




VALUE-ORIENTED STORYTELLING: DOES IT MATTER FOR DESTINATION PERFORMANCE?

Abstract

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Purpose - The present study aims to propose a conceptual model for the management of destination marketing on the consumer side in order to fill a research gap in the literature regarding the ability of experiential value quality to increase destination loyalty.

Design - The research, designed as a quantitative research, included data provided by 208 respondents related to culinary destination experience quality, value-oriented storytelling, destination image, and destination loyalty.

Methodology - This quantitative study involved tourists visiting the culinary destination of Semarang city in Indonesia. The data collected from 208 visitors were analysed using a structural equation model (AMOS software).

Findings - The primary finding of the research emerged from the result of the serial mediation hypothesis test, which stated that improving the quality of experience of a culinary destination would enhance the effectiveness of value-based storytelling, which in turn would improve the image of the culinary destination and strengthen the loyalty of the destination.

Originality- The originality of this research lies in the introduction of two new concepts — first, the experiential quality of a culinary destination in two dimensions, hard-value experience and soft-value recall, and second, the concept of value-based storytelling developed as a perspective of service-dominant logic theory. We have integrated both concepts into a conceptual model and successfully tested them with tourists in culinary destinations..

Keywords: Culinary destination experiential quality, destination loyalty, value-oriented storytelling, destination image

Original scientific paper

Received 6 April 2023

Revised 29 September 2023

Accepted 4 November 2023

<https://doi.org/10.20867/thm.30.2.1>

INTRODUCTION

Research on tourism destinations and marketing has been a subject of continuous development in recent decades (Abdillah et al., 2022; Baker & Cameron, 2008; Buhalis, 2000; Kumar et al., 2020; Preko et al., 2022; Sohn et al., 2013; Tran et al., 2023; Zarhari et al., 2023). With more financial resources and available leisure time, tourists are now able to pursue destination travel more extensively. The tourism experience is not limited to the visit to the destination itself but also encompasses the relationship between the tourist and the services provided (Buhalis, 2000). Providing an excellent service experience is a crucial way for destinations to create value and establish a competitive advantage. One way a destination can achieve a service-based competitive advantage is by highlighting the unique culinary experience it offers. Culinary tourism is growing in popularity as a means of attracting tourists and differentiating destinations (Choo et al., 2022; Ferdinand et al., 2023; Şahin & Kılıçlar, 2023). Tourism is a type of consumption, and tourists, as consumers, play a crucial role in shaping the perception of the destination both through their tangible experiences (Albayrak et al., 2010; Auh, 2005; Santos et al., 2019) and the memories or emotions those experiences evoke, especially in culinary tourism (Auh, 2005; Ferdinand & Zuhroh, 2022; Harrington et al., 2021). The quality of the culinary tourism experience is instrumental in creating an emotional connection with the destination. This emotional connection makes tourists more likely to share their experiences through storytelling, which helps shape the destination's image.

The quality of culinary experiences offered by a destination – for example, in a city famous for its gastronomic offerings – is crucial for several reasons. First, a positive experience, both throughout the visit and specifically in terms of the culinary aspect, creates enduring consumption memories (Ferdinand & Zuhroh, 2022; Harrington et al., 2021). Second, a favourable experience can improve the well-being of the tourist by eliciting positive emotions, encouraging participation, nurturing beneficial relationships and providing individuals with positive and memorable experiences imbued with special significance (Chang et al., 2021). Third, a positive experience can turn a tourist into a vocal advocate for a destination, helping to create and burnish its image and generate awareness with its target audience (Han et al., 2022). Fourth, a positive experience represents an intangible tool that exemplifies the value-in-use (ViU) of a product or brand, both manually and electronically (Lin, 2022). Fifth, a positive experience engenders loyalty in the consumer, who is more likely to visit the destination again or recommend it to others (Yousaf, 2022).

Studies on experiential value have revealed the important role it plays in customer loyalty (Anton Martin et al., 2021; Berbel-Pineda et al., 2019; Di-Clemente et al., 2019; Hernández-Mogollón et al., 2020; Hernandez-Rojas et al., 2021). Berbel-Pineda et al. (2019) demonstrated that gastronomic experiential value is a significant factor in the decision to revisit a destination. As mentioned in Anton Martin et al. (2021), when tourists sample cuisine unique to a specific destination, the relationship between the experience and the intention to return crystallises. Experiencing iconic food adds a unique and memorable element

to the tourist experience, acting as “the icing on the cake”, which can trigger the desire to return to the destination. When tourists have a positive and enjoyable experience at a restaurant, it increases their loyalty, which is manifested in various ways, including future visits and sharing the experiential value of the restaurant with others (Hernandez-Rojas et al., 2021). Memorable experiences involving culinary tourism create an emotional attachment to the destination and induce future loyal behaviours, such as revisiting a destination (Di-Clemente et al., 2019). A study by Nadeem et al. (2021) demonstrated that experiential value positively influences consumer engagement, which leads to increased brand loyalty and satisfaction. Cuong et al. (2020) underscored the heterogeneity among experiential consumers, noting that the drivers and strength of brand loyalty can vary between consumers. Polo Peña et al. (2017) found that the influence of perceived value on loyalty depends on variables external to the consumer, such as the approach to market orientation. Chen et al. (2020) identified that consumers who have nostalgic experiences at traditional restaurants are inclined to ascribe a higher value to their dining experience, which increases feelings of loyalty. Chen (2015) posited that assessing how competition influences different value types experienced by consumers can give tourist destinations insight into how strategic investments can generate customer value and encourage customer loyalty. These studies reveal that unique and enjoyable culinary experiences can create or strengthen feelings of well-being and contentment in tourists, thereby fostering their loyalty (Anton Martin et al., 2021).

