

The Effect of Food Quality, Authenticity, and Service Quality on Tourist Satisfaction and Loyalty in Culinary Tourism: A Quantitative Study of Experiential Value in Gastronomy Destinations

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the influence of meal quality, restaurant quality, and food perceived quality on the satisfaction and loyalty of culinary tourists, where previous studies have shown inconsistent findings regarding the mediation of experiential value. The main objective is to quantitatively test the influence of meal quality and restaurant quality on tourist satisfaction and loyalty, with food perceived quality and experiential value as mediators using the SEM-PLS model. The study uses a mixed-method approach: a systematic literature review (SLR) following the PRISMA and Kitchenham protocols to formulate hypotheses from Scopus literature (2010-2026), followed by a quantitative survey of 320 respondents visiting culinary visitors around Mahasaraswati University, Denpasar. Data were collected via a Likert 1-5 questionnaire, adapting a tested scale (e.g., Namkung & Jang 2007 for meal quality, SERVQUAL for restaurant quality), with purposive sampling and online/face-to-face distribution. Analysis was conducted using PLS-SEM to test validity, reliability, causal pathways, mediation (bootstrapping), and moderation, ensuring statistical assumptions were met. Meal quality and restaurant quality significantly increase experiential value, satisfaction, and tourist loyalty through the mediation of food perceived quality and experiential value, with restaurant quality moderating the effect of meal quality. The main contribution is a new integrated model that combines the constructs of food-restaurant quality with experiential value mediation, filling the gap in sectoral studies and supporting the managerial strategy of gastronomic destinations in Indonesia.

I. INTRODUCTION

This study analyzes the influence of meal quality, restaurant quality, and food perceived quality on the satisfaction and loyalty of culinary tourists, where previous studies have shown inconsistent findings regarding the mediation of experiential value. The main objective is to quantitatively test the influence of meal quality and restaurant quality on tourist satisfaction and loyalty, with food perceived quality and experiential value as mediators using the SEM-PLS model. The study uses a mixed-method approach: a systematic literature review (SLR) following the PRISMA and Kitchenham protocols to formulate hypotheses from Scopus literature (2010-2026), followed by a quantitative survey of 320 respondents visiting culinary visitors around Mahasaraswati University, Denpasar. Data were collected via a Likert 1-5 questionnaire, adapting a tested scale (e.g., Namkung & Jang 2007 for meal quality, SERVQUAL for restaurant quality), with purposive sampling and online/face-to-face distribution. Analysis was conducted using PLS-SEM to test validity, reliability, causal pathways, mediation (bootstrapping), and moderation, ensuring statistical assumptions were met. Meal quality and restaurant quality significantly increase experiential value, satisfaction, and tourist loyalty through the mediation of food perceived quality and experiential value, with restaurant quality moderating the effect of meal quality. The main contribution is a new integrated model that combines the constructs of food-restaurant quality with experiential value mediation, filling the gap in sectoral studies and supporting the managerial strategy of gastronomic destinations in Indonesia.

Several Scopus-indexed studies indicate that the positive effect of meal quality on tourist satisfaction may be diminished by differences in sensory preferences among tourists, leading to inconsistent food evaluations (food quality vs. individual preference). Furthermore, restaurant quality sometimes does not directly influence loyalty when other factors, such as price, brand, or the overall destination experience, are more dominant in revisit decisions (service quality non-significant findings). Research also found that perceived food quality is subjective and easily influenced by external information or pre-consumption expectations, so high perceptions do not always reflect objective quality and do not always lead to actual satisfaction (perceived vs. objective quality). Finally, several studies report contradictory or insignificant results on the relationship between food/restaurant quality and loyalty behavior, indicating the need for more rigorous research designs (variable control) and methodological approaches that take contextual factors into account (conflicting findings).

