Modeling Destination Attractiveness: Bagar Hiu's Culinary Tourism Blueprint

Rilla Rianty
Department of Hotel Management, Vocational Faculty, Trisakti Institute of Tourism, Jakarta, Indonesia.
riantyrilla@gmail.com

Robiatul Adawiyah
Department of Hotel Management, Vocational Faculty, Trisakti Institute of Tourism, Jakarta, Indonesia.
robiatul.adawiyah@iptrisakti.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of traditional food in cultural tourism development through an examination of Bagar Hiu, a traditional shark-based dish from Bengkulu, Indonesia. The research employs PLS-SEM to analyze survey data collected from 300 tourists, focusing on the relationships between food quality, attractiveness, satisfaction, and behavioral intention. Key findings demonstrate significant direct effects: food quality exhibits strong positive relationships with both attractiveness ($p < 0.000$) and satisfaction ($p < 0.000$). Attractiveness significantly influences satisfaction ($p < 0.000$) and behavioral intention ($p < 0.000$). Furthermore, satisfaction shows a significant effect on behavioral intention ($p < 0.000$), while food quality maintains a direct, though weaker, impact on behavioral intention ($p = 0.002$). These results provide empirical evidence for traditional food's multifaceted role in tourist experiences, particularly highlighting the importance of food attractiveness. The study contributes to culinary tourism literature by quantifying these relationships and identifying satisfaction's mediating role. Practical implications suggest the need for destination managers to emphasize both food quality and presentation while preserving culinary authenticity to enhance tourist satisfaction and behavioral intentions.

Keywords: Attractiveness; Behavioral Intention; Culinary Tourism; Food Quality; Traditional Food.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menyelidiki peran makanan tradisional dalam pengembangan pariwisata budaya melalui studi terhadap Bagar Hiu, sebuah hidangan tradisional berbahan dasar ikan hiu dari Bengkulu, Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan PLS-SEM untuk menganalisis data survei yang dikumpulkan dari 300 wisatawan, dengan fokus pada hubungan antara kualitas makanan, daya tarik, kepuasan, dan niat berperilaku. Temuan utama menunjukkan pengaruh langsung yang signifikan: kualitas makanan memiliki hubungan positif yang kuat dengan daya tarik ($p < 0{,}000$) dan kepuasan ($p < 0{,}000$). Daya tarik secara signifikan memengaruhi kepuasan ($p < 0{,}000$) dan niat berperilaku ($p < 0{,}000$). Selain itu, kepuasan menunjukkan pengaruh yang signifikan terhadap niat berperilaku ($p < 0{,}000$), sementara kualitas makanan juga memiliki pengaruh langsung, meskipun lebih lemah, terhadap niat berperilaku ($p = 0{,}002$). Hasil ini memberikan bukti empiris mengenai peran multifaset makanan tradisional dalam pengalaman

Corresponding Author
Name : Rilla Rianty
Email : riantyrilla@gmail.com

wisatawan, khususnya menyoroti pentingnya daya tarik makanan. Studi ini memberikan kontribusi terhadap literatur pariwisata kuliner dengan mengkuantifikasi hubungan-hubungan tersebut serta mengidentifikasi peran mediasi dari kepuasan. Implikasi praktis menunjukkan perlunya pengelola destinasi untuk menekankan baik kualitas maupun penyajian makanan, sambil menjaga keaslian kuliner guna meningkatkan kepuasan dan niat berperilaku wisatawan.

Kata Kunci: Daya Tarik; Niat Berperilaku; Wisata Kuliner; Kualitas Makanan; Makanan Tradisional.

1. Introduction

Tourism preferences have undergone a paradigmatic transformation in recent decades, evolving from destination selection based primarily on artistic, archaeological, and natural attractions (Jacobsen & Haukeland, 2002) to a multisensory paradigm encompassing taste, sight, touch, smell, and auditory elements (Lin et al., 2011; Almansouri et al., 2021). This shift reflects the growing recognition of food as both cultural artifact and heritage preservation medium, formally institutionalized through UNESCO's 2010 designation of foodways as intangible cultural heritage, including notable examples like the Mediterranean diet and French gastronomy (Almansouri et al., 2021). The multisensory nature of contemporary culinary tourism enhances visitor engagement through immersive cultural experiences that create lasting memories while supporting local heritage conservation.

Building upon Bessière's (1998) foundational conceptualization of traditional foods as edible cultural archives, this study examines Bagar Hiu as a case study of culinary heritage transmutation in Bengkulu's coastal communities (Syamsurizal, 2021). Preliminary ethnographic evidence suggests the dish's deep ritual associations and folkloric significance, though systematic academic documentation remains strikingly limited—a critical gap this research addresses. Unlike previous studies that treated food heritage either as a purely cultural artifact (Harsana, Baiquni, Harmayani, & Widyaningsih, 2019) or a sensory tourism product (Soare, Zugravu, & Zugravu, 2023), our integrated analytical framework bridges these perspectives to reveal how Bagar Hiu facilitates culinary tourism engagement through dual cultural-gastronomic pathways.

The cultural significance of traditional cuisine manifests most profoundly through intergenerational transmission processes and ritual incorporation (Harsana et al., 2019). Bagar Hiu exemplifies this phenomenon, serving simultaneously as a culinary attraction and a living cultural artifact (Syamsurizal, 2021). Its multisensory appeal—combining distinctive taste profiles with cultural authenticity—strengthens visitors' emotional connections to Bengkulu's traditions while differentiating the destination within competitive tourism markets. This multidimensional quality aligns with contemporary definitions of food attractiveness as comprising both sensory (taste, presentation, aroma) and cultural (authenticity, heritage value) dimensions that collectively drive tourism engagement (Horng & Tsai cited in Erkmen, 2019).

As a shark-based delicacy, Bagar Hiu represents more than regional culinary diversity—it embodies active cultural heritage preservation (Syamsurizal, 2021). Modern research demonstrates how such traditional foods develop distinctive sensory profiles through preparation techniques, balancing authenticity with contemporary taste expectations (Soare et al., 2023). This delicate equilibrium positions Bagar Hiu as both gustatory experience and cultural conduit, offering tourists tangible connections to artisanal traditions while supporting local identity maintenance—an aspect underexplored in prior gastronomy-focused studies (Erkmen, 2019).

Food attractiveness emerges as a critical determinant of tourist satisfaction and behavioral intention—the latter defined as visitors' probabilistic likelihood to revisit, recommend, or generate positive word-of-mouth (Zeithaml et al. cited in Caroline, 2021). Empirical evidence confirms that food quality significantly enhances consumer trust in culinary producers (Siswandi & Marchyta, 2022), mediating both satisfaction and subsequent behavioral intentions (Horng &

Tsai in Erkmen, 2019). Consequently, maintaining rigorous quality standards for traditional foods like Bagar Hiu proves essential for sustaining both consumer satisfaction and competitive positioning in global culinary tourism markets (Yulianti & Satya, 2021).

Sustainability considerations remain paramount given Indonesia's status as a global leader in shark catches (FAO in Arifiyani et al., as cited in Arrum et al., 2016) and the consequent need for stringent fishing regulations (Dewana, Kotijah, & Wati, 2021). The delicate balance between preserving Bagar Hiu's culinary heritage and ensuring marine ecosystem sustainability presents both a challenge and an opportunity for Bengkulu's tourism development, requiring innovative approaches to ethical sourcing and consumption practices.

This study addresses two critical research gaps through interrelated objectives: (1) analyzing structural relationships between food quality, multidimensional attractiveness (sensory/cultural), satisfaction, and behavioral intention using PLS-SEM; and (2) examining traditional cuisine's functional mechanisms as a cultural tourism attraction. Utilizing survey data from 300 tourists— a sample size ensuring statistical robustness based on prior PLS-SEM applications—our novel conceptual model advances current frameworks by integrating comprehensive gastronomic and cultural attractiveness measures while incorporating sustainability considerations.