However, several studies have found that experiential quality does not play a significant role in enhancing destination loyalty (Cachero-Martínez & Vázquez-Casielles, 2021; Chen et al., 2020; Hussein et al., 2018; Sangpikul, 2018; Zhou et al., 2023). This inconsistency could be due to several possible causes. First, disparities may arise due to variable factors, such as the type of destination (e.g. nostalgic versus ordinary) and the customer segment it serves (Chen et al., 2020). Second, studies also reveal that the experience of travelling to a destination is not the sole or even the primary determinant of loyalty (Sangpikul, 2018). Third, a tourist’s experience of the destination could be negatively affected by factors unrelated to the destination itself, such as problems with travel arrangements or traffic congestion. These peripheral factors could deter them from returning, even if they found the destination valuable overall (Zhou et al., 2023). This research gap raises the question of what steps in the consumption chain can be utilised to manage the quality of culinary experiential value to enhance consumer loyalty. Addressing this gap will provide a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of how experiential value affects consumer loyalty in the culinary sector, which could introduce value-oriented storytelling as a mediating concept.

We adopt the service-dominant logic (SDL) approach to address the issue for several reasons. First, one of the foundational principles of SDL is the creation and exchange of value for consumers (Vargo & Lusch, 2016). Second, destination marketing practices suggest that crafting positive experiences for tourists can effectively enhance tourist loyalty (Schlesinger et al., 2020). Therefore, utilising SDL integrates the following concepts into our conceptual model: the quality of culinary experiences, value-oriented storytelling, destination image (DI), and destination loyalty (DL). The primary objective of the current study is to propose a conceptual model for the management of consumer-side destination marketing, with the aim of addressing the research gap in the literature regarding how the quality of experiential value can increase destination loyalty. We tested the model using culinary tourism destinations in Indonesia, particularly the city of Semarang, a renowned culinary city (Ratnaningtyas et al., 2016).

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. Service Dominant logic and Consumption value

The SDL philosophy emphasises the collaboration between customers and service providers in creating value (Vargo & Lusch, 2007). SDL posits that customers assume an active role in the value-creation process (Kolyperas et al., 2019), shifting the emphasis from a company-centric perspective to a more holistic and collaborative approach. The co-creation process entails the creation of value through interactions between companies and customers, where both parties actively create value through shared experiences and the collaborative process of addressing the needs and wants of consumers. According to Schau et al. (2009), customers can create value by actively engaging in a company’s innovation process and potentially becoming an integral part of the organisation itself. The SDL theory emphasises that co-creating and experiencing value is critical to the success of a company, particularly in the culinary industry (Richards, 2021). The concept of consumption value, expressed explicitly as ViU, is not exclusively determined by the characteristics of a product or service but rather emerges through the consumption of those goods or services (Vargo & Lusch, 2007). Vargo and Lusch (2007) emphasise the role of the consumer as a collaborator in creating value, with the degree to which customers are actively involved in value creation having a significant effect on the overall value they derive from a service. The concept of value co-creation within the framework of SDL places a strong emphasis on generating exceptional value for consumers, with greater value exemplified by factors including artistic presentation (Aron et al., 2019), epistemic value (Soltani et al., 2021), ambient value (Smith et al., 2020; Uluskan, 2023), nutrition and health value (Ljubicic et al., 2017), authentic value (Testa et al., 2019) and gastronomic-experiential value (Ferdinand et al., 2023). Incorporating one or several of those value types into a culinary event may enhance the overall experience for the customer, thus fostering a higher level of customer loyalty.

1.2. Culinary-destination experiential quality and value-oriented storytelling from an SDL Perspective

This study of experiential value within culinary tourism is fundamentally anchored in SDL for several reasons (Lusch et al., 2007; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). First, SDL is a marketing philosophy in which consumers play a pivotal role in the design and value-creation phases and subsequently amplify that value to the broader consumer base (Lusch et al., 2007; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Second, consumers gain value by sharing memories of their experiences, effectively amplifying the value of those experiences throughout the broader market and generating a substantial ripple effect. Third, the value of culinary experiences is a quintessential example of the ViU concept (Vargo & Lusch, 2017), acting as a primary driver for improved performance. We therefore propose that value is a pivotal concept for attracting consumers. This research examines the culinary ViU that contributes to a positive experience and should serve as a market draw and a foundation for long-term success.

