

FACTORS INFLUENCING REVISIT INTENTION TO CHONGQING AS A CULINARY TOURISM DESTINATION: A MIXED-METHOD APPROACH

Xingyu Chen

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Program in Management
Rattanakosin International College of Creative Entrepreneurship
Rajamangala University of Technology Rattanakosin
Academic Year 2026
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2026



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Title of Thesis Factors Influencing Revisit Intention to Chongqing as a Culinary Tourism Destination: A Mixed-Method Approach
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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this study were (1) to explore the key cultural elements that shape tourists' culinary experiences in Chongqing, (2) to investigate the pathways through which culinary culture identity, perceived destination image, culinary tourism attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control influence tourists' revisit intention toward culinary destinations in Chongqing, (3) to investigate the mediating role of tourist satisfaction and perceived destination image in the relationships between culinary culture identity, perceived destination image, culinary tourism attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, and revisit intention, and (4) to investigate the moderating role of price sensitivity on the relationships among tourist satisfaction and revisit intention.

This study adopted a mixed-method research design that integrated qualitative inquiry with quantitative modelling. The qualitative phase consisted of semi-structured interviews with 50 tourists who had recently engaged in culinary activities in Chongqing. The transcripts were analyzed by using grounded-theory procedures. These insights were used to refine the measurement framework for the quantitative phase. The quantitative phase involved the collection of 557 valid questionnaires from visitors in major culinary districts across Chongqing. Reliability and validity were examined through standard psychometric tests, and structural equation modelling was employed to analyze causal pathways and test the mediating effects.

Major findings: (1) On the issue of the first objective, this study revealed that tourists' culinary experiences in Chongqing are shaped by sensory, social, ritual, narrative, and authenticity-related cultural elements, which together constructed experiential immersion and a sense of place; (2) On the issue of the second objective, the results showed that perceived destination image and tourist satisfaction are the strongest predictors of revisit intention, while culinary culture identity, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control also have significant positive effects, whereas culinary tourism attitude has no significant direct effect; (3) On the issue of the third objective, the results indicated that perceived destination image and tourist satisfaction significantly mediated the effects of culinary culture identity, culinary tourism attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control on revisit intention; and (4) On the issue of the fourth objective, the findings demonstrated that price sensitivity significantly weakens the positive relationship between tourist satisfaction and revisit intention.

Keywords: Culinary tourism, Revisit intention, Culinary culture identity, Perceived destination image, Tourist satisfaction, Price sensitivity

Advisor's Signature .....

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This dissertation represents not only the outcome of my personal academic efforts, but also the crystallization of wisdom, care and support from all those who have accompanied me along this journey. Every bit of progress I have made is inseparable from the selfless help from my supervisors, teachers, family and friends.

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List of Abbreviation and Glossary

Abbreviation / Glossary	Explanation
AGFI	Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index
AVE	Average Variance Extracted
CAC	Cognitive-Affective-Conative
CCI	Culinary Culture Identity
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CFI	Comparative Fit Index
CITC	Corrected Item-Total Correlations
CR	Composite Reliability
CTA	Culinary Tourism Attitude
f^2	Effect sizes
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
GFI	Goodness-of-Fit Index
NFI	Normed Fit Index
KMO	Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin
PBC	Perceived Behavioral Control
PDI	Perceived Destination Image
Q^2	Predictive Relevance
PS	Price Sensitivity
RMSEA	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
RI	Revisit Intention
SEM	Structural Equation Modeling
SN	Subjective Norm
SIT	Social Identity Theory
SRMR	Standardized Root Mean Square Residual
TLI	Tucker-Lewis Index
TPB	Theory of Planned Behavior

List of Abbreviation and Glossary (continued)

Abbreviation / Glossary	Explanation
TS	Tourist Satisfaction
UGC	User-Generated Content

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins by situating the study within the broader background of culinary tourism and the specific development context of Chongqing, and on this basis identifies the central research gap that motivates the investigation. Building on this foundation, it then explains the theoretical significance of integrating social identity theory, image theory and the theory of planned behaviour, followed by the practical significance for destination managers, policymakers and industry stakeholders concerned with the sustainable development of culinary tourism. The chapter subsequently presents the statement of research questions and research objectives, clarifying the core issues that guide the empirical work of the thesis. It then outlines the methodology adopted, introducing the mixed qualitative and quantitative approach used to explore cultural experience and test the proposed structural relationships. To ensure conceptual clarity, key terms such as culinary culture identity, perceived destination image, culinary tourism attitude and revisit intention are defined in a dedicated section. The chapter further specifies the delimitation of the thesis, indicating the spatial, conceptual and methodological boundaries within which the analysis is conducted. Finally, an outline of the overall thesis structure is provided, before the chapter closes with a brief conclusion that synthesizes its main points.

1.1 Background of the Study

1.1.1 Research Problem Statement

Tourism has become one of the most dynamic sectors of the global economy, not only contributing to economic growth and employment but also fostering cross-cultural exchange and social development (Naseem, 2021). With the growing demand for personalized and authentic experiences, tourism has gradually shifted from traditional sightseeing toward immersive and participatory forms. Among them, culinary tourism, which centers on local culinary culture, has increasingly emerged as a key pathway to

enhancing destination attractiveness and promoting sustainable tourism development (Park & Widyanta, 2022). Unlike general “food tourism”, which emphasizes casual consumption, culinary tourism highlights in-depth engagement with culinary culture. It not only satisfies sensory enjoyment but also embodies local identity, cultural narratives, and social memory (Putra, 2022). Consequently, culinary tourism not only enriches tourists' experiences but also contributes to the protection and transmission of cultural heritage, reinforces the uniqueness of destinations, and generates an economic multiplier effect by stimulating the restaurant, accommodation, and retail industries (Kovalenko et al., 2023b). In doing so, it enhances local economic vitality, promotes industrial restructuring and community participation, and thus lays a solid foundation for the long-term prosperity of tourism and the sustainable development of regional economies.

Studying culinary tourism is crucial not only for regional economic development but also for the preservation and transmission of local culinary culture (Putra, 2022). As domestic tourism increasingly shifts from traditional sightseeing toward authentic and immersive experiential consumption, understanding how culinary culture shapes tourist satisfaction and revisit intention has become essential for destinations seeking to strengthen their culinary identity and cultivate long-term tourist loyalty (Li et al., 2024). Such research provides valuable insights into how local cuisine can be transformed from a consumption resource into a cultural asset that supports sustainable tourism development and enhances destination competitiveness.

In China, culinary tourism has developed rapidly alongside the growth of domestic tourism and the increasing demand for distinctive cultural experiences. Many cities, including Chengdu, Wuhan, Changsha, and other regional culinary destinations, have leveraged their unique food traditions and local cultural characteristics to enhance tourism attractiveness and establish recognizable culinary identities (Li et al., 2024). Within this context, Chongqing has emerged as a representative culinary tourism destination due to its distinctive spicy flavors, iconic hotpot culture, and diverse street food landscape. The city’s culinary resources have increasingly become an important component of its tourism appeal, attracting substantial numbers of domestic visitors and contributing to the integration of culinary culture with urban tourism development (Cheshmehzangi, 2025).

Chongqing boasts a rich and diverse range of tourism resources, including city sightseeing, night view appreciation, boat tours, urban lifestyle experiences, and film-

related tourism projects. Among them, the culinary culture is a distinctive component. In recent years, Chongqing has continuously showcased its unique culinary culture through large-scale food festivals (such as Wanzhou Food Music Beer Festival and Three Gorges Food Culture Activities), attracting a large number of tourists. With the reputation of "The City of Spicy Flavor", hot pot, street food, spicy wraps, and barbecue together form a vibrant urban food landscape. According to Chongqing Hot Pot Industry Association (2024), there were 37,000 hot pot restaurants in the city, accounting for nearly 30% of the local catering market; the number of barbecue restaurants exceeded 9,600, accounting for nearly 17%. Meanwhile, in 2023, Chongqing received 421 million visitors, an increase of 16.1% compared to the previous year (Chongqing Municipal Bureau of Culture and Tourism, 2023). Food consumption accounted for 27% of the total tourism expenditure, second only to accommodation expenses, highlighting the significant role of food in the city's tourism economy (Chongqing Online Tourism Consumption Data Report, 2024). These data not only reflect the deep integration of the catering industry with urban lifestyle and tourism consumption, but also further consolidate Chongqing's status as a culinary center, injecting strong impetus into the development of tourism and the construction of cultural brands.

Compared to world-class gastronomic destinations, Chongqing faces three main shortcomings. First, it lacks international visibility. Chongqing's culinary image remains unfamiliar to many overseas tourists due to limited global marketing and insufficient integration into international tourism networks (Jiang & Zhang, 2023). Second, there are inconsistencies in service quality. Disparities in dining standards, multilingual services, and the overall experience along the gastronomic value chain can create a gap between tourist expectations and perceptions, undermining satisfaction and the likelihood of revisiting (Mitchell, 2025). Finally, its cultural branding is underdeveloped. While hotpot is famous domestically, its international promotion lacks a compelling narrative and cultural depth. Without an emotionally resonant story, the tourist experience remains superficial, hindering the development of long-term loyalty (Dan & Feng, 2021). In essence, Chongqing's key challenge is not attracting tourists, but converting their satisfaction into lasting loyalty.

Although enhancing tourists' revisit intention is regarded as the key path to narrowing the gap with top international culinary tourism destinations, during this process, Chongqing still faces many practical challenges.

Firstly, there is a clear stratification of tourist experiences. Chongqing government positions the city's destination image as a vibrant “City of Hotpot and Spicy Flavor,” integrating cuisine with nightscapes, riverside leisure, and social entertainment to embody the spirit of a “mountain and river metropolis with fiery passion.” This official positioning emphasizes both culinary distinctiveness and urban vitality, aiming to attract visitors seeking authentic and sensory-rich experiences. many tourists' perceptions of Chongqing's culinary image remain largely superficial, dominated by impressions of “spiciness,” “crowds,” and “check-in hotspots,” while neglecting the deeper cultural and historical heritage underlying the city's cuisine (Zocchi et al., 2021). Such perceptual deviation weakens the consistency between expected and experienced values, resulting in fragmented experiences and low perceived authenticity. Consequently, tourists' satisfaction is reduced, and the behavioral transformation from positive perception to revisit intention becomes fragile—manifested in the phenomenon of “only visiting once” (Dan & Feng, 2021).

Secondly, the growing competition among culinary destinations further emphasizes the need for Chongqing to strengthen the alignment between its projected and perceived destination image in order to cultivate visitor loyalty. Chengdu, for instance, successfully integrates its Sichuan cuisine heritage and cultural storytelling under the title of “City of Culinary,” while Xi'an fuses its local snacks with historical narratives, enabling tourists to experience a coherent and authentic cultural image (Cao et al., 2024; Wenying & Qiongying, 2022). In contrast, Chongqing's projected image—centered on “spicy vitality”—is not always perceived consistently by tourists, whose experiences often remain limited to surface-level consumption (Soltani et al., 2021). This gap between the promoted and perceived image weakens emotional resonance and reduces satisfaction, thereby constraining revisit intention. Enhancing the congruence between destination branding and actual tourist experience is thus essential for converting attraction into loyalty and for sustaining competitiveness in the national culinary tourism landscape.

Thirdly, price has become a key constraint. Culinary tourism is essentially an activity that combines cultural experience with consumption. Although a genuine and

memorable food experience can enhance satisfaction, high expected costs may undermine the ability to convert satisfaction into the willingness to return (Konuk, 2019). In Chongqing, when tourists dine on hotpot—the city's signature culinary experience—the average per capita cost is around or above 200 RMB, which is significantly higher than other local dining options such as small noodle shops (10–30RMB) or barbecue (80–100 RMB), and even higher than similar hotpot meals in nearby tourist cities like Chengdu (approximately 150 RMB) (Chongqing Daily, 2024). This price disparity reinforces the perception that "authentic Chongqing hotpot is becoming unaffordable," discouraging repeat visits among price-sensitive tourists. Such perceptions alter the psychological mechanism linking satisfaction and loyalty: even if the dining experience itself is satisfying, tourists with high price sensitivity may evaluate the cost as exceeding perceived value, thus lowering their intention to return (Altun et al., 2022). Therefore, it is essential to consider the moderating role of price sensitivity in explaining how satisfaction translates into revisit intention, as overlooking this factor may obscure important behavioral differences among visitor segments.

In summary, the above three challenges highlight that while Chongqing' s culinary tourism has achieved remarkable growth, it still suffers from shallow tourist engagement, weak loyalty cultivation, and price-related constraints. These issues indicate that the city's culinary tourism has not yet transformed its cultural richness into sustainable behavioral loyalty. To overcome this predicament, it is necessary to go beyond the mere consumption aspect and delve into the factors and mechanisms that influence the revisit intention of tourists in Chongqing's culinary tourism. This not only helps to enhance the loyalty of tourists, thereby promoting the coordinated development of related industries, but also helps to strengthen the unique brand advantage of Chongqing's culinary culture, and drive sustainable economic development.

The culture identity is widely recognized as a key factor in shaping tourists' loyalty and revisit intention (Hernandez-Rojas et al., 2021). Chongqing cuisine, renowned for its distinctive "mala" (numbing and spicy) flavor, has gained global recognition. Street food, night markets, and hot pot culture not only provide sensory enjoyment but also serve as cultural symbols reflecting regional characteristics and social identity (Cheshmehzangi, 2025). In response, the Chongqing government has strengthened policy and financial support. During the "Golden Autumn Consumption Season" in 2025, over RMB 1 billion

was allocated to catering promotions. Additionally, the Opinions on Promoting the High-Quality Development of the Hot Pot Industry set a target output of RMB 500 billion by 2027 and emphasized the integration of “hot pot + culinary tourism.” These initiatives demonstrate the city's commitment to transforming cuisine into both a cultural symbol and an economic driver (Chongqing Cultural and Tourism Development Commission, 2025). Hence, this study on how culinary culture identity affects satisfaction, loyalty, and revisit intention not only fills an academic gap but also provides important practical insights.

The perceived destination image has long been regarded as a key factor influencing tourists' decisions and intention (Hernandez-Rojas et al., 2021). It not only shapes tourists' overall perception of the destination but also directly relates to satisfaction, loyalty, and the willingness to visit again (Padrón-Ávila et al., 2021). For culinary tourism, a positive and distinct destination image can enhance the destination's popularity, strengthen the emotional connection of tourists in the food experience, and promote their formation of sustained loyal behavior. Chongqing, as a "hotspot city" that rose due to the popularity of social media, is also known as the "Capital of Hot Pot in China". This distinct image significantly enhances its appeal in the hearts of tourists from both home and abroad. In 2024, the city welcomed over 300 million tourists, and food ranked among the top three motivations for visiting Chongqing (Chongqing Cultural and Tourism Development Commission, 2025). This indicates that the perceived destination image is not only an important source of tourism attractiveness but also largely promotes tourists' loyalty and repeat visits.

The development of Chongqing' s culinary tourism depends not only on expanding economic scale but also on a deeper understanding of tourist behavioral mechanisms (Wei et al., 2025). Usually, the theory of planned behavior (TPB) is widely applied to predict revisit behavior in tourism scenarios (Abbasi et al., 2021; Ajzen, 1991), and has gradually become an important theoretical tool for explaining the mechanism of culinary tourism behavior. In the culinary tourism context, culinary tourism attitude reflects tourists' overall evaluation of Chongqing's culinary experiences—whether they perceive them as enjoyable, authentic, and culturally enriching (Wiastuti et al., 2024). Subjective norm captures the influence of social expectations and peer endorsement, such as the growing trend of sharing hotpot dining experiences on social media or following recommendations from friends and influencers (Verma & Kapoor, 2025). Perceived behavioral control,

meanwhile, denotes tourists' perceived ease or difficulty of arranging a return trip, influenced by factors such as affordability, transportation convenience, and time availability (Hagger et al., 2022). In Chongqing's case, these psychological drivers directly shape satisfaction and revisit intention. A positive attitude toward the city's cuisine enhances affective satisfaction and experiential fulfillment; strong social influence reinforces intention through normative influence, creating a sense of shared identity around “Chongqing-style dining”; and high perceived behavioral control lowers perceived travel or cost barriers, making revisit behavior more attainable. Yet, these mechanisms operate in concert with broader cultural and contextual forces. Culinary culture identity and destination image enrich the TPB framework by embedding psychological evaluations within socio-cultural meaning systems, deepening tourists' sense of cultural belonging and authenticity.

Furthermore, price sensitivity act as a contextual moderate that influence how satisfaction translates into actual revisit intention. Tourists with high price sensitivity tend to weigh perceived costs against experiential value more critically. When dining costs are perceived as disproportionate to service quality or cultural depth, their behavioral intention weakens despite high satisfaction. In contrast, tourists with low price sensitivity are more willing to re-experience the cuisine for its symbolic meaning and social value, allowing satisfaction to evolve into loyalty.

Therefore, the main problem is that it remains unclear how satisfaction, destination image, and cultural identity influence tourists' revisit behavior. Despite the significant role of culinary tourism in enhancing destination attractiveness and economic vitality, the complex interplay of these factors in shaping tourists' loyalty and revisit intentions, particularly in the context of Chongqing, has not been thoroughly explored. This study aims to fill this gap by examining how these elements contribute to tourists' revisit intention to culinary tourism destinations, offering both theoretical and practical insights for the sustainable development of tourism in Chongqing.

1.1.2 Research Gap Statement

Despite the growing scholarly attention to culinary tourism, current research still lacks a comprehensive understanding of how cultural, psychological, and economic factors jointly shape tourists' revisit intention.

Most existing studies on Chongqing' s culinary tourism focus on macro-level industrial development and destination branding initiatives-such as government-led campaigns like “360 Bowls of Chongqing Flavors” and hotpot industry upgrading policies (Cheshmehzangi, 2025). Although these studies highlight the integration of cuisine and tourism, they overlook tourists' subjective cultural perceptions and the meaning-making process underlying culinary experiences. Furthermore, previous applications of the theory of planned behavior (TPB) in culinary tourism have primarily examined the core predictors—attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control (Balıkçıoğlu Dedeoğlu et al., 2022)—without adequately incorporating mediating variables such as tourist satisfaction and revisit intention that could explain how cultural cognition translates into behavioral loyalty. In addition, the role of culinary culture identity as a form of social identity remains underexplored. Although cuisine represents a key channel for cultural belonging and destination attachment, few studies have empirically investigated how this identity interacts with tourists' satisfaction and loyalty formation (Mariani & Okumus, 2022). Finally, in culinary contexts where experiences involve both cultural immersion and tangible consumption, economic constraints such as price sensitivity may further condition tourists' behavioral responses. Yet, little research has examined how such economic evaluations moderate the relationship between satisfaction and revisit intention (Kumar & Mohan, 2021).

Therefore, this study addresses these gaps by developing an integrated model that combines social identity theory, image theory, and the theory of planned behavior, incorporating culinary culture identity, perceived destination image, and price sensitivity to comprehensively explain the cognitive-affective-behavioral mechanisms driving revisit intention in Chongqing' s culinary tourism.

1.2 Significance of the Study

1.2.1 Theoretical Significance

The theoretical significance of this study lies in integrating three key theoretical perspectives to comprehensively examine tourists' satisfaction and revisit intention in the context of Chongqing's culinary tourism. This integrated model captures the interactions among cultural belonging, perceived evaluation, and rational decision-making in shaping tourists' revisit intention towards a destination with unique culinary traditions.

First, social identity theory (SIT) provides a valuable lens to explain how tourists' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral connections with Chongqing's culinary culture influence their overall tourism experience. According to SIT, individuals derive their self-concept and behavioral motivations from group membership and shared cultural belonging (Ajzen, 1991). Within this framework, culinary culture identity can be conceptualized as a specific manifestation of social identity, reflecting how food traditions and culinary practices allow tourists to affirm and negotiate their sense of belonging. In this study, culinary culture identity is examined through three interrelated dimensions: cognitive identity, which reflects tourists' understanding and recognition of the city's BaYu culinary heritage and symbolic mala flavor; emotional identity, which captures affective attachment and resonance with local culinary traditions; and behavioral identity, which manifests in actions such as recommending Chongqing cuisine to others, engaging in cultural preservation, and revisiting. By positioning culinary culture identity within the analytical framework of SIT, this study underscores culinary not merely as a sensory indulgence but as a socially grounded cultural resource that shapes long-term loyalty, advocacy, and sustained engagement with the destination.

Second, the image theory provides a theoretical basis for the introduction of the destination image framework. The destination image framework offers a foundation for understanding how the image of a culinary destination (covering people's perceptions of Chongqing as a culinary destination in terms of cognition and emotions) affects tourist behavior. The cognitive part involves evaluations of the quality of the cuisine, authenticity, dining environment, and diversity of cooking, while the emotional part captures emotional impressions such as excitement, warmth, or comfort triggered by the culinary experience. Based on the Cognitive-Affective-Conative model, this study regards the culinary destination image as a key antecedent influencing satisfaction and repeat visits, thereby positioning the perception evaluation as a bridge between cultural identity and behavioral outcomes.

Third, the TPB is applied to analyze how tourists' cognitive appraisals and perceived social contexts translate into revisit intentions and actual behaviors. According to this theory, attitude toward culinary tourism reflects overall evaluations of Chongqing' s culinary experiences, subjective norm captures the influence of social expectations and peer recommendations, and perceived behavioral control relates to tourists' perceived ease

or difficulty in arranging a repeat visit. Beyond the core TPB structure, this study further introduces price sensitivity as a moderating variable.

It represents a contextual factor that conditions the extent to which positive culinary tourism attitude, perceived norm, and control beliefs are translated into behavioral outcomes. For instance, tourists with high price sensitivity may hesitate to revisit despite favorable attitudes and intentions, whereas those with lower sensitivity are more likely to act upon their positive evaluations. By embedding price sensitivity into the TPB theory, the study captures the economic rationality underlying tourists' decision-making, thus extending TPB to the specific context of culinary tourism where financial considerations play a pivotal role.

In summary, this study integrated the theories of social identity, image and TPB into a unified model applicable to the context of culinary tourism, thereby advancing the research on tourism behavior. This approach covers multiple fields such as culture, perception and behavior, and provides a solid framework for understanding the influencing factors and mechanisms of tourists' revisit intention to Chongqing.

1.2.2 Practical Significance

For the Chongqing Tourism Bureau, this study offers valuable insights for crafting targeted gastronomic branding strategies. By understanding the impact of culinary culture identity on tourist satisfaction and revisit intentions, the bureau can develop policies that protect and promote local culinary traditions, incorporate culinary culture into broader tourism strategies, and enhance the city's status as a culinary destination.

For restaurant associations, the findings highlight the importance of enhancing service design and authenticity. Associations can guide local restaurants in aligning their offerings with tourist expectations, focusing on improving service quality, maintaining authenticity, and addressing price sensitivity. Such measures will enhance satisfaction and increase repeat visits, ultimately strengthening Chongqing's culinary tourism sector.

For local entrepreneurs, this research emphasizes the role of experiential innovations in attracting the revisit market. Entrepreneurs can capitalize on the moderating effect of price sensitivity by offering tiered pricing or mid-range dining experiences. By integrating cultural elements into their business models, such as showcasing Chongqing's hotpot as a social experience, they can create unique dining experiences that appeal to both price-sensitive and experience-seeking tourists.

For policymakers and tourism planners, this study provides critical insights for sustainable tourism planning and cultural preservation. By recognizing the significant influence of culinary culture identity on tourist revist intention, authorities can prioritize the preservation of culinary heritage, promote local food artisans, and develop infrastructure that highlights Chongqing's culinary identity, such as culinary districts and cultural festivals.

For destination managers, the study outlines the importance of enhancing tourist satisfaction through both quality service and emotional engagement. Ensuring a coherent alignment between the city's projected and perceived image, providing transparent pricing, and fostering strong service quality will increase tourists' perceived behavioral control, encouraging repeat visits and strengthening Chongqing's competitive advantage.

For marketing professionals, this research offers clear strategies for converting revisit intentions into actual behavior. Marketers can design segmented campaigns that cater to price-sensitive tourists through promotions or value bundles while also tapping into the emotional appeal of shared gastronomic experiences like hotpot. These strategies can resonate with both rational and emotional motivations, increasing the likelihood of repeat visits.

For local stakeholders, such as chefs, food vendors, and tourism guides, this study emphasizes the need for training programs that focus on both culinary skills and cultural communication. Ensuring consistency in quality, promoting customer relationships, and addressing diverse tourist expectations will elevate service standards and contribute to the cohesion of Chongqing's culinary brand.

In summary, this study equips policymakers, planners, and industry practitioners with actionable insights for improving the competitiveness of Chongqing's culinary tourism, promoting sustainable development, and preserving cultural heritage. By focusing on the cognitive, social, and emotional factors that drive revisit behavior, it offers a comprehensive framework for sustaining the city's growth as a global culinary destination.

1.3 Statement of Research Questions

(1) What key cultural elements do tourists identify as central to their culinary experience in Chongqing?

(2) How do culinary culture identity, perceived destination image, culinary tourism attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control influence tourists' revisit intention toward culinary destinations in Chongqing, China?

(3) How do tourist satisfaction influence their revisit intention to Chongqing for culinary tourism?

(4) How does the price sensitive play as moderation role?

1.4 Statement of Research Objectives

(1) To explore the key cultural elements that shape tourists' culinary experiences in Chongqing.

(2) To investigate the pathways through which culinary culture identity, perceived destination image, culinary tourism attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control influence tourists' revisit intention toward culinary destinations in Chongqing, China.

(3) To investigate the mediating role of tourist satisfaction and perceived destination image in the relationships between culinary culture identity, perceived destination image, culinary tourism attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control and revisit intention.

(4) To investigate the moderating role of price sensitivity on the relationships among tourist satisfaction and revisit intention.

1.5 Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods research design combining qualitative inquiry with quantitative modeling to capture both the cultural depth and the behavioral mechanisms of culinary tourism in Chongqing. The qualitative component provides an interpretive foundation for understanding how tourists experience the city's culinary culture, while the quantitative component tests the structural relationships among psychological constructs derived from the literature and the qualitative findings.

The qualitative phase is based on semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted with tourists who had recently engaged in culinary activities in Chongqing. Interviews

were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using a grounded-theory coding approach involving open, axial and selective coding. This process enabled the identification of core experiential elements such as sensory immersion, atmospheric characteristics, social interaction rituals, procedural learning, historical symbolism and authenticity cues. These findings informed the refinement of constructs and measurement items for the subsequent survey instrument, ensuring contextual and cultural relevance.

The quantitative phase uses a structured questionnaire survey administered to visitors in major culinary districts of Chongqing. All latent constructs were measured through multi-item scales adapted from established tourism, consumption and identity literature, with modifications guided by insights from the qualitative data. Reliability and validity were assessed through Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, average variance extracted and confirmatory factor analysis to ensure the robustness of the measurement model. Structural equation modeling was then applied to examine the causal relationships among culinary culture identity, perceived destination image, culinary tourism attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, tourist satisfaction, price sensitivity and revisit intention. Mediation effects were evaluated using bootstrapping procedures, and moderation effects were tested by incorporating interaction terms into the structural model.

The combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches allows the study to capture both the culturally embedded nature of culinary experience and the psychological processes that shape behavioral intention. The qualitative inquiry provides depth and contextual sensitivity, while the quantitative analysis offers empirical rigor and generalizability. Together, these methodological components form an integrated framework capable of addressing the complexity of culinary tourism as both a cultural practice and a behavioral decision process.

1.6 Definitions of Terms

1.6.1 Culinary Culture Identity

Culinary culture identity refers to the psychological connection tourists establish with a destination through its culinary traditions, symbolic meanings and embodied food practices. It is formed when visitors internalize the sensory atmosphere, social dynamics and cultural narratives encountered during dining experiences (Yang et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2020a) . In the context of Chongqing, this identity develops through exposure to

signature dishes, communal eating rituals, historical associations of food and the distinctive flavor profile that reflects local heritage and social memory. Culinary culture identity includes cognitive elements such as understanding the cultural origins of cuisine and affective components such as emotional resonance with shared dining experiences. As tourists participate in local customs, observe cooking techniques and experience the lively ambiance of culinary spaces, they increasingly perceive themselves as part of the destination's cultural world. This sense of belonging influences their judgments about authenticity, satisfaction with the dining environment and commitment to future visits. Culinary culture identity therefore represents an integrated cultural self-concept constructed through repeated sensory encounters, ritual participation and narrative interpretation within the gastronomic environment.

1.6.2 Perceived Destination Image

Perceived destination image refers to the comprehensive mental representation tourists form about a place based on cognitive evaluations and emotional impressions. It encompasses perceptions of cultural character, sensory qualities, environmental atmosphere, hospitality, infrastructure and symbolic meanings associated with a destination (Guo & Pesonen, 2022; Kovalenko et al., 2023a) . Within culinary tourism, perceived destination image is shaped not only by physical settings but also by embodied experiences such as taste intensity, authenticity cues, interpersonal interactions and the social vibrancy of dining spaces. In Chongqing's context, tourists construct destination image through impressions of bustling food streets, the energetic environment of hotpot restaurants, the friendliness of local diners and the city's relationship between food, labor history and cultural resilience. This image is dynamic because visitors continually integrate sensory stimuli, social cues and cultural narratives into their interpretation of the destination. A positive perceived destination image reflects perceived uniqueness, emotional warmth and cultural coherence, which in turn influences satisfaction and revisit intention. The construct therefore captures how tourists translate multisensory and socio-cultural experiences into stable cognitive and affective evaluations of the destination.

1.6.3 Culinary Tourism Attitude

Culinary tourism attitude refers to tourists' overall evaluative judgment regarding participation in food-related activities at a destination. It reflects their willingness, enthusiasm and affective predisposition toward exploring local cuisine, tasting traditional

dishes, visiting food markets and engaging in culturally embedded dining practices (Yang et al., 2024). The construct includes both emotional components, such as enjoyment, curiosity and anticipated pleasure, and cognitive assessments of the cultural significance, experiential value and learning potential associated with culinary experiences. In Chongqing, tourists' attitudes are influenced by expectations of aromatic richness, chili-driven flavor, lively social interaction and opportunities for authentic cultural immersion (Chen et al., 2026). A positive culinary tourism attitude shapes anticipatory perceptions, frames the interpretation of sensory encounters and increases openness to new dining practices. Although attitude alone may not directly determine revisit intention, it serves as an important foundation shaping cognitive appraisals and satisfaction outcomes. It reflects tourists' initial motivational orientation toward gastronomic activities and influences the degree of engagement with the destination's food culture.

1.6.4 Subjective Norm

Subjective norm refers to the perceived social pressure or encouragement individuals experience from significant others regarding the performance of a particular behavior. In culinary tourism, it captures the extent to which tourists believe that family members, friends, colleagues or online communities approve of or expect their engagement in local food activities (Sutiadiningsih et al., 2023). Subjective norm reflects a socially constructed influence arising from interpersonal communication, group expectations and the desire for social conformity or social belonging. For visitors to Chongqing, subjective norm may take the form of recommendations from peers, viral social media content, or cultural expectations that certain foods or food streets are “must-do” experiences. These perceived expectations shape tourists' motivations, affect their evaluations of authenticity and influence how they interpret their own participation in local dining rituals. A strong subjective norm increases the likelihood that tourists will feel socially validated and emotionally supported in their culinary decisions, which contributes to positive destination image, heightened satisfaction and enhanced intention to revisit.

1.6.5 Perceived Behavioral Control

Perceived behavioral control refers to tourists' belief in their capability to perform culinary activities successfully within a destination. It reflects an integrated assessment of internal resources such as knowledge, confidence and cultural adaptability, together with external conditions such as accessibility, availability of information and environmental

comfort (Sutiadiningsih et al., 2023). In culinary tourism, perceived behavioral control encompasses the ability to navigate unfamiliar ordering procedures, understand local dining etiquette, manage strong or spicy flavors, choose suitable venues and interact comfortably within crowded or lively food environments. For visitors in Chongqing, this may involve confidence in participating in hotpot practices, selecting ingredients, adjusting spice levels or interpreting cultural norms communicated through local dining behavior. High perceived behavioral control reduces psychological uncertainty, facilitates smooth participation in dining rituals and enhances positive emotional responses. It thereby contributes to stronger destination image, greater satisfaction and increased revisit intention. The construct therefore signifies tourists' perceived sense of agency within culturally immersive culinary settings.

1.6.6 Tourist Satisfaction

Tourist satisfaction refers to the emotional and evaluative response that arises when tourists compare actual culinary experiences with their expectations prior to visiting. It reflects the extent to which food-related encounters meet or exceed anticipated levels of enjoyment, cultural learning, authenticity and experiential richness (Basendwah et al., 2024). Within Chongqing's culinary environment, satisfaction is shaped by multiple elements including sensory stimulation, social atmosphere, service interactions, cultural symbolism, procedural participation and perceived value. Tourists derive satisfaction not only from taste and quality but also from the overall coherence of the experience, such as the bustling ambiance of food streets, the warmth of communal dining, the historical significance of local dishes and the sense of immersion in everyday culinary life. Satisfaction serves as an affective synthesis of these dimensions and represents a central determinant of behavioral outcomes. High satisfaction strengthens emotional attachment to the destination, reinforces positive destination image and increases the likelihood of repeat visitation (Rueda-López et al., 2026). It therefore functions as an essential indicator of experiential fulfillment in culinary tourism.

1.6.7 Revisit Intention

Revisit intention refers to the expressed likelihood that tourists will return to a destination in the future to repeat, extend or deepen their culinary experiences. It is a forward-oriented behavioral construct shaped by the integration of cognitive evaluations, affective responses, cultural identity formation and perceived feasibility (Nguyen Viet et

al., 2020). In culinary tourism, revisit intention is influenced by how meaningful, enjoyable and culturally significant visitors perceive their food experiences to be. Within Chongqing's gastronomic context, tourists' intention to revisit may stem from emotional attachment to local foodways, appreciation of the vibrant dining atmosphere, desire to explore additional culinary districts or interest in recreating memorable social interactions from previous visits. Revisit intention reflects a stable behavioral commitment that indicates long-term loyalty to the destination (Stylos & Bellou, 2019). It is typically strengthened by positive destination image and high satisfaction but may be constrained by external factors such as price sensitivity or travel accessibility. The construct therefore represents the final behavioral outcome in the experiential and psychological process of culinary tourism.

1.6.8 Price Sensitivity

Price sensitivity refers to the extent to which tourists rely on price when making culinary tourism choices and revisit-related decisions. It reflects the degree to which visitors prefer discounted or lower-priced options and use price as an important basis for selecting culinary experiences (Holmes & Howard, 2023). In the context of Chongqing's culinary tourism, tourists with higher price sensitivity are more likely to evaluate culinary experiences according to whether they are on sale, whether lower-priced options can satisfy their needs, and whether price plays a decisive role in their choice behavior. In this study, price sensitivity is conceptualized as a moderating variable that weakens the positive effect of tourist satisfaction on revisit intention, showing that stronger price dependence may reduce the likelihood that satisfaction is translated into future revisit behavior (Chung, 2010).

1.7 Delimitation of the Thesis

This thesis establishes several deliberate delimitations to ensure conceptual clarity, methodological coherence and analytical feasibility. First, the study focuses exclusively on culinary tourism within the municipal boundary of Chongqing. Although culinary culture exists across multiple regions in China, the thesis does not attempt cross-city or cross-regional comparisons. Instead, Chongqing is selected as a single representative case due to its distinctive sensory profile, strong cultural symbolism and high visibility in China's contemporary culinary tourism landscape. Second, the research scope is limited to

tourists who have personally participated in local culinary activities, including dining in traditional neighborhoods, experiencing hotpot culture and visiting food streets. Residents, migrants and long-term local diners are not included, as their embedded cultural familiarity may differ substantially from the experiential structure of short-term visitors.

Third, the theoretical framework emphasizes specific psychological constructs derived from social identity theory and the theory of planned behaviour. Other potential determinants of revisit intention, such as personality traits, cultural distance, travel constraints or macro-environmental factors, are intentionally excluded to maintain a focused conceptual boundary. Fourth, the qualitative phase concentrates on semi-structured interviews rather than ethnographic observation or digital trace analysis. This delimitation allows for in-depth exploration of meaning-making processes but does not capture long-term or fully immersive behavioral data. Fifth, the quantitative phase employs cross-sectional survey design, thus restricting the ability to infer causality or examine temporal changes in identity formation or satisfaction dynamics. Longitudinal tracking and panel-based behavioural data fall outside the scope of the present thesis.

Finally, the study focuses on tourists' subjective evaluations, psychological mechanisms and behavioural intentions rather than economic impact assessment, destination branding strategies or policy-level governance issues. By narrowing the analytical lens to experiential, cognitive and affective processes within the culinary tourism domain, the thesis defines clear boundaries that prioritise depth of interpretation over breadth of coverage. These delimitations ensure that conclusions remain theoretically grounded and methodologically consistent, while also providing a coherent analytical foundation for understanding the formation of revisit intention in Chongqing's culinary tourism context.

1.8 Outline of Thesis

This thesis is organized into five chapters, each building cumulatively toward a comprehensive understanding of how culinary cultural experiences shape tourist satisfaction and revisit intention in Chongqing. Chapter One introduces the research background, highlights the theoretical and practical motivations for examining culinary tourism, and identifies the gaps that existing literature has not sufficiently addressed. It also presents the research objectives, outlines the methodological approach and clarifies

key conceptual definitions, providing the foundational framework upon which the subsequent chapters are developed.

Chapter Two provides a systematic review of the literature related to culinary tourism, social identity, destination image, tourist satisfaction and behavioural intention. By synthesizing theoretical and empirical contributions across these domains, the chapter establishes the intellectual grounding for the conceptual framework adopted in this study. It also refines the positioning of culinary culture identity within broader cultural and experiential tourism debates, thereby strengthening the theoretical coherence of the research model.

Chapter Three presents the development of the research framework and hypotheses. Drawing upon insights from social identity theory and the theory of planned behaviour, the chapter constructs a multi-layered model that links cultural identification, attitudinal dispositions, social influences and perceived behavioural control to cognitive evaluations, affective responses and revisit intention. It also explains the rationale for including mediating mechanisms such as perceived destination image and tourist satisfaction, as well as the moderating role of price sensitivity, thus articulating the full theoretical logic underpinning the study.

Chapter Four details the methodological execution and empirical findings of the research. The chapter begins by reporting the qualitative results derived from open coding, axial coding and selective coding, offering a grounded account of how tourists perceive, interpret and experience Chongqing's culinary culture. It then presents the quantitative analyses, including reliability and validity assessments, confirmatory factor analysis and the structural equation modeling results. Together, these analyses empirically validate the proposed model and clarify the pathways through which culinary experiences influence satisfaction and revisit behaviour.

Chapter Five discusses the theoretical and practical implications of the findings, highlighting how the study expands existing applications of social identity theory and the theory of planned behaviour within culinary and experiential tourism contexts. It also addresses implications for local government, culinary business operators and tourism intermediaries, emphasizing strategies that enhance cultural authenticity, culinary experience design and revisit engagement. The chapter concludes with a reflection on the

study's limitations and proposes avenues for future research, before offering an integrative final conclusion that synthesizes the contributions of the thesis.

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the conceptual and contextual foundations of this thesis by situating Chongqing's culinary tourism within broader transformations in global tourism, where immersive, culturally embedded and experientially meaningful forms of travel have increasingly replaced traditional sightseeing. Through a review of the city's culinary landscape, industrial development and visitor trends, the chapter has highlighted the paradox between Chongqing's strong culinary visibility and its persistent challenges in cultivating deep engagement, destination loyalty and sustainable revisit behaviour. The discussion also emphasized the importance of understanding how cultural identity, destination image, psychological drivers and economic constraints jointly shape tourists' behavioural intentions.

Building on these issues, the chapter identified a set of research gaps concerning the underexplored role of culinary culture identity, the limited integration of mediating and moderating mechanisms within the theory of planned behaviour, and the insufficient attention to price sensitivity in gastronomic contexts. These gaps informed the formulation of the research questions and objectives, which collectively aim to unravel the cognitive, affective, cultural and economic mechanisms underlying revisit intention in Chongqing's culinary tourism. The chapter further outlined the mixed-methods approach and provided clear definitions of key conceptual constructs to ensure theoretical precision and analytical coherence.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter outlines the research background of the study and examines the interplay among cultural belonging, perceived evaluation, and rational decision-making by integrating social identity theory, image theory and the theory of planned behavior (TPB). It further elaborates on the conceptual foundations of each construct and reviews relevant empirical studies to synthesize the current state of research in culinary tourism. By adopting a multidimensional perspective, the chapter illustrates how Chongqing's culinary culture identity, culinary tourism attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control jointly influence tourist satisfaction and revisit intention, while perceived destination image serves a dual role—as both an outcome of these factors and an intermediary linking them to behavioral responses. In addition, it considers the mediating roles of tourist satisfaction, as well as the moderating effect of price sensitivity. Based on these discussions, a coherent theoretical foundation has been established for the subsequent empirical research.

2.1 Contexts of the Study

2.1.1 Culinary Tourism

Culinary tourism refers to tourism practices primarily motivated by cuisine, emphasizing tourists' engagement with a destination's cultural distinctiveness through local cuisine, culinary heritage, and embodied food experiences (Nesterchuk et al., 2021). Rather than merely involving food consumption, it encompasses participatory and experiential dimensions—including interactions within local foodscapes, visits to markets and festivals, and immersion in traditional cooking practices. As both a cultural medium and identity marker, cuisine enables tourists to experience authenticity and foster emotional connections with places (Macêdo et al., 2025). With the evolving demand for authentic and experiential travel, culinary tourism has transformed from a subsidiary

component of sightseeing into a strategic driver of destination image formation, cultural sustainability, and local economic revitalization.

From a global perspective, culinary tourism has become one of the fastest-growing sectors within cultural and experiential tourism. According to the World Tourism Organization (2024), more than 80% of international travelers consider tasting local cuisine an essential motivation for travel. Across the world, countries such as Spain, Japan, Thailand, and Italy have successfully integrated cuisine into their national cultural strategies, achieving synergy between tourism development and cultural promotion through initiatives such as "food capitals," culinary festivals, and regional cuisine branding (Nesterchuk et al., 2021). Meanwhile, the rise of social media and digital platforms has transformed the way culinary tourism is promoted and experienced—short videos, food vlogs, and user-generated content (UGC) have shifted food experiences from offline participation to online cultural representation, creating new pathways for the symbolic transmission of cuisine (Macêdo et al., 2025). Currently, the evolution of global culinary tourism exhibits three major trends: Cross-sector integration, as cuisine increasingly merges with creative industries, digital media, and film narratives to enrich cultural experiences; Green sustainability, as local dining industries emphasize low-carbon sourcing, resource efficiency, and food waste reduction; and Cultural socialization, as cuisine becomes a medium for promoting intercultural understanding, community participation, and local empowerment (Richards, 2021).

Current research on culinary tourism spans a diverse range of topics and increasingly explores the psychological and cultural dimensions behind food experiences. In terms of research subjects, studies commonly focus on both domestic and international tourists, local culinary businesses, and tourism service providers, examining issues such as travel motivation, perceptions of food authenticity, satisfaction, and destination loyalty (Nesterchuk et al., 2021; Vuksanović et al., 2024). As for research content, core variables include culinary culture, culinary destination image, service quality, and tourists' emotional response (Aydin et al., 2022; Hossain et al., 2024). At the same time, the role of social media, brand marketing, and digital storytelling has been highlighted as crucial in shaping destination image and influencing tourist expectations (Altun et al., 2022; Chen & Chen, 2025). Methodologically, a combination of quantitative approaches—such as surveys and structural equation modeling (SEM)—and qualitative methods like in-depth

interviews and case studies has been employed to explore how destination attributes affect loyalty through tourist satisfaction and revisit intention (Luong & Nguyen, 2024; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2022). Research findings generally agree that a comprehensive understanding of culinary tourism behavior requires integrating tourists' psychological drivers with the cultural context of culinary experiences.

Although previous studies have provided valuable insights into culinary tourism behavior, most remain confined to single-variable analyses or direct causal examinations, lacking an integrated framework that captures the interplay among cultural, psychological, and economic dimensions. In response, this study proposes an integrated revisit behavior framework that combines social identity theory, image theory, and the theory of planned behavior to explain the complex mechanisms underlying revisit behavior in culinary tourism.

2.1.2 Culinary Tourism in Chongqing, China

(1) The Current Situation of Culinary Tourism Development in Chongqing

Chongqing has emerged as one of Chinese most representative culinary tourism destinations, characterized by its distinctive mala (numbing and spicy) culinary culture and deeply embedded food heritage (Dan & Feng, 2021). The city's culinary reflects the mountainous landscape and humid climate, where chili and Sichuan peppercorns are used not only to stimulate the palate but also to symbolize resilience, warmth, and community vitality. Among its iconic dishes, Chongqing hotpot stands as the core of the city's culinary identity—originating from the wharf workers along the Jialing River in the early 20th century, who cooked beef tripe and offal in a shared spicy broth to withstand the cold and foster camaraderie (Cheshmehzangi, 2025). Today, hotpot has evolved into both a social ritual and cultural performance, where communal dining around bubbling pots embodies Chongqing people's fiery temperament and collective spirit.

Complementing hotpot, other signature dishes—such as Xiao Mian (spicy noodles), Mao Xuewang (duck-blood stew), and spicy grilled fish—have become everyday culinary symbols of the city's cultural continuity. Each dish carries its own historical narrative: for instance, Xiao Mian originated as an affordable breakfast for dockworkers, while Mao Xuewang reflects the local tradition of thrift and respect for ingredient integrity. Together, these foods form a living archive of Chongqing's working-

class culture and social memory, transforming dining into a culturally immersive experience for tourists.

To celebrate and promote this rich culinary heritage, Chongqing hosts numerous culinary festivals that integrate food with culture, performance, and tourism. The Chongqing Hotpot Culture Festival, held annually since 2007, features hotpot master competitions, ingredient exhibitions, and interactive tasting sessions, drawing millions of visitors and reinforcing the city's identity as the “Capital of Hotpot” (Cheshmehzangi, 2025). Similarly, the Wanzhou Food & Beer Music Festival and the Three Gorges Food Culture Carnival combine cuisine with live music, traditional opera, and folk performances, creating multisensory experiences that extend beyond eating to emotional and cultural participation. These events not only enrich the visitor experience but also serve as effective platforms for branding Chongqing's image domestically and internationally.

The culinary tourism ecosystem further extends to food-related production and experience spaces, forming a comprehensive industrial chain. In Jiulongpo and Bishan Districts, for example, modernized hotpot base and condiment factories such as Little Swan Group and Laozao Flavor Co. have opened to tourists, allowing them to observe sauce production processes and participate in tasting workshops. Agricultural farms supplying chili, peppercorn, and beef tripe have also developed into agritourism bases, where visitors can experience ingredient harvesting and learn about the origin of Chongqing's flavors. These production–consumption linkages embody the “farm-to-table” philosophy, deepening tourists' understanding of the authenticity and sustainability of local cuisine.