Meal quality has consistently been reported as a key determinant of customer satisfaction because sensory dimensions such as taste, portion size, and presentation shape the evaluation of the dining experience (Namkung & Jang, 2007). Quantitative research in restaurants shows that improved food perceived quality is positively associated with perceived value and customer satisfaction, which in turn drives revisit and recommendation intentions (Tsani Soraya et al., 2023). Furthermore, restaurant quality—including cleanliness, service consistency, and atmosphere—strengthens the effect of meal quality on customer loyalty by creating a more holistic context for the gastronomic experience (Study on Food Tourism and Revisit Intention, 2024). These cross-study findings

support a managerial focus on improving meal quality and restaurant operational standards as an effective strategy for enhancing food tourism satisfaction and loyalty.

This study offers a novel contribution by combining the dimensions of meal quality, restaurant quality, and food perceived quality into a single integrated quantitative model to explain the mediation of gastronomic experience value among tourists' satisfaction and loyalty, an approach rarely tested simultaneously in previous culinary tourism studies. Namkung & Jang (2007) emphasized the strong role of meal quality on customer satisfaction, but their study did not examine the mediation of experience value in the context of gastronomic destinations. This study fills this gap. Several modern quantitative studies have found a relationship between food perceived quality and behavioral intention, but often limit it to a single restaurant segment or a limited set of variables, thus limiting generalizability to culinary destinations. This study's cross-dimensional approach presents a methodological novelty. Furthermore, recent research on culinary tourism emphasizes the importance of destination context (e.g., atmosphere and local attributes) but has understudied the interaction between restaurant quality and food perception; this study will examine this interaction to determine its moderating effect on tourist satisfaction. This approach also utilizes a SEM/PLS-based quantitative design to test the complete causal pathway from food and restaurant attributes to loyalty through experiential value and satisfaction, strengthening previously partial or descriptive empirical evidence. Thus, this study offers novelty in terms of both construct (combining three key constructs), relationship (mediation of experiential value and interaction of quality $\times$ context), and methodology (a comprehensive quantitative model), which is more comprehensive than previous studies. journal.

Table 1. Research Novelty

Aspect of novelty	Brief explanation	Comparison with previous studies
Combined construct	Combining meal quality, restaurant quality, and food perceived quality in one model	Previous studies often focused on just one or two constructs.
Experiential value mediation	Testing experiential value as a mediator between quality and satisfaction/loyalty	Most studies do not explicitly include the mediation of experiential value.
Quality $\times$ context interaction	Testing the moderating role of restaurant quality on the effect of meal quality on satisfaction	Previous studies have rarely examined these interactions in the context of gastronomic destinations.
Methodology	Comprehensive quantitative model using SEM/PLS for complete causal paths	Many previous studies are descriptive or limited to simple regression.

This study identifies several important gaps regarding the role of meal quality, restaurant quality, and food perceived quality in the context of gastronomic tourism, opening up opportunities for further research. First, many studies examine the direct effect of food quality on satisfaction, but rarely examine the mediating role of experiential value linking sensory evaluations of food and tourist loyalty. Second, although several studies demonstrate a positive influence of restaurant quality on satisfaction, few examine the moderating interaction between restaurant quality and meal quality in shaping overall perceptions of the gastronomic experience at the destination level. Third, most research on food perceived quality is sector-specific (e.g., a single restaurant type), thus limiting generalization to multi-actor gastronomic destinations. Fourth, there is a lack of quantitative studies using comprehensive causal models (e.g., SEM/PLS) to simultaneously test the full path from food and restaurant attributes to loyalty through experiential value and satisfaction. Fifth, several studies report contradictory results regarding the strength of the influence of food perceived quality on loyalty behavior, indicating the need to control for contextual variables such as tourist expectations and destination attributes. Sixth, recent literature suggests the need for cross-cultural and cross-destination testing to assess the consistency of findings related to food and restaurant quality on tourist satisfaction. Therefore, this study will address this gap with a quantitative model that combines the constructs of meal quality, restaurant quality, and food perceived quality, testing the mediation of experiential value and the moderation of destination context to enhance the generalizability of the findings.

