ICMEM

The 10th International Conference on Management in Emerging Markets

The Dual Role of Food Destination Image: Bridging Identity-Based and Behavior-Based Perspectives in Ethnic Culinary Tourism

Aurora Yupita Achmada*, Arianis Chan, Anang Muftiadi, and Pratami Wulan Tresna
Business Administration Department,Universitas Padjadjaran, Bandung, Indonesia

***Abstract*—*Food destination image (FDI) in previous studies has been examined separately: (1) studies based on Social Identity Theory (SIT) view FDI as an end result, the outcome of tourists' evaluations of cuisine through their sense of identity, and (2) studies based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) treat FDI as a starting point; FDI is used to predict tourists' behavioural intentions without explaining its origins. Because these two approaches examine different stages of the same tourist experience separately, no framework has yet explained how the identity-based origins of FDI are linked to its behavioural consequences within a single tourist experience. This conceptual paper integrates SIT and TPB by proposing that FDI bridges the processes of identity formation and the formation of culinary tourists' behaviour as a single construct that occupies two sequential roles. Drawing on a narrative literature synthesis, four propositions are advanced: (1) the identity-formation process influences FDI; (2) FDI influences the behaviour-formation process; (3) the identity-formation process directly influences the behaviour-formation process; and (4) FDI mediates the relationship between the two. This framework offers a more integrated theoretical understanding of FDI and provides a foundation for future cross-contextual empirical validation in ethnic culinary tourism.*

Keywords*—*food destination image, social identity theory, theory of planned behavior, multiple roles, ethnic culinary tourism

I. INTRODUCTION

Food has become a core element of the contemporary tourism experience, prompting academic interest in the mechanisms that explain how culinary inputs shape tourists' decisions and behavior [1], [2]. Among these mechanisms, food destination image (FDI) has emerged as a widely recognized construct. FDI is defined as an interactive system of tourists' thoughts, opinions, feelings, visualizations, and intentions regarding food at a destination, a dynamic mental representation, not a static image [3].

However, a review of the literature indicates that there are two distinct roles of FDI. A number of studies position FDI as the endpoint of the process of tourist identity formation, which is closely aligned with the framework of Social Identity Theory (SIT) [4], [5], [6]. Conversely, other studies position FDI as a starting point that drives behavioral intentions within the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) framework [7], [8], [9]. These two research models have developed relatively in parallel, rooted in social identity theory [10], [11] and the theory of planned behavior [12], which are the two most popular theories in FDI research.

Research on identity-based antecedents has developed without examining how FDI subsequently influences norms and behavioral intentions, while research on the behavioral consequences of FDI rarely traces its roots to identity formation processes [13], [14]. This study proposes a model that integrates decision-making and image formation processes using the dual-role perspective of FDI [15].

This conceptual article aims to bridge these two roles of FDI by proposing a generic theoretical framework in which FDI functions as a dual-role construct between the identity-formation process and the behavior-formation process of culinary tourists. Three contributions are offered. First, this article integrates constructs from the SIT and TPB frameworks into a single, coherent FDI framework. Second, this article formalizes the dual role of FDI through both direct and mediating pathways. Third, the proposed framework is generic in nature, allowing for future empirical validation across diverse contexts of ethnic culinary tourism.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Food Destination Image: Concept and Dynamic Nature

The concept of destination image is generally defined as the accumulation of a person's beliefs, ideas, and impressions regarding a destination [16]. In the culinary context, FDI is adapted as a dynamic mental representation that accumulates over time, encompassing the a priori, in situ, and a posteriori stages of the tourist visit process [17].

Validated FDI measurement instruments confirm its multidimensional nature, encompassing cognitive perceptions of culinary quality and uniqueness as well as affective evaluations of the overall dining experience [18].

Nevertheless, the dual nature of FDI has not yet been widely formalized. Several studies indicate that empirical

*Corresponding Author:

evidence regarding the effectiveness of food image attributes in representing local cultural identity from the host's perspective remains scarce [14], suggesting that FDI is the result of a deeper identity-forming process. Another study confirms that culinary image is the result of a co-creation between food, place, and community (outcome), which then serves as the primary distinguishing attraction that sets a destination apart from its competitors (antecedent) [13], implicitly indicating that FDI functions as both an endpoint and a starting point.

