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THE MEDIATING ROLE OF LOCAVORISM IN THE EFFECT OF LOCAL FOOD CONSUMPTION VALUE ON INTENTION TO PURCHASE LOCAL FOODS

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ABSTRACT

The number of studies exploring attitudes toward local food is limited but growing. This research aims to fill the gap by testing food consumption value as a second-order construct and assessing its impact on attitudes toward local food, locavorism, and the intention to purchase local food. Additionally, the study examines the conditions that may influence the effect of food consumption value. The study sample consists of participants aged 18 and older who consume local food. The research model was analyzed for validity, reliability, and structural relationships using Smart PLS statistical software. The findings indicate that taste and quality values are significant in shaping attitudes toward local food, whereas price and prestige values did not have a positive effect on these attitudes. Moreover, the study shows that positive attitudes toward local food increase the intention to purchase it. Lastly, the elements of lionization and communalization were found to reinforce both positive attitudes toward local food and purchase

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intentions, while the element of opposition did not demonstrate this effect.

INTRODUCTION

Local food consumption has surged in the United States, where consumers with access to local food perceive it as safe (Statista, 2020), a trend mirrored globally as local food gains rapid traction and appreciation (Skallerud & Wien, 2019). Various factors drive this interest, including locavorism—a consumer ideology tied to normative beliefs about local food's value (Reich et al., 2018). This reflects a growing shift toward locavorism, transforming the purchase of local foods into a form of food activism (Fitzgerald, 2016). Locavores commonly view local foods as tasty, nutritious, reliable, and beneficial to their communities. The term "locavore" has gained widespread recognition as a relatively new concept, one that has also been adopted by the tourism industry. Tourists are increasingly traveling to savor local cuisines, dedicating significant portions of their budgets to gastronomic experiences (Stone et al., 2020), thereby intertwining local food consumption with tourism. Economically, local food systems bolster community wealth by retaining money locally (Wenzig & Gruchmann, 2018), highlighting a strong nexus between economics, food, and tourism.

Despite these trends, a critical research problem remains: the decision-making processes behind tourists' intentions to purchase local food are poorly understood, particularly regarding the role of consumption values and locavorism. Previous studies have largely focused on specific destinations, measuring tourist experiences at those sites (Choe & Kim, 2018), but they fall short in examining how perceived benefits—epistemic (knowledge-seeking) and emotional (feelings-based)—shape intentions across broader contexts. Additionally, the literature lacks insight into how locavorism mediates the relationship between local food consumption values and purchase intentions, leaving a gap in understanding the behavioral mechanisms at play. This study addresses these shortcomings by posing a specific question: How do local food consumption values influence tourists' intentions to purchase local food, and to what extent does locavorism mediate this effect?

The purpose of this research is to investigate the effect of local food consumption value on the intention to purchase local food, with locavorism as a mediating factor. While prior work highlights destination-specific experiences, it overlooks the broader interplay of consumer values, perceived benefits, and future-oriented behaviors, such as how tourists' intentions persist beyond a single trip. This study fills these gaps by

providing a comprehensive analysis of the factors driving purchase intentions and by exploring tourists' motivations for locavorism—whether epistemic curiosity or emotional connection—when accessing local food. In doing so, it expands the academic discourse on local food consumption, offering novel insights into its psychological and behavioral dimensions and addressing the limitations of earlier, narrowly focused research.

The research question investigates the effect of local food consumption value on the intention to purchase local food, with locavorism as a mediating factor. Based on this question, we experimented with many aspects of consumption value theory (CVT). For example, this study expands the understanding of how multiple consumption values drive consumers' intention to purchase local food. This theory mainly focuses on locavorism and local food consumption, which was the main objective of this research. Moreover, this theory explains not only the tangible benefits (e.g., price or taste) but also focuses on epistemic, social, and emotional values attached to purchasing local food repeatedly. This provides a unique understanding of consumer behavior and the decision-making process in the context of ethical consumption, local food systems, and sustainability.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Food Consumption Value

Generally, consumer preferences are explained by the Theory of Consumption Values (TCV). These include functional, emotional, social, and epistemic values (Sheth et al., 1991). In research, functional value, which is one of the most important factors in consumer preferences, covers quality, price, and health (Perrea et al., 2015). Emotional values associated with activities such as travel and vacation for pleasure and recreation are also important (Sánchez et al., 2006). Social value includes social image concepts such as respect, recognition, and prestige (Elliot et al., 2011). Epistemic value represents emotions such as curiosity and desire to learn new information. These experiences include local food consumption and cultural interactions (Sheth et al., 1991). Food choices and food consumption are quite important in the tourism industry. It closely concerns many branches of science and interdisciplinary research emerges. Consuming local foods represents local traditions and allows tourists to gain knowledge and interact with others (Sims, 2009; Choe & Kim, 2018). The demand for locally produced food is increasing because it has many advantages, especially reliability. Local food is a concept that has not yet been

sufficiently defined. It is typically defined as food that is provided via a local food system or a brief supply chain where production and consumption are close to one another (Feldmann & Hamm, 2015; Skallerud & Wien, 2019). Investigating why local food is consumed can help marketers and destination organizations influence tourists' decision-making process (Choe & Kim, 2018).