When visiting a destination, tourists are often looking for diverse experiences. However, the culinary elements of a destination, especially those that are regionally or culturally unique, are one of the biggest draws for tourists. Our research focuses on culinary tourism, in which tourists seek out and enjoy the culinary delicacies of select destinations. Tourists can explore a city's culinary offerings from different angles, all of which are anchored in the SDL concept of ViU (Vargo & Lusch, 2004), in that their unique or authentic nature enhances the memory of the consumption experience (Sotelo-Duarte & Rajagopal, 2022). It is crucial for companies to create, co-create, and provide value, including culinary experiential value. This culinary experiential value should not be viewed as a mere commodity but rather as a method for expressing and sharing the value of consumption. The foundational principle asserts that value is embedded in the product or service (Ferdinand et al., 2023) and articulated through several hard and soft attributes (Auh, 2005; Mastroberardino et al., 2022). The hard value of a culinary product refers to the tangible elements designed to attract prospective consumers (Auh, 2005), including the actual food and its flavour, its visual presentation, and the ambience of the dining venue (Hsu et al., 2023; Hu et al., 2021). Soft value pertains to the intangible aspects of an experience that promote the creation or enhancement of consumption memory, thereby shaping future loyalty behaviour (Sotelo-Duarte & Rajagopal, 2022).

Based on the above, we propose two elements of culinary tourism: hard-value experience and soft-value memorability. The experience of hard value pertains to the consumer's consumption of a product's physical attributes within a distinct cultural context. Tourists have the opportunity to immerse themselves in cultural experiences, such as savouring local cuisine in a specific cultural ambience or enjoying regional specialities that provide a unique or authentic experience (Chang et al., 2021). A consumption experience may manifest as either constructive or existential authenticity (Chen et al., 2023). Constructive authenticity is derived from enjoying the physical attributes of a destination's landscape, which facilitates the appreciation of culinary offerings. Existential authenticity encapsulates the uniqueness of the culinary experience, which has the potential to forge strong consumption memories. Harrington et al. (2021) posit that the quality of food and beverage and the connectedness and uniqueness of the experience may cultivate and fortify long-term consumption memories. Such positive consumption memories give tourists the ability to share exciting stories about their culinary tourism experiences.

The second element of culinary experiential quality is the memorability of soft value, which refers to the distinctiveness, and therefore the enduring nature of the experience. Enjoying a culinary tour can yield memorable experiences that manifest in various forms. Firstly, there is the epistemic value – the sense of originality generated by the unique flavour of the food and the ambience created by how it is served – in which consumers may acquire new knowledge and encounter experiences that are unique to them (Badu-Baiden et al., 2022). The greater the epistemic value, the quicker it becomes ingrained as a consumption memory. Secondly, there is the value of novelty, as tourists pursue originality whilst engaging with the four Es of tourism (Fonseca et al., 2021; Santos et al., 2019). The four Es are 1) educational value, such as gaining a fresh perspective on culinary practices or consumption habits; 2) entertainment value, which is often involved in culinary tourism; 3) aesthetic value (the E refers to the US English spelling variant of the word: esthetic), referring to the art of culinary preparation and food presentation, factors that can amplify the consumption memory; and 4) escapism or the desire to escape from routine. Another illustration of how culinary tourism creates lasting consumption memories is the iconic value inherent in signature dishes that symbolise the distinctive character of a particular destination (Anton Martin et al., 2021). Moreover, Rewtrakunphaiboon and Sawangdee (2022) emphasise that an immersive exploration of varied cuisines, complemented by the authenticity and educational insights offered by culinary tours, can significantly increase customer loyalty.

Value-oriented storytelling

Value-oriented storytelling in the context of culinary experiences refers to the use of narratives and storytelling techniques to communicate the significance and value of food and dining experiences. This process entails forging a connection between the culinary narrative and the shared values held by consumers. This connection augments the culinary experience, simultaneously delivering a competitive advantage to the destination and a more memorable experience to the consumer (Hong et al., 2022; Kemp et al., 2021; Tercia et al., 2022). Increasingly, companies are using value-oriented storytelling to articulate their value proposition to their consumer audience (Langhof & Guldenberg, 2019). Consumers also engage in value-oriented storytelling to reflect upon and respond to the value they perceive and to determine if it delivers on the company's promises or deviates from their expectations. The value delivered to consumers effectively acts as a spokesperson for the company as well as a tool for consumers. Consequently, this study seeks to investigate the concept of value-oriented storytelling as a mechanism for

conveying the advantages and disadvantages of experiential value to a broader consumer base. Consumers engage in value-oriented storytelling to describe their experiences visiting (and potentially dining at) a tourist destination. While both positive and negative experiences can prompt tourists to engage in value-oriented storytelling, favourable experiences tend to make them more proactive in sharing their experiences.

From the perspective of SDL (Vargo & Lusch, 2007), the culinary value consumed by a tourist, termed destination value-in-use, epitomises the pinnacle of service that a company endeavours to deliver. SDL assumes consumers as co-creators of value: they engage with brands and products, and through these interactions, value is co-created. From the consumer's viewpoint, value-oriented storytelling entails expressing values, beliefs, and personal experiences associated with the brand or product and disseminating them as narratives to a broader community or audience. Consumer storytelling can assist brands in deciphering customer values and needs, thereby fortifying the relationship between the brand and the customer.

