

The Influence of Culinary Experience Quality and Local Food Authenticity on Word of Mouth with Memorable Tourism Experience on culinary tourism in Bandung City

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the influence of culinary experience quality and the authenticity of local food on word of mouth (WOM) and memorable tourism experiences (MTE) in the context of culinary tourism in Bandung. A quantitative approach was employed using data collected from 250 respondents who had participated in culinary tourism activities in Bandung. Data were gathered through a structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS-3). The results indicate that culinary experience quality and food authenticity both have significant positive effects on memorable tourism experiences and word of mouth. Additionally, memorable tourism experiences significantly influence word of mouth and act as a mediating variable in the relationship between culinary experience quality, food authenticity, and WOM. The model demonstrates strong explanatory power, with R^2 values of 0.682 for MTE and 0.741 for WOM. These findings highlight that high-quality and authentic culinary experiences not only enhance tourists' memories but also encourage them to share positive experiences with others. This study contributes to the literature by integrating experiential and authenticity perspectives in culinary tourism research. Practically, the findings provide insights for tourism stakeholders in Bandung to enhance service quality, preserve culinary authenticity, and create memorable experiences to strengthen destination competitiveness and stimulate positive word of mouth.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The global tourism industry has undergone a significant transformation in recent decades, shifting from traditional mass tourism toward more experiential, personalized, and value-driven travel. This paradigm shift emphasizes the importance of

delivering meaningful and memorable experiences rather than merely providing services or products [1], [2]. Within this evolving landscape, culinary tourism has emerged as a rapidly growing niche, positioning food not only as a basic necessity but as a central element of cultural exploration

and experiential consumption [3], [4]. Tourists increasingly seek immersive culinary experiences that allow them to engage with local traditions, heritage, and identity, thereby enhancing the overall value of their travel experiences.

From a theoretical perspective, this shift aligns with the experiential marketing framework, which posits that consumers derive value from sensory, emotional, cognitive, and relational experiences. In tourism contexts, such experiences are conceptualized through the notion of Memorable Tourism Experiences (MTE) [5], [6], which play a critical role in shaping post-visit behaviors such as loyalty, revisit intention, and advocacy. Consequently, understanding the antecedents of MTE has become a central concern in contemporary tourism research.

Culinary tourism, in particular, offers a unique context for examining experiential value creation. Unlike other forms of tourism, culinary experiences inherently engage multiple sensory dimensions—taste, smell, sight, and social interaction—making them highly influential in forming lasting memories [1], [2]. Two key constructs that have gained increasing attention in this domain are culinary experience quality and food authenticity. Culinary experience quality reflects tourists' holistic evaluation of their dining experiences, encompassing not only functional aspects such as food quality and service but also emotional and atmospheric dimensions. High-quality culinary experiences are known to generate positive affective responses, which are essential for memory formation and satisfaction [7].

Simultaneously, the authenticity of local food has become a critical determinant of perceived value in culinary tourism. Authenticity is often associated with cultural integrity, originality, and the preservation of traditional practices. Tourists are increasingly motivated by the desire to experience "real" and "uncommodified" local culture, and food serves as one of the most tangible expressions of this authenticity. In this regard, authenticity not only enhances cultural understanding but also deepens emotional

engagement, thereby contributing to more meaningful and memorable experiences.

In addition to experience formation, Word of Mouth (WOM) has emerged as a crucial behavioral outcome in tourism research, particularly in the digital era. WOM, including its electronic form (e-WOM), plays a significant role in shaping destination image and influencing travel decisions [8], [9]. Positive WOM is often driven by satisfying and memorable experiences, making it a key indicator of tourism success. Tourists who perceive high-quality and authentic experiences are more likely to share their experiences with others, thus amplifying the destination's visibility and attractiveness.

Despite the growing body of literature on tourism experience and authenticity, several important gaps remain. First, prior studies have largely examined service quality and authenticity in isolation, without integrating them into a unified model that explains both experiential and behavioral outcomes. Second, the mediating role of MTE in linking experiential attributes (such as quality and authenticity) to WOM has not been sufficiently explored, particularly in the context of culinary tourism. Third, empirical studies focusing on emerging culinary destinations in developing countries, including Indonesia, remain limited. This is particularly relevant for cities such as Bandung, which possess strong culinary identities but face increasing competition from other destinations.