Locavorism

Locavorism, a term introduced by Prentice in 2006, refers to the movement of eating locally sourced foods (Fitzgerald, 2016). This ideology has three dimensions: lionization (belief in the superior taste and local food quality), opposition (against long transportation of foods), and communalization (supporting local communities) (Reich et al., 2018). Locavorism emphasizes individual benefits and social relationships, often reflecting a common belief system that can obscure the true nature of social relationships (Simonetti, 2012). Consumers loyal to their communities tend to purchase local products (Yildiz et al., 2018). The three dimensions reinforce each other; for example, opposing non-local foods (opposition) by believing they are more nutritious (lionization) or supporting the community through local food consumption (communalization). Although locavorism is frequently associated with eating food from a particular region, it supports human health, animal welfare, community revival, and environmental sustainability (Rudy, 2012). It aims to create more livable communities and contributes to environmental and agricultural sustainability (Fitzgerald, 2016). According to research, Locavorism promotes harmony between humans and the natural world as well as between farmers and consumers (Fitzgerald, 2016). It encourages frequent shopping and loyalty to local retailers, and is positively related to environmental concerns, ethnocentrism, social desirability, and community values (Reich et al., 2018). Locavores perceive businesses that serve locally produced food as more trustworthy, and such restaurants are more likely to be preferred by local consumers (Scozzafava et al., 2017).

Attitude-Intention Theories

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) was proposed by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) who postulates that attitude and subjective norms are the main structures that explain behavior. Later on, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) was investigated by adding perceived behavior to the TRA in the hope of increasing its predictability by taking into account a discretionary element in this theory. Perugini and Bagozzi (2001) introduced the Model

of Goal-Directed Behavior (MGB) model, which includes desire as a mediator along with positive and negative anticipated emotions, to improve upon weaknesses identified in the TRA and TPB. On the other hand, various theories have been used to make detailed sense of human behavior regarding the environment and sustainability. An example of these theories is the Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) theory. The three pillars of the VBN theory are norms, beliefs, and values (Stern et al., 1999).

HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

The globalization of food has heightened interactions between tourists and local cuisines, leading to swift dietary acculturation at various destinations. Typically, tourists have ample opportunities to savor local foods while traveling. The distinctive qualities of local foods -such as their history, taste, nutritional benefits, and associated cultural values- contribute significantly to their appeal. As a result, purchasing local foods has become an essential aspect of the travel process for many visitors (Choe & Kim, 2018). A review of previous studies indicates that restaurant quality, food novelty, and food quality remarkably influence emotional and epistemic benefits. It has been found that emotional value, epistemic value, and taste/quality value have direct positive effects on tourists' positive attitudes toward local foods (Sulek & Hensley, 2004). Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H_{1a}: Taste/quality value has a positive effect on attitude toward local food.

The theory of planned behavior is based on the idea that individuals focus on the benefits of a behavior before performing it. In the context of health value, it is associated with the superiority of the benefits of the food to be consumed, such as the naturalness, freshness, and nutritional value of the food to be consumed. Individuals who are aware of the value of healthy nutrition may tend to develop a more positive attitude by identifying local foods with these values. Some communities are concerned with the foods they consume and their connection to nutrition and health (Kumar & Smith, 2018). At this stage, TBP, health awareness is an important factor affecting attitudes toward local foods (Pino et al., 2012). Rousta and Jamshidi (2020) investigated the value tourists place on consuming local foods and their interest in local gastronomy. Essam et al. (2025) found that restaurant management can attract and please local food customers by sharing the history of menu items, production methods, food sources, and the processes involved before the food arrives at the restaurant. They recommend using appealing terms like "safe food," "fresh food," and "environmental labels".

Their study found that emotional, health, prestige, quality, taste, and price values have positive effects on tourists' behavior towards local foods. In this context, it is predicted that health value will positively affect attitudes towards local foods.

H_{1b}: Health value has a positive effect on attitude toward local food.

Certain factors, such as demographics, socioeconomic characteristics and memories, and past experiences, can shape an individual's perception of an objective price. Lichtenstein et al. (1989) investigated product price perception and the decision-making process accordingly. Consumers' behaviors and choices were examined according to this perception. Their study concentrated on consumer perceptions of price and its acceptability. Uddin (2019) investigated the factors affecting customer loyalty and satisfaction in the restaurant industry and found that customers' perceptions of service food quality and prices were positively related to their satisfaction. Similarly, Thio et al. (2022) found that individuals who perceive the price value of local foods as high are more likely to find the destination attractive and be more willing to revisit.

H_{1c}: Price value has a positive effect on attitude toward local food.

Travelers eat for energy and emotional pleasure. They often expect positive emotional effects when they choose to eat local foods in the places they visit, as they are likely different from their daily diet (Perrea et al., 2015; Choe & Kim, 2018). Consumers' assessments of tourism products and hospitality are influenced by emotional value as well (Pelegrin-Borondo et al., 2017). When the studies are examined, the findings show that when a customer enjoys experiencing a product, a hedonic value is created, which in turn affects attitudes (Peng & Kim, 2014). Sthapit et al. (2017) found that emotions related to local food consumption (comfort, distress, arousal, and sentimentality) positively impact visitors' memories of their gastronomy experiences.