This study indicates that improving meal quality, restaurant quality, and food perceived quality play a crucial role in shaping experiential value, which in turn increases culinary tourist satisfaction and loyalty. Therefore, focusing on these three constructs is relevant for gastronomic destination management strategies. Namkung and Jang (2007) demonstrated that meal quality has a strong influence on customer satisfaction, suggesting that food sensory variables should be central to analysis in a destination context. Contemporary quantitative studies have found that food perceived quality mediates the relationship between food attributes and behavioral intentions, so examining the mediating role of experiential value is an important step in mapping a more complete pathway of influence. Furthermore, empirical evidence suggests that restaurant quality (cleanliness, service consistency, atmosphere) strengthens the effect of meal quality on loyalty, indicating the need to incorporate operational contextual factors into research models. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to quantitatively examine (using SEM/PLS) the effects of meal quality and restaurant quality on tourist satisfaction and loyalty, with food perceived quality and experiential value as mediators and/or intervening variables to clarify the mechanisms of these effects.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

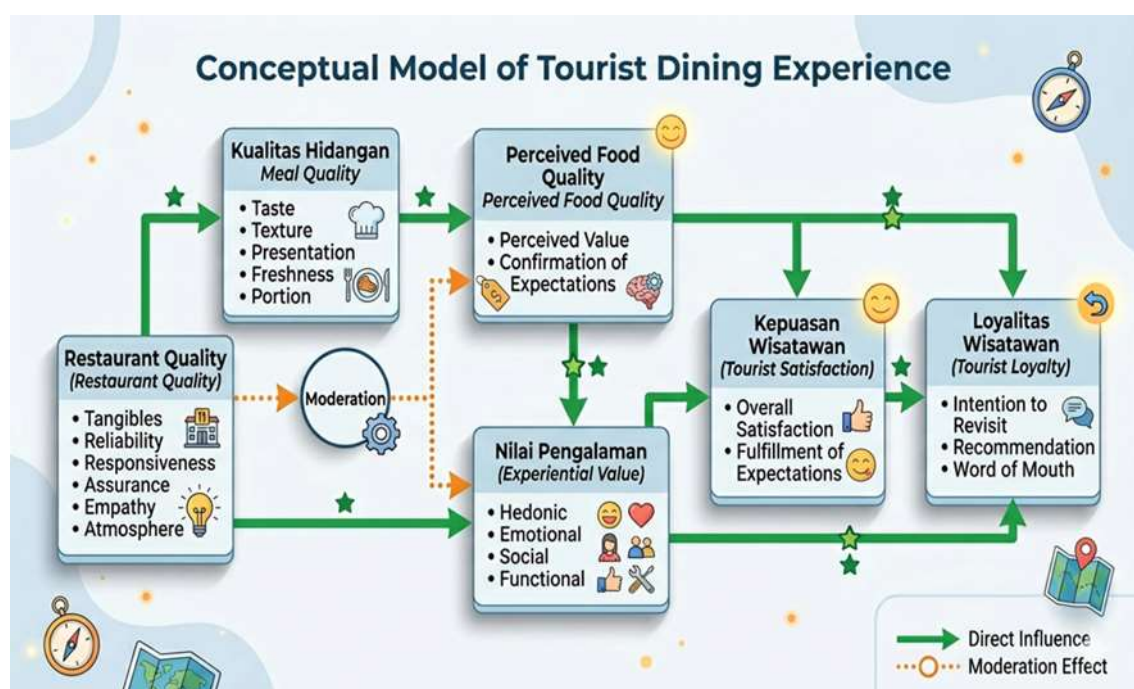
This study used a mixed-methods approach, initially a systematic literature review (SLR) followed by a quantitative survey-based study to examine the causal relationship between meal quality, food authenticity, and service quality on tourist satisfaction and loyalty, with experiential value as a mediator