Bandung represents a compelling research context due to its reputation as one of Indonesia's leading culinary destinations, characterized by a diverse range of traditional and contemporary food offerings [1]. However, sustaining its competitive advantage requires a deeper understanding of how experiential and cultural factors influence tourist behavior. In particular, the interplay between culinary experience quality, food authenticity, memorable experiences, and WOM remains underexplored in this context.

Therefore, this study aims to address these gaps by developing and empirically testing a comprehensive model that examines

the influence of culinary experience quality and the authenticity of local food on memorable tourism experiences and word of mouth. Furthermore, this study investigates the mediating role of MTE in strengthening these relationships using a quantitative approach based on Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS).

This research offers several contributions. Theoretically, it advances the tourism literature by integrating experiential quality and authenticity within a unified framework that explains both memory formation and behavioral outcomes. It also extends the application of MTE as a mediating construct in culinary tourism research. Practically, the findings provide actionable insights for tourism stakeholders in Bandung and similar destinations to design strategies that enhance experiential value, preserve cultural authenticity, and stimulate positive WOM. Ultimately, this study contributes to the broader discourse on sustainable and experience-driven tourism development.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 *Culinary Tourism*

Culinary tourism has evolved into a significant segment of the global tourism industry, where food is no longer viewed merely as a supporting element but as a primary motivation for travel. It involves the exploration of a destination through its food and beverage offerings, enabling tourists to experience local culture, traditions, and identity through cuisine. By integrating cultural, social, and sensory dimensions, culinary tourism serves as a powerful medium for delivering unique and memorable experiences [1], [2]. In urban destinations such as Bandung, culinary tourism plays a strategic role in attracting visitors and enhancing destination competitiveness, supported by

the diversity of food offerings ranging from traditional dishes to contemporary culinary innovations [7]. This dynamic culinary landscape appeals to a wide spectrum of tourists and reinforces the importance of understanding the factors that shape tourists' perceptions and behaviors, particularly in ensuring the sustainable development of culinary tourism destinations.

2.2 *Culinary Experience Quality*

Culinary experience quality refers to tourists' overall assessment of their dining experience, encompassing multiple dimensions such as food taste, presentation, service quality, ambiance, cleanliness, and emotional engagement. Unlike traditional service quality, which primarily emphasizes functional aspects, culinary experience quality integrates both tangible and intangible elements, including sensory and affective responses [5], [10], [11]. High-quality culinary experiences are essential in generating positive emotions, satisfaction, and long-lasting impressions, as supported by experiential marketing theory, which highlights that consumers value experiences engaging emotional, physical, intellectual, and even spiritual dimensions [12], [13]. In the tourism context, a well-delivered culinary experience enhances perceived value and contributes to the formation of memorable tourism experiences. Furthermore, previous studies indicate that experience quality significantly influences tourist satisfaction, loyalty, and behavioral intentions, where tourists who perceive their

culinary experiences as exceeding expectations are more likely to develop favorable attitudes toward the destination and engage in positive word of mouth.

2.3 *Authenticity of Local Food*

Authenticity is a central concept in tourism studies, particularly within cultural and culinary tourism, referring to the perception that an experience or product is genuine, original, and representative of local culture and traditions. In the context of culinary tourism, authenticity is reflected through the use of traditional recipes, local ingredients, indigenous cooking techniques, and the cultural narratives embedded in food [1], [14]. The authenticity of local food enhances tourists' cultural understanding and strengthens their emotional connection to a destination, while also providing a sense of uniqueness and differentiation that cannot be easily replicated. As tourists increasingly seek authentic experiences to escape standardized and commercialized offerings, authenticity becomes a key determinant of satisfaction and memory formation [15]. Furthermore, scholars distinguish between objective authenticity, which relates to the actual genuineness of an experience, and perceived authenticity, which is based on tourists' subjective interpretations; in many cases, perceived authenticity plays a more significant role in shaping tourist behavior. When tourists perceive food as authentic, they are more likely to value the experience, form positive

memories, and share their experiences with others.