H_{1d}: Emotional value has a positive effect on attitude toward local food.

Brand prestige positively influences purchasing intentions, indicating a correlation between prestige and the intent to buy (Steenkamp et al., 2003). Consumers prioritize local products over foreign products in their food preferences. Factors such as social belonging, economy, and quality trigger this priority. Food consumers can infer quality from country-of-origin labels. Local labels often encourage trust and confidence (Šapić et

al., 2018). Rehman et al. (2022) incorporated local food consumption value, behavioral intention, tourist engagement, and fear of COVID-19 into a joint research process. The striking aspect of the study is that local food consumption value has a significant relationship with local food satisfaction. There is no relationship between local food satisfaction and emotional value. Also, prestige value affects food satisfaction and acceptance.

H_{1e}: Prestige value has a positive effect on attitude toward local food.

Social value encompasses human relationships that go beyond personal recognition or status. Research has highlighted the significance of interaction value, or "togetherness," within food tourism (Ignatov & Smith, 2006). Interactions among family members, as well as between food producers and consumers (tourists), are identified as crucial elements of food-related festivals (Williams et al., 2015). Soltani et al. (2021) examined tourists' perceptions of local food and the image of food destinations, focusing on the value of local food consumption, the experiential aspects of local food, and the role of social media influencers. The findings show that tourists tend to have positive attitudes towards local food across all values of local food consumption.

H_{1f}: Interaction value has a positive effect on attitude toward local food.

Epistemic value significantly influences attitudes toward local food by addressing consumers' desire for novelty, curiosity, and knowledge enrichment. Prior research consistently emphasizes that such intrinsic motivations shape positive attitudes toward new food experiences. For instance, Bianchi and Mortimer (2015) demonstrate that favorable attitudes toward local foods are critical drivers of consumption behavior across various cultural contexts, highlighting the role of consumers' knowledge-seeking tendencies. Similarly, Qu et al. (2018) establish that personal values and informational influences, such as media exposure, shape local food attitudes, particularly when these are tied to broader economic and cultural narratives. This reinforces the notion that epistemic value is not limited to individual curiosity but also involves engaging with the authenticity and uniqueness of local products. Furthermore, Badu-Baiden et al. (2022) reveal that perceived epistemic and emotional benefits of local food consumption positively correlate with consumption values, suggesting that tourists often seek meaningful, knowledge-based interactions through local food experiences. Zhao et al. (2019) further support this perspective, showing that awareness of local food quality and production processes critically

impacts consumer attitudes and acceptance. Based on this literature, we posit that epistemic value will positively influence tourists' attitudes toward local food. This suggests that the sense of discovering and learning about local food, which satisfies consumers' curiosity and knowledge-seeking motives, positively influences their attitudes toward local food (Yee, 2015). Hence, we are proposing the following hypothesis:

H_{1g}: Epistemic value has a positive effect on attitude toward local food.

Previous research has consistently shown that attitudes toward local food consumption play a critical role in shaping consumers' purchase intentions. Notably, Bianchi and Mortimer (2015) demonstrated that positive attitudes toward supporting local agri-businesses strongly enhance consumers' intentions to buy local food, highlighting the attitude-behavior linkage across different cultural settings. Similarly, Baby and Joseph (2023) emphasized that pro-environmental attitudes cultivated through travelers' experiences significantly influence their intentions to purchase local food, particularly in tourism contexts. Cozzio et al. (2018) further reinforced this connection by showing that consumers with favorable attitudes toward sustainability practices are more inclined to purchase local food, suggesting that broader beliefs about sustainability directly inform purchasing behaviors. This indicates that a positive attitude towards local food, resulting from a strong local identity, may enhance the intention to purchase local food (Zhang et al. 2022). Additionally, Wenzig and Gruchmann (2018) identified a positive correlation between consumers' moral obligations and their attitudes toward local food, noting that ethical and social considerations strengthen the translation of attitudes into actual purchase decisions. Magnusson et al. (2001) also emphasized the influence of demographic and cultural factors on attitudes, finding that these factors significantly predict consumers' purchasing intentions. We can deduce that these elements significantly influence people's positive attitudes toward local food, providing credence to the idea that such attitudes influence people's tendency to buy such food (Kim & Huang, 2021).

H_2: Attitude toward local food has a positive effect on the intention to purchase local food.

According to Reich et al. (2018), locavorism is an emerging consumer ideology that arises from the convergence of several cultural and economic factors. Three components encompass normative beliefs about food. The first of these is "communalization", which includes supporting consumers and supporting local communities. Secondly, there is the "lionization"

component, which advocates that local foods and products are much better and superior in terms of taste and quality. Finally, there is the “opposition” belief, which supports local purchasing and wants local products to remain local and is against the long-term supply chain (Reich et al., 2018). It is a belief in lionization that reflects the desire to access local food. With this belief, the idea that local food is more delicious and healthier is adopted (Onozaka & McFadden, 2011). It has a crucial mediating role in determining local food attitudes and subsequent purchase intentions. With the lionization process, it has been seen that local foods have come to the fore in terms of health, quality, benefits, and ethics. This process then increases consumers’ perceptions of local food and makes it more desirable. As a result, consumers develop a more positive attitude towards local foods. This then increases their purchase intentions. The mediating effect of lionization affects public consumer behavior by increasing awareness and perceived value of local food through mass marketing. It also encourages local food consumption.

