



# The Flavor of Place: Examining the Impact of Authentic Local Cuisine on Tourist Satisfaction and Destination Loyalty

Paper first received: 29 July 2024; Accepted: 22 June 2025; Published in final form: 08 August 2025

<http://doi.org/10.48416/ijfsaf.v31i2.630>

Alvaro DIAS<sup>1,2</sup> and Anastasiia POSHELIUZNAIA<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

This research examines the impact of authentic local cuisine on tourist satisfaction and revisit intention, with a focus on the mediating roles of destination image and destination branding. Utilizing a conceptual model and partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM), this study analyzes data from 203 tourists. The findings reveal that authentic local cuisine significantly and positively influences tourist satisfaction, both directly and indirectly through destination image and destination branding. Furthermore, tourist satisfaction is identified as the most critical factor influencing revisit intention. The study provides valuable insights for destination marketers and policymakers, highlighting the competitive advantage of leveraging authentic cuisine as an effective branding strategy and offering practical steps to enhance tourist satisfaction and revisit intention.

---

<sup>1</sup> ISCTE-IUL

<sup>2</sup> BRU

Corresponding author: Alvaro Dias [alvaro.dias@iscte-iul.pt](mailto:alvaro.dias@iscte-iul.pt)

## Biographical notes

**Álvaro Dias** is a professor since 1995, teaching mainly in the areas of tourism, Marketing, and Entrepreneurship. Holds two PhD.s degrees classified as honored (cum laude), one in Management with a specialty in Marketing, and another in Tourism, MsC in Strategy, MBA and Ba in Management. He also has post-graduate studies in E-business.

**Anastasiia Posheliuznaia** holds a Bachelor of Arts in Tourism and Travel Services Management and a MsC in Tourism Development & Culture (Joint Master). She is a graphic designer.

## Introduction

Gastronomy has emerged as a crucial element in tourism, shaping travelers' experiences and perceptions of destinations. It extends beyond food consumption to encompass cultural heritage, economic significance, and sensory engagement (Okumus, 2021). Recent research highlights the multi-dimensional nature of gastronomic experiences, including authenticity and social aspects, which influence tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016; Kovalenko et al., 2023). Furthermore, gastronomy is increasingly recognized as a predictor of tourism development, emphasizing factors such as food authenticity, local culinary events, and destination branding in shaping the attractiveness of regions (Kalenjuk Pivarski et al., 2024; Orgaz Agüera & Domínguez-Valerio, 2024). Despite this growing body of work, gaps remain in understanding the empirical link between authentic local cuisine, destination branding, and revisit intention.

In the tourism sector, food, especially local cuisine, is viewed as one of the key factors that influence brand image, along with transportation, accommodation, nature, etc. Moreover, authentic cuisine is relevant to the brand image of tourism destinations (Lai et al., 2017). Therefore, exploring the branding of gastronomy and authentic cuisine as an attractive strategy for promoting tourism is an essential consideration for tourism marketers.

Over the last few decades, gastronomy in tourism has become a major selling point due to changes in eating styles and the increased value of social dining (Sormaz et al., 2015). Experiential marketing has been a growing trend to enhance user experience (Carmo et al., 2022). Tourism marketing efforts worldwide are progressively focusing on gastronomy (Sormaz et al., 2015). In today's tourism management, gastronomy tourism has taken a significant place and forms the basis of policies, industry strategies, and agendas (Jong et al., 2018). The importance of gastronomy in this regard is manifested in the formation and maintenance of the Common Agricultural Policy, European Region of Gastronomy Network, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) Cities of Gastronomy program (Jong et al., 2018).

Nonetheless, Tovmasyan (2019) reports that gastronomy plays a significant role in tourism marketing because it is part of the culture. Gastronomy also reveals the relevant conventions and values within a particular region or country. While traveling, tourists generally eat the food specific to a certain destination. In this regard, gastronomy can significantly influence the consumer's decision to travel to a particular destination or their intention to return. Moreover, gastronomy plays a crucial role in the satisfaction of tourists throughout their trip (Tovmasyan, 2019). Katrin Blumberg (2005) conducted a case study on the Nelson/Tasman region of New Zealand and found that destination marketing and management are two distinct operations. However, they coordinate their efforts to appeal to tourists. The study found that the marketing of tourist destinations contributed significantly to destination management and development, which in turn appealed to tourism (Blumberg, 2005).

Despite the growing recognition of gastronomy as a key driver of tourism, existing research often examines its influence on tourism in fragmented ways, primarily focusing on its role in shaping cultural experiences and local identity rather than explicitly linking it to destination branding, tourist satisfaction, and revisit intention (Kovalenko et al., 2023). While scholars such as Freire and Gertner (2021) emphasize the role of local cuisine in shaping destination brands, their work does not empirically establish how gastronomy influences tourist behavior and loyalty. Similarly, Chia et al. (2021) and Shaflee et al. (2016) highlight the impact of destination image on tourist satisfaction but do not thoroughly examine the mediating role of gastronomy within this relationship. The lack of empirical evidence regarding how authentic local cuisine contributes to destination branding, enhances tourist satisfaction, and ultimately influences revisit intention represents a significant research gap in the literature. Furthermore, limited research has quantitatively examined the mediating effects of destination branding and destination image in shaping tourist satisfaction and revisit intention. This study addresses this gap by empirically testing a conceptual model that uncovers the indirect pathways through



which authentic local cuisine enhances tourism success.

Likewise, the purpose of this research is to provide valuable insights for destination marketers and policymakers on leveraging authentic cuisine as a unique and effective branding strategy for enhancing tourist satisfaction and promoting sustainable tourism development in Russia's Ural region. It is, therefore, essential to consider ways in which the Ural region can be promoted as an active and viable tourist destination consistent with the government's goals for sustainable development in tourism. To this end, the main objective of this study is to identify the link between authentic local cuisine, destination branding, destination image, and how it affects tourists' satisfaction and likelihood to return.

The Ural region presents a compelling case for studying the role of authentic local cuisine in destination branding due to its rich and diverse culinary traditions, yet limited recognition as a gastronomic destination. Unlike well-established food tourism regions, the Ural region is in the early stages of positioning itself as a culinary tourism hub. This makes it an ideal context to explore how gastronomic authenticity can contribute to destination branding and tourism development. Additionally, studying an emerging food tourism destination provides a broader contribution to understanding how culinary identity can shape place branding in lesser-known regions, offering valuable insights that extend beyond traditional gastronomic hotspots.

This research contributes to the existing body of knowledge in the tourism industry by conducting empirical research on the link between authentic local cuisine, destination branding, destination image, tourist satisfaction, and intentions to revisit. This research involves collecting quantitative data from an online survey to empirically test the variables and hypotheses identified in the literature and based on the theoretical framework derived from the literature. The data will explore how authentic culinary experiences influence destination branding and subsequently affect tourists' satisfaction and the likelihood that they will revisit. The study will focus on consumer behavior and destination marketing theories and, drawing on the research results, propose a conceptual framework for integrating these constructs in destination branding. Finally, our research will use a structural equation model (SEM). The SEM focuses on the relationship between authentic local cuisine, destination branding, destination image, tourist satisfaction, and tourists' intention to revisit the destination in the future.

## Literature Review

Gastronomy plays a pivotal role in tourism, influencing tourists' perceptions of a destination and their overall travel experiences. This research investigates the role of gastronomy in destination branding, particularly by examining how authentic local cuisine contributes to shaping a destination's identity, enhancing tourist satisfaction, and encouraging revisit intention. While previous studies have recognized food as a cultural element that enriches the tourist experience (Zhang et al., 2019; Kovalenko et al., 2023), there is limited empirical research that systematically explores how local cuisine functions as a branding tool that strengthens destination image and increases tourist loyalty (García-Pérez & Castillo-Ortiz, 2024). This literature review synthesizes existing studies on the impact of authentic local cuisine on tourist satisfaction, the mediating roles of destination branding and destination image, and how these factors collectively influence revisit intention.

### *Impact of Authentic Local Cuisine on Tourist Satisfaction*

In the context of culinary tourism, particularly in regions where food and wine are central to the tourism sector, the concept of "authenticity of cuisine" requires careful examination. Authenticity in this realm can be multifaceted, encompassing objective authenticity—where culinary practices adhere strictly to traditional methods and ingredients—and constructive authenticity, which recognizes that perceptions of authenticity are socially constructed and may evolve over time (Wang, 1999). In the cases of religious and dark tourism, Gardiner et al. (2022) found that staged authenticity practices contribute to the overall experience. In highly touristified contexts, the demand for authentic culinary experiences often leads to the commodification of

local food cultures, resulting in “staged authenticity,” where culinary traditions are modified or performed to meet tourist expectations (MacCannell, 1973). This means that authenticity should not be considered as a fixed attribute but as a fluid concept influenced by both hosts and guests.

Moreover, the pursuit of authenticity in such settings can lead to a paradox where the very act of seeking authentic experiences contributes to their alteration. Tourists’ desires for genuine culinary encounters may pressure local establishments to conform to idealized versions of their cuisine, potentially diluting traditional practices (Cohen, 1988).

Most scientific papers in the field of gastronomy tourism present different approaches to understanding the role of authentic local cuisine in shaping tourist experiences and outcomes. For example, Zhang et al. (2019) focused on the importance of authenticity in driving quality attributes, satisfaction, and loyalty in the context of gastronomy tourism. The study found that food authenticity has a direct positive effect on food quality, service quality, local environment, tourist satisfaction, and tourist loyalty. This challenges the traditional view that quality alone drives tourist satisfaction and loyalty. Moreover, the paper highlights authenticity as a key to the quality-satisfaction-loyalty framework in gastronomy tourism.

In contrast, Anggara et al. (2023) studied the relative impact of meal quality, service quality, and authenticity of local food on tourist satisfaction in Bali, Indonesia. Despite the study highlighting the value of food authenticity, as it provides tourists with a unique and enjoyable experience by allowing them to connect with the local culture and traditions, the research results emphasize that excellent service had the most substantial impact on the overall tourist experience and satisfaction (Anggara et al., 2023). Therefore, while the first paper emphasized the priority of food authenticity, the second study highlights the significance of service quality.