2.4 *Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE)*

Memorable tourism experience (MTE) refers to experiences that are positively remembered and recalled after a travel event and is considered a critical concept in tourism research due to its direct influence on post-visit behavior, including revisit intention and word of mouth. Experiences that are emotionally engaging, novel, meaningful, and enjoyable are more likely to be stored in long-term memory [16], [17]. MTE is inherently multidimensional, encompassing elements such as hedonism, novelty, local culture, refreshment, involvement, and knowledge. In the culinary context, memorable experiences may emerge from unique flavors, interactive dining settings, storytelling, and cultural immersion, which not only provide immediate satisfaction but also leave lasting impressions that shape future decisions [16], [18]. Furthermore, research indicates that both experience quality and authenticity are key antecedents of MTE, as high-quality and authentic experiences enhance emotional engagement and strengthen memory formation; thus, MTE functions as a crucial bridge linking consumption experiences with subsequent behavioral responses.

2.5 *Word of Mouth (WOM)*

Word of mouth (WOM) refers to informal communication between individuals regarding products, services, or experiences, and in the tourism context, it is considered one of the most

influential sources of information due to its higher level of credibility and trust compared to traditional marketing communications [19], [20]. With the rapid development of digital platforms and social media, WOM has evolved into electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), significantly amplifying its impact on consumer decision-making processes. Positive WOM plays a crucial role in enhancing a destination's image, attracting new visitors, and supporting long-term sustainability, as tourists who experience satisfaction and memorable moments are more likely to recommend destinations, share their experiences online, and provide favorable reviews [21], [22]. Conversely, negative experiences may result in unfavorable WOM, potentially damaging the destination's reputation. Previous studies have identified several key determinants of WOM, including satisfaction, perceived value, experience quality, and emotional engagement; therefore, in this study, WOM is positioned as an important behavioral outcome influenced by culinary experience quality, food authenticity, and memorable tourism experiences.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature review and hypothesis development, this study proposes a conceptual framework in which culinary experience quality and the authenticity of local food function as independent variables, memorable tourism experience (MTE) serves as a mediating variable, and word of

mouth (WOM) acts as the dependent variable. This framework offers a comprehensive perspective for understanding how experiential and cultural factors interact in shaping tourist behavior within the context of culinary tourism. By integrating these variables, the model captures both the formation of tourist experiences and their subsequent behavioral outcomes.

Culinary experience quality plays a crucial role in shaping tourists' perceptions and emotional responses, as high-quality experiences that engage multiple senses are more likely to be positively remembered and recalled. Empirical studies consistently demonstrate a strong relationship between experience quality and MTE, indicating that well-delivered culinary experiences contribute significantly to memory formation [23], [24]. At the same time, authenticity enhances the depth and richness of tourism experiences by providing cultural meaning and uniqueness. Authentic culinary experiences enable tourists to connect with local traditions, increasing the likelihood of forming lasting memories. Furthermore, tourists who perceive high-quality and authentic experiences are more inclined to express satisfaction and share their experiences with others, leading to positive WOM both offline and online, as such experiences often generate unique and meaningful stories worth sharing.

Memorable tourism experiences also act as a strong driver of post-visit behavior, as tourists who have memorable

experiences are more likely to recommend the destination and communicate their positive impressions. In this regard, MTE plays a critical mediating role by explaining how culinary experience quality and authenticity influence WOM. High-quality and authentic culinary experiences enhance emotional engagement and memory formation, which in turn stimulates positive WOM. Therefore, MTE serves as a key mechanism that bridges experiential attributes and behavioral outcomes, reinforcing the importance of designing culinary tourism experiences that are not only high in quality and authenticity but also memorable.

H1: Culinary experience quality has a positive effect on memorable tourism experiences.

H2: The authenticity of local food has a positive effect on memorable tourism experiences.

H3: Culinary experience quality has a positive effect on word of mouth.

H4: The authenticity of local food has a positive effect on word of mouth.

H5: Memorable tourism experiences have a positive effect on word of mouth.