Moreover, Chongqing's culinary tourism integrates a variety of local specialty products and performances that reinforce culinary identity. Products such as Fuling pickled mustard (Zha Cai), Hechuan chili oil, and Yubei beef jerky serve as tangible souvenirs of taste and memory, extending tourists' sensory experience beyond the trip. Meanwhile, theatrical shows and cultural performances themed around food—such as “Hotpot Banquet” stage performances and intangible cultural heritage cooking demonstrations—blend cuisine with visual storytelling, creating an immersive cultural narrative that appeals to both domestic and international visitors.

Collectively, these practices demonstrate that Chongqing's culinary tourism is not limited to consumption but constitutes a holistic cultural system encompassing food production, culinary performance, festival celebration, and symbolic identity. This integrative structure enhances tourists' sense of authenticity and attachment, promoting satisfaction, loyalty, and revisit intention—thereby positioning Chongqing as a model for culturally embedded culinary tourism in China.

As shown in Table 2.1, Chongqing consists of 38 county-level administrative regions, each district within the municipality contributes unique regional specialties—such as Wanzhou grilled fish, Qianjiang chicken giblets, Rongchang marinated goose, and Fuling pickled mustard—underscoring the city's internal culinary diversity and its potential to offer varied and repeat-worthy experiences.

Table 2.1 Chongqing Cuisine

Number	Districts in Chongqing	Cuisine
1	Dazu	Dazu Braised Chicken, Spicy Leg Soup
2	Wanzhou	Wanzhou grilled fish
3	Qianjiang	Qianjiang chicken giblets (Qianjiang jizha)
4	Rongchang	Rongchang marinated white goose
5	Fuling	Fuling pickled mustard, Fuling fermented rice with oil
6	Jiangjin	Jiangjin spicy chicken (Laziji)
7	Hechuan	Hechuan peach slices (Taopian)
8	Yubei	Yubei smoked duck, spicy beef jerky
9	Shapingba	Shapingba grilled pork ribs, old vinegar peanuts
10	Nan'an	Nan'an sesame jelly noodles (Majiang liangmian), pan-fried beef buns
11	Dadukou	Stinky tofu, iron plate fried rice cakes
12	Beibei	Beibei mung bean cakes, sweet glutinous rice balls
13	Tongliang	Tongliang crispy eel, roasted rabbit head
14	Fengjie	Fengjie spicy preserved duck, pickled radish noodles
15	Wulong	Wulong cold noodles, cured pork with wild vegetables
16	Youyang	Youyang sour fish soup (Suan tang yu), sticky rice cakes

Table 2.1 (continued)

Number	Districts in Chongqing	Cuisine
17	Yuzhong	Yuzhong spicy wontons, traditional steamed pork belly
18	Jiangbei	Jiangbei spicy crayfish, grilled skewers
19	Jiulongpo	Jiulongpo tofu pudding, sweet rice wine soup
20	Banan	Banan sour soup beef, glutinous rice cake rolls
21	Qijiang	Qijiang pickled bamboo shoots, Qijiang roast duck
22	Changshou	Changshou longevity noodles, sesame cake
23	Yongchuan	Yongchuan fermented tofu, tea-flavored chicken
24	Nanchuan	Nanchuan wild vegetable soup, mountain mushroom hotpot
25	Bishan	Bishan crispy chicken, handmade rice noodles
26	Tongnan	Tongnan dried beef slices, spicy goose intestines
27	Liangping	Liangping pomelo chicken, potato pancakes
28	Chengkou	Chengkou smoked sausage, corn flour dumplings
29	Fengdu	Fengdu ghost hotpot, spicy river fish
30	Dianjiang	Dianjiang handmade tofu, crispy fried dough
31	Zhongxian	Zhongxian fish ball soup, chili pickled vegetables
32	Kaizhou	Kaizhou beef rice noodles, spicy ribs
33	Yunyang	Yunyang spicy river shrimp, sesame balls
34	Wushan	Wushan stone-pot fish, wild mountain vegetables
35	Wuxi	Wuxi oil tea, steamed glutinous rice cakes
36	Shizhu	Shizhu sour soup pork, sticky rice rolls
37	Xiushan	Xiushan bacon hotpot, sour chili tofu
38	Pengshui	Pengshui pepper chicken, taro sticky cake

Source: https://whlyw.cq.gov.cn/.

As shown in Figure 2.1, it illustrates the vibrant and diverse culinary landscape of Chongqing, highlighting its rich culinary culture and iconic dishes. This culinary richness enhances the possibility of cultivating revisit intention and subsequent revisit behavior, particularly among tourists who value both novelty and emotional or cultural connection.



Figure 2.1 Chongqing Culinary Landscape

Source: https://whlyw.cq.gov.cn/ghwd/whlyw_znwd/index.html, 2024

Given Chongqing' s vibrant and distinctive culinary culture—rooted in bold flavors, diverse regional specialties, and deep cultural symbolism—the city has gradually cultivated a strong destination image as a leading hub for culinary tourism in China. To further consolidate this brand identity, Chongqing has launched a series of marketing and promotional initiatives, including the “Chongqing Flavor 360 Bowl” campaign, culinary festivals, the development of themed food districts, and social media outreach via platforms such as Douyin and Xiaohongshu. These efforts have not only enhanced tourists' perceived value but also strengthened their positive attitudes toward Chongqing' s culinary tourism. Simultaneously, the viral nature of social media has fostered a socially endorsed atmosphere of “must-visit and widely recommended,” thus reinforcing strong subjective norms. These factors have further increased tourist satisfaction and revisit intention. By emphasizing cultural participation and local identity, such strategies have effectively promoted both emotional and social recognition of revisit behavior, helping to establish a sustainable and enduring motivational structure for repeat tourism.

The economic benefits of Chongqing's destination image enhancement efforts have become increasingly evident in recent years. As shown in Figure 2.2, between 2020 and

2024, Chongqing's culinary tourism revenue steadily increased from approximately RMB 40 billion to RMB 62.1 billion, indicating tourists' sustained interest in and consumption of local culinary experiences. This upward trend reflects not only the comprehensive success of local government initiatives in culinary promotion and service enhancement, but also tourists' perception of high revisit feasibility and convenience, including factors such as transportation accessibility, ease of information acquisition, and affordability. Collectively, these elements enhance the actual likelihood of repeat visits. Moreover, the consistent demand for culturally immersive and personally engaging culinary tourism experiences further validates the psychological and behavioral mechanisms through which revisit intention translates into revisit behavior.

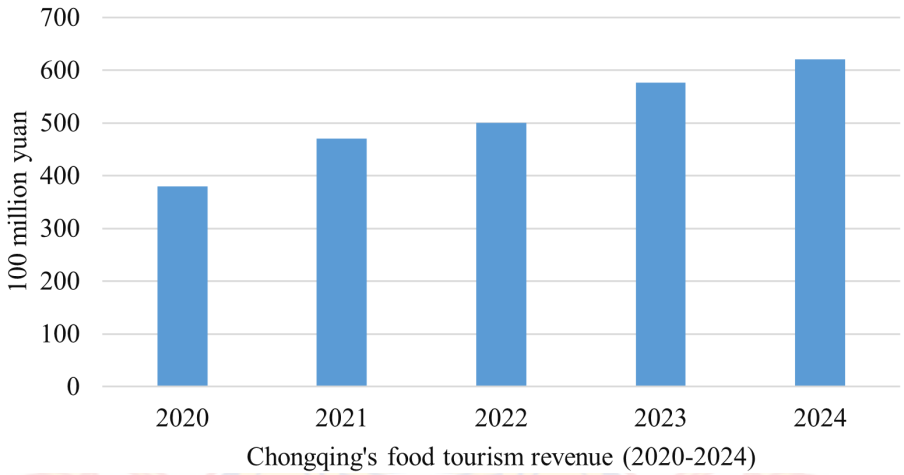

Figure 2.2 Chongqing' s Culinary Tourism Revenue (2020-2024)
Source: https://whlyw.cq.gov.cn/ghwd/whlyw_znwd/index.html,2024

To further institutionalize and sustain the momentum of Chongqing' s culinary tourism development, a series of policies have been introduced to deepen cultural integration and strengthen the local culinary industry. As summarized in Table 2.2, these measures focus on linking culinary with cultural tourism, creating immersive consumption scenarios, promoting regional cuisine through initiatives like “Yu-Taste 360 Bowls,” and reinforcing culinary identity in urban development. Together, they provide a solid institutional foundation for enhancing the destination image, enriching tourist experiences, and fostering revisit intention and behavior.

Table 2.2 Culinary Industry Development Policies in the Context of Culinary Tourism in Chongqing

Policy Name	Policy Content	Source
Implementation Plan for Promoting High-Quality Development of Service Consumption in Chongqing (2023–2027)	Clearly proposes the construction of an "International Gourmet City," supporting the expansion of Yu cuisine branding, the diversification of dining scenarios, and integration with culinary tourism strategies such as the "Yu-Taste 360 Bowls" campaign.	Chongqing Municipal People's Government, March 2025
Three-Year Action Plan for the Brand Cultivation of the "Yu-Taste 360 Bowls" in the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle (2024–2026)	Systematically outlines strategies for shaping the Yu cuisine brand, standardizing hotpot and regional specialty dishes, promoting regional image, and boosting international recognition.	Joint initiative by the Ministry of Commerce and local governments, February 2025
Action Plan for Enhancing Tourism Consumption and Promoting High-Quality Development of the Tourism Sector (2023–2027)	Proposes the construction of integrated cultural-tourism consumption scenarios, supports culinary festivals, night markets, and consumption upgrades, and provides institutional and resource support for culinary tourism.	Chongqing Tourism Economic Development Office, February 2024
Wanzhou District Three-Year Action Plan for Promoting High-Quality Development of Cultural and Tourism Industries (2023–2025)	Emphasizes the integration of local culinary culture and tourism, supporting the development of distinctive food products and travel routes to enhance revisit experiences and regional brand identity.	Wanzhou District Government, July 2023

(2) Research on Culinary tourism in Chongqing

In recent years, Chongqing has gained increasing scholarly attention as a nationally representative destination for cuisine-centered tourism. Existing studies have primarily explored tourists' culinary travel behavior and revisit intentions, emphasizing motivations such as culinary satisfaction, emotional attachment, and cultural identity (Zulkefli et al., 2024). In particular, Chongqing' s bold mala flavors and strong digital influence have positioned it as a focal point for understanding how local culinary culture shapes tourist

engagement and loyalty. Much of the literature highlights the symbolic and promotional dimensions of Chongqing' s culinary identity. Iconic elements such as hotpot, street snacks, and regional specialties are frequently framed as tools for city branding and expressions of local culture (Htet et al., 2024). These studies have contributed to understanding how culinary enhances destination image and enriches the experiential dimension of cultural tourism.

The current body of research provides valuable insights into the cultural and promotional dimensions of Chongqing's culinary tourism but remains fragmented in its behavioral interpretation. A more integrative analytical approach—linking culinary culture, perceived image, and psychological constructs—would enable a deeper understanding of how culinary experiences evolve into long-term tourist loyalty and revisit intention within Chongqing's distinctive culinary landscape.

2.1.3 Tourists' Revisit Intention toward Culinary Destinations

In existing studies, revisit intention toward culinary destinations is commonly defined as tourists' intention to return to a destination after an initial food-related experience (Luong & Long, 2025). This intention is typically viewed as the outcome of prior satisfaction with local cuisine and the emotional or cultural value attached to the culinary experience. Scholars increasingly conceptualize revisit intention as a multidimensional construct, it emphasizes that repeat visits reflect more than mere consumption—they signal deeper psychological and cultural engagement with the destination (Verma & Kapoor, 2025).

Empirical research on revisit intention in culinary tourism has grown steadily in recent years. In terms of research subjects, most studies focus on domestic or international tourists with a demonstrated interest in food-centered travel (Zocchi et al., 2021). The content of these studies typically explores the impact of culinary culture, destination image, and psychological factors on tourist satisfaction and loyalty. For example, some scholars have identified culinary authenticity and cultural symbolism as major influences on revisit intention (Cheshmehzangi, 2025), while others emphasize the mediating role of satisfaction in translating destination perceptions into behavioral outcomes (Yasami et al., 2021). Research methods are predominantly quantitative, employing tools such as surveys and structural equation modeling (SEM) to test hypothesized relationships (Ding et al., 2022).

Overall, existing scholarship portrays revisit intention as a multidimensional construct that integrates cognitive, affective, and behavioral elements. The evolving literature has gradually moved from examining isolated psychological determinants to developing more integrative frameworks that account for tourists' cultural identity, affective attachment, and destination perception. This growing theoretical convergence lays a valuable foundation for further investigation into how culinary experiences cultivate sustained loyalty and shape long-term relationships between tourists and destinations.

2.2 Parent Discipline

2.2.1 Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory (SIT) emphasizes that individuals derive their self-concept and behavioral orientations from their membership in social groups (Ellemers & Haslam, 2012). Through identification, categorization and comparison, individuals establish a sense of belonging and gain value and self-esteem from their affiliation with groups, which in turn influences their attitudes and behaviors.

Building on this foundation, scholars have extended SIT to the cultural domain by conceptualizing cultural identity as a specific manifestation of social identity. Some scholars were among the first to articulate this linkage, describing cultural identity as a dynamic process through which individuals construct and negotiate their sense of cultural identity in intercultural communication. Later contributions further refined this perspective within tourism research, identifying cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions of cultural identity (Fu & Luo, 2023). Cognitive identity reflects tourists' recognition and understanding of a destination's cultural values and symbols; emotional identity captures affective resonance and attachment to cultural traditions; and behavioral identity manifests in supportive actions such as recommending the culture to others, revisiting the destination, or engaging in conservation efforts.

In this sense, SIT provides a robust theoretical lens for interpreting cultural identity: it explains how tourists incorporate cultural symbols, traditions, and practices into their self-concept, thereby transforming cultural belonging into concrete attitudes and behaviors (Holmes & Howard, 2023). Within culinary tourism, food traditions and culinary practices act as symbolic vehicles of culture. By tasting distinctive flavors, observing traditional cooking techniques, or participating in communal dining rituals,

tourists are able to internalize local culinary culture as part of their identity (Trisutaguna et al., 2025). This heightened cultural identity enhances their perception of authenticity, increases satisfaction, and reinforces loyalty intentions.

Accordingly, this study adopts SIT to frame culinary culture identity as a multidimensional construct that mediates the relationship between cultural experience and behavioral outcomes. By situating Chongqing' s cuisine within this theoretical context, the study demonstrates how culinary cultural identity shapes tourists' satisfaction and revisit intention, thereby extending social identity theory (SIT) into the domain of culinary tourism.

2.2.2 Image Theory

Since early scholars proposed the view that human behavior is determined by images rather than objective reality, academic interest in the concept of image has been widespread in various fields and disciplines (Beach & Mitchell, 1998). These early studies and the subsequent acceptance of the image concept have led to the formation of the "image theory", which holds that the world is a psychological or distorted reflection of objective reality, existing in the minds of individuals (Myers, 1968). With the development of image theory, scholars gradually realized that this theory is also applicable to the context of tourism research (Hunt, 1975). Tourism activities, as a highly perceptual and impression-based social behavior, the travel choices of tourists are often not entirely based on objective conditions, but rather are constructed on their subjective perceptions and impressions of the destination. Therefore, destination image has gradually become an extension and specific application of image theory in the tourism field, and is regarded as an important conceptual framework for explaining tourist behavior.

Early work distinguished between organic images, which are formed through non-commercial information sources and personal experiences, and induced images, which are shaped by marketing and promotional activities (Crompton, 1979). Others extended the conceptualization by developing a three-dimensional framework that incorporates attribute-holistic impressions, functional-psychological characteristics, and common-unique features, thereby integrating both tangible and intangible elements. Building on these developments, scholars consolidated the understanding of destination image into three interrelated components: cognitive, affective, and conative (Gartner, 1994). The cognitive dimension concerns tourists' beliefs, impressions, and knowledge about

destination attributes, shaped by physical features and service quality (Jamshidi et al., 2023). The affective dimension captures the emotional responses a destination evokes (Hosany et al., 2021), while the conative dimension reflects behavioral intentions, such as the likelihood of visiting or revisiting. Empirical evidence indicates that these dimensions are interdependent, with cognition influencing affection, and both jointly predicting conation.

In recent years, research has increasingly examined the role of destination image in shaping not only tourists' initial visitation decisions but also their revisit intention and subsequent behavior (Hamdy et al., 2024). Within culinary tourism, this has led to the emergence of the perceived destination image construct, which incorporates culinary-specific attributes—such as local culinary culture, perceived authenticity, culinary quality, and dining environment—into the broader destination evaluation (Abbasi et al., 2021; Ding et al., 2022). This specialized dimension aligns closely with the cognitive-affective-conative framework: cognition encompasses evaluations of food-related attributes (Kim et al., 2021); affection captures emotional connections forged through culinary experiences (Rottigni & Spence, 2024); and conation is expressed in behavioral outcomes, including satisfaction, loyalty, and revisits (Kim & Chen, 2021). Perceived destination image exerts both direct and indirect effects on revisit intention and behavior, often mediated by tourist satisfaction (Darvishmotevali et al., 2023). However, these relationships are moderated by contextual factors such as cultural heritage, culinary identity, and tourist expectations, suggesting that destination-specific analyses remain essential.

2.2.3 Theory of Planned Behaviour

The theory of planned behaviour (TPB), is a foundational framework in social psychology for explaining and predicting human behavior. The theory posits that individual behavior is primarily determined by behavioral intention, which is in turn influenced by three constructs: attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control. Attitude reflects an individual' s overall evaluation of performing a behavior, based on expected outcomes. Subjective norm refers to perceived social pressures from significant others or social groups regarding whether one should engage in the behavior. Perceived behavioral control denotes the individual' s perception of the ease or difficulty of performing the behavior, often influenced by access to resources, time, and opportunities (Ajzen, 1991). Together, these variables account for both motivational and volitional

aspects of behavior and are frequently used to understand decision-making across domains including health, consumer behavior, and tourism (Lin et al., 2024; Rozenkowska, 2023).

In culinary tourism, TPB has been increasingly employed to explain tourists' behavioral intentions related to food-centered travel. Studies have shown that a positive attitude toward local cuisine—shaped by perceived taste, authenticity, and cultural richness—can significantly enhance tourists' intention to revisit culinary destinations (Luong & Long, 2025). Subjective norm, particularly the influence of social networks, online reviews, and user-generated food content, plays a critical role in reinforcing revisit motivation by shaping social expectations (Wijaya et al., 2025). Perceived behavioral control, reflected in tourists' sense of travel convenience, affordability of local cuisine, and confidence in managing culinary activities, enhances their ability to carry out revisit plans (Abdullah & Rahman, 2022).

Building on this foundation, scholars have expanded TPB to address its limitations in capturing destination-specific and experiential dimensions. Commonly introduced variables include destination image, perceived risk, perceived value, satisfaction, past experience, and personal norms (Abbasi et al., 2021). In the context of culinary tourism, extensions such as food-related image, cultural symbolism, and sensory appeal have demonstrated that integrating psychological and destination-specific factors improves the prediction of revisit intentions and behaviors (Abbasi et al., 2021; Luong & Long, 2025).

More recently, economic evaluation factors have also been incorporated into TPB. Price sensitivity, defined as the degree to which perceived financial costs shape behavioral intentions (Bhutto et al., 2022), functions as a contextual constraint within the TPB framework. High price sensitivity may weaken the conversion of satisfaction into revisit intention, while low sensitivity can reinforce the pathway from satisfaction to loyalty. By embedding this economic dimension into TPB, scholars extend the model's explanatory power and provide a more comprehensive understanding of revisit intention in culinary tourism.

2.3 Immediate Discipline

2.3.1 Culinary Culture Identity

Culinary culture identity refers to the sense of belonging, recognition, and emotional commitment that individuals develop toward the culinary traditions of a particular place (Zhang et al., 2020b). It extends beyond the sensory dimensions of food to encompass its cultural symbolism and social meaning. In this study, the construct is conceptualized across three interrelated dimensions: cognitive identity, which reflects tourists' knowledge, recognition, and memories of Chongqing's culinary traditions; affective identity, which captures emotional ties, pride, and resonance with local culinary practices; and behavioral identity, which manifests in actions such as recommending Chongqing's culinary to others, sharing positive impressions, and expressing intentions to revisit (Yang et al., 2022).

Existing research highlights culinary culture identity as a major factor in culinary tourism, influencing destination image and tourist behavior. While studies have explored national cuisines, fewer focus on regional experiences like Chongqing' s spicy cuisine and street food (He et al., 2022). Moreover, how tourists perceive culinary practices as part of cultural experience remains underexamined, especially in rapidly modernizing Chinese cities. By focusing on Chongqing' s unique culinary traditions, this study fills a gap in understanding how specific aspects of culinary culture identity impact tourist satisfaction and revisit intention. The inclusion of well-defined dimensions offers a structured approach to analyzing cultural influence in culinary tourism, contributing both theoretical insight and practical value.

2.3.2 Perceived Destination Image

Perceived destination image refers to a tourist' s interpretation and perception of a place based on their knowledge, beliefs, emotions, and assumptions about its culinary offerings (Kovalenko et al., 2023b). It encompasses both cognitive and affective evaluations, reflecting not only what tourists know or believe about a destination' s culinary culture but also how they feel about it. In this study, based on previous studies (Guo & Pesonen, 2022), the perceived image of the culinary destination was mainly focused on the following aspects: cognitive, affective and conative.

Previous research underscores the role of destination image in shaping tourist behavior, particularly revisit intention and satisfaction (Liu et al., 2024). Within the

context of culinary tourism, scholars have emphasized that culinary image—how tourists perceive a destination' s culinary scene—can significantly influence the destination's appeal (Zhang et al., 2020b). Recent studies, such as those have advanced the operationalization of perceived destination image in culinary tourism by distinguishing its cognitive, affective, and conative components (Guo & Pesonen, 2022). These studies highlight that tourists' rational assessments of culinary quality and infrastructure (cognitive), emotional experiences of pleasure and excitement (affective), and behavioral intentions to revisit or recommend (conative) jointly determine the strength of a destination's image.

This study contributes to the literature by applying and refining the perceived destination image construct in the context of Chongqing—a city with a highly distinct culinary identity. By incorporating both tangible (e.g., facilities, services) and intangible (e.g., emotional impression, cultural image) components, the research provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how destination image influences tourist satisfaction and repeat visitation in culinary tourism.

2.3.3 Culinary Tourism Attitude

Culinary tourism attitude refers to an individual' s evaluation of the behavior of choosing culinary as a tourism motivation (Sutiadiningsih et al., 2023). It reflects the tourist' s favorable or unfavorable assessment of engaging in culinary travel and plays a critical role in shaping revisit intentions.

Extant literature within the framework of the theory of planned behavior emphasizes the predictive power of attitude in behavioral intention (Ajzen, 1991). Specifically, in the context of culinary tourism, prior studies have demonstrated that tourists with positive attitudes toward local culinary are more likely to engage in culinary experiences and recommend the destination (Martin et al., 2021). However, much of the research has focused on broader destination images or general tourist satisfaction, with less emphasis on attitudes formed specifically through culinary encounters, particularly in Chinese urban settings like Chongqing.

This study measures attitude through clearly defined emotional and cognitive dimensions, the study offers a comprehensive framework to assess how favorable perceptions of local cuisine contribute to sustained tourism engagement. This approach

deepens the understanding of how affective evaluations affect destination loyalty in the context of culinary tourism.

2.3.4 Subjective Norm

Subjective norm refers to the perceived social pressure an individual experiences to perform or not perform a particular behavior - in this case, choosing cuisine as a tourist motivation (Sutiadiningsih et al., 2023). It captures the influence of important referents on the decision to revisit a culinary destination. This construct reflects the expectations, encouragement, and support that tourists perceive from those close to them regarding culinary travel decisions.

The role of subjective norm in predicting behavioral intention is well established in the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991). In tourism studies, subjective norms have been used to explain how social influence impacts travel behavior, destination selection, and loyalty (Wasaya et al., 2022). Specifically, in the context of culinary tourism, subjective norms manifest through cultural expectations, shared culinary interests, or social endorsement of local cuisine. Studies suggest that tourists are more likely to revisit a destination or engage in culinary tourism when supported or encouraged by significant others (Martin et al., 2021). However, limited research has explored how social approval directly affects tourists' revisit intention in regional culinary hubs like Chongqing.

This study conceptualizes subjective norm through four dimensions: agreement, recommendation, support, and understanding from important others regarding revisiting Chongqing for its culinary offerings. By doing so, it investigates how interpersonal influences shape culinary travel decisions. This contributes valuable insights into how social dynamics interplay with individual intentions, reinforcing the importance of subjective norm in shaping sustainable culinary tourism behavior.

2.3.5 Perceived Behavioral Control

Perceived behavioral control refers to an individual' s perception of the ease or difficulty involved in performing a particular behavior - in this context, revisiting a culinary destination (Sutiadiningsih et al., 2023). It reflects the tourist' s self-assessed ability to engage in culinary travel, considering both internal factors (such as confidence and motivation) and external constraints. Within the theory of planned behavior, perceived behavioral control influences both behavioral intention and the actual execution of behavior.

In the field of tourism research, perceived behavioral control has been increasingly recognized as a key predictor of revisit intention, especially when travel involves experiential components like cuisine. Several studies suggest that the availability of resources (e.g., financial means, time, information), perceived travel ease, and logistical accessibility all contribute to a tourist' s decision to revisit a destination (Abbasi et al., 2021; Gidebo, 2021). In the domain of culinary tourism, factors such as access to culinary events, knowledge about regional culinary experiences, and tourists' comfort in navigating food-related activities directly affect their behavioral control.

This study operationalizes perceived behavioral control through three dimensions: tourists' confidence in revisiting Chongqing for culinary purposes, perceived ease of planning, and sufficiency of personal resources. By delving into this underexplored area, this study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how perceptual behavior control affects revisit intention in the context of culinary travel.

2.3.6 Tourist Satisfaction

Tourist satisfaction, in the context of tourism, refers to the degree to which a destination and its components meet or exceed tourists' expectations and performance criteria (Basendwah et al., 2024; Kusumah, 2024). It reflects the overall evaluation of the tourism experience based on factors such as the quality, authenticity, and emotional fulfillment derived from visiting a place. In culinary tourism, satisfaction often hinges on the uniqueness, taste, presentation, and cultural resonance of the food consumed during the trip.

Recent studies have shown that tourist satisfaction is a significant predictor of revisit intention and destination loyalty, especially in experience-based tourism such as culinary (Chung & Yoon, 2024; Mensah et al., 2023). Satisfaction in culinary contexts is shaped by multiple interrelated elements, including the quality and authenticity of local cuisine, service professionalism in food establishments, the ambiance and comfort of dining environments, and the alignment of culinary experiences with tourists' cultural expectations. However, most existing research has focused on international culinary destinations or general hospitality settings, while limited empirical attention has been devoted to regional culinary hubs such as Chongqing. Given Chongqing's distinct culinary identity, characterized by its spicy mala flavors and dynamic street food culture, examining

satisfaction in this localized culinary context provides valuable theoretical and practical insights.

This study conceptualizes tourist satisfaction across four dimensions: the influence of culinary on destination choice; the contribution of culinary experiences to overall travel satisfaction; the emotional enjoyment of local food, and general satisfaction with the culinary experience in Chongqing. his enabled a targeted assessment of how the elements of cuisine affect the satisfaction level of tourists. By focusing on satisfaction in the context of Chongqing's culinary culture, the study deepens the understanding of emotional and experiential factors that drive sustainable culinary tourism.

2.3.7 Revisit Intention

Revisit intention refers to a tourist' s expressed willingness to return to a previously visited destination, often regarded as a form of post-consumption behavior (Nguyen Viet et al., 2020). It serves as a critical indicator of tourist loyalty and satisfaction, reflecting the perceived value and overall experience associated with a destination. In culinary tourism, revisit intention is particularly significant, as it encapsulates how culinary experiences influence tourists' decisions to return for similar or deeper engagements with local culinary culture.

Extensive research across tourism disciplines has highlighted revisit intention as a central construct in destination management, influenced by factors such as destination image, tourist satisfaction, perceived behavioral control, and cultural experience (Damanik & Yusuf, 2022; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2025). In culinary tourism, studies have shown that positive food-related experiences, such as the enjoyment of traditional dishes or participation in food festivals, enhance emotional connection and motivation to revisit (Darvishmotevali et al., 2023).

This study defines revisit intention through three dimensions derived from established literature and adapted for culinary tourism: personal desire to revisit the destination for culinary experiences; planned intention to return in the near future, and willingness to recommend the destination to others. These components reflect both affective and behavioral dimensions of loyalty. By focusing on revisit intention in the context of Chongqing' s culinary offerings, this research contributes to a nuanced understanding of how culinary experiences drive sustainable destination loyalty and inform culinary tourism strategies.

2.3.8 Price Sensitivity

Price sensitivity refers to the extent to which individuals' consumption and behavioral decisions are influenced by price considerations when choosing products or services. In the context of tourism, it reflects the degree to which tourists rely on price when making travel-related and revisit-related decisions (Chung, 2010). Unlike constructs such as satisfaction or destination image, which emphasize affective and cognitive evaluations, price sensitivity highlights the economic dependence underlying tourists' behavioral choices.

Previous studies have shown that price sensitivity can significantly shape tourists' behavioral intentions, especially when visitors compare discounted options, lower-priced alternatives, and overall value in the decision-making process (Zou & Petrick, 2021). In culinary tourism, this construct is particularly relevant because food-related experiences are closely connected to expenditure and choice flexibility. Tourists with higher price sensitivity are more likely to prefer discounted or lower-priced culinary experiences and to rely heavily on price when making consumption decisions, whereas those with lower price sensitivity are less constrained by price considerations (Wei et al., 2023).

In this study, price sensitivity is conceptualized as a moderating variable in the relationship between tourist satisfaction and revisit intention. Specifically, higher price sensitivity is expected to weaken the positive effect of tourist satisfaction on revisit intention. To measure this construct, the study adapts three items from Chung (2010), including whether tourists are more likely to choose culinary experiences in Chongqing when they are on sale, whether they prefer the lowest priced options that still meet their needs, and whether they rely heavily on price when choosing such experiences. By incorporating price sensitivity into the analytical framework, the study introduces an economic decision-oriented dimension into the understanding of culinary tourism behavior in Chongqing.

2.4 Empirical Model and Hypotheses Statement

2.4.1 Empirical Model

Figure 2.3 presents the theoretical framework of this study, which integrates social identity theory, image theory, and the theory of planned behavior (TPB) to explain tourists' revisit intention in the context of culinary tourism. The model identifies five independent

variables—culinary culture identity, attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, and perceived destination image—as key antecedents shaping tourists' behavioral responses. Specifically, these constructs are hypothesized to exert indirect influence on revisit intention through tourist satisfaction (H6a - H6e). The framework assumes that each of the four TPB variables (attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control) and culinary culture identity positively affect both tourist satisfaction and revisit intention (H1a–H4c), while perceived destination image further mediates these relationships (H5a–H5j). Tourist satisfaction, as the first mediator, captures the evaluative and emotional outcomes of tourists' culinary experiences, which subsequently enhance revisit intention (H6f). Additionally, the moderating effect of price sensitivity on the relationship between tourists' satisfaction and revisit intention is considered (H7).

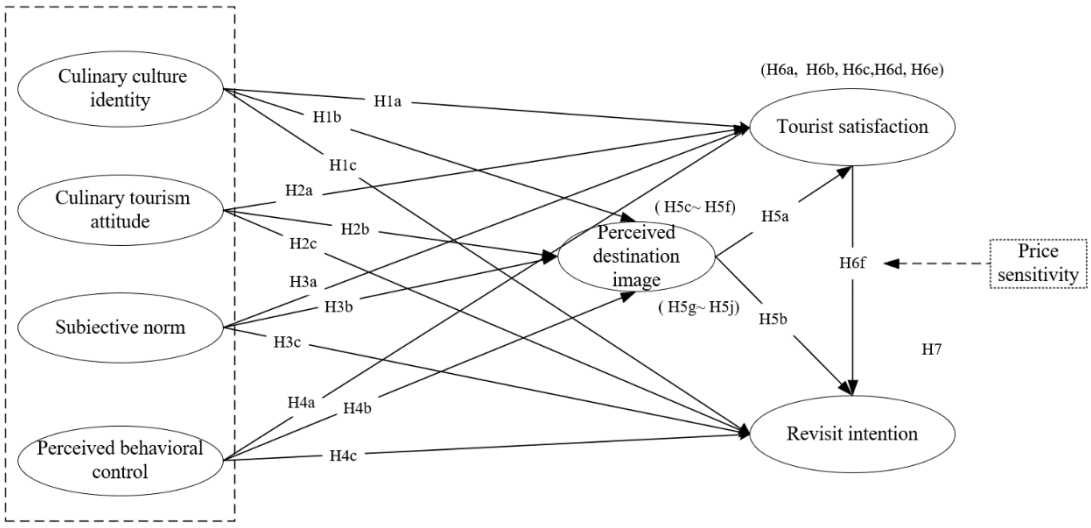

Figure 2.3 Conceptual Framework of the Study

2.4.2 Hypothesis Statements

Culinary culture identity represents the extent to which tourists cognitively recognize, emotionally resonate with, and behaviorally engage in a destination's culinary traditions, practices, and symbolic meanings (Lytvynenko, 2025). This identity transcends the act of food consumption itself, as it embodies cultural narratives, social rituals, and historical values that shape tourists' perceptions of authenticity and belonging. When tourists strongly identify with a destination's culinary culture, they tend to perceive it as integral to their personal identity, which in turn strengthens long-term engagement with the place.

Culinary culture identity exerts a strong influence on tourist satisfaction. Culinary experiences that are perceived as authentic and deeply rooted in local traditions provide more than sensory pleasure—they create a sense of cultural enrichment and symbolic fulfillment (Richards, 2021). When tourists recognize themselves in the cultural values embedded in local cuisine, their emotional involvement enhances their evaluation of the overall trip. Prior research indicates that satisfaction is significantly heightened when food experiences align with tourists' cultural expectations and identity-related needs (Nurwitasari et al., 2024). Therefore, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1a: Culinary culture identity has a positive impact on tourist satisfaction.

Culinary culture identity significantly impacts tourists' perceptions of a destination's image. A strong connection to local cuisine fosters a sense of cultural authenticity, which in turn enhances the overall perception of the destination. When tourists perceive the food culture as authentic and aligned with their own cultural values, their overall image of the destination is positively influenced (Zulkefli et al., 2024). Studies have shown that a destination's culinary reputation plays a key role in shaping tourists' destination image, influencing their future travel decisions (Htet et al., 2024). Therefore, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1b: Culinary culture identity has a positive impact on perceived destination image.

Culinary culture identity shapes revisit intention by bridging tourists' cultural perceptions with their future-oriented loyalty (Liu et al., 2024). Tourists who identify strongly with culinary traditions often perceive such destinations as unique and irreplaceable, thereby reinforcing their willingness to return. Studies have shown that engagement with food-related culture and rituals not only enhances perceived authenticity but also fosters a durable intention to revisit (Soonsan & Somkai, 2023). In this sense, culinary culture identity functions as both a cognitive anchor and an emotional motivator for revisit planning. Therefore, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1c: Culinary culture identity has a positive impact on revisit intention.

Culinary tourism attitude in the theory of planned behavior refers to an individual's positive or negative evaluation of performing a particular behavior—in this case, revisiting a culinary destination (Ajzen, 1991). Culinary tourism attitude shapes tourists' expectations and emotional readiness, which in turn affect how they evaluate their

experiences (Baydeniz et al., 2024). Positive attitudes toward culinary destinations are likely to lead to favorable interpretations of events, contributing to overall satisfaction. Studies support the view that attitudinal positivity correlates with increased satisfaction in tourism contexts (Loedphacharakamon & Choibamroong, 2025). Hence, a tourist with a positive attitude toward local cuisine is more likely to have a satisfying culinary experience. Therefore, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H2a: Culinary tourism attitude has a positive impact on tourist satisfaction.

Culinary tourism attitude encompasses tourists' evaluations and emotional responses towards the culinary experiences of a destination, including the perceived quality, authenticity, and uniqueness of local food culture (Ajzen, 1991).. A positive attitude towards gastronomic offerings can significantly influence tourists' overall perception of a destination. Research has shown that favorable attitudes toward a destination's culinary culture enhance its image, making it appear more appealing and authentic (Richards, 2021). When tourists appreciate the gastronomic experiences, their positive attitude enhances their perception of the destination's image, contributing to its reputation as a leading culinary destination (Aydin et al., 2022). Therefore, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H2b: Culinary tourism attitude has a positive impact on perceived destination image.

A positive evaluation of the culinary experience strongly predicts a tourist' s willingness to return. Favorable attitudes often lead to loyalty, which in tourism is expressed through repeat visitation (Elistia & Maulana, 2023; Hu & Xu, 2023). Studies have consistently demonstrated that attitude is a key determinant of revisit intention in culinary tourism (Elistia & Maulana, 2023). Therefore, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H2c: Culinary tourism attitude has a positive impact on revisit intention.

Subjective norm reflects the perceived social pressure to perform or not perform a particular behavior (Holmes & Howard, 2023). Social influences, including recommendations from trusted sources, can affect tourists' expectations and satisfaction (Roy et al., 2024). When tourists choose a destination based on peer endorsement or online reviews and their experience aligns with those expectations, satisfaction tends to increase. Research demonstrated that subjective norms positively influence both destination choice

and post-trip satisfaction (Gupta et al., 2023). Therefore, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H3a: Subjective norm has a positive impact on tourist satisfaction.

In the context of culinary tourism, subjective norms refer to the influence of social networks, including recommendations from friends, family, and online communities, on tourists' perceptions of a destination. Empirical studies have demonstrated that peer influence and digital word-of-mouth significantly shape tourists' behavior and perceptions (Ding et al., 2022). When social networks and cultural trends encourage a positive view of a destination's cuisine, tourists are more likely to perceive the destination favorably. This suggests that subjective norms play a crucial role in shaping the overall image of a destination, particularly in the context of culinary tourism. Therefore, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H3b: Subjective norm has a positive impact on perceived destination image.

Social pressure and encouragement from others play a key role in repeat decision-making (Damiasih, 2025). Tourists are more likely to revisit destinations endorsed by friends, family, or online communities. A study showed that subjective norms significantly influence revisit intentions in hospitality settings (Wiastuti et al., 2024). Therefore, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H3c: Subjective norm has a positive impact on revisit intention.

Perceived behavioral control refers to a tourist' s belief in their capacity to successfully manage and navigate their travel experience (Rezaimoghadam et al., 2022). In the context of culinary tourism, this includes confidence in locating restaurants, understanding culinary offerings, making appropriate choices based on dietary preferences, and handling language or cultural differences. Tourists who feel in control of these aspects are less likely to encounter frustration or anxiety, which contributes to a more enjoyable experience. Empirical studies, such as those have shown that higher perceived behavioral control is linked to increased satisfaction because tourists can focus on the pleasure of the activity rather than logistical challenges (Soltani et al., 2021). This sense of ease and autonomy enhances the overall impression of the destination and its services. Therefore, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H4a: Perceived behavioral control has a positive impact on tourist satisfaction.

In the context of culinary tourism, this encompasses factors such as affordability, accessibility, and the confidence tourists have in navigating a destination. Researc found that perceived behavioral control plays a significant role in shaping tourists' perceptions of a destination (Akter & Hasan, 2023). When tourists feel they have the ability to easily access and enjoy the destination's gastronomic offerings, their overall image of the destination is positively influenced. The perception of fewer barriers in experiencing and engaging with the local food culture strengthens the destination's appeal and image. Therefore, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H4b: Perceived behavioral control has a positive impact on perceived destination image.

When tourists perceive that revisiting is easy, feasible, and worthwhile, they are more likely to form the intention to return (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2023). Perceived behavioral control includes logistical considerations like cost, time, and familiarity, all of which influence planning decisions (Wang et al., 2024). Some scholara confirmed that this construct is a reliable predictor of revisit intention in tourism (Soliman, 2021). Therefore, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H4c: Perceived behavioral control has a positive impact on revisit intention.

Perceived destination image refers to tourists' overall perception of a culinary destination, encompassing its culinary reputation, environmental appeal, and symbolic associations (Suna & Alvarez, 2021). A strong perceived destination image sets expectations and enhances perceived value, which directly affects satisfaction (Kim et al., 2021). Tourists are more satisfied when the culinary experience aligns with or exceeds their image-based expectations. Research found that positive destination imagery is associated with greater tourist contentment, particularly in food-oriented trips (Zhao et al., 2024). Thus, cultivating a strong and coherent culinary image can significantly improve tourist satisfaction. Therefore, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H5a: Perceived destination image has a positive impact on tourist satisfaction.

The mental image formed of a culinary destination directly affects a tourist' s desire to return. A positive, vivid, and trustworthy image increases revisit intentions by reinforcing pleasant memories and expectations (Juliana et al., 2023). According to research, the more favorable the perceived destination image, the stronger the intention to revisit (Hossain et al., 2024). Therefore, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H5b: Perceived destination image has a positive impact on revisit intention.

Culinary culture identity influences how tourists perceive the authenticity and cultural richness of a destination's culinary offerings, which in turn shapes their overall satisfaction (Mora et al., 2021). Research has shown that when tourists strongly identify with a destination' s cuisine, their perception of the destination improves, enhancing their satisfaction (Kovalenko et al., 2023b). Therefore, perceived destination image plays a mediating role in this relationship. Therefore, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H5c: Perceived destination image mediates the relationship between culinary culture identity and tourist satisfaction.

Tourists' attitudes toward culinary tourism are shaped by their perceptions of food quality, authenticity, and cultural significance. Positive attitudes toward culinary tourism enhance the perceived destination image, which, in turn, boosts tourist satisfaction. Studies have indicated that a favorable attitude towards a destination' s culinary positively impacts tourist satisfaction through the enhancement of destination image (Sio et al., 2024). Therefore, perceived destination image serves as a mediator in this relationship. Therefore, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H5d: Perceived destination image mediates the relationship between culinary tourism attitude and tourist satisfaction.

Subjective norms, influenced by recommendations from peers, social networks, and online reviews, significantly shape tourists' perceptions of a destination (Javed et al., 2025). Existing research has shown that when tourists receive positive cues from their social circles regarding a destination's cuisine, their perceived destination image is enhanced, leading to increased satisfaction (Aydin et al., 2022). Thus, perceived destination image mediates the relationship between subjective norm and tourist satisfaction.

H5e: Perceived destination image mediates the relationship between subjective norm and tourist satisfaction.

Perceived behavioral control refers to tourists' perceived ease or difficulty in experiencing a destination's culinary offerings. When tourists feel confident in their ability to engage with the destination's food culture, it positively influences their destination image, which in turn increases satisfaction (Jebbouri et al., 2022). Research suggests that perceived behavioral control significantly influences satisfaction through its impact on

destination image (Rezaimoghadam et al., 2022). Therefore, perceived destination image mediates this relationship.

H5f: Perceived destination image mediates the relationship between perceived behavioral control and tourist satisfaction.

Culinary culture identity shapes how tourists view the destination's culinary culture, and a strong identification with this culture leads to a positive destination image, which increases tourists' revisit intentions (Martin et al., 2021). Studies have shown that when tourists identify strongly with a destination's culinary culture, they are more likely to revisit, largely due to the enhanced image of the destination (Akter & Hasan, 2023). Therefore, perceived destination image mediates this relationship.

H5g: Perceived destination image mediates the relationship between culinary culture identity and revisit intention.

Tourists' positive attitudes towards a destination's culinary culture enhance their overall image of the destination, which in turn influences their decision to revisit. Research indicates that a positive attitude toward the destination's culinary offerings strengthens its image and significantly boosts the likelihood of revisit (Gupta et al., 2023). Perceived destination image thus mediates the relationship between attitude and revisit intention.

H5h: Perceived destination image mediates the relationship between culinary tourism attitude and revisit intention.

Subjective norms, including recommendations from peers and online reviews, shape tourists' perceptions of a destination's culinary. Positive social influence enhances the perceived destination image, which leads to increased revisit intentions. Previous studies have shown that subjective norms strongly influence revisit intentions through their impact on destination image (Hamdy et al., 2023). Therefore, perceived destination image mediates this relationship.

H5i: Perceived destination image mediates the relationship between subjective norm and revisit intention.

Perceived behavioral control, or the ease with which tourists can navigate a destination's gastronomic offerings, significantly impacts their destination image, which in turn affects their intention to revisit. Some schalors found that perceived behavioral control influences revisit intentions via its effect on destination image (Laradi et al., 2025).

Therefore, perceived destination image mediates the relationship between perceived behavioral control and revisit intention.

H5j: Perceived destination image mediates the relationship between perceived behavioral control and revisit intention.

Tourist satisfaction refers to the overall evaluation of a tourist's experience, reflecting the extent to which their expectations and needs are fulfilled during a trip. Previous studies have demonstrated that satisfaction frequently serves as a mediating mechanism between cultural engagement and revisit intention (Gupta et al., 2023; Onat & Güneren, 2024; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2023). For instance, some scholars found that tourists who strongly identified with local cultural traditions reported higher levels of satisfaction, which subsequently increased their likelihood of revisiting the destination (Gupta et al., 2023). In the context of culinary tourism, satisfaction derived from authentic food experiences plays a pivotal role in transforming cultural identity into loyalty-related behaviors. When tourists develop a strong culinary culture identity—through cognitive recognition, emotional resonance, and behavioral alignment with local cuisine—this identity enhances their satisfaction, which in turn motivates revisit intention. Therefore, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H6a: Tourist satisfaction mediates the relationship between culinary culture identity and revisit intention.

Attitude toward revisiting a destination reflects a tourist' s favorable or unfavorable evaluation of the potential return experience. Positive attitudes often stem from prior enjoyable experiences or anticipated benefits and have been found to directly impact satisfaction (Chen et al., 2023). For example, some scholars notes that attitudes play a fundamental role in shaping behavioral evaluations and outcomes (Ajzen, 1991). In the context of culinary tourism, a tourist who holds a positive attitude toward revisiting is more likely to derive greater satisfaction from subsequent visits, especially if the experience aligns with expectations. Thus, satisfaction functions as a bridge, translating attitudinal positivity into revisit intention. Therefore, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H6b: Tourist satisfaction mediates the relationship between culinary tourism attitude and revisit intention.

Subjective norm refers to the perceived social pressure from important others to perform or not perform a behavior (Sutiadiningsih et al., 2023). In tourism, this may include recommendations or encouragement from friends, family, or online communities. Research has shown that social endorsements can shape expectations and influence satisfaction when the experience lives up to socially constructed ideals (Xu et al., 2023). In culinary tourism, for instance, tourists who follow peer suggestions may feel validated and more satisfied if their culinary experiences meet or exceed those social recommendations. Consequently, satisfaction mediates the link between subjective norm and the intention to revisit. Therefore, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H6c: Tourist satisfaction mediates the relationship between subjective norm and revisit intention.