Nonetheless, we also analyzed the research of Yang et al. (2024) on how the gastronomy experience contributes to tourists’ subjective well-being. In comparison with the studies mentioned above, this research takes a broader perspective by investigating how various aspects of gastronomy tourism, including sensory, service, and environmental experiences, contribute to tourist satisfaction and subjective well-being. Moreover, the study utilizes the cognitive theory of emotion to analyze the mediating role of tourist attitude and satisfaction in the relationship between food tourism experiences and subjective well-being, therefore providing a new research perspective for gastronomy tourism. According to the research results, subjective well-being can be linked to satisfaction because if a food experience improves the tourist’s subjective well-being, then we can reasonably assume that the food experience also improves the tourist’s satisfaction (Yang et al., 2024). However, research findings also revealed that food experiences had a positive effect on both satisfaction and subjective well-being only together with other factors such as service experience and environmental experiences. Moreover, satisfaction can be interpreted through the prism of subjective well-being, emphasizing the holistic nature of tourist experiences beyond just food quality.

To sum up, despite the limited amount of literature connected with authentic local cuisine due to the concept’s novelty, reviewed studies illustrate both direct and indirect connections between authentic local cuisine and tourist satisfaction. Therefore, as part of our current research, we propose the following hypothesis:

**H1: Authentic Local Cuisine positively influences Tourist Satisfaction.**

*The Mediating Role of Destination Branding in the Relationship between Authentic Local Cuisine and Tourist Satisfaction*

In marketing, branding is a process where the elements of a product are managed and marketed to develop and manage the product elements so that it has a positive image capable of appealing to and retaining consumers (Lai et al., 2017). This section of the literature review examines the mediating role of destination branding in the relationship between authentic local cuisine and destination satisfaction.



The papers on destination branding are scarce, possibly due to its relatively late arrival in the literature. Gulisova (2022) reviewed studies on the relationship between gastronomy, tourism, and location/place branding. The study was conducted using a thematic analysis. The research found support in the literature for the assumption that food, culinary experiences, and gastronomy are frequently used in tourism by Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs), governments, and sector units for destination branding (Gulisova, 2022). Another example is a qualitative study by Freire and Gertner (2021) carried out in the Algarve in Portugal on the importance of local cuisine in the development of destination brands. The study was prefaced by the belief that a positive destination brand image is influenced by many factors, including food experiences. Research findings revealed that tourists evaluate a destination by reference to their food experience and often describe destination brands by naming its cuisine and national or local dishes. Thus, research supports the hypothesis that local cuisine has a positive impact on destination brands (Freire & Gertner, 2021). Despite the above-mentioned research findings, this study does not explicitly measure the mediating effect of destination branding on the relationship between authentic local cuisine and tourist satisfaction.

Based on the studies mentioned above, it can be concluded that there is a relationship between authentic local cuisine and destination branding. For instance, studies have shown that gastronomy is frequently used for destination branding purposes, and tourists often evaluate a destination based on their food experiences, which can contribute to forming a positive destination brand image. However, to measure and explore the role of destination branding in the relationship between authentic local cuisine and tourist satisfaction, this study brings out the following hypothesis:

**H2: Destination Branding mediates the relationship between Authentic Local Cuisine and Tourist Satisfaction.**

*The Mediating Role of Destination Image in the Relationship between Authentic Local Cuisine and Tourist Satisfaction*

Based on the review of the related literature, we can state the fact that most research tends to focus more on the direct influence of destination image on tourist satisfaction and does not observe it as a mediating factor in the context of the relationship between Authentic Local Cuisine and Tourist Satisfaction. For example, Chia et al. (2021) carried out a study to determine the extent to which destination image impacts satisfaction toward that destination. While research results show that elements of destination image, such as political images, cultural images, and infrastructure images, are positively linked to tourist satisfaction, it does not directly measure the mediating role of destination image between Authentic Local Cuisine and Tourist Satisfaction. The same limitations were noticed in another study conducted by Shaflee et al. (2016) on the impact of destination image on tourist satisfaction and tourists' intention to revisit. Research results showed that all elements linked to the destination image, as well as gastronomy, have significant and positive effects on satisfaction and intention to revisit (Shaflee et al., 2016).

Although the studies seem to focus more sharply on the direct relationship between destination image and tourist satisfaction, the literature nevertheless has shown that there is a significant link between the two. Moreover, one study went further and established a relationship between destination image, perceived value, tourist satisfaction, and loyalty (Ramseook-Munhurrin et al., 2015).

To conclude, despite the literature proving that destination image positively influences tourist satisfaction, it does not specify its role in the context of relationships between authentic local cuisine and tourist satisfaction. In response, and considering these limitations, this research proposes:

**H3: Destination Image mediates the relationship between Authentic Local Cuisine and Tourist Satisfaction.**

### *Tourist Satisfaction Influence on Revisit Intention*

Tourist satisfaction plays a crucial role in determining their intention to revisit a destination. Several studies have explored the relationship between tourist satisfaction and revisit intention, shedding light on the factors that influence this connection.

For instance, Fatmawati and Frido (2023) in their research investigated the factors influencing tourist revisit intentions in Indonesia. The results indicated that environmental quality, attractiveness, accessibility, and facilities positively affect tourist satisfaction, and overall tourist satisfaction positively impacts tourist revisit intention. Similar ideas can be found in the research conducted in another Asian country—Vietnam. In their study, Dang and Nguyen (2020) identified that revisit intentions are directly linked to satisfaction, attractiveness, accommodation, culture, and risk perceptions (Dang & Nguyen, 2020). Nonetheless, Junaedi and Harjanto (2020) united the factors mentioned above into the broader concept that significantly impacted tourists' intention to revisit, such as destination awareness, destination image, and tourist motivation (Junaedi & Harjanto, 2020).

To follow the main topic of current research—gastronomy tourism, we reviewed the study of the city of Popayan, Colombia, which was previously recognized by UNESCO as a Creative City of Gastronomy. The research by González Santa Cruz et al. (2020) examined the impact of different elements of culinary motivation on the satisfaction with gastronomy experienced during the visit. The study also analyzed the role of tourist attitudes toward culinary experiences in gastronomy satisfaction. Primarily, research findings revealed that tourist satisfaction with gastronomy is linked to a future destination choice (González Santa Cruz et al., 2020).

However, while there is a significant body of literature on the influence of tourist satisfaction on revisit intention, some research gaps still need to be discovered. For instance, Hasan et al. (2017) state that the effects of tourist risk perceptions on revisit intentions and the theoretical foundations of this relationship require further exploration. Mohd Salim et al. (2024) also found the destination foodscape to be an important predictor of destination attractiveness.

Overall, despite there being plenty of studies that identify tourist satisfaction among significant factors in determining tourists' intention to revisit a destination, there is a gap in research that explicitly examines these relationships taking into consideration the mediating effects of other constructs such as local cuisine, destination image, and destination branding. Based on the earlier discussions, in the context of this study, we developed the following hypothesis:

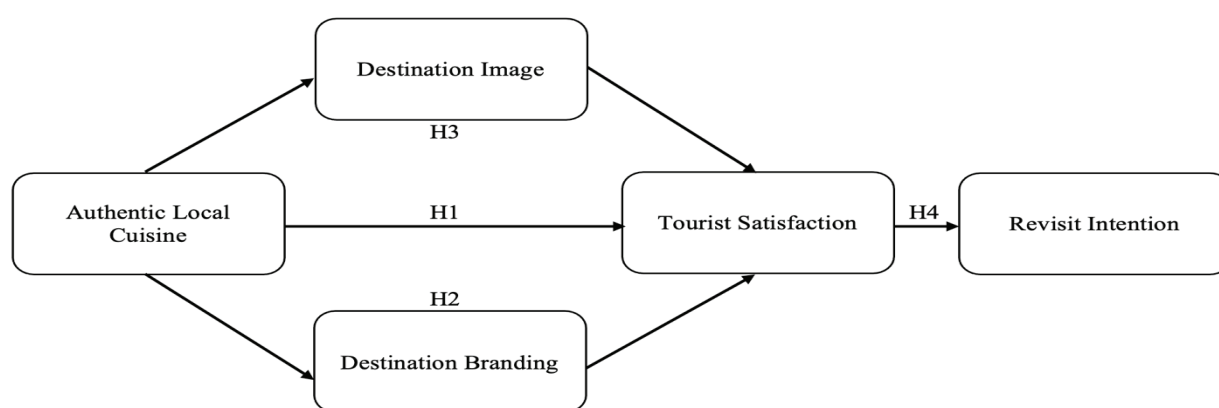
**H4: Tourist Satisfaction positively influences Revisit Intention.**

### *Conceptual Model*

In order to study the relationship between Authentic Local Cuisine, Destination Image, Destination Branding, Tourist Satisfaction, and Revisit Intention, the conceptual model presented in Figure 2.1 was developed. The constructs featured in the figure below are formulated based on previous studies, which help to form four hypotheses. Authentic Local Cuisine is expected to have a positive impact on Tourist Satisfaction. Thus, Destination Branding and Destination Image are expected to mediate this relationship. Also, we propose that Tourist Satisfaction, in turn, positively influences tourists' intention to revisit the destination.



Figure 1. Conceptual model



H2, H3: Mediating effects

## Methodology

Structural Equation Modeling is a comprehensive statistical technique that enables researchers to examine complex relationships among observed and latent variables simultaneously. It integrates aspects of factor analysis and multiple regression, allowing for the assessment of measurement models and structural paths within a unified framework. Structural Equation Modeling has been effectively utilized across various disciplines, including sociology, to test theoretical models that involve intricate interdependencies among variables. For instance, Bollen (1989) provided a foundational approach to structural Equation Modeling in social sciences, emphasizing its applicability in testing causal relationships. Similarly, Saris and Gallhofer (2007) highlighted the utility of structural Equation Modeling in evaluating the quality of survey questions and the relationships between latent constructs. Moreover, Kline (2015) discussed the broad applications of structural Equation Modeling in social and behavioral research, underscoring its capacity to handle complex models that traditional statistical methods may not adequately address.

### Gastronomy in the Ural Region

The Ural region possesses a rich cultural heritage, diverse ethnic communities, and a dynamic culinary landscape shaped by its historical and geographical diversity. Ural cuisine represents a distinctive fusion of Russian, Finno-Ugric, and Asian culinary traditions, utilizing locally sourced ingredients such as meat, fish, wild berries, and forest herbs. A particularly significant influence on the region's gastronomy stems from the indigenous peoples of the northern Urals, the Khanty and Mansi.