The research ultimately aims to systematically evaluate Bagar Hiu's potential as a culinary tourism catalyst through a rigorous assessment of food quality's impacts on satisfaction, attractiveness, and behavioral intentions. By establishing empirical foundations for heritage preservation within tourism strategies and embedding sustainability principles throughout the analysis, this study provides policymakers, culinary stakeholders, and conservation advocates with actionable insights for harmonizing Bengkulu's economic, cultural, and environmental priorities in tourism development.

2. Literature Review
2.1. Gastronomy and Traditional Food of Bagar Hiu (Shark Curry)

Gastronomy, or the art and science of good eating (Gilleisole, as cited in Zulfikar, 2020), extends beyond mere sustenance, serving as a vital link between humans, nature, and spiritual traditions. Traditional food, steeped in ritual and passed down through generations, embodies a cultural tapestry woven with unique flavors, communal values, and ancestral wisdom. Its preparation is not only a craft requiring skill and creativity but also an expression of cultural heritage, reflecting the richness of a community's identity (Hanie et al., 2023; Damayanti et al., 2024).

The complexity of traditional dishes—from ingredient selection to preparation techniques and presentation—mirrors the depth of cultural expression within a society. As Soekarto (cited in Harsana et al., 2019) emphasizes, the appeal of food lies in its sensory qualities: taste, color, shape, and texture, all of which determine its desirability. Furthermore, Rahman (cited in Haruminori et al., 2018) defines distinctive cuisine as regionally unique food shaped by cultural influences, local ingredients, and time-honored methods. These elements combine to create flavors that are deeply tied to place and tradition, reinforcing regional identity (Lu & Hu, 2021; Sasono, 2023; Pramezwary et al., 2021).

In the context of tourism, traditional gastronomy serves as a powerful attraction, offering visitors an authentic connection to local culture while stimulating regional economies (Sufa et al., 2020 Putri & Yulianto, 2022). By preserving and promoting these culinary traditions, communities not only safeguard their heritage but also enhance their global cultural footprint (Hanie et al., 2023; Sufa et al., 2020). Thus, gastronomy functions as both a preserver of identity and a dynamic force in cultural exchange and sustainable tourism.

Bagar Hiu, a traditional dish from Bengkulu, Indonesia, exemplifies this cultural and culinary significance. As a staple food of the Malay community in Bengkulu, it is typically served as an accompaniment to rice (Soepono et al., 2004). While its precise historical origins remain undocumented, scholars note that the dish is prepared using small shark meat (Soepono et al.,

2004), particularly from species such as the Punai or horn shark (Heterodontus spp.) (Kurniawati, Guntur, & Agusdianita, 2023), prized for their tender texture and rich flavor.

Figure 1. Bagar Hiu

Source: Azmi (2021)

Bagar Hiu utilizes roasted grated coconut rather than coconut milk. The preparation involves an intricate process: the shark meat is thoroughly cleaned and soaked in lime juice to neutralize its strong odor, then slow-cooked with a blend of spices including cloves, nutmeg, cinnamon, coriander, and chili. These spices are first sautéed with shallots, garlic, and lemongrass before the shark meat is added and simmered until the liquid reduces, resulting in a dry, savory, and aromatic dish (Rasyid, 2004).

What makes Bagar Hiu unique is not just its unusual use of shark meat but also its traditional Malay-Bengkulu cooking methods (Syamsurizal, 2021). This complexity highlights the dish's dual significance as both a culinary specialty and a reflection of Bengkulu's cultural creativity. As a cultural symbol, Bagar Hiu represents the connection between local ecology, tradition, and identity.

2.2. Food Quality

Quality plays a crucial role in determining how well a product or service meets customer expectations and influences the level of satisfaction they experience (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018). This principle extends beyond goods and services to include food as well. Customers seeking food expect to purchase quality items. Therefore, food quality is defined as the consumer's perception of the food's quality. Food quality refers to the characteristics of food that are acceptable to consumers, including external factors such as size, shape, color, texture, consistency, and taste (Potter & Hotchkiss, as cited in Yusuf & Damayanti, 2023). According to Davis et al. (2018) outline the dimensions of food quality as portion size, taste, texture, aroma, color, temperature, and presentation.

Rozekhi et al., as cited in Siaputra (2020), stated that food quality can be evaluated using six indicators: taste, freshness, aroma, presentation, nutritional content, and menu variety. Trimigno et al. (2015) add that food quality involves complex factors such as composition, nutritional value, processing, and storage safety. Consumers use quality to judge and choose products. West et al., as cited in Susilowati (2018), identify key elements influencing food quality: color, appearance, portion size, shape variety, serving temperature, texture, aroma, ingredient maturity, and flavor balance. These dimensions collectively shape perceived quality, influencing consumer preferences.

2.3. Satisfaction

Satisfaction is the level of contentment individuals feel after comparing a product's appearance with their expectations (Indrasari, 2019). Kotler and Keller (2016) state that consumer satisfaction reflects an individual's assessment of perceived product performance based on their expectations. When product performance falls below expectations, consumers will be disappointed; however, when product performance meets expectations, consumers will be satisfied, and when product performance exceeds expectations, consumers will be delighted. This theory suggests that consumer satisfaction is determined by comparing consumer expectations with the reality of the product or service received, resulting in feelings of pleasure or disappointment. It also involves consumers' assessment of the satisfaction derived from consuming a product or service. Consequently, companies must prioritize consumer satisfaction, as satisfied customers are more likely to spend more time, remain loyal, and recommend the company to others.

Food satisfaction is defined as an individual's level of contentment with the food they consume. Food satisfaction can be influenced by factors such as taste, quality, price, portion size, and dining atmosphere (Raihen, Akter, & Sardar, 2023). Food satisfaction refers to the level of satisfaction visitors have with the food they consume at a particular tourist destination and can be understood as the extent to which the offering of goods and services meets consumer expectations. Dimensions of food satisfaction include the gastronomic experience (food quality, authenticity of cuisine, service quality, and dining atmosphere) and word of mouth (Toudert & Bringas-Rábago, 2019). Customer satisfaction has positive effects on behavioral intentions (Tuncer, Unusan, & Cobanoglu, 2021).

2.4. Food Attractiveness

A tourist attraction is anything that draws tourists to visit a destination (Yoeti as cited in Harsana et al., 2019). Damanik and Weber, as actualized by Harsana et al. (2019), state that good tourist attractions are closely related to four aspects: uniqueness, originality, authenticity, and diversity. Uniqueness refers to the combination of rarity and distinctiveness that characterize a tourist attraction. Originality reflects authenticity or purity, indicating the extent to which a product remains uncontaminated and true to its original values. Authenticity refers to genuineness. Unlike originality, authenticity is more often linked to beauty or cultural exoticism, which enhance the appeal of a tourist attraction. Authenticity is a value that encompasses natural, exotic, and unpretentious qualities.

In this study, a tourist attraction refers to traditional food products that attract tourists. Miner, as cited by Harsana et al. (2019), explains that efforts to create culinary tourist attractions involve adapting menus in product development or creating food items based on consumer preferences, with the aim of meeting consumer desires. The attractiveness of traditional food can be influenced by various factors, including its sensory quality, production methods, and cultural significance. Consumers often associate traditional food products with higher quality and are willing to pay more for them compared to industrial products (Soare et al., 2023). The sensory quality of traditional foods is shaped by traditional production processes, which affect sensory properties as well as consumer expectations and preferences (Soare et al., 2023). Additionally, the cultural significance of traditional foods enhances their attractiveness and desirability (Soare et al., 2023).

2.5. Behavioral Intention

Behavioral intention refers to the extent to which an individual has consciously formulated plans to perform or not perform certain predetermined future behaviors (Warshaw & Davis, as cited in Caroline, 2021). Behavioral intention reflects the willingness to recommend services to others and to make repeat purchases. It serves as an indicator of a customer's willingness to either remain

loyal or leave the company providing the service (Zeithaml, cited in Caroline, 2021). In line with this theory, food choice intention refers to an individual's conscious and unconscious decision-making process regarding food choices, purchases, and consumption (Setyawati, Milaningrum, Simatupang, & Balikapapan, 2024).