Consumer narratives are often considered more authentic than those generated by brands and are more effective in shaping the perceptions and purchasing decisions of other consumers. It is the responsibility of the company to demonstrate value actively through implementation and passively through the dissemination of consumers' value-oriented storytelling. Value-oriented storytelling regarding high ViU is significant for companies for several reasons. Firstly, a positive consumption experience characterised by superior values, such as authenticity, can foster meaningful emotional engagement in value-oriented storytelling (Tiago et al., 2018), while a low-value experience may have a detrimental effect on value-oriented storytelling. Thus, SDL guides consumers to recognise the importance of ViU, acting as a powerful catalyst for value-oriented storytelling. Secondly, value-oriented storytelling can be used to combat false stories about a product or brand and protect it from threats to its brand value (Mills & Robson, 2020). Storytelling by consumers that conveys their perception of superior value has a positive impact on attitudes toward the brand, such as loyalty to the brand or product (He et al., 2021). Fourthly, consumers' value-oriented storytelling arises from their reflections on their consumption experiences (Heck & Tsai, 2022). Narratives from consumers are often more positively viewed than companies' promotional efforts; therefore, value-oriented storytelling based on authentic experiences may bolster loyalty and cultivate a more favourable brand attitude (Hong et al., 2022). From the consumer's perspective, value-oriented storytelling is a process in which they construct and share narratives that describe their perceived value and interactions with a brand or product. In this context, consumers are not only the audience for stories but also their creators and narrators.

As substantiated by the research of Roy et al. (2019), a culinary service experience that adeptly addresses customer needs and engenders a sense of satisfaction can make a lasting impression on consumers and encourage the sharing of positive experiences through storytelling and word of mouth (WOM). Building upon the findings of Moliner-Tena et al. (2023), it is clear that individuals derive pleasure from culinary service, leading to the formation of episodic memories. These memories are cultivated through unique consumption experiences, allowing for a comparative analysis between diverse options and previous experiences. The outcome of this comparison is the accumulation of positive episodic memories, which serve as a record that is subsequently communicated to others through practices such as WOM and various storytelling techniques (Moliner-Tena et al., 2023). Drawing from the study by Cervera-Taulet et al. (2019), it can be said that the quality of the service experience is a fundamental factor in effectively conveying positive consumption experiences to others. This experiential value is attributed to the superior value of the service received. As a result, pleasant experiences make consumers more inclined to share the exceptional value of these experiences with others through storytelling and positive WOM. Hence, we propose the following two hypotheses.

- H1. Culinary-destination experiential quality has a positive impact on value-oriented storytelling.
- H2. Culinary-destination experiential quality has a positive impact on destination loyalty.

Value-oriented storytelling, destination image, and loyalty

A company's image serves as a key factor in marketing, serving not only as an identifier for products or services, particularly destinations, but also as a driver of brand loyalty. To remain competitive, companies must utilise a strategic marketing approach that assists decision-makers in evaluating the available options and making the best choice (Yamagishi et al., 2021). Destination marketing is instrumental in enhancing tourists' perceptions of the destination. A well-crafted image can create a favourable impression amongst tourists. The image of a destination is based on tourists' interpretations of the value of the destination, articulated as narratives detailing the quality of their experiences, which are pivotal in fostering loyalty towards tourist locales. Crafting a unique and distinctive destination image aims to attract tourists for repeat visits. (Kim et al., 2018).

Amidst the rising interest in culinary products and traditions, which has positioned food as a central factor in tourist destination preferences, it is evident that food tourism, such as gourmet and rural tourism, demands diverse marketing strategies to address different consumer demographics. By using storytelling to emphasise its distinct gastronomic heritage, a destination can engender a sense of authenticity, enticing travellers to pursue immersive culinary experiences (Gyimóthy & Mykletun, 2009; Hong et al., 2022; Snyder et al., 2017). Additionally, storytelling influences the overall destination experience. It stimulates the imagination of visitors, affects their expectations, and contributes to the development of meaningful experiences (Vespestad &

Hansen, 2019). Through storytelling, visitors can relive their tourism experiences, develop a strong attachment to a destination, and establish a positive image of it (Pujiastuti et al., 2022). Utilising first-person narrators to accentuate the value of a destination can bolster visitor engagement, enhance the brand image of the destination, and increase consumers' intentions to visit (Pachucki et al., 2021).

The pleasure and satisfaction tourists gain from culinary experiences provide ample fodder for an abundance of episodic memories of their dining experiences (Moliner-Tena et al., 2023). These quality experiences, whether experienced in person or described by a credible source, are robust drivers in crafting a positive image for the destination (Huete-Alcocer & Hernandez-Rojas, 2022). According to Tiago et al. (2018), consumers often rely on the testimonials, views and feedback of peers when making destination decisions. This process can potentially shape individuals' perception of a destination, resulting in either a positive or negative image.

Furthermore, a resonant personal memory, stemming either from direct consumption experiences or conveyed through a central figure in a narrative, amplifies a consumer's emotional response (Tercia et al., 2022). These memories are stored within the consumption memory, representing a positive culinary image. Consequently, we posit the third hypothesis as follows.

H3: Value-oriented storytelling has a positive effect on destination image.