H_{3a}: Lionization mediates positively on attitude toward local food and intention to purchase local food.

The concept of opposition is the belief in being against industrial products, non-local foods, and foods provided by distant supply chains from outside the local area, also influenced by sustainability and local development concerns (Zhang et al., 2020). Opposition to factory production is an important mediator in the relationship between local food attitudes and consumption. The "opposition" belief has become more prominent after the food shortages, food safety, environmental sustainability, and economic support for local development that emerged after global problems. The "opposition" aims to present a critical perspective against excessive consumption behaviors and the negativities in industrial food production. This perspective supports positive attitudes towards local food. It emerges as a healthier, fairer, and more sustainable option. This leads to a stronger consumption of local food. Consumers also consider the influence of “dissenting” beliefs in their purchasing decisions.

H_{3b}: Opposition mediates positively on attitude toward local food and intention to purchase local food.

Communalization refers to a process that promotes community values and beliefs through the consumption of local food. This approach strengthens community ties by encouraging the purchase and consumption of local produce, highlighting the social aspects of food consumption beyond mere buying. When consumers recognize that their local food

purchases contribute to their community's welfare and development, they tend to adopt a positive attitude (Reich et al., 2018). This positive sentiment enhances social benefits, such as boosting local economies, preserving cultural values, and supporting both tangible and intangible heritage. As a result, socialization increases the consumption of locally produced food, thus raising community awareness and social values in consumer behavior (Kim & Huang, 2021).

H_{3c}: Communalization mediates positively on attitude toward local food and intention to purchase local food.

All of the hypotheses are visible on Figure 1.

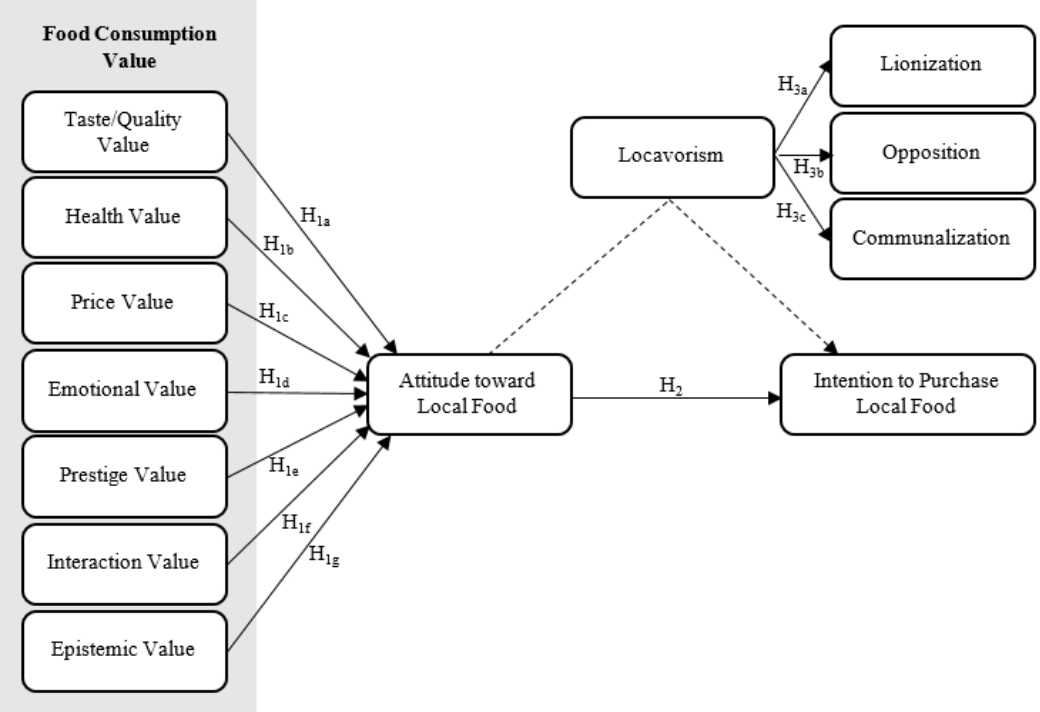

Figure 1. *Research Model*

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Sampling

The face validity of the scales used in the research was first ensured by interviewing five experts in the field. Later, to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the questionnaire form used in the research, a preliminary questionnaire was created and tested with data collected from a total of 50 participants. During the pilot testing phase, Cronbach's Alpha values of the