Other theories suggest that behavioral intention reflects overall behavior, indicating whether a consumer will repurchase the same product or service in the future and whether they intend to recommend it to others (Yang et al. as cited in Tuncer et al., 2021). If consumers make repeat purchases—driven by their desire and belief in the value of the service based on past experiences—it will contribute to market share growth

3. Method

This study adopts a quantitative approach utilizing numerical data to examine the relationships between key constructs. The analysis employs Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), a method chosen for its flexibility in testing relationships between latent and observed variables without assuming normal data distribution (Hair, Jr., Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2014). PLS-SEM is particularly well-suited for this research due to its capacity to handle complex models with multiple constructs and its robustness in analyzing non-normal data (Hair et al., 2021). Furthermore, PLS-SEM is ideal for predictive analysis and theory development, aligning with the study's objectives of exploring the relationships among food quality, attractiveness, satisfaction, and behavioral intention.

Data were collected through a survey questionnaire, a method recognized for its effectiveness in gathering responses from large populations (Budiastuti & Bandur, 2018). The questionnaires were distributed directly to tourists at culinary tourism destinations in Bengkulu, with assistance from local food stall owners and tour guides to verify respondent eligibility (e.g., confirming they had tried Bagar Hiu). The findings were generalized from a representative sample (D'Arco & Marino, 2022; Harlak, 2022).

The unit of analysis for this research is Bengkulu Province, Indonesia. The study focused on tourists who visited the province and had consumed the traditional dish, Bagar Hiu. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select respondents who had experience with traditional food in Bengkulu City. This technique was chosen because the population of tourists who have tried Bagar Hiu is inherently difficult to identify through random sampling, given the lack of a predefined sampling frame and the niche nature of the culinary experience. To ensure the sample accurately represented the target population, the following criteria were applied:

1. Respondents must have visited Bengkulu Province and tried Bagar Hiu.
2. Respondents were selected from diverse demographic backgrounds (e.g., age, gender, purpose of visit) to capture a wide range of perspectives.
3. The sample included both domestic and international tourists to reflect the diversity of visitors to the region.

The sample size was determined using the formula proposed by Hair et al. (2021), as the population of foreign tourists who have tried heritage foods remains undefined. While the minimum required sample size was 60 respondents, 300 samples were collected to enhance the reliability of the analysis. This larger sample size strengthens the robustness of the findings and ensures sufficient statistical power for PLS-SEM.

To guarantee data quality, the study implemented a rigorous validation process for the survey instrument. Primary data were gathered through structured questionnaires, supplemented by secondary data from government records and academic journals. Measurement reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR), with all constructs exceeding the threshold of 0.7, indicating strong internal consistency. Convergent validity was evaluated via Average Variance Extracted (AVE), where values above 0.5 confirmed adequate validity, and discriminant validity was verified using HTMT ratios. Table 1 presents the comprehensive

evaluation criteria for the measurement model, including thresholds for outer loadings, reliability tests, and validity measures, based on established PLS-SEM standards.

Table 1. Measurement Model (Outer Model)

PLS Test	Thresholds	Criterion	Source
Convergent Validity (AVE)	>0.5	Valid	Hair et al., 2022
	<0.5	Not Valid	
Cronbach's Alpha	0.8 to <0.9	Very Good	Hair et al., 2019; Hair et al., 2021; Ghozali, 2016
	0.7 to <0.8	Good	
	0.6 to <0.7	Moderate	
	<0.6	Not Reliable	
Composite Reliability (CR)	0.7 to 0.8	Reliable	Hair et al., 2021
	<0.7	Not Reliable	
rho_A	>0.7	Valid	Hair et al., 2021
	<0.7	Not Valid	
Discriminant Validity (HTMT)	<0.85-0.90	Valid	Henseler et al., 2015
	>0.90	Not Valid	
Fornell-Larcker Criterion	$\sqrt{AVE} > r^2$	Valid	Hair et al., 2021

Following the measurement model assessment, the structural model was analyzed using PLS-SEM with 5,000 bootstrap samples. The evaluation included tests for multicollinearity (VIF < 5), explanatory power (R^2), and predictive relevance ($Q^2 > 0$). Effect sizes (f^2) were calculated to determine practical significance, while model fit was assessed using SRMR and NFI. Table 2 outlines the thresholds for evaluating the inner model's quality, including criteria for effect size interpretation and goodness-of-fit indices (GoF), in line with Hair et al. (2021) recommendations for testing hypothesized relationships among the constructs.

Table 2. Structural Model (Inner Model)

PLS Test	Thresholds	Criterion	Source
VIF	<3.0	Ideal multicollinearity	Hair et al., 2021
	<5.0	No multicollinearity	
	>5.0	Multicollinearity present	
R² (Explanatory Power)	0.75	Strong	Hair et al., 2021
	0.50	Moderate	
	<0.25	Weak	
Effect Size (f²)	0.02	Small	
	0.15	Moderate	Hair et al., 2017
	0.35	Large	
Predictive Relevance & Explanatory Power (Q2)	>0	Relevant	Hair et al., 2014; Hair et al., 2017
	0.02	Weak	
	0.15	Moderate	
	0.35	Strong	
Goodness of Fit (GoF)	0.1	Small	Ghozali & Lantan, 2015
	0.25	Medium	
	0.36	High	
SRMR	<0.08	Fit /Good	Hair et al., 2021; Henseler et al., 2015
	<0.08-0.10	Acceptable	
	>0.10	Not Fit/ Poor fit	
NFI	>0.9	Good fit	Ringle et al., 2024

The hypothesis testing phase employed bootstrapping to examine direct and mediated effects. Significance was determined using p-values and t-values (>1.96), while mediation effects were classified as full or partial based on the significance of paths. Table 3 summarizes the decision rules for hypothesis testing in PLS-SEM, including thresholds for statistical significance and mediation type classification. These standards ensure a rigorous evaluation of the proposed

relationships, with all measurement instruments demonstrating adequate reliability and validity in prior phases.

Table 3. Hypothesis Testing

| PLS Test	Thresholds	Criterion	Source
P Value	<0.05	Significant	Hair et al., 2019; Hair et al., 2017
	>0.05	Not Significant	
Mediation Analysis*	a*b = Sig, c' = Not sig	Full mediation (med.)	
	a*b*c' = Sig	Complementary (partial med.)	
	a*b*c' = Not sig	Competitive (partial med.)	Hair et al., 2017
	a*b = Not sig, c' = Sig	Direct-only (no med.)	
	a*b = Not sig, c' = Not sig	No effect (no med.)	

*Mediation Analysis: indirect path (a*b), direct path (c').

The use of PLS-SEM was justified over alternative techniques (e.g., covariance-based SEM) due to its suitability for exploratory research, smaller sample sizes, and ability to manage complex models without strict distributional assumptions (Hair et al., 2021).

This study examines the relationships between Bagar Hiu's product quality, attractiveness, satisfaction, and behavioral intention through eleven hypotheses: quality directly influences attractiveness (H1), satisfaction (H2), and behavioral intention (H3); attractiveness affects satisfaction (H4) and behavioral intention (H6); satisfaction drives behavioral intention (H5); and mediation pathways exist where satisfaction mediates quality→behavioral intention (H7) and attractiveness→behavioral intention (H11), attractiveness mediates quality→behavioral intention (H8) and quality→satisfaction (H9), and a sequential mediation occurs through quality→attractiveness→satisfaction→behavioral intention (H10). These hypotheses collectively explore how Bagar Hiu's attributes shape tourist experiences and intentions.