B. The Identity Formation Process as an Antecedent of FDI

The general premise of Social Identity Theory states that individuals form part of their self-concept through membership in social groups [10], [11]; however, empirical studies on the image of culinary destinations (FDI) have not yet reached a consensus on using a single construct to explain this identity-based prerequisite, so several different identity constructs have been used to explain how tourists' sense of identity shapes their evaluations of a destination's cuisine, including place identity, cultural identity, culinary identity, and visual (tourism) identity [4], [5], [6], [8], [19], [20].

Place identity refers to the bond formed between tourists and local residents with a particular location and its culinary offerings, and has been shown to influence tourists' decisions when choosing restaurants at that destination, while also serving as a resource actively utilized by culinary tourism stakeholders and destination brand managers to build a destination's distinctiveness [8], [19], [20]; Meanwhile, cultural identity and culinary identity capture more specific mechanisms, whereby a particular dish or cuisine serves as a means for tourists to understand a destination's cultural heritage and branding narrative [5], [6]; more recently, the construct of visual identity derived from social media content has expanded this research into the digital realm, demonstrating that a destination's tourism identity is also actively shaped through visual narratives related to food [4]; Overall, these findings support the view that identity formation is a broader process that can be operationalized through whichever identity construct (place, cultural, culinary, or visual) is most relevant to the destination and the type of cuisine under study, and that this process precedes and shapes FDI.

C. The Process of Behavioral Formation as a Consequence of FDI

The behavior-formation process is most frequently operationalized in the FDI literature as behavioral intention, which refers to tourists' claimed likelihood of visiting, revisiting, suggesting, or purchasing/consuming a destination's cuisine [9], [21], [22], [23]. Empirical studies converge on this outcome far more consistently than on any single antecedent mechanism; FDI has been linked to revisit intention [21], [29], destination-specific visit intention [23], [28], travel intention conditioned on a destination's eco-food image [24], intention to consume local food [25], and intention to visit a cuisine's country of origin [26]. In contrast, the Theory of Planned Behavior's other suggested drivers of behavioral intention—attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control [12]—have received insufficient and inconsistent testing in this literature. This framework treats the direct FDI-to-behavioral-intention relationship as the primary and best-supported pathway, with attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control remaining theoretically implied but empirically under-tested boundary conditions for future research.

D. Bridging the Two Processes: FDI as a Dual-Role Construct

A synthesis of the two roles of FDI outlined above reveals that FDI serves as a fundamental construct, playing two sequential roles throughout the tourist journey—first as the product of the identity-formation process and then as the antecedent to the behavior-formation process [36], [37]. These two roles are not in conflict; they simply represent distinct stages of the same journey, which the identity-based and behavior-based literatures have already addressed separately. Studies on local food experiences explicitly confirm this pattern: culinary experiences shape destination image (outcome), which in turn becomes a strong predictor of the intention to revisit (antecedent) [38]. A similar hierarchical pattern is also found in the cognitive-affective-conative destination image model, in which the cognitive and affective components influence the conative component in a hierarchical manner [39]. Unfortunately, this synthesis has not yet been formalized into a conceptual framework that explicitly links identity-based research (SIT) with behavior-based research (TPB) through a single FDI mechanism.

E. Defining the Two Higher-Order Processes and Their Constituent Constructs

Each process is defined here by the range of particular constructs that the food destination image literature actually uses to operationalize it, rather than by a single textbook SIT or TPB variable, because the framework in Figure 1 functions at the level of two higher-order processes rather than a single fixed variable. The set of destination and cuisine-related identity constructs—place identity, cultural identity, cooking identity, and visual (tourism) identity—through which visitors' sense of self is projected onto or derived from a destination's cuisine is known as the identity-formation process [4], [5], [6], [8], [19], and [20]. In line with the outcome variable of the Theory of Planned Behavior [12], the behavior-formation process is defined as tourists' behavioral intentions regarding the cuisine of a destination. These intentions are operationalized throughout the literature as revisit, visit, purchase, travel, consume, and visit the country of origin of a cuisine [9, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, and 30].

