



The Journal Gastronomy Tourism

Journal homepage:

<https://ejournal.upi.edu/index.php/gastur/index>



Co-Creation in Gastronomic Tourism: Exploring Culinary Experiences in Bangka Belitung, Indonesia

Echo Perdana Kusumah*

Universitas Bangka Belitung, Indonesia

*Correspondence: E-mail: echo_perdana@ubb.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Gastronomic tourism has gained prominence as an integral aspect of the global tourism industry, blending cultural exploration with immersive sensory and emotional engagement. This study investigates the co-creation dynamics within Gastronomic tourism in Bangka Belitung, Indonesia, using an eight-dimensional framework. By analyzing 635 online reviews from Google Reviews, the research identifies sensory and emotional engagement as pivotal dimensions, supported by cognitive enrichment, social interactions, and personalization. Findings highlight the importance of sensory immersion, such as vibrant market experiences and the flavors of traditional dishes, in fostering cultural connection. Emotional bonds with local hosts and shared activities further enhance tourists' sense of belonging and satisfaction. The study also examines post-pandemic adaptations, including smaller group sizes and personalized itineraries, demonstrating the resilience and flexibility required to meet evolving tourist preferences. Challenges such as time constraints and inconsistent personalization are identified as areas for improvement. This study enriches the theoretical understanding of co-creation in Gastronomic tourism and offers actionable insights for enhancing tourist experiences and supporting destination branding in emerging culinary markets.

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Submitted/Received Feb 2025

First Revised May 2025

Accepted June 2025

First Available online June 2025

Publication Date June 2025

Keyword:

Gastronomic Tourism; Co-Creation; Sensory Engagement; Bangka Belitung

1. INTRODUCTION

Food consumption is a pivotal element of the tourism experience, providing destinations with a distinctive means to boost their attractiveness and competitiveness (Sidali et al., 2015; Richards, 2012). As tourists increasingly prioritize immersive experiences, gastronomic tourism has gained prominence as an essential aspect of experiential travel, combining cultural discovery with sensory pleasure (Rozanis et al., 2024). In addition to its economic benefits, gastronomy serves as a medium for cultural preservation and storytelling, strengthening the connection between travellers and destinations (Masmoudi & Jmour, 2024). This dual role of gastronomy as both sustenance and a cultural artifact highlights its value as a strategic asset for destinations seeking to broaden their offerings and deliver unforgettable experiences.

Indonesia, renowned for its rich culinary diversity, illustrates the vast potential of gastronomic tourism. The gastronomy of each region represents a unique interplay of historical, cultural, and environmental influences (Harrington, 2005). Bangka Belitung, an archipelago situated off Sumatra's eastern coast, stands out for its distinctive culinary heritage deeply embedded in its maritime traditions. Signature dishes such as otak-otak (grilled fish cake) and lempah kuning (spicy yellow fish soup) highlight the region's dependence on fresh seafood and the strong influence of Malay culture (Wiyanto, 2024). Gastronomic tourism in Bangka Belitung often involves visits to traditional fishing communities, exploration of local markets, and participation in cooking demonstrations, providing tourists with immersive experiences that celebrate the region's culinary identity. These activities reflect the principles of co-creation, where value emerges through collaborative interactions among tourists, local providers, and the surrounding environment (Font et al., 2021).

Empirical research on gastronomic tours as integrative cultural experiences remains limited (Carvalho et al., 2023). Furthermore, to the best of our knowledge, the concept of co-creation in gastronomic tourism within the Indonesian context has yet to be investigated. Literature highlights gastronomic tours as a dynamic platform for co-creation, offering opportunities for sensory immersion, emotional connection, social interaction, and cognitive enrichment (Carvalho et al., 2021). These aspects have become increasingly significant in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has shifted traveler preferences toward more personalized, small-group, and safety-oriented tourism experiences (Shamshiripour et al., 2020).

Tourists' online reviews from Google Reviews serve as the foundation for this study, which explores the co-creation dynamics of gastronomic tours in Bangka Belitung. Google Reviews, a widely used platform for sharing candid and detailed travel experiences (Dinis et al., 2019), offers a wealth of user-generated content capturing tourists' sensory, emotional, and social engagements (Alzboun et al., 2023). By analyzing these reviews, the study gains a deeper understanding of how tourists perceive and participate in co-creation within the context of gastronomic tourism. This methodology aligns with previous research that highlights the utility of online reviews in revealing authentic tourist insights and co-creative processes (Phi & Dredge, 2021). Through examining these narratives, the study provides a unique lens on the collaborative generation of value in real-world settings, contributing to a broader theoretical framework for understanding co-creative tourism experiences (Carvalho et al., 2023).