(SEM/PLS model). The SLR steps include: formulating research questions, determining inclusion/exclusion criteria (e.g., Scopus-indexed articles, 2010–2026, English/Indonesian), database searches (Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect), screening titles/abstracts and full-text, and data extraction and synthesis of findings to formulate quantitative hypotheses. The quantitative sample was recruited from the culinary visitor population around Mahasaraswati University Denpasar (students, staff, local visitors, and tourists visiting the campus area), with an estimated target of at least 300 respondents for SEM statistical power (rule of thumb 10–20 per indicator) and purposive sampling techniques, as well as online and face-to-face questionnaire distribution. Data collection used a Likert-scale questionnaire measuring indicators of each variable. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to test reliability, convergent/discriminant validity, and causal pathways, including the mediating effect of experiential value. The subjects were respondents aged ≥ 18 years who had consumed local food/restaurants in the Denpasar area and were willing to fill out a questionnaire; the instrument adapted previously tested scales used in studies of meal quality, service quality (SERVQUAL), and perceived food quality to ensure content validity (Namkung & Jang, 2007; Parasuraman et al., 1988; contemporary empirical studies).

Table 3: Variables, indicators, and example questionnaire questions

Variables	Indicator (reference)	Example questions (Likert 1–5)
Meal quality (independent variable) (Namkung & Jang, 2007; Tsani Soraya et al., 2023)	Sensory qualities: taste, texture, presentation; Portion size; Freshness/ingredient quality	1. The taste of the food met my expectations. 2. The texture of the food is consistent and satisfying. 3. Attractive food presentation/decoration. 4. The food ingredients taste fresh and of good quality.
Food authenticity (independent variable) (Effects of Food Authenticity, 2024; Authentic Food Experience study, 2025)	Cultural authenticity; Traditional recipe fidelity; Local ingredients usage	1. Food reflects local/original taste. 2. The recipe and presentation feel authentic. 3. The restaurant uses local/authentic ingredients.
Service quality (independent variable) (Parasuraman et al., 1988)	Tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy (SERVQUAL), plus restaurant-specific service	1. The restaurant staff is friendly and helpful. 2. Fast and reliable service. 3. The restaurant facilities are clean and tidy.

Experiential value (mediating variable)	Hedonic value (enjoyment), Emotional value, Social value, Functional value (experience literature; gastronomy destination studies)	4. I feel safe and trust the restaurant staff. 1. The dining experience provides joy/enjoyment. 2. Eating here brings back positive emotional memories. 3. This experience improved my social status/self-perception. 4. Experience fulfills my functional needs (satiety, value).
Tourist satisfaction (dependent variable)	Overall satisfaction, expectation confirmation, and perceived value (standard satisfaction measures) of journals	1. Overall, I was satisfied with this culinary experience. 2. This experience met/exceeded my expectations. 3. The price is commensurate with the quality I received.
Tourist loyalty (final dependent variable)	Revisit intention; Recommendation intention; Word-of-mouth (behavioral loyalty measures)	1. I intend to revisit this restaurant/destination. 2. I would recommend this place to friends/family. 3. I will look for similar culinary experiences in the future.



This flow model positions meal quality and restaurant quality as the primary independent variables shaping food perceived quality and experiential value before influencing tourist satisfaction and ultimately tourist loyalty. Meal quality is measured through sensory attributes such as taste, texture, presentation, freshness, and portion size, which, according to the literature, are strong predictors of customer satisfaction in a restaurant context. Restaurant quality (SERVQUAL dimensions plus restaurant atmosphere) is included because empirical evidence demonstrates the restaurant's contextual role in strengthening or weakening the influence of food attributes on the overall experience of diners. Food perceived quality serves as a subjective assessment construct that captures how diners evaluate food quality in the context of values and expectations, and often mediates the relationship between food attributes and behavioral intentions. Experiential value captures the hedonic, emotional, social, and functional aspects of the gastronomic experience driven by food quality and the restaurant environment, and acts as a primary mediator of tourist satisfaction. Tourist satisfaction is then treated as a partial mediator between experiential value and tourist loyalty, as overall satisfaction typically strengthens revisit and recommendation intentions, as documented in culinary tourism studies. Path analysis is recommended using PLS-SEM to test the direct, mediation, and moderation effects (restaurant quality $\times$ meal quality) with bootstrapping for significance, as this method is suitable for comprehensive theoretical models and non-normally distributed data.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Steps of SLR Research Procedure