According to Ramseook-Munhurrin et al. (2015), tourists or groups form an image of a place based on knowledge, beliefs and feelings towards the destination. Overall, image is an evaluation that is equivalent to behaviour towards an object but that applies specifically to tourist destinations. The level of involvement and intensity of tourist visits can shape the image as an overall reflection of the tourist experience. The image of a destination arises from holistic and dynamic attributes and dimensions, along with personal experience (Li et al., 2021). Tourists can have different image perceptions of a destination. In general, destination image is associated with impressions, beliefs, ideas, expectations and feelings that have accumulated about a place over time. According to Ragb et al. (2020), the approach to destination image forms a three-component construction consisting of (1) cognitive image, (2) affective image and (3) overall image. In this study, we use cognitive images from destinations based on the seven dimensions posited by Huete-Alcocer and Hernandez-Rojas (2022): value for money, public infrastructure, hospitality and security, tourism infrastructure, relaxation and outdoor activities, natural attractions and archaeological and cultural attractions. The tourist's point of view creates a destination image by comparing expectations and the reality of tourists' experiences. In this study, destination image acts as a mediating variable between value-oriented storytelling and destination loyalty. Loyalty in this study results from a series of quality tourist experiences that result from positive stories and images of the intended tourist destinations. Based on research by Hsu et al. (2021), tourist destinations must present satisfying experiences not only to attract new tourists but also to maintain the loyalty of repeat visitors. The logic underlying the influence of image on loyalty is supported by empirical evidence suggesting that a favourable positive image resulting from high experiential value fosters loyal behaviours such as repeat visits (Wu et al., 2014). A favourable post-trip destination image, which can arise from culinary experiential value, has consistently been demonstrated to trigger consumer loyalty (Li et al., 2021). Numerous culinary studies suggest that a positive destination image based on factors such as the quality of food, demonstrations of exotic cooking methods, unique cultural experiences (Yang et al., 2020), distinctive exotic cuisines (Wijaya, 2019) and authentic and unique flavours and ingredients (Putra et al., 2023) invariably engenders consumer loyalty. Hence, we propose the fourth hypothesis as follows.

H4: Destination image has a positive effect on destination loyalty.

This study establishes the fundamental idea that a positive consumption experience can foster consumer loyalty, particularly when the experience is distinctive and effectively communicated or shared. Unique values, narrated based on a consumption experience, can offer an individual both cognitive and affective reinforcement (Ben Aicha & Bouzaabia, 2023). If the consumption experience exhibits certain values, storytelling based on the experience can elicit an emotional response and create or reinforce a positive perception of the experience, subsequently embedding it as a consumption memory. The better the image, the more likely it is to engender consumer loyalty. For instance, value-oriented storytelling that underscores the uniqueness of a consumption value in the form of authentic value, ethical value or iconic culinary value can elicit enduring personal memories, which are then encapsulated in a distinct consumption image (Tercia et al., 2022). A positive and memorable experience is an effective medium for strengthening the image of a product, service or brand (Angeloni, 2023) and establishing a foundation for loyalty behaviour. Therefore, specific experiences can potentially enhance the image of a product or service, provided the image is favourable enough to stimulate loyal behaviour. Additionally, value-oriented storytelling that highlights the uniqueness of the consumption experience can amplify positive brand perceptions, which can bolster a brand's image and foster loyalty (Hong et al., 2022). Consequently, it can bolster a specifically positive impression, acting as a catalyst for expressing consumer loyalty (Nosrati & Detlor, 2022; Tercia et al., 2022). Thus, storytelling emerges as an effective medium for cultivating positive consumer emotions, such as excitement and joy (Nicoli et al., 2022) which subsequently act as precursors to robust loyalty.

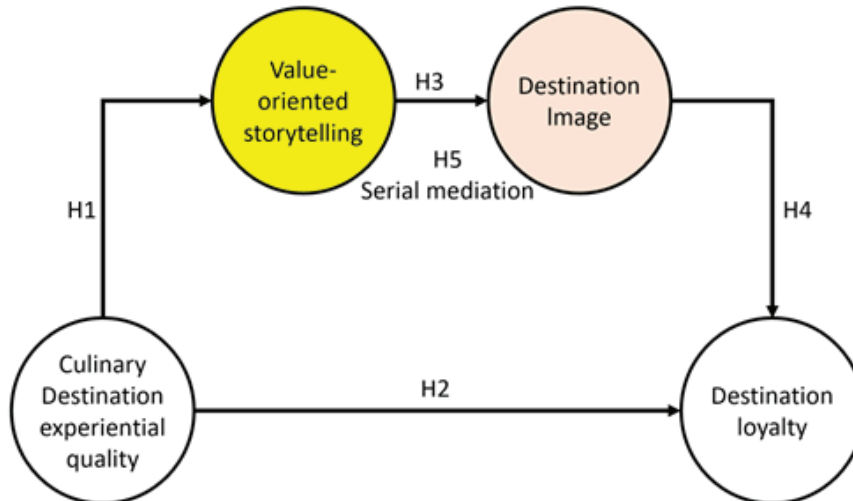
In essence, credible value-oriented storytelling has the potential to enhance the image of a culinary destination, situating it favourably in the spectrum ranging from dislike to like, unfavourable to favourable, bad to good, and, for storytelling, not at all helpful to very helpful. This serves as a foundation for consumer purchase and repurchase decisions (Mao & Li, 2022). Storytelling is a key tool for shaping attitudes towards a brand or product. Value-oriented storytelling can activate cognitive processing and create positive emotions, particularly when juxtaposed with alternative products or brands (Hong et al., 2022). Value-oriented storytelling can

adeptly convey brand-related associations to the minds of consumers (Karampourniotti & Wiedmann, 2022), acting as a catalyst to increase consumer loyalty. Hence, we propose a serial mediation hypothesis, as follows.

H5: Value-oriented storytelling and destination image have a serial mediation effect on the influence of culinary-destination experiential quality on destination loyalty.