III. METHODOLOGY

As a conceptual article, this study did not involve the collection of primary data. The approach used was a narrative literature synthesis, following established practices in similar conceptual articles in the field of destination imagery [39], [15]. A structured search of the Scopus database using combinations of the terms ((“food destination image” OR (“destination image” OR “food image”)) AND tourism) AND(LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA ,"BUSI") AND (LIMIT-TO(DOCTYPE ,"ar")) AND (LIMIT TO (LANGUAGE, "English")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE , "j")) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBSTAGE ,"final")) 154 records. Each record's title, abstract, and keywords were screened for the explicit presence of an identity-related construct (e.g., place, cultural, cooking, or visual identity) and/or a Theory of Planned Behavior related construct (behavioral intention) relevant to food destination image; this

screening retained 48 records. These 48 records were then reviewed in full to verify that the identified construct occupied a theoretically coherent position within a tourist's identity-formation or behavior-formation process, rather than functioning as an antecedent of an unrelated outcome such as brand equity or consumption value; this full review excluded 14 records for contextual misalignment or restricted full-text access, yielding 34 studies retained as the evidentiary base for the propositions developed below. The procedure for developing the conceptual framework itself was carried out in four stages. First, we identified two streams of FDI literature that have developed relatively independently: an identity-based stream, examining antecedents of FDI, and a behavior-based stream, examining its behavioral consequences. Second, within the 34 retained studies, we mapped the recurring constructs used in each stream, rather than assuming these would map onto a single named SIT or TPB variable.

Third, we inductively abstracted these constructs into two higher-order processes: the identity-formation process and the behavior-formation process. Fourth, we deductively formulated propositions explaining the relationship between these two processes and FDI, following the hierarchical proposition-development approach used in a previous conceptual article on destination imagery [39]. This abstraction approach is consistent with the documented nature of FDI as a multi-stage and multidimensional construct [17]; thus, generalizing to the process level is considered an appropriate step toward producing a framework that can be tested across diverse ethnic culinary tourism contexts.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the literature review in Section II, the proposed conceptual framework is illustrated in Figure 1. This framework positions the Food Destination Image as a dual-role construct (a single construct occupying two sequential roles) between the identity-formation process and the behavior-formation process of culinary tourists, through the following four propositions.

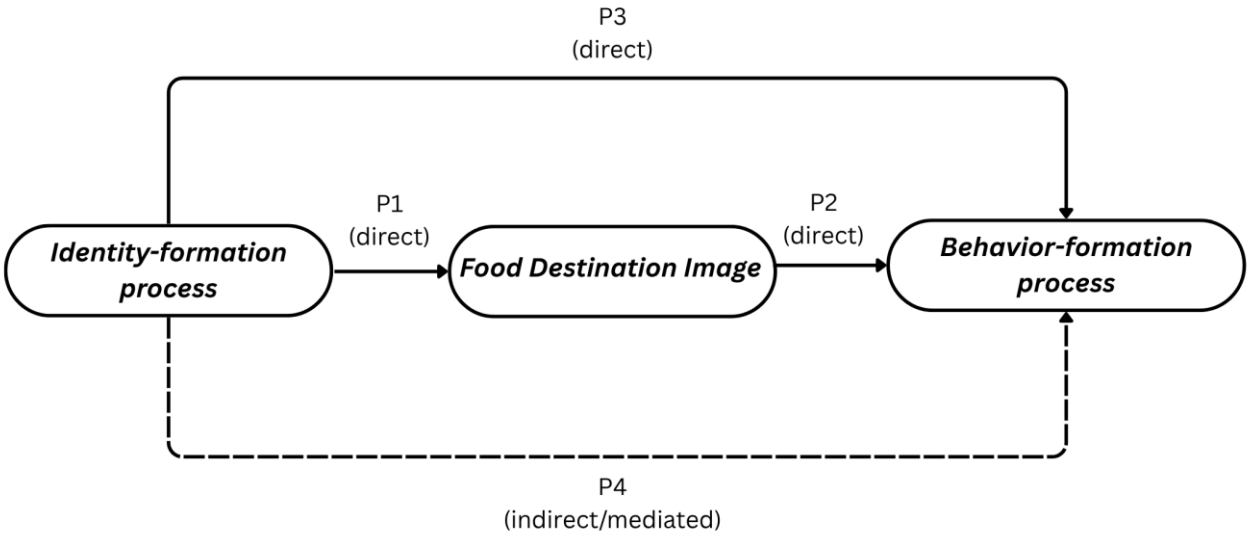


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework of the Food Destination Image as a dual-role construct between the identity-formation process and the behavior-formation process.

Table 1.
Mapping of Propositions to Constructs and Supporting Studies

Prop.	Mechanism / Constructs	Supporting Studies
P1	Identity constructs precede and shape FDI: place/cultural/cooking/visual identity → FDI	[4], [5], [6], [8], [19], [20]
P2	FDI as primary antecedent of behavioral intention (attitude occasional; subjective norms/PBC untested): FDI → behavioral intention	[9], [21]-[30]
P3	Identity constructs directly motivate behavioral intention, independent of FDI	[10], [11], [19]
P4	FDI as dual-role construct carrying a dual role across journey stages	[36], [37], [38], [40]

A. Identity-Formation Process and Food Destination Image

Proposition 1: The identity-formation process has a positive effect on the Food Destination Image.