This study seeks to answer three primary questions: (i) What dimensions of co-creation are evident in tourists' online reviews of Bangka Belitung gastronomic tours? (ii) How is value co-

created in these experiences, as reflected in tourists' online reviews? and (iii) In what ways have gastronomic tours adapted their co-creation strategies to meet the challenges posed by the post-COVID-19 era? The findings aim to deliver actionable insights for gastronomic tourism operators and destination managers while contributing to the academic understanding of co-creation in emerging tourism destinations.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Gastronomic Tourism

Gastronomic tourism has emerged as a vital component of the global tourism industry, representing a fusion of cultural exploration and experiential engagement. Defined as travel undertaken primarily to experience the unique food and drink of a destination (Ellis et al., 2018), gastronomic tourism provides travelers with an avenue to engage deeply with the cultural identity of a place. In tourism literature focusing on food, a variety of terms are frequently used, including 'gourmet tourism,' 'tasting tourism,' 'food and wine tourism,' as well as the more commonly referenced 'food tourism,' 'culinary tourism,' and 'gastronomic tourism' (Horng & Tsai, 2012; Sánchez-Cañizares & López-Guzmán, 2012). Some scholars contend that the latter three terms are closely related and are, at times, used interchangeably (Horng & Tsai, 2012). Jimenez Ruiz et al. (2024) posits that gastronomy acts as a lens through which tourists interpret and connect with local traditions, history, and ways of life. Beyond its cultural significance, gastronomic tourism serves as a substantial economic driver, with culinary-related activities accounting for a significant share of global tourist expenditures (Wondirad et al., 2021). Furthermore, Williams et al. (2014) argue that gastronomic tourism enhances destination branding by leveraging unique culinary traditions to differentiate markets.

In emerging tourism markets, gastronomy serves as a powerful cultural artifact, embodying local identity and history. Indonesia, as one of the most culturally diverse nations in the world, offers fertile ground for gastronomic tourism development. Bangka Belitung, an archipelago celebrated for its seafood-rich cuisine and Malay heritage (Pratiwi, 2020), exemplifies how local gastronomy reflects both the geographical environment and the cultural traditions of its people. Dishes such as lempah kuning (spicy yellow fish soup) and otak-otak (grilled fish cake) are not merely sustenance but also narratives of the region's history and identity. Gastronomic tourism activities in Bangka Belitung, such as fishing village tours, local market visits, and cooking workshops, create opportunities for tourists to immerse themselves in these culinary traditions and understand the community's way of life.

2.2. Co-Creation Paradigm in Tourism

The concept of co-creation has become a central theme in tourism studies, emphasizing the active involvement of tourists in shaping their experiences. Co-creation, introduced by Pine and Joseph (1998) within the framework of the experience economy, shifts the focus from passive consumption to active engagement. It positions tourists as co-producers of their experiences, engaging in sensory, emotional, and intellectual interactions that enhance the value and memorability of their journeys (Campos, 2016; Carvalho et al., 2021). Research suggests that co-creation enhances tourist satisfaction, fosters emotional connections, and builds destination loyalty (Arica et al., 2023). Additionally, González-Mansilla et al. (2019) emphasize that co-creation contributes to the perceived authenticity of tourism offerings, a key determinant of tourist satisfaction.

Gastronomic tourism provides an ideal context for co-creation due to its multisensory nature and integration of tangible and intangible elements. Culinary activities, such as market

tours, cooking classes, and shared meals, allow tourists to engage deeply with hosts and local communities. These interactions foster cultural exchange, enrich tourists' understanding of local cuisines, and create a sense of belonging (Htet et al., 2024). Co-creation not only benefits individual experiences but also contributes to the authenticity and sustainability of tourism practices, as it encourages meaningful and reciprocal relationships between tourists and hosts (Cannas et al., 2019; Lin et al., 2017).

Scholars have identified several dimensions of co-creation that contribute to its richness and complexity in gastronomic tourism contexts (Randall et al., 2011; Ranjan & Read, 2016). Sensory immersion, which engages tourists through taste, smell, sight, and touch, is a fundamental aspect of memorable culinary experiences (Brochado et al., 2021). In Bangka Belitung, the sensory appeal of fresh seafood markets, the vibrant colors of spices, and the smoky aroma of traditional cooking methods provide a dynamic platform for sensory engagement.

Emotional engagement is another critical dimension, as gastronomic tourism often evokes feelings of joy, nostalgia, and connection (Chang et al., 2021; Sthapit et al., 2020). In Bangka Belitung, the warmth of local hospitality and the stories shared by hosts during meals deepen emotional bonds, enhancing tourists' appreciation of the destination. Cognitive enrichment occurs when tourists gain intellectual insights into the cultural and historical significance of local cuisines (Sthapit et al., 2020). For instance, learning the preparation techniques for lempah kuning not only imparts culinary skills but also reveals its roots in Malay traditions, offering a deeper understanding of the region's heritage.

Social interaction plays a central role in co-creation by fostering connections among tourists, hosts, and local communities (Reichenberger, 2017). Activities such as communal dining, collaborative cooking workshops, and guided market tours facilitate cultural exchange and mutual learning. Personalization is also a key component, allowing experiences to be tailored to individual preferences (Pardini et al., 2022) and dietary needs, such as accommodating halal or vegetarian diets. Personalization enhances inclusivity and ensures that the experiences resonate with a diverse range of tourists (Yang et al., 2024).

2.3. Post-Pandemic Transformation in Gastronomic Tourism

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted the tourism industry, reshaping traveler expectations and operational practices. Health and safety concerns, coupled with a growing preference for small-group and private experiences, have highlighted the need for adaptive and innovative approaches in gastronomic tourism (Orea-Giner, 2023). Co-creation, with its emphasis on collaboration and personalization (Romero & Molina, 2011), aligns closely with these evolving demands. In destinations like Bangka Belitung, gastronomic tour operators have responded by implementing enhanced hygiene protocols, limiting group sizes, and introducing more personalized experiences to maintain engagement while ensuring safety.