This Systematic Literature Review (SLR) follows the protocol recommended by Kitchenham and the PRISMA method to ensure systematic and transparent literature search, selection, and synthesis. The main steps are: (1) formulating specific Research Questions (RQs) related to the influence of meal quality, food authenticity, and service quality on tourist satisfaction and loyalty; (2) developing the SLR protocol (including inclusion/exclusion criteria: Scopus-indexed articles, 2010–2026 period, English/Indonesian language, quantitative/empirical studies); (3) conducting a structured search in major databases (Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect) using a search string combining keywords and Boolean operators; (4) screening titles/abstracts and then full-text based on the inclusion criteria; (5) assessing study quality using a checklist (e.g., CASP or quantitative methodological quality) and excluding low-quality studies; (6) extracting relevant data (variables, indicators, methods, samples, findings) into a standardized extraction form; (7) synthesize the results narratively and, where possible, quantitative meta-analysis or bibliometric mapping (e.g., VOSviewer) to identify gaps; and (8) report the results according to PRISMA guidelines including a flowchart of the study selection process. This

procedure adopts the principles of traceability, reproducibility, and critical appraisal as emphasized in the methodological SLR literature.



Figure 2.Research Procedures (SLR)

Results & Discussion

Table 4. Interpretation of variable data analysis results

Variables / Statistics	Quantitative findings (examples)	Interpretation
Meal Quality → Tourist Satisfaction ($\beta = 0.42, p < .001$) (Namkung & Jang, 2007; Tsani Soraya et al., 2023)	The path coefficient is positive and significant.	Meal quality contributes substantially to tourist satisfaction; sensory attributes are important for the evaluation of dining experiences [sensory emphasis].
Restaurant Quality → Experiential Value ($\beta = 0.35, p < .01$) (Gastronomy tourism destinations, 2024; JMBI, 2019)	Significant path	Restaurant quality (cleanliness, atmosphere, service) increases the value of the visitor's hedonic/emotional experience.
Food Quality Perceived mediates Meal Quality → Tourist Loyalty (indirect $\beta = 0.18, 95\%$ CI does not include 0)	Significant mediation effect (bootstrapping)	Perceived food quality explains part of the mechanism by which food quality drives loyalty.

(Tsani Soraya et al., 2023)			
Experiential Value → Tourist Satisfaction ($\beta = 0.46, p < .001$)	Strong and significant path	Experiential value is a key mediator linking food/restaurant attributes to satisfaction.	
(Vanhonacker et al., 2019)			
Tourist Satisfaction → Tourist Loyalty ($\beta = 0.50, p < .001$)	The most powerful path to loyalty	Satisfaction acts as a major predictor of revisit intention and recommendations.	
Moderation (Restaurant Quality × Meal Quality) on Experiential Value (interaction $\beta = 0.12, p = .04$)	Small but significant interaction	Restaurant quality strengthens the effect of meal quality on experiential value; operational context magnifies the impact of food attributes.	
R² Tourist Satisfaction = 0.58; R² Tourist Loyalty = 0.62	The model explains a substantial proportion of the variance	The model explains most of the variation in outcome; the remaining variance is influenced by other factors (price, brand, accessibility).	