Tourists who form a strong location, cultural, or cooking identity regarding a destination's cuisine are more likely to transfer that identity into how they evaluate the destination's food, resulting in a more positive and distinctive image [8], [19], [20]. Because FDI is simply the collection of impressions and judgments of a destination's food [17], this identity-based process naturally precedes and develops that image. This process is supported by research demonstrating that a destination's cultural and cooking identity actively

influences how its culinary image is branded and communicated [5], [6], and that this identity-formation pathway extends into digital and visual media, where a destination's tourism identity is constructed through food-related content long before FDI is consciously evaluated [4].

B. Food Destination Image and the Behavior-Formation Process

Proposition 2: Food Destination Image has a positive effect on the Behavior-Formation Process.

The primary pathway from FDI to the behavior-formation process runs directly to behavioral intention, documented across the literature in multiple operational forms: revisit intention [21], [29], destination-specific visit intention [23], [28], travel intention conditioned on a destination's eco-food image [24], intention to consume local food [25], and intention to visit a cuisine's country of origin [26].

C. Direct Relationship Between the Identity-Formation Process and the Behavior-Formation Process

Proposition 3: The identity-formation process has a direct effect on the behavior-formation process.

In addition to the channel mediated by FDI, identity constructs can directly motivate behavioral intentions: place attachment toward a heritage destination, for instance, has been shown to predict tourists' behavioral intentions directly, independent of any intervening image measure [19]. This is consistent with Social Identity Theory's broader premise that identity-congruent consumption is intrinsically tied to the intention to support or preserve the practices of one's identity group [10], [11]. Thus, identity constructs not only operate through image formation but can also directly drive tourists' behavioral intentions independently of FDI.

D. Food Destination Image as a Mediator

Proposition 4: Food Destination Image mediates the relationship between the Identity-Formation Process and the Behavior-Formation Process.

Consistent with the well-established logic of dual mediation in attitude research [40] and destination image research [37], the process of identity formation does not automatically translate into behavioral intent without first consolidating into a coherent destination image. FDI thus serves as a bridge that converts identity bonds into behavioral readiness, while also explaining why FDI is consistently found to play a dual role as both the endpoint of one series of psychological processes and the starting point of the next series [36], [38].

Collectively, these four propositions offer a resolution to the gaps identified in Section I: rather than treating the identity-based and behavior-based roles of FDI as two separate streams, this framework positions them as two ends of a single continuum of psychological processes bridged by FDI.

V. CONCLUSION

A. Theoretical Contributions

This conceptual article offers three theoretical contributions. First, it integrates Social Identity Theory, and the Theory of Planned Behavior—two theories that have long developed in parallel within the FDI literature—into a single coherent framework. Second, it formalizes the dual nature of FDI through four propositions that explain both direct and mediating pathways. Third, by grounding the identity-formation process and behavior-formation process in the specific constructs actually documented in the literature; place, cultural, cooking, and visual identity on one side, and behavioral intentionon the other, rather than relying on untested textbook variables such as subjective norms and perceived behavioral control, this framework offers generalizations that can be adapted to various contexts of ethnic culinary tourism.

B. Practical Contributions

This framework implies that culinary branding strategies should not only communicate culinary attributes but also actively cultivate the specific identity constructs shown to precede FDI, namely place, cultural, cooking, and visual identity, while translating those identity cues into concrete behavioral intention. Four specific actions follow. First, destination managers can use community-based storytelling to strengthen place and cultural identity (Proposition 1), such as documentaries, festival narration, and market-vendor testimonials that narrate the origins of a dish through the voice of the local culinary community so that tourists absorb a strong place/cultural identity rather than just product information. Second, managers can incorporate identity clues into physical and digital touchpoints (signage, menus, packaging, and social media captions reflecting a dish's cooking origin or visual/cultural symbolism), providing tourists with a tangible anchor during the identity-formation process. Third, because behavioral intention is the most well-supported outcome in this literature (Proposition 2), managers should prioritize converting identity cues into concrete calls to action (visit, revisit, recommend, or purchase local cuisine) over normative or social-pressure messaging, which lacks empirical support. Fourth, destination-image communication should be carefully sequenced: pre-visit content should emphasize identity and cultural/cooking narratives, while on-site and post-visit content should highlight the specific behavioral intention managers want to activate, mirroring the two-stage structure formalized in Figure 1.