These adaptations not only address immediate challenges but also underscore the resilience of co-creative strategies in navigating the future of tourism. By prioritizing sensory immersion, emotional engagement, and authentic interactions, gastronomic tourism operators can meet the changing needs of travelers while contributing to the sustainability of local communities. As such, co-creation offers a robust framework for understanding and enhancing gastronomic tourism in the post-pandemic era (Hashim & Jamaluddin, 2022).

3. METHODS

Bangka Belitung, Indonesia, known for its rich culinary heritage, provides a compelling context for studying co-creation in gastronomic tourism. Dishes like lempah kuning (spicy yellow fish soup) and otak-otak (grilled fish cakes) showcase the region's unique blend of Malay and maritime cultural influences (Wiyanto, 2024). Gastronomic tours in Bangka Belitung often feature immersive experiences such as exploring traditional markets, engaging in cooking workshops, and sharing communal meals. This study explores the dynamics of co-creation within these experiences to uncover the sensory, emotional, and social elements that enhance their attractiveness to tourists.

Google Reviews was chosen as the primary data source for its extensive repository of user-generated content and widespread use by travelers to document experiences (Dinis et al., 2019). This platform provided detailed narratives that reflected the sensory, emotional, and social dimensions of gastronomic tourism in Bangka Belitung. The dataset was constructed using specific inclusion criteria to ensure relevance and diversity. First, reviews written in both Indonesian and English were included, representing the perspectives of domestic and international tourists. This linguistic diversity enriched the dataset and provided a broader understanding of tourist experiences. Second, the study focused on reviews posted between January 2018 and December 2022. This time frame was selected to encompass pre-pandemic, pandemic, and post-pandemic tourism, allowing for an analysis of how external factors influenced gastronomic tourism experiences. Lastly, only reviews explicitly mentioning gastronomic tour activities in Bangka Belitung were included. These activities encompassed visits to traditional markets, where tourists immerse themselves in local culture by exploring fresh produce, spices, and seafood unique to the region. Cooking workshops featuring local dishes allowed tourists to engage hands-on with Bangka Belitung's culinary heritage. Communal dining experiences, often during local festivals, provided opportunities for tourists to share meals with the community, enhancing social connections and cultural understanding. Reviews unrelated to these culinary experiences were excluded to maintain a focused analysis on gastronomic tourism in the region.

A total of 635 unique reviews were curated and compiled into a database. The reviews were carefully selected to ensure variation in tone, sentiment, and content, reflecting a spectrum of tourist experiences from positive to negative. Redundant or repetitive reviews were excluded, and the narratives were refined to capture diverse themes while maintaining their authenticity. This study employs a qualitative research approach using passive netnography, which adapts ethnographic methods for analyzing user-generated content in online platforms (Kozinets, 2002). By analyzing reviews from Google Reviews, the study captures authentic and spontaneous accounts of tourists' experiences. This method enables the examination of co-creation dimensions in a naturalistic context, free from the constraints of structured interviews or surveys. The analysis aimed to identify patterns and themes across the eight co-creation dimensions: Aesthetics/Sense, Feel (Emotional Engagement), Think (Education), Relate (Social Interactions), Personalization, Entertainment, Act (Co-Production), and Escape/Engagement, guided by a thematic framework derived from co-creation literature (Brochado et al., 2021; Campos, 2016; Carvalho et al., 2021; Chang et al., 2021; Randall et al., 2011; Ranjan & Read, 2016; Sthapit et al., 2020; Reichenberger, 2017; Yang et al., 2024). These dimensions provided a comprehensive framework to explore the sensory, emotional, cognitive, and social aspects of tourists' experiences in Bangka Belitung's gastronomic tours, enabling a nuanced understanding of the dynamics of co-creation.

The first step involved familiarizing with the data by reading all reviews to gain an overall understanding of their content and context. During this phase, initial impressions were noted,

and recurring themes were identified. Each review was then systematically coded using a pre-established framework encompassing the dimensions of co-creation, such as aesthetics, emotional engagement, personalization, and social interactions. Next, the coded data were grouped into thematic categories, with each category representing one of the co-creation dimensions. For example, reviews describing sensory experiences like the vibrant colors of the market and the aroma of traditional dishes were categorized under "Aesthetics/Sense." Similarly, narratives highlighting interactions with locals or guides were grouped under "Relate." This process helped in organizing the data and identifying the prevalence and depth of each co-creation dimension.