For these indigenous communities, fish constitutes the dietary cornerstone and is consumed in various forms throughout the year, including fresh, boiled, smoked, sun-dried, salted, or fried preparations. A notable traditional dish is stroganina, composed of thinly sliced frozen fish (Lukina, 1991). In addition to fish, the diet is supplemented by game meats, such as deer, moose, and fur-bearing animals like hare and squirrel. Reindeer and elk meat are also widely consumed, either raw, boiled, dried, or smoked, reflecting a deep-rooted reliance on sustainable, regionally available resources.

A defining culinary hallmark of the central Ural region is pelmeni (dumplings), whose name originates from the Ugric term "pel-nyan," meaning "ear-bread." Ural-style pelmeni extend beyond the traditional meat filling, incorporating variations with mushrooms, radishes, and sauerkraut (Pervukhina, 2021). Similarly, the central and southern Ural regions emphasize the culinary significance of baked goods and dough-based dishes. Pies crafted with bird-cherry flour or filled with bird-cherry berries highlight the integration of locally sourced

ingredients. Another iconic specialty is shangi, a baked dough product topped with thick spreads such as mashed potatoes, cottage cheese, or millet porridge. Among the most cherished regional specialties are posikunchiki, small, meat-filled pastries known for their juicy and flavorful filling (Pervukhina, 2021).

Many of these traditional dishes are prominently featured at esteemed gastronomic events, such as the Ural Cuisine Gastronomic Festival. The region also hosts a variety of specialized food festivals, including the Barbecue Festival, the Pelmeny Party (celebrating Ural dumplings), and the Strawberry Jam Festival, all of which attract both local and international audiences. These events serve as a platform for the preservation and innovation of regional culinary traditions while reinforcing the region's position as an emerging hub for gastronomic tourism.

These events, such as the Barbecue Festival, the Pelmeny Party (celebrating Ural dumplings), and the Strawberry Jam Festival, are not merely opportunities for consumption but serve as dynamic cultural platforms. They actively contribute to the preservation and innovation of regional culinary traditions by showcasing the diversity of Ural cuisine, from traditional recipes to contemporary interpretations. By attracting both local and international audiences, these festivals reinforce the Ural region's position as an emerging hub for gastronomic tourism and foster a sense of community around shared culinary heritage. Key stakeholders, including local chefs, restaurateurs, and cultural institutions, collaborate to curate unique experiences at these festivals, further promoting Ural gastronomy and enhancing the region's attractiveness as a gastronomic destination.

Key stakeholders, including chefs, restaurateurs, and cultural institutions, collaborate to curate unique culinary experiences that promote Ural gastronomy. A notable initiative in this regard is the "Authentic Ural Cuisine" (AUC) project (Authentic Ural Cuisine, n.d.), which seeks to preserve and disseminate the region's culinary heritage as an essential component of gastronomic tourism. This project convenes esteemed Ural-based chefs to develop and promote dishes that encapsulate the region's unique culinary identity, thereby enhancing its attractiveness as a gastronomic destination.

The AUC project and the various food festivals hosted in the region represent a fascinating interplay between genuine culinary heritage and its strategic presentation for tourism. While the project convenes esteemed Ural-based chefs to develop and promote dishes encapsulating the region's unique culinary identity, and the festivals showcase diverse traditions, it is important to consider these initiatives through the lens of «staged authenticity.» As discussed in the literature review, staged authenticity occurs when culinary traditions are modified or performed to meet tourist expectations. In the context of an emerging gastronomic destination like the Ural region, such efforts, while grounded in authentic traditions and ingredients, are also consciously curated and marketed to enhance tourist appeal. This strategic promotion, involving collaboration with chefs and cultural institutions, aims to balance the preservation of historical culinary techniques with the commercial viability of gastronomic tourism. Therefore, these initiatives can be seen as a form of constructive authenticity, where perceptions of authenticity evolve and are socially constructed through the interaction of hosts and guests, rather than a fixed or objective attribute. They are an expression of how local stakeholders actively shape and present their culinary identity to create a compelling destination brand.

Research by Polukhina (2022) and Ogurtsova (2022) underscores the necessity of fostering innovation within the food industry, particularly in the realms of sustainable waste management and the adoption of eco-friendly production methods, to solidify the region's standing as a premier gastronomic destination. Correspondingly, regional tourism policies prioritize place branding through culinary identity, thereby positioning the Ural region as a center for authentic and innovative food experiences.

Moreover, the region's tourism strategy integrates cultural and historical elements to offer visitors a holistic and immersive experience. The "On the Urals—Eat! Gastronomic Journeys" initiative exemplifies this approach by enabling tourists to engage with local culinary traditions, interact with residents, and explore historical





sites such as the Demidov factories and ancient villages. This strategy not only fosters the development of gastronomic tourism but also reinforces the cultural identity of the region. Museums, libraries, and cultural institutions further contribute to this initiative by organizing food-related exhibitions and events, thereby enriching the visitor experience.

The central Ural region, particularly Sverdlovsk Oblast, is actively positioning itself as a leading gastronomic tourism destination within Russia by harmonizing culinary innovation with cultural preservation. By fostering a dynamic and evolving food scene, the region continues to attract gastronomes and cultural tourists seeking an authentic engagement with Ural culinary heritage. This commitment to sustainable tourism development is further reflected in the region's growing recognition, with half of its constituent territories ranking among the top 30 in the national tourism index for domestic and outbound tourism development in 2024 (Russian Tourism Rating, 2024).

The AUC project, though not recent, continues to evolve in its approach to showcasing the region's culinary heritage. Online information and videos indeed suggest a well-curated project, often aligning with international, particularly Scandinavian, styles of food and quality cuisine communication. This aesthetic emphasizes natural ingredients, minimalist presentation, and a narrative around regionality and sustainability, which resonates with contemporary global gastronomic trends. While the project is at least five years old, its core mission of preserving and disseminating Ural culinary heritage remains. Changes have largely focused on broadening its reach and integrating more diverse culinary experiences, moving beyond a purely historical focus to include innovative interpretations of traditional dishes.

The AUC project and the various gastronomic festivals, such as the Barbecue Festival, Pelmeny Party, and Strawberry Jam Festival, represent a blend of top-down interventions and bottom-up initiatives. Regional tourism policies prioritize place branding through culinary identity, indicating a clear top-down strategy to position the Ural region as a center for authentic and innovative food experiences. Initiatives like “On the Urals—Eat! Gastronomic Journeys” exemplify this strategic approach, enabling tourists to engage with local culinary traditions and explore historical sites. However, the involvement of key stakeholders, including chefs, restaurateurs, and cultural institutions, in curating unique culinary experiences also points to significant bottom-up contributions. While the emergence of start-ups by young chefs specifically within these projects isn't explicitly detailed, the emphasis on innovation within the food industry, alongside sustainable practices, suggests an environment conducive to such ventures. Local/regional associations promoting tourism through food are implicitly involved through collaboration with tourist visitor centers for data collection and outreach.

The target audience for these events is multifaceted. While the study's participant demographics indicate a majority of middle-income residents from the Ural region, with a high interest in local cuisine, the strategic branding efforts and the curated style of communication for projects like AUC suggest a broader appeal. There's an evident ambition to attract not only local publics but also potentially wealthy foodies from major Russian cities and international visitors who are accustomed to haute cuisine or meticulously curated “authentic” culinary experiences. The focus on unique culinary identity and immersive experiences aims to differentiate the Ural region in the competitive tourism market, attracting those seeking distinctive gastronomic journeys beyond traditional hotspots.

### *Participants*

The research method employed in this quantitative study utilizes explanatory research with survey data collection. As to size, although initially we collected 216 questionnaires, part of them had to be rejected according to exclusion criteria. Therefore, the final study involved 203 respondents who were visitors of the Ural region and were selected using purposive sampling.

Due to the purposive sampling technique, we established exclusion criteria relevant to the study's objectives

to define characteristics that disqualify individuals from participating in a study. According to the statistics provided by the Director of the Department of Tourism and Hospitality Industry Development of the Sverdlovsk Region, the primary source of tourist flow in the Ural region consists of residents from neighboring regions, followed by other regions of Russia (Business Quarter, 2023). Therefore, we followed two main limitations for our study on Gastronomy and Destination Branding: age and traveling background. Taking into consideration the large territory of Ural that includes six federal subjects of the Russian Federation (Kurgan Oblast, Sverdlovsk Oblast, Tyumen Oblast, Chelyabinsk Oblast, Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug—Yugra, and Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug) and the statistical fact that the majority of tourists in the region reside in various parts of Ural, we decided not to exclude residents of Ural, but to exclude those who did not have tourist experience in Ural.

As a result, anyone under 18 and therefore beneath the age of consent and anyone who had no tourist experience in the studied Ural region was not included in the study.

Of the satisfactorily completed questionnaires, 41.4% of the sample were male respondents, while 58.6% of the sample represented female respondents. Although participants of the research were residents of various regions, the most dominant category was individuals from Ural (60.1%). Regarding income level, 59.6% of the respondents were in the middle-income bracket, 17.2% had higher income, 7.9% had lower income, and 15.3% decided not to share their income level. What is important for our research is that the majority (59.1%) stated they are very interested in local cuisine during their trips. Overall, the participants' demographics can be described as mainly consisting of middle-income residents of the Ural region, with a wide range of ages from 18 to over 65 years. More details regarding the sample profile are displayed in the appendix, table A.1.

#### *Variables/Measurements*

Five scales to measure Authentic Local Cuisine, Destination Image, Destination Branding, Tourist Satisfaction, and Revisit Intention were adapted to the purposes of current research on the Ural region and included in the survey (Table 1). The measure of Authentic Local Cuisine was adapted from Lai et al. (2017), Zhang et al. (2019), and considering characteristics of food tourism and gastronomic identity proposed by Hall et al. (2003) and Harrington R. J. (2005). The scale used to measure Destination image was adapted from Chi and Qu (2008). Destination Branding was measured using five modified scales developed by Tsaur et al. (2016). A study by Dang and Nguyen (2020) served as the basis for the five measurement items in the Tourist Satisfaction scale. Finally, to measure Revisit Intention, we modified and used a scale with five items developed by Jalilvand et al. (2012) (Table 3.2).

