a positive association between memorable tourism experiences and revisit intentions. This notion finds further support from Lu et al. (2022) who identified novelty, engagement, hedonistic pursuits and appreciation of local culture as key drivers of domestic tourists' revisit intentions. These findings underscore the critical role of memorable experiences in shaping tourists' revisit intentions to a destination, with local food as a central element in enriching these experiences³.

The hypothesis was confirmed by investigating the sequential connection among local food, memorable tourism experiences and revisit intention (H_4). This finding implies that local food directly affects memorable experiences and indirectly shapes revisit intentions through the mediation of memorable tourism experiences. Additionally, emotional reactions and the sense of place identity linked with theme restaurants showcasing local-specific elements can amplify the revisit intention (Rossidis et al., 2021). These findings underscore the intricate interplay between local food, memorable experiences and tourists' revisit intentions, highlighting the importance of emotional and identity-related factors in influencing revisit decisions.

The hypothesis examining the impact of local food on destination image (H_5) was strongly validated, emphasizing the significance of local culinary experiences in shaping tourists' perceptions of a destination. It underscores the importance of considering food as a pivotal dimension in destination branding strategies (Freire & Gertner, 2021). This finding suggests that promoting and enhancing local food offerings can positively influence a destination's overall image and attractiveness, thereby contributing to its branding efforts and competitive positioning in the tourism market.

However, the hypotheses regarding the direct influence of destination image on revisit intentions (H_6) and the sequential connection among local food, destination image and revisit intention (H_7) did not find support. While a destination image's impact on revisit intentions is well-established with studies

confirming its significance. Research by Junaedi and Harjanto (2020) has emphasized the direct influence of destination image on tourists' revisit intentions, with word of mouth serving as a mediating factor. Although local food can significantly shape destination image and revisit intentions, its effects may vary due to individual preferences, perceived quality, marketing strategies, cultural understanding and external influences such as economic conditions or political instability. Erkmen and Dilistan Shipman (2019) noted that discrepancies in findings might stem from the unique context and characteristics of each destination, as well as tourists' personal preferences and experiences.

Finally, the hypothesis examining the impact of memorable tourism experiences on destination image (H_8) garnered substantial support with tourists' positive perceptions contributing significantly (Tukamushaba et al., 2016). Furthermore, these experiences, directly and indirectly, shape tourists' future behavioural intentions, thus questioning the primacy of visitor satisfaction as the sole determinant of revisit intentions (Kim, 2018).

5. CONCLUSIONS

The research revealed complex relationships among local food, memorable tourism experiences, destination image and revisit intentions. While local food alone may not directly influence the revisit intention, it significantly shapes memorable experiences and destination images. However, the direct impact of destination image on revisit intentions was not confirmed. Further research is needed to explore factors influencing this relationship, such as individual preferences, marketing strategies and external influences like economic conditions or political instability. Also, investigating the role of word of mouth and other mediating factors in the relationship between destination image and revisit intentions could provide valuable insights for destination management strategies.

ENDNOTES

¹ The 3rd sentence of this paragraph was translated from Indonesian into English using ChatGPT-4o. in February 2024. The authors assured that the original meaning of the sentences was preserved after the translation, so they did not affect the result.

² The 3rd sentence of this paragraph was translated from Indonesian into English using ChatGPT-4o. in February 2024. The authors assured that the original meaning of the sentences was preserved after the translation, so they did not affect the result.

³ The 6th sentence of this paragraph was translated from Indonesian into English using ChatGPT-4o. in March 2024. The authors assured that the original meaning of the sentences was preserved after the translation, so they did not affect the result.

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