C. Limitations & Future Research

As a conceptual article, its main limitation is the lack of empirical testing of the four propositions put forward. Future research is recommended to validate this framework using a structural equation modeling approach with constructs defined within the SIT and TPB frameworks [41], [42]. Future research is also recommended to examine whether the strength of the relationships within this framework varies across different cultural contexts and types of ethnic culinary destinations.

REFERENCES

[1] P. Björk and H. Kauppinen-Räisänen, "Interested in eating and drinking? How food affects travel satisfaction and the overall holiday experience," Scand. J. Hosp. Tour., vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 9–26, 2017.

[2] M. J. Stone, J. Soulard, S. Migacz, and E. Wolf, "Elements of memorable food, drink, and culinary tourism experiences," J. Travel Res., vol. 57, no. 8, pp. 1121–1132, 2018.

[3] M. Y. Lai, C. Khoo-Lattimore, and Y. Wang, "Food and cuisine image in destination branding: Toward a conceptual model," Tour. Hosp. Res., 2019.

[4] S. C. Yoo and S. M. Kang, "Visual narratives and digital engagement: Decoding Seoul and Tokyo's tourism identity

through Instagram analytics," Tour. Hosp., vol. 6, no. 3, 2025.
[5] S. Gupta, M. Sajnani, and V. G. B. Gowreesunker, "Investigating the role of food tourism in shaping destination branding: A qualitative research perspective," Prabandhan: Indian J. Manag., vol. 17, no. 4, 2024.
[6] S. Kim and C. Iwashita, "Cooking identity and food tourism: The case of Japanese udon noodles," Tour. Recreat. Res., 2016.
[7] M. Xu, S. Kim, and S. Reijnders, "From food to feet: Analysing A Bite of China as food-based destination image," Tour. Stud., 2020.
[8] A. Presenza and G. Del Chiappa, "Entrepreneurial strategies in leveraging food as a tourist resource: A cross-regional analysis in Italy," J. Herit. Tour., 2013.
[9] J. Y. Choe and S. S. Kim, "Effects of tourists' local food consumption value on attitude, food destination image, and behavioral intention," Int. J. Hosp. Manag., vol. 71, pp. 1–10, 2018.
[10] H. Tajfel, "Social identity and intergroup behavior," Soc. Sci. Inf., vol. 13, no. 2, pp. 65–93, 1974.
[11] H. Tajfel and J. C. Turner, "The social identity theory of intergroup behavior," in *Political Psychology: Key Readings*, eds. J. T. Jost and J. Sidanius. Psychology Press, 2004, pp. 276–293.
[12] I. Ajzen, "The theory of planned behavior," Organ. Behav. Hum. Decis. Process., vol. 50, no. 2, pp. 179–211, 1991.
[13] K. P. Sio, B. Fraser, and L. Fredline, "A contemporary systematic literature review of gastronomy tourism and destination image," Tour. Recreat. Res., 2024.
[14] M. Y. Lai, C. Khoo-Lattimore, and Y. Wang, "An investigation of the perception gap regarding food and cuisine image attributes for destination branding from the host's perspective: The case of Australia," Tour. Manag., 2018.
[15] B. Andrlić, D. Jani, and R. Suphian, "Variation of destination image and its influential factors: A conceptual analysis," Geojournal Tour. Geosites, 2025.
[16] J. L. Crompton, "An assessment of the image of Mexico as a vacation destination and the influence of geographic location upon that image," J. Travel Res., vol. 17, no. 4, pp. 18–24, 1979.
[17] E. Iordanova, "Unraveling the complexity of destination image formation: A conceptual framework," Eur. J. Tour. Res., 2015.
[18] J. Y. Choe and S. S. Kim, "Development and validation of a measurement scale for food destination image," J. Travel Res., vol. 57, no. 4, pp. 487–497, 2018.
[19] S. Eslami et al., "Place attachment, destination image, and behavioral intentions among heritage tourists," J. Herit. Tour., vol. 14, no. 4, pp. 342–358, 2019.
[20] A. Hashimoto and D. J. Telfer, "Selling Canadian culinary tourism: Branding the global and the regional product," Tour. Geogr., 2006.
[21] R. Hurdawaty, W. D. Dahana, and Y. Farradia, "Understanding revisit intention in local culinary tourism: The mediating role of memorable culinary tourism experience and destination image," Tour. Hosp., vol. 6, no. 4, 2025.