Perceived behavioral control refers to a tourist' s belief in their capability to revisit a destination, influenced by factors such as cost, time, and accessibility (Sutiadiningsih et al., 2023). When tourists perceive high control over their ability to revisit and encounter minimal barriers, they are more likely to enjoy a stress-free and fulfilling experience, thereby enhancing satisfaction. According to research, perceived behavioral control has both direct and indirect effects on behavioral outcomes through satisfaction. In culinary tourism, convenient transportation, clear food-related information, and prior familiarity increase satisfaction, which in turn motivates repeat visitation (Hagger et al., 2022). Thus, satisfaction mediates the relationship between perceived behavioral control and revisit intention. Therefore, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H6d: Tourist satisfaction mediates the relationship between perceived behavioral control and revisit intention.

Perceived destination image encompasses tourists' cognitive and affective perceptions of a culinary destination, including its visual appeal, emotional resonance, and perceived culinary quality. Prior research indicates that a favorable destination image enhances tourist satisfaction by shaping positive expectations and emotional engagement (Zhao et al., 2024). For instance, some scholars found that destination image significantly influenced satisfaction, which subsequently predicted tourists'likelihood of returning (Maghrifani et al., 2022). In culinary contexts, a vivid and appealing perceived destination image can intensify sensory anticipation and cultural affinity, leading to heightened satisfaction. Therefore, tourist satisfaction serves as a mediating mechanism through

which perceived destination image influences revisit intention. Therefore, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H6e: Tourist satisfaction mediates the relationship between perceived destination image and revisit intention.

Tourist satisfaction refers to the overall evaluation of a tourist's experience, reflecting how well their expectations and needs are met during their visit. Previous research has consistently shown that satisfaction plays a crucial role in influencing tourists' intention to revisit a destination (Zulkefli et al., 2024). When tourists are satisfied with their experience—whether due to the quality of the destination's cuisine, service, or overall ambiance—they are more likely to develop a strong desire to return (Hamdy et al., 2023). Satisfaction enhances tourists' emotional attachment to the destination, creating a positive cycle that strengthens their commitment to revisit (Holmes & Howard, 2023). In the context of culinary tourism, satisfying food experiences contribute significantly to tourists' overall satisfaction, thereby increasing their likelihood of revisiting the destination. Therefore, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H6f: Tourist satisfaction has a positive impact on revisit intention.

Tourist satisfaction has long been recognized as a central antecedent of revisit intention, as satisfied tourists are more likely to develop positive evaluations and loyalty toward a destination (Torabi et al., 2022). However, the strength of this relationship may vary depending on contextual or personal factors. One such factor is price sensitivity, which refers to the degree to which consumers' behavioral decisions are influenced by perceived financial costs (Bhutto et al., 2022). In tourism research, price sensitivity is often conceptualized as a psychological characteristic shaping how individuals evaluate the economic value of travel experiences (Nicolau et al., 2023).

From the perspective of the theory of planned behavior (TPB), price sensitivity functions as a contextual constraint that affects volitional control (Kumar & Mohan, 2021). Even when tourists report high satisfaction with culinary experiences, those with higher price sensitivity may hesitate to revisit if they perceive costs as exceeding acceptable thresholds. Conversely, tourists with lower price sensitivity are less constrained by financial considerations, allowing satisfaction to more strongly translate into revisit intention. Empirical studies in tourism and hospitality support this view, demonstrating that financial evaluations often attenuate the link between positive experiences and

subsequent behavioral intentions (Mora et al., 2021). Therefore, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H7: Price sensitivity negatively moderates the relationship between tourist satisfaction and revisit intention.

This chapter reviews the theoretical and background foundations of studies on tourists' satisfaction, revisit intention, and tourists' revisit behavior in the context of culinary tourism in Chongqing. By introducing the theory of social identity, image theory, and the theory of planned behavior, this study identifies key factors, including culinary culture identity, perceived destination image, attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, as core antecedents shaping tourists' satisfaction and revisit intention. The proposed hypotheses reflect the pathways through which these factors influence tourist behavior. H1c - H5b responded to research objective 2: to investigate the pathways through which culinary cultural identity, perceived destination image, culinary tourism attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control influence tourists' intention to revisit culinary destinations in Chongqing, China. H5a-H5c responded to research objective 3: to investigate the mediating role of tourist satisfaction and perceived destination image in the relationships between culinary culture identity, perceived destination image, culinary tourism attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control and revisit intention. H7 responded to research objective 4: to investigate the moderating role of price sensitivity on the relationships among tourist satisfaction and revisit intention.

The proposed hypotheses provide a structured foundation for understanding the direct and indirect effects of the research variables, enhancing both theoretical insight and practical applications for tourism management in Chongqing. This comprehensive framework offers valuable guidance for improving culinary tourism and fostering sustainable tourism development in the city.

Table 2.3 Hypothesis Development Statements

H1a: Culinary culture identity has a positive impact on tourist satisfaction.
H1b: Culinary culture identity has a positive impact on perceived destination image.
H1c: Culinary culture identity has a positive impact on revisit intention.

Table 2.3 (continued)

H2a: Culinary tourism attitude has a positive impact on tourist satisfaction.
H2b: Culinary tourism attitude has a positive impact on perceived destination image.
H2c: Culinary tourism attitude has a positive impact on revisit intention.
H3a: Subjective norm has a positive impact on tourist satisfaction.
H3b: Subjective norm has a positive impact on perceived destination image.
H3c: Subjective norm has a positive impact on revisit intention.
H4a: Perceived behavioral control has a positive impact on tourist satisfaction.
H4b: Perceived behavioral control has a positive impact on perceived destination image.
H4c: Perceived behavioral control has a positive impact on revisit intention.
H5a: Perceived destination image has a positive impact on tourist satisfaction.
H5b: Perceived destination image has a positive impact on revisit intention.
H5c: Perceived destination image mediates the relationship between culinary culture identity and tourist satisfaction.
H5d: Perceived destination image mediates the relationship between culinary tourism attitude and tourist satisfaction.
H5e: Perceived destination image mediates the relationship between subjective norm and tourist satisfaction.
H5f: Perceived destination image mediates the relationship between perceived behavioral control and tourist satisfaction.
H5g: Perceived destination image mediates the relationship between culinary culture identity and revisit intention.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter reviews the theoretical and background foundations of studies on tourists' satisfaction, and tourists' revisit intention in the context of culinary tourism in Chongqing. By introducing the theory of social identity, image theory, and theory of planned behavior, this study considers culinary culture identity, perceived destination image, culinary tourism attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control as the

core antecedent factors shaping tourists' satisfaction and revisit intention. It emphasizes the need to examine the sequential mediating role of perceived destination image and satisfaction in converting cultural and perceptual factors into actual revisit behavior, as well as the moderating role of price sensitivity between tourists' satisfaction and revisit intention. The proposed hypotheses provide a structured basis for the direct and indirect effects of the research variables, thereby enhancing theoretical insight and practical application value.



CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the research methodology adopted to achieve the study's research objectives: to explore the key cultural elements that shape tourists' culinary experiences in Chongqing; to investigate the pathways through which culinary culture identity, perceived destination image, culinary tourism attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control influence tourists' revisit intention toward culinary destinations in Chongqing, China; to investigate the mediating role of tourist satisfaction and perceived destination image in the relationships between culinary culture identity, perceived destination image, culinary tourism attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control and revisit intention. The chapter first explains the post-positivist research paradigm that underpins this mixed-methods approach and discusses how it guides the integration of qualitative and quantitative phases. It then presents the qualitative research design, detailing the sampling strategy, participant selection, interview procedures, and thematic analysis used to identify key cultural dimensions of culinary experience. Next, it introduces the quantitative research process, including target population identification, sample size determination, sampling methods, data collection, scale development, and data analysis through Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The exploratory qualitative phase provides contextual depth for model adaptation, while the quantitative phase empirically validates causal pathways using SEM. Finally, the chapter concludes by addressing the ethical considerations that ensure the reliability, validity, and integrity of the research.

3.1 Overview and Justification of Research Paradigm

This study adopts a post-positivist research paradigm to investigate the determinants of revisit intention in the context of culinary tourism in Chongqing. The post-positivist paradigm is appropriate for this inquiry due to its emphasis on a critical realist ontology, probabilistic reasoning, and methodological pluralism (Nair, 2023). Unlike

classical positivism, which assumes an entirely knowable and objective reality, post-positivism acknowledges that social phenomena, such as tourist behavior, are influenced by a range of cognitive, cultural, and situational factors that cannot be perfectly captured through observation alone. This philosophical stance aligns with the multifaceted nature of culinary tourism, which encompasses not only rational decision-making processes but also subjective experiences shaped by cultural symbols, culinary narratives, and emotional connections.

Ontologically, post-positivism asserts the existence of a reality that can be studied, albeit imperfectly, through systematic empirical methods (O'Keeffe et al., 2016). In this study, the "reality" under investigation is the patterned relationship among variables such as culinary culture identity, destination image, attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, and their influence on tourist satisfaction, and revisit intention. While these constructs can be operationalized and measured quantitatively, it is recognized that tourists' perceptions and motivations are context-dependent and embedded in individual and cultural subjectivities. Thus, although objective relationships are hypothesized, their manifestations may vary across respondents and context, a position that supports the use of empirical generalization while maintaining epistemic caution.

Epistemologically, the study is grounded in critical realism, whereby knowledge is gained through theory-driven hypothesis testing, tempered by the understanding that findings are provisional and contingent. The research employs a hypothetico-deductive approach to evaluate how both internal psychological factors (culinary tourism attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control) and external environmental stimuli (culinary culture identity and destination image) contribute to revisit intention through mediating mechanisms of tourist satisfaction and culinary destination image. This approach is justified within the post-positivist tradition, as it emphasizes empirical validation, replication, and the use of multiple sources of evidence to refine understanding. The integration of quantitative techniques, particularly structural equation modeling (SEM), enables rigorous testing of causal relationships and mediating effects, reflecting the paradigm' s commitment to methodological rigor.

Methodologically, the post-positivist paradigm encourages mixed or multi-method research designs, particularly where complex social phenomena are involved (Gobo,

2023). This study primarily adopts a quantitative methodology to facilitate the testing of a large-scale model involving multiple latent constructs.

The structural equation model (SEM) was employed to assess the structural relationships among the variables and the mediating paths. The quantitative data are supported by the development of validated measurement scales derived from prior literature on culinary tourism, behavioral intention, and customer satisfaction. While qualitative elements are not the core focus of this research, the conceptual model is grounded in qualitative insights drawn from prior empirical studies and theoretical frameworks, ensuring contextual relevance and construct validity.

Axiologically, the study adheres to the post-positivist commitment to minimizing bias and enhancing objectivity while acknowledging the value-laden nature of research. Although the researcher's theoretical orientation and topic selection reflect subjective interest, rigorous procedures, such as scale validation, pre-testing, and the use of established analytical techniques, are implemented to ensure the credibility, transparency, and reproducibility of the findings. Ethical considerations, including informed consent, data anonymity, and confidentiality, are also upheld in line with post-positivist commitments to ethical rigor and research integrity.

In conclusion, the adoption of a post-positivist paradigm provides a philosophically coherent and methodologically robust framework for analyzing the cognitive, affective, and cultural dimensions of tourist revisit behavior in Chongqing' s culinary tourism context. The ontological recognition of an imperfectly knowable reality, coupled with epistemological and methodological tools aimed at identifying probabilistic patterns, supports the study' s goal of developing a theoretically grounded and empirically testable model. By synthesizing psychological constructs from TPB with destination-specific factors such as culinary culture identity and perceived destination image, the research contributes both to theoretical advancement and to the strategic management of culinary tourism destinations.

3.2 Qualitative Research Design

The qualitative phase is not only designed to address the first research objective—exploring the key cultural elements shaping tourists' culinary experiences in Chongqing—but also serves an exploratory function. It aims to identify additional contextual variables

and behavioral dimensions that may not be fully captured in existing literature or theoretical frameworks. By conducting qualitative interviews, this phase allows for the discovery of emergent factors specific to Chongqing's culinary context, thereby enriching the conceptual foundation for the subsequent quantitative analysis. The insights obtained will also inform the refinement of the measurement model and contribute to addressing potential research gaps discussed in Chapter 5.

3.2.1 Research Tools

Semi-structured interviews serve as the principal qualitative tool in this study. This method provides a structured yet adaptable framework that supports systematic inquiry into core cultural constructs while allowing participants to articulate contextually grounded perspectives that arise during the interaction (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). The interview guide presented in Table 3.1 was developed directly from the analytical structure of the study and reflects the major dimensions identified as essential to the conceptualization of culinary experience, including sensory perception, atmospheric interpretation, communal engagement, procedural understanding, historical symbolism, authenticity evaluation, and cultural place-making. Each question is designed to stimulate rich narrative accounts and to facilitate the emergence of meaning across sensory, social, ritualistic, symbolic, and evaluative domains.

The interview protocol targets individuals who have engaged with Chongqing's culinary settings, enabling the collection of multi-layered insights into how food, environment, and cultural context intersect in the construction of a taste of place. This design ensures alignment between qualitative exploration and the theoretical model, providing conceptual depth that informs the operationalization of constructs for the subsequent quantitative phase. The data generated through interviews will be analyzed through a grounded and iterative thematic approach, supporting the identification of underlying cultural patterns, refining measurement items, and enhancing the structural coherence of the empirical framework that follows.

Table 3.1 Interviewee Related Questions

No.	Interview Questions
1	How would the sensory environment of Chongqing's culinary settings be described upon arrival?
2	How did the surrounding social and spatial atmosphere influence the interpretation of the dining context?
3	How did shared dining practices shape interaction patterns during the meal?
4	What forms of local dining knowledge or practices were observed or learned in the process of eating?
5	How did stories or cultural narratives associated with local dishes influence the meaning of the experience?
6	How were judgments formed regarding whether a culinary setting appeared authentic or staged?
7	How were sensory impressions integrated with environmental cues to form a holistic perception of the dining space?
8	How did ritualized or coordinated dining behaviors contribute to the social quality of the meal?
9	How did historical or cultural narratives interact with sensory impressions to shape perceptions of taste?
10	How did narrative credibility influence assessments of authenticity in the dining experience?
11	How would the depth of engagement and overall immersion during the culinary experience be characterized?
12	How did the culinary encounter contribute to the construction of meaning, identity, or attachment associated with Chongqing as a place?

3.2.2 Data Collection Administration

3.2.2.1 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis in this qualitative phase focuses exclusively on tourists who have participated in Chongqing' s culinary tourism. These participants were selected to provide in-depth insights into how tourists's experience, interpret, and evaluate the city' culinary culture. The interviewees include both domestic and international tourists, with

variation in age, occupation, travel purpose, and visit frequency, ensuring a diversity of perspectives. Specifically, participants comprised leisure travelers, food enthusiasts, and repeat visitors who had engaged in a variety of culinary activities such as dining in hotpot restaurants, exploring street food areas, attending local food festivals, and visiting thematic culinary districts. This focus on tourists enables the study to capture the first-hand sensory, emotional, and cultural dimensions of culinary experiences, ranging from perceptions of authenticity and service quality to the symbolic meanings and social interactions embedded in local dining practices. Through these rich narratives, the qualitative phase seeks to reveal how culinary culture identity and destination image are constructed through visitors' lived experiences in Chongqing.

3.2.2.2 Sampling Method

This study will employ a snowball sampling method to recruit tourists with prior culinary experiences in Chongqing. Snowball sampling is particularly suitable for qualitative research when the target group is not easily accessible through random selection and when the depth and relevance of experience are prioritized over statistical representativeness (Dosek, 2021). Snowball sampling was chosen due to the distributed nature of gastronomic stakeholders in Chongqing. To ensure diversity, the initial seeds will be selected from varied networks (culinary associations, tourism bureaus, local markets). Subsequent referrals will be monitored to maintain balance across subgroups and prevent overrepresentation from a single network.

In this study, tourists serve as the sole group of respondents. The recruitment process will begin with an initial set of tourists identified during on-site visits to popular culinary venues in Chongqing, including hotpot restaurants, night markets, food festivals, and traditional snack streets. These initial participants will be selected based on their prior experiences with Chongqing's cuisine and their willingness to share reflections on sensory impressions, cultural meanings, and emotional responses. Each participant will be subsequently invited to recommend others who had also engaged in similar culinary experiences, thereby expanding participants through referral networks.

3.2.2.3 Sample Size

Following the guidance of Nair (2023), who suggests that approximately 30 interviews are typically sufficient to achieve saturation in semi-structured interviews, and Braun and Clarke (2021), who recommend a range of 20 to 30 participants for

comprehensive qualitative data collection, this study aims to recruit 30 tourist participants, or until the interview data are saturated. The final number may vary depending on the emergence of new themes and the point at which no additional insights are obtained from subsequent interviews, ensuring that theoretical and thematic saturation is fully achieved. In practice, the qualitative phase concluded with a total of 50 completed interviews.

3.2.2.4 Data Collection Method

This study will be conducted with semi-structured interviews with approximately 30 tourist participants, and until the interview data were saturated (Nair, 2023). The interviews will be designed to elicit in-depth reflections on tourists' culinary experiences in Chongqing, focusing on sensory impressions (e.g., taste, aroma, and presentation), cultural perceptions, and emotional engagement with local food traditions.

Interviews will be conducted face-to-face at representative culinary venues such as hotpot restaurants, local snack streets, night markets, and food festivals, which are central to Chongqing's culinary culture. This on-site approach will allow participants to express their experiences in context and provided the researcher with opportunities to capture nonverbal cues and environmental details that enrich data interpretation.

Each interview will be last approximately 40–60 minutes and followed a flexible semi-structured guide to balance comparability and openness. Questions encouraged participants to describe how they perceive authenticity, cultural identity, and social meanings in their food experiences. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent, subsequently transcribed verbatim, and anonymized to ensure confidentiality and ethical compliance.

This qualitative approach enable the study to gather rich, context-sensitive insights into how tourists interpret and construct meanings within Chongqing's culinary tourism landscape, providing a foundation for the subsequent quantitative phase.

3.2.3 Data Analysis

This study will adopt an inductive thematic analysis approach to analyze qualitative data collected from semi-structured interviews with tourists who have experienced Chongqing's culinary culture (Brownstone et al., 2021). This method allows themes and patterns to emerge directly from the data, ensuring that findings are grounded in participants' lived experiences rather than constrained by predefined theoretical models.

By combining content analysis, emotion analysis, and thematic synthesis, the study identifies the key cultural elements that shape tourists' culinary experiences in Chongqing. The analysis will be conducted in three systematic stages:

(1) Data preparation and content analysis.

All interview recordings will be transcribed verbatim and will be carefully reviewed. Through content analysis, the transcripts will be coded to identify recurring cultural motifs such as flavor perception, cooking techniques, dining rituals, and symbolic meanings. This step will be establishing a structural understanding of how participants will describe and interpret Chongqing's culinary culture.

(2) Emotion analysis.

To explore the affective dimension of culinary experiences, emotion analysis will be conducted to capture tourists' emotional responses that will be evoked through culinary encounters. These emotional expressions will be illustrating how affective engagement enhances perceptions of authenticity and cultural value (Soltani et al., 2021).

(3) Thematic analysis.

Following the framework of Ahmed et al. (2025), thematic analysis will be performed to synthesize the findings into coherent patterns of meaning.

Initial coding: Interview data will be broken down into smaller units and will be assigned descriptive codes representing key cultural and experiential aspects.

Category development: Related codes will be grouped into broader categories to capture relationships between sensory experiences, cultural identity, and social interaction.

Theme construction: Core themes will be refined and integrated into a conceptual framework that will be delineating the dimensions, sub-dimensions, and interconnections of Chongqing's culinary culture (Naeem et al., 2024).

NVivo 12 (QSR International) was employed to manage and analyze the interview data systematically (Rasheed et al., 2024). The software facilitated efficient coding, visualization, and cross-comparison of emerging themes and emotional expressions. To enhance trustworthiness, triangulation was achieved by comparing interview results with field observation notes, and member checking was conducted to verify the accuracy of thematic interpretations with selected participants.

Through this iterative and inductive process, the study identifies context-specific cultural elements—including sensory perception, symbolic meaning, and emotional

resonance—that constitute the essence of Chongqing's culinary tourism. These findings form the empirical foundation for variable operationalization and hypothesis development in the subsequent quantitative phase, strengthening both the theoretical robustness and practical applicability of the research.

3.3 Quantitative Research Design

This section outlines the quantitative research design aimed at examining the pathways through which culinary culture identity, perceived destination image, attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control influence tourists' revisit behavior toward culinary destinations in Chongqing, China. In addition, the study investigates the mediating roles of tourist satisfaction and revisit intention, thereby offering a comprehensive understanding of the psychological and contextual mechanisms that drive repeat visitation in the context of culinary tourism.

3.3.1 Research Tools

3.3.1.1 Operational Definitions of Variables

To ensure the rigor and clarity of this study, the following operational definitions are provided for the key variables under investigation, as shown in Table 3.2:

Table 3.2 Operational Definitions of Related Variables

Construct	Operational Definition	Source
Culinary culture identity	Culinary culture identity refers to the sense of belonging, recognition, and emotional commitment that individuals develop toward the culinary traditions of a particular place. It extends beyond the sensory dimensions of food to encompass its cultural symbolism and social meaning. The construct is conceptualized across three interrelated dimensions: cognitive identity, which reflects tourists' knowledge, recognition, and memories of Chongqing's culinary traditions; affective identity, which captures emotional ties, pride, and resonance with local culinary practices; and behavioral identity, which manifests in actions such as recommending Chongqing's culinary to others, sharing positive impressions, and expressing intentions to revisit.	Yang et al. (2022); Zhang et al. (2020a)

Table 3.2 (continued)

Construct	Operational Definition	Source
Perceived destination image	Perceived destination image is a tourist's own elaboration and interpretation of their knowledge, beliefs, assumptions, emotional impressions, and ideas regarding a place. It encompasses both cognitive and affective evaluations, reflecting not only what tourists know or believe about a destination' s gastronomy culture but also how they feel about it. In this study, based on previous studies, the perceived image of the gastronomy destination was mainly focused on the following aspects: cognitive, affective and conative.	Guo and Pesonen (2022); Kovalenko et al. (2023a)
Attitude	Attitudes toward are interpreted as a person's assessment of the implementation of the behavior of choosing culinary as a tourist destination.	Sutiadiningsih et al. (2023)
Subjective norm	Tourists's expectations of those who choose culinary as a tourist destination. It refers to the perceived social pressure an individual experiences to perform or not perform a particular behavior - in this case, choosing gastronomy as a tourist motivation.	
Perceived behavioral control	The ease or difficulty of choosing culinary as a tourist destination is perceived as behavioral control.	
Tourist satisfaction	In a tourism setting, consumer satisfaction refers to the extent to which the destination (or each of its components) fulfils tourists' performance criteria.	Basendwah et al. (2024)
Revisit intention	Revisit intention refers to a tourist' s expressed willingness to return to a previously visited destination, often regarded as a form of post-consumption behavior.	Nguyen Viet et al. (2020)
Price sensitivity	Price sensitivity is how individuals perceive and respond to changes in the process of the services or products offered by companies.	Chung (2010)

3.3.1.2 Variable Measurements

(1) Culinary Culture Identity

Culinary culture identity refers to the cognitive, affective, and behavioral connections that individuals establish with a destination's culinary traditions (Zhang et al., 2020b). In this study, the measurement of culinary culture identity (Yang et al., 2022) and

revised to fit the context of Chongqing. As shown in Table 3.3, the construct includes three interrelated dimensions: cognitive identity, which reflects tourists' recognition and personal relevance of Chongqing's culinary culture (e.g., recalling culinary memories, perceiving food as part of self-identity); affective identity, which captures emotional attachment, pride, and familiarity with local culinary traditions and dining rituals; and behavioral identity, which represents tourists' willingness to recommend, revisit, and advocate for Chongqing's cuisine. Each item is measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), enabling a nuanced assessment of how culinary culture identity influences satisfaction, loyalty, and revisit intention in Chongqing's culinary tourism. In addition to the revised items adapted from existing scales, the present study further developed six new measurement items derived directly from the qualitative interview findings, reflecting core experiential elements that emerged from grounded-theory coding. These new items capture sensory immersion, everyday atmosphere, social interaction, ritualized dining procedures, historical symbolism and authenticity cues specific to Chongqing's culinary environment. By integrating both revised and newly generated items, the measurement of culinary culture identity in this study more comprehensively represents the culturally embedded, multisensory and socially situated nature of culinary experience in Chongqing.

Table 3.3 The Measurement of Culinary Culture Identity

Original Items	Revised Items	Source
1. There exists a link between this cultural heritage site and my daily life.	CCI1: Chongqing's culinary culture is meaningfully connected to my daily life	Yang et al. (2022)
2. I can reflect on the memories attached to this cultural heritage site.	CCI2: I can recall meaningful memories associated with my culinary experiences in Chongqing.	
3. Thoughts about this cultural heritage site are part of me.	CCI3: Thinking about Chongqing' s culinary feels like a part of who I am.	

Table 3.3 (continued)

Original Items	Revised Items	Source
4. I miss the traditional rituals experienced in this cultural heritage site.	CCI4: I miss the traditional rituals and dining practices embedded in Chongqing's culinary culture.	
5. I am proud of this cultural heritage site.	CCI5: I feel proud of Chongqing's culinary culture and traditions.	
6. I have strong ties to this cultural heritage site.	CCI6: I feel a strong emotional connection to Chongqing's gastronomic culture.	
7. I know these traditional rituals quite well now.	CCI7: I am familiar with the traditional culinary rituals and customs of Chongqing.	
8. I will recommend this cultural heritage site to others.	CCI8: I will recommend Chongqing's culinary culture and food experiences to others.	
9. I tend to visit this cultural heritage site again in the future.	CCI9: I intend to revisit Chongqing to experience its culinary again in the future.	
10. I will say positive things about this cultural heritage site to others.	CCI10: I will share positive comments about Chongqing's culinary culture with others.	

Table 3.3 (continued)

Original Items	Revised Items	Source
Developed based on qualitative findings	CE1: Culinary experiences in Chongqing involve intense and distinctive sensory stimulation	
	CE2: Dining in Chongqing reflects a vivid and lively everyday local atmosphere	
	CE3: Culinary experiences in Chongqing facilitate social interaction and shared participation	
	CE4: Traditional dining practices in Chongqing emphasize ritualized and communal procedures	
	CE5: Chongqing's cuisine conveys historical narratives and collective urban memory	
	CE6: Authentic culinary experiences in Chongqing are perceived as locally endorsed rather than commercialized	

(2) Perceived Destination Image

Perceived destination image refers to the overall cognitive, affective, and conative evaluations that tourists form about a destination, reflecting their perceptions, emotional responses, and behavioral intentions toward it (Kovalenko et al., 2023b). The measurement of perceived destination image revised to align with the context of Chongqing's culinary tourism (Guo & Pesonen, 2022). As presented in Table 3.4, the construct comprises three dimensions: cognitive image, which involves tourists' rational evaluations of attributes such as local hospitality, culinary authenticity, infrastructure, and entertainment; affective image, which captures the emotional responses triggered by Chongqing's culinary environment; and conative image, which represents tourists'

behavioral intentions, such as their willingness to revisit, share positive opinions, and recommend Chongqing as a culinary destination. Each item is measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), providing a comprehensive assessment of how these perceptions influence satisfaction, loyalty, and revisit intention within the context of culinary tourism.

Table 3.4 The Measurement of Perceived Destination Image

Original Items	Revised Items	Source
1. Friendly and receptive residents.	PDI1: Local residents and food vendors in Chongqing are friendly and hospitable.	Guo and Pesonen (2022)
2. Appealing local food.	PDI2: Chongqing offers appealing and distinctive local cuisine with authentic flavors.	
3. Suitable accommodations.	PDI3: Chongqing provides comfortable dining environments and suitable accommodations for tourists.	
4. Quality of infrastructure.	PDI4: Chongqing has convenient infrastructure and transportation that facilitate access to culinary areas.	
5. Good entertainment.	PDI5: Chongqing offers diverse food-related entertainment and cultural experiences.	
6. A willingness to speak positively.	PDI6: I am willing to share positive opinions about Chongqing's cuisine with others.	

(3) Culinary Tourism Attitude

Culinary tourism attitude refers to an individual' s overall evaluative judgment about performing a specific behavior—in this context, the act of revisiting Chongqing for culinary tourism (Sutiadiningsih et al., 2023). Table 3.5 presents the measurement scale of this variable (Siddiqui et al., 2022), emphasizing tourists' affective and cognitive evaluations of revisiting a culinary destination. The scale measures four key dimensions of this attitude, each representing an aspect of the tourists' evaluation of revisiting the destination for gastronomic experiences. These items capture tourists'

evaluative judgments of revisiting Chongqing for culinary tourism in terms of perceived enjoyment, wisdom of choice, cultural benefit, and overall attractiveness. Each item assesses the extent to which tourists positively evaluate the idea of returning to Chongqing for food-related experiences. Responses are recorded on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), ensuring effective measurement of revisit-related attitudes.

Table 3.5 The Measurement of Culinary Tourism Attitude

Original Items	Revised Items	Source
1. Travelling to tourism destinations is good.	CTA1: Travelling to culinary destinations in Chongqing is enjoyable.	Siddiqui et al. (2022)
2. Travelling to tourism destinations is wise.	CTA2: Travelling to culinary destinations in Chongqing is a wise choice.	
3. Travelling to tourism destinations is beneficial.	CTA3: Travelling to culinary destinations in Chongqing enriches my cultural experiences.	
4. Travelling to tourism destinations is attractive.	CTA4: Travelling to culinary destinations in Chongqing is attractive.	

(4) Subjective Norm

Subjective norm refers to tourists' expectations regarding the views and behaviors of significant others when choosing culinary destination (Sutiadiningsih et al., 2023). It reflects how social influence shapes a tourist' s perceived obligation or desire to align with the preferences of family, friends, or peers concerning culinary travel decisions. Table 3.6 presents the measurement scale of this variable (Siddiqui et al., 2022), comprising four items that measure agreement, recommendation, support, and understanding from important others. These items assess how much tourists feel the social influence of their close networks when it comes to making decisions about visiting a culinary destination. The responses to these items are captured on a five-point Likert scale, with scores ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). This allows for a

detailed evaluation of the degree to which social influence and expectations shape tourists' revisit behavior toward Chongqing's culinary tourism.

Table 3.6 The Measurement of Subjective Norm

Original Items	Revised Items	Source
1. Most people who are important to me think I should travel to tourism destinations.	SN1: Most people who are important to me think that I should travel to culinary destinations in Chongqing.	Siddiqui et al. (2022)
2. Most people who are important to me would want me to travel to tourism destinations.	SN2: Most people who are important to me expect me to travel to culinary destinations in Chongqing.	
3. People whose opinions I value would prefer me to travel to tourism destinations.	SN3: My close friends support my decision to travel to culinary destinations in Chongqing.	
4. Most of my friends encourage me to travel to tourism destinations.	SN4: People around me generally approve of travelling to culinary destinations in Chongqing.	

(5) Perceived Behavioral Control

Perceived behavioral control refers to the perceived ease or difficulty that tourists associate with revisiting a culinary destination, reflecting their belief in the availability of resources and opportunities to execute this behavior (Sutiadiningsih et al., 2023). Table 3.7 presents the measurement scale of this variable (Siddiqui et al., 2022), includes three items that capture tourists' self-assessed capability, planning convenience, and access to relevant resources. Self-assessed capability: Tourists evaluate whether they feel revisiting Chongqing for culinary experiences is within their control. Planning convenience: Tourists assess their confidence in planning and executing a trip to Chongqing's culinary destinations. Access to resources: Tourists measure their availability of resources, time, and opportunities to visit Chongqing for culinary tourism. Responses are recorded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), ensuring accurate assessment of perceived behavioral control in the context of culinary tourism.

Table 3.7 The Measurement of Perceived Behavioral Control

Original Items	Revised Items	Source
1. Whether or not, travelling to tourism destinations is completely up to me.	PBC1: Whether or not, travelling to culinary destinations in Chongqing is completely up to me.	Siddiqui et al. (2022)
2. I am confident that if I want, I can travel to tourism destinations.	PBC2: I am confident that if I want to, I can travel to culinary destinations in Chongqing.	
3. I have the resources, time and opportunities to travel to tourism destinations	PBC3: I have the resources, time, and opportunities to travel to culinary destinations in Chongqing.	

(6) Tourist Satisfaction

Tourist satisfaction refers to the extent to which the destination—particularly its culinary elements—meets or exceeds tourists' expectations during their visit (Basendwah et al., 2024). This study adapts the measurement scale (Kovalenko et al., 2023b), focusing specifically on tourists' culinary satisfaction. As shown in Table 3.8, the scale encompasses four dimensions: the influence of culinary on destination choice, the role of food experiences in overall satisfaction, the perceived importance of local cuisine during travel, and the tourists' final evaluation of their culinary experience. Responses are rated using a five-point Likert scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), to capture nuanced perceptions of satisfaction derived from Chongqing' s culinary culture.

Table 3.8 The Measurement of Tourist Satisfaction

Original Items	Revised Items	Source
1. How important is culinary for you as a destination choice when travelling?	TS1: I am satisfied with the culinary experiences I had in Chongqing.	Kovalenko et al. (2023b)
2. How important are culinary experiences for you when you choose a destination for your trip?	TS2: The culinary experiences in Chongqing were enjoyable.	

Table 3.8 (continued)

Original Items	Revised Items	Source
3. How important is culinary for you in relation with the satisfaction of your trip?	TS3: The culinary experiences in Chongqing met my expectations.	
4. My level of satisfaction with the culinary has been significant.	TS4: Overall, I feel satisfied with Chongqing as a culinary tourism experience.	

(7) Revisit Intention

Revisit intention refers to a tourist' s post-consumption behavioral inclination to return to a previously visited destination, particularly motivated by prior positive experiences. As shown in Table 3.9, the measurement scale evaluates three dimensions: emotional willingness, future planning, and word-of-mouth promotion (Zhu et al., 2024). These dimensions capture tourists' desire to revisit Chongqing for its culinary attractions, their intention to do so in the near future, and their likelihood of recommending the destination to others. Each item is assessed on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) to reflect varying degrees of revisit intention.

Table 3.9 The Measurement of Revisit Intention

Original Items	Revised Items	Source
1. I'd love to come to Nanjing again.	RI1: I would love to revisit Chongqing to experience its unique food culture again.	Zhu et al. (2024)
2. I will come back to Nanjing in near future.	RI2: I plan to return to Chongqing in the near future primarily for its culinary offerings.	
3. I will encourage family and friends to visit Nanjing	RI3: I will recommend Chongqing to family and friends as a must-visit destination for food lovers.	

(8) Price Sensitivity

Price sensitivity in this study refers to the extent to which tourists rely on price when making culinary tourism choices and revisit-related decisions. Adapted from Chung (2010), the scale consists of three items. As shown in Table 3.10, the items measure whether tourists are more likely to choose culinary experiences in Chongqing when they are on sale, prefer lower-priced options that meet their needs, and rely heavily on price in their decision-making. Higher scores indicate higher price sensitivity, and no reverse coding is required. Thus, the construct reflects price dependence rather than perceived affordability or price acceptability. This operationalization is consistent with the moderating logic of the study, in which higher price sensitivity is expected to weaken the positive relationship between tourist satisfaction and revisit intention. Responses are measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 for strongly disagree to 5 for strongly agree.

Table 3.10 The Measurement of Price Sensitivity

Original Items	Revised Items	Source
1. I usually buy ( ) when they are on sale.	PS1: I am more likely to choose culinary experiences in Chongqing when they are on sale.	Chung (2010)
2. I buy the lowest priced ( ) that will suit my needs.	PS2: I am likely to choose the lowest priced culinary experiences in Chongqing that will suit my needs.	
3. When it comes to buying ( ) for me, I rely heavily on price.	PS3: When it comes to choosing culinary experiences in Chongqing, I rely heavily on price.	

3.3.2 Data Collection Administration

3.3.2.1 Target Population

The target population of this study includes tourists who visited Chongqing and participated in at least one culinary-related activity. Culinary activities refer to food-related experiences such as tasting local dishes like hotpot or noodles,visiting culinary districts, attending food festivals, joining cooking classes, orexploring local markets.

According to the Chongqing Municipal Culture and Tourism Development Commission (2025), the city received approximately 473 million domestic tourist trips in 2024, and 40% of these tourists participated in culinary-related activities during their stay in Chongqing.

3.3.2.2 Sampling Size

Determining an appropriate sample size is essential to ensure the reliability and validity of the research findings. Although there is no absolute standard, researchers generally follow the empirical rule of " 10-20 samples per free parameter " (McDonald & Ho, 2002). In this study, a total of 37 scale items have been constructed to assess key constructs (the total number of items measured by each variable): culinary culture identity, perceived destination image, attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, tourist satisfaction, revisit intention, revisit behavior and price sensitivity. Following this guideline, 380 valid responses is required to support robust statistical analysis and structural model testing.

The required sample size is calculated as follows:

Sample Size =37 × 15 = 555

Therefore, 555 tourists who have visited Chongqing and participated in various culinary activities will be selected as the sample. This sample size is considered appropriate and sufficient for this study. This sample size ensures adequate statistical power to examine the relationships among key variables. It enables robust analysis and supports the development of valid and generalizable conclusions regarding the psychological and experiential factors that influence tourists' revisit behavior within the context of Chongqing' s culinary tourism.

By adhering to the established guideline, this study aims to comprehensively investigate how culinary culture identity, perceived destination image, attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control affect tourists' satisfaction, revisit intention. The chosen sample size also reflects the need to capture a diverse range of perspectives from tourists visiting different districts of Chongqing, ensuring that the findings are both reliable and representative of the broader population of food tourists in the region. In practice, a total of 557 valid questionnaires were ultimately collected.

3.3.2.3 Sampling Techniques

This study adopts a three-stage non-probability sampling strategy consisting of purposive sampling, quota sampling, and convenience sampling, in order to systematically select survey sites, control sample distribution, and efficiently approach eligible respondents. Culinary activities refer to food-related experiences such as tasting local dishes like hotpot or noodles,visiting culinary districts, attending food festivals, joining cooking classes, orexploring local markets.

Purposive sampling was applied to ensure that the survey is conducted in locations that are both culturally significant and representative of the city's culinary identity (Martin et al., 2021). The purposive sampling criteria included three aspects: (1) the site must be a recognized culinary hotspot featuring authentic Chongqing cuisine (e.g., hotpot, street snacks); (2) it should attract a large number of domestic tourists engaging in food-related activities; and (3) it should represent the city's cultural identity and be easily accessible for on-site survey distribution.

Based on the above criteria, eight offline questionnaire survey locations were selected for this study. The selection of these eight culinary tourism sites is based on their representativeness of Chongqing's spatial, cultural, and experiential diversity. First, they capture the city's spatial hierarchy, covering both urban culinary hubs (Jiefangbei, Hongya Cave, Guanyinqiao) and scenic or peri-urban areas (Nanshan, Tongliang, Wulong). This combination reflects the coexistence of commercial dining clusters and culture-oriented food destinations. Second, the sites illustrate Chongqing's culinary typology, combining traditional heritage (Ciqikou, Tongliang) with modern culinary innovation (Nanbin Road, Jiefangbei). Together, they represent the evolution from authenticity to creativity in local food culture. Third, these destinations are the main nodes of culinary participation. They host the most frequent food-related activities—such as hotpot dining, street-snack tasting, and food festivals—making them ideal for collecting contextually rich and diverse data.

As shown in Table 3.10, the eight major culinary tourism attractions in Chongqing collectively received approximately 165.6 million visitors in 2024. The majority of culinary tourists were concentrated in urban districts such as Jiefangbei, Hongya Cave, and Ciqikou, which together attracted the majority of tourists interested in food, which reflects the strong clustering effect of Chongqing's culinary characteristics within the city. These locations were also selected as the primary sites for on-site survey

distribution in this study, based on purposive sampling criteria. This strategic site selection allows the study to capture a comprehensive range of culinary experiences—spanning from traditional cultural streets and historical food towns to modern commercial districts—thus ensuring both cultural depth and empirical validity in the sampling process.

After selecting the locations, **quota sampling** was applied to determine the number of questionnaires to be distributed at each site. The quotas were set proportionally according to the tourist volume reported in 2024 (as shown in Table 3.11). Sites with higher footfall—such as Jiefangbei, Hongya Cave, and Ciqikou—were assigned larger sample quotas, while smaller quotas were allocated to lower-volume areas such as Tongliang and Wulong.This step ensures that the final sample reflects the actual distribution of culinary tourists across Chongqing's major destinations, thereby improving representativeness within the non-probability sampling framework.

Table 3.11 Key Culinary Tourism Locations in Chongqing, Tourists Percentage, and Allocated Survey Respondents (2024)

Culinary Destination	Key Culinary Features	Tourists (million)	Percentage	Number of respondents
Jiefangbei Commercial District	Concentration of Chongqing hotpot chains, urban snack streets, and modern dining experiences.	36	21.70%	120
Hongya Cave	Iconic riverside dining, night market atmosphere, and integration of hotpot, barbecue, and scenic views.	28.5	17.20%	95
Ciqikou Ancient Town	Traditional snacks (Chen Mahua, glutinous rice cake), local teahouses, and historic food culture.	24	14.50%	80

Table 3.11 (continued)

Culinary Destination	Key Culinary Features	Tourists (million)	Percentage	Number of respondents
Nanbin Road Food Street	Open-air barbecue, river-view dining, and seafood specialties.	18.5	11.20%	62
Guanyinqiao Pedestrian Street	Urban fusion of traditional and modern cuisine, with strong nightlife and street-food presence.	17	10.30%	57
Nanshan Hotpot Street	Concentration of authentic spicy hotpot restaurants in scenic hillside area.	15.5	9.40%	52
Tongliang Dragon Hotpot Cultural Park	Theme-based culinary tourism combining local folklore, hotpot heritage, and interactive dining.	13	7.90%	44
Wulong Fairy Mountain Scenic Area	Integration of local farm cuisine and eco-culinary with rural tourism.	13.1	7.80%	43
Total	-	165.6	100.00%	555

Within these purposively selected sites, convenience sampling was used to recruit participants based on accessibility and willingness to participate. This approach is particularly suitable for transient populations like tourists, as it allows researchers to efficiently approach respondents in high-footfall areas and obtain large numbers of valid responses within a limited time frame (Stewart et al., 2020). By adopting a three-stage non-probability sampling strategy consisting of purposive sampling, quota sampling, and convenience sampling, the study ensures that the collected data are both contextually

relevant to Chongqing's culinary tourism and practically feasible in terms of implementation.

3.3.2.4 Data Collection Technique

The data for this study will be collected through on-site surveys conducted at popular culinary venues in Chongqing (as shown in Table 3.10).

The steps involved in the on-site data collection include:

1) Designing the structured questionnaire based on the finalized measurement scales, with clear instructions and a standardized format to facilitate efficient administration.

2) Conducting the on-site survey at the predetermined culinary venues identified in Section 3.3.2.3, which represent the major culinary tourism clusters in Chongqing, to ensure contextual diversity and cultural representativeness.

3) By actively engaging with tourists, researchers will directly recruit participants. They will explain the purpose of the study to the tourists, ensuring that they fully understand and agree to participate. If further explanations are needed, the researchers will also provide assistance to the respondents.

4) Applying eligibility criteria, requiring participants to have visited Chongqing in 2024, and to have participated in culinary activities, such as tasting local dishes like hotpot or noodles,visiting culinary districts, attending food festivals, joining cooking classes, or exploring local markets.

5) Recording responses in real time through paper-based questionnaires or mobile devices, while monitoring demographic balance to ensure coverage across gender, age, and education levels.

6) Consolidating and verifying all completed questionnaires at the end of each field session, ensuring accuracy and completeness before digitally recording and storing the data in Questionnaire Star, a professional online survey and data management platform widely used in China, for subsequent statistical analysis.

This on-site, experience-proximal approach allows the study to capture tourists' perceptions and cultural impressions while they are immersed in Chongqing's culinary settings. Compared to online surveys, it strengthens the contextual validity of the responses and reduces recall bias, thereby providing more accurate and culturally grounded insights into tourists' culinary experiences.

3.3.2.5 Pilot Study

We will conduct a pilot test, using 10% of the total sample size (37 participants) (Bujang et al., 2024). The objectives of the pilot study are threefold: first, to evaluate the clarity and reliability of the questionnaire items; second, to identify any technical issues associated with the online survey platform; and third, to collect preliminary feedback on the survey' s content and structure. The pilot study will also include Cronbach's alpha reliability test to assess the internal consistency of the scale items. Participants will be invited to provide feedback on any difficulties they experienced in understanding or responding to the questions.

To assess item-level performance, an item analysis was conducted, and the results are presented in Table 3.12. Mean scores, standard deviations, corrected item-total correlations (CITC), and Cronbach's alpha values if items were deleted were examined for all constructs. Most items demonstrated satisfactory psychometric properties, with CITC values exceeding the commonly accepted threshold of 0.40. However, two items, CCI5 and PDI3, exhibited noticeably low CITC values (0.23 and 0.26 respectively) and substantially increased the corresponding Cronbach's alpha when removed. These indicators suggest that the two items did not contribute meaningfully to internal consistency and were therefore marked for potential deletion or revision before proceeding to the final survey stage.