**Table 1. Definitions and indicators of variables**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
<b>Authentic Local Cuisine</b>	Represents the quality, diversity, and cultural significance of local cuisine in the destination	Local dishes, ingredients, cultural experiences, etc.
<b>Destination Image</b>	Reflects tourists' overall perception of the destination, including its natural beauty, culture, and hospitality	Scenic beauty, cultural attractions, local people's friendliness, etc.
<b>Destination Branding</b>	Signifies the branding efforts made by the destination authorities and how well the destination is marketed	Brand image, brand awareness, culinary events, marketing campaigns, etc.



<b>Tourist Satisfaction</b>	Represents the level of contentment and positive experiences that tourists have during their visit to the destination	Satisfaction with local cuisine, attractions, accommodations, overall travel experience, etc.
<b>Revisit Intention</b>	Indicates the likelihood of tourists to revisit the destination based on their perceptions and satisfaction	Intention to return, willingness to recommend the destination, etc.

To measure the above-mentioned variables and, in the process, test proposed hypotheses, this research used structural equation modeling (SEM). Specifically, we utilized partial least squares (PLS), a variance-based structural equation modeling approach. SEM is a tool for analyzing data to test complex links among analytical variables (Peugh & Feldon, 2020). SEM has the capability to test multiple mediating as well as moderate relationships simultaneously and to provide estimates for latent variables based on related measures. It can also address practical issues, including abnormalities and missing data. SEM tests the extent to which hypotheses provide adequate statements about the relationships among variables (Peugh & Feldon, 2020).

Nonetheless, the SEM's variation and association of variables obtained from the data will lead to inferences of causal relationships. The variations are measured using descriptive statistics of the observed variables. Thus, standard deviations will measure the variations, and the correlation coefficient will measure the associations.

#### *Data Collection*

Based on this SEM model, we created a questionnaire and conducted an online survey using Google Forms. We conducted a pilot test with five study participants from varied groups to test the questionnaire's effectiveness. The primary goal of the pilot test was to evaluate the clarity of the questions, identify potential uncertainties, and solicit feedback on the overall structure and format of the questionnaire. Therefore, the respondents were encouraged to make any comments or highlight any items in the questionnaire that they felt were problematic. Following feedback from the pilot test and considering current trends indicating a rise in the number of individuals relocating from Russia, the demographic questions section was updated. Specifically, an additional option was introduced to the question regarding the respondent's place of residence. In addition to the existing choices, participants are now provided with the option to select «Reside outside of Russia». This modification aims to enhance the inclusivity of the questionnaire, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of our target audience's diverse living situations both within and outside of Russia.

The data were gathered between February and April 2024. All survey forms were completed online. Initially, email invitations were sent to a randomized list of potential respondents obtained from a local cultural association. To enhance response rates and reach populations less likely to be part of online panels, the survey link was also shared through social media platforms and community forums related to the research topic. Due to the anticipated respondents' language abilities, the questionnaire was made in Russian. The survey included an introduction notice, a demographic section to identify socio-demographic characteristics, and the main part of research-related questions consisting of five sections.

Socio-demographic information of research participants was obtained by items including age, gender, income, region of residence, frequency of travel, and overall interest in local cuisines. Regarding the main part of the questionnaire, the first was a section with questions about authentic local cuisine; the second was questions about the destination image; the third was questions about destination branding; the fourth was questions about tourist satisfaction; and the last section was questions about revisit intention. All questionnaire items in the above-mentioned sections were measured using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree.

This research used two distinct sampling approaches to ensure a comprehensive sampling strategy. Firstly, we utilized the leading Russian social media platform VKontakte (VK) to spread the questionnaire link in

Ural-themed groups. Through this particular outreach, we aimed to engage individuals with a specific interest in the Ural region, leveraging the platform's popularity to access a niche audience likely to provide valuable insights. Besides that, we cooperated with tourist visitor centers in various cities within the Ural region, distributing the invitation for participation in our research and link to Google Forms questionnaire through their e-mailing lists. This method provided us with respondents who had either already visited Ural or had a particular interest in visiting the Ural region, which in turn enriched our dataset with diverse perspectives and experiences. Overall, by combining the «self-questionnaire» method through VK groups and collaboration with tourist visitor centers, we implemented a multifaceted approach to data collection, ensuring broad coverage and enhancing the representativeness of our respondent sample.

## Results and Analysis

### *Statistical Methods and Procedures*

Altogether, 203 participants who satisfied the inclusion criteria completed the questionnaires. The raw data was collected from the Google form in Excel format and entered according to the required format and variable type into statistical analysis software for further analysis. Specifically, in the analysis of the results, we utilized partial least squares (PLS), a variance-based structural equation modeling approach. Smart PLS 4.0 software was utilized to assess both the measurement and structural models (Ringle et al., 2024). Partial least-based structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) is a variance-based approach that uses total variance to estimate the parameters (Hair et al., 2019). This particular type of analysis and software has been chosen because PLS path modeling is commonly used in social sciences disciplines research, and it is well-suited for exploratory and confirmatory research and complex models (Henseler et al., 2014; Hair et al., 2019).

Firstly, to test the validity and reliability of the constructs and to determine measurement model fit, we conducted confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). After that, the relationship among proposed variables (Authentic Local Cuisine, Destination Image, Destination Branding, Tourist Satisfaction, and Revisit Intention) was tested using partial least-based structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM).

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was applied to test the validity and reliability of the constructs and to assess the measurement model. Likewise, as suggested by Hair et al. (2019), this part of research encompasses several key indicators. First, the reliability of the constructs was analyzed using composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha. High values of Cronbach's alpha connected with strong reliability and prove that the items within one construct consistently measure the same underlying concept (Hair et al., 2019). According to Hair et al., it is generally agreed that Cronbach's alpha coefficient higher than 0.70 is acceptable, and values as low as 0.60 may be acceptable for exploratory research (Hair et al., 2010). The results showed that the Cronbach's alphas of every item were higher than 0.70 (with a minimum value of 0.852 for the Revisit Intention variable) (Table A.2.). Similarly, composite reliability analysis ensures satisfactory internal consistency in the measurement model to demonstrate reliable construct measurement, and the magnitude of CR should exceed 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019). The reliability testing results also showed that all five variables tested for reliability were reliable, based on the magnitude of CR greater than 0.70 (Table A.2.).

Secondly, the convergent validity was calculated using the average variance extracted (AVE) with a threshold value of 0.5, as recommended by Hair et al. (2019). The AVE indicates how much variance a construct captures through its indicators compared to the variance caused by measurement error. A value of 0.5 or higher suggests that each construct accounts for at least 50% of the variance in its assigned indicators, as proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981). Table 3 indicates that all the AVE values exceed the cut-off values mentioned above. Therefore, we can confirm that the measurement models demonstrate good convergent validity.

Finally, factor loading serves as an important indicator, reflecting the extent to which each item is associated with its corresponding construct. The factor loading with a value greater than 0.70 is considered to be



acceptable (Hair et al., 2019). Therefore, after conducting factor loading analysis, we excluded item RI\_4 (I would visit Ural rather than any other regions of Russia.) from the final result due to the fact that it carried a factor loading of less than 0.70. Likewise, the other 24 items had factor loadings of the above-suggested values, which are presented in Table A.2. (appendix).

To assess the discriminant validity of the variables, we first employed the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). This criterion involves comparing the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) for each variable with the correlation value between all variables. According to Fornell and Larcker, the square root of the AVE should be greater than the correlation value between the constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Table 2 highlights the square roots of the AVE values in bold (0.869, 0.796, 0.824, 0.841, 0.832). The values mentioned above confirm the presence of discriminant validity, as they satisfy the necessary criterion.

As the second approach to assess the discriminant validity, we employed Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of correlation (HTMT) that was suggested by Henseler et al. (2015). This method provides an alternative way to examine the distinctiveness of constructs in a model. The HTMT ratio compares the correlation between two different constructs (heterotrait) to the correlation between two identical constructs (monotrait). A value of less than 0.9 indicates discriminant validity, suggesting that the constructs measure different underlying concepts. As shown in Table 3, HTMT values of all variables were less than 0.9 and therefore met the requirements mentioned above. Overall, the discriminant validity assessment using both the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the HTMT indicates that all variables in the research model are conceptually similar.

*Table 2. Fornell-Larcker discriminant validity assessment*

Variable	Authentic Local Cuisine	Destination Image	Destination Branding	Tourist Satisfaction	Revisit Intention
Authentic Local Cuisine	<b>0.869</b>				
Destination Image	0.737	<b>0.796</b>			
Destination Branding	0.348	0.313	<b>0.824</b>		
Tourist Satisfaction	0.702	0.765	0.452	<b>0.841</b>	
Revisit Intention	0.611	0.641	0.446	0.776	<b>0.832</b>

*Table 3. Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of correlation (HTMT) discriminant validity assessment.*

Variable	Authentic Local Cuisine	Destination Image	Destination Branding	Tourist Satisfaction	Revisit Intention
Authentic Local Cuisine					
Destination Image	0.788				
Destination Branding	0.296	0.314			
Tourist Satisfaction	0.744	0.849	0.432		
Revisit Intention	0.656	0.716	0.456	0.845	

### *Structural Model Assessment*

After assessing the measurement model reliability and validity and finding it satisfactory, the structural model was examined. The assessment of the structural model involved two main approaches. Before assessing the structural relationships, Hair et al. (2019) suggests examining collinearity to make sure it does not bias the regression results. Likewise, firstly, multicollinearity was analyzed by examining the variance inflation



factor (VIF) values of all the predictor constructs in the model. The results of the VIF tests revealed that the predictor variables in our model exhibited low levels of multicollinearity as VIF values ranged from 1.000 to 2.262, thus falling below the threshold of 5, as recommended by Hair et al. (2019).

Secondly, each endogenous variable's magnitude of the  $R^2$  value was analyzed. According to Shmueli and Koppius (2011), the  $R^2$  value measures the extent to which the variance in each of the endogenous constructs is explained, making it a measure of the model's explanatory power. Additionally, Rigdon (2012) refers to the  $R^2$  as the in-sample predictive power. The  $R^2$  value ranges from 0 to 1, with higher levels indicating higher levels of predictive accuracy. According to Chin (1998),  $R^2$  values of 0.67, 0.33, and 0.19 and lower in PLS path models are considered substantial, moderate, and weak, respectively. The  $R^2$  values fall between the lowest 0.121 (Destination Branding) and highest 0.663 (Tourist Satisfaction), therefore confirming the model's substantial to moderate levels of predictive power.