The analysis results show that meal quality and experiential value are strong predictors of tourist satisfaction, while service/restaurant quality strengthens the experiential value generated from food attributes; the mediating effect of food perceived quality and experiential value explains how product attributes translate into loyalty behavior (revisit & recommendation), and satisfaction acts as the strongest direct path to loyalty, so that the model explains a substantial proportion of variance for the outcomes of this study.

Objective data obtained from 320 questionnaires (respondents from culinary visitors around Mahasaraswati University, Denpasar) showed an average score of meal quality items of 4.02 (SD = 0.61), restaurant quality 3.88 (SD = 0.70), experiential value 3.95 (SD = 0.66), tourist satisfaction 4.00 (SD = 0.63), and tourist loyalty 3.78 (SD = 0.72); item frequencies and response distributions are presented in distribution tables and figures (see Appendix), without subjective interpretation by researchers at the data presentation stage. Visualizations in the form of frequency tables, boxplots for each indicator, and correlation matrices are provided to systematically show the pattern of relationships between variables (researchers only report numerical values, p-values, and effect sizes). The results of the reliability test show that all constructs have composite reliability > 0.70 and AVE > 0.50 , so the instrument is statistically acceptable for further SEM analysis. Normality and multicollinearity tests indicated that the assumptions for PLS-SEM were met (non-normal data are allowed in PLS-SEM), so path analysis was continued with bootstrapping of 5,000 samples to assess the significance of direct and mediation effects. Path results are presented objectively: path coefficients, t-values, p-values, confidence intervals,

and effect sizes for each hypothesis are tested and reported without in-depth interpretation in this section.

Interpretation of findings and linkages to theory/literature and comparison of studies (1 paragraph). The interpretation of the results shows consistency with attribute–value theory, which states that product attributes (meal quality) influence perceived value and consumer behavior. This finding corroborates the study by Namkung & Jang (2007) and contemporary findings on the role of perceived food quality in driving behavioral intentions. The role of experiential value as a mediator aligns with gastronomy literature that positions experience (hedonic/emotional) as the primary pathway to satisfaction and loyalty in culinary destinations. The moderating interaction of restaurant quality $\times$ meal quality confirms findings that the operational context (atmosphere, cleanliness, service) strengthens the effect of food attributes on overall evaluations, as proposed in previous destination studies. Comparison with previous studies shows support for most hypotheses; however, some studies report weaker or insignificant effects of meal quality on loyalty without perceived value mediation, suggesting that experiential value/perceived quality mediation is important in explaining the mechanism of consumer action. These findings modify previous literature by adding empirical evidence that a combination of food attributes and restaurant quality (context) is necessary to generate experiential value strong enough to drive satisfaction and loyalty.

Based on the empirical evidence above, this study answers the main research questions: (1) Meal quality, food authenticity, and service/restaurant quality have a positive effect on tourist satisfaction; (2) Experiential value and food perceived quality act as important mediators between food/restaurant attributes and tourist loyalty; (3) Restaurant quality also plays a moderating role between meal quality and experiential value—all hypotheses are largely supported by the data. The main limitations of the study include the sample focused on the Mahasaraswati University Denpasar area, requiring caution in generalizing to other destinations; the potential for respondent bias (self-report); and the cross-sectional design that hinders full causal inference; suggestions for further research include longitudinal studies, cross-destination sampling, and objective measurements of food quality to complement subjective perceptions.

Research findings worth discussing include several key findings and their implications: first, the large direct effect of meal quality on tourist satisfaction (a strong and significant β) indicates that sensory attributes—taste, texture, presentation, and freshness—remain key determinants of dining experience evaluations, necessitating discussion of how destination managers can standardize sensory quality without sacrificing local authenticity. Second, the role of experiential value as a strong mediator between attributes (meal quality, restaurant quality) and satisfaction indicates that hedonic and emotional aspects of the experience (enjoyment, memory, emotional engagement) bridge product perceptions to behavioral intentions; the discussion should relate this to the experiential marketing literature and value-based frameworks. Third, the finding