To ensure reliability, three trained researcher assistants independently coded the reviews. After completing the independent coding, the results were compared to measure the consistency of the analysis. Discrepancies were resolved through collaborative discussion, ensuring a shared understanding of the thematic framework. The coding process achieved an inter-coder agreement rate of 96%, calculated as follows:

$$\text{Inter - Coder Agreement Rate} = \frac{\text{Number of Agreements}}{\text{Total Number of Units}} \times 100$$

In this study, the researchers agreed on 610 of 635 units, resulting in an agreement rate of:

$$\text{Agreement Rate} = \frac{610}{635} \times 100 = 96.06\%$$

This high agreement rate underscores the robustness and reliability of the analysis (Campbell et al., 2013; Lombard et al., 2002). Finally, the findings were synthesized into actionable insights. Patterns across the dimensions were analyzed to uncover how sensory, emotional, and social elements contribute to the co-creation of gastronomic tourism experiences. This synthesis provided a nuanced understanding of tourists' experiences in Bangka Belitung. All reviews were anonymized to protect the privacy of the reviewers, and no personally identifiable information was included in the analysis. The study adhered to ethical guidelines for netnographic research, ensuring the responsible use of publicly available data.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study analyzed 635 unique reviews from Google Reviews, offering detailed insights into tourists' perceptions of gastronomic tours in Bangka Belitung. The reviews were collected between January 2018 and December 2022, capturing pre-pandemic, pandemic, and post-pandemic tourism dynamics. The dataset includes reviews in both Indonesian and English, reflecting the diverse linguistic backgrounds of domestic and international tourists. Although demographic details such as age or nationality were not consistently available due to platform limitations, the reviews represent a broad spectrum of visitor experiences. This diversity enabled the identification of thematic patterns and key dimensions of co-creation, which underpin the richness of Bangka Belitung's culinary tourism.

4.1. Frequencies of Dimensions

The analysis identified eight co-creation dimensions, with aesthetics and sensory engagement being the most frequently mentioned, followed by emotional connections and cognitive enrichment. Table 1 summarizes the frequency and percentage of each dimension observed in the reviews.

Table 1. Frequency of Experience Dimensions in Tourist Reviews

| Category (Experience Dimensions) | Frequency (f) | Percentage of Total Reviews (%) |
|----------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------|
| Aesthetics/Sense | 210 | 33.1 |
| Feel | 145 | 22.8 |
| Think/Education | 105 | 16.5 |
| Relate | 95 | 15.0 |
| Personalization | 45 | 7.1 |
| Entertainment | 20 | 3.1 |
| Act/Co-Production | 10 | 1.6 |
| Escape/Engagement | 5 | 0.8 |
| Total | 635 | 100 |

4.2. Detailed Insights

Aesthetics and Sensory Immersion. The analysis revealed that sensory elements played a pivotal role in shaping tourists' perceptions of gastronomic tours in Bangka Belitung. Reviewers frequently praised the vibrant colors of traditional markets, the aromatic appeal of spices, and the rich, layered flavors of local dishes such as lempah kuning and otak-otak. These sensory experiences were not merely appreciated for their immediate enjoyment but were described as integral to tourists' engagement with the region's cultural identity. One reviewer noted:

"Walking through the market was a feast for the senses—the colors, the smells of fresh spices, and the sight of food being prepared were simply unforgettable." (*December, 2018*)

The visual aesthetics of the market—bursting with colorful produce and bustling activity—evoked a sense of wonder and curiosity among visitors. The sights of vendors arranging fruits and vegetables, spices displayed in neat mounds, and street foods being freshly cooked created a dynamic visual landscape that connected tourists to the authenticity of the local culture. The aromatic appeal of spices further heightened these experiences, with many reviewers describing the smells as both tantalizing and evocative of a deeper cultural story. Taste, a cornerstone of gastronomic tourism, provided another powerful sensory dimension. Tourists frequently commented on the complex and distinctive flavors of Bangka Belitung's cuisine. Dishes like lempah kuning, with its bold turmeric and tamarind notes, were described as "a perfect blend of local ingredients that tell the story of the region." These culinary encounters not only satisfied tourists' palates but also offered a tangible connection to the region's cultural heritage.

Emotional Engagement. Emotional connection emerged as a key aspect of the gastronomic tour experience, characterized by feelings of joy, nostalgia, and belonging. Tourists frequently highlighted the warmth and hospitality of local guides and hosts, which created a welcoming and inclusive environment. One participant shared:

"The guide's hospitality made us feel at home—it wasn't just a tour; it was an emotional experience." (*July, 2019*)

Communal activities, such as shared meals and cooking workshops, fostered bonds among participants and with hosts, creating a sense of togetherness that transcended cultural barriers. These interactions often became highlights of the tour, with shared laughter and collaboration enhancing the experience. Nostalgia also played a role, as traditional flavors and intimate settings reminded many tourists of familial meals, deepening their connection to the experience. Storytelling by guides further enriched this dimension, adding depth and sentimentality to activities by connecting dishes with cultural heritage. Tour operators can

enhance emotional engagement by emphasizing storytelling and creating opportunities for shared interactions, ensuring that gastronomic tours remain impactful and memorable.

Cognitive Enrichment. Tourists highly valued the educational elements of the gastronomic tours, which provided deeper insights into Bangka Belitung's cultural and historical heritage. Activities such as cooking workshops and storytelling about historical trade routes offered practical skills and enriched their understanding of the region's cuisine. One reviewer noted:

"Hearing about the influence of historical trade routes on Bangka Belitung cuisine gave me a whole new perspective on what I was tasting." (June, 2021)

Cooking workshops allowed participants to learn traditional methods and engage directly with local ingredients, fostering a personal connection to the culinary traditions. Storytelling further enhanced the experience by linking dishes to historical and cultural narratives, helping tourists see gastronomic as a reflection of the region's identity. These educational elements transformed the tours into meaningful cultural explorations, leaving tourists with a greater appreciation for Bangka Belitung's heritage. Tour operators can build on this by incorporating more interactive learning opportunities, ensuring participants leave with both practical knowledge and memorable insights.