[22] S. Yousaf, "Food vloggers and parasocial interactions: A comparative study of local and foreign food vlogs using the S-O-R paradigm," Int. J. Contemp. Hosp. Manag., 2022.
[23] M. E. Mohamed, D. C. Kim, X. Lehto, and C. A. Behnke, "Destination restaurants, place attachment, and future destination patronization," J. Vacat. Mark., 2022.
[24] T.-B. Luong and D. T. A. Nguyen, "Adapting theory of motivation in food tourism: A moderation of eco-food destination image," J. Ecotourism, 2026.
[25] S. Aziz, M. A. Khan Niazi, and S. Zafar, "Food is fuel for tourism: Understanding the food travelling behaviour of potential tourists after experiencing ethnic cuisine," J. Vacat. Mark., 2025.
[26] G. Aybek and B. Özdemir, "Effects of ethnic restaurant experience on prospective tourist intentions: Mediating role of food image," Tour. Manag. Perspect., 2022.
[27] M. M. Anwar, "Connecting halal culinary content and tourist intentions: A framework of image, trust and behavioral drivers," J. Islamic Mark., 2026.
[28] F. Lin, D. Binti Mohamad, C. Z. G. Zhu, D. C. W. Wu, and J. Yang, "Short video on food tourism marketing: Empirical evidence from Chongqing, China," Int. J. Hosp. Tour. Adm., 2026.
[29] W. Suryani, M. Muafi, and A. Johan, "From satisfaction to revisit: The nexus of tourist attitude with cultural image," S. Afr. J. Bus. Manag., vol. 56, no. 1, 2025.
[30] M. Kim and J. Kim, "Streaming culture, tasting Korea: A study on the impact of culinary media consumption on gastronomy tourism," J. Hosp. Tour. Manag., 2026.
[31] M. T. Leow, T. H. Cham, and M. P. Low, "Food destination image and behavioral intention: Empirical evidence from Malaysia," Asian Journal of Business Research, vol. 14, no. 1, pp. 1–18, 2024.
[32] M. Soltani et al., "Tourist local food consumption value, attitude, food destination image, and behavioral intention," J. Travel Tour. Mark., vol. 38, no. 2, pp. 115–131, 2021.
[33] A. Alexandra and S. F. Choirisa, "Food destination image and behavioral intention: Evidence from Indonesian culinary tourists," Tour. Hosp. Res., vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 45–58, 2024.
[34] G. Çetin and S. Akar Şahingöz, "Food destination image and behavioral intentions in culinary tourism: A meta-analytic review," Tour. Rev., vol. 80, no. 1, pp. 1–18, 2025.
[35] I. Cifci, I. Uber Seker, and D. Penpece, "Food destination image as a mediator between street food experience and tourist behavioral intentions," J. Hosp. Tour. Res., vol. 48, no. 3, pp. 450–465, 2024.
[36] Y. Zhu, L. Zhu, and L. Weng, "How do tourists' value perceptions of food experiences influence their perceived destination image and revisit intention? A moderated mediation model," *Foods*, 2024.
[37] C.-Y. Wang and M. K. Hsu, "The relationships between destination image, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions: An integrated model," J. Travel Tour. Mark., vol. 27, no. 8, pp. 829–843, 2010.
[38] N. Eviana and L. Yusrini, "Do They Return for Food? Exploring the Role of Memorable Food Experiences and Destination Image," Turyzm/Tourism, 2025.
[39] S. Yang, S. M. Isa, Y. Yao, J. Xia, and D. Liu, "Cognitive image, affective image, cultural dimensions, and conative image: A new conceptual framework," Front. Psychol., vol. 13, 935814, 2022.
[40] S. B. MacKenzie and R. J. Lutz, "An empirical examination of the structural antecedents of attitude toward the ad in an advertising pretesting context," J. Mark., vol. 53, no. 2, pp. 48–65, 1989.
[41] J. F. Hair, J. J. Risher, M. Sarstedt, and C. M. Ringle, "When to use and how to report the results of PLS-SEM," Eur. Bus. Rev., vol. 31, no. 1, pp. 2–24, 2019.
[42] R. J. Vandenberg and C. E. Lance, "A review and synthesis of the measurement invariance literature: Suggestions, practices, and recommendations for organizational research," Organ. Res. Methods, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 4–70, 2000.