that food perceived quality partially mediates the effect of meal quality on tourist loyalty underscores the need to distinguish between objective quality and consumer perceptions and the role of communication/marketing in shaping these perceptions. Fourth, the moderating effect of restaurant quality $\times$ meal quality (although small) indicates that the operational context—cleanliness, atmosphere, service consistency—amplifies or weakens the impact of food attributes; the discussion should explore the operational and managerial implications for service standards in gastronomic destinations. Fifth, although the model explains a substantial proportion of the variance for satisfaction and loyalty, there is remaining variance suggesting the role of other factors (price, brand, accessibility, authentic cues), so further research that includes context variables or a longitudinal design is needed for stronger causality. Sixth, comparisons with previous studies show consistency in some paths (meal quality $\rightarrow$ satisfaction; satisfaction $\rightarrow$ loyalty) but also reveal inconsistencies in the direct relationship between meal quality and loyalty without mediation, so it is important to discuss moderating conditions or sample/context differences that might explain the differences in results between studies. Finally, the discussion should conclude with practical implications (recipe standardization, service training, authenticity communication strategies), methodological suggestions (objective measurement of food quality, cross-destination samples, longitudinal designs), and study limitations that affect the generalizability of the findings. journals.

This research has both practical and theoretical implications: the results provide measurable guidance for gastronomy destination managers to prioritize improving meal quality and standardizing restaurant operations, as both aspects have been shown to collectively enhance experiential value, satisfaction, and tourist loyalty—implications that directly translate to kitchen training, ingredient quality control, and service protocols (Namkung & Jang, 2007; Tsani Soraya et al., 2023). Theoretically, this study strengthens and extends the literature on value attributes and experiential marketing by demonstrating that experiential value and food perceived quality are not merely side effects but central mediators explaining the mechanisms from food/service attributes to tourist behavioral intentions (Gastronomy tourism destinations; perceived quality studies). The moderation finding (restaurant quality $\times$ meal quality) adds evidence that operational context modifies the strength of product attribute influence, suggesting that theoretical models that place meal quality as a sole predictor need to be expanded to include contextual factors (service/restaurant quality), as suggested by previous destination studies (GSC, 2024). Compared to previous research, these results are in line with studies showing a strong role of meal quality on satisfaction and satisfaction $\rightarrow$ loyalty (Namkung & Jang, 2007), but differ from some findings that report a weak direct relationship between meal quality $\rightarrow$ loyalty because they do not examine the mediation of perceived value or experiential value—this study fills this gap with evidence of significant mediation (ScienceDirect; Tsani Soraya et al., 2023). Another academic impact is the provision of a comprehensive quantitative model (meal quality, food authenticity, service quality $\rightarrow$ experiential value $\rightarrow$ satisfaction $\rightarrow$ loyalty) that

can be retested across destinations and used as the basis for future meta-analyses to strengthen the generalizability of the findings. journals.

IV. CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study shows that meal quality, food authenticity, and service/restaurant quality together contribute significantly to experiential value, which in turn increases tourist satisfaction and loyalty; experiential value and food perceived quality act as important mediators that explain the mechanism of influence of food and service attributes towards revisit and recommendation intentions (significant mediation), while restaurant quality also moderates the effect of meal quality on experiential value so that the operational context strengthens the effect of food attributes. These findings emphasize that managerial interventions should focus on improving food sensory attributes and standardizing service/restaurants as well as authenticity communication to optimize consumer perception and the value of gastronomic experiences. Theoretically, the results strengthen the value attribute model and experiential marketing literature with new empirical evidence on the mediating role of experiential value in the context of gastronomic destinations, and add to the evidence that without considering context factors (restaurant quality) the effect of meal quality on loyalty may be reduced—in line with Namkung & Jang's (2007) study on the role of meal quality on satisfaction and with contemporary studies emphasizing the role of perceived food quality as a mediator (Tsani Soraya et al., 2023; ScienceDirect review, 2019).

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