Social Interactions. Social interactions were a key component of co-creation, frequently described as transformative by participants. Tourists highlighted the relational dynamics fostered through activities such as shared meals, collaborative cooking sessions, and engaging with locals. These interactions provided opportunities for cultural exchange and community building, enhancing the overall experience. One reviewer shared:

"Cooking together with the group and exchanging stories over dinner created memories I will cherish forever." (September, 2019)

Shared meals often served as a platform for bonding, where tourists, hosts, and fellow participants could connect over traditional dishes and shared experiences. Collaborative cooking sessions added another layer of interaction, encouraging teamwork and collective learning. These activities not only deepened tourists' understanding of Bangka Belitung's culinary culture but also created a sense of camaraderie that transcended cultural and linguistic barriers. Engagement with local vendors, guides, and cooks further enriched the social aspect, as tourists were able to gain insights directly from the people who embody the region's culinary traditions. These moments of connection often fostered a sense of inclusivity and belonging, making the tours more meaningful and memorable.

Personalization. Personalization emerged as a significant factor driving tourist satisfaction, with many reviews praising the flexibility and attentiveness of tour operators. Tourists appreciated efforts to accommodate dietary restrictions, cultural preferences, and individual interests, highlighting the importance of tailoring experiences to meet diverse needs. One vegetarian tourist shared:

"The guide ensured that my vegetarian preferences were met, yet the dishes still tasted authentic and delicious." (April, 2018)

This adaptability extended beyond dietary accommodations. Some participants noted that guides adjusted itineraries to include stops or activities based on the group's interests, such as spending extra time in markets or learning about specific cooking techniques. These personalized touches not only enhanced the inclusivity of the tours but also made participants feel valued and cared for. The ability to provide a customized experience reflects the growing importance of personalization in tourism, where flexibility and attention to detail significantly impact overall satisfaction. Tour operators can further enhance this dimension by offering

customizable packages or soliciting preferences from participants beforehand, ensuring that each tour feels uniquely tailored to individual needs.

Challenges and Areas for Improvement. Despite the overwhelmingly positive feedback, some challenges were highlighted by participants, particularly concerning time constraints and limited opportunities for deeper cultural engagement. Tourists occasionally felt that the pace of the tours was too rushed, leaving little time to fully explore or connect with the activities. One reviewer noted:

"I wish we had more time to interact with the market vendors—it felt a bit rushed."
(December, 2022)

This sense of being hurried was particularly evident in activities such as market visits, where tourists desired more time to converse with vendors, learn about local ingredients, and experience the authentic atmosphere. Such limitations can detract from the immersive quality of the experience, reducing the potential for meaningful cultural exchange and personal connections. These challenges point to the need for tour operators to balance efficiency with engagement. While structured itineraries are necessary to manage logistics, adding flexibility or allocating more time for key activities could significantly enhance the depth of the experience. Additionally, reducing group sizes or designing smaller, focused activities could allow for more personalized interactions and better pacing.

Post-Pandemic Adaptations. The COVID-19 pandemic brought significant changes to the operation of gastronomic tours, prompting adaptations that were largely well-received by participants. Measures such as smaller group sizes, enhanced hygiene protocols, and virtual workshops were implemented to address safety concerns while maintaining the quality of the experience. One reviewer remarked:

"The smaller group size made the experience feel more intimate and safer." (July, 2020)

Smaller group sizes not only ensured compliance with health guidelines but also fostered a more personalized and engaging atmosphere, allowing tourists to interact more meaningfully with guides, hosts, and fellow participants. Enhanced hygiene protocols reassured visitors of their safety, making them feel more comfortable participating in hands-on activities like cooking workshops or market tours. Virtual experiences emerged as an innovative solution during travel restrictions, enabling tourists to engage with Bangka Belitung's culinary traditions remotely. Activities such as online cooking classes allowed participants to learn about local dishes and interact with hosts from the comfort of their homes. While these virtual adaptations were appreciated for their accessibility and creativity, many participants emphasized the unique value of in-person experiences, such as the sensory richness of markets and the social connections formed during communal activities.

4.3. Discussion

This study explored the co-creation dimensions in Bangka Belitung's gastronomic tourism through the analysis of 610 online reviews. The findings revealed that sensory, emotional, cognitive, and social dimensions play critical roles in shaping tourists' perceptions and experiences, aligning with existing literature on co-creation in tourism (Ellis et al., 2018; Harrington, 2005). Aesthetics and sensory immersion emerged as the most frequently highlighted dimensions, confirming the importance of multisensory experiences in tourism.

The vibrant visuals of traditional markets, the aromatic appeal of local spices, and the authentic flavors of regional dishes like lempah kuning provided tourists with a profound connection to the destination. These findings support the argument that sensory engagement enhances the authenticity and memorability of tourism experiences (Ellis et al., 2018).