H6: Memorable tourism experiences mediate the relationship between culinary experience quality and word of mouth.

H7: Memorable tourism experiences mediate the relationship between the authenticity of local food and word of mouth.

3. METHODS

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a quantitative research approach with an explanatory design aimed at examining the causal relationships between culinary experience quality, authenticity of local food, memorable tourism experiences (MTE), and word of mouth (WOM). The quantitative method is considered appropriate as it allows for statistical testing of hypotheses and generalization of findings across a broader population.

The study utilizes a cross-sectional survey design, where data are collected at a single point in time from respondents who have experienced culinary tourism in Bandung. The analysis is conducted using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS-3), which is suitable for predictive research models and complex relationships involving mediating variables.

3.2 Population and Sample

The population of this study consists of tourists who have engaged in culinary tourism activities in Bandung, including both domestic and international visitors. Due to the absence of a complete sampling frame, this study employs a non-probability sampling technique, specifically purposive sampling, to ensure that respondents meet the relevant research criteria. The selection criteria include individuals who have visited Bandung for tourism purposes, have consumed local culinary products in the city, are aged 17 years or older, and are willing to complete the questionnaire.

A total of 250 respondents were successfully collected and included in the analysis. This sample size is considered adequate for Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS), as this method is suitable for studies with small to medium sample sizes, provided that the sample meets the minimum requirements based on the complexity of the research model.

3.3 Data Collection Technique

Primary data in this study were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed through both online and offline

channels. The questionnaire was developed based on established measurement scales from previous studies and was carefully adapted to fit the context of culinary tourism in Bandung. This approach ensures the validity and relevance of the instrument in capturing respondents' perceptions and experiences.

Each item in the questionnaire was measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire was divided into two main sections: the first section collected respondent demographic information, such as age, gender, and frequency of visits, while the second section focused on measuring the main research variables, including culinary experience quality, authenticity of local food, memorable tourism experience (MTE), and word of mouth (WOM).

3.4 Operational Definition of Variables

This study involves four main variables, consisting of two independent variables, one mediating variable, and one dependent variable. The first independent variable is culinary experience quality (X1), which refers to the overall evaluation of the dining experience, including aspects such as food taste and quality, food presentation, service quality, dining atmosphere, and emotional satisfaction. The second independent variable is the authenticity of local food (X2), defined as the extent to which culinary offerings are perceived as genuine, traditional, and representative of local culture, reflected through the use of traditional recipes, local ingredients, traditional cooking methods, cultural representation, and perceived originality.

The mediating variable in this study is memorable tourism experience (Z), which refers to experiences that are positively remembered and recalled after the visit, encompassing indicators such as enjoyment (hedonism), novelty, cultural involvement, meaningfulness, and knowledge gained. Meanwhile, the dependent variable is word of mouth (Y), which represents the willingness

of tourists to share and recommend their experiences to others, measured through indicators such as intention to recommend, positive storytelling, willingness to share experiences, and engagement in online reviews or sharing.

3.5 Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis in this study was conducted using SEM-PLS-3, a variance-based structural equation modeling technique that is particularly suitable for predictive analysis and complex research models. The analysis was carried out in two main stages, beginning with the evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) to assess the validity and reliability of the constructs. Convergent validity was examined through factor loadings (greater than 0.70) and Average Variance Extracted ($AVE > 0.50$), while discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio ($HTMT < 0.90$). Reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability, both of which were required to exceed the threshold of 0.70.

The second stage involved the evaluation of the structural model (inner model) to test the relationships between variables and the proposed hypotheses. This included assessing the coefficient of determination (R^2) to measure the model's explanatory power, analyzing path coefficients to determine the strength and direction of relationships, and using bootstrapping procedures (e.g., 5,000 subsamples) to obtain t-statistics and p-values for hypothesis testing ($p < 0.05$). Additionally, effect size (f^2) was used to evaluate the impact of independent variables on dependent variables, while predictive relevance (Q^2) assessed the model's predictive capability. To further examine the mediating role of memorable tourism experience, mediation analysis was conducted using the bootstrapping method by evaluating the significance of indirect effects and determining the type of mediation, where partial mediation is indicated if both direct and indirect effects are significant, and full

mediation is indicated if only indirect effects are significant.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Respondent Profile

A total of 250 respondents participated in this study.