Summing up the conducted analysis, the structural model can be considered robust and reliable regarding its predictive accuracy and the absence of multicollinearity issues.

### *Common Method Bias*

Common method bias (CMB) is a critical concern in research methodologies, especially in social sciences research that utilizes self-administered surveys as a data collection technique. CMB occurs when the estimates of the relationships between two or more constructs are biased due to the use of the same measurement method (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Consequently, detecting and mitigating CMB is crucial to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the research findings.

In our research, we implemented several methods to address potential common method biases. As indicated by Podsakoff and Organ (1986), common method bias often arises from common method variance, which occurs when the same method or source is used to measure both the independent and dependent variables. By incorporating measurement items and data for the researched variables from different sources in this study, we minimized common method variance and, therefore, reduced the potential bias associated with using a single measurement method.

Nonetheless, questionnaire participants were informed about the research's purpose and assured of the confidentiality of their responses, which, according to Nederhof (1985), can help reduce social desirability bias. This bias occurs when respondents provide answers they believe are more socially acceptable rather than honest.

Furthermore, the questionnaire structure was created considering findings by Podsakoff et al. (2003) on techniques for eliminating the effects of consistency motifs. Thus, the questionnaire was divided into different parts, each addressing a particular variable. This approach helped prevent earlier responses from influencing later ones, ensuring that each set of answers remained independent and reliable. Additionally, this segmentation allowed respondents to focus more thoroughly on each specific topic, potentially leading to more thoughtful and accurate responses.

Finally, to mitigate common method bias, we employed confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and Harman's single factor test to verify the factor structure of observed variables and confirm that they represent distinct constructs. By applying CFA, we tested the measurement model to ensure that researched variables were distinct and not overly correlated, therefore reducing the risk of common method bias. The findings of Harman's single-factor analysis indicate that the first factor accounts for only 27.3%, indicating no single factor explained more than 50% of the variance, which illustrates the absence of significant CMB issues in the data (MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2012).





Overall, while no single method can entirely eliminate the risk of CMB, the combination of procedural and statistical techniques employed in this study provides a robust approach to detecting and mitigating its impact.

### Hypothesis Testing

For the hypothesis testing, we followed the principles of structural model and path coefficients evaluation proposed by Hair et al. (2010). To determine the significance of the path coefficient research model, we used the SmartPLS bootstrapping function. According to Hair et al. (2010), the hypothesis should be supported if its t-values are greater than 1.65 and p-values are less than 0.05. Table 4 provides the results of the structural model assessment that was used to test the research hypothesis. The first hypothesis (H1) predicted that Authentic Local Cuisine had a positive impact on Tourist Satisfaction, which was confirmed ( $\beta = 0.251$ ,  $t = 3.738$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The results also indicated that Tourist Satisfaction positively influences Revisit Intention (H4), registering the most substantial impact of the model ( $\beta = 0.776$ ,  $t = 18.19$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

**Table 4. Structural model assessment**

Path	Path coefficient	Standard deviation	t values	p values
Authentic Local Cuisine -> Destination Image	0.737	0.055	13.390	0.000
Authentic Local Cuisine -> Destination Branding	0.348	0.066	5.249	0.000
Authentic Local Cuisine -> Tourist Satisfaction	0.251	0.067	3.738	0.000
Destination Image -> Tourist Satisfaction	0.516	0.057	8.994	0.000
Destination Branding -> Tourist Satisfaction	0.204	0.052	3.883	0.000
Tourist Satisfaction -> Revisit Intention	0.776	0.043	18.191	0.000

To evaluate Destination Branding and Destination Image mediating roles (H2: Destination Branding mediates the relationship between Authentic Local Cuisine and Tourist Satisfaction; H3: Destination Image mediates the relationship between Authentic Local Cuisine and Tourist Satisfaction), we conducted the mediation analysis and examined the indirect effects of specific pathways on the outcome variables. The results of the analysis of indirect effects in Table 5 show that Destination Branding ( $\beta = 0.071$ ,  $t = 3.462$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and Destination Image ( $\beta = 0.380$ ,  $t = 7.212$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) are mediators between Authentic Local Cuisine and Tourist Satisfaction.

**Table 5. Mediation effect assessment**

Indirect effect	Path Coef- ficient	Std. Devia- tion	t values	p values
Authentic Local Cuisine -> Destination Image -> Tourist Satisfaction	0.380	0.053	7.212	0.000
Authentic Local Cuisine -> Destination Branding -> Tourist Satisfaction	0.071	0.020	3.462	0.001

Further, the total indirect effect of Authentic Local Cuisine on Tourist Satisfaction was calculated using the following formula: total indirect effect =  $ab$  where  $a$  is the path coefficient of the relationship between the independent and the mediator variable, and  $b$  is the path coefficient of the relationship between the mediator and the dependent variable (Hair et al., 2010). Calculation of the sum of total indirect effects of Destination Image and Destination Branding results in 0.451, which way exceeds the direct effect (H1) size ( $\beta = 0.251$ ), therefore indicating the importance of the mediating variables in the model. Additionally, following the procedure suggested by Hair et al. (2014), we calculated variance accounted for (VAF) to evaluate the size of total indirect effects in relation to the total effect. According to Hair et al. (2014),  $VAF = \text{Total indirect effect} / \text{Total effect}$ , where the total effect is a sum of total indirect and direct effects ( $0.451 + 0.251 = 0.702$ ). Likewise,

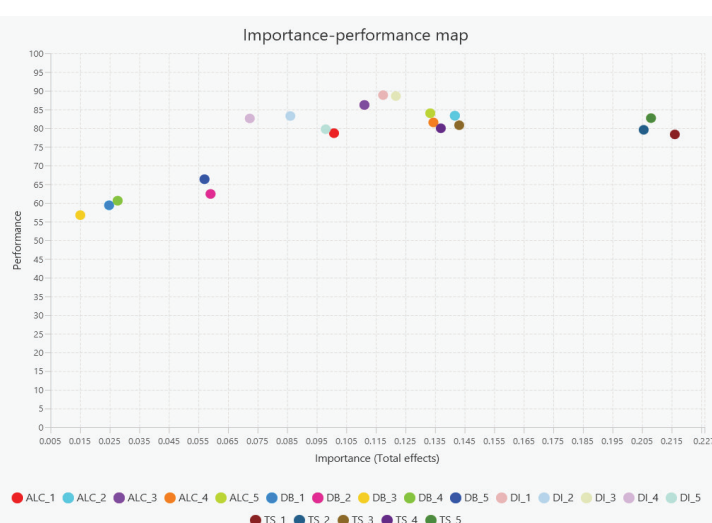
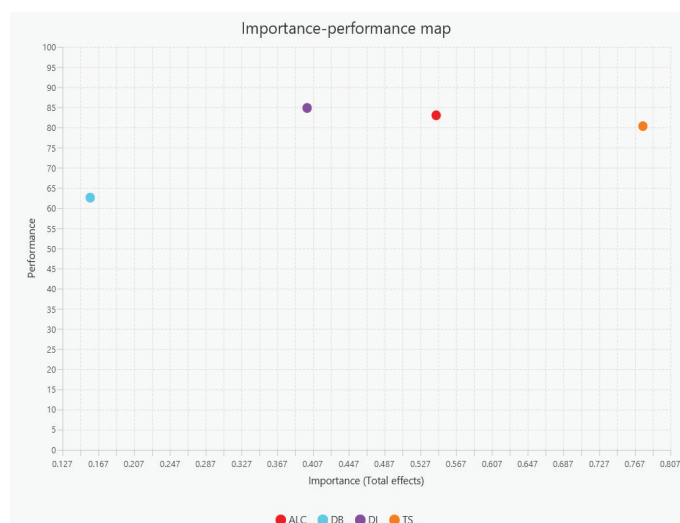
VAF values of less than 0.2, 0.2 to 0.8, and greater than 0.8 are considered no mediation, partial mediation, and full mediation, respectively (Hair et al., 2014). In our study, the size of VAF is 0.642, which means that Destination Branding and Destination Image act as partial mediators in the relationship between Authentic Local Cuisine and Tourist Satisfaction. This means that H2 and H3 are partially supported.

### Importance-Performance Map Analysis

To provide additional insights, we conducted an importance-performance map analysis (IPMA) to evaluate the relative importance of constructs that are key drivers of tourists' revisit intentions in our research model. Figure 2 visually represents the relationship between the importance and performance of these constructs. The results indicate the relative importance of each construct on revisit intention, with tourist satisfaction playing the most significant role, followed by authentic local cuisine and destination image. Further analysis of the relative importance of items, as shown in Figure 3, reveals that items related to Tourist Satisfaction (TS\_1, TS\_2, TS\_5) hold the highest importance in influencing tourists' decisions to revisit a destination. Additionally, the IPMA results highlight the significance of specific items within the constructs of authentic local cuisine and destination image. For instance, items ALC\_2, ALC\_3, ALC\_4, ALC\_5, and DI\_1, DI\_3 show higher importance among the constructs mentioned above. Conversely, items from the Destination Branding construct demonstrate a lower influence on revisit intention compared to the more critical constructs like Tourist Satisfaction, Authentic Local Cuisine, and Destination Image.

Figure 2. IPMA map for the researched constructs

Figure 3. IPMA map for the researched items



## Discussion

The purpose of this study was to provide valuable insights for destination marketers and policymakers in leveraging authentic cuisine as a unique and effective branding strategy for enhancing tourist satisfaction and promoting sustainable tourism development in Russia's Ural region. Likewise, our research proposed a conceptual model to investigate the role of gastronomy, particularly authentic local cuisine, in destination branding and its impact on tourist satisfaction and revisit intention. Therefore, the results of the research provide significant insights into how tourists' perceptions of local cuisine can influence their overall satisfaction with a destination and their intention to return.

### Food, Social Identity, and Collective Memory

Food is deeply intertwined with social identity and collective memory, acting as a marker of both personal and communal belonging (Bessière, 1998; Richards, 2021; Azic et al., 2024). In the Ural region, the interplay of Russian, Finno-Ugric, and Asian culinary traditions reflects the region's multiethnic history, making food a



powerful tool for maintaining cultural heritage. Traditional dishes such as pelmeni (dumplings) and stroganina (sliced frozen fish) not only serve as culinary experiences but also embody historical narratives passed down through generations, aligning with the concept of destination social media foodscape (Mohd Salim, et al., 2024). These foods function as cultural symbols that reinforce group identity while also being reinterpreted to appeal to tourist expectations (Cioclu et al., 2025).