Based on the extant literature review and all the hypotheses development, the proposed conceptual model appears in Figure 1.

Figure 1: **Conceptual model**



2. METHOD

2.1. Samples and Respondents

This study investigated how the experiential quality of culinary destinations enhances destination loyalty through value-oriented storytelling and destination image for domestic tourists who visited Semarang's gastronomy tourism site. We invited 300 tourists aged over 17 who visited Semarang for culinary tourism between December 2022 and January 2023. We used a convenience sampling technique for those who voluntarily wished to participate in this research. Participants were asked to allocate approximately 10 minutes to complete the electronically provided questionnaire. Questionnaires were disseminated online via Google Forms. Out of a total of 300 respondents approached, 208 completed our Google Form, for a response rate of 69%. Their responses were accurately recorded in the Google Drive designated for this research. Our respondents were from various provinces in Indonesia, such as Central Java, Jakarta, Yogyakarta, West Java, East Java and Banten, in the most populated islands of Java and other islands, such as Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi and Bali.

Measurement of variables

This research adapted measurement strategies from several studies. First, destination experiential quality, which we adapted from Auh (2005), Hu et al. (2021) and Hsu et al. (2021), consists of four indicators: entertainment, enjoyment, aesthetics and escapism. Second, we adapted value-oriented storytelling from the study of Abdillah et al. (2022) and obtained the indicators from Kim and Hall (2020): the possibility of the story happening in the real world, the story that is told being short and concise and the things that are interesting and important in the story. Third, we adapted the destination image from the studies of Hernandez-Rojas et al. (2021) and Ragb et al. (2020). For indicators such as a good city, the overall image is positive and has a good reputation. Finally, destination loyalty adapted from Hernández-Mogollón et al. (2020) and Li et al. (2021) provided indicators of willingness to recommend return visits. Table 3 presents the scale of the questionnaire items. All item measurements used a numerical scale of 1 to 10 (Srivastava, 2016), where 1 means strong disagreement and 10 means strong agreement. Table 1 describes variables, indicators, scales, measurement estimates, construct reliability and convergent validity.

Table 1. Measurement: Loading factor, Validity, and Reliability

Variable, Indicator Scale Item	Reference	Std. Loading	Critical Ratio ≥ 1.96
Culinary Destination Experiential Quality (CV-AVE=0.62; CRI=0.92)	Adapted from (Auh, 2005); Hu et al. (2021) and Hsu et al. (2021)		
Hard-value experience			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The appearance and taste of culinary tourism dishes in Semarang are extraordinary. 		0.795	12.352
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The atmosphere of the entire culinary tour is novel and exciting. 		0.850	12.352
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I really enjoy this culinary tourism experience. 		0.656	9.804
Soft-value memorability			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I learned many new things during the culinary tour. 		0.793	12.156
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The culinary tour experience made me more knowledgeable about the specific value of this culinary destination. The culinary tour experience stimulated my curiosity to learn new things. 		0.839	13.450
		0.815	12.482
Value-oriented storytelling (CV-AVE=0.64; CRI=0.87)	Adapted from Abdillah et al. (2022) and Kim and Hall (2020)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am happy to share the story about the culinary authenticity of this city 		0.812	13.450
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I often tell stories about the culinary specialities of this city. 		0.827	13.785
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I often tell stories about the authentic culinary diversity of this city. 		0.831	7.648
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I often tell stories about this city's memorable experiences and culinary delights. 		0.716	11.328
Destination Image (CV-AVE=0.54; CRI=0.77)	Adapted from Hernandez-Rojas et al. (2021) and Ragb et al. (2020)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This city is a nice city. 		0.852	7.818
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This city is a relaxing city. 		0.520	12.156
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This city is an excellent place to visit with the family. 		0.849	7.807
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This city has a good reputation. 		0.811	7.648
Destination Loyalty (CV-AVE=0.60; CRI=0.82)	Adapted from Hernández-Mogollón et al. (2020) and Li et al. (2021)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I recommend that others visit this City. 		0.896	12.352
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I will revisit this city. 		0.718	12.131
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I would have liked to have stayed longer in this City. 		0.695	11.550
CV-AVE = Convergent Validity			
CRI = Construct Reliability Index			

Source: The author's own research.

We used AMOS SEM version 23 to perform a two-step analysis consisting of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and a full structural model following. The CFA results met the minimum expected value of 0.50 for each construct, with a minimum critical significant ratio of 1.96, as shown in Table 3. Thus, it was accepted for further analysis. All model constructs have acceptable convergent validity, measured by average extracted variance (AVE) with a minimum cut-off value of 0.50. Our CFA demonstrates that the experience quality reaches its threshold with an AVE of 0.62. The results are also the same for value-oriented storytelling variables (0.64), destination image (0.54), and destination loyalty (0.60). The construct reliability index (CRI) measures the construct's reliability by a value cut-off of at least 0.70. A good level of reliability appears, based on our calculation results, where experience quality has a CRI of 0.92, along with value-oriented storytelling (0.87), destination image (0.77) and destination loyalty (0.82). Because the validity and reliability of all constructs meet the minimum requirements, we concluded that the data, as shown, was good for model conclusions. Next came a complete structural equation modelling procedure to test the proposed hypotheses.