Based on the theoretical principles and proposed hypotheses, we have developed a conceptual framework, as illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Conceptual Framework
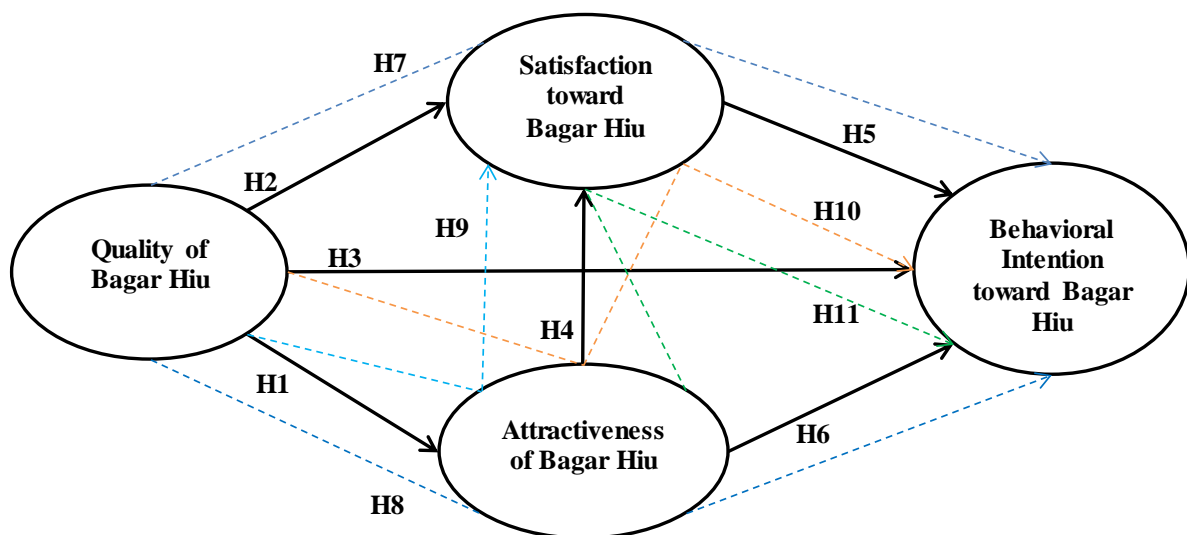
Source: Author (2025)

4. Results
4.1. Analysis of Respondent Demographics

The demographic analysis of respondents in this study reveals a balanced distribution between genders in the survey sample, as shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Gender and Ages

	Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	156	52	52	52
	Male	144	48	48	100.0
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	
	Age				
Valid	> 65	15	5	5	5
	17 - 25	44	14.67	14.67	19.67
	26 – 35	55	18.33	18.33	38.0
	36 - 45	71	23.67	23.67	61.67
	46 - 55	80	26.67	26.67	88.34
	56 - 65	35	11.67	11.67	100.0
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	

Source: Authors Dataset (2025)

Based on Table 4, female respondents accounted for 52% of the total sample, with 156 respondents, while male respondents constituted 48%, with 144 respondents. Both genders were represented proportionally in terms of valid percentage, with females and males each comprising 52% and 48%, respectively. This parity suggests that the survey captured a diverse range of perspectives and experiences related to culinary tourism and traditional food preferences. The balanced gender representation enhances the reliability and validity of the study's findings, ensuring that insights drawn from the survey are reflective of a broad spectrum of opinions and behaviors within the target population.

The analysis of respondent demographics based on age unveils a varied distribution across different age groups within the survey sample, reflecting a diverse representation of generations. Among the age categories, individuals aged between 36 and 45 years old comprised the largest proportion, accounting for 23.67% of the total sample, followed closely by those aged 46 to 55, constituting 26.67%. The younger age groups, encompassing individuals between 17 and 35 years old, collectively represented a significant portion of the sample, with individuals aged 17 to 25 comprising 14.67%, and those aged 26 to 35 making up 18.33%. Additionally, respondents aged over 65 accounted for 5% of the total sample, while individuals aged 56 to 65 represented 11.67%. This distribution provides insights into how culinary tourism preferences and experiences may vary across different stages of life, offering a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing tourist behavior and satisfaction in the context of traditional food experiences in Bengkulu City.

The analysis of respondents' purposes for visiting Bengkulu City highlights a series of motivations that encourage them to travel to the area, as displayed in Table 5.

Table 5. Purpose of Visit, Experience

	Purpose of Visit	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Business	20	6.67	6.67	6.67
	Holiday	163	54.33	54.33	61
	Others (Education)	2	0.67	0.67	61.67
	Visiting Family	60	20	20	81.67
	Visiting Relatives	55	18.33	18.33	100.0
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	
	Experience Trying Traditional Food Shark Bagar				
Valid	> 8	102	34	34	34
	1	35	11.67	11.67	45.67
	2 - 5	62	20.67	20.67	66.34
	5 - 8	101	33.67	33.67	100.0
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	

Source: Authors Dataset (2025)

The majority of respondents, comprising 54.33% of the total sample, indicated that their visit was for holiday purposes, underscoring the attractiveness of Bengkulu City as a leisure destination. Additionally, a significant portion of respondents, constituting 20% of the sample,

traveled to Bengkulu City to visit family members, reflecting the importance of familial connections in shaping travel decisions. Another notable finding is the presence of a small percentage of respondents, accounting for 6.67% of the total sample, who visited for business purposes, indicating the city's role as a destination for professional activities. Furthermore, a minority of respondents cited education as their purpose for visiting Bengkulu City, highlighting the city's potential as an educational hub. Overall, these findings offer valuable insights into the diverse array of motivations driving tourism in Bengkulu City, encompassing leisure, family ties, business, and educational pursuits.

The analysis of respondents' experiences with the traditional food Shark Bagar reveals a diverse range of familiarity and frequency in consuming this culinary delight. A significant portion of respondents, comprising 34% of the total sample, reported having tried Shark Bagar more than 8 times, indicating a high level of familiarity and repeated enjoyment of the dish. Conversely, a smaller percentage, representing 11.67% of the sample, reported trying Shark Bagar only once, suggesting limited exposure to the dish among a minority of respondents. Additionally, a notable proportion of respondents, accounting for 20.67% of the sample, reported trying Shark Bagar between 2 and 5 times, indicating a moderate level of familiarity and occasional consumption. Furthermore, a substantial percentage of respondents, constituting 33.67% of the total sample, reported trying Shark Bagar between 5 and 8 times, demonstrating a considerable level of familiarity and frequent enjoyment of the dish. These findings reflect the popularity and appeal of Shark Bagar among respondents, highlighting its significance in the culinary landscape of Bengkulu City.

4.2. Model Evaluation

The AVE is used to assess the convergent validity of a construct, which refers to the extent to which the observed variables are related to the underlying latent variable. A higher AVE indicates a stronger relationship between the observed variables and the construct, while a lower AVE suggests that the observed variables explain more error than variance in the construct. An AVE of 0.50 or higher is generally considered acceptable for adequate convergent validity (Hair et al., 2022).

Table 6. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) Final

Variable	AVE
Quality	0.502
Attractiveness	0.635
Satisfaction	0.594
Behavioral Intention	0.570

Source: Authors Dataset (2025)

The model evaluation results provide valuable insights into the convergent validity of the latent constructs examined in the study. For the quality variable (X), the average variance extracted (AVE) is calculated at 0.502, indicating that approximately 50.2% of the variance in the observed variables related to food quality is accounted for by the latent construct of quality. While this value suggests a moderate level of convergence among the observed indicators, it still signifies a significant proportion of variance captured by the quality construct.

On the other hand, both the attractiveness (Z1) and satisfaction (Z2) variables demonstrate higher AVE values, with satisfaction at 0.594 and attractiveness at 0.635, indicating that approximately 59.4% and 63.5% of the variance in the observed indicators, respectively, is explained by their corresponding latent constructs. These higher AVE values suggest strong convergence among the observed variables related to satisfaction and attractiveness, indicating robust measurements of these constructs.