scales were calculated, and all values were higher than 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019). In addition, factor loadings were calculated, and it was determined that all items were higher than 0.50 (Kaiser, 1974). Accordingly, content validity was ensured. The main data were collected through Amazon M-Turk between 08 May and 01 June 2024 dates. The preference for data collection through Amazon M-Turk over other methods (such as face-to-face) is due to its ethical and economic advantages (Ali et al., 2021). The population of the study consisted of people over the age of 18 who consumed local food in the destinations they visited. Before starting the survey, participants were asked whether they had ever consumed local food in the destinations they visited. Individuals meeting these criteria were asked to complete the questionnaire form. For the sampling technique, the convenience sampling method was chosen to investigate a population without a sampling limit to collect data quickly and more efficiently. Before distributing the questionnaire form, (1) a succinct description of the study's topic was provided, and (2) consent was requested to ensure participants acknowledged their participation was voluntary. Subsequently, participants were required to finish the questionnaire forms. The research proceeded with a total of 392 data points. The demographic traits of the participants are shown in detail in Table 1.

Table 1. *Respondent Profile*

Categories		**N**	**%**
Gender	Female	170	43.4
	Male	222	56.6
Age	18-24	23	5.9
	25-34	192	49.0
	35-44	102	26.0
	45-54	44	11.2
	55-64	27	6.9
	65 and above	4	1.0
Marital status	Single	332	84.7
	Married	60	15.3
Education	High school graduate (high school diploma or equivalent including GED)	27	6.9
	Associate degree	6	1.5
	Bachelor's degree in college (4-year)	284	72.4
	Master's degree	75	19.1
Employment status	Full-time employee	369	94.1
	Part-time employee	14	3.6
	Unemployed	2	.5
	Retired	2	.5
	Others	5	1.3

Measures

To ensure the validity and reliability of the scales, all measurement items were subjected to minor modifications to suit the purpose and topic of this research. The questionnaire technique was used as the data collection method. In the first section of the questionnaire form, participants' demographic characteristics are presented. The second section includes items from the food consumption value scale sub-factors. These sub-factors—emotional value (6 items), epistemic value (6 items), health value (4 items), prestige value (4 items), taste/quality value (5 items), price value (2 items), and interaction value (2 items)—were adapted from the study by Choe and Kim (2018). Next, items from the Locavorism scale's sub-factors—lionization (3 items), opposition (4 items), and communalization (4 items)—were adapted from the study by Reich et al. (2018). Third, items from the intention to purchase local foods scale (3 items) were used and adapted from the studies by Reich et al. (2017), Reich et al. (2018), and Zhang et al. (2020). Lastly, in the second section of the questionnaire form, the attitude toward the local food scale (4 items) was used, adapted from the studies by Christoph et al. (2008), Phillips et al. (2013), and Choe and Kim (2018). The items for the food consumption value, locavorism, and intention to purchase local foods scales were presented to participants in a 5-point Likert scale format (1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree). The attitude toward local food scale items was presented to participants using a semantic differential scale (1-very bad, very unpleasant, very negative, very unfavorable to 7- very good, very pleasant, very positive, very favorable).

Data Analysis

The research model was subjected to validity, reliability analyses, and structural equation modeling analysis using the SmartPLS statistical program. The primary reason for using the SmartPLS statistical program is its ability to simultaneously present measurement model results, structural evaluation, and structural equation modeling results. For data analysis, confirmatory tetrad analysis (CTA) was first conducted to determine whether the scales belonged to formative or reflective constructs. During the CTA analysis, since the PRIVAL, INTIVAL, and INT scales had fewer than four indicators each, additional indicators (EMOVAL1 and EMOVAL2) were added to the relevant scales to complete the analysis (Bollen & Ting, 1993). CTA analysis requires at least four indicators per construct, as it creates 25 indicators per structure. PRIVAL and INTIVAL, having only two indicators each, required two additional indicators, and INT, having three indicators, required one additional indicator.

In the CTA analysis, confidence intervals calculated with the Bonferroni correction (adjusted confidence interval) were examined. It was determined that all scales were reflective. Consequently, covariance-based structural equation modeling (CB-SEM) was used as the data analysis method. Also, to test for common method bias, Harman's single method bias was performed (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). As a result, it was determined that the scales did not have common method bias.

RESULTS

Measurement Model Assessment

The validity and reliability results in the study are presented in Table 2 for dependent and independent variables and in Table 3 for mediator variables. Firstly, the results of the confirmatory factor analysis (outer loadings- λ) of the scales were examined. Since the items EPIVAL4 (.671), EMOVAL1 (.691), and TASVAL4 (.663) had loadings below .708 (Hair et al., 2019), they were removed. It was found that the other scale items had loadings above .708. For reliability, Cronbach's Alpha (α) reliability coefficient was found to be above .60 for each scale except for INTVAL, which had a value of .57 but was considered adequate (Taber, 2018). The Dijkstra and Henseler's (2015) rho_a values, except for INTVAL (.599), LION (.685), and PRIVAL (.613), were above .70 and thus deemed good. Values for the other scales were above .60 and therefore considered sufficient (Taber, 2018). The rho_c scores, examined to calculate internal consistency, were found to be above .60 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). The AVE values, examined for convergent validity, were above .50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

The model's chi-square value was 3981.614. The SRMR was .067, which is within the acceptable range (≤ .080) (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The NFI was .66, which, according to Bentler and Bonett (1980), indicates that the closer the NFI is to 1.0, the better the model fit. In this research, the NFI of .66 was deemed acceptable due to its proximity to 1. The d_ULS was 4.457, and the d_G was 1.531. These values were found to be higher than their original criteria values (> .05), indicating a good fit (Dijkstra & Henseler, 2015). Finally, the GoF was calculated and found to be higher than .36 (.47) (Tenenhaus et al., 2005). In conclusion, the research model demonstrated a good model fit.