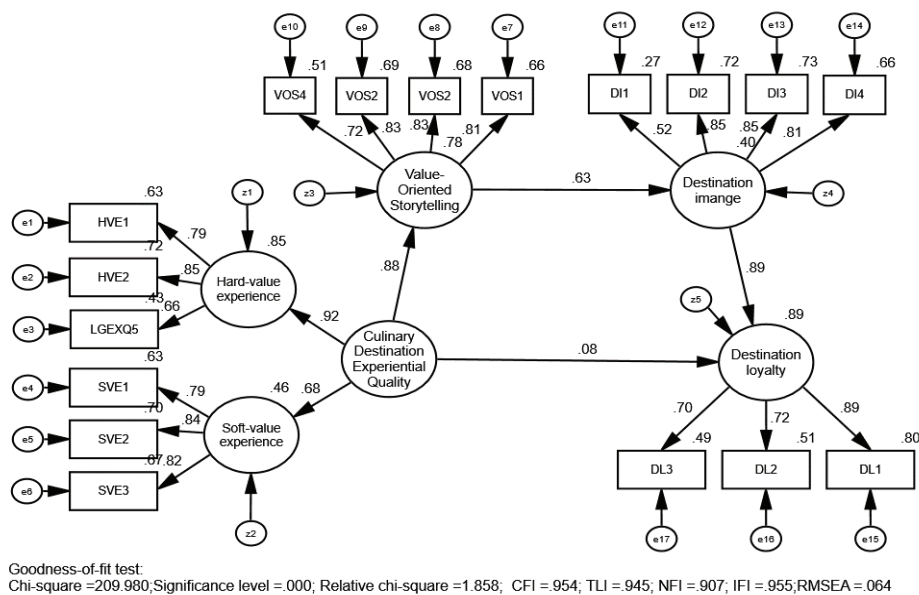
3. DATA ANALYSIS

3.1. Hypothesis Testing

We carry out one step before the hypothesis testing process by observing the sample's adequacy and the data distribution's normality. A sample profile of 208 respondents is sufficient to test the developed model (Collier, 2020). However, observation of the normality of the data distribution shows evidence of non-normality. Therefore, we use the Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) approach to transform the data through the formula $\sqrt{C-X}$, where C is a constant equal to the highest value of the respondent's answer plus 1, and X is the score of the respondent's answer. The results of the data transformation show that the data is normally distributed. Therefore, our analysis continues with hypothesis testing.

The first step in testing our model using the AMOS SEM software was to analyse the model's goodness of fit. We adopted the guidelines of Bentler and Bonett (1980) and Collier (2020) for evaluating the mode with the criteria of relative chi-square of ≤ 3.0 , CFI (comparative fit index), TLI (Tucker Lewis Index), IFI (Incremental Fit Index) and NFI (Normed Fit Index) of ≥ 0.90 with the Root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) of between 0.03-0.08. The result of the data processing indicates that these criteria are satisfactorily fulfilled with a relative chi-square of 1.858, CFI of 0.954, TLI of 0.944, NFI of 0.907, IFI of 0.955, and RMSEA of 0.064, as depicted in Figure 2. Therefore, the model is fit, and we continue testing the regression hypothesis.

Figure 2: Full Structural Model



As Figure 2 presents, we carried out hypothesis testing for the regression effect hypothesis and the serial mediation hypothesis using the AMOS SEM procedure. Table 2 shows the results of the standardised structural path coefficient.

Table 2. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Std. Estimate	Lower	Upper	P	Conclusion
H1: Culinary-Destination Experiential quality→Value-oriented storytelling	.884	.791	.984	.001	Accepted
H2: Destination Culinary Experiential quality→Destination loyalty	.082	-.038	.221	.256	Rejected
H3: Value-oriented storytelling→Destination Image	.635	.539	.718	.001	Accepted
H4: Destination Image→Destination loyalty	.893	.782	.979	.003	Accepted

Source: The author's own research.

As proposed in the development of the study's Hypothesis 5, we developed a serial mediation, namely Value-oriented storytelling and Destination Image mediate the effect of Destination Culinary Experiential quality on Destination Loyalty. This led to generating a serial mediation using the syntaxis formula in the AMOS software (Collier, 2020), as Table 3 shows.

Table 3. **Serial Mediation Testing**

Serial mediation test	Direct effect	Indirect effect				Conclusion
		Estimate	Confidence interval		P	
			Lower	Upper		
H5 Destination Culinary Experiential quality→Value Oriented storytelling→Destination Image→Destination Loyalty	0.082 (p=0.256) ns	.346	.251	.497	.001	Full mediation

Source: The author's own research.

The rejection of hypothesis 2 (0.082 with p=0.256) provides good fortune for our analysis because rejecting that direct effect indicates full serial mediation in the model (Collier, 2020). Therefore, we may conclude that destination experience is a good driver for developing value-oriented storytelling (0.884). Furthermore, value-oriented storytelling that will articulate and highlight the unique values of an excellent and memorable culinary experience in a destination will be more potent if there is a good quality culinary experience. Furthermore, storytelling that articulates and highlights the unique culinary values of a destination will encourage a good destination image (0.635). Finally, this study found that a good destination image can effectively drive destination loyalty (0.893). Our mediation hypothesis test showed that the direct effect of destination culinary experience quality on loyalty is insignificant (0.082 with p=0.256). In contrast, serial mediation tests produce a significant indirect effect of destination culinary experiential quality on destination loyalty (0.346 with p=0.001), through the bridge of value-oriented storytelling and destination image, leading us to conclude a full mediation.