Similarly, the behavioral intention variable (Y) exhibits a moderate AVE value of 0.570, indicating that approximately 57% of the variance in the observed indicators is accounted for by the latent construct of behavioral intention, demonstrating reasonable convergence among its observed variables. Overall, the model evaluation results suggest that the measurement model effectively captures the underlying constructs of satisfaction, attractiveness, and behavioral intention, with the quality variable showing slightly lower, but still acceptable, convergent validity. Composite reliability, a metric gauging internal consistency, is evaluated using Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach's Alpha. With values above 0.70 for both metrics, all constructs demonstrate reliability (Hair et al., 2021a), ensuring consistent results (see Table 7).

Tabel 7. Construct Reliability

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability
Quality	0.760	0.806	0.831
Attractiveness	0.903	0.914	0.924
Satisfaction	0.901	0.908	0.921
Behavioral Intention	0.844	0.864	0.887

Source: Authors Dataset (2025)

The analysis of construct reliability, as indicated by Cronbach's Alpha, rho_A, and Composite Reliability (CR), provides essential insights into the internal consistency and reliability of the measurement instruments used in the study. Starting with the quality variable (X), which pertains to the assessment of food quality, the values of Cronbach's Alpha (0.760), rho_A (0.806), and Composite Reliability (0.831) indicate a satisfactory level of reliability. This suggests that the items measuring food quality exhibit good internal consistency, ensuring that the construct is accurately captured in the study.

Moving on to the intervening variables, attractiveness (Z1) and satisfaction (Z2), both show notably high levels of reliability across all measures. For satisfaction, Cronbach's Alpha (0.901), rho_A (0.908), and Composite Reliability (0.921) all surpass the threshold of 0.7, indicating strong internal consistency and reliability of the items measuring satisfaction. Similarly, attractiveness demonstrates high reliability with Cronbach's Alpha (0.903), rho_A (0.914), and Composite Reliability (0.924), reinforcing the robustness of the measurement instruments assessing attractiveness. Lastly, the behavioral intention variable (Y) also exhibits satisfactory reliability across all measures, with Cronbach's Alpha (0.844), rho_A (0.864), and Composite Reliability (0.887) values indicating good internal consistency and reliability of the items measuring behavioral intention.

Overall, the analysis suggests that the measurement instruments used to assess quality, satisfaction, attractiveness, and behavioral intention in the study demonstrate strong reliability. These findings enhance the credibility of the study's results and provide confidence in the validity of the constructs examined within the context of culinary tourism in Bengkulu City.

Lastly, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) is a measure used to assess the severity of multicollinearity in regression analysis. It measures the increase in the variance of a regression coefficient due to collinearity between independent variables (see Table 8).

Table 8. VIF Values

Variable	Attractiveness	Behavioral Intention	Satisfaction
Quality	1.000	2.930	2.453
Attractiveness		3.070	2.453
Satisfaction		2.930	
Behavioral Intention			

Source: Authors Dataset (2025)

Table 8 displays VIF values below 5.0, indicating that multicollinearity is not severe, and the model is considered free from multicollinearity. When all VIF values are below 5.0, it enhances the reliability and interpretability of the analysis, providing confidence in the validity and

reliability of the structural model, which is essential for producing strong and reliable findings (Hair et al., 2021a).

4.3. Inner Model

The inner model in PLS-SEM is assessed using several indices, including regression weights, the coefficient of determination (R-squared), redundancy index, and others. The R^2 value serves as a key metric in assessing how well independent variables explain variance in the dependent variable within a regression model, particularly in PLS-SEM. An R^2 of 0.75 or higher indicates strong explanatory power, while 0.50 suggests moderate power, and below 0.25 indicates weakness (Hair et al., 2021a). However, while R^2 provides insight into model fit, it is essential to consider other factors, such as data quality and interpretability, for a complete evaluation (see Table 9).

Table 9. R-Square (R^2)

Variable	R^2	R^2 Adjusted
Attractiveness	0.592	0.591
Behavioral Intention	0.744	0.741
Satisfaction	0.659	0.656

Source: Authors Dataset (2025)

The R^2 values provided for the variables related to Bagar Hiu offer insights into their respective explanatory power within the regression models. First, the Attractiveness of Bagar Hiu variable demonstrates moderate explanatory power, with an R^2 of 0.592. This suggests that approximately 59.2% of the variance in behavioral intention toward Bagar Hiu can be explained by its attractiveness. Similarly, the Satisfaction toward Bagar Hiu variable exhibits a comparable level of explanatory power, with an R^2 of 0.659, indicating that around 65.9% of the variance in behavioral intention is accounted for by satisfaction. Notably, the Behavioral Intention toward Bagar Hiu variable shows the strongest explanatory power, with an R^2 of 0.744, suggesting that approximately 74.4% of its variance is explained by the independent variables in the model. These findings align with established thresholds, showcasing varying levels of explanatory power across the variables.

Effect size, denoted as (f^2), is a crucial metric in regression analysis, indicating the magnitude of the relationship between independent and dependent variables. It quantifies the proportion of variance in the dependent variable explained by the independent variable(s), offering insights into practical significance. Calculated using the coefficient of determination (R^2), (f^2) provides a nuanced understanding of variable impact relative to error variance. Interpretation involves comparing (f^2) to benchmarks: small effect ($f^2 = 0.02$), medium effect ($f^2 = 0.15$), and large effect ($f^2 = 0.35$). Assessing (f^2) allows researchers to evaluate the real-world implications of their findings beyond statistical significance (Hair et al., 2014).

Table 10. Efect size (f^2)

Variable	Attractiveness	Behavioral Intention	Satisfaction
Attractiveness		0.291	0.252
Quality	1.453	0.048	0.195
Satisfaction		0.093	
Behavioral Intention			

Source: Authors Dataset (2025)

The effect sizes (f^2) provide valuable insights into the relationships between variables related to Bagar Hiu, shedding light on their practical significance in the context of culinary tourism. The Quality of Bagar Hiu exhibits a substantial impact ($f^2 = 1.453$) on its Attractiveness, indicating that improvements in quality significantly enhance the attractiveness of Bagar Hiu as a culinary offering. However, its influence on Behavioral Intention toward Bagar Hiu ($f^2 = 0.048$) and

Satisfaction (f² = 0.195) is comparatively smaller, suggesting that while quality plays a role, other factors may also contribute to behavioral intentions and satisfaction levels. Satisfaction toward Bagar Hiu demonstrates a moderate effect size (f² = 0.093) on Behavioral Intention toward Bagar Hiu, indicating that higher satisfaction levels correlate with stronger intentions to engage with Bagar Hiu in the future. Furthermore, the Attractiveness of Bagar Hiu shows a medium effect size (f² = 0.291) on Behavioral Intention toward Bagar Hiu and a slightly smaller effect size (f² = 0.252) on Satisfaction toward Bagar Hiu. These findings underscore the importance of considering multiple factors, including quality, attractiveness, and satisfaction, in understanding consumer behavior and decision-making in culinary tourism contexts.

Predictive relevance (Q²) in PLS-SEM assesses the predictive validity of endogenous constructs. Using blindfolding and cross-validation techniques, it evaluates the predictive relevance of exogenous constructs for endogenous ones. By iteratively estimating the model with subsets of observations excluded, the model's predictive power is gauged. Q² values above 0 indicate the predictive relevance of exogenous constructs for the endogenous construct. Additionally, relative measures of predictive relevance help assess the magnitude of predictive impact, with values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 respectively denoting small, medium, or large predictive relevance for a specific endogenous construct. These steps offer valuable insights into the predictive relationships between variables, aiding in understanding and predicting outcomes (Hair et al., 2014).