Table 3.12 Item Analysis for Pilot Test

Construct	Item	Mean	SD	CITC	Cronbach's α if item deleted	Decision
Culinary culture identity	CCI1	4.18	0.71	0.62	0.934	Retain
	CCI2	4.11	0.76	0.65	0.933	Retain
	CCI3	4.05	0.79	0.67	0.932	Retain
	CCI4	3.98	0.82	0.59	0.935	Retain
	CCI5	4.36	0.65	0.23	0.943	Consider deletion
	CCI6	4.09	0.78	0.66	0.932	Retain
	CCI7	3.87	0.86	0.57	0.936	Retain
	CCI8	4.02	0.81	0.61	0.934	Retain
	CCI9	3.95	0.83	0.58	0.936	Retain
	CCI10	4.07	0.79	0.63	0.933	Retain

Table 3.12 (continued)

Construct	Item	Mean	SD	CITC	Cronbach's α if item deleted	Decision
Culinary	CE1	4.15	0.74	0.64	0.921	Retain
experience	CE2	4.08	0.77	0.62	0.922	Retain
climate	CE3	4.01	0.8	0.6	0.923	Retain
	CE4	3.92	0.84	0.57	0.925	Retain
	CE5	3.97	0.82	0.59	0.924	Retain
	CE6	3.89	0.86	0.55	0.926	Retain
Perceived	PDI1	4.03	0.79	0.63	0.902	Retain
destination image	PDI2	4.17	0.73	0.66	0.9	Retain
	PDI3	3.56	0.94	0.26	0.914	Consider deletion
	PDI4	3.98	0.81	0.58	0.905	Retain
	PDI5	3.91	0.84	0.55	0.907	Retain
	PDI6	4.1	0.77	0.61	0.903	Retain
Culinary tourism	CTA1	4.22	0.7	0.71	0.903	Retain
attitude	CTA2	4.09	0.76	0.68	0.906	Retain
	CTA3	4.15	0.73	0.7	0.904	Retain
	CTA4	4.18	0.72	0.69	0.905	Retain
Subjective norm	SN1	3.97	0.82	0.63	0.898	Retain
	SN2	3.92	0.84	0.61	0.9	Retain
	SN3	3.99	0.81	0.65	0.897	Retain
	SN4	3.88	0.86	0.59	0.901	Retain
Perceived	PBC1	3.86	0.87	0.62	0.884	Retain
behavioral	PBC2	3.93	0.84	0.66	0.878	Retain
control	PBC3	3.79	0.89	0.59	0.888	Retain
Tourist	TS1	4.05	0.79	0.67	0.911	Retain
satisfaction	TS2	4.12	0.76	0.7	0.909	Retain
	TS3	4.09	0.77	0.69	0.91	Retain
	TS4	4.03	0.8	0.66	0.912	Retain

Table 3.12 (continued)

Construct	Item	Mean	SD	CITC	Cronbach's α if item deleted	Decision
Revisit intention	RI1	4.18	0.73	0.73	0.903	Retain
	RI2	4.06	0.78	0.69	0.91	Retain
	RI3	4.11	0.75	0.71	0.907	Retain
Price sensitivity	PS1	3.72	0.88	0.63	0.885	Retain
	PS2	3.68	0.9	0.61	0.887	Retain
	PS3	3.74	0.87	0.64	0.883	Retain

Following item analysis, construct-level reliability was further examined using Cronbach's alpha coefficients, as reported in Table 3.13. All nine constructs demonstrated strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.873 to 0.937, exceeding the recommended reliability threshold of 0.70. These results confirm that the retained items reliably measure their intended underlying constructs and provide a sound basis for subsequent confirmatory statistical procedures.

Table 3.13 Pretest Reliability Statistics

Study variables	Number of questions	Cronbach's
Culinary culture identity	10	0.937
Culinary experience climate	6	0.921
Perceived destination image	6	0.904
Culinary tourism attitude	4	0.905
Subjective norm	4	0.892
Perceived behavioral control	3	0.884
Tourist satisfaction	4	0.918
Revisit intention	3	0.911
Price sensitivity	3	0.873

To evaluate sampling adequacy and the suitability of the data for factor analysis, the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were performed (Table 3.14). The overall KMO value of 0.893 indicates a high degree of shared

variance among the items, demonstrating excellent sampling adequacy for factor extraction. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was highly significant ($\chi^2 = 5210.437$, df = 741, $p < 0.001$), confirming that the correlation matrix was not an identity matrix and that factor analysis was appropriate for the dataset.

Table 3.14 Pre-investigation KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	0.893	
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	5210.437
	df	741
	Sig.	0

3.3.3 Data Analysis

3.3.3.1 Descriptive Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistical analysis involves summarizing and organizing data to provide a clear understanding of its basic features, focusing on measures of central tendency (mean, median, and mode) and measures of variability (standard deviation, variance, and range). This type of analysis is crucial for presenting quantitative data in a comprehensible form, enabling the identification of patterns, trends, and anomalies within the dataset (Stewart et al., 2020). Descriptive statistics help simplify large amounts of data, making it easier to interpret and draw preliminary insights into the research variables.

In this study, descriptive statistical analysis will be employed to summarize data collected from the questionnaire administered to tourists who have visited Chongqing and experienced its local cuisine. The analysis will focus on key variables such as culinary culture identity, perceived destination image, attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control and so on. For each variable, measures including mean, median, mode, and standard deviation will be calculated to provide a clear overview of tourists' perceptions, psychological orientations, and behavioral responses. This method will aid in identifying prevalent trends in how tourists evaluate Chongqing' s cuisine appeal and their likelihood of revisiting.

Additionally, frequency distributions and percentage analyses will be used to describe the demographic characteristics of the respondents, such as age, gender, and

region of origin, which are essential for understanding the diversity of the sample. By presenting these descriptive statistics, the study will offer a clear picture of the general attitudes and behaviors of the target population toward culinary tourism in Chongqing. This analysis will also serve as a basis for further inferential statistical analysis, enabling the identification of significant relationships between variables and facilitating a deeper exploration of the factors influencing tourists're visit behavior toward culinary destinations.

3.3.3.2 Reliability Analysis

Reliability analysis is a fundamental procedure to assess the consistency and stability of a measurement instrument, ensuring that it produces consistent results when applied repeatedly under similar conditions (Moustapha et al., 2022). This process evaluates the extent to which the questionnaire items consistently measure the intended constructs, thereby enhancing the credibility and dependability of the research findings. Common methods for assessing reliability include Cronbach' s alpha, test-retest reliability, and split-half reliability. Among these, Cronbach' s alpha is widely used to determine the internal consistency of scale items. A high reliability score indicates that the instrument effectively measures the constructs, thereby supporting the validity of the conclusions drawn.

In this study, reliability analysis will be conducted on the 38 scale items developed to measure variables. Cronbach's alpha will be used to evaluate the internal consistency of these items, with a threshold of 0.70 or above considered acceptable and indicative of good reliability, in accordance with widely accepted standards in social science research. This analysis will help detect any inconsistencies within the items and guide necessary revisions to improve the precision and validity of the measurement instruments. The results of the reliability analysis will provide crucial insights into the robustness of the measurement instrument, ensuring that the collected data is both reliable and valid for subsequent inferential statistical analysis.

3.3.3.3 Validity Analysis

Validity analysis is a crucial step in ensuring that the measurement instruments accurately capture the constructs under examination (Lim, 2024). The validity of the questionnaire guarantees that the collected data genuinely reflect the theoretical concepts and relationships proposed in the study, thereby reinforcing the accuracy,

credibility, and practical relevance of the findings. This study evaluates three types of validity—content validity, construct validity, and criterion-related validity—to comprehensively assess the appropriateness and robustness of the scale items.

(1) Content Validity. Content validity ensures that the measurement items comprehensively represent the domain of each construct (Lim, 2024). To establish content validity, experts in tourism management and marketing were invited to review the clarity, coverage, and relevance of the questionnaire items. In addition, the items were compared with established theoretical frameworks in culinary tourism to ensure alignment. Feedback from experts was used to refine and improve the instrument, guaranteeing that the scale adequately captures the multidimensional aspects of culinary experiences and revisit intention in Chongqing.

(2) Construct Validity. Construct validity examines whether the observed items accurately represent the underlying latent constructs. This study follows a two-stage approach:

Pilot Study (Exploratory Factor Analysis, EFA): In the pilot phase, EFA was conducted to preliminarily test the factor structure of the questionnaire (Husain & Aziz, 2022). Using Principal Axis Factoring with Varimax rotation, EFA identified the underlying dimensions of constructs such as satisfaction and price sensitivity, and ensured that items with low or cross-loadings were removed or revised. Data adequacy was checked using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure (≥ 0.60) and Bartlett's test of sphericity ($p < 0.05$) (Howard & Henderson, 2023), confirming suitability for factor extraction. All analyses were conducted using the SPSS software.

Main Study (Confirmatory Factor Analysis, CFA): In the main data collection stage, CFA will be applied using AMOS or SmartPLS to test the hypothesized factor structure. Model adequacy will be evaluated through factor loadings (>0.50), Average Variance Extracted ($AVE \geq 0.50$), and Composite Reliability ($CR \geq 0.70$) (Zhai & Aryadoust, 2024). Discriminant validity will be assessed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion and HTMT ratio (<0.85) (Rokonuzzaman et al., 2022). Together, these steps ensure both convergent and discriminant validity, confirming that the scale reliably represents the proposed theoretical framework.

(3) Criterion-Related Validity. Criterion-related validity assesses whether the measured constructs can predict theoretically relevant outcomes (Rosenbaum, 1989). In

this study, the predictive utility of constructs such as satisfaction, destination image, and price sensitivity will be examined in relation to revisit intention and behavior. Comparisons with benchmarks from prior culinary tourism research provide further evidence of external validity and situate the findings within the broader literature.

By integrating expert review (content validity), EFA in the pilot study (exploratory construct validation), CFA in the main study (confirmatory construct validation), and criterion-related validity testing, this study establishes a rigorous and comprehensive validation framework. This multi-stage approach strengthens the robustness of the measurement model and enhances the generalizability of findings for understanding revisit behavior in culinary tourism.

3.3.3.4 Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

Structural equation modeling (SEM) is an advanced statistical technique that allows for the examination of complex relationships between observed and latent variables (Putra, 2022). SEM integrates factor analysis and multiple regression to test theoretical models that include both multiple dependent and independent variables. This approach is particularly valuable for investigating direct and indirect effects, mediation, and moderation among variables, providing comprehensive insights into the structural relationships within the data. By simultaneously assessing measurement models (using confirmatory factor analysis, CFA) and structural models, SEM ensures that the observed data adequately represent the underlying theoretical constructs, thereby enhancing the reliability and validity of the findings (Sureshchandar, 2023).

Following the validation of the measurement model, the structural model was assessed to test the hypothesized relationships among constructs. The model was estimated using a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 subsamples to obtain robust path coefficients (β), t-values, and p-values, thereby determining the significance of direct and indirect effects. The overall model fit was evaluated using the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), with a value less than 0.08 indicating a good fit between the proposed model and the empirical data (Coşkun et al., 2023). The explanatory power of the model was evaluated using the coefficient of determination (R^2), with thresholds of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 indicating substantial, moderate, and weak explanatory capacity, respectively (Cohen, 1988). Effect sizes (f^2) were calculated to assess the relative contribution of each exogenous construct to the endogenous variables, while predictive relevance (Q^2) was

examined through blindfolding procedures, with Q^2 values greater than zero confirming predictive capability (Hair et al., 2021).

Where applicable, indirect effects were tested for mediation terms were used to test. Significance was determined through bootstrapped confidence intervals (Tibbe & Montoya, 2022). This structured analysis approach ensures both the validity of measurement instruments and the robustness of hypothesized relationships, aligning with best performance in PLS-SEM research.

3.4 Ethical Consideration

Ethical considerations are an essential aspect of this research, particularly as it involves human participants—tourists who have visited Chongqing. Ensuring informed consent is the first priority of this study. All participants will be provided with clear and detailed information about the purpose of the research, data collection methods, potential benefits, and any associated risks. Participants will be explicitly informed that their participation is voluntary and that they have the right to withdraw at any time without facing any adverse consequences. This approach ensures that participation is based on a comprehensive understanding of the study' s nature and is conducted with transparency and respect for the participants' autonomy.

Confidentiality and anonymity will be rigorously maintained throughout the research process. Personal identifiers such as names, contact information, or any data that could lead to the identification of individual participants will not be collected. All data gathered will be handled with strict confidentiality and securely stored, accessible only to the research team. The results will be reported in an aggregated form, ensuring that no individual can be identified from the findings. This approach not only safeguards the privacy of participants but also enhances their willingness to provide honest and accurate responses.

Furthermore, the study will adhere to the ethical guidelines established by institutional review boards and ethical committees to ensure that the research is conducted with integrity and professionalism. This includes obtaining ethical clearance before data collection begins. The research will take all necessary measures to minimize potential discomfort or stress for participants, such as ensuring that the questionnaire is user-friendly

and non-intrusive. Participants will also be provided with a contact point for any inquiries or concerns they might have about the study.

The study' s commitment to ethical standards extends to ensuring that the findings contribute positively to the field of culinary tourism by offering insights that can inform policy and strategy for enhancing tourist experiences in Chongqing. By maintaining high ethical standards, the research not only ensures the rights and welfare of participants but also strengthens the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. This ethical approach will help build a robust foundation for the study's conclusions, ensuring that they are both reliable and ethically sound.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the methodological framework employed to investigate the factors influencing tourists' revisit behavior in the context of Chongqing' s culinary tourism. By integrating qualitative and quantitative methods, the study comprehensively explores core constructs such as culinary culture identity, perceived destination image, attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, tourist satisfaction, revisit intention and price sensitivity. The use of structural equation modeling (SEM) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) allows for a rigorous analysis of the interrelationships among these variables, supporting the theoretical model. Ethical standards and the development of valid and reliable measurement instruments further ensure the credibility and robustness of the research. Through descriptive, reliability, and validity analyses, the methodology establishes a solid foundation for empirical inquiry, ultimately contributing to a deeper understanding of the psychological and experiential factors shaping repeat culinary tourism in Chongqing.

CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

This chapter presents the empirical foundation of this study by integrating qualitative and quantitative analyses to uncover how tourists experience, evaluate and respond to the culinary culture of Chongqing. The chapter begins by establishing an interpretive framework derived from semi-structured interviews, moving from the presentation of participant characteristics to a grounded analytic progression that includes open coding, axial coding, conceptual synthesis and selective coding. This qualitative sequence generates the experiential constructs—such as sensory immersion, atmospheric energy, communal dining, procedural knowledge, historical symbolism and authenticity seeking—that later inform the development of the quantitative model. Building on these inductive insights, the chapter then transitions to the quantitative analysis, beginning with assessments of data reliability, validity and descriptive characteristics to ensure the robustness of the measurement structure. Confirmatory factor analysis is used to evaluate convergent and discriminant validity, after which structural equation modeling examines the hypothesized relationships among cultural identity, attitudinal and normative influences, perceived behavioral control, destination image, satisfaction, price sensitivity and revisit intention. Through this integrated design, the chapter systematically connects experiential meaning-making with statistical model testing, providing a cohesive empirical basis for understanding how culinary cultural experiences shape tourists' cognitive evaluations, emotional responses and behavioral intentions.

4.1 The Findings of the Qualitative Research

The qualitative findings provide a comprehensive account of how tourists experience, interpret and assign meaning to Chongqing's culinary culture. The analysis follows a grounded and systematic progression, moving from the micro-level articulation of participants' lived experiences to the identification of higher-order conceptual patterns. This chapter presents the full analytical sequence employed in the qualitative phase. It

begins with an overview of the participant characteristics to contextualize the dataset. It then proceeds through four interconnected analytical stages: open coding, where the raw data were fractured to generate initial concepts; axial coding, where these concepts were reorganized to reveal relationships among categories; conceptual understanding, where the findings were interpreted through thematic and theoretical lenses; and selective coding, where the core category was crystallized to integrate the overall meaning structure of tourists' culinary experiences in Chongqing. This multi-stage process enables the emergence of a coherent theoretical explanation grounded in empirical narratives and patterned meaning-making processes.

4.1.1 Data Presentation

The qualitative dataset consists of fifty participants whose demographic characteristics are summarized in Table 4.1. The distribution of participants reflects a diverse and information-rich sample that supports theoretical saturation and enhances the interpretive robustness of the analysis. Gender was relatively balanced, with twenty-six male and twenty-four female participants, ensuring that perspectives across genders were adequately represented in the experiential narratives. Age distribution demonstrates a strong presence of young and middle-aged adults, with the largest group concentrated in the 26–35 age range, followed by participants aged 36–45. These groups correspond to the demographic clusters most active in contemporary urban tourism and culinary exploration, allowing the data to capture experience patterns typical of key consumer segments in food tourism.

Educational background also displays meaningful variation: nine participants completed high school education, twenty-eight held bachelor's degrees and thirteen possessed postgraduate qualifications. This range provides insight into how tourists with differing cultural capital and interpretive resources perceive and evaluate Chongqing's culinary environment. Variations in educational attainment are particularly relevant given the interpretive depth required to comprehend symbolic, historical and cultural dimensions embedded in culinary experiences.

Visit frequency further strengthens the analytical potential of the dataset. Fifteen participants were first-time visitors, bringing perspectives grounded in novelty, discovery and initial impressions. In contrast, thirty-five were repeat visitors, enabling the analysis to incorporate longitudinal familiarity, accumulated culinary knowledge and sustained

emotional attachment. Among repeat visitors, the majority reported visiting Chongqing two to three times, while others noted four to five visits or more, indicating long-term engagement with the city's culinary culture.

Across all participants, tasting local food was reported as the primary activity, demonstrating the centrality of cuisine to their travel purpose. High involvement in visiting night markets and exploring historic streets also highlights the embeddedness of culinary experiences within broader spatial and cultural environments. The prominence of hotpot, xiao mian and chuan chuan as memorable foods reflects their symbolic role in representing Chongqing's culinary identity, reinforcing the context for subsequent thematic interpretations.

Table 4.1 Participant Overview

ID	Gender	Age Group	Education	Visit Frequency
P1	Male	26–35	Bachelor	Repeat
P2	Female	36–45	Bachelor	Repeat
P3	Male	18–25	Bachelor	First Time
P4	Male	26–35	Master/PhD	Repeat
P5	Female	46–55	High School	Repeat
P6	Male	36–45	Bachelor	Repeat
P7	Female	26–35	Bachelor	First Time
P8	Male	26–35	Master/PhD	Repeat
P9	Male	36–45	High School	Repeat
P10	Female	18–25	Bachelor	First Time
P11	Male	26–35	Bachelor	Repeat
P12	Female	26–35	Bachelor	Repeat
P13	Male	36–45	Bachelor	Repeat
P14	Male	46–55	Master/PhD	First Time
P15	Female	26–35	Bachelor	Repeat
P16	Male	26–35	High School	First Time
P17	Female	36–45	Master/PhD	Repeat
P18	Male	18–25	High School	Repeat
P19	Female	26–35	Bachelor	Repeat

Table 4.1 (continued)

ID	Gender	Age Group	Education	Visit Frequency
P20	Male	46–55	Bachelor	First Time
P21	Female	26–35	High School	Repeat
P22	Male	36–45	Bachelor	Repeat
P23	Female	26–35	Master/PhD	Repeat
P24	Male	26–35	Bachelor	Repeat
P25	Male	36–45	High School	Repeat
P26	Female	18–25	Bachelor	First Time
P27	Male	26–35	Bachelor	Repeat
P28	Female	36–45	Master/PhD	Repeat
P29	Male	46–55	Bachelor	Repeat
P30	Female	26–35	Bachelor	First Time
P31	Male	18–25	High School	First Time
P32	Female	26–35	Bachelor	Repeat
P33	Male	36–45	Master/PhD	Repeat
P34	Male	26–35	Bachelor	Repeat
P35	Female	46–55	Bachelor	Repeat
P36	Male	26–35	Bachelor	First Time
P37	Female	36–45	High School	Repeat
P38	Male	26–35	Master/PhD	Repeat
P39	Female	18–25	Bachelor	First Time
P40	Male	26–35	Bachelor	Repeat
P41	Female	36–45	Master/PhD	Repeat
P42	Male	46–55	Bachelor	Repeat
P43	Female	26–35	Bachelor	Repeat
P44	Male	36–45	Bachelor	Repeat
P45	Female	26–35	High School	First Time
P46	Male	18–25	Bachelor	Repeat
P47	Female	36–45	Bachelor	Repeat
P48	Male	26–35	High School	Repeat
P49	Female	46–55	Master/PhD	Repeat
P50	Male	26–35	Bachelor	Repeat

4.1.2 Open Coding

The open coding stage focused on fracturing the raw interview data to identify the full range of meanings embedded in participants' descriptions of their culinary experiences in Chongqing (Glaser, 2016). Each transcript was examined line by line to extract discrete conceptual indicators that captured sensory perceptions, emotional responses, behavioral practices and interpretive reflections articulated by participants. This procedure generated a large number of initial concepts that were subsequently grouped through constant comparison to reveal recurring experiential patterns.

Table 4.2 illustrates representative examples of this analytical process. Statements such as “the smell hits you, the noise hits you, the sight of all that red chili hits you” (P18) were coded as multi-sensory attack, reflecting the intensity and simultaneity of sensory stimuli in local dining environments. This initial concept was then clustered under the broader category of intense sensory environment. Similarly, descriptions emphasizing social vibrancy, including references to “a place that's buzzing with life” (P25), were conceptualized as seeking lively atmosphere and later categorized as vibrant social atmosphere. This interpretation was further supported by participants who emphasized the importance of local social presence rather than merely visual attractiveness. As one participant explained, “The place was packed with locals, not tourists. You could see families, couples, groups of friends all enjoying themselves. That's what made it feel real” (P38). This narrative indicates that tourists perceived social interaction and local participation as essential components of an authentic culinary atmosphere. Narratives concerning shared practices around hotpot, such as helping others cook ingredients or focusing collectively on the pot (P33), were coded as communal dining focus and organized into the shared food experience category.

Table 4.2 Examples of Open Coding Process

Participant Quote (Raw Data)	Initial Concept (Code)	Conceptual Category
"It's not just eating. The moment you walk in, the smell hits you, the noise hits you, the sight of all that red chili hits you." (P18)	Multi-sensory attack	Intense Sensory Environment

Table 4.2 (continued)

Participant Quote (Raw Data)	Initial Concept (Code)	Conceptual Category
"I want to be in a place that's buzzing with life, where you can see the steam from the kitchen and hear the locals laughing." (P25)	Seeking lively atmosphere	Vibrant Social Atmosphere
"With hotpot, you are all focused on this one central thing. You share, you talk, you help each other cook things." (P33)	Communal dining focus	Shared Food Experience
"My Chongqing friend taught me how to mix the perfect dipping sauce... It felt like I was being let in on a secret." (P7)	Learning local customs	Procedural Dining Knowledge
"When you learn that hotpot was invented by laborers... you're tasting the history of the city, its struggle and its spirit." (P41)	Food as historical link	Story-Laden Cuisine
"The first rule is to avoid the shiny, new-looking places... The real gems are hidden in the side alleys." (P12)	Avoiding tourist traps	Seeking Non-Commercialism

The open coding process also captured practices that reflect cultural learning. Accounts of being taught how to mix dipping sauces or follow local etiquette (P7) were coded as learning local customs and assigned to the procedural dining knowledge category. Participants further highlighted that culinary participation involved not only tasting food but also acquiring culturally embedded knowledge through interaction with local people. For example, one participant stated, “My Chongqing friend taught me how to mix the perfect dipping sauce... It felt like I was being let in on a secret” (P7), suggesting that learning culinary practices enhanced tourists’ perception of cultural inclusion and experiential intimacy. When participants linked food to historical memory, as in the description of “tasting the history of the city” (P41), the initial concept food as historical link emerged and was categorized within story-laden cuisine. The narratives indicated that historical knowledge transformed ordinary food consumption into a meaningful cultural

encounter. One participant reflected that “When you learn that hotpot was invented by laborers... you're tasting the history of the city, its struggle and its spirit” (P41), demonstrating that culinary experiences were interpreted through broader social memories and historical narratives. Likewise, evaluations of authenticity, such as avoiding modern-looking restaurants in favor of hidden alleyway eateries (P12), were coded as avoiding tourist traps and organized under seeking non-commercialism. This preference was also reflected in participants’ emphasis on discovering locally endorsed culinary spaces rather than commercially designed tourist locations. One participant noted, “The first rule is to avoid the shiny, new-looking places... The real gems are hidden in the side alleys” (P12), indicating that perceived authenticity was closely associated with local embeddedness, informal environments, and distance from excessive commercialization.

Across all interviews, this systematic segmentation yielded a comprehensive set of conceptual categories that reflected the recurring experiential dimensions associated with culinary tourism in Chongqing. These categories were subsequently mapped onto higher-order main categories, as shown in Table 4.3. For example, visual intensity, auditory overload and aromatic potency were consolidated into the main category of sensory immersion, while bustling vibrancy and authentic liveliness formed the basis of the atmospheric energy category. Other clusters included communal dining, procedural knowledge, historical symbolism and authenticity seeking, each supported by multiple conceptual indicators and associated properties.

Table 4.3 Mapping Conceptual Categories to Main Categories

Conceptual Categories	Main Category	Frequency	Properties	Dimensions
Visual Intensity, Auditory Overload, Aromatic Potency	Sensory Immersion	87	Multi-sensory input, Intensity level, Novelty	High/Medium/Low intensity; Familiar/Novel
Bustling Vibrancy, Social Buzz, Authentic Liveliness	Atmospheric Energy	94	Vibrancy level, Authenticity perception, Social density	High/Low vibrancy; Authentic/Staged; Dense/Sparse

Table 4.3 (continued)

Conceptual Categories	Main Category	Frequency	Properties	Dimensions
Shared Pot Experience, Collective Focus, Mutual Participation	Communal Dining	76	Participation level, Relationship type, Duration	Active/Passive; Close/Distant relationships; Extended/Brief
Dipping Sauce Preparation, Ingredient Sequencing, Etiquette Rules	Procedural Knowledge	68	Complexity level, Learning mode, Cultural significance	Complex/Simple; Observation/Instruction; High/Low significance
Food Origin Stories, Occupational Heritage, Urban Memory	Historical Symbolism	81	Narrative depth, Historical period, Emotional resonance	Deep/Shallow; Ancient/Recent; High/Low resonance
Avoiding Tourist Traps, Prioritizing Local Endorsement, Non-Commercialization	Authenticity Seeking	79	Commercialization level, Information source, Risk tolerance	High/Low commercial; Local/Online sources; High/Low risk
Multi-sensory Atmosphere Perception, Environmental Holism	Sensory-Atmospheric Integration	63	Integration level, Perceptual unity, Environmental coherence	Integrated/Fragmented; Unified/Disparate
Ritual-Enhanced Bonding, Procedural Socialization	Social-Ritualistic Integration	71	Ritual formality, Social enhancement, Performance quality	Formal/Informal; Strong/Weak enhancement; Professional/Casual
Story-Enhanced Sensory Appreciation, Historical Context Enrichment	Narrative-Sensory Fusion	58	Narrative depth, Sensory enhancement, Meaning density	Deep/Shallow narrative; Enhanced/Unenhanced senses
Story-Validated Authenticity, Historical Authenticity Markers	Authenticity-Narrative Alignment	64	Narrative credibility, Historical verification, Authenticity confidence	High/Low credibility; Verified/Unverified; Confident/Doubtful

Table 4.3 (continued)

Conceptual Categories	Main Category	Frequency	Properties	Dimensions
Multi-Dimensional Engagement, Holistic Involvement, Flow State	Experiential Immersion	72	Engagement depth, Flow achievement, Holistic quality	Deep/Shallow; Flow/Non-flow; Holistic/Fragmented
Collective Meaning Construction, Place Identity Formation	Cultural Place-Making	85	Meaning co-creation, Identity strength, Cultural connection	Strong/Weak co-creation; Strong/Weak identity; High/Low connection

Beyond individual sensory or behavioral descriptions, several participants further revealed that culinary experiences were formed through the interaction between physical environments, social relationships, and cultural meanings. For instance, one participant described observing local interactions and engaging with vendors, stating, “I just sat there and watched everything—the way people interacted, the energy, the noise. I even started chatting with the vendor about how long he'd been running the place” (P19). Such narratives demonstrate that culinary tourism experiences were not solely derived from food attributes but were co-created through environmental immersion and social engagement.

The open coding phase therefore established the foundational analytical structure for the qualitative findings by generating a detailed inventory of concepts that capture the multi-dimensional nature of tourists' culinary experiences. These conceptual outputs formed the basis for the axial coding stage, where relationships among categories were systematically examined to identify structural patterns within the data.

4.1.3 Axial Coding

The axial coding stage reorganized the initial open coding results into a set of interconnected analytical structures that clarify how tourists' culinary experiences in Chongqing are shaped through the interaction of sensory, social, procedural, historical and evaluative processes. Following the Straussian coding paradigm, each category was examined through its causal conditions, contextual settings, intervening conditions,

action–interaction strategies and resulting consequences. This analytical step moved the qualitative interpretation beyond descriptive categorization toward an integrated explanatory model that accounts for how culinary meanings are produced, negotiated and reinforced during the visitor experience.

Table 4.4 demonstrates this paradigm through the category “Experiencing the Atmospheric Energy,” which encapsulates tourists' engagement with the characteristic vibrancy of Chongqing's culinary spaces. Causal conditions such as high customer density, visible cooking activity and auditory overload create the environmental stimuli that activate the perception of lively everyday life. These stimuli emerge within particular contexts including night markets, old street eateries and neighborhood-based dining areas. Intervening conditions—such as tourists' pre-existing expectations, the presence of local patrons and the time of visit—shape how these environmental cues are interpreted and influence the degree to which the atmosphere is perceived as authentic or staged. Tourists respond through immersive observation, photographic documentation and conversational engagement with vendors or fellow diners. The consequences of these actions include heightened excitement, a sense of belonging and validation of the dining episode as part of Chongqing's cultural lifeworld.

Table 4.4 Axial Coding Paradigm for “Experiencing the Atmospheric Energy”

Coding element	Key conceptual categories (examples)
Causal conditions	High Density of People; Visible Cooking Processes; Auditory Overload
Context	Night Markets; Old Street Eateries; Local Neighborhoods
Intervening conditions	Tourists' Pre-existing Expectations; Presence of Locals
Action/interaction strategies	Immersive Observation; Photographic Documentation; Initiating Conversations with Vendors
Consequences	Feelings of Excitement; A Sense of Belonging; Validation of an Authentic Experience

This relational logic extends across the broader set of categories presented in Table 4.5. Sensory immersion arises from visual intensity, auditory overload and aromatic potency, most often triggered in crowded spaces with open-kitchen designs. The intensity of sensory exposure interacts with tourists' sensory sensitivity and prior food experiences, producing memorable impressions and an amplified awareness of the culinary environment. Atmospheric energy reflects the social dimension of food spaces, where bustling vibrancy, authentic liveliness and human warmth shape tourists' emotional responses. The perception of this atmosphere is mediated by the presence of local diners and the timing of the visit, influencing authenticity judgments and strengthening emotional connection.

Communal dining emerges through shared-pot formats, extended meal duration and mutual participation. The dynamics of ingredient sharing, collaborative cooking and table interaction vary depending on group composition and relational closeness, leading to strengthened interpersonal bonds and shared memory construction. Procedural knowledge is shaped by traditional dining practices, unwritten rules and intergenerational customs encountered within local communities. Tourists' cultural background, willingness to learn and social confidence influence the process through which they acquire these procedural competencies.

Historical symbolism becomes salient when narratives highlight occupational heritage, urban memory or cultural resilience. The depth of engagement with these narratives is conditioned by tourists' historical interest and narrative receptivity, resulting in emotional resonance and deeper cultural appreciation. Authenticity seeking is shaped by perceptions of commercialization and preferences for local endorsement. Visitors intentionally bypass tourist-oriented venues in favor of side alleys, unmarked eateries or neighborhood establishments. Their strategies of information gathering and risk tolerance generate confidence in the authenticity of the experience and reduce post-consumption regret.

Beyond these core categories, higher-order integrative categories demonstrate how sensory, social, narrative and authenticity dimensions fuse to create holistic experiences. Sensory–atmospheric integration reflects the alignment of sensory inputs and environmental coherence; social–ritualistic integration demonstrates how ritualized dining enhances social bonding; narrative–sensory fusion shows how historical storytelling

enriches sensory perception; and authenticity–narrative alignment reveals how credible narratives reinforce authenticity judgments. These integrative mechanisms contribute to experiential immersion, as tourists engage multi-dimensionally with the culinary environment, and ultimately facilitate cultural place-making, where visitors co-construct meaning and form identity connections with Chongqing.

Table 4.5 Axial Coding Process - Development of Main Categories

Main Category	Conceptual Categories (Grouped)	Causal Conditions	Context	Intervening Conditions	Action/ Interaction	Consequences	Frequency
Sensory Immersion	Visual Intensity, Auditory Overload, Aromatic Potency, Tactile Sensation, Taste Amplification	Crowded Environment, Open Kitchen Design, High-Temperature Cooking	Night Markets, Street Eateries, Peak Hours	Tourist's Sensory Sensitivity, Prior Culinary Experience	Active Observation, Photo Documentation, Sensory Engagement	Excitement, Stimulation, Memorable Impression	87
Atmospheric Energy	Bustling Vibrancy, Social Buzz, Authentic Liveliness, Crowded Dynamics, Human Warmth	High Customer Density, Visible Social Interaction, Local Presence	Traditional Neighborhoods, Old Streets, Local Eateries	Tourist's Expectations, Presence of Locals vs. Tourists, Time of Visit	Immersive Observation, Conversation Initiation, Environmental Absorption	Sense of Belonging, Validation of Authenticity, Emotional Connection	94
Communal Dining	Shared Pot Experience, Collective Focus, Mutual Participation, Table Interaction, Group Bonding	Hotpot Format, Shared Food Source, Extended Dining Duration	Family Restaurants, Group-Oriented Venues	Group Composition, Relationship Closeness, Social Comfort	Collaborative Cooking, Ingredient Sharing, Conversation Facilitation	Relationship Strengthening, Collective Memory Creation, Social Intimacy	76

Table 4.5 (continued)

Main Category	Conceptual Categories (Grouped)	Causal Conditions	Context	Intervening Conditions	Action/ Interaction	Consequences	Frequency
Procedural Knowledge	Dipping Sauce Preparation, Ingredient Sequencing, Cooking Time Awareness, Etiquette Rules, Local Customs	Traditional Dining Practices, Unwritten Social Rules, Generational Transmission	Local Communities, Family Settings, Peer Groups	Tourist's Cultural Background, Willingness to Learn, Social Confidence	Observation Learning, Peer Teaching, Trial-and-Error Practice	Cultural Competence Acquisition, Sense of Initiation, Insider Status	68
Historical Symbolism	Food Origin Stories, Occupational Heritage, Urban Memory, Cultural Resilience, Ingredient Significance	Historical Events, Social Class Origins, Urban Development	Historical Districts, Heritage Sites, Local Communities	Tourist's Historical Interest, Educational Background, Narrative Receptivity	Story Listening, Historical Research, Reflective Contemplation	Deeper Understanding, Cultural Appreciation, Emotional Resonance	81
Authenticity Seeking	Avoiding Tourist Traps, Prioritizing Local Endorsement, Seeking Non-Commercialization, Environmental Rawness, Vendor Authenticity	Commercial Homogenization, Tourist Bubble Existence, Market Saturation	Side Alleys, Unmarked Eateries, Local Neighborhoods	Tourist's Skepticism, Information Access, Risk Tolerance	Active Information Seeking, Local Consultation, Deliberate Venue Selection	Confidence in Experience Quality, Satisfaction with Authenticity, Reduced Regret	79

Table 4.5 (continued)

Main Category	Conceptual Categories (Grouped)	Causal Conditions	Context	Intervening Conditions	Action/ Interaction	Consequences	Frequency
Sensory-Atmospheric Integration	Multi-sensory Atmosphere Perception, Environmental Holism, Synergistic Sensory Effect	Combined Sensory Inputs, Integrated Environmental Design	Mixed-Use Food Spaces	Tourist's Perceptual Integration Ability	Holistic Environmental Engagement	Unified Atmospheric Experience	63
Social-Ritualistic Integration	Ritual-Enhanced Bonding, Procedural Socialization, Collective Performance	Ritualistic Dining Format, Social Participation	Community Dining Settings	Group's Cultural Openness	Collaborative Ritual Participation	Enhanced Social Bonding through Ritual	71
Narrative-Sensory Fusion	Story-Enhanced Sensory Appreciation, Historical Context Enrichment, Meaning-Laden Consumption	Historical Symbolisms, Sensory Environment	Heritage Food Venues	Tourist's Narrative Receptivity	Simultaneous Sensory and Narrative Engagement	Enriched Sensory Experience	58
Authenticity-Narrative Alignment	Story-Validated Authenticity, Historical Authenticity Markers, Narrative Credibility	Authentic Historical Origins, Verified Local Stories	Historically Significant Venues	Tourist's Narrative Trust	Narrative Verification, Story Validation	Confirmed Authenticity Perception	64

Table 4.5 (continued)

Main Category	Conceptual Categories (Grouped)	Causal Conditions	Context	Intervening Conditions	Action/ Interaction	Consequences	Frequency
Experiential Immersion	Multi-Dimensional Engagement, Holistic Involvement, Flow State Achievement	All Previous Conditions Combined	Integrated Food Tourism Venues	Tourist's Openness to Immersion	Full Sensory, Social, Cognitive Engagement	Peak Experience, Lasting Memory	72
Cultural Place-Making	Collective Meaning Construction, Place Identity Formation, Cultural Belonging	All Sensory, Social, Historical Elements	Culturally Significant Food Spaces	Tourist's Cultural Openness	Active Participation in Cultural Meaning-Making	Strong Place Identity, Cultural Connection	85

Table 4.6 provides a further elaboration of the axial structure using the category “Atmospheric Energy” as a detailed example. The central phenomenon of “Yanhuoqi” emerges when bustling vibrancy, social buzz and human warmth intersect within traditional neighborhoods or peak-hour dining periods. Causal conditions such as dense customer flow and visible social interactions enhance the perception of liveliness, while contextual settings anchor the experience within the city's cultural geography. Intervening factors—including visitors' expectations, the presence of locals and group composition—influence interpretive patterns and determine the perceived authenticity of the environment. Action–interaction strategies such as immersive observation, environmental absorption and conversational engagement facilitate deeper cognitive and affective processing of the scene. The resulting consequences extend beyond immediate enjoyment, generating emotional attachment, a sense of community belonging and strong validation of the dining experience as an authentic expression of local life.

Table 4.6 Axial Coding Paradigm - Detailed Example: "Atmospheric Energy"

Coding Element	Description	Supporting Conceptual Categories	Example Participant Quotes
Central Phenomenon	Experiencing the vibrant, authentic "Yanhuoqi" atmosphere that represents lively daily life	Bustling Vibrancy, Social Buzz, Authentic Liveliness, Crowded Dynamics, Human Warmth	"What I look for is that 'Yanhuoqi'. I want to be in a place that's buzzing with life, where you can see the steam from the kitchen and hear the locals laughing." (P25)
Causal Conditions (What leads to it?)	High customer density, visible social interaction, presence of local people rather than tourists	High Customer Density, Visible Social Interaction, Local Presence	"The place was packed with locals, not tourists. You could see families, couples, groups of friends all enjoying themselves. That's what made it feel real." (P38)
Context (Where/When?)	Traditional neighborhoods, old streets, local eateries, particularly during peak dining hours	Traditional Neighborhoods, Old Streets, Local Eateries, Peak Hours	"We went to this old street in the local neighborhood, not the tourist area. It was 7 PM on a Friday, and the place was absolutely packed." (P16)

Table 4.6 (continued)

Coding Element	Description	Supporting Conceptual Categories	Example Participant Quotes
Intervening Conditions (What influences it?)	Tourist's pre-existing expectations, whether locals are present vs. only tourists, time of visit, social group composition	Tourist's Expectations, Presence of Locals vs. Tourists, Time of Visit, Group Composition	"If I had gone during the day when it was mostly tourists, it wouldn't have felt the same. Going at dinner time when locals were there made all the difference." (P42)
Action/Interaction (How do tourists respond?)	Immersive observation of the environment, initiating conversations with vendors or other diners, absorbing the environmental energy	Immersive Observation, Conversation Initiation, Environmental Absorption	"I just sat there and watched everything—the way people interacted, the energy, the noise. I even started chatting with the vendor about how long he'd been running the place." (P19)
Consequences (What are the outcomes?)	Sense of belonging to the local community, validation that the experience is authentic, emotional connection to the place	Sense of Belonging, Validation of Authenticity, Emotional Connection	"After that experience, I felt like I was part of the local community, not just a tourist passing through. It was the most authentic moment of my trip." (P31)

4.1.4 Conceptual Understanding

The consolidation of axial relationships enabled the emergence of a deeper conceptual understanding of how culinary experiences function as multi-layered meaning-making processes within Chongqing's gastronomic landscape. The integration of sensory, social, procedural, historical and authenticity-oriented categories revealed that tourists do not simply consume food but engage in a dynamic interpretive process through which the culinary environment is perceived, negotiated and internalized as a cultural experience. This conceptual understanding highlights that the culinary encounter operates as a holistic experiential system, wherein meaning is generated through the convergence of embodied perception, social interaction, ritualized performance, narrative engagement and authenticity evaluation.

A central conceptual insight concerns the primacy of sensory-social synergy in shaping tourists' experiential immersion. Sensory immersion provides the initial perceptual anchor, as visitors are confronted with visual intensity, auditory dynamism and aromatic potency that immediately signal the distinctiveness of Chongqing's culinary environment. However, these sensory cues gain experiential significance only through their interaction with social and atmospheric dimensions. The presence of local diners, the density of social interactions and the vibrancy of everyday life collectively transform raw sensory stimulation into recognizable expressions of cultural vitality. This synergy supports a conceptualization of culinary spaces as sensory-social ecologies, where embodied perception and social context operate as mutually reinforcing components.

The analysis further indicates that procedural and narrative elements act as cognitive bridges that deepen engagement beyond surface-level appreciation. Procedural knowledge—learned through observation, imitation and instruction—allows tourists to participate in local dining rituals, thereby transitioning from peripheral observers to active contributors within the culinary setting. This process produces a sense of cultural competence and insider identity, demonstrating that participation in ritualized practices is a crucial mechanism for embedding tourists within the sociocultural fabric of the dining environment. Similarly, historical symbolism enriches the cognitive dimension of the experience by connecting culinary practices to narratives of labor, urban development and cultural resilience. Through these narratives, food becomes a medium through which visitors encounter the city's past, reframe its present and attribute emotional significance to its culinary traditions.

Authenticity emerges as a higher-order interpretive lens through which all other dimensions are evaluated and validated. Tourists' efforts to avoid commercialized venues, seek local endorsement and identify narrative credibility reveal that authenticity is not a fixed property of places but a dynamic construct negotiated through sensory coherence, social presence and narrative trustworthiness. Authenticity therefore functions as a meta-evaluative framework that shapes the perceived legitimacy of the experience and reinforces emotional attachment to the culinary setting.

The culmination of these interconnected processes is experiential immersion, a state in which sensory, social, procedural and narrative elements converge to produce holistic engagement. This immersion forms the foundation for cultural place-making,

wherein visitors co-construct meaning, develop identity connections with Chongqing and participate in the symbolic formation of place-based cultural belonging. Culinary experiences thus operate not merely as recreational activities but as culturally productive encounters that generate sustained emotional and cognitive ties to the destination.

4.1.5 Selective Coding

The selective coding stage synthesizes the analytical insights generated through the preceding open and axial coding phases into a unified theoretical framework that captures the core process underlying tourists' culinary meaning-making in Chongqing. The integration of the major categories revealed a central phenomenon identified as constructing the taste of place through cultural immersion, which encapsulates how visitors progressively interpret, participate in and internalize the city's culinary culture. This core category functions as the conceptual anchor that organizes the relationships among all major categories and higher-order integrative mechanisms.

The integration matrix presented in Table 4.7 demonstrates that each main category contributes a distinct functional layer to the immersion sequence, forming a temporally structured and hierarchically organized experiential pathway. Sensory immersion operates as the foundational layer, providing the initial perceptual gateway into the culinary environment through intense visual, auditory and olfactory stimuli. Atmospheric energy serves as the interpretive layer, transforming raw sensory cues into socially meaningful impressions of vibrancy, warmth and everyday dynamism. Communal dining introduces the participatory layer, shifting visitors from perceptual observers to active participants engaged in shared cooking practices, synchronized eating behaviors and group-based interaction. Procedural knowledge adds a performative layer, enabling visitors to enact localized dining rituals and thereby cultivate cultural competence. Historical symbolism contributes a cognitive layer that links contemporary culinary practices to collective memory, occupational heritage and urban narratives, imbuing the experience with temporal depth and cultural resonance. Authenticity seeking functions as an evaluative layer that operates throughout the entire immersion process, guiding visitors' judgments regarding what constitutes genuine cultural expression and validating the coherence of their interpretations.

Table 4.7 Axial Coding Integration Matrix - How Categories Relate to Core Category

Main Category	Relationship to Core Category: "Constructing the Taste of Place through Cultural Immersion"	Integration Pattern	Sequence in Immersion Process
Sensory Immersion	Foundation layer - provides initial sensory input that signals entry into a different cultural space	Foundational	1st
Atmospheric Energy	Interpretive layer - transforms raw sensory data into meaningful social atmosphere	Interpretive	2nd
Communal Dining	Participatory layer - enables active engagement through shared food practices	Participatory	3rd
Procedural Knowledge	Performative layer - allows tourists to perform cultural competence through learned practices	Performative	4th
Historical Symbolism	Cognitive layer - adds intellectual depth through understanding Historical Symbolisms	Cognitive	5th
Authenticity Seeking	Evaluative layer - guides and validates the entire immersion process	Evaluative/Guiding	Throughout

Beyond these sequential contributions, Table 4.8 highlights several integrative mechanisms that illustrate how different experiential layers converge to form complex meaning structures. Sensory–atmospheric integration demonstrates that embodied perception and social vibrancy are mutually reinforcing, enabling visitors to interpret sensory intensity as culturally significant rather than merely stimulating. Social–ritualistic integration reveals how shared dining practices and procedural performances deepen social bonding and enhance feelings of belonging. Narrative–sensory fusion shows that historical storytelling amplifies sensory appreciation, allowing culinary elements such as spice, aroma or texture to become symbolically charged. Authenticity–narrative alignment indicates that credible historical narratives not only enrich the cognitive dimension but also validate judgments of authenticity, reinforcing the legitimacy of the overall experience.

Table 4.8 Integration Patterns and Higher-Order Outcomes in Constructing the "Taste of Place"

Integration Pattern / Higher-Order Outcome	Relationship to Core Category: "Constructing the Taste of Place through Cultural Immersion"	Integration Type	Position in Immersion Process
Sensory–Atmospheric Integration	Synergistic layer – integrates sensory and atmospheric dimensions	Synergistic	1st–2nd
Social–Ritualistic Integration	Synergistic layer – integrates social and procedural dimensions	Synergistic	3rd–4th
Narrative–Sensory Fusion	Synergistic layer – integrates historical and sensory dimensions	Synergistic	2nd–5th
Authenticity–Narrative Alignment	Validating layer – validates authenticity through Historical Symbolisms	Validating	4th–5th
Experiential Immersion	Peak layer – represents the culmination of all dimensions in a unified experience	Cumulative	Final
Cultural Place-Making	Outcome layer – represents the final construction of place identity and cultural meaning	Outcome	Final

The culmination of these integrative processes is experiential immersion, which represents the peak layer where sensory, social, procedural and cognitive dimensions cohere into a holistic state of engagement. This immersive state provides the experiential grounding for cultural place-making, the final outcome through which visitors construct symbolic attachments, form identity-linked meanings and embed Chongqing's culinary culture within their personal and cultural memory frameworks.

Through selective coding, the study conceptualizes Chongqing's culinary experience not as a series of isolated impressions but as an interconnected system of sensory encounters, social engagements, cultural performances, historical narratives and authenticity evaluations that collectively construct the taste of place. This theoretical synthesis captures the dynamic and multi-layered nature of culinary immersion, offering a robust interpretive foundation for understanding how visitors develop lasting emotional and cognitive bonds with Chongqing's gastronomic landscape.