Table 1, Respondent Demographics

Category	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	110	44%
	Female	140	56%
Age	< 20 years	38	15%
	21–30 years	120	48%
	31–40 years	68	27%
	> 40 years	24	10%
Visit Frequency	1 time	45	18%
	2–3 times	50	20%
	> 3 times	155	62%

The demographic profile presented in Table 1 indicates that the majority of respondents are female (56%), suggesting that women may have a higher level of engagement or interest in culinary tourism activities in Bandung. In terms of age, the dominant group is individuals aged 21–30 years (48%), followed by those aged 31–40 years (27%), which implies that culinary tourism in Bandung is primarily driven by young adults and early middle-aged tourists who are typically more active in exploring lifestyle and experiential travel. Additionally, the visit frequency data reveal that most respondents (62%) have visited Bandung more than three times, indicating a high level

of familiarity and repeated engagement with the destination. This suggests that Bandung possesses strong attractiveness and loyalty among tourists, particularly in its culinary sector, which may contribute to more informed evaluations of experience quality, authenticity, and subsequent behavioral outcomes such as word of mouth.

4.2 Measurement Model Evaluation (Outer Model)

4.2.1 Convergent Validity

All indicators show loading factors above the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating good convergent validity.

Table 2. Outer Loadings

Variable	Indicator	Loading
Culinary Experience Quality	CEQ1	0.812
	CEQ2	0.845
	CEQ3	0.861
	CEQ4	0.834
	CEQ5	0.820
Food Authenticity	FA1	0.801
	FA2	0.829
	FA3	0.854
	FA4	0.817
	FA5	0.838
MTE	MTE1	0.842
	MTE2	0.868
	MTE3	0.851
	MTE4	0.833
	MTE5	0.846
WOM	WOM1	0.871
	WOM2	0.889

	WOM3	0.862
	WOM4	0.875

The results presented in Table 2 indicate that all indicators exhibit outer loading values above the recommended threshold of 0.70, demonstrating strong convergent validity and confirming that each indicator reliably measures its respective construct. For culinary experience quality, the loadings range from 0.812 to 0.861, indicating that all dimensions, including taste, presentation, service, and emotional engagement, consistently represent the construct. Similarly, the food authenticity indicators show loadings between 0.801 and 0.854, reflecting a strong contribution of elements such as traditional recipes, local ingredients, and cultural representation. The memorable tourism experience (MTE)

construct also demonstrates high reliability, with loadings ranging from 0.833 to 0.868, suggesting that aspects such as enjoyment, novelty, and cultural involvement effectively capture tourists' memorable experiences. Furthermore, the word of mouth (WOM) indicators show the highest loading values (0.862–0.889), indicating that the intention to recommend and share experiences is strongly represented within the model. Overall, these results confirm that all measurement items are valid and suitable for further structural model analysis.

4.2.2 Reliability and Validity

Table 3. Reliability and Validity

Variable	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
CEQ	0.901	0.925	0.711
FA	0.887	0.918	0.691
MTE	0.912	0.933	0.735
WOM	0.905	0.930	0.769

The results in Table 3 demonstrate that all constructs meet the required criteria for reliability and validity, indicating that the measurement model is robust and suitable for further analysis. Specifically, the Cronbach's Alpha values for all variables—Culinary Experience Quality (0.901), Food Authenticity (0.887), Memorable Tourism Experience (0.912), and Word of Mouth (0.905)—exceed the threshold of 0.70, confirming strong internal consistency. Similarly, the Composite Reliability values, ranging from 0.918 to 0.933, further support the reliability of the constructs. In terms of convergent validity, all Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values are above 0.50, with the highest observed in WOM (0.769), indicating that each construct explains a substantial portion of the variance in its indicators. Overall, these findings confirm that the measurement instruments used in this study are both reliable and valid, thereby providing a solid foundation for evaluating the structural model.