Emotional engagement was equally significant, as tourists often described feelings of joy, nostalgia, and belonging. The warmth and hospitality of local guides and hosts played a pivotal role in fostering these emotions, resonating with studies emphasizing the emotional dimensions of co-creation in fostering long-term satisfaction and destination loyalty (Reichenberger, 2017; Romero & Molina, 2011).

Cognitive enrichment emerged as a key dimension, reflecting the intellectual value of learning opportunities embedded in the tours. Tourists appreciated gaining insights into the cultural and historical significance of local dishes, aligning with research highlighting the role of education in enhancing the perceived value of tourism experiences (Carvalho et al., 2023; Horng & Tsai, 2012). These findings underscore the importance of integrating storytelling and educational elements into gastronomic tourism to create more meaningful and immersive experiences. Social interactions, both among tourists and with local hosts, were highlighted as transformative aspects of the tours. Communal dining and collaborative cooking activities provided opportunities for cultural exchange and community building, reinforcing the relational aspects of co-creation (Reichenberger, 2017; Romero & Molina, 2011). These findings suggest that fostering social connections through shared activities can significantly enhance the overall tourism experience.

Personalization was a critical factor in shaping tourist satisfaction, particularly for visitors with specific dietary needs or preferences. The ability of tour operators to adapt itineraries and menus to meet individual requirements not only improved inclusivity but also demonstrated attentiveness to visitor needs, aligning with broader trends in tourism where customization is increasingly recognized as a determinant of visitor satisfaction and loyalty (Pardini et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2024). However, the findings also indicate that inconsistent personalization can lead to dissatisfaction, highlighting the need for standardized practices to ensure a consistently high-quality experience.

The study highlighted the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on gastronomic tourism. Tour operators implemented smaller group sizes, enhanced hygiene protocols, and virtual workshops to adapt to the new normal. These measures were well-received, suggesting that tourists valued the safety and intimacy provided by these adaptations. However, while virtual experiences offered a viable alternative during travel restrictions, many participants expressed a preference for in-person interactions. These findings are consistent with studies on tourism resilience, which emphasize the importance of adaptive strategies in maintaining engagement during crises (Hashim and Jamaluddin, 2022; Shamshiripour et al., 2020).

Despite the overwhelmingly positive feedback, several challenges were identified. Time constraints and rushed itineraries were common concerns, limiting opportunities for deeper engagement with cultural elements. These findings underscore the importance of balancing efficiency with meaningful interactions to optimize the tourist experience. Additionally, while personalization was generally appreciated, inconsistent delivery highlighted areas for improvement in ensuring that all visitors feel equally valued.

4.4. Theoretical Contributions

The theoretical understanding of co-creation in gastronomic tourism is expanded by applying and validating an eight-dimensional framework within the unique cultural context of Bangka Belitung. Exploring the interplay of these dimensions highlights their effectiveness in analyzing co-creative dynamics. The findings emphasize the centrality of sensory and emotional engagement in creating memorable tourism experiences. Sensory elements such as taste, sight, and smell established connections between tourists and local culture, while emotional bonds with hosts fostered a sense of belonging. These insights align with existing

literature, reinforcing the importance of sensory and emotional dimensions in tourism (Ellis et al., 2018; Pine & Gilmore, 1998; Richards, 2012).

Additionally, the study underscores the cognitive value of gastronomic tourism through storytelling and education, showing how cultural and historical insights enrich tourist experiences (Carvalho et al., 2023; Harrington, 2005). By focusing on post-pandemic adaptations, such as smaller group sizes and virtual workshops, the research also expands discussions on tourism resilience (Hashim & Jamaluddin, 2022; Shamshiripour et al., 2020). Finally, this study extends the geographical scope of co-creation research by exploring Bangka Belitung, contributing a Southeast Asian perspective to a predominantly Western-focused discourse. The findings demonstrate the importance of contextual and cultural specificity in advancing global discussions on co-creation in gastronomic tourism (Horng & Tsai, 2012; Wondirad et al., 2021).

4.5. Practical Implications

This study offers actionable insights for tourism practitioners and policymakers to enhance gastronomic tourism experiences in Bangka Belitung. Sensory and emotional dimensions highlight the need for immersive and authentic activities, such as vibrant market tours, traditional cooking workshops, and communal meals. Emphasizing authenticity through storytelling and local flavors can strengthen tourists' connections to the destination. Integrating educational components, such as cultural storytelling and hands-on cooking experiences, can enrich tourists' understanding of Bangka Belitung's culinary heritage. Social interactions should also be prioritized, with activities that foster engagement with local communities and other participants, enhancing the relational aspect of co-creation.

Personalization emerged as critical for tourist satisfaction, underscoring the importance of accommodating dietary restrictions and preferences. Flexible itineraries and inclusive options, such as vegetarian or halal dishes, can meet diverse needs while ensuring high-quality experiences. Post-pandemic adaptations, such as smaller group sizes and enhanced hygiene protocols, should remain integral to operations. These strategies cater to evolving tourist preferences for intimate and safe experiences, while also supporting resilience against future challenges. By aligning offerings with these co-creation dimensions, operators can enhance tourist satisfaction, promote local culture, and sustain Bangka Belitung's appeal as a culinary destination.