Gastronomic tourism plays a crucial role in making these culinary traditions visible and accessible, transforming everyday practices into heritage elements that can be consumed by both locals and visitors. Museums, food festivals, and culinary events such as the Ural Cuisine Gastronomic Festival act as mechanisms of cultural transmission, reinforcing local identity while simultaneously reshaping it to fit within the demands of the tourism industry.

#### *Authenticity as a Social Construct: Who Defines What is Authentic?*

A central theme in this study is the negotiation of authenticity in food tourism. While many tourists seek «authentic» culinary experiences, authenticity itself is a socially constructed concept that is constantly redefined through interactions between tourists, locals, and industry stakeholders (Wang, 1999; MacCannell, 1973). Our findings suggest that destination branding and place identity shape tourists' perceptions of authenticity, influencing their levels of satisfaction and willingness to revisit.

In highly touristified regions, the commodification of authenticity is a common phenomenon, where traditional dishes are altered to meet tourist expectations (Cohen, 1988). However, in emerging food destinations such as the Ural region, authenticity remains a fluid and contested space, influenced by local stakeholders such as chefs, restaurateurs, and cultural institutions. Initiatives like the Authentic Ural Cuisine project seek to balance commercial appeal with the preservation of historical culinary techniques, illustrating how authenticity is both performed and negotiated within gastronomic tourism.

#### *Gastronomic Tourism, Power Relations, and Inequality*

Beyond its cultural significance, food tourism also raises questions of power and social inequality. This study highlights the role of destination branding as a mediating factor in how local cuisines are represented and marketed, but it also prompts us to ask: Who has the power to define what constitutes an «authentic» experience? Are traditional food producers, local farmers, and small-scale restaurateurs benefiting from gastronomic tourism, or are the economic gains concentrated in the hands of a few elite stakeholders?

In the Ural region, the push for gastronomic tourism is largely shaped by regional tourism policies and branding efforts, such as the «On the Urals—Eat! Gastronomic Journeys» initiative, which frames local food as a tourist attraction. While these initiatives promote local identity, they may also lead to a selective curation of what is considered «authentic,» potentially marginalizing certain culinary traditions that do not fit neatly within tourism narratives. This aligns with broader global debates on culinary gentrification, where rising interest in local food leads to price increases that may exclude local populations from their own gastronomic heritage (Bell & Valentine, 2013).

#### *The Global-Local Nexus: Gastronomy Between Tradition and Innovation*

The Ural region's case illustrates the tension between tradition and innovation in food tourism. While traditional food is promoted as an authentic experience, there is also pressure to modernize and adapt local cuisines to meet global tourist expectations. The inclusion of eco-friendly food production and sustainable waste management strategies, as highlighted by Polukhina (2022) and Ogurtsova (2022), suggests that contemporary food tourism must balance cultural heritage preservation with environmental and economic sustainability.

This dynamic reflects a broader trend where food tourism is shaped by both local heritage and global

consumer trends. While destinations such as Sicily or Burgundy have long-established food tourism industries, emerging regions like the Urals are actively crafting their gastronomic identity, using food as a tool for place-branding and economic differentiation. The results of this study indicate that gastronomic tourism is not merely about consumption but also about negotiation—between past and present, between local tradition and global appeal, and between authenticity and commercial viability.

## Conclusion

Most studies on gastronomy in tourism describe food consumption as the primary motivation for visiting a specific destination; therefore, understanding the multifaceted influences of gastronomy on tourism is crucial for effective destination marketing and development. Likewise, this research did not examine gastronomy in isolation but instead placed it within the larger context of other factors such as destination branding, destination image, tourist satisfaction, and revisit intention. The study started with the question: What is the role of gastronomy, particularly authentic local cuisine, in promoting Russia's Ural region for tourism? To answer this question, our research delves into the intricate dynamics between authentic local cuisine and revisit intention within the tourism industry, emphasizing the mediating roles of destination image and destination branding. The primary aim was to explore how gastronomy, particularly authentic local cuisine, contributes to tourists' overall satisfaction and revisit intention through destination branding and image.

Our study provides a theoretical foundation that can be applied to different cultural and economic contexts, highlighting the significance of strategic place-branding efforts in both established and emerging food tourism destinations. While our study focuses on the Ural region, the findings contribute to broader discussions on the role of gastronomy in tourism development. The relationships between food authenticity, destination branding, and tourist satisfaction are not exclusive to emerging gastronomic destinations but are relevant across various tourism contexts. Established food tourism regions where culinary heritage plays a dominant role can also benefit from understanding how authenticity perceptions shape visitor behavior.

The contribution to the tourism literature is also associated with the empirical validation of the mediating roles of destination branding and destination image in the relationship between authentic local cuisine and tourist satisfaction. While previous studies have acknowledged the significance of food authenticity, our research advances the field by quantifying these relationships and demonstrating the indirect pathways through which gastronomy enhances tourism success. The findings suggest that destinations aiming to leverage their culinary heritage should strategically integrate branding efforts with authentic gastronomic experiences to maximize tourist satisfaction and loyalty.

### *Theoretical Contributions/Implications*

The theoretical contributions of this paper are multifaceted, advancing both the literature on gastronomy tourism and the broader field of destination marketing and management. For instance, constructing and testing a new structural model, which consists of five constructs (authentic local cuisine, destination image, destination branding, tourist satisfaction, and revisit intention), contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics that shape tourist behavior and destination competitiveness. According to Zhang et al. (2019), food not only preserves conventional culture but also attracts tourists and helps to improve the local economy. However, most practitioners need to be made aware of the competitive advantage of food authenticity and quality (Pereira et al., 2022). Our PLS-SEM analysis uncovered compelling insights, demonstrating a substantial positive direct and indirect impact of authentic local cuisine on both tourist satisfaction and revisit intention. The absence of previous studies that simultaneously investigate these constructs highlights the novelty and originality of this research.

Finally, the research results may contribute to the literature of knowledge by indicating that the role of gastronomy in enhancing the level of tourist satisfaction is not direct but depends on other constructs like



destination branding and image. This brings us back to the need to consider these mediators when further studying the effects of gastronomy on tourist perceptions.

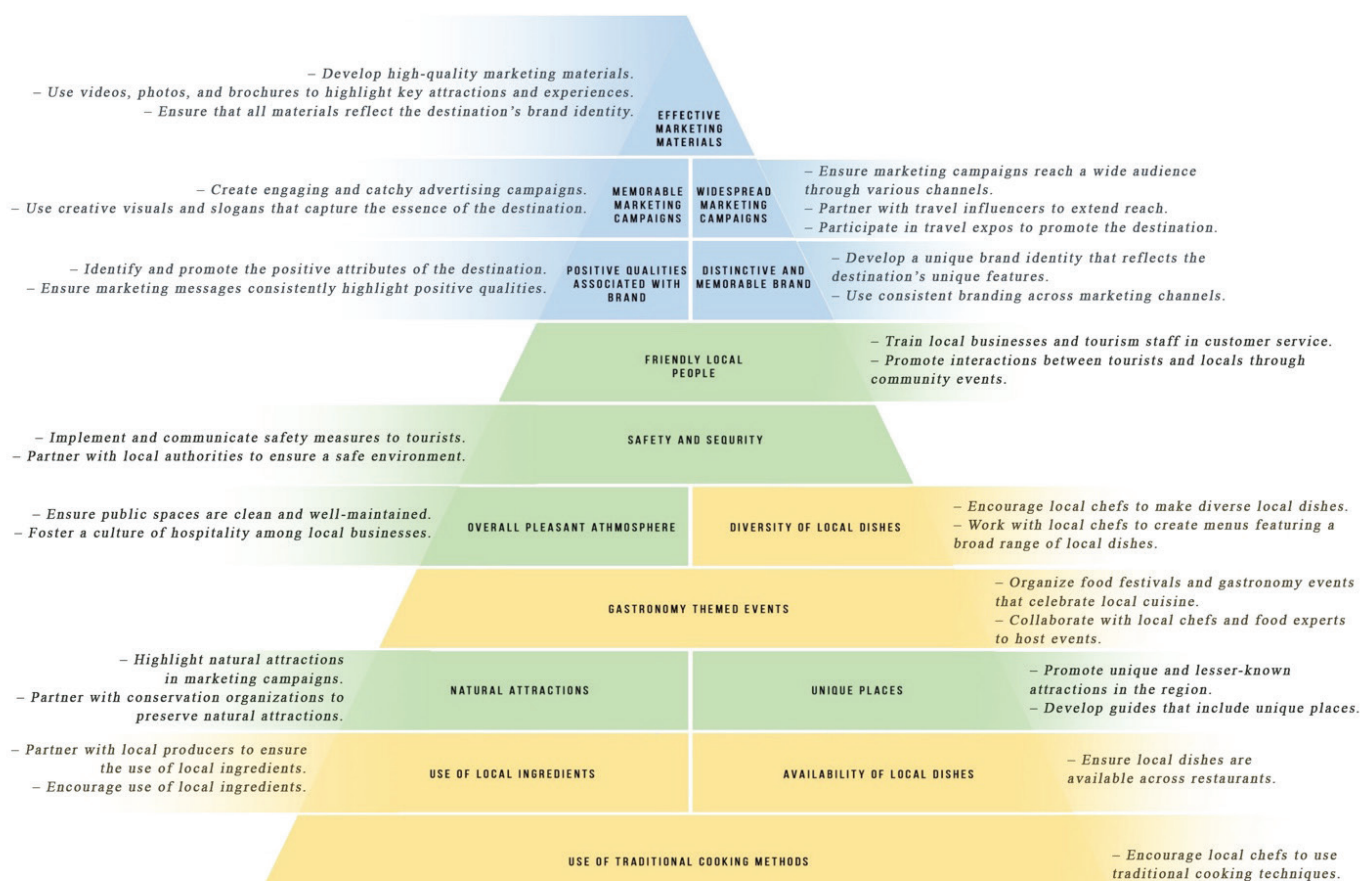
### Managerial Implications

The findings show that destinations' authentic cuisine, brand, and image positively impact tourists' satisfaction. However, authentic local cuisine was found to be the strongest predictor, suggesting that priority should be given to enhancing tourists' overall perception of the destination through gastronomy. This, in turn, would encourage an increase in tourists' revisit intentions, as our IPMA analysis indicates that tourist satisfaction has the highest impact on revisit intentions.