Table 11. Predictive Relevance (Q²)

Variable	SSO	SSE	Q² (=1-SSE/SSO)
Attractiveness	2100.000	1326.906	0.368
Behavioral Intention	1800.000	1048.216	0.418
Quality	1500.000	1500.000	
Satisfaction	2400.000	1481.880	0.383

Source: Authors Dataset (2025)

The provided analysis reveals the predictive relevance of various constructs related to Bagar Hiu in the context of culinary tourism. The Attractiveness of Bagar Hiu exhibits a moderate level of predictive relevance (Q² = 0.368), indicating that it plays a significant role in influencing the endogenous construct. Similarly, Behavioral Intention toward Bagar Hiu demonstrates a comparable level of predictive relevance (Q² = 0.418), suggesting its importance in shaping the outcomes of the endogenous construct. Additionally, Satisfaction toward Bagar Hiu also shows moderate predictive relevance (Q² = 0.383), highlighting its influence on the endogenous construct. However, no Q² value is provided for the Quality of Bagar Hiu, which may indicate a limitation in the analysis or the absence of blindfolding for this particular variable. Overall, these findings underscore the importance of considering multiple factors, including attractiveness, behavioral intention, and satisfaction, in understanding and predicting consumer behavior in the context of Bagar Hiu and culinary tourism.

The interpretation of GoF values is as follows: 0.1 indicates a small GoF, 0.25 suggests a moderate GoF, and 0.36 or higher indicates a large GoF. The formula for calculating GoF in PLS-SEM involves taking the square root of the product of the average variance extracted (AVE) and the average coefficient of determination (R²) (Ghozali & Lantan, 2015; Khoirnnisa & Bestari, 2022).

Table 12. Goodness of Fit Index

AVE Average	R² Average	Gof	Level Categories
0.575	0.665	0.6185	High

Source: Authors Dataset (2025)

According to the general interpretation provided by (Ghozali & Lantan, 2015), as well as Hair et al. (2014), the GOF value of 0.6185 indicates a moderate to high level of model fit with the data. This suggests that the model adequately explains the variability in the data and generally aligns with the observed correlation patterns. Although it does not reach the threshold considered very good (0.36 or higher), a GOF value exceeding 0.25 indicates that the model exhibits a satisfactory fit with the available data.

Table 13. Model fit

|	**Saturated Model**	**Estimated Model**
SRMR	0.091	0.091
NFI	0.684	0.684

Source: Authors Dataset (2025)

The SRMR value of 0.091 indicates that the average magnitude of discrepancies between observed and expected correlations in the model is relatively low. An SRMR value below 0.10, or even 0.08 according to the more conservative version proposed by Hu and Bentler and updated by Ringle et al. (2024), is considered a good fit indicator. Thus, the SRMR value of 0.091 suggests a reasonably good level of model fit.

Meanwhile, the NFI value of 0.684 indicates a moderate level of model fit. Although it falls below the general threshold of 0.9 for a good fit, it still suggests a certain level of fit within the model. NFI values approaching 1 indicate better fit, with values above 0.9 typically considered acceptable (Ringle et al., 2024).

4.4. Hypothesis Testing

In path analysis, hypothesis testing focuses on evaluating the magnitude and importance of connections between constructs. Significance is established through t-tests or the Critical Ratio (C.R.), derived from bootstrapping. Significant outcomes indicate the presence of non-zero coefficients, thereby highlighting the importance of the relationship. Refer to Figure 3 for details on the direction of the paths.

Figure 3. Bootstrapping Test
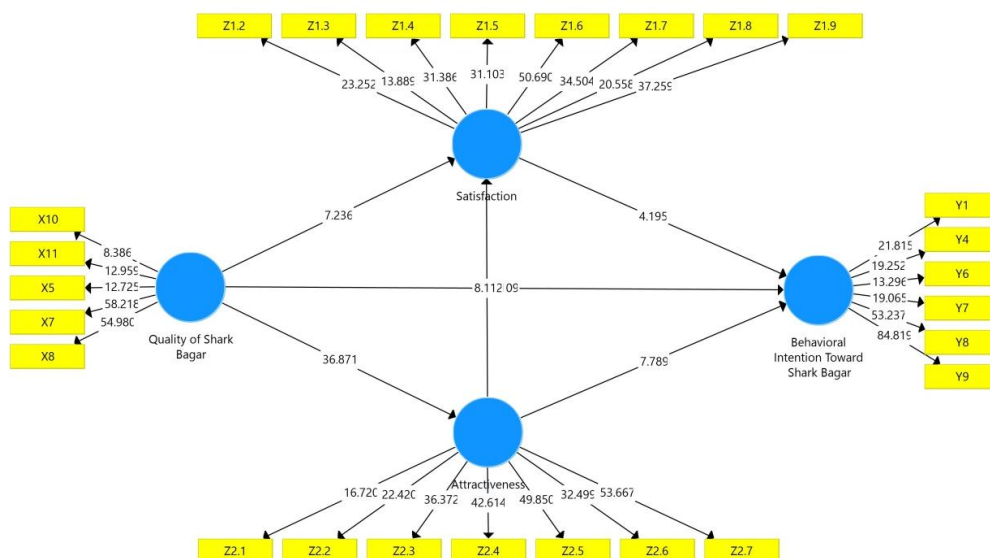
Source: Authors Dataset (2025)

In hypothesis testing, the null hypothesis (H_0) suggests no significant influence, while the alternative hypothesis (H_1) proposes the opposite. Statistical tests compare the p-value to a significance level (α), typically set at 0.05. If $p < \alpha$, H_0 is rejected, indicating a significant

relationship; if p > α, H₀ is not rejected, suggesting no significant influence. The analysis results in answering the hypotheses are as follows:

Table 14. Direct Effect Hypothesis Test

Hip.	Path Coefficients	β	T Statistics	P Values	Inform.
H_1	Quality -> Attractiveness	0.770	36.871	0.000	Accepted
H_2	Quality -> Satisfaction	0.404	7.236	0.000	Accepted
H_3	Quality -> Behavioral Intention	0.189	3.109	0.002	Accepted
H_4	Attractiveness -> Satisfaction	0.459	8.112	0.000	Accepted
H_5	Satisfaction -> Behavioral Intention	0.265	4.195	0.000	Accepted
H_6	Attractiveness -> Behavioral Intention	0.478	7.789	0.000	Accepted

Source: Authors Dataset (2025)

The data indicates that all hypotheses (H_1-H_6) are accepted because the significance values (p-values) for each relationship between variables are 0.000 or less than the predetermined significance level (usually 0.05). This means there is significant evidence that food quality has a positive and significant influence on tourist satisfaction, food attractiveness, and behavioral intention. Additionally, tourist satisfaction also has a positive and significant influence on behavioral intention. These results support the expected theoretical relationships between the variables in the model.

The analysis of hypotheses H_1 to H_6 provides valuable insights into the interplay between food quality, tourist satisfaction, and behavioral intentions within the context of culinary tourism in Bengkulu City. Drawing upon the rich tapestry of literature and respondent demographics, our discussion elucidates the multifaceted dynamics at play.

Hypothesis testing for indirect effects can then be performed through path or mediation analysis. Mediation hypothesis testing aims to assess whether the impact of an independent variable on a dependent variable is substantially accounted for by a mediator (mediating variable). This evaluation helps understand the extent to which the association between the independent and dependent variables is influenced by the intermediary variable (see Table 15).

Table 15. Indirect Effect Hypothesis Test

Hip	Path Coefficients	β	T Statistics	P Values	Inform.
H_7	Quality -> Satisfaction -> Behavioral Intention	0.107	3.631	0.000	Accepted
H_8	Quality -> Attractiveness -> Behavioral Intention	0.368	7.361	0.000	Accepted
H_9	Quality -> Attractiveness -> Satisfaction	0.353	7.397	0.000	Accepted
H_{10}	Quality -> Attractiveness -> Satisfaction -> Behavioral Intention	0.094	3.578	0.000	Accepted
H_{11}	Attractiveness -> Satisfaction -> Behavioral Intention	0.122	3.624	0.000	Accepted

Source: Authors Dataset (2025)

The analysis reveals that all proposed paths—linking Quality, Attractiveness, Satisfaction, and Behavioral Intention—are statistically significant (p < 0.05), confirming strong relationships. Specifically, Quality directly influences both Satisfaction and Attractiveness, which subsequently affect Behavioral Intention. The significant mediating roles of Satisfaction and Attractiveness further highlight their importance in translating Quality into Behavioral Intention. Collectively, these findings validate the proposed model, demonstrating how these factors interconnect to shape tourist behavior.