4.2 Results of Quantitative Research

To complement the qualitative insights derived from semi-structured interviews, the quantitative phase further validates and tests the proposed theoretical model through large-scale survey data. This section follows a structured analytical sequence, beginning with reliability and validity assessments of all measurement constructs, followed by descriptive statistical profiling of participants and key variables. Subsequently, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is conducted to evaluate the measurement model, including convergent and discriminant validity. Finally, the structural model is tested through structural equation modeling (SEM) to examine direct effects, mediation effects, total effects, and moderation effects. Together, these quantitative analyses provide robust empirical support for the conceptual framework developed in the earlier qualitative stage.

4.2.1 Data Reliability and Validity Analysis

Establishing the reliability and validity of the measurement scales constitutes a fundamental prerequisite for conducting structural equation modeling, as it ensures that the observed variables reliably reflect the theoretical constructs and that the relationships among constructs can be meaningfully interpreted. This analysis includes internal consistency testing through Cronbach's alpha, as well as an assessment of sampling adequacy and factorability using the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) statistic and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. These procedures jointly determine whether the dataset is statistically appropriate for confirmatory factor analysis and subsequent structural modeling.

Internal consistency was examined using Cronbach's alpha coefficients for each latent variable. Cronbach's alpha evaluates the degree of inter-correlation among items within a construct, reflecting whether these items measure the same underlying concept. A value above 0.70 typically indicates acceptable reliability, coefficients exceeding 0.80 reflect good reliability, and values above 0.90 suggest excellent internal consistency suitable for advanced multivariate analysis (Hussey et al., 2025).

Table 4.9 presents the reliability coefficients for all constructs included in the study. The results demonstrate that each construct meets or surpasses the recommended reliability thresholds. Specifically, culinary culture identity reports the highest reliability ($\alpha = 0.937$), indicating highly coherent measurement across its fifteen items. Tourist satisfaction ($\alpha = 0.903$) and perceived destination image ($\alpha = 0.916$) also demonstrate excellent internal consistency. Constructs with fewer items, such as perceived behavioral

control (α = 0.852) and revisit intention (α = 0.894), similarly achieve strong reliability levels, confirming stable measurement properties. Even price sensitivity, which often exhibits greater variation due to its evaluative nature, achieves a reliable coefficient of 0.828. These findings collectively establish that the measurement items are reliable indicators of their respective constructs and are suitable for subsequent validity testing and CFA procedures.

Table 4.9 Reliability Statistics

Study Variables	Number of Questions	Cronbach's α
Culinary Culture Identity	15	0.937
Culinary Tourism Attitude	4	0.853
Subjective Norm	4	0.866
Perceived Behavioral Control	3	0.852
Perceived Destination Image	5	0.916
Tourist Satisfaction	4	0.903
Price Sensitivity	3	0.828
Revisit Intention	3	0.894

Before conducting confirmatory factor analysis, it is necessary to evaluate whether the sample size and the inter-item correlations are suitable for latent variable modeling. This study applied two statistical procedures: the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity.

The KMO statistic assesses the proportion of variance among variables that may be common variance. Values above 0.80 indicate meritorious sampling adequacy, while values above 0.90 are considered outstanding, demonstrating that the dataset is highly appropriate for factor extraction. As shown in Table 4.10, the KMO value of 0.944 exceeds the highest benchmark and provides strong evidence that the correlations among items are sufficiently compact and suitable for multivariate factor analysis.

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity examines whether the correlation matrix differs significantly from an identity matrix, in which variables would be uncorrelated. A significant result supports the presence of patterned relationships among variables, indicating that factor analysis is appropriate. The test yields an approximate chi-square

value of 14899.755 with 820 degrees of freedom ($p < 0.001$), confirming that the correlation matrix is statistically distinct from an identity matrix. These results jointly reinforce the suitability of the dataset for confirmatory factor analysis, ensuring that the data structure supports the measurement model proposed in this study.

Table 4.10 KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.944
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	14899.755
	df	820
	Sig.	.000

4.2.2 Descriptive Analysis

4.2.2.1 Sample Information

The socio-demographic and behavioral characteristics of the respondents are summarized in Table 4.11. Overall, the valid sample consists of 557 tourists who have visited Chongqing and participated in local culinary activities. The distribution across gender, age, education, income, visit frequency and culinary expenditure suggests a relatively diverse yet tourism-active group, providing a robust basis for examining culinary tourism experiences and revisit-related outcomes.

Table 4.11 Sample Information

Category	Item	N	%
Gender	Male	292	52.4
	Female	265	47.6
Age Group	Under 25	182	32.7
	26–40	273	49
	41–60	82	14.7
	61 and above	20	3.6
Education Level	Junior College Students	178	32
	Undergraduate	270	48.5
	Graduate	65	11.7
	Others	44	7.9

Table 4.11 (continued)

Category	Item	N	%
Monthly Income (RMB)	Below 5,000	149	26.8
	5,000–10,000	293	52.6
	10,001–20,000	87	15.6
	Above 20,000	28	5
Number of Visits to Chongqing	Once	261	46.9
	Twice	178	32
	Three times	71	12.7
	More than three times	47	8.4
Average Culinary Expenditure per Visit (RMB)	Below 200 RMB	114	20.5
	201–500 RMB	183	32.9
	501–1000 RMB	162	29.1
	Above 1000 RMB	98	17.6

In terms of gender composition, the sample is relatively balanced, with males accounting for 52.4 percent and females for 47.6 percent. This near parity indicates that the findings are not heavily skewed toward a single gender group, which is beneficial for exploring potential gender-neutral patterns in culinary culture identity, perceived destination image and revisit intention.

The age distribution reveals a clear concentration of respondents in younger and early middle-age cohorts. Tourists aged under 25 comprise 32.7 percent of the sample, while those aged 26–40 account for the largest proportion at 49.0 percent. Respondents aged 41–60 represent 14.7 percent, and those aged 61 and above constitute only 3.6 percent. This structure suggests that Chongqing's culinary tourism is particularly attractive to younger and working-age visitors, who are more likely to be mobile, consumption-oriented and receptive to novel food experiences.

Educational attainment is generally high. Undergraduate degree holders form the largest group at 48.5 percent, followed by junior college students at 32.0 percent. Graduate-level respondents account for 11.7 percent, while 7.9 percent fall into other educational categories. The dominance of tertiary-educated participants indicates that the

sample largely consists of individuals with substantial cultural capital, which may enhance their sensitivity to culinary symbolism, authenticity and destination image.

Regarding economic capacity, more than half of the respondents report a monthly income between 5,000 and 10,000 RMB, representing 52.6 percent of the sample. A further 26.8 percent earn below 5,000 RMB, 15.6 percent fall in the 10,001–20,000 RMB range and 5.0 percent report incomes above 20,000 RMB. This distribution reflects a core group of middle-income tourists, supplemented by lower-income and higher-income segments. Such a pattern is consistent with the notion that urban culinary tourism can appeal to a broad consumer base, while price sensitivity may still play a meaningful role in revisit evaluations.

The number of visits to Chongqing illustrates a mix of first-time and repeat culinary tourists. First-time visitors account for 46.9 percent of the sample, whereas repeat visitors, defined as those who have visited at least twice, collectively make up 53.1 percent. Specifically, 32.0 percent have visited twice, 12.7 percent three times and 8.4 percent more than three times. The relatively high proportion of repeat visitors provides an empirical foundation for analyzing revisit intention and actual revisit behavior in relation to culinary experiences.

In terms of culinary expenditure per visit, the largest group of respondents spends between 201 and 500 RMB on food, representing 32.9 percent of the sample. A further 29.1 percent report expenditures between 501 and 1000 RMB, while 20.5 percent spend below 200 RMB and 17.6 percent spend above 1000 RMB. This indicates that most tourists allocate a moderate to substantial budget specifically to culinary consumption, reinforcing the role of food as a central component of the travel experience in Chongqing. At the same time, the presence of both lower and higher expenditure segments suggests heterogeneity in spending patterns, which underpins the inclusion of price sensitivity as a moderating variable in the structural model.

4.2.2.2 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were employed to examine the distributional characteristics and central tendencies of all measurement items, providing a foundational understanding of respondents' perceptions before conducting confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling. Each item is evaluated through four indicators: the mean, which reflects the central level of respondent agreement; the standard deviation,

which captures the degree of dispersion across responses; skewness, which indicates the asymmetry of the distribution; and kurtosis, which reflects the peakedness or flatness relative to a normal distribution. Together, these indicators ensure that item distributions are suitable for multivariate analyses and allow insights into how participants evaluated different dimensions of culinary cultural experience.

The results in Table 4.12 demonstrate that all items exhibit mean values between approximately 3.30 and 3.85, indicating that respondents generally hold moderate to positive perceptions across all constructs. The culinary culture identity items, including the additional sensory–experiential components derived from qualitative insights, show consistent agreement levels, with means centering around 3.4 to 3.8. These results reveal that participants perceive Chongqing's culinary culture as emotionally resonant, socially meaningful and rooted in traditional practices. Negative skewness across nearly all items reflects a response pattern leaning toward agreement, while kurtosis values near zero indicate distributions approximating normality and therefore appropriate for structural modelling.

Table 4.12 Descriptive Statistics Results

Study variables	Item	Mean	S.D.	Skewness	Kurtosis
Culinary Culture Identity	CCI1	3.499	0.938	-0.463	-0.262
	CCI2	3.443	0.948	-0.441	-0.324
	CCI3	3.368	1.019	-0.325	-0.573
	CCI4	3.476	1.036	-0.368	-0.588
	CCI5	3.467	1.082	-0.496	-0.382
	CCI6	3.654	1.039	-0.776	-0.035
	CCI7	3.526	0.999	-0.659	-0.025
	CCI8	3.526	1.041	-0.549	-0.189
	CCI9	3.456	0.947	-0.537	-0.089
	CE1	3.654	1.174	-0.975	0.292
	CE2	3.680	1.019	-0.721	0.343
	CE3	3.531	1.191	-0.597	-0.330
	CE4	3.646	1.190	-0.839	-0.034
	CE5	3.600	1.153	-0.791	0.063
	CE6	3.826	1.140	-0.855	0.061

Table 4.12 (continued)

Study variables	Item	Mean	S.D.	Skewness	Kurtosis
Culinary Tourism Attitude	CTA1	3.411	0.984	-0.534	0.063
	CTA2	3.411	0.988	-0.347	-0.310
	CTA3	3.364	1.059	-0.267	-0.616
	CTA4	3.332	0.996	-0.199	-0.574
Subjective Norm	SN1	3.327	1.048	-0.383	-0.496
	SN2	3.438	1.075	-0.496	-0.407
	SN3	3.632	1.038	-0.795	0.047
	SN4	3.503	1.005	-0.696	0.006
Perceived Behavioral Control	PBC1	3.569	1.209	-0.592	-0.512
	PBC2	3.691	1.218	-0.615	-0.557
	PBC3	3.795	1.170	-0.700	-0.405
Perceived Destination Image	PDI1	3.810	1.032	-0.964	0.758
	PDI2	3.749	1.070	-0.856	0.377
	PDI3	3.749	0.988	-0.816	0.631
	PDI4	3.758	1.007	-0.813	0.580
	PDI5	3.819	1.090	-0.873	0.442
Tourist Satisfaction	TS1	3.542	1.174	-0.396	-0.764
	TS2	3.662	1.157	-0.693	-0.335
	TS3	3.636	1.209	-0.552	-0.686
	TS4	3.659	1.071	-0.356	-0.852
Price Sensitivity	PS1	3.483	1.227	-0.468	-0.711
	PS2	3.436	1.290	-0.429	-0.869
	PS3	3.671	1.228	-0.546	-0.738
Revisit Intention	RI1	3.429	0.969	-0.530	-0.257
	RI2	3.488	0.966	-0.507	-0.088
	RI3	3.440	1.112	-0.451	-0.569

Culinary tourism attitude shows similarly favorable evaluations, with means slightly above the midpoint and negative skewness suggesting that respondents generally view culinary travel experiences in Chongqing as enjoyable, culturally enriching and

attractive. Standard deviations close to one highlight moderate variability, consistent with individual differences in travel motivations and prior culinary exposure. Subjective norm items also reveal moderately positive social influences on respondents' culinary travel behaviors, with slightly higher agreement on peer encouragement and approval. The distribution of these items maintains acceptable skewness and kurtosis, indicating stable data properties.

Perceived behavioral control exhibits some of the highest mean values in the dataset, suggesting that respondents generally believe they possess adequate resources, time and autonomy to engage in culinary tourism. The slightly higher standard deviations indicate broader heterogeneity in perceived control, likely reflecting diverse personal circumstances. The distributional characteristics remain well within acceptable ranges. Perceived destination image presents particularly strong endorsements, especially regarding hospitality, culinary distinctiveness and cultural appeal. The consistently negative skewness and mildly positive kurtosis across these items reflect high evaluative consistency and strong destination impressions.

Tourist satisfaction also demonstrates overall positive evaluations, with items reflecting meaningful contributions of culinary experiences to overall trip satisfaction. The relatively wide standard deviations indicate individual differences in actual experience quality, expenditure levels and expectations. Nevertheless, distributional symmetry remains adequate. Price sensitivity items reveal more diverse evaluations, as suggested by the wider standard deviations, yet the mean values around 3.4 to 3.7 indicate that respondents generally perceive culinary prices in Chongqing as acceptable for future travel. Finally, revisit intention items display moderate-to-high agreement, although with slightly lower means compared with destination image and satisfaction, suggesting that the intention to revisit is influenced by additional evaluative or contextual factors.

4.2.2.3 Structural Equation Model Analysis

Structural equation modeling is employed to examine the proposed relationships among culinary culture identity, culinary tourism attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, perceived destination image, tourist satisfaction, price sensitivity and revisit intention, enabling the simultaneous estimation of both measurement and structural components within a unified analytical framework. Before testing the structural relationships, the measurement model is assessed to confirm that all observed

indicators exhibit adequate reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity, thus ensuring that the latent constructs are empirically robust. Following the validation of the measurement model, the structural model is estimated, and the model fit indices indicate that the theoretical framework achieves a high level of goodness-of-fit, demonstrating strong alignment between the empirical data and the hypothesized structure. Through this modeling process, both direct and indirect effects are identified, offering a detailed understanding of how culinary cultural factors shape revisit intention through intermediary mechanisms such as perceived destination image and tourist satisfaction, while also accounting for the moderating effect of price sensitivity. The SEM results therefore provide a comprehensive and integrated explanation of the experiential and psychological pathways influencing tourists' behavioral intentions within the context of Chongqing's culinary tourism.

4.2.3 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

4.2.3.1 Measurement Model and Fit Index

The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is conducted to assess whether the observed indicators adequately represent their corresponding latent constructs within the proposed measurement framework. The measurement model includes eight constructs: culinary culture identity, culinary tourism attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, perceived destination image, tourist satisfaction, revisit intention and price sensitivity, each operationalized through multiple items adapted from existing scales and refined through qualitative inquiry. As illustrated in Figure 4.1, all latent constructs are specified as reflective, and their indicators load directly onto each construct, allowing examination of item reliability, construct validity and overall fit between the empirical data and the theoretical specification.

Figure 4.1 presents the full measurement model, demonstrating that each indicator loads significantly on its intended latent variable with no cross-loadings. The standardized factor loadings across the constructs are consistently strong, generally falling above the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70. These loading patterns indicate that the observed items meaningfully capture the conceptual domains they are intended to measure. For instance, both dimensions of culinary culture identity—cognitive-emotional connection and sensory-experiential perception—exhibit high loadings, confirming that the integration of CE items into this construct is empirically valid. Similarly, the

measurement items for perceived destination image and tourist satisfaction demonstrate high degrees of internal coherence, reflecting respondents' consistently positive evaluations of Chongqing's culinary tourism environment.

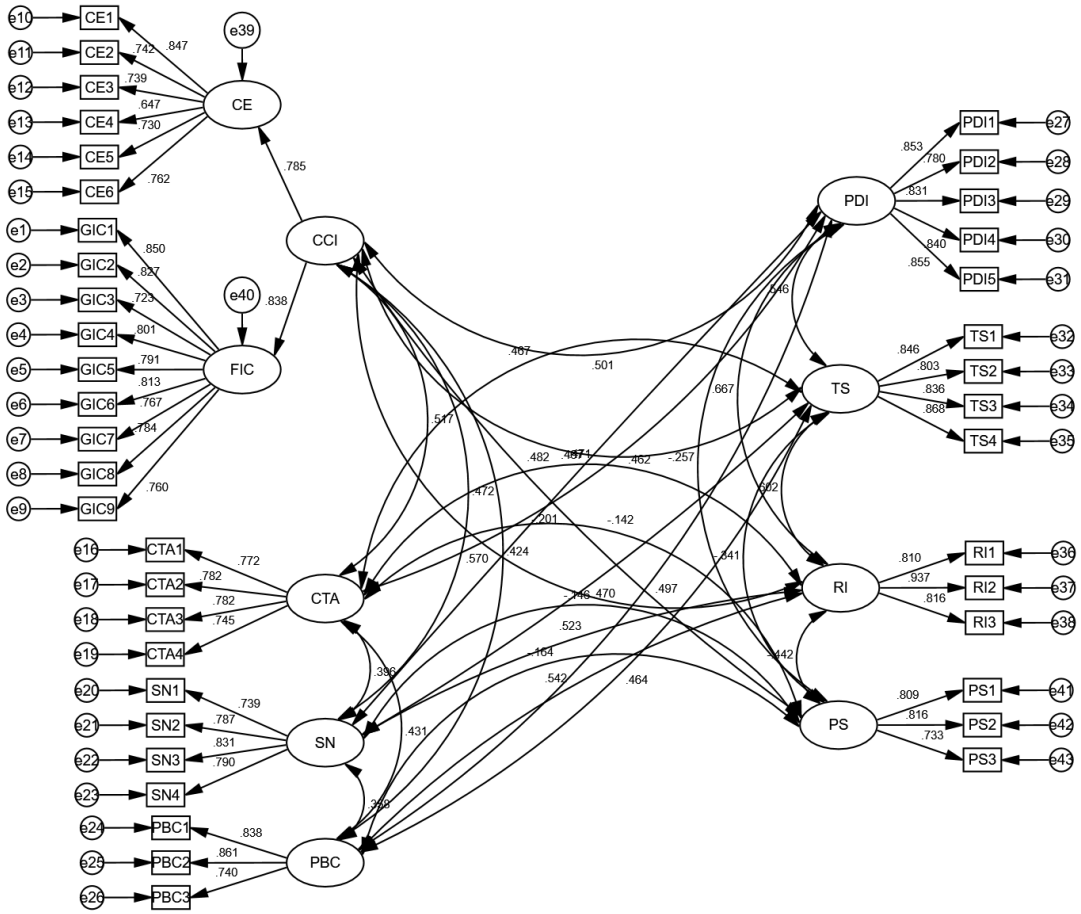

Figure 4.1 Measurement model

To evaluate the adequacy of the overall measurement model, several goodness-of-fit indices are examined, each assessing a different dimension of model performance. These indices and their corresponding results are presented in Table 4.13. The chi-square statistic divided by degrees of freedom (χ^2/df = 1.438) is substantially below the threshold of 3, indicating a strong absolute fit between the observed covariance matrix and the model-implied matrix. The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA = 0.028) is notably lower than the recommended cut-off value of 0.08, demonstrating an excellent degree of approximation and minimal residual error.

Table 4.13 Measure Model Fit Index

Fit Index	χ^2/df	RMSEA	GFI	AGFI	NFI	TLI	CFI
Reference Standards	<3	<0.08	>0.90	>0.90	>0.90	>0.90	>0.90
Result	1.438	0.028	0.916	0.903	0.93	0.975	0.977

Absolute fit indices further support the robustness of the model. The goodness-of-fit index (GFI = 0.916) and the adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI = 0.903) both exceed the 0.90 criterion, indicating that the model captures a high proportion of the variance and covariance among observed variables. The normalized fit index (NFI = 0.930) provides additional evidence that the model performs substantially better than the null model, meeting the benchmark of 0.90 for acceptable fit.

Incremental and comparative fit indices also confirm the strong performance of the measurement model. Both the Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI = 0.975) and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI = 0.977) exceed the commonly recommended threshold of 0.95, indicating that the model fits the data exceptionally well relative to a baseline model. These indices collectively demonstrate minimal discrepancy between the observed and model-implied covariance structures, affirming the suitability of the measurement model for further structural analysis.

4.2.3.2 Convergent Validity

Convergent validity is assessed to determine whether the indicators of each latent construct consistently measure the same underlying concept. In CFA, convergent validity is typically evaluated using three key criteria: standardized factor loadings, composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE). Factor loadings reflect the strength of association between each observed item and its latent construct; CR evaluates internal consistency across items; and AVE measures the amount of variance captured by a construct relative to the variance attributable to measurement error. According to established guidelines, factor loadings should exceed 0.70, CR values should be above 0.70 and AVE should reach at least 0.50 to demonstrate acceptable convergent validity.

The results shown in Table 4.14 indicate that all constructs exhibit strong convergent validity. For culinary culture identity, the standardized factor loadings range

from 0.723 to 0.85 for the cognitive–emotional items, and from 0.647 to 0.847 for the sensory–experiential items (CE1–CE6). These high loading values confirm that the items collectively capture both the cultural meaning and sensory atmosphere inherent in culinary identity. The CR values of 0.938 for CCI items and 0.883 for CE items further indicate excellent internal consistency, while AVE values of 0.626 and 0.558 respectively demonstrate that the constructs capture more than half of the variance in their indicators. These results substantiate the empirical justification for integrating sensory–experiential elements into the broader construct of culinary culture identity.

Table 4.14 Convergence Validity

Variable	Item	Factor Loading	CR	AVE
Culinary Culture Identity	CCI1	0.85	0.938	0.626
	CCI2	0.827		
	CCI3	0.723		
	CCI4	0.801		
	CCI5	0.791		
	CCI6	0.813		
	CCI7	0.767		
	CCI8	0.784		
	CCI9	0.76		
	CE1	0.847	0.883	0.558
	CE2	0.742		
	CE3	0.739		
	CE4	0.647		
	CE5	0.73		
	CE6	0.762		
Culinary Tourism Attitude	CTA1	0.772	0.854	0.594
	CTA2	0.782		
	CTA3	0.782		
	CTA4	0.745		

Table 4.14 (continued)

Variable	Item	Factor Loading	CR	AVE
Subjective Norm	SN1	0.739	0.867	0.62
	SN2	0.787		
	SN3	0.831		
	SN4	0.79		
Perceived Behavioral Control	PBC1	0.838	0.855	0.664
	PBC2	0.861		
	PBC3	0.74		
Perceived Destination Image	PDI1	0.853	0.918	0.693
	PDI2	0.78		
	PDI3	0.831		
	PDI4	0.84		
	PDI5	0.855		
Tourist Satisfaction	TS1	0.846	0.904	0.703
	TS2	0.803		
	TS3	0.836		
	TS4	0.868		
Price Sensitivity	PS1	0.809	0.83	0.619
	PS2	0.816		
	PS3	0.733		
Revisit Intention	RI1	0.81	0.891	0.733
	RI2	0.937		
	RI3	0.816		

Culinary tourism attitude also demonstrates strong convergent validity, with factor loadings between 0.745 and 0.782, a CR of 0.854 and an AVE of 0.594. These values indicate that respondents' evaluations of enjoyment, perceived value and attractiveness are consistently aligned with the underlying attitudinal construct. Subjective norm shows similarly robust results, with factor loadings ranging from 0.739 to 0.831, a

CR of 0.867 and an AVE of 0.62, confirming that social expectations and perceived support form a coherent normative influence.

Perceived behavioral control displays factor loadings from 0.74 to 0.861, with a CR of 0.855 and AVE of 0.664, demonstrating that respondents' beliefs regarding ability, resources and control are measured with high internal consistency and conceptual precision. The construct of perceived destination image shows high loadings (0.78–0.855), a strong CR of 0.918 and an AVE of 0.693, indicating that respondents form consistent and favorable destination impressions across hospitality, infrastructure and culinary appeal.

Tourist satisfaction exhibits some of the strongest convergent validity in the model, with loadings from 0.803 to 0.868, a CR of 0.904 and an AVE of 0.703. These values demonstrate that satisfaction is robustly measured and reflects a strongly unified evaluative construct. Price sensitivity, though conceptually distinct from the affective and experiential constructs, also meets all required thresholds, with loadings from 0.733 to 0.816, a CR of 0.83 and an AVE of 0.619, indicating stable and coherent judgments regarding price acceptability and affordability.

Revisit intention shows exceptionally high internal consistency, with factor loadings ranging from 0.81 to 0.937, a CR of 0.891 and an AVE of 0.733. These results reflect tightly clustered respondent evaluations regarding plans, preferences and willingness to revisit Chongqing for culinary tourism.

4.2.3.3 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity assesses whether each latent construct in the model is empirically distinct from the others. In structural equation modeling, discriminant validity is typically examined using the Fornell–Larcker criterion, which requires that the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct exceeds its correlations with other constructs (Hamid et al., 2017). This ensures that the variance shared between a construct and its own measurement items is greater than the variance it shares with other constructs, thereby confirming that conceptual boundaries between constructs are preserved.

Table 4.15 reports the discriminant validity results based on this criterion. The diagonal elements represent the square roots of the AVE for each construct, and all values range from 0.771 to 0.856, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.707. These

values indicate that each construct captures a substantial proportion of variance from its items. The off-diagonal values reflect the inter-construct correlations. For each construct, the diagonal value is consistently higher than any correlation it shares with other constructs, which satisfies the Fornell–Larcker requirement.

Table 4.15 Discriminant Validity Test

Latent variables	CCI	CTA	SN	PBC	PDI	TS	PS	RI
GIC	**0.812**							
CTA	.419**	**0.771**						
SN	.381**	.345**	**0.787**					
PBC	.348**	.375**	.309**	**0.815**				
PDI	.420**	.411**	.414**	.446**	**0.832**			
TS	.397**	.411**	.419**	.410**	.502**	**0.838**		
PS	-.158**	-.122**	-.124**	-.138**	-.230**	-.290**	**0.787**	
RI	.442**	.401**	.437**	.452**	.583**	.509**	-.398**	**0.856**

Note: GIC refers to Culinary Culture Identity: CTA refers to Culinary Tourism Attitude: SN refers to Subjective Norm: PBC refers to Perceived Behavioral Control: PDI refers to Perceived Destination Image: TS refers to Tourist Satisfaction: PS refers to Price Sensitivity: RI refers to Revisit Intention. The coefficients represent inter-construct correlations, and the diagonal values indicate the square roots of the average variance extracted, all supporting discriminant validity at the 0.01 significance level.

For example, the square root of AVE for culinary culture identity (CCI) is 0.812, which is greater than its correlations with culinary tourism attitude (0.419), subjective norm (0.381), perceived behavioral control (0.348), perceived destination image (0.420), tourist satisfaction (0.397), price sensitivity (–0.158) and revisit intention (0.442). This pattern confirms that CCI is empirically distinguishable from all related psychological and behavioral constructs. A similar pattern is observed for culinary tourism attitude (0.771 on the diagonal), whose correlations with other constructs fall between 0.345 and 0.411, and for subjective norm (0.787), which shows moderate correlations with related behavioral constructs but still maintains a clearly higher diagonal value.

Perceived behavioral control (0.815) also demonstrates strong discriminant validity, showing moderate correlations with subjective norm (0.309), attitude (0.375) and

perceived destination image (0.446), but none exceeding the diagonal value. Perceived destination image (0.832) displays some of the highest inter-construct correlations—especially with tourist satisfaction (0.502) and revisit intention (0.583)—consistent with theoretical expectations. Nevertheless, its diagonal value is still higher than all correlations, indicating distinguishability despite conceptual proximity.

Tourist satisfaction (0.838) similarly maintains discriminant validity, showing moderate correlations with revisit intention (0.509) and perceived destination image (0.502), yet still displaying a larger square root of AVE. Price sensitivity (0.787) shows negative correlations with most constructs, aligning with its theoretical role as an inhibitory evaluative factor, and its diagonal value remains higher than all correlation coefficients in the corresponding row. Finally, revisit intention (0.856) presents the highest diagonal value in the table, indicating very strong construct reliability and ensuring that its correlations with perceived destination image (0.583) and tourist satisfaction (0.509) do not compromise discriminant validity.

4.2.4 Structural Model Analysis

4.2.4.1 Model Fit Metrics for the Structural Model

Figure 4.2 presents the estimated structural equation model integrating all latent variables and the hypothesized causal paths among them. The diagram displays the eight core constructs—Culinary Culture Identity (CCI), Culinary Tourism Attitude (CTA), Subjective Norm (SN), Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC), Perceived Destination Image (PDI), Tourist Satisfaction (TS), Price Sensitivity (PS) and Revisit Intention (RI)—each linked to their corresponding observed indicators. Compared with the measurement model, the structural model incorporates the directional relationships proposed in the research hypotheses, enabling the evaluation of how cognitive, affective, and evaluative factors jointly shape tourists' revisit behavior. The visual representation demonstrates not only strong standardized factor loadings for all items, but also clearly outlines the direct, indirect, and mediated pathways embedded within the theoretical framework.

Notably, PDI and TS appear as central mediating constructs within the model. PDI receives inputs from four antecedent variables (CCI, CTA, SN and PBC), confirming its theoretical role as a cognitive appraisal channel through which cultural and psychological perceptions influence downstream outcomes. TS is also positioned as a key emotional response variable shaped by both PDI and the four primary predictors. RI, as

the terminal behavioral outcome, aggregates influences from nearly all prior constructs, receiving direct effects from CCI, SN, PBC, PDI, and TS. The inclusion of PS as a moderating construct is also visually apparent in the model, illustrating its interaction effect with TS on revisit intention. Altogether, Figure 4.2 provides a holistic view of the structural relationships, reinforcing the conceptual logic that tourists' culinary experiences influence revisit behavior through a sequential cognitive–affective–behavioral process mediated by destination image and satisfaction.

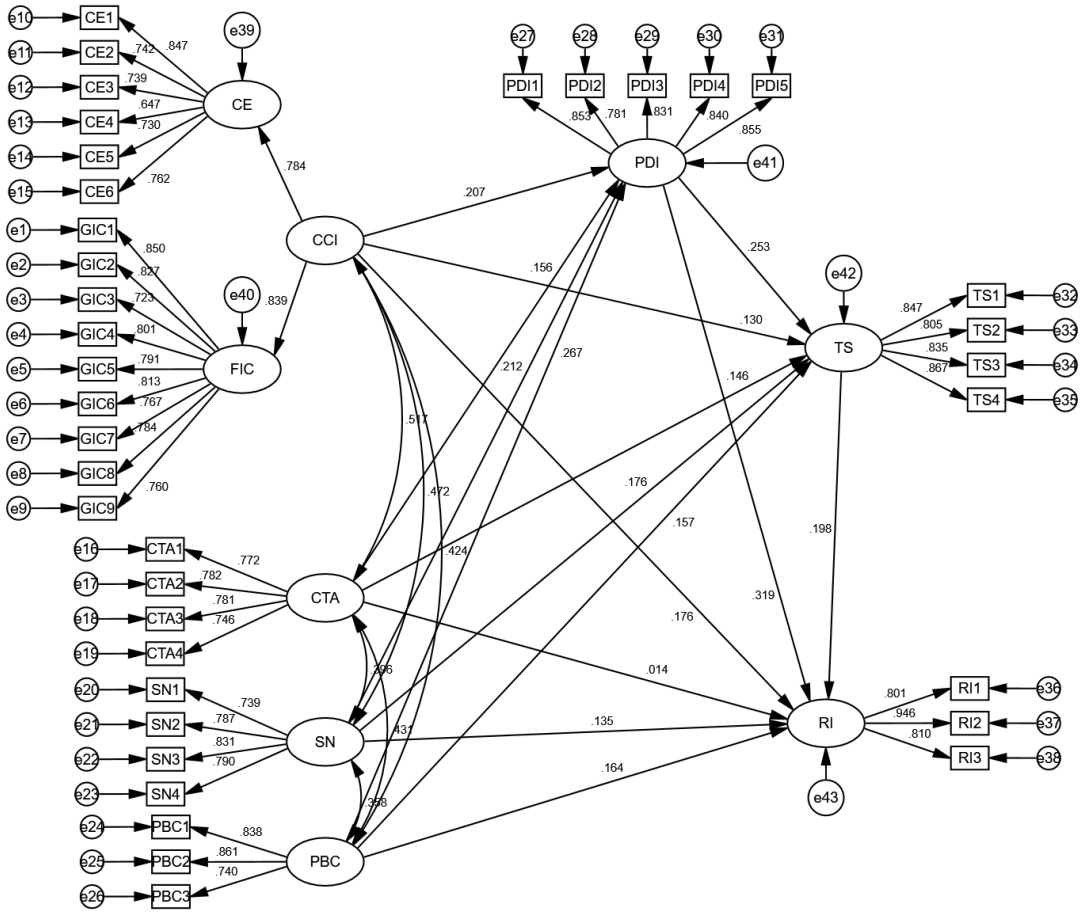

Figure 4.2 Structural model

To evaluate whether this structural model adequately represents the empirical data, Table 4.16 reports a comprehensive set of model fit indices, including absolute, incremental, and parsimony-adjusted measures. The chi-square statistic, when adjusted for degrees of freedom ($\chi^2/df = 1.506$), is well below the recommended threshold of 3, indicating that the discrepancy between the observed and estimated covariance matrices is minimal relative to model complexity. This reflects a parsimonious yet effective model

structure. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA = 0.030) is considerably lower than the common cut-off value of 0.08, signifying excellent approximate fit and indicating that the model exhibits negligible residual variance unexplained by the model structure. The associated confidence interval is narrow and close to zero (not shown in the table but implied by the low RMSEA), further confirming the stability of the model estimation.

The Goodness of Fit Index (GFI = 0.918) and Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI = 0.906) both exceed 0.90, suggesting that the model accounts for a substantial proportion of variance within the empirical data and that model performance remains robust even after penalties for model complexity. Meanwhile, the incremental fit indices reflect equally strong performance. The Normed Fit Index (NFI = 0.933) surpasses the threshold of 0.90, indicating that the hypothesized structural model improves substantially upon an independence (null) model. The Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI = 0.974) and Comparative Fit Index (CFI = 0.976) are both extremely close to 1.0, demonstrating extraordinarily good fit relative to alternative models and confirming that the structural model provides a highly accurate representation of the underlying theoretical relationships.

Table 4.16 Model Fit Index

Fit Index	χ^2/df	RMSEA	GFI	AGFI	NFI	TLI	CFI
Reference Standards	<3	<0.08	>0.90	>0.90	>0.90	>0.90	>0.90
Result	1.506	0.03	0.918	0.906	0.933	0.974	0.976

4.2.4.2 Path Analysis for Direct Effects

To examine whether the hypothesized causal relationships among the latent variables are empirically supported, structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to estimate the direct path coefficients. Table 4.17 summarizes the standardized path coefficients (β), unstandardized estimates, standard errors, critical ratios (C.R.), and significance levels (p-values) for each hypothesized relationship. Overall, the majority of the proposed hypotheses are statistically supported, indicating that the cognitive, affective, and behavioral mechanisms outlined in the conceptual framework are robust and theoretically consistent.

Table 4.17 Direct Path Effects

Hypothesis	Path	Estimate	β	S.E.	C.R.	P	Results
H1a	CCI → TS	0.166	0.13	0.074	2.229	0.026	Supported
H1b	CCI → PDI	0.234	0.207	0.066	3.566	***	Supported
H1c	CCI → RI	0.176	0.176	0.051	3.452	***	Supported
H2a	CTA → TS	0.19	0.146	0.067	2.835	0.005	Supported
H2b	CTA → PDI	0.181	0.156	0.06	3.033	0.002	Supported
H2c	CTA → RI	0.014	0.014	0.045	0.322	0.748	Non-Supported
H3a	SN → TS	0.226	0.176	0.062	3.625	***	Supported
H3b	SN → PDI	0.241	0.212	0.055	4.393	***	Supported
H3c	SN → RI	0.135	0.135	0.042	3.191	0.001	Supported
H4a	PBC → TS	0.155	0.157	0.048	3.235	0.001	Supported
H4b	PBC → PDI	0.232	0.267	0.041	5.597	***	Supported
H4c	PBC → RI	0.126	0.164	0.033	3.86	***	Supported
H5a	PDI → TS	0.286	0.253	0.058	4.927	***	Supported
H5b	PDI → RI	0.282	0.319	0.041	6.86	***	Supported
H6f	TS → RI	0.155	0.198	0.035	4.405	***	Supported

The results first demonstrate the strong influence of Culinary Culture Identity (CCI) on subsequent cognitive and behavioral outcomes. Specifically, CCI exerts a significant positive effect on Perceived Destination Image (PDI) (H1b: $\beta = 0.207$, $p < .001$), suggesting that stronger identification with Chongqing's culinary culture enhances tourists' cognitive evaluations of the destination. CCI also positively influences Tourist Satisfaction (TS) (H1a: $\beta = 0.130$, $p = .026$) and Revisit Intention (RI) (H1c: $\beta = 0.176$, $p < .001$), indicating that when tourists perceive culinary culture as meaningful and identity-relevant, they are more satisfied and more likely to return. These findings reinforce the idea that cultural embeddedness and symbolic meanings play foundational roles in shaping destination loyalty.

Culinary Tourism Attitude also shows significant positive effects on Perceived Destination Image and Tourist Satisfaction. These findings indicate that favorable attitudes toward culinary tourism enhance both tourists' cognitive evaluations of

Chongqing and their affective responses to the culinary experience. However, the direct path from Culinary Tourism Attitude to Revisit Intention is not statistically significant, with a very small standardized coefficient. This result is theoretically important because it suggests that a positive culinary tourism attitude, by itself, does not directly translate into behavioral commitment. In other words, although tourists may hold favorable evaluations of culinary tourism in Chongqing, such attitudes are insufficient on their own to motivate revisit intention unless they are transformed into stronger destination-specific cognitions and post-consumption affective responses. This non-significant finding highlights that attitude is not an immediate driver of revisit intention in the present model, but rather an indirect antecedent whose influence is transmitted through more proximal mechanisms such as Perceived Destination Image and Tourist Satisfaction. This also implies that the attitudinal component of the theory of planned behavior may be comparatively weaker than expected in the context of Chongqing's culinary tourism, where actual revisit decisions appear to depend more on experiential evaluation than on general attitudinal predisposition.

The influence of Subjective Norm (SN) is also substantiated across all three outcomes. SN positively affects PDI (H3b: $\beta = 0.212$, $p < .001$), TS (H3a: $\beta = 0.176$, $p < .001$), and RI (H3c: $\beta = 0.135$, $p = .001$). These results demonstrate the powerful role of social pressure and interpersonal expectations in shaping tourists' cognitive image, emotional satisfaction, and behavioral intentions. The findings align with the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which posits subjective norms as a meaningful predictor of behavioral intentions.

In terms of personal agency, Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) shows consistent and significant impacts on all dependent variables. PBC strongly predicts PDI (H4b: $\beta = 0.267$, $p < .001$), indicating that when tourists feel capable of navigating local food environments, their destination image becomes more favorable. PBC also enhances TS (H4a: $\beta = 0.157$, $p = .001$) and RI (H4c: $\beta = 0.164$, $p < .001$), confirming that behavioral confidence is a critical determinant of satisfaction and future behavioral tendencies.

Among the endogenous variables, Perceived Destination Image (PDI) plays an essential mediating role in the model and exerts significant direct effects on both TS (H5a: $\beta = 0.253$, $p < .001$) and RI (H5b: $\beta = 0.319$, $p < .001$). The magnitude of these coefficients suggests that PDI is one of the strongest predictors in the model, emphasizing

that tourists' cognitive evaluations of a destination serve as a central mechanism linking cultural and psychological antecedents to emotional satisfaction and loyalty.

Finally, Tourist Satisfaction (TS) also significantly predicts revisit intention (H6f: $\beta = 0.198$, $p < .001$). This result is consistent with a long tradition of research in tourism behavior, confirming that satisfaction remains a fundamental determinant of destination loyalty. The positive coefficient indicates that higher satisfaction directly increases the likelihood of tourists returning to Chongqing for future culinary experiences.

4.2.4.3 Path Analysis for Indirect Effects

To further clarify the internal mechanisms linking psychological antecedents to tourist outcomes, a series of bootstrapped mediation tests was conducted. Using 5,000 bias-corrected resamples, the analysis examined whether perceived destination image (PDI) and tourist satisfaction (TS) serve as mediating variables across the hypothesized relationships. As shown in Table 4.18, all indirect effects are statistically significant, with confidence intervals that do not include zero, thereby supporting the proposed mediation hypotheses.

The results first demonstrate that perceived destination image functions as a key cognitive mediator. Culinary culture identity (CCI), culinary tourism attitude (CTA), subjective norm (SN), and perceived behavioral control (PBC) all exert indirect effects on tourist satisfaction through PDI. For example, the pathways CCI → PDI → TS, CTA → PDI → TS, SN → PDI → TS, and PBC → PDI → TS exhibit significant mediation, suggesting that individuals who recognize and value the culinary culture, hold favorable attitudes, experience social encouragement, or feel capable of participating in culinary activities tend to form stronger destination images, which subsequently enhance their satisfaction levels. Similarly, PDI mediates the effect of all four antecedents on revisit intention, confirming its central role in translating cognitive evaluations into behavioral intentions.

Tourist satisfaction also emerges as an important affective mediator of revisit intention. The indirect pathways CCI → TS → RI, CTA → TS → RI, SN → TS → RI, and PBC → TS → RI are all supported, showing that satisfaction functions as the emotional bridge between tourists' perceptions and their loyalty-related behaviors. Moreover, PDI further influences revisit intention through TS, indicating a sequential cognitive–affective chain where perceptual evaluations elevate satisfaction, which

ultimately transforms into behavioral intention. Together, these findings reinforce the dual-mediation structure, wherein cognitive appraisals (via PDI) and affective responses (via TS) jointly shape tourists' decision-making processes.

Table 4.18 Mediation Effect Bootstrap Test

Hypothesis	Mediation Path	Effect Size	SE	Bias-Corrected 95% CI	Results
H5c	CCI → PDI → TS	0.053	0.019	[0.023, 0.103]	Supported
H5g	CCI → PDI → RI	0.066	0.025	[0.025, 0.124]	Supported
H6a	CCI → TS → RI	0.026	0.015	[0.002, 0.062]	Supported
H5d	CTA → PDI → TS	0.04	0.018	[0.011, 0.083]	Supported
H5h	CTA → PDI → RI	0.05	0.02	[0.017, 0.095]	Supported
H6b	CTA → TS → RI	0.029	0.013	[0.008, 0.059]	Supported
H5e	SN → PDI → TS	0.054	0.019	[0.023, 0.101]	Supported
H5i	SN → PDI → RI	0.068	0.018	[0.038, 0.110]	Supported
H6c	SN → TS → RI	0.035	0.013	[0.013, 0.067]	Supported
H5f	PBC → PDI → TS	0.068	0.021	[0.032, 0.117]	Supported
H5j	PBC → PDI → RI	0.085	0.021	[0.050, 0.136]	Supported
H6d	PBC → TS → RI	0.031	0.013	[0.010, 0.063]	Supported
H6e	PDI → TS → RI	0.05	0.016	[0.023, 0.089]	Supported

Beyond mediation, moderation analysis was conducted to evaluate whether price sensitivity (PS) alters the strength of the satisfaction–revisit intention relationship. The hierarchical regression results displayed in Table 4.19 show that tourist satisfaction significantly predicts revisit intention in the baseline model. When price sensitivity is introduced, it independently and negatively predicts revisit intention, suggesting that tourists with higher sensitivity to cost constraints are generally less inclined to revisit regardless of their satisfaction levels.

In the final model, the interaction term TS × PS is statistically significant, indicating a negative moderation effect. This means that although satisfaction generally enhances revisit intentions, this relationship becomes weaker for individuals with higher price sensitivity. In practical terms, even when tourists enjoy the culinary experience, those

who are more cost-conscious may still hesitate to revisit, implying that economic considerations can dampen the emotional drivers of loyalty behavior. This finding highlights the nuanced role of economic rationality in shaping consumer decision-making within culinary tourism contexts.

Table 4.19 Moderation Effect

Model	Key Findings	R^2
Model 1 (Main Effect)	Tourist satisfaction → revisit intention (β = 0.509, $p < 0.001$, significant)	0.259
Model 2 (Add Moderator)	Price sensitivity negatively predicts revisit intention (β = -0.273, $p < 0.001$)	0.327
Model 3 (Interaction Added)	Interaction TS × PS is significant (β = -0.130, $p <$ 0.001), indicating a negative moderation effect	0.343

Culinary culture identity exhibits a significant total effect on both tourist satisfaction and revisit intention, with confidence intervals that exclude zero, confirming the robustness of these relationships. This indicates that identification with local culinary culture not only shapes tourists' immediate emotional evaluations but also reinforces their long-term behavioral tendencies. Similarly, culinary tourism attitude shows meaningful total effects on satisfaction and revisit intention, suggesting that positive attitudinal orientations translate into enhanced experiential outcomes and loyalty behaviors even when direct effects on revisit intention are comparatively weak.

Subjective norm demonstrates comparable total effects on both outcome variables, illustrating the influential role of social expectations in shaping tourists' evaluative and behavioral processes. The finding that normative pressures translate into stronger satisfaction and heightened revisit intention reinforces the notion that culinary tourism is embedded within socially reinforced consumption practices. Perceived behavioral control produces the strongest total effects among the antecedent constructs, affirming that tourists' perceived capability to participate in culinary activities plays a decisive role in shaping both their satisfaction and intention to return. This pattern highlights the importance of perceived control in reducing psychological barriers and fostering confidence in cultural participation.

Perceived destination image further contributes to revisit intention through its total effect, underscoring its centrality as a cognitive appraisal mechanism. Although its total effect is smaller relative to the antecedent constructs, the statistical significance of its confidence interval confirms that cognitive evaluations regarding destination attributes remain essential drivers of tourists' willingness to return. Collectively, these total effects demonstrate that tourist behavior is shaped through the cumulative influence of identification, attitudes, social pressures, perceived control and destination-related cognitions, each contributing uniquely and interactively to satisfaction and loyalty formation.

To further strengthen the integration of the mixed-method design, it should be clarified that the qualitative phase provided the experiential foundation for refining the quantitative constructs and measurement items rather than generating entirely new variables. The six core elements identified in the interviews, namely sensory immersion, atmospheric energy, communal dining, procedural knowledge, historical symbolism, and authenticity seeking, were mapped onto the existing constructs of Culinary Culture Identity, Perceived Destination Image, and Tourist Satisfaction. Sensory immersion, communal dining, procedural knowledge, and historical symbolism mainly enriched Culinary Culture Identity, while atmospheric energy and authenticity seeking were more directly reflected in Perceived Destination Image. At the same time, all six elements helped contextualize Tourist Satisfaction by showing how satisfaction was grounded in culturally embedded and multisensory culinary experiences. At the operational level, the qualitative findings guided the revision and refinement of several questionnaire items, especially the sensory-experiential items incorporated into Culinary Culture Identity, as well as the wording of selected items for Perceived Destination Image and Tourist Satisfaction. The qualitative phase did not result in separate new variables because these themes were better understood as experiential manifestations of the broader constructs already established in the theoretical framework. This approach preserved theoretical coherence while improving the contextual relevance and empirical grounding of the quantitative model.