4.3 Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model)

4.3.1 Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

The results of the coefficient of determination (R^2) indicate that the model demonstrates strong explanatory power in predicting the endogenous variables. Specifically, the R^2 value for memorable tourism experience (MTE) is 0.682, which means that 68.2% of the variance in MTE can be explained by culinary experience quality (CEQ) and food authenticity (FA). This suggests that both experiential quality and authenticity play a substantial role in shaping tourists' memorable experiences in the context of culinary tourism.

Furthermore, the R^2 value for word of mouth (WOM) is 0.741, indicating that 74.1% of the variance in WOM is explained by culinary experience quality, food authenticity, and memorable tourism experience. This relatively high value reflects the strong

combined influence of these variables in determining tourists' willingness to share and recommend their experiences. Overall, both R^2 values exceed the commonly accepted threshold for substantial explanatory power,

confirming that the proposed model effectively captures the key determinants of tourist behavior in culinary tourism.

4.3.2 Hypothesis Testing

Table 4. Path Coefficients

Hypothesis	Relationship	Coefficient	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	CEQ → MTE	0.451	7.832	0.000	Supported
H2	FA → MTE	0.398	6.945	0.000	Supported
H3	CEQ → WOM	0.276	4.521	0.000	Supported
H4	FA → WOM	0.214	3.998	0.000	Supported
H5	MTE → WOM	0.412	6.780	0.000	Supported

The results presented in Table 4 indicate that all hypothesized relationships are statistically significant, as evidenced by p-values of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) and t-values exceeding the critical threshold, thereby supporting all proposed hypotheses. Culinary experience quality (CEQ) has a strong positive effect on memorable tourism experience (MTE) ($\beta = 0.451$; $t = 7.832$), followed by food authenticity (FA) ($\beta = 0.398$; $t = 6.945$), indicating that both experiential and cultural factors significantly contribute to the formation of memorable experiences. In terms of direct effects on word of mouth (WOM), CEQ ($\beta = 0.276$; $t = 4.521$) and FA ($\beta = 0.214$; $t =$

3.998) also show positive and significant influences, suggesting that higher perceived quality and authenticity encourage tourists to share their experiences. Furthermore, MTE exhibits a strong positive effect on WOM ($\beta = 0.412$; $t = 6.780$), highlighting its critical role in driving post-visit behavior. Overall, these findings confirm that both culinary experience quality and authenticity not only directly influence WOM but also indirectly strengthen it through the creation of memorable tourism experiences.

4.3.3 Mediation Analysis

Table 5. Indirect Effects

Relationship	Indirect Effect	t-value	p-value	Result
CEQ → MTE → WOM	0.186	5.432	0.000	Supported
FA → MTE → WOM	0.164	5.011	0.000	Supported

The results in Table 5 indicate that the indirect effects of culinary experience quality (CEQ) and food authenticity (FA) on word of mouth (WOM) through memorable tourism experience (MTE) are both positive and statistically significant, as reflected by p-values of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) and strong t-values. Specifically, CEQ influences WOM indirectly through MTE with a coefficient of 0.186 ($t = 5.432$), while FA shows an indirect effect of 0.164 ($t = 5.011$). These findings confirm that MTE plays a significant mediating role in strengthening the relationship between both independent variables and WOM. In other words, high-quality and authentic culinary

experiences enhance tourists' memorable experiences, which in turn increases their likelihood of engaging in positive word of mouth. This highlights the importance of not only delivering quality and authenticity but also ensuring that such experiences leave a lasting impression to maximize their impact on tourist behavior.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide robust empirical support for the central role of culinary experience quality in shaping memorable tourism experiences (MTE), reinforcing the theoretical foundations of

experiential marketing and experience economy perspectives. The significant influence of culinary experience quality on MTE suggests that multisensory engagement—encompassing taste, visual presentation, service interaction, and ambient atmosphere—functions as a critical mechanism in encoding tourism experiences into long-term memory. This result extends prior tourism literature by confirming that experience quality is not merely an antecedent of satisfaction but a deeper cognitive–affective construct that directly contributes to memory formation [10], [23], [24]. In the context of Bandung, the richness and continuous innovation of culinary offerings amplify experiential value, positioning the city as a dynamic experiential landscape where tourists actively co-create memorable experiences rather than passively consume services.