As a practical outcome of the findings of this study, we created a useful model-guide that serves as a strategic framework for tourism industry stakeholders, destination marketers, public bodies, and policymakers, which offers valuable insights and a comprehensive perspective on the factors that shape tourist satisfaction and therefore encourage them to return. The pyramid model presented in Figure 4 visually represents a hierarchical structure of key elements essential for promoting a destination through authentic local cuisine, destination image, and destination branding. Each layer of the pyramid represents a specific element arranged according to its importance in achieving the overall goal of improving tourist satisfaction and revisiting intention. Additionally, our model outlines specific practical steps to provide clear guidance on how to implement and achieve the objectives of a particular element.

Overall, this structured presentation of the research's findings can help destination authorities implement a transparent, step-by-step approach to creating an attractive destination. This, in turn, enables the development of tailored strategies for the destination, maximizing tourist satisfaction and encouraging repeat visits.

Figure 4. Strategic framework for improving tourist satisfaction and revisit intention



### *Limitations and Future Research*

Despite the theoretical and practical contributions of this study, this research has several inherent limitations that provide avenues for future research. First, the research paper's limitations include its specific focus on the Ural region of Russia, which may restrict the generalizability of findings to other tourist destinations. This region is still developing its reputation as a gastronomic destination. While this provides valuable insights into the branding potential of emerging food tourism locations, the findings may not be directly transferable to regions with well-established culinary tourism industries. As such, future research should conduct comparative analyses between emerging and established gastronomic destinations to explore the extent to which the identified relationships hold across different cultural and economic contexts.

The limitations of the study were also found in the lack of literature on the link between local cuisine and destination image and branding. Given the limitation of the study and based on research findings, we suggest further research on the link between gastronomy and tourist destination image and branding through the employment of a mixed-methods approach. By incorporating qualitative insights to complement the quantitative findings, we can gain comprehensive, voluntary data in a narrative as well as provide a more holistic understanding of the link between gastronomy, tourist destination image, and branding.

The last limitation of our study relates to the broadening of the theory. For instance, the failure to account for external factors such as economic conditions, political events, and seasonality may limit a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics that shape tourists' behavior and destination attractiveness. Acknowledging these limitations, it is suggested that future studies adopt longitudinal research to explore these relationships' complex nature.





## References

- Anggara, A. P., Lin, C. W., Mao, T. Y., & Susanto, E. (2023, May). Effects of food authenticity, food quality, and service quality on tourist satisfaction under multiple regression model during Covid-19. In *AIP Conference Proceedings* (Vol. 2685, No. 1). AIP Publishing.
- Alegre, J. & Garau, J. (2010). Tourist Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 37(1), 52-73.
- Azic, M. L., Rašan, D., & Mikić, K. (2024). Memorable gastronomic experience in sustainable tourism destinations: evidence from Croatia. *European journal of tourism research*, 36, 3608-3608.
- Bell, D., & Valentine, G. (2013). *Consuming geographies: We are where we eat*. Routledge.
- Bessière, J. (1998). Local development and heritage: traditional food and cuisine as tourist attractions in rural areas. *Sociologia ruralis*, 38(1), 21-34.
- Björk, P., & Kauppinen-Räsänen, H. (2016). Exploring the multi-dimensionality of travellers' culinary-gastronomic experiences. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 19(12), 1260-1280.
- Blumberg, K. (2005). Tourism Destination Marketing – A Tool for Destination Management? A Case Study from Nelson/Tasman Region, New Zealand. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 10(1), 45-57.
- Bollen, K. A. (1989). *Structural equations with latent variables*. Wiley.
- Carmo, I. S. D., Marques, S., & Dias, Á. (2022). The influence of experiential marketing on customer satisfaction and loyalty. *Journal of Promotion Management*, 28(7), 994-1018.
- Chi, C. & Qu, H. (2008). Examining the structural relationships of destination image, tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty: An integrated approach. *Tourism management*, 29(4), 624-636.
- Chia, S. K.-S.; Lo, M.-Chium; Razak, Z. B.; Wang, Y. C. & Mohamad, A. A. (2021). Impact of Destination Image on Tourist Satisfaction: The Moderating Effect of Information. *GeoJournal of tourism and Geosites*, 34(1), 88-93.
- Chin, W. W. (1998). The partial least squares approach to structural equation modeling. In: G. A. Marcoulides (Ed.), *Modern Methods for Business Research* (pp. 295–358).
- Cioclu, A., Petre, A. A., Lamagna, E., & Cavaliere, F. (2025). Exploring the design and content of restaurant menus for a comprehensive understanding of traditional Romanian Cuisine. In *Landscape—Tourism—Food* (pp. 245-263). Springer VS, Cham.
- Cohen, E. (1988). Authenticity and commoditization in tourism. *Annals of tourism research*, 15(3), 371-386.
- Dang, H. P. & Nguyen, H. H. (2020). Revisit Intention and Satisfaction: The Role of Destination Image, Perceived Risk, and Cultural Contact. *Cogent Business & Management*, 7(1),
- Fatmawati, Indah & Olga, Frido. (2023). Investigating The Determining Factors of Tourist Revisit Intention in a Natural-based Tourism Destination. *E3S Web of Conferences*. 444. <https://doi.org/10.1051/e3sconf/202344401014>.
- Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18(1), 39–50. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3151312>
- Freire, Joao & Gertner, Rosane. (2021). The relevance of food for the development of a destination brand. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*. 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41254-020-00164-5>.
- Gardiner, S., Vada, S., Yang, E. C. L., Khoo, C., & Le, T. H. (2022). Recreating history: The evolving negotiation of staged authenticity in tourism experiences. *Tourism Management*, 91, 104515.
- Geisser, S. (1974). A predictive approach to the random effect model. *Biometrika*, 61(1), 101–107. <https://doi.org/10.1093/biomet/61.1.101>

- González Santa Cruz, F., Lopez-Guzman, T., Pemberthy Gallo, L. S., & Rodríguez-Gutiérrez, P. (2019). Tourist loyalty and intangible cultural heritage: the case of Popayán, Colombia. *Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development*, 10(2), 172–188. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jchmsd-06-2019-0062>
- Gulisova, B. (2022). Place Branding for and Through Gastronomy. *Gastronomy and Tourism*, 6(3), 154–169.
- Hair, J. F., Risher, J. J., Sarstedt, M., & Ringle, C. M. (2019). When to use and how to report the results of PLS-SEM. *European Business Review*, 31(1), 2–24.
- Hair, J., JR, Black, W., Babin, B., Anderson, R. and Tatham, R. (2010). SEM: an introduction, *Multivariate Data Analysis: A Global Perspective*, 1, 629–686.
- Hair, J.F., JR, Sarstedt, M., Hopkins, L. and Kuppelwieser, V.G. (2014). Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM): An emerging tool in business research, *European Business Review*, Vol. 26 No. 2, pp. 106–121.
- Hair, J.F., Ringle, C.M. and Sarstedt, M. (2011). PLS-SEM: indeed a silver bullet, *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, Vol. 19 No. 2, pp. 139–151.
- Hall, C. M., Sharples, L., Michell, R., Macionis, N., & Cambourne, B. (2003). Food tourism around the world. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Harrington, R. J. (2005). Defining Gastronomic Identity: The Impact of Environment and Culture on Prevailing Components, Texture and Flavors in Wine and Food. *Journal of Culinary Science & Technology*, 4(2–3), 129–152. [https://doi.org/10.1300/J385v04n02\\_10](https://doi.org/10.1300/J385v04n02_10)
- Hasan, M. K., Ismail, A. R., & Islam, M. F. (2017). Tourist risk perceptions and revisit intention: A critical review of literature. *Cogent Business & Management*, 4(1), 121. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2017.1412874>
- Henseler, J., Ringle, C.M. and Sarstedt, M. (2015), A new criterion for assessing discriminant validity in variance-based structural equation modeling, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 43 No. 1, pp. 115–135.
- Jalilvand, M. R., Samiei, N., Dini, B., & Yaghoubi Manzari, P. (2012). Examining the structural relationships of electronic word of mouth, destination image, tourist attitude toward destination and travel intention: An integrated approach. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 1(1–2), 134–143. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2012.10.001>.
- Jong, A.D.; Palladino, M.; Puig, R.G.; Romeo, G., et al. (2018). Gastronomy Tourism: An Interdisciplinary Literature Review of Research Areas, Disciplines, and Dynamics. *Journal of Gastronomy and Tourism*, 3, 131–146.
- Julaimi, A.R.; Talib, S.A. & Sahaimi, M.Z. (2016). International Tourists Revisit Intention: A Case of the United Arab Emirates. *Journal of Tourism, Hospitality, & Culinary Arts*, 8(1), 35–42.
- Junaedi, S. & Harjanto, J. (2020). Examining the Effect of Destination Awareness, Destination Image, Tourist Motivation, and Word of Mouth on Tourists' Intention to Revisit. In Barnett. & Sergi, B.S. (Eds.). *Advanced Issues in the Economics of Emerging Markets (International Symposia in Economic Theory and Econometric)*, Vol. 27 Leeds: Emerald Publishing, 27–38.
- Kalenjuk Pivarski, B., Tešanović, D., Šmugović, S., Ivanović, V., Paunić, M., Vuković Vojnović, D., ... & Gagić Jaraković, S. (2024). Gastronomy as a Predictor of Tourism Development—Defining Food-Related Factors from the Perspective of Hospitality and Tourism Employees in Srem (AP Vojvodina, R. Serbia). *Sustainability*, 16(24), 10834.
- Kline, R. B. (2015). *Principles and practice of structural equation modeling* (4th ed.). Guilford Press.
- Kovalenko, A., Dias, Á., Pereira, L., & Simões, A. (2023). Gastronomic experience and consumer behavior: Analyzing the influence on destination image. *Foods*, 12(2), 315.
- García-Pérez, L. E., & Castillo-Ortiz, I. (2024). Memorable gastro-tourism experiences: A systematic literature review. *Annals of Tourism Research Empirical Insights*, 5(2), 100158.
- Lai, M.Y.; Khoo-Lattimore, C.; & Wang, Y. (2017). Food and Cuisine Image in Destination Branding: Toward a Conceptu-