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter integrates the qualitative and quantitative components of the study to construct a comprehensive understanding of how culinary cultural experiences shape tourist satisfaction and revisit intention within the context of Chongqing's gastronomic landscape. The qualitative phase establishes the experiential foundation of the research model by revealing how tourists interpret sensory stimuli, navigate social interactions, acquire procedural knowledge and negotiate authenticity as they participate in the city's culinary culture. Through open, axial and selective coding, the findings demonstrate that culinary experiences are not merely acts of consumption but culturally embedded processes through which visitors construct meaning, form emotional connections and develop a sense of place identity. These insights inform the quantitative framework by identifying the core experiential dimensions that underlie the psychological variables measured in the structural model.

Building upon this foundation, the quantitative analysis provides empirical validation of the relationships proposed in the study. Reliability and validity assessments confirm that the measurement model achieves strong psychometric robustness, while confirmatory factor analysis verifies the convergence and distinction of the latent constructs. Structural equation modeling further demonstrates that culinary culture identity, culinary tourism attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control significantly predict both perceived destination image and tourist satisfaction. These findings highlight the multi-layered psychological mechanisms through which experiential and social-cognitive factors influence behavioral intentions in culinary tourism settings. The analysis also confirms the mediating roles of perceived destination image and tourist satisfaction, illustrating how cognitive evaluations and emotional responses translate cultural meaning into repeat visitation behavior. Additionally, the moderating effect of price sensitivity reveals that economic considerations can weaken the positive influence of satisfaction on revisit intention, signaling the need to account for tourists' cost perceptions in the culinary tourism experience.

CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This chapter brings together the study's theoretical insights, practical relevance and methodological reflections to offer a holistic interpretation of how culinary experiences shape tourists' cognitive, affective and behavioral responses in Chongqing. Building upon the qualitative conceptualization of cultural elements and the quantitative validation of behavioural pathways, the chapter first turns to the broader theoretical landscape to examine how the findings deepen current understandings of identity formation, cognitive–affective processing and behavioural decision-making in culinary tourism. From there, the discussion naturally extends to the practical arena, considering how the mechanisms identified, such as sensory immersion, authenticity cues, destination image formation and the conditional role of price sensitivity can inform the strategies of local governments, culinary business operators and tourism intermediaries seeking to enhance destination competitiveness and foster repeat visitation. The chapter then reflects critically on the scope and methodological choices of the study, acknowledging the constraints inherent in its cross-sectional design, single-destination focus and reliance on self-reported measures. These reflections pave the way for suggestions on how future research can further enrich the field through longitudinal, comparative and multi-sensory methodological innovations. The chapter concludes by integrating these theoretical, practical and methodological insights, highlighting how the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of gastronomic tourism as a culturally embedded, experientially mediated and economically conditioned phenomenon.

RO1. To explore the key cultural elements that shape tourists' culinary experiences in Chongqing.

In relation to the first research objective, which aimed to explore the key cultural elements that shape tourists' culinary experiences in Chongqing, the qualitative findings demonstrate that culinary encounters in this setting are structured by a complex interplay of sensory, social, ritual, narrative and authenticity related dimensions rather than by the

act of tasting alone. The open and axial coding processes reveal that tourists' accounts consistently foreground intense sensory immersion, a distinctive form of atmospheric energy often described through the local notion of yanhuoqi, communal dining practices centered on shared hotpot formats, the acquisition of procedural knowledge regarding local rules and techniques, the activation of historical symbolism, and an ongoing orientation toward authenticity seeking. These elements coalesce into higher order integration patterns such as sensory atmospheric integration, social ritualistic integration, narrative sensory fusion and authenticity narrative alignment, which ultimately contribute to experiential immersion and cultural place making. In this way, the study refines RO1 by showing that the key cultural elements in Chongqing's culinary tourism are not isolated attributes but layered processes through which visitors gradually construct a sense of belonging and identity around the taste of place.

Compared with existing work on food and culinary tourism, the identification of sensory immersion and atmospheric energy as foundational elements both resonates with and extends prior understandings of gastronomic experience. Studies on food tourism have emphasized the importance of multisensory stimulation and atmosphere in shaping evaluations of meals and destinations, highlighting the roles of visual presentation, smell, sound and physical setting in creating memorable experiences. However, much of this literature treats ambience as a background condition that enhances tasting rather than as a cultural object in its own right. The present study advances this discussion by showing that the sensory environment and atmospheric energy are actively interpreted by tourists as signs of authenticity and everyday local life. The notion of yanhuoqi, which surfaces repeatedly in the narratives, encapsulates a culturally specific configuration of steam, noise, crowding and social buzz that is read as evidence of genuine urban vitality. This means that sensory intensity is not only a hedonic stimulus but a semiotic resource through which visitors access and evaluate Chongqing's lived culture. Such a finding enriches the broader discussion of multisensory experience by linking sensorial richness to place based meaning making in a Chinese megacity context rather than in the more frequently studied rural or vineyard based settings.

The study also deepens understanding of the social and ritual dimensions of culinary experience. Prior work on commensality and food related sociality has shown that eating together fosters bonding, intimacy and group identity, and research on experiential

consumption has pointed out that participatory formats enhance engagement. The current findings specify how these processes unfold in Chongqing's hotpot culture. Communal dining emerges as a distinct cultural element in which the shared pot, collaborative cooking and extended time at the table produce a focused social microenvironment. Tourists describe helping each other cook ingredients, negotiating cooking times and sharing stories around the pot, which aligns with but also extends existing accounts of social dining by emphasizing the procedural and performative aspects of the meal. In addition, the acquisition of procedural knowledge, such as how to mix dipping sauces, follow unwritten etiquette or choose the “right” type of venue, is experienced as a pathway into insider status. Learning these embodied scripts is not only a matter of mastering techniques; it is recognized as a ritualized form of initiation into local culinary culture. This dual emphasis on communal dining and procedural knowledge shows that social and ritual elements are central cultural components of Chongqing's culinary tourism and not mere adjuncts to tasting.

Historical symbolism and narrative also appear as critical cultural elements that differentiate Chongqing's culinary experiences from more generic urban food consumption. Existing studies on heritage and gastronomy have argued that food often functions as a carrier of memory, identity and historical narratives, with dishes linked to past ways of life, class histories or regional struggles. The qualitative evidence in this study demonstrates that visitors actively engage with stories of hotpot's origins among laborers, narratives of hardship and resilience, and accounts of urban transformation. These narratives are not perceived as detached information; rather, they are fused with sensory impressions, so that tasting becomes a way of accessing the city's history. The category of narrative sensory fusion captures this entanglement, where the spice, heat and communal format of hotpot are interpreted through narratives of work, endurance and solidarity. This moves beyond prior work that treats storytelling as an add on to tasting by showing that, in the Chongqing context, narrative and sensory experience are co constitutive dimensions of a single cultural process.

Authenticity seeking provides a further lens through which the key cultural elements of Chongqing's culinary experiences can be understood. Earlier studies in food tourism have emphasized tourists' preference for local, less commercialized venues and their attempts to avoid tourist traps, often framed in terms of back stage versus front stage

or staged authenticity. The present study refines this understanding by demonstrating that authenticity seeking is enacted through concrete spatial and informational strategies, such as choosing side alley eateries, following local recommendations, tolerating uncertainty and evaluating environmental rawness. Tourists use high density of locals, modest decor, visible labor and atmospheric energy as cues that validate their experience as real. The integration of authenticity narrative alignment in the coding shows that stories about historical origins and local endorsement work together to confirm authenticity judgments. This suggests that authenticity in Chongqing's culinary tourism is not a fixed attribute of places but an ongoing evaluative process in which sensory, social and narrative elements are constantly compared with tourists' expectations and prior imaginaries.

RO2. To investigate the pathways through which culinary culture identity, perceived destination image, culinary tourism attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control influence tourists' revisit intention toward culinary destinations in Chongqing, China.

In relation to the second research objective, the structural and mediation results together demonstrate that tourists' revisit intention toward culinary destinations in Chongqing is formed through a multi-layered causal pathway in which cognitive appraisals, affective evaluations and perceived behavioral control jointly shape loyalty outcomes. The structural model reveals that revisit intention is most strongly predicted by perceived destination image (H5b) and tourist satisfaction (H6f), with standardized coefficients of 0.319 and 0.198, respectively, while culinary culture identity (H1c), subjective norm (H3c) and perceived behavioral control (H4c) exert additional but comparatively weaker direct effects on revisit intention, with coefficients of 0.176, 0.135 and 0.164. These findings confirm the validity of the hypothesized direct effects and indicate that revisit intention is not driven by a single attitudinal variable but by an assemblage of cultural identification, social influence, perceived capability and destination-related cognitions that operate both directly and through mediating mechanisms.

Culinary culture identity plays a foundational role in this structure and is strongly supported by H1a, H1b and H1c. The direct path from culinary culture identity to revisit intention (H1c) is significant, and culinary culture identity further shapes both perceived destination image (H1b) and tourist satisfaction (H1a), with standardized coefficients of

0.207 and 0.130. Bootstrap tests provide further support for the derivative hypotheses H5c and H5g, showing that culinary culture identity influences revisit intention through the indirect pathways CCI → PDI → TS (effect size = 0.053) and CCI → PDI → RI (effect size = 0.066). In addition, H6a confirms that culinary culture identity also affects revisit intention through tourist satisfaction, with an indirect effect of 0.026. Taken together, the total effect results demonstrate that culinary culture identity exerts a meaningful cumulative influence on revisit intention. This suggests that identification with Chongqing's culinary culture strengthens tourists' cognitive evaluations of the destination and affective responses to the experience, which in turn increase the likelihood of return. While previous research has linked place identity and cultural identity to loyalty outcomes in tourism, the present findings refine this understanding by demonstrating that cultural identity grounded in everyday food practices constitutes a particularly powerful driver of gastronomic loyalty within a dense urban Chinese culinary environment.

Perceived destination image functions as the most proximate cognitive predictor in the model, as specified in H5a and H5b. It not only predicts tourist satisfaction (H5a) with a standardized coefficient of 0.253 but also exerts the strongest direct effect on revisit intention (H5b). Perceived destination image also performs a pivotal mediating function, carrying the effects of multiple antecedents to both satisfaction and revisit intention. The mediation results confirm hypotheses H5d, H5e, H5f, H5h, H5i and H5j, showing that perceived destination image mediates the influence of culinary tourism attitude (CTA → PDI → RI, effect = 0.050), subjective norm (SN → PDI → RI, effect = 0.068) and perceived behavioral control (PBC → PDI → RI, effect = 0.085), among others. These significant indirect pathways demonstrate that perceived destination image aggregates upstream cognitive, cultural and normative influences and channels them toward satisfaction and revisit intention. This reinforces prior findings emphasizing the centrality of destination image in loyalty formation but extends them by revealing that in a culinary tourism context, image formation is shaped by culturally saturated sensory immersion, social ambiance and perceived authenticity, as uncovered in the qualitative phase. In other words, perceived destination image does not merely operate as a general cognitive impression of the destination, but as a destination-specific evaluative mechanism that crystallizes tourists' sensory, social and cultural experiences into a judgment that is directly

relevant to future revisit decisions. This helps explain why perceived destination image emerges as the strongest direct predictor of revisit intention in the present model.

A theoretically noteworthy result concerns H2c, which tests the direct effect of culinary tourism attitude on revisit intention. Contrary to traditional expectations derived from the theory of planned behavior, the direct path from culinary tourism attitude to revisit intention (H2c) is not significant, with a standardized coefficient of 0.014 and a non-significant p value. However, H2a and H2b remain supported, as culinary tourism attitude significantly predicts perceived destination image and tourist satisfaction. Furthermore, the mediation pathways proposed in H5d, H5h and H6b show that culinary tourism attitude indirectly affects revisit intention through perceived destination image (effect = 0.050) and tourist satisfaction (effect = 0.029). This pattern suggests that attitude does not vanish from the decision process; instead, its influence becomes almost fully absorbed by cognitive and affective evaluations. This differs from previous research where attitude commonly retains a strong direct effect, indicating that in an experiential culinary environment like Chongqing, tourists rely less on abstract evaluative orientations and more on concrete on-site sensory and emotional appraisals crystallized into destination image and satisfaction.

This non-significant direct effect is particularly meaningful because it suggests that revisit intention in Chongqing's culinary tourism is not a low-cost or purely attitudinal response, but a more demanding behavioral commitment that requires destination-specific confirmation. A favorable attitude toward culinary tourism may indicate that tourists generally enjoy food-related travel and hold positive predispositions toward culinary experiences; however, deciding whether to revisit Chongqing involves a more consequential judgment that includes travel time, financial cost, opportunity cost, and comparison with alternative destinations. In this sense, revisit intention is a higher-threshold decision than general behavioral preference, and therefore cannot be sufficiently explained by attitude alone. This helps clarify why culinary tourism attitude, although positive and significant at the upstream stage, fails to retain a direct effect once more proximal evaluative variables are introduced into the model.

More importantly, the results imply that perceived destination image and tourist satisfaction may effectively intercept the influence of culinary tourism attitude. That is, attitude appears to shape revisit intention only after it has been translated into a favorable

image of Chongqing and a satisfying post-consumption evaluation. From this perspective, the non-significant H2c path suggests that the relationship between culinary tourism attitude and revisit intention may be characterized by a near full-mediation pattern in this empirical setting. Although the present analysis does not label it formally as full mediation in a strict statistical sense, the evidence clearly indicates that the behavioral influence of attitude is largely transmitted through perceived destination image and tourist satisfaction rather than through a direct route. This finding is theoretically important because it shows that, in the context of Chongqing's culinary tourism, general attitudinal predisposition is insufficient unless it is converted into specific cognitive recognition and affective fulfillment.

This interpretation is also consistent with the qualitative findings. The interview data suggest that tourists' culinary evaluations in Chongqing are strongly shaped by sensory immersion, atmospheric energy, authenticity cues and social dining experiences. These experiential dimensions are highly concrete and place-specific. As a result, tourists' willingness to revisit depends less on whether they generally like culinary tourism and more on whether Chongqing, as an actual destination, is cognitively represented as distinctive and emotionally remembered as satisfying. In other words, tourists may hold a favorable culinary tourism attitude in principle, but such an attitude only acquires behavioral force when it is anchored in a compelling destination image and reinforced by satisfying lived experience. The findings therefore extend the theory of planned behavior by suggesting that, in highly immersive culinary contexts, the direct explanatory power of attitude may be weakened because its effect is structurally reallocated to destination-specific cognitive and affective mediators.

Subjective norm and perceived behavioral control follow pathways largely consistent with expectations but acquire new interpretive nuances in a culinary tourism setting. The structural results support hypotheses H3a–H3c and H4a–H4c, showing that both subjective norm and perceived behavioral control significantly predict tourist satisfaction, perceived destination image and revisit intention. The mediation results further validate H5e, H5i, H6c and H5f, H5j, H6d, showing that both constructs influence revisit intention through perceived destination image and tourist satisfaction. Subjective norm exerts indirect effects of 0.068 through perceived destination image and 0.035 through tourist satisfaction, while perceived behavioral control demonstrates even stronger

mediation effects with corresponding values of 0.085 and 0.031. These findings reveal that social expectations and perceived capability not only shape behavioral intention directly but also enhance the cognitive and affective evaluations that underpin loyalty. Compared with prior studies in which subjective norm often plays a weaker role, the relatively strong predictive power observed here implies that Chongqing's culinary tourism is a socially embedded practice influenced by peer recommendations, collective travel behavior and shared culinary norms. The important role of perceived behavioral control aligns with broader literature emphasizing the relevance of feasibility perceptions in experiential tourism, yet this study further indicates that control perceptions are closely tied to tourists' confidence in navigating local culinary spaces, interpreting cultural codes and managing uncertainties associated with intense flavors or unfamiliar environments.

RO3. To investigate the mediating role of tourist satisfaction and perceived destination image in the relationships between culinary culture identity, perceived destination image, culinary tourism attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control and revisit intention.

In relation to the third research objective, the mediation analysis provides clear evidence that perceived destination image and tourist satisfaction function as central psychological mechanisms through which cultural, attitudinal and social determinants influence tourists' revisit intention. The structural and bootstrap results show that all mediation-related hypotheses—H5c to H5j and H6a to H6e—are fully supported, indicating that revisit intention emerges not from direct cognitive or affective judgments alone but through a sequential evaluative process in which destination image and experiential satisfaction act as interpretive filters. That every hypothesized mediation pathway reached statistical significance underscores the coherence and robustness of the mediational structure proposed in this study.

Perceived destination image operates as the primary mediator, consistent with the mechanisms specified in hypotheses H5c, H5d, H5e, H5f, H5g, H5h, H5i and H5j, and forms the most influential bridge between antecedents and revisit intention. This construct consistently conveys the effects of all four antecedent variables—culinary culture identity, culinary tourism attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control—to both tourist satisfaction and revisit intention, with indirect effect sizes ranging from 0.040 to 0.085. For instance, the pathway specified in H5j (PBC → PDI → RI) demonstrates the

strongest mediation effect (0.085), highlighting that tourists' perceived capability in navigating local culinary environments enhances their cognitive evaluations of Chongqing as a culinary destination, which subsequently strengthens behavioral loyalty. Similarly, H5g (CCI → PDI → RI) and H5i (SN → PDI → RI) reveal mediation effects of 0.066 and 0.068, respectively, indicating that both cultural identity and social expectations operate through destination image to influence revisit intention. These patterns show that cognitive representations of the destination—formed through sensory, cultural and social experiences—constitute a critical mechanism underlying gastronomic loyalty. While previous research has often conceptualized destination image as a static evaluative construct, the present study extends this view by demonstrating that image formation is a dynamic cognitive process shaped by embodied sensory immersion, cultural meaning-making and social interactions in the culinary field.

Tourist satisfaction emerges as the second key mediator, consistent with the pathways proposed in hypotheses H6a, H6b, H6c and H6d, functioning as the immediate affective mechanism shaping revisit intention. Satisfaction mediates the effects of all four antecedent variables with effect sizes between 0.026 and 0.068, showing that identity, attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control exert part of their influence on revisit intention through the emotional fulfillment derived from the culinary experience. For example, H6a (CCI → TS → RI) reveals an indirect effect of 0.026, suggesting that stronger identification with Chongqing's culinary culture enhances satisfaction, which then increases revisit intention. Similarly, H6b (CTA → TS → RI) and H6c (SN → TS → RI) demonstrate that tourists' personal evaluations of culinary tourism and perceived social expectations gain behavioral relevance insofar as they shape the enjoyment and affective fulfillment of the experience. Moreover, H6d (PBC → TS → RI) shows that perceived behavioral control enhances satisfaction, highlighting the affective reward mechanism embedded in culinary tourism. These findings collectively underscore that satisfaction is not merely an outcome but a central affective mediator translating diverse cognitive and social determinants into loyalty outcomes.

A particularly meaningful finding concerns H6e (PDI → TS → RI), which specifies the mediation of the relationship between perceived destination image and revisit intention through tourist satisfaction. The results show a significant indirect effect of 0.050, confirming that favorable cognitive evaluations of the destination enhance affective

evaluations, which subsequently strengthen revisit intention. This aligns with well-established theories linking cognitive appraisals to affective responses, yet the present research extends prior work by situating this relationship within the culturally dense, multisensory culinary context of Chongqing. Findings from the qualitative phase revealed that satisfaction is shaped by sensory immersion, atmospheric vibrancy, perceived authenticity and cultural place-making; therefore, perceived destination image and tourist satisfaction operate not as isolated constructs but as integrated cognitive–affective systems activated by the unique spatial, cultural and sensory dynamics of Chongqing's culinary landscape.

RO4. To investigate the moderating role of price sensitivity on the relationships among tourist satisfaction and revisit intention.

In addressing the fourth research objective, the moderation analysis empirically verifies Hypothesis H7, which posits that price sensitivity negatively moderates the relationship between tourist satisfaction and revisit intention. The results show that price sensitivity significantly conditions how strongly satisfaction predicts revisit intention within Chongqing's culinary tourism context. Specifically, the interaction term between tourist satisfaction and price sensitivity is statistically significant ($\beta = -0.130$, $p < 0.001$), confirming the moderating effect proposed in H7. This indicates that the positive satisfaction–revisit intention linkage diminishes as tourists become more price conscious. The moderating pattern contrasts with the main effect documented in Model 1, where tourist satisfaction strongly predicts revisit intention ($\beta = 0.509$). Once price sensitivity is incorporated in Model 2, revisit intention is not solely shaped by affective evaluations; instead, price sensitivity itself emerges as a significant negative predictor ($\beta = -0.273$). This combined evidence supports the core argument of H7, demonstrating that highly price-sensitive tourists are less likely to translate culinary satisfaction into revisit intention.

This finding contributes new insights to the satisfaction–loyalty literature, showing that affective predictors of behavioral loyalty are not universally robust, but instead contingent upon tourists' economic orientations. Much of the existing research assumes that satisfaction exerts a uniformly positive influence on revisit intention; however, the results of H7 reveal that even strong satisfaction may be insufficient to guarantee repeat visitation when tourists rely heavily on price in their decision-making. This deviation from earlier findings is particularly notable in gastronomic tourism, where price variation across

different culinary settings, including street food stalls, specialty restaurants and commercialized dining districts, means that tourists continuously evaluate value-for-money and compare available options. In highly immersive culinary environments such as Chongqing, where sensory engagement and cultural identity cues are exceptionally strong, price nonetheless remains a decisive benchmark that can override the emotional resonance of the experience.

The moderation effect confirmed by H7 also aligns with the economic rationality perspective, which argues that tourists integrate experiential and financial considerations when forming behavioral intentions. However, the present results extend this perspective by showing that price sensitivity does not simply add to the predictive model; instead, it reshapes the psychological mechanism linking satisfaction to revisit intention. For tourists with low price sensitivity, the satisfaction–intention pathway remains stable and consistent with findings from experiential tourism research. In contrast, for highly price-sensitive tourists, the pathway becomes significantly weaker, indicating that economic thresholds cap the influence of affective rewards from culinary experiences. Thus, H7 highlights that satisfaction is necessary but not always sufficient for behavioral loyalty in contexts where price dependence plays a salient role.

At this point, a conceptual clarification is necessary. In this study, price sensitivity is not interpreted as perceived affordability, price fairness or price acceptability. Rather, it is operationalized as the extent to which tourists rely on price when choosing culinary experiences and making revisit-related decisions. The revised measurement items focus on whether tourists are more likely to choose culinary experiences when they are on sale, prefer lower-priced options that still meet their needs, and rely heavily on price in making such choices. Accordingly, higher scores indicate stronger price dependence rather than a more favorable perception that prices are reasonable or affordable. This distinction is important because the negative moderating effect should not be read as meaning that tourists who perceive prices as more acceptable are less likely to revisit. Instead, the results indicate that tourists who place greater decision weight on price are more likely to discount or constrain the positive influence of satisfaction when considering a future return trip.

This clarification also helps avoid a potential interpretive ambiguity in the discussion of the moderating effect. If the construct had been measured through items assessing whether prices were reasonable, suitable or affordable, then higher scores would

have implied greater perceived affordability, and a negative moderation interpretation would indeed have become conceptually problematic. In the present study, however, the construct captures behavioral reliance on price, which is directionally consistent with the finding that stronger price sensitivity weakens the satisfaction–revisit intention relationship. Therefore, the discussion of H7 should be understood as referring to tourists' price-oriented decision tendency rather than to their positive evaluation of price levels. This makes the interpretation theoretically coherent and empirically aligned with the scale actually used in the study.

When interpreted in light of the qualitative findings, the moderating effect gains additional cultural depth. The qualitative phase revealed that tourists often perceive authentic Chongqing culinary experiences as grounded in everyday life, local familiarity and non-commercialized environments. These experiential expectations help explain why price sensitivity matters so strongly in the conversion from satisfaction to revisit intention. Tourists who are highly price sensitive do not merely calculate monetary cost; they also evaluate whether the culinary experience remains consistent with their expectations of everyday local culture. When prices appear compatible with a locally grounded and non-excessive culinary environment, satisfaction can more easily develop into revisit intention. By contrast, when prices appear overly commercialized or inconsistent with the type of culinary authenticity tourists expect, highly price-sensitive visitors may become reluctant to return even if the experience itself was enjoyable.

In this sense, the moderating effect of price sensitivity is not purely economic, but also partly cultural and symbolic. For highly price-sensitive tourists, price functions as a cue that shapes judgments about whether the culinary experience still belongs to the everyday cultural world they sought to access. Once price becomes too salient, the experience may be reinterpreted as commercialized rather than authentic, and this reinterpretation weakens the behavioral consequences of satisfaction. The support for H7 thus suggests that the negative moderating effect is partially rooted in a cultural–economic tension, revealing how tourists reconcile emotional fulfillment, price dependence and authenticity expectations in shaping future behavioral commitments.

Taken together, the findings across RO1–RO4 demonstrate that tourists' culinary experiences and behavioral intentions in Chongqing are shaped through a multidimensional, culturally embedded and psychologically layered mechanism that

differs meaningfully from patterns reported in earlier gastronomic tourism studies. At the qualitative level (RO1), this study shows that Chongqing's culinary tourism is structured by a distinctive fusion of sensory immersion, atmospheric vibrancy (yanhuoqi), ritualized communal dining, procedural mastery, historical symbolism and authenticity-seeking—a configuration that extends prior research, which often isolates single elements such as sensory stimulation or storytelling. By revealing how these elements integrate into higher-order experiential patterns such as sensory–atmospheric integration, social–ritualistic integration and narrative–sensory fusion, the study advances existing literature by showing that tourists construct "the taste of place" not through individual cultural attributes but through layered immersion processes unique to Chongqing's urban culinary ecology.

The quantitative findings (RO2–RO3) further diverge from conventional models by demonstrating that revisit intention is shaped through a multi-layered causal structure where cultural identity, social norms and perceived capability feed into revisit intention primarily through destination image and satisfaction, rather than through direct paths alone. While previous studies often emphasize attitude as the strongest proximal predictor, the present study identifies a novel suppression effect: culinary tourism attitude (H2c) loses its direct predictive power once culturally grounded cognitive and affective constructs are accounted for, suggesting that in intensely immersive culinary environments, tourists rely less on abstract attitudes and more on embodied, context-specific appraisals. Moreover, the mediating effects of destination image and satisfaction, supported in hypotheses H5c–H5j and H6a–H6e, reveal that image in this context is not a static cognitive representation—as much of the earlier literature assumes—but a dynamic cognitive–affective system shaped by multisensory and culturally saturated experiences, a finding rarely documented in previous gastronomic tourism research.

Finally, the results for RO4 show that the negative moderating effect of price sensitivity (H7) introduces an additional layer of complexity to the satisfaction–loyalty relationship. Earlier studies typically conclude that satisfaction robustly predicts revisit intention, yet this research demonstrates that the strength of this relationship is significantly weakened among price-sensitive tourists. This divergence is theoretically significant: it indicates that in cultural gastronomic contexts—especially in cities like Chongqing where authenticity is closely associated with everyday affordability—economic evaluations can override experiential enjoyment, preventing satisfaction from

automatically converting into loyalty. This insight refines existing models by showing that price acts not merely as a cost consideration but as a cultural cue through which tourists judge the authenticity and legitimacy of the culinary experience.

In addition, the study's contribution lies not only in the individual qualitative and quantitative findings, but also in the way these two strands are analytically integrated. The qualitative phase provided the experiential foundation for the quantitative model by identifying the culturally specific dimensions through which tourists encounter Chongqing's culinary landscape, thereby refining the contextual meaning of the survey constructs and informing the wording of selected measurement items. Rather than generating entirely separate new variables, the qualitative themes were mapped onto the existing theoretical framework, with sensory immersion, communal dining, procedural knowledge and historical symbolism enriching culinary culture identity, atmospheric vibrancy and authenticity cues strengthening perceived destination image, and all six experiential elements deepening the interpretation of tourist satisfaction as a culturally embedded affective response. The quantitative phase then extended this interpretive foundation by statistically validating the structural relationships among these constructs and testing their direct, indirect and moderating effects. In this sense, the mixed-method design achieved complementarity and integration: the qualitative analysis explained what the culinary experience consists of and why it matters, whereas the quantitative analysis demonstrated how these experiential meanings are translated into cognitive evaluation, emotional response and revisit intention. Through this linkage, the study offers a more coherent explanation of gastronomic tourism behavior than would have been possible through either method alone.

5.1 Implication to Theories

5.1.1 Implication to Social Identity Theory

The findings of this study offer several important theoretical implications for social identity theory (SIT), extending its relevance within the field of cultural and gastronomic tourism. SIT argues that individuals derive elements of their self-concept from their membership in social groups and their identification with symbolic cultural categories (Ellemers & Haslam, 2012). Prior tourism research has shown that cultural identity strengthens emotional connection, place attachment and loyalty intentions (Yang et al.,

2022; Zhang et al., 2020a) . However, the present study advances this body of work by demonstrating that culinary culture identity constitutes a distinctive, embodied and performative form of social identity rooted in tourists' multisensory and meaning-rich encounters with Chongqing's culinary environments.

First, this study expands social identity theory by revealing that identity formation in gastronomic tourism is shaped not only by symbolic meaning but also by embodied sensory immersion and atmospheric engagement. While SIT applications traditionally emphasize cognitive categorization, this study demonstrates that tourists' identification with Chongqing's culinary culture arises through the heat, spice, steam, sounds and crowd dynamics that characterize the local foodscape. This complements and extends recent experiential-identity research, showing that social identity in culinary tourism is fundamentally embodied rather than purely cognitive.

Second, the study contributes new insight into the link between identity and destination image formation, reinforcing and extending arguments that identity shapes place-related cognition. The results show that culinary culture identity does not merely influence image at an abstract level but becomes materially fused with sensory, atmospheric and narrative cues. Tourists interpret steam-filled hotpot restaurants, side-alley eateries and the culturally meaningful atmosphere of yanhuoqi as signs that validate their identification with local culture. Thus, this research reconceptualizes destination image as a culturally embodied cognitive system, shaped through identity-laden sensory participation.

Third, this study enriches SIT by demonstrating that identity in culinary tourism is procedurally enacted through embodied cultural learning. The acquisition of procedural knowledge—how to mix sauces, choose authentic venues, follow unwritten etiquette—serves as a performative mechanism through which tourists gain insider status. This supports performative approaches to identity and extends SIT by showing that identity is not merely adopted but actively performed, especially in ritualized cultural settings like hotpot dining.

Fourth, the structural findings reveal that culinary culture identity influences revisit intention through both cognitive pathways (identity → destination image → revisit intention) and affective pathways (identity → satisfaction → revisit intention). This dual mechanism elaborates how identity transforms into behavioral loyalty and extends prior

SIT-based tourism studies that typically emphasize only emotional bonding. The present study thus offers a more comprehensive explanation of identity-driven decision-making, demonstrating that both cognition and affect mediate the influence of cultural identity on future behavioral commitments.

Fifth, historical symbolism emerges as a central dimension of identity formation. Existing work highlights that food is tied to memory and heritage, but this study shows that tourists integrate labor heritage, narratives of resilience and urban memory into their identity with Chongqing's culinary culture. These narratives are not detached information—they are felt through the spice, heat and communal dining format. This supports a culturally situated understanding of SIT, in which identity formation is intertwined with historical narrative and sensory memory.

Sixth, authenticity seeking functions as a validation mechanism for identity construction. While earlier studies treat authenticity as a separate construct influencing satisfaction or loyalty (Lyu et al., 2025), this study demonstrates that tourists use authenticity cues—visible labor, dense local crowds, modest décor—to confirm their cultural identification. This embeds authenticity within SIT as an identity-confirmation process, advancing theoretical understanding of how authenticity and identity interact in experiential tourism.

Finally, social identity theory is extended through the finding that identity in culinary tourism is socially co-constructed through group participation. Hotpot's communal and participatory nature reveals that identity emerges not only from individual interpretation but also from collective practices such as shared cooking, group decision-making and collaborative dining. This resonates with emerging work highlighting the group-based nature of tourism identity and shows that identity formation in culinary tourism is inherently social (Ndaguba & van Zyl, 2025).

5.1.2 Implication to Theory of Image Theory

The findings of this study offer several important implications for image theory by extending its application within the context of immersive culinary tourism. Traditional destination image research conceptualizes image as a multidimensional construct composed of cognitive and affective evaluations, which subsequently influence satisfaction and behavioral intention (Hsu & Huang, 2012). Prior studies have consistently shown that destination image is an important predictor of tourist loyalty (Pham, 2026).

The present study supports this general proposition, but also advances it by demonstrating that perceived destination image in Chongqing's culinary tourism is not a static representation of place, but a dynamic and experience-dependent mechanism shaped by sensory, social, and cultural processes (Esfandiar & Hadinejad, 2025).

First, this study extends image theory by showing that destination image in culinary tourism is formed through embodied and culturally embedded experience rather than through abstract destination attributes alone. While earlier studies often emphasize image as a perception of destination features, the qualitative findings here reveal that tourists construct Chongqing's image through sensory immersion, atmospheric energy, communal dining, historical symbolism, and authenticity cues. This suggests that image is not simply what tourists know or believe about a destination, but what they actively interpret through lived culinary experience (Ridwan & Prananta, 2026). In this sense, the study refines image theory by showing that culinary destination image is multisensory, socially interactive, and narratively saturated.

Second, the study demonstrates that perceived destination image plays a more central role than culinary tourism attitude in shaping revisit intention. In contrast to conventional models in which attitude is often treated as a key proximal predictor of intention, the present findings show that attitude does not directly predict revisit intention once destination image and satisfaction are included, whereas destination image emerges as the strongest direct predictor (Yacoub et al., 2025). This indicates that in a highly immersive culinary context, general positive attitude is insufficient unless it is transformed into a clear and favorable image of the destination. Theoretically, this strengthens the role of image theory by showing that destination-specific cognitive evaluation may be more behaviorally consequential than abstract attitudinal preference in explaining loyalty.

Third, this study advances image theory by clarifying the mediating role of destination image within the broader behavioral process. Previous research has often treated destination image as either an antecedent of satisfaction and intention or as a direct predictor of loyalty. The present findings suggest a more layered role (Mugova et al., 2025). Perceived destination image mediates the effects of culinary culture identity, culinary tourism attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control on both tourist satisfaction and revisit intention. This means that image functions as a cognitive filter through which upstream cultural and psychological influences are translated into

downstream affective and behavioral outcomes. Such a finding extends image theory by positioning image not only as a destination representation, but also as an active mechanism in the formation of tourist loyalty.

Finally, the study highlights the contextual specificity of destination image formation. The image of Chongqing is shaped by a distinctive combination of mountain-city urban form, spicy-hot culinary symbolism, hotpot's collective ritual structure, and the dense night-time foodscape associated with yanhuoqi. These elements jointly produce a destination image that is not easily interchangeable with other Chinese culinary cities. This contributes to image theory by suggesting that image formation is deeply conditioned by local cultural and spatial configurations, and that case-based research can reveal how destination image operates differently across specific urban gastronomic contexts.

5.1.3 Implication to Theory of Planned Behavior

The findings of this study also offer substantial contributions to the refinement and contextual extension of the theory of planned behavior, particularly in the domain of immersive culinary tourism. Classical theory of planned behavior posits that attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control independently and directly predict behavioral intention. Empirical research in tourism contexts has repeatedly validated these pathways. However, the present study reveals several departures from these canonical assumptions when theory of planned behavior is situated within the culturally saturated, multisensory, and socially embedded environment of Chongqing's urban culinary tourism.

First, the results challenge the presumed universality of the direct attitude–intention linkage. Although prior research consistently demonstrates strong and positive effects of attitude on behavioral intention across tourism and hospitality settings (Ho et al., 2024), the current analysis shows that culinary tourism attitude does not significantly predict revisit intention when perceived destination image and tourist satisfaction are included in the structural model. Instead, attitude exerts its influence indirectly and almost entirely through cognitive destination image and affective satisfaction mechanisms. This finding suggests that in highly immersive culinary contexts, abstract evaluative dispositions are insufficient to motivate behavioral intention unless they are transformed into concrete cognitive and emotional appraisals anchored in the lived sensory environment. Conceptually, this extends theory of planned behavior by demonstrating a translated attitudinal pathway, in which attitude operates through downstream judgments

rather than directly shaping intention, thereby positioning theory of planned behavior as a more layered and processual model in experiential tourism.

More importantly, the non-significant attitude–intention path should not be treated as a minor statistical irregularity, but as a theoretically revealing result about the nature of revisit decision-making in culinary tourism. A positive attitude toward culinary tourism indicates that tourists generally like the idea of food-related travel, appreciate culinary exploration, and hold favorable predispositions toward such experiences (Kiciak et al., 2024). Yet revisit intention is not simply an extension of that general preference. Revisit intention involves a more demanding behavioral commitment, one that requires tourists to decide whether the destination is worth returning to after the first experience has already taken place. In this sense, revisit is a higher-involvement and higher-cost behavioral judgment than initial interest or first-time trial. It requires the integration of prior experience, destination comparison, expected value, time and money expenditure, and the opportunity cost of not choosing alternative destinations. This helps explain why attitude alone does not retain direct predictive power in the present model. Tourists may like culinary tourism in general and even appreciate Chongqing's food culture, yet still withhold revisit intention unless that positive orientation is confirmed by a strong destination image and a satisfying experiential outcome.

This point substantially deepens the application of theory of planned behavior. In many conventional tourism settings, attitude may function as a relatively immediate predictor of intention because the behavioral act is framed in broad or anticipatory terms. In the present study, however, the dependent variable is revisit intention, which is not merely a generic willingness to engage, but a loyalty-oriented and destination-specific behavioral commitment. Such commitment appears to require stronger evaluative support than attitude alone can provide. Culinary tourism attitude therefore seems to function more as a pre-experiential preference or motivational orientation, whereas loyalty formation depends on more proximal and experience-based mechanisms, particularly perceived destination image and tourist satisfaction. This means that in the Chongqing context, attitude is not irrelevant, but structurally insufficient unless it is cognitively specified and affectively validated.

This interpretation is reinforced by the mediating results. The fact that culinary tourism attitude significantly predicts perceived destination image and tourist satisfaction,

while failing to predict revisit intention directly, strongly suggests that its influence is effectively absorbed by these two constructs. In theoretical terms, this points to a near full-mediation pattern, where the behavioral meaning of attitude is redirected through destination-specific cognitive re-evaluation and post-consumption affective integration. Such a pattern is highly informative because it shows that tourists do not move from liking culinary tourism to intending to revisit in a direct linear fashion. Rather, they first reinterpret Chongqing as a destination through image formation, then integrate the actual experience through satisfaction, and only afterward form a behavioral commitment to return. Thus, the present findings imply that theory of planned behavior in urban culinary tourism should be understood less as a simple additive model and more as a staged evaluative system in which attitude must pass through cognitive and affective filters before it acquires behavioral force.

This also carries broader contextual implications. The non-significant direct effect of culinary tourism attitude may suggest that in Chinese urban culinary tourism settings, where food experiences are intensely place-bound, socially performed, and symbolically loaded, attitude is less likely to translate into intention on its own. In such contexts, tourists may not decide to revisit merely because they favor culinary tourism in principle. Instead, they appear to require confirmation that the city itself is distinctive, memorable, experientially rewarding, and worth the cost of returning to. The Chongqing case therefore indicates that in culturally dense urban destinations, loyalty may be shaped less by general favorable attitudes and more by post-visit judgments concerning image, satisfaction, and value. This represents an important refinement of theory of planned behavior because it suggests that the predictive weight of attitude may decline when the focal behavior is not initial participation, but repeat visitation in a competitive destination environment.

Second, the study provides evidence that subjective norm plays a stronger and more central role in Chongqing's culinary tourism than has been reported in many previous theory of planned behavior applications. Prior research frequently identifies subjective norm as the weakest predictor of intention, prompting some scholars to question its relevance in individualistic consumption contexts (Nystrand & Olsen, 2020). In contrast, this study finds that subjective norm significantly predicts revisit intention and exerts substantial indirect effects through destination image and satisfaction. These results suggest that culinary tourism in Chongqing is deeply socially embedded, with peer

influence, group travel patterns, collective dining traditions, and social media driven food recommendations shaping not only intention but also the cognitive and affective processes that precede it. This provides a theoretically meaningful extension to theory of planned behavior by demonstrating that subjective norm becomes particularly powerful in culturally collectivist, socially interactive, and communally performed tourism settings.

Third, the findings extend the conceptual boundaries of perceived behavioral control within theory of planned behavior. Traditional interpretations of perceived behavioral control focus on volitional capability derived from resources, opportunities, and self-efficacy (Ajzen, 2002). Tourism studies often operationalize perceived behavioral control through economic resources, time availability, and travel convenience (Rosli et al., 2022). However, this study reveals that in the culinary tourism context, perceived behavioral control encompasses a broader set of competencies, including cultural fluency, procedural knowledge, and risk tolerance regarding intense flavors, unfamiliar cooking formats, and socially codified dining rituals. Perceived behavioral control significantly predicts revisit intention directly and exerts the strongest indirect effects through destination image among all predictors. These findings imply that perceived behavioral control in experiential tourism should be reconceptualized not merely as logistical feasibility but as a multidimensional cultural–procedural capability, capturing tourists' confidence in navigating complex local foodscapes. This extends theory of planned behavior by highlighting that the meaning of control is context dependent and must be theoretically adapted when applied to settings characterized by deep cultural embeddedness and performative participation.

Fourth, this study advances theory of planned behavior by integrating perceived destination image and tourist satisfaction as central mediators, thereby articulating a cognitive–affective process structure underlying behavioral intention. While prior studies sometimes include destination image or satisfaction as additional predictors (Wang, 2025), they rarely theorize the psychological processes through which theory of planned behavior antecedents shape these constructs. The present findings show that attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control influence intention largely through image formation and emotional fulfillment, thereby positioning theory of planned behavior not as a flat three-variable model but as a hierarchical psychological system in which cultural, social, and efficacy-related antecedents operate through interpretive and affective filters.

This contributes to a more nuanced understanding of theory of planned behavior by mapping the sequential unfolding of intention formation: identity, attitude, norms, and control shape destination image, destination image strengthens satisfaction, and both of these more immediate evaluations then guide intention. In the case of Chongqing, this sequence is especially important because the destination is not evaluated only through abstract beliefs, but through vivid sensory encounters, social dining practices, and authenticity judgments that intensify the role of image and satisfaction as decision-converting mechanisms.

Finally, by incorporating price sensitivity as a moderator of the satisfaction–intention relationship, the study highlights an often-overlooked limitation of theory of planned behavior, namely its implicit assumption that the strength of predictive paths is relatively stable across individuals. The moderating effect observed here demonstrates that economic cognition can reshape the internal logic of theory of planned behavior pathways, attenuating the influence of satisfaction on intention for highly price-sensitive tourists. This suggests that theory of planned behavior, when applied to high-involvement or cost-variant tourism contexts, must be expanded to incorporate economic threshold moderators that condition the translation of affective evaluations into behavioral intentions. More broadly, this means that even after attitude has been cognitively and affectively translated into image and satisfaction, the conversion into revisit intention may still be interrupted by value screening and cost sensitivity. Therefore, the present study suggests that theory of planned behavior in culinary tourism should not be treated as a closed attitudinal model, but as an open, context-sensitive framework in which intention emerges through the interaction of cultural orientation, social embeddedness, experiential evaluation, and economic constraint.

5.2 Implication to Practitioners

5.2.1 Implication to Chongqing Government

For the Chongqing government, the findings of this study suggest that culinary tourism should be governed not merely as a food-related consumption sector, but as a place-specific urban cultural system. This implication is particularly important in Chongqing because the loyalty mechanism identified in this study is rooted in a distinctive combination of mountain-city spatial form, spicy-hot culinary symbolism, hotpot's

collective ritual structure, and a dense night-time foodscape characterized by yanhuoqi. These features mean that Chongqing's culinary tourism cannot simply be treated as interchangeable with other Chinese food cities. Rather, the city's revisit mechanism depends on how these local characteristics are translated into cultural identity, destination image, and experiential satisfaction.

First, because culinary culture identity significantly strengthens perceived destination image and revisit intention, the government should embed Chongqing's culinary symbolism more systematically into urban cultural governance. The findings indicate that tourists are attached not only to the food itself, but also to the meanings carried by hotpot, spice, heat, labor heritage, and everyday urban resilience. Government action should therefore focus on preserving historically significant food streets, enhancing interpretation of hotpot's local origins, and supporting cultural presentation that communicates the symbolic value of Chongqing cuisine. This is important because the study shows that culinary loyalty in Chongqing emerges from cultural identification rather than from food consumption alone.

Second, since perceived destination image is the strongest direct predictor of revisit intention, local government should prioritize destination image management over generic attitude-oriented promotion. The results suggest that tourists do not decide to revisit simply because they hold favorable attitudes toward culinary tourism in general. Instead, revisit intention depends more strongly on whether Chongqing is cognitively consolidated as a distinctive and worthwhile culinary destination. In practical terms, this means protecting the city's visible street vitality, night-time atmosphere, food alley culture, and socially dense dining environments, because the qualitative findings demonstrate that tourists interpret these features as signs of authenticity and local liveliness. Image building in Chongqing should therefore be based on preserving experiential atmosphere rather than relying only on promotional slogans.

Third, the qualitative results show that communal dining, procedural learning, and hotpot-based shared ritual are central to how tourists form memorable culinary experiences. This implies that government support should not stop at general service upgrading, but should also preserve and activate participatory culinary forms that are specific to Chongqing. Compared with broad recommendations such as improving service quality, this finding more directly suggests supporting food festivals, live culinary

demonstrations, community-based dining events, and heritage activities that allow visitors to experience the collective and procedural aspects of local cuisine. In Chongqing, shared hotpot ritual is not merely a dining format, but a social mechanism through which attachment and revisit intention are strengthened.

Fourth, the significant negative moderating role of price sensitivity suggests that the government should adopt differentiated pricing governance rather than uniform price control. The findings show that highly price-sensitive tourists are less likely to convert satisfaction into revisit intention, especially when prices appear inconsistent with expectations of everyday local authenticity. This means that different culinary spaces require different strategies. Neighborhood eateries and night markets should emphasize visible price transparency and protection against opportunistic overpricing, because these spaces are closely tied to tourists' expectations of local affordability. By contrast, higher-end hotpot establishments may sustain premium pricing if value is clearly communicated through ingredient quality, service design, and cultural positioning. Thus, the study indicates that pricing policy in Chongqing should be context-sensitive rather than generalized.