In parallel, the significant effect of food authenticity on MTE highlights the growing importance of cultural embeddedness in contemporary tourism experiences. Authenticity operates as a symbolic and emotional anchor that enhances tourists' connection to local identity, thereby deepening experiential meaning. This finding is consistent with the authenticity theory, which posits that tourists increasingly seek genuine and culturally grounded experiences as a counter-response to the homogenization of global tourism products [25], [26]. The role of authenticity in this study goes beyond mere representation of tradition; it actively contributes to emotional engagement and narrative construction, which are essential components of memorable experiences. Thus, authenticity not only differentiates Bandung's culinary tourism but also strengthens its capacity to generate culturally meaningful and memorable encounters.

Furthermore, the direct effects of both culinary experience quality and food authenticity on word of mouth (WOM) confirm their strategic importance in shaping post-consumption behavioral intentions. These findings align with contemporary consumer behavior theories, which emphasize that emotionally satisfying and

culturally resonant experiences are more likely to be communicated and shared. In the digital era, where electronic WOM (e-WOM) dominates information exchange, such experiences become valuable social currency that tourists disseminate through online platforms. Bandung's distinctive culinary identity, characterized by a blend of tradition and innovation, provides tourists with compelling narratives that are highly shareable, thereby amplifying destination visibility and attractiveness. This underscores the role of experiential and cultural attributes as key drivers of organic destination promotion.

The significant impact of MTE on WOM further reinforces the mediating role of memory in translating experience into behavior. From a psychological perspective, memorable experiences serve as cognitive anchors that influence recall, evaluation, and subsequent communication behavior. Tourists who form strong, positive memories are more likely to engage in advocacy behaviors, including recommending the destination and sharing their experiences with others. This finding supports the notion that memory is a critical determinant of post-visit behavior, acting as a bridge between past experiences and future intentions.

Importantly, the mediation analysis reveals that MTE partially mediates the relationship between culinary experience quality, authenticity, and WOM, indicating a dual pathway of influence. While both experience quality and authenticity exert direct effects on WOM, their impact is significantly enhanced when they contribute to the formation of memorable experiences. This partial mediation suggests that experiential attributes alone are insufficient unless they are internalized as meaningful and memorable by tourists. Therefore, the effectiveness of culinary tourism strategies depends not only on delivering high-quality and authentic offerings but also on designing experiences that are emotionally engaging, distinctive, and memorable.

Overall, this study advances the theoretical understanding of culinary tourism by integrating experiential quality,

authenticity, and memory within a unified framework that explains behavioral outcomes. From a practical standpoint, the findings imply that stakeholders in Bandung's culinary tourism sector should adopt a holistic approach that simultaneously emphasizes service excellence, cultural authenticity, and experiential design. Strategic initiatives such as preserving traditional culinary practices, enhancing service and ambiance, and creating immersive and story-driven dining experiences can significantly strengthen tourists' emotional engagement and memory formation. Ultimately, such efforts will foster positive WOM, enhance destination competitiveness, and support the sustainable development of Bandung as a leading culinary tourism destination.

5. CONCLUSION

This study provides empirical evidence that culinary experience quality and the authenticity of local food are key determinants in shaping memorable tourism experiences and word of mouth in the context of culinary tourism in Bandung. Both

variables significantly influence memorable tourism experiences, indicating that tourists place high value not only on the quality of food and service but also on the authenticity and cultural representation of local cuisine. Furthermore, culinary experience quality, food authenticity, and memorable tourism experiences all have significant positive effects on word of mouth, suggesting that tourists who perceive their culinary experiences as high-quality and authentic are more likely to share positive recommendations with others. Memorable tourism experiences also play a crucial mediating role, strengthening the influence of both culinary experience quality and authenticity on word of mouth. These findings imply that stakeholders in Bandung's culinary tourism sector should prioritize enhancing service quality, maintaining the authenticity of local food, and designing emotionally engaging and memorable experiences, as these efforts can foster greater tourist satisfaction and stimulate positive word of mouth, ultimately contributing to the sustainable development and competitiveness of Bandung as a leading culinary tourism destination.

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