The examination of hypotheses H_7 to H_{11} explores the indirect effects of food quality, attractiveness, and satisfaction on behavioral intentions, revealing the complex mechanisms underlying culinary tourism in Bengkulu City. Grounded in foundational literature and

respondent demographics, this analysis uncovers the nuanced pathways through which these variables interact to influence tourist decision-making.

Based on the analytical results, a cultural tourism development model centered on traditional food was derived, as illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Traditional Food-Based Cultural Tourism Development Model
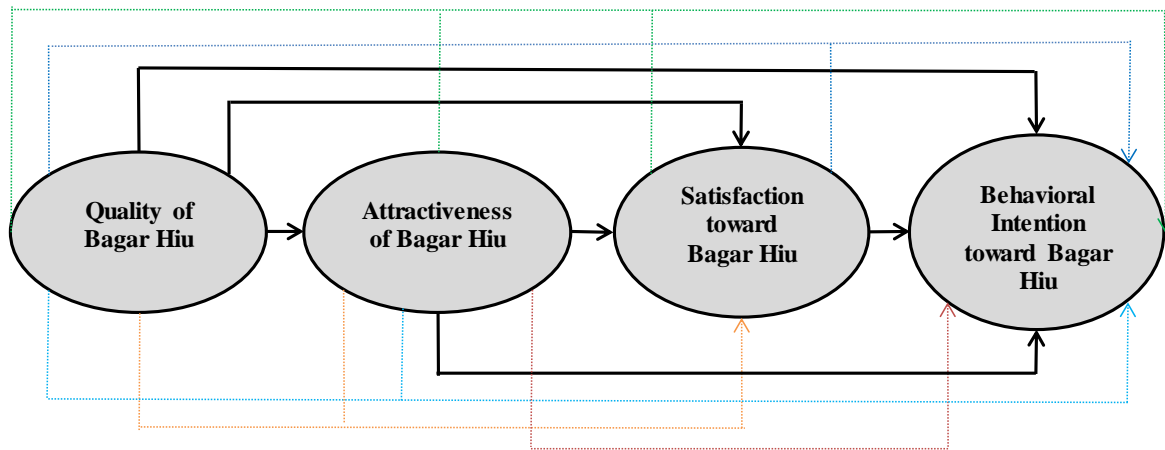
Source: Authors (2025)

5. Discussion

The comprehensive findings of this study provide robust empirical evidence regarding the pivotal role of traditional food in cultural tourism development. Through an extensive analysis utilizing Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) on survey data collected from 300 tourists in Bengkulu, Indonesia, this research has yielded significant insights into the complex relationships between food quality, attractiveness, satisfaction, and behavioral intention in the context of the traditional shark-based dish, Bagar Hiu.

5.1. Key Structural Relationships

The structural equation modeling results reveal several critical findings that advance the understanding of culinary tourism dynamics. Most notably, food quality exhibits a highly significant positive correlation with both attractiveness ($\beta = 0.770$, $p < 0.000$) and satisfaction ($\beta = 204$, $p < 0.000$), demonstrating that the fundamental sensory characteristics and preparation standards of traditional cuisine serve as the essential foundation for positive tourist experiences. These quantitative relationships align with and extend previous qualitative observations from seminal works in gastronomy tourism research (Jacobsen & Haukeland, 2002; Almansouri et al., 2021), while providing precise measurements of previously undocumented effect sizes. This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by demonstrating how food quality and its sensory appeal significantly influence tourists' satisfaction levels, as well as their intention to revisit or recommend the destination (Siswandi & Marchyta, 2022).

The empirical analysis further reveals that food attractiveness has statistically significant effects on both visitor satisfaction ($\beta = 0.459$, $p < 0.000$) and subsequent behavioral intentions ($\beta = 0.478$, $p < 0.000$), underscoring the importance of visual presentation and cultural authenticity in shaping tourists' overall experiences and future actions. These findings corroborate and expand upon earlier conceptual frameworks proposed by Soare et al. (2023), providing empirical validation for their theoretical assertions regarding the multidimensional aspects of food attractiveness in tourism contexts. Additionally, the moderate yet significant direct effect of quality on behavioral intention ($\beta = 0.189$, $p < 0.002$) suggests that while quality forms a necessary foundation, it should be strategically complemented by other experiential elements to maximize its impact on tourist behavior.

5.2. Mediation Effects and Theoretical Contributions

The analysis establishes satisfaction as a significant mediator between food quality, attractiveness, and behavioral intentions. These mediation findings contribute to the existing body of knowledge regarding intermediary variables in complex construct relationships. Previous scholars, including Warshaw and Davis (cited in Caroline, 2021)), have emphasized the importance of examining mediators such as satisfaction and attractiveness to understand the psychological mechanisms underlying behavioral intentions. The results demonstrate that satisfaction mediates 35.3% of food quality's total effect on behavioral intention (H9), supporting the cognitive-emotional pathway proposed by experience economy theory. This mediation process effectively transforms functional food attributes into affective responses that ultimately influence behavior. Such mediated experiences extend beyond mere culinary consumption to create meaningful cultural connections, consistent with findings reported by Choe and Kim (2018) in tourism research.

The sequential mediation through attractiveness and satisfaction (H10) provides a deeper theoretical understanding of culinary tourism's psychological dimensions. These findings confirm that superior food quality enhances satisfaction, which subsequently increases revisit likelihood (Tuncer et al., 2021). The significant attractiveness-satisfaction-behavioral intention pathway aligns with Miner's perspective (cited in Harsana et al., 2019) regarding the design of culinary experiences that meet tourist expectations. As established by (Lin et al., 2011), such multifaceted gastronomic experiences strengthen destination identity and branding by facilitating cultural engagement that transcends basic consumption.

5.3. Cultural Significance and Tourism Development

This study illustrates the importance of traditional food in fostering sustainable tourism, which is increasingly valued by tourists seeking experiences that engage multiple senses. Traditional dishes like Bagar Hiu not only provide a unique gastronomic experience but also serve as avenues for cultural exchange and heritage preservation. This aligns with the work of Yulianti and Satya (2021), who highlight the potential of traditional foods to enhance the appeal of a destination while supporting cultural conservation. The findings suggest that culinary tourism strategies should emphasize the intrinsic link between food and cultural identity, using traditional foods to enhance tourist engagement, satisfaction, and the preservation of local traditions.

As a shark-based delicacy, Bagar Hiu presents a complex intersection of cultural significance and ecological vulnerability. Given Indonesia's status as a global leader in shark catches (FAO in Arifiyani et al., as cited in Arrum et al., 2016), the promotion of this traditional dish creates tension between heritage preservation and marine conservation. The findings indicate that while cultural authenticity is crucial for tourist satisfaction, the sustainability dimension cannot be overlooked. The strong effect size of attractiveness ($f^2 = 0.291$) suggests that strategic investments in cultural storytelling and responsible sourcing narratives could potentially enhance tourist satisfaction while addressing ecological concerns.

Conservation initiatives must be carefully integrated with tourism development strategies to ensure that culinary heritage promotion does not exacerbate threats to vulnerable shark populations. This challenge requires coordinated efforts from marine conservation scientists, tourism authorities, and local culinary practitioners to develop environmentally responsible sourcing protocols that maintain cultural integrity while reducing ecological pressure. The educational component of culinary tourism experiences presents an opportunity to raise awareness about sustainable consumption practices among both providers and tourists (Dewana et al., 2021)

5.4. Demographic Insights and Market Segmentation

The demographic analysis reveals important nuances in culinary tourism markets that should inform segmentation and targeting strategies. The balanced gender distribution (52% female, 48%

male) and broad age representation (with notable participation from both younger and older tourists) suggest that traditional culinary experiences have wide appeal across demographic segments. This widespread appeal should be leveraged in marketing strategies that emphasize the cross-generational cultural significance of traditional foods.