Finally, the results imply that Chongqing should adopt a whole-of-community approach to culinary tourism governance. Because revisit intention is shaped by social density, local endorsement, and the perception of being immersed in everyday urban life, culinary tourism planning should preserve the coexistence of residents, vendors, and visitors in shared food spaces. Supporting neighborhood-level culinary events, involving local vendors in storytelling and branding, and protecting older markets and community food districts would help retain the social texture that makes Chongqing distinctive. In this way, government coordination can strengthen culinary tourism not only as an economic growth sector, but as a long-term urban cultural asset grounded in the city's particular culinary ecology.

5.2.2 Implication to Culinary Business Operators

For culinary business operators—including hotpot restaurants, street-food vendors, specialty eateries, and experiential dining providers—the findings of this study offer strategic guidance on how to enhance visitor satisfaction, strengthen destination image, and ultimately increase revisit intention. The results demonstrate that tourist satisfaction and perceived destination image are the most influential predictors of return behavior,

while qualitative evidence highlights that tourists' culinary experiences in Chongqing are shaped by sensory immersion, atmospheric vibrancy (yanhuoqi), communal dining rituals, procedural learning, authenticity cues, and historically grounded narratives. These insights underscore the need for operators to design and manage experiences that go beyond food quality alone, attending to the full sensory and cultural ecology of culinary consumption.

First, the strong indirect pathways linking culinary culture identity, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control to revisit intention through perceived destination image suggest that businesses should contribute actively to the construction of a coherent and distinctive Chongqing gastronomic image. This involves curating the sensory environment of culinary spaces: ensuring appropriate lighting, maintaining the characteristic “steam-and-heat” atmosphere associated with hotpot, integrating Chongqing-specific aesthetic elements, and crafting soundscapes that reflect local vibrancy. Operators who provide immersive, multi-sensory environments aligned with Chongqing's cultural identity help strengthen the cognitive image tourists form of the destination, which in turn enhances loyalty.

Second, the findings show that tourist satisfaction mediates the effects of cultural identity, attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control on revisit intention, indicating that operators must prioritize experiential quality as the core of business strategy. This includes offering consistently high-quality food, efficient service, and culturally embedded interactions. Because satisfaction is heavily shaped by the ritualistic and participatory nature of hotpot dining, businesses should facilitate communal engagement by offering clear guidance on cooking procedures, recommending ingredient combinations, and encouraging shared practices that reinforce social bonding. Training staff to provide culturally informed interaction—explaining sauce preparation, recommending local favorites, or offering stories tied to the restaurant's heritage—can further elevate experiential satisfaction.

Third, the qualitative insights reveal that tourists actively seek authenticity, using cues such as density of local customers, modest décor, visible food preparation, and everyday ambience to assess whether an experience feels “real.” Culinary operators should therefore strike a careful balance between commercial positioning and cultural authenticity. Over-stylization or excessive commercialization may weaken visitors' authenticity perception and thereby diminish satisfaction and loyalty. Maintaining

elements of everyday Chongqing culture—whether through retaining traditional cooking methods, preserving raw street-side aesthetics, or featuring local narratives in menu design—can strengthen the authenticity signals tourists rely upon when choosing where to dine.

Fourth, the moderation analysis demonstrates that price sensitivity significantly weakens the satisfaction–revisit intention relationship, meaning that even highly satisfying experiences may not lead to repeat visits if prices are perceived as misaligned with tourists' expectations of value or authenticity. For culinary operators, this necessitates thoughtful value management: providing transparent pricing, offering a range of price points to accommodate different customer segments, and clearly communicating the value proposition behind premium items. Aligning pricing structures with the perceived authenticity and everyday nature of Chongqing cuisine can mitigate the negative moderating effect of price sensitivity and sustain loyalty among more price-conscious guests.

Lastly, the findings suggest that tourists' cultural identity and social influences shape both their expectations and their evaluations of culinary experiences. Culinary operators should therefore engage in storytelling and cultural communication, collaborating with local communities to incorporate historical symbolism, neighborhood heritage, and localized narratives into branding and service delivery. Such narrative elements deepen cultural resonance and reinforce the emotional and cognitive mechanisms that support revisit intention.

5.2.3 Implication to Tourism Intermediaries

For tourism intermediaries—including travel agencies, online travel platforms (OTAs), food-themed tour designers, social media influencers, and content-curation platforms—the findings of this study provide important guidance on how to enhance the visibility, attractiveness and experiential coherence of Chongqing's culinary tourism offerings. The results indicate that perceived destination image and tourist satisfaction are the strongest predictors of revisit intention, while cultural identity, social norms and perceived behavioral control shape tourists' experiences indirectly through cognitive and affective pathways. These dynamics suggest that intermediaries play a pivotal role in shaping pre-visit expectations, guiding on-site behaviors, and influencing post-visit loyalty.

First, since perceived destination image exerts the strongest direct effect on revisit intention and mediates the influence of cultural identity, attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control, tourism intermediaries should strategically emphasize the multi-sensory, culturally saturated, and socially vibrant character of Chongqing's culinary landscape. Marketing materials, online campaigns and promotional storytelling should highlight elements that emerged as essential in the qualitative phase: sensory immersion, intense yanhuoqi (atmospheric vitality), communal hotpot rituals, historical narratives and authenticity cues. High-quality visual and narrative content—short videos, curated itineraries, influencer collaborations and AI-enhanced immersive media—can reinforce a coherent cognitive image of Chongqing as a unique culinary destination, enhancing tourists' expectations and increasing the likelihood of satisfaction and repeat visitation.

Second, intermediaries should help visitors navigate culinary environments, as perceived behavioral control significantly predicts destination image, satisfaction and revisit intention. This can be achieved by providing practical guidance on how to engage with Chongqing cuisine: instructions for hotpot procedures, sauce preparation tutorials, tips for selecting authentic local eateries, information about queueing norms, and guidance on managing spice levels. By reducing uncertainty and strengthening tourists' sense of competence, intermediaries enhance perceived behavioral control, which, according to the mediation results, also strengthens destination image and satisfaction in meaningful ways.

Third, because subjective norm significantly predicts satisfaction, destination image and revisit intention, tourism intermediaries should leverage the power of social endorsement and peer recommendation. User-generated content, community reviews, interactive culinary maps, and curated lists of “local favorites” can create a social validation environment in which tourists perceive Chongqing's culinary experiences as collectively endorsed and culturally meaningful. Platforms can amplify narratives around communal dining, insider culinary rituals, and culturally grounded practices that tourists wish to emulate. Such social amplification aligns well with the qualitative findings showing that group dynamics, peer influence and collective dining culture are central to how tourists interpret Chongqing's gastronomic identity.

Fourth, given that price sensitivity significantly moderates the satisfaction–revisit intention relationship, tourism intermediaries should assist visitors in building accurate price expectations. Clear price information, categorized recommendations for different

budget levels, and “value-for-money” indicators can minimize discrepancies between expected and perceived cost. Highlighting affordable but culturally rich dining options, particularly those aligned with authenticity cues identified in the qualitative phase, can support price-sensitive visitors in maintaining satisfaction-related loyalty. Helping tourists interpret the relationship between price, authenticity and cultural norms also reduces the likelihood that higher prices will undermine revisit intention.

Fifth, intermediaries can strengthen cultural identity formation by embedding culinary storytelling, historical symbolism and local narratives into pre-visit and on-site content. The qualitative findings showed that tourists construct culinary culture identity through sensory-narrative fusion and ritualistic immersion; intermediaries can therefore promote narrative-rich content—stories of hotpot's labor origins, neighborhood food histories, interviews with local cooks—to evoke cultural resonance even before tourists arrive. This enhances identification with Chongqing's culinary culture, which the structural results show contributes significantly to shaping destination image, satisfaction and revisit intention.

Finally, tourism intermediaries should integrate experience orchestration by aligning transportation information, dining routes, neighborhood exploration and cultural events into cohesive culinary itineraries. This orchestration not only reduces navigational uncertainty but also structures the visitor journey in ways that optimize the cognitive–affective mechanisms linked to loyalty. Experiences built around thematic food routes, night-time culinary streets, riverfront dining atmospheres or historic neighborhood tastescapes can enhance immersion and help visitors anchor gastronomic memories in place-specific cultural identities.

5.3 Limitation of the Study and Implications of Future Research

5.3.1 Limitation of The Present Research

Although this study provides meaningful insights into culinary tourism experience and revisit behavior in Chongqing, several limitations specific to the present research design should be acknowledged.

First, although the study adopts a mixed-method design, the integration between the qualitative and quantitative phases remains limited. The qualitative findings mainly informed construct refinement and the revision of selected measurement items, especially

in relation to culinary culture identity, perceived destination image, and tourist satisfaction. However, the study did not develop a more explicit joint display or a fully systematic theme-to-item mapping to demonstrate how each emergent qualitative theme was translated into the quantitative instrument and structural model. As a result, the qualitative and quantitative strands are complementary, but their integration is not fully elaborated.

Second, the role of perceived destination image in the model may involve a degree of conceptual overlap. In the present framework, perceived destination image is positioned both as a construct shaped by upstream variables and as a mediating mechanism linking those variables to tourist satisfaction and revisit intention. This specification was theoretically motivated, since destination image was understood as both an evaluative outcome and a cognitive filter in the formation of behavioral intention. Nevertheless, its dual role may still create ambiguity regarding whether it should be interpreted primarily as an antecedent, a mediator, or both. Although the empirical results support this configuration, the model may appear conceptually dense and require further clarification in future studies.

Third, some issues remain regarding the measurement purity of tourist satisfaction and price sensitivity. Although the tourist satisfaction scale was revised to better capture post-experience evaluation, there is still a possibility that respondents' answers incorporated not only satisfaction itself but also broader judgments about the importance or salience of culinary experience within the trip. Similarly, price sensitivity in this study was operationalized as price dependence in culinary choice and revisit-related decisions, rather than as perceived affordability or price fairness. Even so, some overlap in respondents' interpretation cannot be fully ruled out, and the construct may still be read partly in terms of affordability or price acceptability. These measurement issues do not negate the findings, but they suggest that the mediation and moderation results should be interpreted with appropriate caution.

5.3.2 Implications for Future Research

These limitations open several important directions for future research.

First, future studies should strengthen mixed-method integration by developing clearer links between qualitative themes and quantitative constructs. More explicit theme-to-item mapping, joint displays, or sequential explanatory designs could show more precisely how qualitative insights are transformed into measurement dimensions and

structural pathways. Such an approach would improve methodological transparency and allow stronger integration between experiential interpretation and model testing.

Second, future research should examine alternative model structures for perceived destination image in order to clarify its conceptual role. Comparative model testing could investigate whether destination image functions more appropriately as a mediator, an antecedent, or even a parallel mechanism alongside tourist satisfaction. This would help sharpen construct boundaries and provide a more parsimonious explanation of how destination-related cognition operates within culinary tourism behavior.

Third, future studies should refine the measurement of tourist satisfaction and price sensitivity to improve construct purity. Tourist satisfaction could be measured more strictly as post-consumption affective evaluation, with clearer separation from motivational salience or trip importance. Price sensitivity could also be operationalized with more distinct items that capture price dependence without overlapping with affordability, price fairness, or price acceptability. Further validation across different culinary tourism settings would help confirm the robustness of these constructs and improve the precision of future mediation and moderation analyses.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter drew together the theoretical, practical and methodological implications of the study in order to demonstrate the broader contribution of the research to culinary tourism scholarship. More importantly, it clarified the central knowledge claim generated by the thesis. The study shows that, in the context of Chongqing's culinary tourism, revisit intention is not directly or automatically produced by a general preference for food-related travel. Rather, it is formed through a layered process in which culturally grounded culinary identity, destination-specific cognitive evaluation, and post-experience affective judgment jointly shape behavioral commitment, while the final translation of satisfaction into revisit intention remains conditionally constrained by price sensitivity. In this sense, the study advances a more processual understanding of gastronomic loyalty by showing that culinary revisit behavior is culturally embedded, cognitively filtered, affectively confirmed, and economically conditioned.

From a theoretical perspective, the study contributes new knowledge by demonstrating that culinary tourism in Chongqing cannot be adequately explained through

conventional linear models of preference and intention. The qualitative findings reveal that tourists' culinary experiences are constructed through a distinctive integration of sensory immersion, atmospheric energy, communal dining rituals, procedural learning, historical symbolism, and authenticity seeking. These dimensions do not operate as isolated experiential attributes, but as an interconnected system through which tourists construct the taste of place. The quantitative results further show that this experiential system is translated into revisit intention mainly through perceived destination image and tourist satisfaction, rather than through culinary tourism attitude alone. Thus, the study refines current theoretical understanding by establishing that in an urban culinary destination such as Chongqing, loyalty emerges less from abstract attitudinal favorability and more from the sequential interplay of identity, image, satisfaction, and conditional value judgment.

This conclusion also allows the thesis to make a more specific contribution to the theory of planned behavior and related tourism behavior frameworks. The findings indicate that attitude does not directly predict revisit intention in the present context, suggesting that revisit is a higher-threshold behavioral outcome that requires stronger destination-specific confirmation than initial preference or general willingness to participate. At the same time, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control remain significant, but their effects are channeled through destination image and satisfaction in ways that highlight the social, cultural, and performative nature of culinary tourism. As a result, the study proposes that behavioral intention in culinary tourism should be understood not as an immediate product of internal preference, but as the outcome of a hierarchical evaluative process. This represents a meaningful theoretical extension because it shows that in culturally dense tourism settings, intention formation is more layered, situational, and mediated than classical formulations typically assume.

From a contextual perspective, the thesis also demonstrates why Chongqing matters as more than a convenient empirical case. The findings suggest that the mechanisms identified here are closely tied to the city's particular culinary ecology, namely the interaction of mountain-city spatial form, spicy-hot culinary symbolism, hotpot's collective ritual structure, and the dense night-time foodscape associated with yanhuoqi. These place-specific features shape how tourists interpret authenticity, how they form destination image, and how they convert experience into loyalty. The study therefore adds knowledge not only about culinary tourism in general, but about how a specific

Chinese urban gastronomic setting produces a distinctive loyalty mechanism. In this respect, the thesis contributes a case-based but theoretically meaningful explanation of how local cultural form shapes tourist behavior.

From a practical perspective, the chapter has shown that the implications of the study extend beyond general calls to improve service or strengthen promotion. The findings indicate that local governments, culinary business operators, and tourism intermediaries should prioritize those experiential and symbolic elements that were found to be most consequential for loyalty formation, including cultural identity cues, atmospheric vitality, participatory dining ritual, coherent destination image, and differentiated pricing logic. This means that the practical contribution of the thesis lies in identifying not only what stakeholders should do, but why these actions matter in the specific behavioral mechanism uncovered by the study. Culinary tourism competitiveness in Chongqing depends not simply on attracting first-time consumption, but on sustaining the cultural, social, and evaluative conditions under which satisfaction can be converted into revisit intention.

At the same time, the chapter acknowledged important limitations concerning mixed-method integration, the dual role of perceived destination image, and the measurement purity of tourist satisfaction and price sensitivity. These limitations do not diminish the value of the thesis, but instead define the boundary conditions of its contribution and point toward more refined future inquiry. Future research may strengthen the present framework through clearer mixed-method integration, alternative structural specifications, and more precise measurement development.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

Interview Protocol (English version)

Appendix A. Interview Protocol (English version)



Rattanakosin International College of Creative Entrepreneurship
Of Rajamangala University of Technology, Rattanakosin

Section 1. Participant Background

Q1. Could you briefly introduce yourself? For example, where you are from, your travel purpose, and whether this is your first time visiting Chongqing. During your trip, what kinds of food-related activities did you take part in (e.g., eating at local restaurants, visiting food streets, attending food festivals, taking part in cooking or tasting events)?

……...
……...
……...

Section 2. Cultural Elements of Culinary Experience

Q2. In your opinion, what cultural elements best represent Chongqing's culinary culture (for example, flavors, cooking methods, presentation, dining rituals, or local stories)?

……...
……...
……...

Q3. Can you describe one specific food experience in Chongqing that you felt captured the essence of its culture?

……...
……...
……...

Q4. What makes Chongqing's culinary culture feel authentic or different from other places you have visited?

……...

……...

……...

Q5. How do local traditions, social customs, or historical stories influence your understanding or appreciation of Chongqing's cuisine?

……...

……...

……...

Section 3. Tourist Experience and Satisfaction

Q6. Which aspects of Chongqing's culinary experience gave you the most satisfaction or enjoyment?

……...

……...

……...

Q7. Were there any elements that reduced your satisfaction (e.g., pricing, accessibility, service quality)?

……...

……...

……...

Q8. How do you feel the cultural aspects—such as atmosphere, collective dining, or symbolic meanings—affect your overall dining experience?

……...

……...

……...

Section 4. Revisit Intention and Behavioral Tendencies

Q9. What aspects of Chongqing's culinary culture would make you want to revisit the city in the future?

……...

……...

……...

Q10. How do cultural experiences such as hotpot gatherings, night markets, or food festivals influence your desire to come back?

……...

……...

……...

Q11. Would you recommend Chongqing's culinary experiences to others? Why or why not?

……...

……...

……...

Section 5. Cultural Transmission and Social Interaction

Q12. How do you usually share your culinary experiences (e.g., word-of-mouth, social media, posting pictures or reviews)?

……...

……...

……...

Q13. In your opinion, how do such sharing activities help spread or reshape Chongqing's culinary culture among other tourists?

……...

……...

……...

Section 6. Reflection and Closing

Q14. What do you think are the main strengths of Chongqing's culinary culture?

……...

……...

……...

Q15. What challenges or improvements do you think could make the culinary experience more meaningful for tourists?

……...

……...

……...

Q16. Is there anything else about Chongqing's culinary culture or your experiences that we haven't discussed but you feel is important to mention?

……...

……...

……...

APPENDIX B

Interview Protocol (Chinese version)

Appendix B. Interview Protocol (Chinese version)



拉达那哥欣国际创意创业学院

拉加曼加拉理工大学拉达那科欣

第一部分：受访者基本信息

Q1. 请您简单介绍一下自己,例如您的居住地、此次来重庆的主要目的、是否为首次来访等。

……

……

……

Q2. 在此次重庆之行中,您主要参与了哪些与美食相关的活动？例如：在本地餐馆用餐、参观美食街、参加美食节或烹饪体验等。

……

……

……

第二部分：美食体验的文化要素

Q3. 在您看来,哪些文化元素最能代表重庆的美食文化？（如：味觉特色、烹饪方法、菜品呈现方式、就餐习俗、文化象征或地方故事等）

……

……

……

Q4. 您能否分享一个让您印象深刻、最能体现重庆文化特色的美食体验？

……

……

……

Q5. 您觉得重庆的美食文化有哪些地方让您感受到“正宗”或“独特”？

……

……

……

Q6. 您认为当地的传统、历史或民间故事,在塑造您对重庆美食文化的理解中起到了怎样的作用？

……

……

……

第三部分：游客体验与满意度

Q7. 在重庆的美食体验中,哪些方面让您感到最满意或最愉快？

……

……

……

Q8. 是否有一些因素让您的美食体验不够理想？（例如价格、交通便利性、服务质量等）

……

……

……

Q9. 您觉得重庆美食中的文化因素——比如热闹的用餐氛围、集体就餐习惯、象征意义等——对您的整体满意度有多大影响？

……

……

……

第四部分：再访意向与行为倾向

Q10. 您认为重庆的哪些美食文化特征最能吸引您再次前来？

……

……

……

Q11. 您觉得像火锅文化、美食节、夜市等体验,是否会增强您再次来重庆的意愿？为什么？

……

……

……

Q12. 您是否愿意向他人推荐重庆的美食体验？如果愿意,原因是什么？

……

……

……

第五部分：文化传播与社会互动

Q13. 您通常会以何种方式分享在重庆的美食体验？（如口碑推荐、社交媒体发布、美食照片或评论分享等）

……

……

……

Q14. 您认为这种分享行为是否有助于让更多人了解或传播重庆的美食文化？

第六部分：反思与总结

……

……

……

Q15. 您认为重庆美食文化最大的优势或亮点是什么？

……

……

……

Q16. 您觉得在提升游客的美食文化体验方面,还有哪些需要改进或加强的地方？

……

……

……

Q17. 关于重庆的美食文化或您的个人体验,还有哪些我们没有提到,但您认为值得补充的内容吗？

……

……

……

APPENDIX C

Questionnaire (English version)

APPENDIX C. Questionnaire (English version)

Rattanakosin International College of Creative Entrepreneurship
Of Rajamangala University of Technology, Rattanakosin

Hello, and thank you for taking the time to participate in this questionnaire. This survey will take approximately 5 minutes to complete. The purpose of this study is to examine the key factors that influence tourists' and revisit intention in the context of culinary tourism in Chongqing. Your responses will offer valuable insights that support the sustainable development of Chongqing' s culinary tourism and contribute to academic research in tourism behavior. The questionnaire is structured into ten sections: Part 1: Basic Information; Part 2: Culinary Culture Identity; Part 3: Perceived Destination Image; Part 4: Culinary Tourism Attitude; Part 5: Subjective Norm; Part 6: Perceived Behavioral Control; Part 7: Tourist Satisfaction; Part 8: Revisit Intention; Part 9: Price Sensitivity. All information collected will be kept strictly confidential and used solely for research purposes. Your honest feedback is greatly appreciated. Thank you again for your valuable contribution!

The instruction of the questionnaire:

Instruction: Please check ✓ in the ☐ and fill form all data with your information truly.

Part 1 Basic Information

1. Gender:

☐ Male

☐ Female

2. Age:

☐ under 25 ☐ 26-40

☐ 41-60 ☐ 61 and above

3. Education Level:

☐ Junior College Students ☐ Undergraduate

☐ Graduate ☐ Others (please specify)

4. Household Income (per month in RMB):

☐ Below 5,000 ☐ 5,000 - 10,000

☐ 10,001 - 20,000 ☐ Above 20,000

5. In 2024, have you traveled to Chongqing?

☐ yes (Do further)

☐ No (Stop doing the rest of questionnaire)

6. In 2024, have you participated in any food-related activities during your visit to Chongqing (e.g., tasting local dishes like hotpot or noodles, visiting culinary districts, attending food festivals, joining cooking classes, or exploring local markets)?

☐ yes (Do further)

☐ No (Stop doing the rest of questionnaire)

7. In 2024, how many times have you visited Chongqing?

☐ Once ☐ Twice

☐ Three times ☐ More

8. In 2024, which districts in Chongqing have you visited for culinary tourism? (Multiple selections possible)

☐ Yuzhong District ☐ Jiangbei District ☐ Shapingba District

☐ Nan'an District ☐ Wanzhou District ☐ Qianjiang District

☐ Rongchang District ☐ Fuling District ☐ Jiangjin District

☐ Hechuan District ☐ Others (please specify) _____

9. In 2024, what local Chongqing foods do you like the most? (Multiple selections possible)

☐ Chongqing Hotpot ☐ Chongqing Noodles

☐ Chaoshou (Dumplings) ☐ Shancheng Small Glutinous Rice Balls

☐ Guaiwei Broad Beans ☐ Mao Xuewang (Spicy Blood Curd Soup)

☐ Wanzhou Grilled Fish ☐ Qianjiang Chicken Giblets

☐ Rongchang Marinated White Goose ☐ Fuling Fermented Rice with Oil

☐ Fuling Pickled Mustard ☐ Jiangjin Spicy Chicken

☐ Hechuan Peach Slices ☐ Others (please specify) _____

10. What aspects of Chongqing cuisine attract you the most? (Multiple selections possible)

☐ Spicy and flavorful taste ☐ Authenticity and cultural heritage

☐ Unique cooking techniques ☐ Variety and richness of ingredients

☐ Street food experience ☐ Restaurant dining atmosphere

☐ Affordability and value for money ☐ Others (please specify) _____

11. In 2024, how much did you spend on food during your visit to Chongqing?

☐ Below 200 RMB ☐ 201 - 500 RMB

☐ 501 - 1000 RMB ☐ Above 1000 RMB

Part 2 Culinary Culture Identity

(Please draw a ✓ 1-5 below the score that suits you to indicate 'strongly disagree strongly agree')

Items	1	2	3	4	5
CCI1: Chongqing's culinary culture is meaningfully connected to my daily life					
CCI2: I can recall meaningful memories associated with my culinary experiences in Chongqing.					

Items	1	2	3	4	5
CCI3: Thinking about Chongqin' s culinary feels like a part of who I am.					
CCI4: I miss the traditional rituals and dining practices embedded in Chongqing's culinary culture.					
CCI5: I feel proud of Chongqing's culinary culture and traditions.					
CCI6: I feel a strong emotional connection to Chongqing's culinary culture.					
CCI7: I am familiar with the traditional culinary rituals and customs of Chongqing.					
CCI8: I will recommend Chongqing's culinary culture and food experiences to others.					
CCI9: I intend to revisit Chongqing to experience its culinary again in the future.					
CCI10: I will share positive comments about Chongqing's culinary culture with others.					
CE1: Culinary experiences in Chongqing involve intense and distinctive sensory stimulation					
CE2: Dining in Chongqing reflects a vivid and lively everyday local atmosphere					
CE3: Culinary experiences in Chongqing facilitate social interaction and shared participation					
CE4: Traditional dining practices in Chongqing emphasize ritualized and communal procedures					
CE5: Chongqing's cuisine conveys historical narratives and collective urban memory					
CE6: Authentic culinary experiences in Chongqing are perceived as locally endorsed rather than commercialized					

Part 3 Perceived Destination Image

(Please draw a ✓ 1-5 below the score that suits you to indicate 'strongly disagree strongly agree')

Items	1	2	3	4	5
PDI1: Local residents and food vendors in Chongqing are friendly and hospitable.					
PDI2: Chongqing offers appealing and distinctive local cuisine with authentic flavors.					
PDI3: Chongqing provides comfortable dining environments and suitable accommodations for tourists.					
PDI4: Chongqing has convenient infrastructure and transportation that facilitate access to culinary areas.					
PDI5: Chongqing offers diverse food-related entertainment and cultural experiences.					
PDI6: I am willing to share positive opinions about Chongqing's cuisine with others.					

Part 4 Culinary Tourism Attitude

(Please draw a ✓ 1-5 below the score that suits you to indicate 'strongly disagree strongly agree')

Items	1	2	3	4	5
CTA1: Travelling to culinary destinations in Chongqing is enjoyable.					
CTA2: Travelling to culinary destinations in Chongqing is a wise choice.					
CTA3: Travelling to culinary destinations in Chongqing enriches my cultural experiences.					
CTA4: Travelling to culinary destinations in Chongqing is attractive.					

Part 5 Subjective Norm

(Please draw a ✓ 1-5 below the score that suits you to indicate 'strongly disagree strongly agree')

Items	1	2	3	4	5
SN1: Most people who are important to me think that I should travel to culinary destinations in Chongqing.					
SN2: Most people who are important to me expect me to travel to culinary destinations in Chongqing.					
SN3: My close friends support my decision to travel to culinary destinations in Chongqing.					
SN4: People around me generally approve of travelling to culinary destinations in Chongqing.					

Part 6 Perceived Behavioral Control

(Please draw a ✓ 1-5 below the score that suits you to indicate 'strongly disagree strongly agree')

Items	1	2	3	4	5
PBC1: Whether or not, travelling to culinary destinations in Chongqing is completely up to me.					
PBC2: I am confident that if I want to, I can travel to culinary destinations in Chongqing.					
PBC3: I have the resources, time, and opportunities to travel to culinary destinations in Chongqing.					

Part 7 Tourist Satisfaction

(Please draw a ✓ 1-5 below the score that suits you to indicate 'strongly disagree strongly agree')

Items	1	2	3	4	5
TS1: I am satisfied with the culinary experiences I had in Chongqing.					
TS2: The culinary experiences in Chongqing were enjoyable.					

Items	1	2	3	4	5
TS3: The culinary experiences in Chongqing met my expectations.					
TS4: Overall, I feel satisfied with Chongqing as a culinary tourism experience.					

Part 8 Revisit Intention

(Please draw a ✓ 1-5 below the score that suits you to indicate 'strongly disagree strongly agree')

Items	1	2	3	4	5
RI1: I would love to revisit Chongqing to experience its unique food culture again.					
RI2: I plan to return to Chongqing in the near future primarily for its culinary offerings.					
RI3: I will recommend Chongqing to family and friends as a must-visit destination for food lovers.					

Part 9 Price Sensitivity

(Please draw a ✓ 1-5 below the score that suits you to indicate 'strongly disagree strongly agree')

Items	1	2	3	4	5
PS1: I am more likely to choose culinary experiences in Chongqing when they are on sale.					
PS2: I am likely to choose the lowest priced culinary experiences in Chongqing that will suit my needs.					
PS3: When it comes to choosing culinary experiences in Chongqing, I rely heavily on price.					

APPENDIX D

Questionnaire (Chinese version)

APPENDIX D. Questionnaire (Chinese version)



拉达那哥欣国际创意创业学院

拉加曼加拉理工大学拉达那科欣

您好,感谢您抽出宝贵时间参与本次问卷调查。本问卷预计用时约 5 分钟。本研究旨在探讨影响游客在重庆美食旅游背景下重游行为的关键因素。您的回答将为重庆美食旅游的可持续发展提供宝贵的见解,并为旅游行为的学术研究作出积极贡献。本问卷共分为十个部分：第 1 部分：基本信息；第 2 部分：美食文化；第 3 部分：美食旅游目的地形象；第 4 部分：美食旅游态度；第 5 部分：主观规范；第 6 部分：感知行为控制；第 7 部分：游客满意度；第 8 部分：重游意愿；第 9 部分：价格敏感度。所有收集的信息将严格保密,仅用于科研目的。我们非常感谢您真实而宝贵的反馈。再次感谢您的参与与支持!

问卷说明：

说明：请在 ☐ 中勾选 ✓,并真实填写所有数据。

第 1 部分：基本信息

1. 您的性别?

☐ 男

☐ 女

2. 您的年龄?

☐ 25 岁以下　　☐ 26-40 岁

☐ 41-60 岁　　☐ 61 岁以上

3.您的受教育水平是什么？

☐ 大专生　　☐ 本科生

☐ 研究生　　☐ 其他（请注明）

4. 家庭月收入（人民币）：

☐ 5,000 元以下　　☐ 5,000 - 10,000 元

☐ 10,001 - 20,000 元　　☐ 20,000 元以上

5. 您是否去过重庆旅游吗？

☐ 是（继续回答）

☐ 否（停止回答）

6. 在您访问重庆期间,您是否参与过任何与食物相关的活动（比如品尝当地美食,如火锅或小面,参观美食街,参加美食节,参加烹饪课程,或者逛当地市场）？

☐ 是（继续回答）

☐ 否（停止回答）

7. 您到重庆旅游的次数：

☐ 一次　　☐ 两次

☐ 三次　　☐ 更多

8. ,您曾到访重庆哪些地区进行美食旅游？（可多选）

☐ 渝中区　　☐ 江北区　　☐ 沙坪坝区

☐ 南岸区　　☐ 万州区　　☐ 黔江区

☐ 荣昌区　　☐ 涪陵区　　☐ 江津区

☐ 合川区　　☐ 其他（请注明）_____

9. 您最喜欢您曾体验过的哪些重庆特色美食？（可多选）

☐ 重庆火锅　☐ 重庆小面

☐ 抄手（饺子）　☐ 山城小汤圆

☐ 怪味胡豆　☐ 毛血旺

☐ 万州烤鱼　☐ 黔江鸡杂

☐ 荣昌卤白鹅　☐ 涪陵油酆糟

☐ 涪陵榨菜　☐ 江津辣子鸡

☐ 合川桃片　☐ 其他（请注明）_____

10. 重庆美食最吸引您的方面是什么？（可多选）

☐ 辣味浓郁、　☐ 感丰富

☐ 传统文化与地方特色　☐ 独特的烹饪技艺

☐ 食材种类丰富　☐ 地道的街头美食体验

☐ 餐厅的氛围和环境　☐ 价格实惠,性价比高

☐ 其他（请注明）_____

11. 您在重庆美食消费的金额是多少？

☐ 200 元以下　☐ 201 - 500 元

☐ 501 - 1000 元　☐ 1000 元以上

第 2 部分：美食文化认同

（请在适合您的分数下方画 ✓ ,1-5 表示"非常不同意——非常同意"）。

项目	1	2	3	4	5
CCI1：重庆的美食文化与我的日常生活紧密相连。					
CCI2：我能回忆起与我在重庆的美食经历相关的美好回忆。					
CCI3：想到重庆的美食让我感觉像是自身的一部分。					

项目	1	2	3	4	5
CCI4：我怀念重庆美食文化中融入的传统仪式和用餐方式。					
CCI5：我对重庆的美食文化及其传统感到自豪。					
CCI6：我对重庆的美食文化有着强烈的情感联系。					
CCI7：我熟悉重庆的传统烹饪仪式和习俗。					
CCI8：我会向他人推荐重庆的美食文化及美食体验。					
CCI9：我打算将来再次访问重庆,体验那里的饮食文化。					
CCI10：我会向他人分享关于重庆饮食文化的积极评价。					
CE1:重庆的美食体验具有强烈而独特的感官刺激					
CE2:在重庆用餐体现出鲜活而热闹的日常生活氛围					
CE3:重庆的美食体验促进社会互动与共享参与					
CE4:重庆的传统饮食实践强调仪式化与群体性的用餐程序					
CE5:重庆美食承载着历史叙事与城市集体记忆					
CE6:真实的重庆美食体验被认为是本地化认可的,而非商业化的					

第 3 部分：感知目的地形象

（请在适合您的分数下方画 ✓ ,1-5 表示"非常不同意——非常同意"）。

项目	1	2	3	4	5
PDI1: 重庆的当地居民和食品商贩友好且热情。					
PDI2: 重庆提供富有吸引力和独特的地方美食,具有正宗的风味。					
PDI3: 重庆为游客提供舒适的用餐环境和合适的住宿设施。					
PDI4: 重庆拥有便捷的基础设施和交通,方便前往美食区域。					
PDI5: 重庆提供多样的与美食相关的娱乐和文化体验。					
PDI6: 我愿意与他人分享关于重庆美食的积极意见。					

第 4 部分：美食旅游态度

（请在适合您的分数下方画 ✓ ,1-5 表示"非常不同意——非常同意"）。

项目	1	2	3	4	5
CTA1：前往重庆的美食旅游目的地是一种愉快的体验。					
CTA2：前往重庆的美食旅游目的地是一个明智的选择。					
CTA3：前往重庆的美食旅游目的地丰富了我的文化体验。					
CTA4：前往重庆的美食旅游目的地具有吸引力。					

第 5 部分：主观规范

（请在适合您的分值下方画 ✓ ,1-5,表示 "非常不同意——非常同意"）。

项目	1	2	3	4	5
SN1：对我来说重要的人认为我应该去重庆的美食目的地旅行。					
SN2：对我来说重要的人希望我去重庆的美食目的地旅行。					
SN3：我的亲密朋友支持我前往重庆的美食旅游目的地的决定。					
SN4：我周围的人普遍赞成我前往重庆的美食旅游目的地。					

第 6 部分：感知行为控制

(请在适合您的分值下方画 ✓ ,1-5,表示 "非常不同意——非常同意"）。

项目	1	2	3	4	5
PBC1：无论是否能去,去重庆的美食目的地旅行完全取决于我。					
PBC2：我相信如果我想去,我可以去重庆的美食目的地旅行。					
PBC3：我有足够的资源、时间和机会去重庆的美食目的地旅行。					

第 7 部分： 游客满意度

(请在适合您的分值下方画 ✓ 1-5,表示 ″非常不同意——非常同意″）。

项目	1	2	3	4	5
TS1.我对在重庆的美食体验感到满意。					
TS2.重庆的美食体验让我感到愉快。					
TS3.重庆的美食体验符合我的预期。					

第 8 部分：重游意愿

(请在适合您的分值下方画 ✓ 1-5,表示 ″非常不同意——非常同意″）。

项目	1	2	3	4	5
RI1：我很乐意再次前往重庆,重新体验其独特的美食文化。					
RI2：我计划在不久的将来再次到重庆,主要是为了其美食。					
RI3：我会向家人和朋友推荐重庆作为美食爱好者必去的目的地。					

第 9 部分：价格敏感度

(请在适合您的分值下方画 ✓ 1-5,表示 ″非常不同意——非常同意″）。

项目	1	2	3	4	5
PS1.当有促销时,我更倾向于选择重庆的美食体验。					
PS2.在重庆,我倾向于选择能够满足我需求的价格最低的美食体验。					
PS3.在选择重庆的美食体验时,我在很大程度上依赖价格。					

APPENDIX E

Publication of Journal during Ph.D. Study

APPENDIX E. Publication of Journal during Ph.D. Study

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Article

Constructing the Taste of Place Through Cultural Immersion: A Grounded Theory Study of Culinary Tourism Experiences

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Abstract

This study aimed to immerse itself in the most important cultural aspects that tourists see as the main part of their food experience in Chongqing, a city with an active culinary life. We used semi-structured and in-depth interviews with 50 tourists who had recent culinary travel experience in Chongqing. The interview data were systematized with the grounded theory coding process. It was found that six essential themes characterizing the cultural climate of the culinary experience in Chongqing can be taken as Sensory Immersion, Atmospheric Energy (Yanhuoqi), Communal Dining, Procedural Knowledge, Historical Symbolism, and Authenticity Seeking. The research adds a multi-dimensional and granular paradigm for perceiving cultural aspects of a food destination. Through the deconstruction of the taste of place, it gives detailed, contextual information about the manner in which the tourists both interpret and experience food culture. The results have profound practical implications for both destination marketers in relation to the manner in which they can develop powerful cultural narratives and to policymakers on the role of maintaining intangible culinary heritage.

Keywords: Chongqing; culinary tourism; cultural elements; grounded theory; taste of place; tourist experience

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1. Introduction

The modern global society has turned tourism into a mass leisure activity and transformed it into a cultural experience whereby tourists are looking to get a more authentic and participatory experience that makes them feel part of a package (Yu et al., 2025). Culinary tourism or food tourism is one of the most potent and quickly developing types of niche tourism (Yıkmış et al., 2024). It can be described as the intention to seek distinctive and memorable eating and drinking experiences, which not only involve the consumption of food but also the study of the production of said food, its history, and its cultural context (Vuksanović et al., 2024). Food has gone beyond the essential physiological role and serves as a primary tourist attraction, travel driving force, one of the main elements of destination image, and an essential means of cultural exchange (Mohamed et al., 2025).

Chongqing is a city that has an exceptionally rich and unique food culture within the context of the world. Chongqing is a major municipality in southwestern China and a well-established culinary hub within the broader Sichuan (Chuan) gastronomic region. In Chinese cultural contexts, food culture constitutes a key dimension of everyday life and place identity, where shared dining practices, embodied routines, and local narratives connect taste with social belonging and historical meaning. This context makes Chongqing

an appropriate site for examining how tourists construct a "taste of place" through cultural immersion, beyond purely sensory or economic accounts. Since it is one of the main Sichuan (Chuan) cuisine (Chuancai) representatives, its culinary products serve as one of its pillars and an enormous tourist attraction (Gan, 2024). The city's food tourism market is very large; the market size of the Chongqing hotpot industry was over 72 billion RMB in 2024, which is a component of the hundred billion-level food tourism market that promotes major economic growth and development (People's Daily Online, 2024). The city has more than 80 million tourist journeys in peak tourist seasons such as the summer vacation, and many of them have been drawn to the food sector (Fan & Apritado, 2025). The significance of this is accepted and enhanced by robust policy backing. The municipal government of Chongqing has also been keen on marketing the city as a world gastronomy enclave, launching campaigns like the "Implementation Opinions on Promotion of the Construction of Food City" (Chen et al., 2023). The policies have led to the creation of food-focused festivals such as the Chongqing Hotpot festival and the establishment of food streets, which are all aimed at improving the culinary beauty and infrastructure of the city.

Chongqing cuisine is not of taste, but an indication of the geographical features, the history, and the strong sense of spirit and passion of its people, which is fiery and numbing in flavor profile (X. Li & Srijinda, 2025). Even the legendary common food, the communal hotpot, is closely connected to the life and social traditions in Chongqing, and so the numerous bowls of spicy noodles (xiaomian) make this region a worthwhile place to visit among food-adventure travelers. Because culinary experiences are enacted through on-site hospitality encounters and jointly shaped by tourists and destination actors, understanding how tourists interpret cultural cues in food settings is directly relevant to Tourism and Hospitality research on experience co-creation and destination value formation (Carvalho & Alves, 2023).

Although a large amount of literature exists on culinary tourism, there has been a large gap in our knowledge of the cultural aspects of the tourism experience. The available literature has been mostly concentrated on the quantitative explanations of the motivation of tourists (Lin et al., 2025), their satisfaction levels (Y. Zhong & Moon, 2020), intention to behave (Jiang et al., 2024), and the qualities of food themselves (e.g., taste, quality, price) (He et al., 2022). Although these sources provide useful information, they tend to observe culture as a homogeneous or peripheral factor and do not disaggregate what is actually involved in cultural aspects by the tourist. The connective linking of the senses, social, historical and symbolic factors that come into play to produce a rich and distinctive food experience is often brushed off or oversimplified. To address this gap, the study is guided by one overarching research question, specified through three sub-questions:

RQ1: What cultural elements do tourists identify as central to their culinary travel experiences in a food destination?

RQ2: How do these elements cluster into higher-order themes, and what relationships or structure among themes emerge through grounded-theory coding?

RQ3: How do the resulting themes shape tourists' construction of the "taste of place" and perceived authenticity, and what implications follow for destination storytelling and culinary-heritage safeguarding?

With the answer to this question coming through the deep qualitative investigation, this paper will eliminate all superficial analyses and offer a densely textured analysis of the taste of place as lived/cultural experience.

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2. Literature Review

2.1. Culinary Tourism and the Tourist Experience

Culinary tourism is a complex phenomenon, which over the last twenty years has received a lot of scholarly coverage. Previously considered as an auxiliary attribute of travel, it is currently becoming one of the main travel incentives and one of the main elements in the end destination experience (Anton Martin et al., 2021; Sojasi Qeidari & Hosseini Kahnooj, 2024). The culinary tourism sector is gravitational, and it includes such activities as visiting nice restaurants and local food markets; taking cooking courses; participating in food festivals; and visiting food production farms (Vuksanović et al., 2024). Primarily, it is a pursuit of both sensual enjoyment through sensations and culturally educational experiences.

The tourist experience is one of the themes that has been of key concern in the study of tourism. The experience economy conceived by Tang et al. (2025) is an influential work, which postulates that memorable experiences emerge when a business engages a customer in an emotional, physical, intellectual, or even spiritual aspect. They suggested four worlds of experience, including entertainment, education, escapism and estheticism, which are easily implicated to culinary tourism. Visiting a busy Chongqing food market can be entertaining, a cooking lesson can prove to be informative, one can escape by plunging in local peresohan culture, and the art of dish presentation can be aesthetic (Cheshmehzangi, 2025). That framework emphasizes that the attitude toward the culinary experience is not only about the food you are eating but the holistic multi-sensory experience. This was later developed in other studies, in which it is clear that the tourist experience is co-created with various objects of the destination setting, in which value is derived based on the interaction between the tourist and these objects (Carvalho & Alves, 2023). As a culinary tourist, this implies that the food company is not the only factor in the profile, as the physical environment, the social environment, as well as the history, anticipations, and perceptions of the tourist also contribute to the profile (Park & Widyanta, 2022). It is such an interactive and subjective quality of the experience that highlights the necessity of the qualitative methods, in which the fineness and multiplicity of the experience can be revealed.

2.2. The Cultural Dimensions of the Culinary Experience

In comparison to the sensory and economic dimensions of culinary tourism, which are well-researched, the cultural side of the subject is a more abstract and multifaceted phenomenon to study (Y. Li & Jiang, 2025). Culture, in this regard, is not a fixed background but a dynamic part of the very experience of it. It serves in various functions: both as the object of desire in its own right (e.g., the distinctive flavor profile of mala of Chongqing), as the setting of the experience (e.g., the social rules of the community hotpot meal), and as the means of interaction and meaning-making (X. Li & Srijinda, 2025).

Most notably, although much argued, authenticity has been at the fore. The ways in which tourists seek and experience authenticity in food, be it on a traditional recipe basis (objective authenticity), a sense of belonging to another culture (existential authenticity), or on an experience and feeling that reflects on the self-identity (Chua et al., 2025; Prayag et al., 2022). But authenticity is a dynamic phenomenon, which is socially constructed, and what one tourist would consider authentic, another would consider artificial (Rickly & Canavan, 2024). One more important aspect is localness or the affiliation of the food to a particular place. It involves the utilization of regional foods, the indigenous recipes and the integration of food into the local social culture. Every quest for localness can be considered as an opposition to globalization of the food culture, and it is the desire to have something unique and place-specific (S. Zhong, 2025). The other cultural factors that have been observed are tradition, history and socialization. Food may be playing a role of

Historical Symbolism, a carrier of cultural identity. Another important cultural element that has an effect on the whole experience is the social context of a meal, like who one dines with and in what way. Nevertheless, these aspects are usually examined separately (Jayasinghe et al., 2025). There has also been no systematic and comprehensive examination done of how all these various cultural threads are combined in the mind of the tourist to create a culinary experience that is coherent and meaningful. This paper seeks to fill this gap by examining how these factors combine with each other in a bottom-up manner by looking at the experiences of the tourists themselves.

2.3. A Preliminary Analytical Framework

Drawing on the literature synthesized in Sections 2.1 and 2.2, we proposed a preliminary, sensitizing analytical framework to guide initial analytic attention to the cultural dimensions of culinary tourism experiences (Carvalho & Alves, 2023; Park & Widyanta, 2022). According to this framework, the cultural experience of culinary tourism may be multi-dimensional and may include:

- Sensory Dimension: The care, hearing, scent, and general atmosphere in the dining area.
- Social Dimension: The eating practices, customs, and rituals.
- Authenticity Dimension: The opportunity to view the food and experience as something authentic, traditional, and place-based.

It is not a prescriptive framework, but a sensitizing one to be used when undertaking the data analysis process, and it enables the development of themes, per se, based on the stories told by the participants, while still being guided by the research question.

3. Methodology

Since the research questions are exploratory and theory-building in nature, this study adopted an interpretivist paradigm and employed a grounded theory design following the systematic procedures summarized by White and Cooper (2022). Grounded theory was selected because the primary aim is not to test pre-specified hypotheses, but to generate a substantive explanation from participants' accounts regarding how tourists identify, interpret, and integrate cultural features within culinary experiences (Devajit & Haradhan Kumar, 2022). This approach is well-suited to capturing the complexity and situated meanings embedded in lived phenomena such as the "taste of place."