Table 2. *Independent and Dependent Variables Reliability and Validity Scores*

Variables		λ	rho_a	α	rho_c	AVE
Food Consumption Value						
Emotional Value (EMOVAL)			.764	.794	.866	.618
1	Eating local food makes me feel happy. ®	.754				
2	Eating local food gives me pleasure.	.762				
3	Eating local food changes my mood positively	.776				
4	Eating local food fascinates me	.771				
5	Eating local food makes me crave it	.750				
6	Eating local food makes me feel excited.	.754				
Epistemic Value (EPIVAL)			.787	.846	.890	.618
1	I want to seek out more information about local food	.809				
2	I am more curious about local food	.795				
3	Eating local food is a good opportunity for me to learn new things.	.776				
5	Eating local food increases my knowledge about local culture.	.782				
6	I learn local dining habits through my local food experiences (e.g., how to eat the food, and how to use utensils).	.769				
Health Value (HEAVAL)			.539	.874	.913	.725
1	Local food is hygienic	.838				
2	Local food makes me healthy	.841				
3	Local food is safe.	.865				
4	Local food provides good nutrition.	.862				
Prestige Value (PREVAL)			.513	.833	.888	.665
1	Eating local food gives me a chance to show off my local food experiences to others.	.816				
2	I have a higher social status when eating well-known local food.	.800				
3	It is worthwhile to show pictures of my local food experiences to others.	.826				
4	Eating well-known local food gives me prestige.	.820				
Taste/Quality Value (TASVAL)			.610	.772	.854	.594
1	Local food provides a variety of ingredients.	.763				
2	Local food provides good quality ingredients.	.737				
3	Local food provides appealing flavors.	.789				
5	Local food provides a high standard of quality.	.792				
Price Value (PRIVAL)			.613	.609	.836	.719
1	Local food is reasonably priced.	.862				
2	Local food offers value for money.	.833				
Interaction Value (INTVAL)			.599	.571	.821	.697
1	My friendship or kinship with my travel companion has increased while eating local food together.	.882				
2	Eating local food helps me interact with the people I travel with.	.784				
Attitude toward Local Food (ATTITUDE)			.806	.803	.871	.629
1	*Very bad-very good*	.805				
2	*Very unpleasant-very pleasant*	.759				
3	*Very negative-very positive*	.770				
4	*Very unfavorable-very favorable*	.836				
Intention to purchase local foods (INT)			.728	.727	.846	.647
1	How likely is it that you will purchase local foods?	.803				
2	How likely is it that you will buy your basic food items from a neighborhood grocery store that offers locally produced food items?	.791				
3	Will you next time when you buy a food, you will take local foods into consideration?	.819				

Table 3. *Mediating Variables Reliability and Validity Scores*

Variables		λ	rho_a	α	rho_c	AVE
Locavorism (LOC)						
Lionization (LION)			.685	.680	.824	.629
1	Locally produced foods just taste better.	.820				
2	All else equal, there is a taste difference between a locally produced food and one that was shipped from somewhere else	.755				
3	Locally produced foods are more nutritious than foods that have been shipped from somewhere else.	.765				
Opposition (OPP)			.864	.846	.896	.683
1	I don't trust foods that have been produced by large, multinational corporations.	.823				
2	Large, global food systems are destined to fail.	.838				
3	I would go out of my way to avoid buying food from a large retail grocery chain.	.872				
4	I feel uneasy eating something unless I know exactly where it was produced.	.769				
Communalization (COMMU)			.770	.769	.852	.590
1	Buying locally produced foods supports sustainable farming practices.	.774				
2	Buying local foods helps build a more prosperous community.	.761				
3	I like to support local farmers whenever possible.	.782				
4	Supporting the local food economy is important to me.	.757				

For discriminant validity, the Fornell-Larcker criterion was calculated, and the square root of the AVE values for each scale were found to be higher than the correlations between the scales (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) (see Table 4). Secondly, the HTMT values were examined and found to be below 1.0 (Henseler et al., 2015) (see Table 5). Finally, cross-loadings were calculated, and it was determined that the correlation loadings of each scale's items were higher with their respective scale compared to their correlation with other scales (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 4. *Fornell Larcker Criterion*