CONCLUSION: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This research aims to fill the gap in the inconsistent findings from previous studies regarding the effect of experience quality on increasing destination loyalty. Our research findings conclude the importance of destination value-oriented storytelling and image as important strategic influences to increase destination loyalty. Value-oriented storytelling is a means of creating an understanding for tourists of a destination, as well as building relationships between people, places and the environment (Lund et al., 2018), which leads to the formation of destination images, as this study shows. We can present the following findings based on the magnitude of the regression coefficients this study generated. First, as several previous studies showed, a destination experience, especially a consumption experience at culinary destinations, cannot always increase consumer loyalty. This is logical because if there is nothing specific (or, through the lens of SDL, if there are no particular values for sharing or storytelling) (Tran et al., 2021; Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2017), experience has difficulty encouraging consumers (even other people) to behave loyally. The ViU concept in SDL denotes that superior value in culinary destination consumption will have the potential to be shared for enhancing differentiation to a consumer as a means of forming a good consumption memory, a springboard for increasing loyalty to a destination- culinary destination (Di-Clemente et al., 2019; Hernández-Mogollón et al., 2020; Li et al., 2021). The second finding is that a good experience at a culinary destination will only be able to increase loyalty if that experience has specificity in sharing with broader consumers (Hong et al., 2022; Moin et al., 2020; Nicoli et al., 2022). Therefore, value-oriented storytelling is a solution that companies must develop, emphasising the uniqueness of ViU that lasts as long as a memory of consumption. If storytelling well-emphasises the uniqueness of the ViU, it may become a strong power for increasing the image of a culinary destination. Therefore, we may conclude a good experience will improve the open space for value-oriented storytelling and enhance the culinary destination's image, increasing destination loyalty.

Theoretical Implication

The current study adopted the SDL theory by looking through the lens of the value delivery concept (Vargo & Lusch, 2007) in explaining experiential quality, especially culinary destination experiential quality. Accordingly, this study contributes to SDL with several theoretical implications. First, this study attempts to translate the essence of value (Vargo & Lusch, 2007) into culinary destinations. A culinary destination means that consumers will enjoy culinary delights in an area because of the uniqueness of those delights. Experience in a culinary destination may occur in terms of hard-value experience and soft-value experience. The concept of value provision and value proposition can be actualised in the form of hard-value and soft-value experiences that consumers seek and enjoy (Anton Martin et al., 2021; Badu-Baiden et al., 2022; Chang et al., 2021; Fonseca et al., 2021; Harrington et al., 2021). The second implication is the current study contributes to SDL theory in the form of the applied mechanism of value proposition, value delivering, value accentuation and value resonating (Ferdinand, 2021; Ferdinand & Zuhroh, 2022; Vargo & Lusch, 2007), particularly in value-oriented storytelling. In other words, the actualisation of value delivery through value-oriented storytelling is proven in this study as a strong determining factor for increasing consumer loyalty. Storytelling is a medium for informing or sharing values to create and enhance the destination image (He et al., 2021; Hong et al., 2022; Vargo & Lusch, 2007). The third implication is that there is no single way of driving the consumption experience to increase loyalty. The findings regarding serial mediation in this study enrich the application of the

concept of value proposition and value resonating (Ferdinand, 2021; Vargo & Lusch, 2007) through value-oriented storytelling to strengthen the image of a product and service to increase consumer loyalty, especially in a culinary destination.

Managerial Implication

The current research posits several managerial implications for managing culinary tourism destinations to enhance tourists' loyalty towards such cities. Firstly, by focusing on coaching, support, and collaboration, culinary tourism destination managers can monitor the quality of experience to cultivate a superior consumer experience within the culinary locale. Secondly, given the swift advancement of social media and the diversification of promotional means, digital value-oriented storytelling can be employed through social media to share narratives in the form of reviews of visited culinary tourism destinations. Thirdly, the government may survey tourists to gauge the image ingrained in their minds concerning culinary tourism, which can be utilised as a branding tool for a culinary destination.

Limitations and further research

This study undoubtedly has certain limitations and areas for improvement that subsequent research might address. Firstly, this research delves into the quality of experience, value-driven storytelling, and destination image, which are core theories in bolstering tourist loyalty towards culinary tourism sites. Secondly, the examination within this study hinges on the quality of the experience, manifested in various dimensions that tourists perceive during their visits. Given its constraints and areas of potential enhancement, future research suggestions include cultivating a more in-depth and holistic perspective grounded in qualitative research by engaging respondents through an intrapersonal method using face-to-face interviews. This study does not include control variables such as the respondents' general importance of culinary offerings and the length of their last visit to the destination. Therefore, it would be advantageous for future research to incorporate these control variables into the research model to obtain a more complete illustration for deriving conclusions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank all the respondents involved in this studyOriginal scientific paper

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Please cite this article as:

Ferdinand, A.T., Gunawan, Y.A.K. & Santosa, S.B. (2024). Value-oriented storytelling: does it matter for destination performance? *Tourism and Hospitality Management*, 30(2), 151-163, <https://doi.org/10.20867/thm.30.2.1>



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