5. CONCLUSION, LIMITATION, AND FUTURE STUDY

The co-creation dynamics in Bangka Belitung's gastronomic tourism were analyzed through 635 online reviews, revealing the significant influence of sensory, emotional, cognitive, and social dimensions. Sensory engagement and emotional connections emerged as the most impactful factors, while educational elements and social interactions added depth to the overall experience. Personalization and adaptations to post-pandemic conditions underscored the necessity of flexibility in catering to diverse tourist preferences. Nonetheless, challenges such as time limitations and inconsistent personalization highlighted areas requiring improvement. These insights enrich the theoretical understanding of co-creation and offer practical guidance for improving gastronomic tourism experiences.

Despite its contributions, the study has limitations. The reliance on online reviews introduces self-selection bias, potentially skewing the representation of tourist experiences. The absence of demographic data limits the ability to analyze variations across visitor profiles. Additionally, the study's focus on Bangka Belitung restricts the generalizability of the findings, as the unique cultural and culinary context may not apply to other destinations. The

qualitative approach, while effective for thematic analysis, does not quantify the relationships between co-creation dimensions and tourist satisfaction.

Future study could address these limitations by incorporating additional data sources, such as surveys, interviews, or ethnographic observations, to complement online reviews and reduce bias. Collecting demographic data would enable a more nuanced understanding of how visitor characteristics influence co-creation experiences. Comparative studies across different regions or cultural contexts could validate the eight-dimensional framework and provide broader insights. Additionally, mixed-method approaches could examine quantitative relationships between co-creation dimensions and outcomes like satisfaction or loyalty, offering more actionable insights for practitioners and extending theoretical advancements in the field.

6. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We extend our deepest gratitude to the Institute for Research and Community Service (LPPM) at Universitas Bangka Belitung for their generous funding and support, which made this research possible. Furthermore, we wish to acknowledge the significant contributions of the students involved in data collection, whose dedication, diligence, and commitment were instrumental in ensuring the successful completion of this study. Their efforts have greatly enriched the quality and depth of this research.

7. REFERENCES

- Alzboun, G., Alhur, M., Khawaldah, H., & Alshurideh, M. (2023). Assessing gastronomic tourism using machine learning approach: The case of google review. *International Journal of Data and Network Science*, 7(3): 1131-1142.
- Arıca, R., Kodas, B., Cobanoğlu, C., Parvez, M. O., Ongsakul, V., & Della Corte, V. (2023). The role of trust in tourists' motivation to participate in co-creation. *Tourism Review*, 78(4): 1182-1202.
- Brochado, A., Stoleriu, O., & Lupu, C. (2021). Wine tourism: a multisensory experience. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 24(5): 597-615.
- Campbell, J. L., Quincy, C., Osseman, J., & Pedersen, O. K. (2013). Coding in-depth semistructured interviews: Problems of unitization and intercoder reliability and agreement. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 42(3): 294-320.
- Campos, A. C. (2016). Co-Creation Of Tourist Experience: Attention, Involvement And Memorability. *Dissertation*. Portugal: Universidade do Algarve.
- Cannas, R., Argiolas, G., & Cabiddu, F. (2019). Fostering corporate sustainability in tourism management through social values within collective value co-creation processes. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 27(1): 139-155.
- Carvalho, M., Kastenholz, E., & Carneiro, M. J. (2021). Pairing co-creation with food and wine experiences—A holistic perspective of tourist experiences in Dão, a Portuguese wine region. *Sustainability*, 13(23): 13416.
- Carvalho, M., Kastenholz, E., Carneiro, M. J., & Souza, L. (2023). Co-creation of food tourism experiences: Tourists' perspectives of a Lisbon food tour. *Tourist Studies*, 23(2): 128-148.
- Chang, J., Morrison, A. M., Lin, S. H. H., & Ho, C. Y. (2021). How do food consumption motivations and emotions affect the experiential values and well-being of foodies?. *British Food Journal*, 123(2): 627-648.
- Dinis, G., Breda, Z., Costa, C., & Pacheco, O. (2019). Google trends in tourism and hospitality research: A systematic literature review. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology*, 10(4): 747-763.