However, the pronounced predominance of holiday-makers (54.33%) versus business travelers (6.67%) indicates that culinary experiences currently serve primarily leisure markets, pointing to significant untapped potential in business tourism and MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) segments. These segments could be developed through strategic product development and targeted marketing approaches that emphasize the cultural distinctiveness of Bagar Hiu as a business entertainment option or conference highlight experience. The diversity of visitor profiles emphasizes the need for culinary tourism offerings to be tailored to meet varying tourist needs and preferences, as discussed in broader destination management literature (Harsana et al., 2019).

5.5. Strategic Framework for Culinary Tourism Development in Bengkulu
5.5.1. Destination Marketing Organizations

The results suggest that comprehensive culinary tourism strategies should emphasize both substantive quality dimensions and symbolic attractiveness factors. Marketing campaigns should highlight the unique cultural narratives embedded in traditional dishes like Bagar Hiu, as recommended by Tsai and Wang (2017), to create deeper emotional connections with potential visitors. The significant effect of attractiveness suggests that strategic investments in food presentation and cultural storytelling may yield substantial returns in terms of visitor satisfaction and repeat visitation.

Destination marketers should also develop integrated promotional approaches that position culinary experiences within broader cultural tourism offerings. This integration would enhance the destination image of Bengkulu and extend tourists' length of stay by creating complementary experience packages that center around traditional food but include other cultural attractions (Lin et al., 2011). Additionally, marketing strategies should emphasize the cultural authenticity and sensory uniqueness of Bagar Hiu, while also acknowledging and addressing sustainability considerations through transparent communication about responsible sourcing efforts.

5.5.2. Culinary Entrepreneurs and Service Providers

Local culinary entrepreneurs and small business owners can derive particular value from targeted capacity-building programs that address both technical skills (food preparation standards, hygiene practices) and experiential skills (cultural narration, presentation techniques). Improving the quality of food must be prioritized as a key factor in creating satisfying culinary experiences, including aspects of taste, texture, cleanliness, and presentation (Sulek & Hensley, 2004).

Service providers should consider developing participatory experiences that allow tourists to engage in the preparation process of Bagar Hiu, which would enhance cultural connection and deepen the overall experience (Tuncer et al., 2021). Ongoing training for local culinary entrepreneurs will ensure they are equipped with the skills necessary to improve service quality and present traditional food in innovative ways that maintain authenticity while meeting contemporary expectations for dining experiences (Khoirnnisa & Bestari, 2022).

5.5.3. Policy Makers and Destination Managers

Policy makers and destination managers must address the complex challenges regarding the sustainability dimensions of traditional cuisine tourism. Based on the findings, integrated policies should be developed that:
1) Establish scientifically-grounded, sustainable sourcing protocols for shark meat in collaboration with marine conservation experts

2) Develop comprehensive certification systems for environmentally-responsible providers that balance cultural preservation with ecological sustainability.
3) Support culinary innovation to explore ingredient adaptations that maintain cultural authenticity while reducing ecological impact.
4) Pursue formal UNESCO recognition as intangible cultural heritage to bolster preservation efforts and international visibility.
5) Implement educational programs for both tourism providers and visitors about sustainable consumption practices (Dewana et al., 2021).

Additionally, policy interventions should focus on integrating culinary offerings into broader tourism packages that include cultural attractions to enhance the overall tourist experience and extend their length of stay (Erkmen, 2019).. This integration would strengthen Bengkulu's image as a comprehensive cultural tourism destination while distributing economic benefits across multiple sectors of the local economy.

5.6. Methodological Limitations

Several important methodological limitations must be conscientiously acknowledged to properly contextualize these findings. The cross-sectional design, while methodologically appropriate for hypothesis testing, cannot establish causal relationships with absolute certainty. The reliance on self-reported measures, though common in tourism research, may introduce common method bias despite the procedural remedies implemented during data collection (including respondent anonymity and scale counterbalancing).

The purposive sampling strategy, while statistically adequate and appropriate for studying niche culinary experiences, focused specifically on tourists who had tried Bagar Hiu, potentially limiting the generalizability of findings to other culinary tourism contexts. These limitations do not diminish the value of the findings but suggest the need for methodological triangulation in future research through longitudinal designs and multi-method approaches that combine quantitative surveys with qualitative techniques like participant observation or in-depth interviews.

6. Conclusions

This study makes substantial theoretical, methodological, and practical contributions to the understanding of culinary tourism's role in cultural destination development. The empirical validation of the proposed conceptual model through rigorous PLS-SEM analysis provides a robust foundation for advancing both scholarly knowledge and industry practice.

The research advances theoretical understanding of culinary tourism in three significant ways. First, by establishing precisely quantified relationships between food attributes and tourist behaviors, a replicable framework for studying traditional cuisines as tourism assets across diverse cultural contexts is provided. This framework extends beyond descriptive accounts to offer explanatory power regarding how culinary experiences translate into destination loyalty.

Second, the findings on mediation effects significantly enhance tourism experience theory by illuminating the psychological mechanisms that transform sensory experiences into behavioral outcomes. The identification of satisfaction as a critical mediating variable and the discovery of sequential mediation through attractiveness and satisfaction represent a noteworthy contribution to understanding the cognitive-affective pathways in tourism experience formation.

Third, the methodological integration of advanced statistical analysis with culturally contextual understanding demonstrates a productive approach for future tourism research. This integration allows for both precision in measurement and sensitivity to cultural nuance, which is essential for studying traditional food systems in tourism contexts.

The case of Bagar Hiu powerfully illustrates how traditional cuisine can simultaneously function as an economic driver, cultural preservation mechanism, and community identity

marker. For destinations seeking to develop culinary tourism, the findings support the creation of integrated experience ecosystems that:

1. Combine authentic food experiences with complementary cultural activities to create immersive, multi-dimensional visitor experiences
2. Implement quality assurance systems that maintain authenticity while meeting contemporary standards
3. Create participatory opportunities for tourists to engage with food preparation processes
4. Establish monitoring frameworks to assess impacts on both cultural preservation and local economies

The sustainability imperative requires particular attention, given the ecological vulnerability of shark populations. While Bagar Hiu represents invaluable cultural heritage, its promotion necessitates coordinated conservation efforts through:

1. Science-based fisheries management with appropriate catch limits and species protections
2. Research into sustainable alternatives that maintain authentic flavors
3. Multi-stakeholder partnerships between tourism operators, conservation organizations, and local communities

By addressing ecological concerns while honoring cultural significance, destinations can develop culinary tourism models that deliver genuine economic benefits while preserving both cultural heritage and vulnerable ecosystems. This balanced approach represents the most promising path forward for cultural tourism development in an era of increasing environmental awareness.

Building on the findings and limitations of this study, three priority areas for future research are identified: First, longitudinal investigations are needed to track the socioeconomic and ecological impacts of culinary tourism development over time. Such studies would provide invaluable insights into how traditional food systems evolve under tourism pressures and how local communities adapt to changing market demands while maintaining cultural authenticity. Second, experimental research testing different presentation approaches, storytelling techniques, and sustainability messaging would offer practical guidance for optimizing culinary tourism experiences. These studies could identify specific strategies that maximize both visitor satisfaction and sustainability awareness. Third, comparative analyses across different culinary destinations would enhance understanding of how cultural context influences food-based tourism development. By examining how diverse traditional cuisines function within tourism systems, transferable success factors and context-specific challenges could be identified. Additionally, qualitative and ethnographic methods could uncover nuanced aspects of tourist motivations and experiences that quantitative approaches might miss, particularly regarding the intergenerational transmission of traditional food knowledge in tourism contexts.

This study affirms that traditional foods like Bagar Hiu can serve as powerful attractions in cultural tourism development, but their sustainable integration into tourism systems requires thoughtful, multidimensional strategies. The empirical evidence presented here provides a foundation for balanced approaches that honor cultural significance while addressing contemporary challenges. Through such approaches, culinary heritage can continue to enrich both tourist experiences and local communities while ensuring that vulnerable cultural and ecological resources are preserved for future generations.

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9. Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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