3.1. Sampling and Interview Delivery

Purposive and snowball sampling were used to recruit tourists who had visited Chongqing and regarded food as a major component of their trip. Snowball sampling was initiated from a small set of purposively recruited seed participants. After each interview, participants were asked to refer two or three additional tourists who met the same inclusion criteria. All referrals were screened using the same criteria before scheduling interviews. Recruitment was monitored to avoid reliance on a single social circle and to maintain diversity in visit frequency and home cities. Sampling was closed when additional interviews no longer produced substantively new concepts at the category level, and this stopping rule resulted in 50 completed interviews. Data collection was conducted over a four-week period (e.g., 1–28 May 2025). In total, 50 semi-structured, in-depth interviews were completed, and participants were assigned anonymous identifiers (P1–P50). To maximize feasibility and participant comfort, interviews were delivered in a hybrid format: 30 interviews were conducted face-to-face in quiet public settings (e.g., cafés or hotel lounges) in Chongqing, and 20 interviews were conducted online via Tencent

Meeting/WeChat video calls. Interviews were conducted in Mandarin Chinese, typically lasting 35–70 min (mean ≈ 52 min).

A semi-structured interview guide was used to ensure comparability while allowing participants to elaborate on personally salient experiences. The guide focused on tourists' concrete episodes of dining and meaning-making, covering: (1) sensory and atmospheric impressions of food spaces (e.g., heat, steam, soundscape, crowding, and "yanhuoqi"); (2) social and communal dining practices (e.g., hotpot sharing and interaction with companions or locals); (3) procedural dining knowledge and embodied participation (e.g., ordering, sauce-mixing, ingredient sequencing, etiquette); (4) stories, symbols, and historical associations attached to dishes or venues; and (5) authenticity evaluations and decision strategies (e.g., how participants judged "real Chongqing" and avoided overly commercialized tourist spaces). With informed consent, all interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim by a professional transcription service. The final dataset comprised approximately 170,000 words of interview transcripts, which formed the basis for grounded-theory analysis.

3.2. Data Analysis and Coding Procedure

Data analysis followed the core grounded-theory sequence of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Devajit & Haradhan Kumar, 2022; White & Cooper, 2022). First, transcripts were coded line-by-line during open coding to generate initial concepts, combining in vivo codes with researcher-generated labels. Second, constant comparison was applied to examine similarities and differences across incidents, refine properties and dimensions, and cluster concepts into higher-order conceptual categories. Third, axial coding was used to relate categories to each other around a central phenomenon by applying a coding paradigm (conditions, context, actions/interactions, and consequences), thereby strengthening category integration and explanatory coherence. Finally, selective coding was conducted to identify a core category that integrated the main categories into a coherent analytic story explaining how tourists construct a "taste of place" through cultural immersion.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the analytic workflow proceeded from transcripts to concepts and then to progressively higher levels of abstraction. In this study, open coding generated 1584 initial concepts, which were consolidated into 75 conceptual categories through constant comparison and memo writing. These categories were further integrated through axial and selective coding into six main categories and one core category, forming the substantive grounded theory reported in the Section 4.

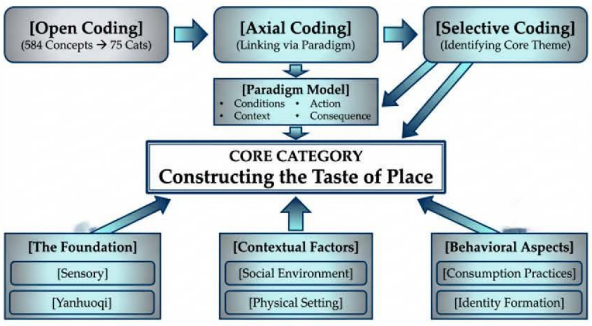

Figure 1. Grounded Theory Coding Process.

3.3. Rigor and Trustworthiness

Several strategies were employed to enhance trustworthiness. Credibility was strengthened through member checking, in which a subset of participants (e.g., 10 participants) were invited to review whether the identified categories and interpretations reflected their experiences. To enhance dependability and coding consistency, a second researcher independently reviewed a sample of transcripts and category definitions, and discrepancies were discussed until agreement was reached (Ahmed, 2024). Transferability was supported via thick description of the study context, participants, and illustrative quotations. Confirmability was addressed by maintaining an audit trail of coding decisions and analytic memos, and by keeping a reflexive journal to document and bracket the researchers' assumptions throughout the analysis (Lim, 2024).

Figure 1 illustrates the process of data analysis by grounded theory.

4. Results

4.1. Participant Demographics

The were 50 subjects (26 males and 24 females) who participated in the study, and they had a varied background. Table 1 reveals that the mean age was 33.5 years, and the highest number (42 percent) was aged between 26 and 35 years. The study participants were highly educated, and 82% had completed a bachelor's degree or above. There were also 20 cities in China, with 30 percent of them being first-time visitors in Chongqing, and 70 percent of them were repeat visitors. Mean visitations of repeat visitors were 3.8. On inquiring about their activities, 100% engaged in tasting local delicacies, whilst the other most common activities were visiting the night markets (88%) and touring the old streets (76%). The most memorable food items included *Hotpot* (94%), *Xiao Mian* (82) and *Chuan Chuan* (70).

Table 1. Participant Demographics (N = 50).

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	26	52%
	Female	24	48%
Age Group	18–25	8	16%
	26–35	21	42%
	36–45	14	28%
	46–55	7	14%
Education	High School	9	18%
	Bachelor	28	56%
	Master/PhD	13	26%
Visit Frequency	First Time	15	30%
	Repeat Visitor	35	70%
Avg. Visits (Repeat)	2–3 times	18	51%
	4–5 times	12	34%
	6+ times	5	15%
Primary Activity	Tasting Local Food	50	100%
	Visiting Night Markets	44	88%
	Exploring Old Streets	38	76%
Most Memorable Food	*Hotpot*	47	94%
	Xiao Mian	41	82%
	Chuan Chuan	35	70%

The interpretation of the interviews, using Grounded Theory, showed that there was a consistent way in which the tourists dismantle and construct the cultural content of

their food experiences. This is done in three stages that would include the coding process, resulting in a substantive theory that would focus on the core category: the construction of a taste of place through cultural immersion.

4.2. Open Coding: From Raw Data to Conceptual Categories

The initial phase entailed a linear line-by-line review of the 50 interview transcripts. Fifteen hundred eighty-four initial concepts (in vivo codes and researcher-generated labels) were produced through this process. These concepts were discussed by constant comparison in order to group them, and 75 formed conceptual categories were created. This step involved fracturing the data in order to reveal all possible meanings and perspectives. Such expressions as "the smell of chili hits you," "it was so loud and exciting," and "seeing the steam everywhere" were once coded as different concepts and then tabulated under the conceptual category Intense Sensory Environment. Table 2 presents exemplifying instances of the said process.

Table 2. Examples of Open Coding Process.

Participant Quote (Raw Data)	Initial Concept (Code)	Conceptual Category
"It's not just eating. The moment you walk in, the smell hits you, the noise hits you, the sight of all that red chili hits you." (P18)	Multi-sensory attack	Intense Sensory Environment
"I want to be in a place that's buzzing with life, where you can see the steam from the kitchen and hear the locals laughing." (P25)	Seeking lively atmosphere	Vibrant Social Atmosphere
"With hotpot, you are all focused on this one central thing. You share, you talk, you help each other cook things." (P33)	Communal dining focus	Shared Food Experience
"My Chongqing friend taught me how to mix the perfect dipping sauce. . . It felt like I was being let in on a secret." (P7)	Learning local customs	Procedural Dining Knowledge
"When you learn that hotpot was invented by laborers. . . you're tasting the history of the city, its struggle and its spirit." (P41)	Food as historical link	Story-Laden Cuisine
"The first rule is to avoid the shiny, new-looking places. . . The real gems are hidden in the side alleys." (P12)	Avoiding tourist traps	Seeking Non-Commercialism

To facilitate the transition from open coding to axial coding, key conceptual categories were further specified by their properties and dimensions and mapped to their corresponding emerging main categories. This mapping is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Mapping Conceptual Categories to Main Categories.

Conceptual Categories	Main Category	Frequency	Properties	Dimensions
Visual Intensity, Auditory Overload, Aromatic Potency	Sensory Immersion	87	Multi-sensory input, Intensity level, Novelty	High/Medium/Low intensity; Familiar/Novel
Bustling Vibrancy, Social Buzz, Authentic Liveliness	Atmospheric Energy	94	Vibrancy level, Authenticity perception, Social density	High/Low vibrancy; Authentic/Staged; Dense/Sparse

Table 3. *Cont.*

Conceptual Categories	Main Category	Frequency	Properties	Dimensions
Shared Pot Experience, Collective Focus, Mutual Participation	Communal Dining	76	Participation level, Relationship type, Duration	Active/Passive; Close/Distant relationships; Extended/Brief
Dipping Sauce Preparation, Ingredient Sequencing, Etiquette Rules	Procedural Knowledge	68	Complexity level, Learning mode, Cultural significance	Complex/Simple; Observation/Instruction; High/Low significance
Food Origin Stories, Occupational Heritage, Urban Memory	Historical Symbolism	81	Narrative depth, Historical period, Emotional resonance	Deep/Shallow; Ancient/Recent; High/Low resonance
Avoiding Tourist Traps, Prioritizing Local Endorsement, Non-Commercialization	Authenticity Seeking	79	Commercialization level, Information source, Risk tolerance	High/Low commercial; Local/Online sources; High/Low risk
Multi-sensory Atmosphere Perception, Environmental Holism	Sensory-Atmospheric Integration	63	Integration level, Perceptual unity, Environmental coherence	Integrated/Fragmented; Unified/Disparate
Ritual-Enhanced Bonding, Procedural Socialization	Social-Ritualistic Integration	71	Ritual formality, Social enhancement, Performance quality	Formal/Informal; Strong/Weak enhancement; Professional/Casual
Story-Enhanced Sensory Appreciation, Historical Context Enrichment	Narrative-Sensory Fusion	58	Narrative depth, Sensory enhancement, Meaning density	Deep/Shallow narrative; Enhanced/Unenhanced senses
Story-Validated Authenticity, Historical Authenticity Markers	Authenticity-Narrative Alignment	64	Narrative credibility, Historical verification, Authenticity confidence	High/Low credibility; Verified/Unverified; Confident/Doubtful
Multi-Dimensional Engagement, Holistic Involvement, Flow State	Experiential Immersion	72	Engagement depth, Flow achievement, Holistic quality	Deep/Shallow; Flow/Non-flow; Holistic/Fragmented
Collective Meaning Construction, Place Identity Formation	Cultural Place-Making	85	Meaning co-creation, Identity strength, Cultural connection	Strong/Weak co-creation; Strong/Weak identity; High/Low connection

4.3. Axial Coding: Developing Connections and Relationships

During the axial coding phase, the 75 conceptual categories were reassembled in an organized way and were put together, creating more abstract and stronger categories, which are considered the main categories. It was done with the help of the Straussian paradigm of coding, which consists of associating the categories depending on their relations as causal conditions, context, intermediating conditions, action/interaction schemes and outcomes. The dynamics between the categories were developed in the course of this process. An example of this would be that the dominant category of Atmospheric Energy was found to be the main category. Axial coding was used to develop its properties as follows:

To bring the Straussian coding paradigm into the framework of the main category of Experiencing the Atmospheric Energy, the relations of the sub-categories were grouped into causal conditions, context, intervening conditions, action/interaction strategies, and consequences, as presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Axial coding paradigm for "Experiencing the Atmospheric Energy."

Coding Element	Key Conceptual Categories (Examples)
Causal conditions	High Density of People; Visible Cooking Processes; Auditory Overload
Context	Night Markets; Old Street Eateries; Local Neighborhoods
Intervening conditions	Tourists' Pre-existing Expectations; Presence of Locals
Action/interaction strategies	Immersive Observation; Photographic Documentation; Initiating Conversations with Vendors
Consequences	Feelings of Excitement; A Sense of Belonging; Validation of an Authentic Experience

The axial coding outcomes for all main categories, including their grouped conceptual categories and paradigm elements (conditions, context, strategies, and consequences), are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5. Axial Coding Process—Development of Main Categories.

Main Category	Conceptual Categories (Grouped)	Causal Conditions	Context	Intervening Conditions	Action/Interaction	Consequences	Frequency
Sensory Immersion	Visual Intensity, Auditory Overload, Aromatic Potency, Tactile Sensation, Taste Amplification	Crowded Environment, Open Kitchen Design, High-Temperature Cooking	Night Markets, Street Eateries, Peak Hours	Tourist's Sensory Sensitivity, Prior Culinary Experience	Active Observation, Photo Documentation, Sensory Engagement	Excitement, Stimulation, Memorable Impression	87
Atmospheric Energy	Bustling Vibrancy, Social Buzz, Authentic Liveliness, Crowded Dynamics, Human Warmth	High Customer Density, Visible Social Interaction, Local Presence	Traditional Neighbor-hoods, Old Streets, Local Eateries	Tourist's Expectations, Presence of Locals vs. Tourists, Time of Visit	Immersive Observation, Conversation Initiation, Environmental Absorption	Sense of Belonging, Validation of Authenticity, Emotional Connection	94
Communal Dining	Shared Pot Experience, Collective Focus, Mutual Participation, Table Interaction, Group Bonding	Hotpot Format, Shared Food Source, Extended Dining Duration	Family Restaurants, Group-Oriented Venues	Group Composition, Relationship Closeness, Social Comfort	Collaborative Cooking, Ingredient Sharing, Conversation Facilitation	Relationship Strengthening, Collective Memory Creation, Social Intimacy	76
Procedural Knowledge	Dipping Sauce Preparation, Ingredient Sequencing, Cooking Time Awareness, Etiquette Rules, Local Customs	Traditional Dining Practices, Unwritten Social Rules, Generational Transmission	Local Communities, Family Settings, Peer Groups	Tourist's Cultural Background, Willingness to Learn, Social Confidence	Observation Learning, Peer Teaching, Trial-and-Error Practice	Cultural Competence Acquisition, Sense of Initiation, Insider Status	68
Historical Symbolism	Food Origin Stories, Occupational Heritage, Urban Memory, Cultural Resilience, Ingredient Significance	Historical Events, Social Class Origins, Urban Development	Historical Districts, Heritage Sites, Local Communities	Tourist's Historical Interest, Educational Background, Narrative Receptivity	Story Listening, Historical Research, Reflective Contemplation	Deeper Under-standing, Cultural Appreciation, Emotional Resonance	81

Table 5. *Cont.*

Main Category	Conceptual Categories (Grouped)	Causal Conditions	Context	Intervening Conditions	Action/Interaction	Consequences	Frequency
Authenticity Seeking	Avoiding Tourist Traps, Prioritizing Local Endorsement, Seeking Non-Commercialization, Environmental Rawness, Vendor Authenticity	Commercial Homogenization, Tourist Bubble Existence, Market Saturation	Side Alleys, Unmarked Eateries, Local Neighborhoods	Tourist's Skepticism, Information Access, Risk Tolerance	Active Information Seeking, Local Consultation, Deliberate Venue Selection	Confidence in Experience Quality, Satisfaction with Authenticity, Reduced Regret	79
Sensory-Atmospheric Integration	Multi-sensory Atmosphere Perception, Environmental Holism, Synergistic Sensory Effect	Combined Sensory Inputs, Integrated Environmental Design	Mixed-Use Food Spaces	Tourist's Perceptual Integration Ability	Holistic Environmental Engagement	Unified Atmospheric Experience	63
Social-Ritualistic Integration	Ritual-Enhanced Bonding, Procedural Socialization, Collective Performance	Ritualistic Dining Format, Social Participation	Community Dining Settings	Group's Cultural Openness	Collaborative Ritual Participation	Enhanced Social Bonding through Ritual	71
Narrative-Sensory Fusion	Story-Enhanced Sensory Appreciation, Historical Context Enrichment, Meaning-Laden Consumption	Historical Symbolisms, Sensory Environment	Heritage Food Venues	Tourist's Narrative Receptivity	Simultaneous Sensory and Narrative Engagement	Enriched Sensory Experience	58
Authenticity-Narrative Alignment	Story-Validated Authenticity, Historical Authenticity Markers, Narrative Credibility	Authentic Historical Origins, Verified Local Stories	Historically Significant Venues	Tourist's Narrative Trust	Narrative Verification, Story Validation	Confirmed Authenticity Perception	64
Experiential Immersion	Multi-Dimensional Engagement, Holistic Involvement, Flow State Achievement	All Previous Conditions Combined	Integrated Food Tourism Venues	Tourist's Openness to Immersion	Full Sensory, Social, Cognitive Engagement	Peak Experience, Lasting Memory	72
Cultural Place-Making	Collective Meaning Construction, Place Identity Formation, Cultural Belonging	All Sensory, Social, Historical Elements	Culturally Significant Food Spaces	Tourist's Cultural Openness	Active Participation in Cultural Meaning-Making	Strong Place Identity, Cultural Connection	85

A detailed illustration of how the Straussian paradigm was applied to the category "Atmospheric Energy" (Yanhuoqi) is provided in Table 6, including representative participant quotations for each coding element.

Table 6. Axial Coding Paradigm—Detailed Example: "Atmospheric Energy."

Coding Element	Description	Supporting Conceptual Categories	Example Participant Quotes
Central Phenomenon	Experiencing the vibrant, authentic "Yanhuoqi" atmosphere that represents lively daily life	Bustling Vibrancy, Social Buzz, Authentic Liveliness, Crowded Dynamics, Human Warmth	"What I look for is that 'Yanhuoqi.' I want to be in a place that's buzzing with life, where you can see the steam from the kitchen and hear the locals laughing." (P25)
Causal Conditions (What leads to it?)	High customer density, visible social interaction, presence of local people rather than tourists	High Customer Density, Visible Social Interaction, Local Presence	"The place was packed with locals, not tourists. You could see families, couples, groups of friends all enjoying themselves. That's what made it feel real." (P38)
Context (Where/When?)	Traditional neighborhoods, old streets, local eateries, particularly during peak dining hours	Traditional Neighborhoods, Old Streets, Local Eateries, Peak Hours	"We went to this old street in the local neighborhood, not the tourist area. It was 7 PM on a Friday, and the place was absolutely packed." (P16)
Intervening Conditions (What influences it?)	Tourist's pre-existing expectations, whether locals are present vs. only tourists, time of visit, social group composition	Tourist's Expectations, Presence of Locals vs. Tourists, Time of Visit, Group Composition	"If I had gone during the day when it was mostly tourists, it wouldn't have felt the same. Going at dinner time when locals were there made all the difference." (P42)
Action/Interaction (How do tourists respond?)	Immersive observation of the environment, initiating conversations with vendors or other diners, absorbing the environmental energy	Immersive Observation, Conversation Initiation, Environmental Absorption	"I just sat there and watched everything—the way people interacted, the energy, the noise. I even started chatting with the vendor about how long he'd been running the place." (P19)
Consequences (What are the outcomes?)	Sense of belonging to the local community, validation that the experience is authentic, emotional connection to the place	Sense of Belonging, Validation of Authenticity, Emotional Connection	"After that experience, I felt like I was part of the local community, not just a tourist passing through. It was the most authentic moment of my trip." (P31)

4.4. Selective Coding: Identifying the Core Category and Building the Theory

The axial-coding integration matrix in Table 7 is used to provide information about how the six main categories were patternically related to the core category; instead of being discrete themes, the categories constitute a stratified process that reflects the temporal flow of the culinary experience of tourists. Sensory Immersion serves as the opening door through which radical flavors, smells and embodied stimulations occur to form an indication of transition into a special cultural environment. Expanding on this, Building, Atmospheric Energy (often referred to as yanhuoqi) is a layer of interpretation that puts the raw input of sensory stimulations into a socially defined ambience. The process then progresses to the participatory phase of communal eating, where people can engage in shared eating habits that enable interaction, co-presence and social caging. With increased engagement, Procedural Knowledge arises as a form of performance in terms of which visitors can learn and practice locally instantiated rules and rituals (e.g., ordering, mixing sauces, sequences) to assert cultural competence. Historical Symbolism provides a cognitive dimension as a way to connect food practices to narratives of collective memory and place that gives the experience deeper meaning with identity-related meanings. Lastly, Authenticity Seeking is an evaluative and directing orientation that constantly legitimizes

the process of immersion and constructs the evaluations by tourists about what is regarded as real Chongqing and synthesizes the entire assembly of the place-based culinary meaning.

Table 7. Axial Coding Integration Matrix—How Categories Relate to Core Category.

Main Category	Relationship to Core Category: "Constructing the Taste of Place Through Cultural Immersion"	Integration Pattern	Sequence in Immersion Process
Sensory Immersion	Foundation layer—provides initial sensory input that signals entry into a different cultural space	Foundational	1st
Atmospheric Energy	Interpretive layer—transforms raw sensory data into meaningful social atmosphere	Interpretive	2nd
Communal Dining	Participatory layer—enables active engagement through shared food practices	Participatory	3rd
Procedural Knowledge	Performative layer—allows tourists to perform cultural competence through learned practices	Performative	4th
Historical Symbolism	Cognitive layer—adds intellectual depth through understanding Historical Symbolisms	Cognitive	5th
Authenticity Seeking	Evaluative layer—guides and validates the entire immersion process	Evaluative/Guiding	Throughout

Table 8 summarizes cross-category linkages and higher-order conceptual outcomes. These items are not treated as additional main categories; rather, they describe how the six main categories (Table 7) interact and culminate in a place-based cultural meaning.

Table 8. Integration Patterns and Higher-Order Outcomes in Constructing the "Taste of Place."

Integration Pattern/Higher-Order Outcome	Relationship to Core Category: "Constructing the Taste of Place Through Cultural Immersion"	Integration Type	Position in Immersion Process
Sensory–Atmospheric Integration	Synergistic layer—integrates sensory and atmospheric dimensions	Synergistic	1st–2nd
Social–Ritualistic Integration	Synergistic layer—integrates social and procedural dimensions	Synergistic	3rd–4th
Narrative–Sensory Fusion	Synergistic layer—integrates historical and sensory dimensions	Synergistic	2nd–5th
Authenticity–Narrative Alignment	Validating layer—validates authenticity through Historical Symbolisms	Validating	4th–5th
Experiential Immersion	Peak layer—represents the culmination of all dimensions in a unified experience	Cumulative	Final
Cultural Place-Making	Outcome layer—represents the final construction of place identity and cultural meaning	Outcome	Final

The Foundational Stage: On arriving in Chongqing, the tourists want to taste the famous cuisine, and they do not just want to breathe in the satisfaction. Instead, it is a search for a true cultural experience. As soon as they enter, they are faced with the Sensory Immersion third-wave multi-sensory environment with visual intensity (steam, color, movement), auditory overload (noise, conversation, sizzling sounds), aromatic strength (chili, spices, cooking aromas), and the feeling of heat and the crowdedness. This layer of the foundation is the first cue that they have reached a culturally different space, which is completely different from their daily surroundings.

The Interpretive Stage: This does not imply that passive recipients of the sensory input, tourists, process this sensory data through the prism of the Atmospheric Energy. They express the pristine sensory input into relevance of the social ambiance, seeing the

busy, multicolored bustle, social buzz and real flow listed as indicators of a place where people are living their day-to-day lives. This process of interpretation is important, as it transforms the intensity of a potentially painful sensory stimulus into an assessed sign of what is perceived as real. The noise and the crowding are what make it real, as one of the participants remarked. It is not a fancy restaurant; it is where people are, in fact, eating. This is the emotional base of this atmospheric interpretation that is more deeply involved.

The Participatory Phase: Having settled on the sensory and atmosphere, the next step of the process for the tourists is to become active participants, which occurs with the Communal Dining experience. This transition is enabled by the style of hotpot, which is known to be collaborative. Tourists gather around a common pot and make a decision together on what to cook, each taking turns to add to the pot and discussing with their peers. It is this communal activity that develops a communal focus and mutual involvement that goes beyond the usual tourist–vendor relationship. As one interviewee explained it: "In case of hotpot, it is all about one central thing. You visit, you talk, you even make meals together. It is not only about eating but it is a communal activity." This participatory interaction makes tourists eventually get a feeling of belonging to the community, though only on a temporary basis.

The Performative Stage: When tourists are dining in the ways of the group, the Procedural Knowledge they face is unwritten rules, etiquette, and local traditions regarding eating. They come to know how to make the right dipping sauce, the sequence in which they should add ingredients to the pot, the duration of cooking various foods and the social rules of the hotpot table. Local companions or watchful peers tend to be facilitators of this learning process. More to the point, this kind of procedural knowledge plays a performative role: the tourists can utilize it to become socially able to demonstrate cultural competence as a means of showing that they are not outsiders but insiders. One of them commented: One of my friends in Chongqing showed me how to prepare the best dipping sauce. . . I felt it as a secret I was being drawn in. I was no longer a simple tourist, but I was involved in the local system of doing things.

The Cognitive Stage: Coexisting with the procedural learning, the tourists explore the Historical Symbolism—the tales and symbolic meanings inherent in the food. They get to know that hotpot is the creation of dock hands who made the stale pieces of meat into communal pots, that small noodles (xiaomian) are the breakfast of lean-class Chongqing people and that maoxuewang (blood and tripe hotpot) was the culture of resourcefulness and inclusiveness. These stories provide intellectual quality to the experience of the senses and social life. Because, as one of the participants noted: "When you hear that hotpot was created by workers. . . you are sampling the history of the city, its struggle and its spirit. It is not only food but it is a tale of the people." This intellectual activity comprises the meal as not just a sensual experience but also as an attempt to encounter the identity and values of the city in a significant manner.

The Evaluative Stage: During the whole process, the Authenticity Seeking guides the tourists. This aspect acts as an assessment prism that defines all other aspects of involvement. In search of non-commercialized and local recommended experiences, they tend to avoid tourism spots, and they perceive environmental grit the way they understand authenticity. This exploration is not inactive; it is active information-seeking (interviewing the locals, reading reviews, requesting recommendations), tactical venue choice (side alley, instead of the primary streets), and active ongoing judgment as to whether the experience itself is authentic. One of them said: The first thing is do not go to the shiny-looking new places. . . The treasures actually lie in the side streets. That is where you can have the true experience. The Authenticity Seeking is therefore an indicator and a corroborator of the entire immersion process.

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These six major categories are not independent phenomena but are ordered into the central category in a hierarchical and sequential organization. The following are major relationships under which this integration can be seen:

Sequential Integration: The categories are being followed in an interlinked sequence that reflects how the tourist experience proceeds.

The immersion of the senses offers the base layer—the very first layer of sensory input, which indicates cultural difference.

The interpretive layer, being the transformation of the sensory data to a meaningful atmosphere, is the Atmospheric Energy.

The participatory layer—the active approach towards others and food is represented in the Communal Dining.

The performative layer, which is the acquisition and demonstration of cultural competence, is the Procedural Knowledge.

The historic symbolism is the depiction of the cognitive layer—the intellectual response of meaning and identity.

The evaluative layer, which is the principle according to which all other dimensions are drawn, is Authenticity Seeking.

Synergistic Integration: In addition to the sequence of relationships, there is a synergistic relationship between the categories that produce emergent properties, which cannot be viewed as the sum of their respective effects. As an illustration, the intensity of sensory experience and the interpretation of the atmosphere will result in an augmented change in authenticity. The collective meals and the knowledge of the procedure give the feeling of cultural initiation. The feeling of the past and sensory experience resonate emotionally and produce meaning-making. Such synergistic effects show that the taste of place is not the total of the individual components but the resultant effect that they interact in a dynamic way.

Hierarchical Integration: The categories are also hierarchically arranged in that some of them have some foundational roles, and some have integrative roles.

The Atmospheric Energy and the Sensory Immersion have background roles; they give the sensual and emotional base of further involvement.

The public meal and the ritual knowledge perform participatory roles; they facilitate the active participation and performance of the cultures.

The Historical Symbolism has a meaning-making role; it gives depth and sense to the experience.

The Authenticity Seeking has a general evaluative role; it directs and authenticates all other dimensions.

Outcome Integration: As a result of integrating all of these categories via the core category, a final outcome is made, and this is a successful construction of a rich, memorable, and meaningful experience in place, the taste of place. This is not just a sensual memory or some fine dining but a strong cultural knowledge and attachment to the city of Chongqing. Tourists who complete this process declare high satisfaction rates, desire to revisit, and the feeling that they experienced something which is deeply rooted and contributes to the all-inclusive rich essence. It was not only about eating good food, as one of the participants recapped. It was also about knowing a place, knowing the people, knowing their history and knowing their soul. That's what made it memorable.

This combination of the core category and the six key categories results in the development of an overall theoretical framework that will be used to explain the way in which tourists create the taste of place in Chongqing. The following model can be presented as the structure of a pyramid, with the Sensory Immersion on the bottom, then, the Atmospheric Energy, next, the Communal Dining, next, the Procedural Knowledge, next, the Historical

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Symbolism, and the most fundamental category, which is the construction of the feeling of place, by cultural immersion, is on the very top.

The pyramid shape is indicative of the linear character of the experience as well as the progressive development of meaning. The successive layers are deeper and more complicated. The sensual base offers the first level of engagement, emotional resonance demands the presence of the atmospheric interpretation, and this sense of belonging allows the social participation. The cultural competence is based on the Procedural Knowledge and finally, the meaning and identity are offered by the presence of the Historical Symbolism, which in turn verifies the sense of authenticity and directs the whole process. What is created is a whole experience of cultural immersion, which is deeply integrated and more than merely eating; it becomes an experience of place, culture and identity.

The core category, according to Figure 2, is formed out of a cumulative and stratified immersion process. The tourists' first experience of the destination takes place during the Sensory Immersion (foundation), which is later interpreted as a culturally legible Yanhuoqi ambience (interpretation). It is based on this that the experience expands with Communal Dining (participation), which is then supplemented by the proximity of Procedural Knowledge, which distinguishes between the performance of the tourists performing locally appreciable dining practices (performance) (Duarte Alonso et al., 2022). This is also enhanced with the effects of Historical Symbolisms that relate dishes to memory and place identity (cognition), leading to an integrated taste of place at the core category level. Notably, the Authenticity Seeking is a cross-cutting judgment layer that cuts across the entire sequence and influences the interpretation that tourists bestow on each layer, as well as authenticating its experience as locally endorsed and not staged.

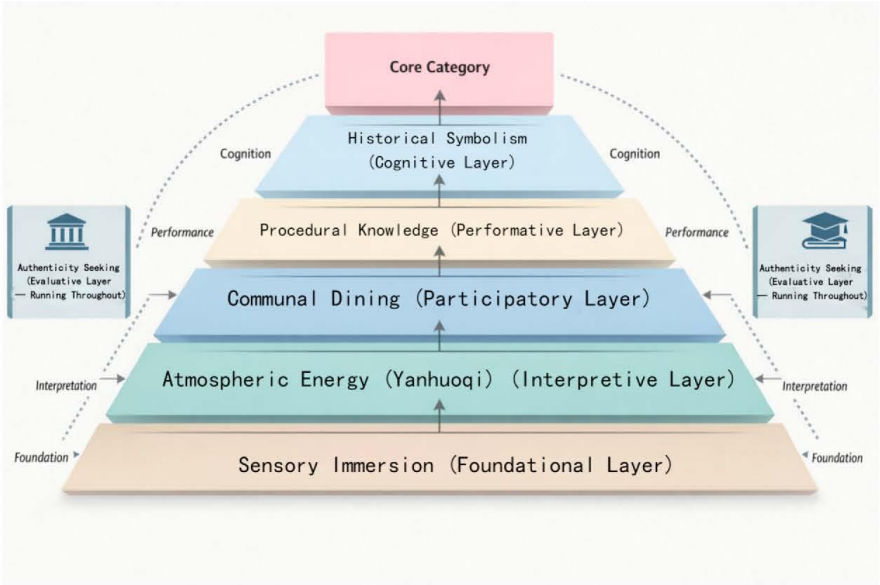

Figure 2. Cumulative Building of Meaning and Experience.

Moreover, the model shows that the taste of place cannot be an object attribute of the food or the destination, since it is a dynamic process of co-creation between the tourist and the place. Tourists are not passive consumers of a ready-made existence of providing

a pre-existing taste of place, but active constructors of interplay with various cultural dimensions in order to construct their own meaningful experience. The implications of this discovery on the concept of culinary tourism, destination marketing and authentic cultural experience are major.

The result of the process is effective building of a rich and memorable taste of place that eventually affects general satisfaction, cultural appreciation, and the desire to come back. This grounded theory offers a model in comprehension of how the cultural aspects of a culinary destination cannot be passively devoured, but are actively created by the tourist.

4.5. Theoretical Saturation Assessment

A systematic saturation evaluation was done to guarantee the adequacy of data by monitoring the emergence of new codes and categories in and across sets of interviews. The 50 interviews were separated into 10 batches of 5 interviews respectively. Findings demonstrated a radical decrease in the new code generation: 112 codes in Batch 1 and 8 codes in Batch 10 (92.9% decrease). Interestingly, all 7 of the primary categories appeared during the first batch (interviews 1–5), and no additional main categories were added after that. Essentially, the new conceptual categories began to dry up by Batch 8 (interviews 36–40). The saturation curve illustrated the typical aspect of theoretical saturation where an inflection point was shown at interviews 35–40 that denoted the attainment of basic saturation. This means that the basic theoretical basis had been established by the 40th interview, and subsequent interviews only served the purpose of further elaborating the developing theory and confirming it.

Theoretical saturation was also reached by several validation criteria. First, there was conceptual redundancy in the sense that, according to interview 40, the new data were clearly falling into the old categories, and new categories were not needed, nor could significant modifications be made. Second, there was a consistency in theory; the core category and its links with main categories did not change after 40 interviews. Third, inter-rater agreement was also achieved when two independent researchers obtained the same saturation point within the 35–40 interval of the interview. Lastly, member checking with 10 participants (20% sample) was done to determine whether the identified themes reflected their experiences with a 100% validation rate. All these validation criteria offer solid proof that the 50 interviews, with some 170,000 words of transcribed text, actually constitute adequate data for formulating a solid and comprehensive grounded theory that will answer the research question. The theoretical saturation examination in the interview batches is summarized in Table 9.

Table 9. Theoretical Saturation Assessment Across Interview Batches.

Interview Batch	Interview Range	New Initial Codes	New Conceptual Categories	New Main Categories	Saturation Rate
Batch 1	1–5	112	18	7	0% (Baseline)
Batch 2	6–10	98	14	0	12.5%
Batch 3	11–15	87	12	0	22.3%
Batch 4	16–20	76	10	0	32.1%
Batch 5	21–25	64	8	0	42.9%
Batch 6	26–30	52	6	0	53.6%
Batch 7	31–35	41	4	0	63.4%
Batch 8	36–40	29	2	0	74.1%
Batch 9	41–45	15	1	0	86.6%
Batch 10	46–50	8	0	0	92.9%

5. Discussion

This paper aimed at researching the major cultural attributes, which tourists have singled out as the most important to their culinary experience at Chongqing. It can be stated that throughout the findings, this experience is a multi-dimensional construct, made of the fibers of sensory immersion, social ambiance, the inter-personal connection, the Procedural Knowledge, the Historical Symbolism, as well as the Authenticity Seeking. The theoretical and practical implications to these findings discussed in this chapter are placed within the framework of the overall academic literature on culinary tourism and cultural experience. Consistent with value co-creation perspectives, these themes are interpreted as an interactional architecture through which tourists co-produce experiential value in food settings rather than merely consuming pre-given attributes (Carvalho & Alves, 2023).

5.1. The Multi-Dimensional Framework of the Culinary Cultural Experience

Figure 3 depicts the six themes as being incorporated in a staged, cumulative practice whereby the tourists create a significant taste of place through cultural immersion. The model makes "Building the Taste of Place by Immersing in Culture" the central category that organizes the themes in specific functional layers. The Sensory Immersion is a bottom level. This foundational role aligns with experience-economy arguments that memorable tourism experiences are initiated through embodied, multi-sensory engagement that precedes higher-order meaning making (Tang et al., 2025). It indicates the presence of cultural difference by providing exaggerated sights, sounds and scents, and is then read into culturally decipherable meaning in the Yanhuoqi atmosphere as an interpretative level. This interpretive move echoes findings that tourists' food experiences are shaped by how they perceive and make sense of the destination foodscape, not only by the food itself (Park & Widyanta, 2022). Further to this, Communal Dining is viewed as participatory layers, which facilitate co-experience participation, and Procedural Knowledge is also viewed as a performative layer, whereby tourists learn and undertake locally treasured dining skills. Interpreting procedural know-how as performative is consistent with gastronomy-tourism research that positions knowledge practices as a key mechanism through which culinary experiences become meaningful and transferable (Duarte Alonso et al., 2022). Such participation reflects the broader claim that experiential value in hospitality contexts is jointly produced through social interaction within the service setting (Carvalho & Alves, 2023). Simultaneously, the Historical Symbolism is introduced as the cognitive layer that enhances the interpretation by connecting dishes to the urban memory and the locality. This cognitive deepening is compatible with work showing that authenticity and meaning can emerge through the narrative phases of tourist experience, as visitors connect present encounters to layered place histories (Rickly & Canavan, 2024). Notably, the Authenticity Seeking occurs in the whole chain of sequential events as an appraisal filter that influences the choice of where to go and keeps confirming experience as locally approved and not performed. This framing aligns with evidence that perceived food authenticity is strongly shaped by tourists' ongoing cognitive appraisal of cues and contexts during the experience (Prayag et al., 2022). These layers, when blended together, eventually lead to the final result of rich, memorable, and meaningful culinary taste of place that is credited with the increased satisfaction, increased periods of revisit intentions, and an overall, lasting cultural attachment.

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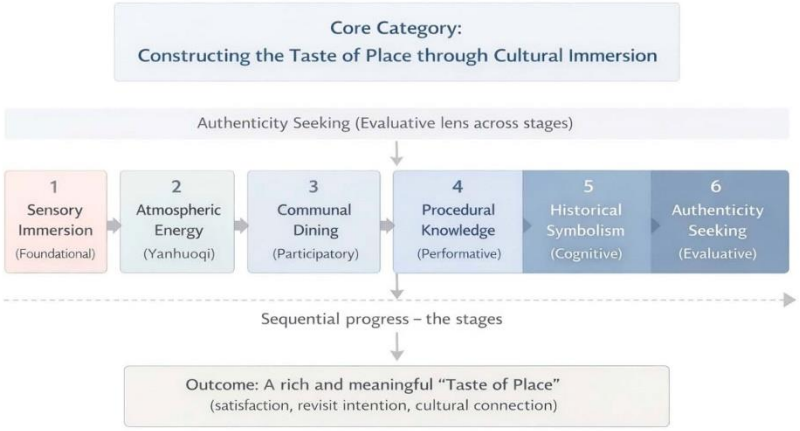

Figure 3. Core Category integration.

5.2. Theoretical Contributions

This study contributes to theories in a number of ways. To situate these contributions within the reviewed scholarship, the model is read through a co-creation lens in which culinary value is produced through tourists' interaction with settings, others, and meanings across the encounter (Carvalho & Alves, 2023). First, it offers an empirical profound ground on the notion of having a taste of place. Although the work by Moroz (2024) was a study on the relationship between food and the physical environment (terroir), the paper at hand extends the concept to other forms of terroir (social, cultural, and historical) of a destination. It is depicted that Chongqing has the flavor of a compound profile that is made up of intensity of sensations, interpersonal warmth, historical richness, and a rawness and non-refined edge of genuineness.

The six themes discovered were the Sensory Immersion, the Atmospheric Energy, the Communal Dining, the Procedural Knowledge, the Historical Symbolism, and the Authenticity Seeking; altogether, they are parts of the cultural architecture in the taste of place. Every theme is a separate meaning-making aspect: the starting point is made by the sensory inputs, followed by the emotive layer of meaning made by the atmosphere, the belonging made by the social engagement, the cultural performance facilitated by the ritualistic participation, the depth and identity of the ones making the historical symbols, and the Authenticity Seeking, which drives it all. This unified model indicates that taste of place is not simply the addition of its singular components but is a result of the interaction of those elements.

Moreover, this study has made contributions to the study of tourism by showing that authenticity in culinary tourism is not an objective feature to be unearthed, but a negotiation process by tourists. The observation that tourists actively pursue experiences characterized as non-commercialized and that untidy places are perceived as a source of authenticity makes traditional tourism marketing seem conventional, and therefore calls into question the tourist's advanced agency in shaping the valuable experiences. Relying on the first-hand experience of 50 tourists and conducting a systematic analysis of 170,000 words of qualitative respondent data, this research will help to bring some real content to the initially abstract ideas, and offer a repeatable model in the future for other food destinations and cultural tourism settings all over the world.

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Second, the research study contributes to the knowledge of the concept of authenticity in tourism. The results support a constructivist perception of authenticity, in which tourists are not active beginners seeking an objective reality; rather, they are active interpreters who create authenticity through a system of signs defined by the current culture. These indications in Chongqing entail the absence of refined taste, the existence of locals, and affiliation with Historical Symbolisms. The increasing popularity of fly restaurants is a great illustration of how tourists can use perceived negative features (e.g., poor environment) to refer to the positive features of authenticity.

Third, the results show the immense significance of social experience and ritual in the tourist experience in terms of the tenets of the experience economy (Tang et al., 2025) and co-creation (Carvalho & Alves, 2023). The communal hotpot can be regarded as an ideal example of a co-created experience, in which the value is in a shared cooking, eating and socializing process. This suggests the importance of social context of the meal to most tourists, since it can be equally important as, or even more so than, the food itself.

5.3. Practical Implications

The research results of this paper have a number of practical and definite implications for stakeholders of the tourism sector in Chongqing.

As was the case with Destination Marketers (DMOs), the marketing discourse ought to be changed to no longer center on flavor (it is spicy and delicious) but to be a wider and more suggestive narrative of the cultural experience. The campaign should focus on promoting the feeling of warmth, the culture of communal meals, and the stories behind the food one has. Rather than merely displaying images of food, the marketing collateral might include some short videos of crowded restaurants, families having hotpot, or chefs narrating the history of their practice. The strategy would provide a stronger and more emotional brand image.

To Tourism Product Developers: More detailed, immersive culinary experiences that are not limited to mere dining can be developed. This may involve led historical eating tours linking particular foods to historical locations, lessons about the cultural manners of hotpot, or storytelling dinners in which local chefs or historians tell the stories behind the food. The trick lies in creating products that appeal to the tourists not only at the sensory level but also at the intellectual and emotional levels.

To Local Food Entrepreneurs: The results show a paradox: on the one hand, tourists want to experience authenticity; on the other hand, providing such services, they are subjected to commercialization to an unpleasant degree, and the authenticity itself is perceived to be lost. The difficulty facing local business is that they must professionalize and enhance the quality of their services but not to lose the feel of Yanhuoqi desired by the tourists. This may entail a shift towards the conservation of old recipes and cooking techniques, their attachment with the local community, and their transparency about their history and values. It is probably more effective than a polished interior, as proven by the success of numerous popular so-called fly restaurants, the quality of which is, in the first place, and the sense of local culture is the second.

5.4. Limitations and Future Research

There are, just as in any other research, limitations on this research. Since the study is a qualitative one, and the sample consists of 50 subjects, the findings cannot be statistically generalized to the entire group of tourists visiting Chongqing. The sample used was not homogeneous enough; most of the sample consisted of domestic Chinese tourists; international tourists' opinions would be slightly different, and this ought to be viewed in a different study. More so, the authors focused on the perceptions of the tourists, and

it would be an added value in future research to integrate the perceptions of the food suppliers, cooks, and local residents to have a holistic picture. There are several ways in which the developed framework from the present research could be applied in future studies. A quantitative study can be designed in such a format that will enable assessing the comparative size of the six suggested cultural variables and the impact they had on the overall degree of satisfaction and desire to revisit the place. The framework might be developed by comparing it with how the tastes of place were developed in other food destinations in China and in foreign countries, to better understand how the framework will be practiced in other cultural locations. Finally, the longitudinal research would be in a position to track the progression of tourists' perceptions of authenticity and culture on subsequent visits to a given destination.

A further consideration is that participants may enter Chongqing with different culinary baselines shaped by their hometown food cultures and prior exposure to Chongqing-style restaurants. In our analysis, such differences are conceptually accommodated as part of the intervening conditions (e.g., pre-existing expectations and prior culinary experience; see Tables 4–6) that can shape how sensory intensity and authenticity cues are interpreted. However, because the study was designed to develop a grounded explanatory model rather than to test subgroup differences, we did not operationalize hometown dietary habits or hometown availability of Chongqing specialty chains as explicit stratification criteria. Future work could extend the present model by incorporating brief screening items (e.g., spicy-food tolerance and prior exposure frequency) to explore whether and how baseline profiles condition the pathways through which "taste of place" is constructed.

Another subgroup-related consideration concerns travel mode, particularly the difference between group tours and free independent travel. In the present study, travel mode was not operationalized as an explicit stratification variable because the research was designed to develop a grounded explanatory model rather than to compare predefined subgroups. However, this difference can be conceptually accommodated within the model as part of the intervening conditions identified in axial coding (e.g., group composition, time of visit, prior expectations, and the presence of locals/local interaction opportunities; see Tables 4–6). In practice, travel mode may shape the intensity and sequencing of several themes. For example, free independent travelers may have greater flexibility for Authenticity Seeking through side-street exploration and local recommendations, whereas group-tour participants may experience stronger itinerary and timing constraints that affect exposure to local "yanhuoqi" atmospheres and opportunities for procedural learning. Likewise, Communal Dining may take different forms depending on whether dining is organized within a tour group or self-arranged with companions. These differences do not necessarily alter the core six-category structure of the model, but they may condition how the pathways of cultural immersion are enacted and interpreted. This interpretation is also consistent with the recurrence of the six main categories across participants with varied home cities, visit histories, and dining episodes in the current sample, which supports the conceptual robustness of the model while still leaving room for future subgroup comparison. Future research can therefore incorporate travel mode as a screening item or comparative sampling dimension to further assess subgroup variation and strengthen the transferability of the framework.

6. Conclusions

This paper has set off on a qualitative venture to unravel the cultural nature of the dining experience in Chongqing. The results show that to the tourist, the use of taste of place involves much more than the taste of the food. It is an abundant and multi-skilled cultural fabric woven by the over-immersion of Sensual Immersion, the resonant

energy of the Atmosphere enacted over a meal, the purposeful Procedural Knowledge, the strong symbolisms of the history placed in the cuisine and the intricate self-plan of seeking authenticity. These six components do not just describe the experience, but they are the experience itself. Helping people to have an insightful, layered and theoretically based concept of these aspects of cultures, the research contributes greatly to the science of culinary tourism. It questions researchers and practitioners to look beyond the plate and to incorporate the intricate interplay of the sensory, social, and symbolical forces that define our association with food and place. In the case of Chongqing and other places of its kind, the message is unmistakable: the strongest culinary ingredient on which their culinary offering is based is not located in the kitchen but in the culture around it. The way to preserve, celebrate, and communicate it is to make it the keystone of creating really memorable and meaningful experiences that will ensure tourists are willing to come back to experience the same again.

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