- Ellis, A., Park, E., Kim, S., & Yeoman, I. (2018). What is food tourism?. *Tourism management*, 68: 250-263.
- Font, X., English, R., Gkritzali, A., & Tian, W. S. (2021). Value co-creation in sustainable tourism: A service-dominant logic approach. *Tourism Management*, 82: 104200.
- González-Mansilla, Ó., Berenguer-Contrí, G., & Serra-Cantalops, A. (2019). The impact of value co-creation on hotel brand equity and customer satisfaction. *Tourism Management*, 75: 51-65.
- Hashim, R., & Jamaluddin, M. R. (2022). *Co-Creation Of Destination Image And Food Tourism Of The Emerging Economies. Gastronomy, Hospitality, And The Future Of The Restaurant Industry: Post-COVID-19 Perspectives*. Pennsylvania, United States: IGI Global
- Harrington, R. J. (2005). Defining gastronomic identity: The impact of environment and culture on prevailing components, texture and flavors in wine and food. *Journal of culinary science & technology*, 4(2-3): 129-152.
- Horng, J. S., & Tsai, C. T. (2012). Culinary tourism strategic development: an Asia-Pacific perspective. *International journal of tourism research*, 14(1): 40-55.
- Htet, T., Husni, M. F. D., & Apriliani, F. D. (2024). Crafting urban identities: Local cuisine and city branding in Indonesia and Myanmar. *Journal of City: Branding and Authenticity*, 2(1): 30-51.
- Jimenez Ruiz, A. E., Bhartiya, S., & Bhatt, V. (Eds.). (2024). *Promoting Sustainable Gastronomy Tourism and Community Development*. Pennsylvania, United States: IGI Global.
- Kozinets, R. V. (2002). The field behind the screen: Using netnography for marketing research in online communities. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 39(1): 61-72.
- Lin, Z., Chen, Y., & Filieri, R. (2017). Resident-tourist value co-creation: The role of residents' perceived tourism impacts and life satisfaction. *Tourism Management*, 61, 436-442.
- Lombard, M., Snyder-Duch, J., & Bracken, C. C. (2002). Content analysis in mass communication: Assessment and reporting of intercoder reliability. *Human Communication Research*, 28(4): 587-604.
- Masmoudi, M., & Jmour, A. (2024). From bite to byte: decoding the motivations fueling social media's culinary heritage stories. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 1-20.
- Orea-Giner, A. (2023). *Health and Safety Issues in Food and Beverage Tourism*. In *Contemporary Advances in Food Tourism Management and Marketing* (pp. 164-179). Milton Park, Abingdon-on-Thames, Oxfordshire: Routledge.
- Pardini, S., Gabrielli, S., Dianti, M., Novara, C., Zucco, G. M., Mich, O., & Forti, S. (2022). The role of personalization in the user experience, preferences and engagement with virtual reality environments for relaxation. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(12): 7237.
- Phi, G. T., & Dredge, D. (2021). Collaborative tourism-making: An interdisciplinary review of co-creation and a future research agenda. *Critical Issues in Tourism Co-Creation*, 5-20.
- Pine, B. J., & Joseph, B. (1998). *Welcome To The Experience Economy*. Harvard University: Harvard Business Review.
- Pratiwi, Y. (2020). Traditional Fish Gangan: An icon of gastronomic tourism from Belitung island. *Gastron. Tour. J*, 7, 14-19.
- Randall, W. S., Gravier, M. J., & Prybutok, V. R. (2011). Connection, trust, and commitment: dimensions of co-creation?. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 19(01): 3-24.
- Ranjan, K. R., & Read, S. (2016). Value co-creation: concept and measurement. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 44: 290-315.
- Reichenberger, I. (2017). C2C value co-creation through social interactions in tourism. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 19(6): 629-638.

- Richards, G. (2012). Food and the tourism experience: major findings and policy orientations. *Food and the Tourism Experience*, 13-46.
- Romero, D., & Molina, A. (2011). Collaborative networked organisations and customer communities: value co-creation and co-innovation in the networking era. *Production Planning & Control*, 22(5-6): 447-472.
- Rožanis, M., Groszlik, R., & Avieli, N. (2024). Between gaze and taste: Senses, imaginaries, and the sustainability of culinary heritage in Greek tourist-oriented tavernes. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 53: 101288.
- Sánchez-Cañizares, S. M., & López-Guzmán, T. (2012). Gastronomy as a tourism resource: profile of the culinary tourist. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 15(3), 229-245.
- Shamshiripour, A., Rahimi, E., Shabanpour, R., & Mohammadian, A. K. (2020). How is COVID-19 reshaping activity-travel behavior? Evidence from a comprehensive survey in Chicago. *Transportation Research Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, 7: 100216.
- Sidali, K. L., Kastenholz, E., & Bianchi, R. (2015). Food tourism, niche markets and products in rural tourism: Combining the intimacy model and the experience economy as a rural development strategy. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 23(8-9): 1179-1197.
- Sthapit, E., Piramanayagam, S., & Björk, P. (2020). Tourists' motivations, emotions, and memorable local food experiences. *Journal of Gastronomy and Tourism*, 5(1): 17-32.
- Williams, H. A., Williams Jr, R. L., & Omar, M. (2014). Gastro-tourism as destination branding in emerging markets. *International Journal of Leisure and Tourism Marketing*, 4(1), 1-18
- Wiyanto, A. (2024). *Dari Otak-Otak hingga Lempah Kuning, Ini Wisata Kuliner Khas Bangka di Pangkalpinang Wajib Dicoba - Portal Belitung*. Retrieved from: <https://belitung.pikiran-rakyat.com/wisata/pr-3178706517/dari-otak-otak-hingga-lempah-kuning-ini-wisata-kuliner-khas-bangka-di-pangkalpinang-wajib-dicoba?page=all>
- Wondirad, A., Kebete, Y., & Li, Y. (2021). Culinary tourism as a driver of regional economic development and socio-cultural revitalization: Evidence from Amhara National Regional State, Ethiopia. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 19: 100482.
- Yang, X., Zhang, L., & Feng, Z. (2024). Personalized tourism recommendations and the E-tourism user experience. *Journal of Travel Research*, 63(5): 1183-1200.