No	Construct	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*	*11*	*12*
1	*ATTITUDE*	**.793**											
2	*COMMU*	.665	**.768**										
3	*EMOVAL*	.678	.715	**.763**									
4	*EPIVAL*	.649	.689	.811	**.786**								
5	*HEALVAL*	.585	.579	.579	.546	**.852**							
6	*INT*	.736	.732	.714	.687	.543	**.804**						
7	*INTVAL*	.590	.639	.642	.672	.503	.659	**.835**					
8	*LION*	.648	.722	.718	.748	.599	.729	.701	**.781**				
9	*OPP*	.273	.491	.433	.430	.348	.367	.446	.534	**.826**			
10	*PRESVAL*	.547	.573	.693	.739	.619	.615	.647	.752	.545	**.816**		
11	*PRIVAL*	.587	.600	.593	.583	.544	.594	.666	.618	.376	.601	**.848**	
12	*TASVAL*	.715	.769	.736	.741	.734	.766	.678	.778	.415	.667	.667	**.771**

Note. *Numbers in bold are AVE square root results, p=<0.001***, p=<0.01**, p=<0.05*, TASVAL= Taste/quality value, HEAVAL= Health value, EPIVAL= Epistemic value, PRIVAL= Price value, EMOVAL= Emotional value, PRESVAL= Prestige value, INTVAL= Interaction value, ATTITUDE= Attitude toward local food, LION= Lionization, OPP= Opposition, COMMU= Communalization, INT= Intention to purchase local food*

Table 5. *Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)*

No	Construct	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*	*11*
1	*ATTITUDE*											
2	*COMMU*	.844										
3	*EMOVAL*	.832	.899									
4	*EPIVAL*	.784	.853	.975								
5	*HEALVAL*	.696	.707	.684	.637							
6	*INT*	.964	.974	.916	.875	.679						
7	*INTVAL*	.859	.963	.942	.971	.715	1,017					
8	*LION*	.874	.995	.964	.987	.777	1,032	1,116				
9	*OPP*	.328	.606	.515	.503	.401	.457	.639	.700			
10	*PRESVAL*	.665	.716	.843	.881	.727	.787	.941	.999	.648		
11	*PRIVAL*	.837	.877	.838	.812	.748	.893	1,129	.957	.521	.844	
12	*TASVAL*	.904	.993	.920	.916	.895	1,018	1,009	1,068	.508	.828	.974

TASVAL= Taste/quality value, HEAVAL= Health value, EPIVAL= Epistemic value, PRIVAL= Price value, EMOVAL= Emotional value, PRESVAL= Prestige value, INTVAL= Interaction value, ATTITUDE= Attitude toward local food, LION= Lionization, OPP= Opposition, COMMU= Communalization, INT= Intention to purchase local food

Structural Model Assessment

In the structural model assessment, the InnerVIF values (see Table 6) were first examined and found to be below 5.0 for all scales (Becker et al., 2015). Looking at the determination coefficient (R^2), it was observed that attitude toward local food had a strong explanatory power from the independent variables (.585, where $.50 \leq R^2 \leq 1.00$), and locavorism sub-factors had a strong explanatory power for intention to purchase local foods (.685, where $.50 \leq R^2 \leq 1.00$). Additionally, attitude toward local food moderately explained locavorism sub-factors (.419, .074, .442, respectively, interpreted as good, insufficient, and good according to Henseler et al. (2009). When assessing effect size (f^2), it was found that the independent variables had a small effect on attitude toward local food, locavorism sub-factors had a small effect on the intention to purchase local foods, and attitude toward local food had a moderate effect ($.15 \leq f^2 \leq .36$) (Cohen, 1988). Finally, it was observed that lionization and opposition sub-factors of locavorism had a high effect on attitude toward local food ($.36 \leq f^2 \leq .79$; $.72 \leq f^2 \leq 1.00$) (see Table 6).

Predictive Model Assessment

To determine the predictive capacity of the research model, the cross-validated redundancy index (Q^2predict) (Shmueli & Koppius, 2011), as well as RMSE (Root Mean Square Error) and MAE (Mean Absolute Error) results were compared (Shmueli et al., 2019). The Q^2predict values yielded positive results. Since the prediction error values did not show a symmetric distribution, the PLS-SEM and linear model (LM) values were compared based on the MAE values. As a result of this comparison, it was found that

the LM values were higher than the PLS-SEM values for a small portion of the dependent variable items, indicating that the model's predictive power is low.

Table 6. *Structural Equation Model Results*

No	Hypotheses	β	$\bar{x}$	SD	*t-statistics*	*p-value*	InnerVIF	f^2	*Results*
H_{1a}	TASVAL->ATT	.290	.286	.083	3.511	.000***	4.002	.051	*Accepted*
H_{1b}	HEAVAL->ATT	.124	.123	.062	1.989	.047*	2.395	.015	*Accepted*
H_{1c}	PRIVAL->ATT	.119	.121	.062	1.937	.053	2.205	016	*Not accepted*
H_{1d}	EMOVAL->ATT	.247	.235	.097	2.553	.011**	3.456	.042	*Accepted*
H_{1e}	PRESVAL->ATT	-.110	-.108	.084	1.303	.193	2.823	.010	*Not accepted*
H_{1f}	INTVAL->ATT	.083	.089	.063	1.307	.191	2.492	.007	*Not accepted*
H_{1g}	EPIVAL->ATT	.122	.129	.080	1.515	.130	3.995	.009	*Not accepted*
H_2	ATT->INT	.350	.347	.044	8.002	.000***	2.083	.080	*Accepted*