- al Model. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 0(0), 1-14.
- Lukina, N. (1991). Food of the Eastern Khanty. *People and Cultures*, 7, 88-116.
- MacCannell, D. (1973). Staged authenticity: Arrangements of social space in tourist settings. *American journal of Sociology*, 79(3), 589-603.
- MacKenzie, S. B., & Podsakoff, P. M. (2012). Common method bias in marketing: Causes, mechanisms, and procedural remedies. *Journal of Retailing*, 88(4), 542-555.
- Mohd Salim, M. N. H., Azinuddin, M., Mior Shariffuddin, N. S., Wan Mohd Zain, W. M. A., Ibrahim, M. A., & Zainul, N. H. (2024). Destination social media foodscape and visit intention: double mediation assessment of food destination attractiveness and familiarity among gastronomy tourists. *Journal of Culinary Science & Technology*, 1-27.
- Nederhof, A. J. (1985). Methods of coping with social desirability bias: A review. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 15(3), 263-280.
- Ogurtsova, Y. N. (2022). Introduction of innovations in the food industry. In *Current Issues in the Development of Physical Culture and Sports, Tourism, and Hospitality* (pp. 64-67). Yekaterinburg.
- Okumus, B. (2021). A meta-analysis of evolution of gastronomy and culinary education research published in top-tier culinary, hospitality, and tourism journals. *Journal of Foodservice Business Research*, 24(1), 101-120.
- Orgaz Agüera, F., & Domínguez-Valerio, C. M. (2024). "Cocoa-Based Tourism": Exploring Tourists' Image, Satisfaction and Loyalty Regarding a Cultural Heritage Destination. *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism*, 1-24.
- Pereira, L., Couto, M., Costa, R. L. D., Dias, Á., Gonçalves, R., & Silva, R. V. D. (2022). Food and beverage industry in a pandemic context. *International Journal of Services, Economics and Management*, 13(2), 152-181.
- Pereira, R. L. G.; Correia, A. L. & Schutz, R. L. A. (2012). Destination Branding: A Critical Overview. *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism*, 13, 81-102.
- Pervukhina, E. A. (2021). The history and features of the formation of Ural cuisine. In *Student Scientific Research: Proceedings of the VI International Scientific and Practical Conference, Penza, May 12, 2021* (Vol. 1, pp. 149-152). Penza: Science and Education LLC.
- Peugh, J. & Feldon, D. F. (2020). How Well Does Your Structural Equation Model Fit Your Data?: Is Marcoulides and Yuan's Equivalence Test the Answer? *CBE Life Science Education*. 19(3) <https://doi.org/10.1187/cbe.20.01.0016>
- Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J.-Y., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(5), 879-903. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.88.5.879>
- Podsakoff, P. M. and Organ, D. W. (1986). Self-Reports in Organizational Research: Problems and Prospects. *Journal of Management*, 12, 531-544. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/014920638601200408>
- Polukhina, M. M. (2022). Prerequisites for the development of gastronomic tourism in Sverdlovsk Oblast. *Innovative Science*, 9(2), 22-23.
- Ramesook-Munhurran, P.; Seebaluck, V. N. & Naidoo, P. (2015). Examining the Structural Relationships of Destination Image, Perceived Value, Tourist Satisfaction and Loyalty: Case of Mauritius. *Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 175, 252-259.
- Richards, G. (2021). Evolving research perspectives on food and gastronomic experiences in tourism. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 33(3), 1037-1058.
- Rigdon, E. E. (2012). "Rethinking partial least squares path modeling: in praise of simple methods", *Long Range Planning*, Vol. 45 Nos 5/6, pp. 341-358.
- Ringle, Christian M., Wende, Sven, & Becker, Jan-Michael. (2024). *SmartPLS 4*. Bönningstedt: SmartPLS. Retrieved

from <https://www.smartpls.com>

Russian Tourism Rating. (2024). National tourism ranking: 2024 results. Retrieved from <https://russia-rating.ru/info/22990.html>

Saris, W. E., & Gallhofer, I. N. (2014). *Design, evaluation, and analysis of questionnaires for survey research*. Wiley.

Shaflee, M.M.; Rabaeian, R.A. & Tavakoli, H. (2016). The Effect of Destination Image on Tourist Satisfaction, Intention to Revisit and WOM: Empirical research in Foursquare social media. *2016 10<sup>th</sup> International Conference on e-Commerce in Developing Countries with Focus on Tourism Isfahan, Iran*, 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.1109/ECDC.2016.7492964>

Shmueli, G. and Koppius, O.R. (2011). "Predictive analytics in information systems research", *MIS Quarterly*, Vol. 35 No. 3, pp. 553-572.

Sormaz, U.; Akmeşe, H.; Gunes, E. & Aras, S. (2015). *Gastronomy in Tourism*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Global Conference on Business, Economics, Management and Tourism, Rome, Italy.

Stone, M. (1974). Cross-validated choice and assessment of statistical predictions. *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society: Series B (Methodological)*, 36(2), 111–133.

Suna, B. & Alvarez, M.D. (2021). The Role of Gastronomy in Shaping the Destination's Brand Identity: An Empirical Analysis on Stakeholders' Opinions. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Managing*, 30(6), 738-758.

Tovmasyan, G. (2019). Exploring the Role of Gastronomy in Tourism. *Socioeconomic Challenges*, 3(3), 30-39.

Tsaur, S.-H., Yen, C.-H., & Yan, Y.-T. (2016). Destination brand identity: Scale development and validation. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 21(12), 1310–1323. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10941665.2016.1156003>

Ustus, T. (2023, September 5). "Who would have thought 10 years ago". In 2023, the Ural region was visited by 3 million tourists. *Business Quarter*. Retrieved from <https://www.dk.ru/news/237189764>

Wang, N.W. (1999). Rethinking authenticity in tourism experience. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 26(2), 349-370.

Wise, N. (2020). Evaluating Multiple Portrayals of Destination Image. In *The Routledge Companion to Media and Tourism*. Routledge, 359-371.

Yang, S., Liu, Y., & Xu, L. (2024). The effect of food tourism experiences on tourists' subjective well-being. *Heliyon*, 10(3), e25482. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e25482>

Zahari, M.S.M.; Jalis, M.H.; Zulfify, M.I.; Radzi, S.M. & Othman, Z. (2009). Gastronomy: An Opportunity for Malaysian Culinary Education. *International Education Studies*, 2(2), 66-71.

Zhang, T.; Chen, J. & Hu, B. (2019). Authenticity, Quality, and Loyalty: Local Food and Sustainable Tourism Experience. *Sustainability* 11(12), 3437.



## Appendices

*Table A.1. Demographic Profile of Respondents (N=203)*

Variable	Category	Percentage
Age	18–15	18.7
	26–35	30.5
	36–45	24.6
	46–64	24.6
	65+	1.5
Gender	Male	41.4
	Female	58.6
Income	Lower income	7.9
	Middle income	59.6
	Higher income	17.2
	Prefer not to say	15.3
Region of Residence	Central	3.0
	Northwestern	4.4
	Southern	0.5
	Volga	4.9
	Ural	60.1
	Siberian	15.3
	Far Eastern	3.4
	North Caucasian	4.4
	Outside of Russia	3.9
Travel frequency	Rarely or never	2.0
	Once a year	30.0
	2-3 times a year	46.8
	More than 3 times a year	21.2
Interest in local cuisine during trips	Very interested	59.1
	Interested	36.0
	Neutral	4.9

Table A.2. Questionnaire items and loadings

Scale items	Factor loading	Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ )	Average variance extracted (AVE)	Composite reliability (CR)
<b>AUTHENTIC LOCAL CUISINE</b>		<b>0.918</b>	<b>0.755</b>	<b>0.939</b>
ALC_1 – I think that the diversity of Ural local dishes contributes to the authenticity of Ural cuisine.	0.791			
ALC_2 – I think that the use of traditional cooking methods enhances the authenticity of Ural cuisine.	0.926			
ALC_3 – I think that exploring cultural experiences through food, such as cooking classes and food festivals, enhances the overall authenticity of Ural cuisine	0.836			
ALC_4 – I think that local dishes in Ural reflect the cultural heritage and traditions of the region.	0.879			
ALC_5 – I think that use of local ingredients add authenticity to Ural cuisine	0.907			
<b>DESTINATION IMAGE</b>		<b>0.857</b>	<b>0.634</b>	<b>0.896</b>
DI_1 – I think that Ural has beautiful scenery and natural attractions.	0.861			
DI_2 – I felt myself safe and secure while travelling in Ural.	0.771			
DI_3 – I think that Ural offers exciting and interesting places to visit.	0.868			
DI_4 – I think that local people in Ural are friendly and welcoming.	0.710			
DI_5 – I feel that the overall atmosphere in Ural is relaxing and pleasant.	0.757			
<b>DESTINATION BRANDING</b>		<b>0.892</b>	<b>0.679</b>	<b>0.913</b>
DB_1 – I am aware of Ural's branding efforts and campaigns.	0.784			
DB_2 – During my trip I realized that Ural's brand image is distinctive and memorable.	0.915			
DB_3 – I think that the marketing materials effectively showcase the Ural's unique features.	0.772			
DB_4 – Ural's promotional campaigns influence my decision to visit.	0.757			
DB_5 – I associate positive qualities with Ural's tourist brand.	0.880			
<b>TOURIST SATISFACTION</b>		<b>0.897</b>	<b>0.708</b>	<b>0.923</b>





TS_1 – I am sure it was the right thing to be a tourist in Ural.	0.881			
TS_2 – The attractions and activities in Ural met my expectations.	0.926			
TS_3 – My accommodations in Ural were comfortable and enjoyable.	0.795			
TS_4 – My meals in Ural were delicious and diverse.	0.713			
TS_5 – I am satisfied with my decision to visit Ural.	0.874			
<b>REVISIT INTENTION</b>		<b>0.852</b>	<b>0.692</b>	<b>0.899</b>
RI_1 – The positive aspects of Ural encourage me to plan another visit.	0.852			
RI_2 – I am more willing to explore other parts of Ural in the future.	0.882			
RI_3 – Ural holds a special place in my travel preferences, and I foresee myself returning regularly	0.735			
RI_5 – I have a genuine desire to recommend others to visit Ural.	0.850			