*p=<0.001***, p=<0.01**, p=<0.05*, TASVAL= Taste/quality value, HEAVAL= Health value, EPIVAL= Epistemic value, PRIVAL= Price value, EMOVAL= Emotional value, PRESVAL= Prestige value, INTVAL= Interaction value, ATTITUDE= Attitude toward local food, LION= Lionization, OPP= Opposition, COMMU= Communalization, INT= Intention to purchase local food*

Importance-Performance Matrix Analysis

IPMA (Importance-Performance Matrix Analysis) is a grid analysis that showcases the overall impact of PLS-SEM prediction's "importance" along with the average "performance" ratings (Groß, 2018). The IPMA-PLS technique was used through the dependent variables to develop more precise recommendations for the intention to purchase local food. IPMA provides benefits by indicating which factors local food-producing businesses should pay attention to in their planning or implementation efforts. When examining Figure 2, The performance ratings for all variables among consumers were above 70. The importance ratings ranged between .75 and .075. It is evident that attitude toward local food holds high importance and performance for the intention to purchase local food. Nevertheless, while consumers' perception of prestige value and opposition towards non-local food businesses have high-performance levels, their importance levels are insufficient. Consumers think that local food businesses have a high level of prestige. However, consumers do not see structures with a low level of importance as an important factor in their local food preferences. This situation shows that although local food businesses have a certain level of perceived privilege, this is not an important factor in the consumer's purchase intention. These results show that consumers are not strongly opposed to non-local food businesses and do not avoid them.

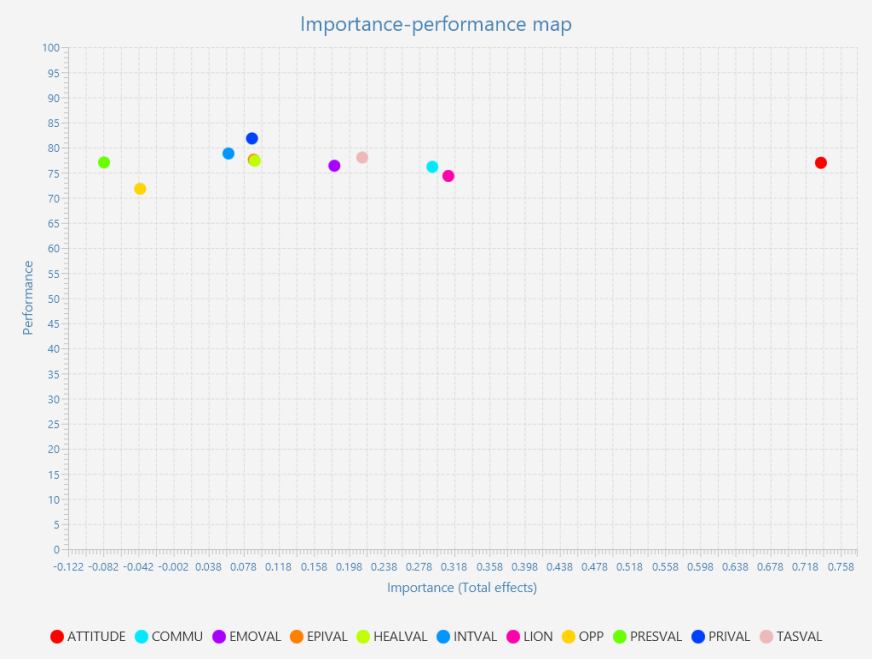

Figure 2. *Map of Importance-Performance of Intention to Purchase Local Food*

Structural Equation Model Analysis

According to the research results, taste/quality value (ßTASVAL>>ATTITUDE= .290, t= 3.511, p< .001), health value (ßHEALVAL>>ATTITUDE= .124, t= 1.989, p< .05), and emotional value (ßEMOVAL>>ATTITUDE= .247, t= 2.553, p< .01) significantly positively affects attitude toward local food. Therefore, H1a, H1b, and H1e are accepted. However, epistemic value (ßEPIVAL>>ATTITUDE= .122, t= 1.515, p< .001), price value (ßPRIVAL>>ATTITUDE= .119, t= 1.937, p< .001), prestige value (ßPRESVAL>>ATTITUDE= -.110, t= 1.303, p< .001), and interaction value (ßINTVAL>>ATTITUDE= .083, t= 1.307, p< .001) do not significantly positively affect attitude toward local food. Consequently, H1c, H1d, H1f, and H1g are not accepted. Attitude toward local food has a positive effect on the intention to purchase local foods (ßATTITUDE>>INT= .350, t= 8.002, p< .001). So, H2a is accepted (see Table 6 and Figure 3).

Mediating Analysis Results

In the study, the mediating effect of locavorism sub-factors between attitude toward local food and intention to purchase local foods was analyzed. According to Zhao et al. (2010), if the direct effect of the independent variable (x) on the dependent variable (y) is significant, and this effect remains significant when the mediator (m) is included, it

indicates partial mediation. If the direct effect becomes non-significant while the mediating effect is significant, it indicates full mediation.

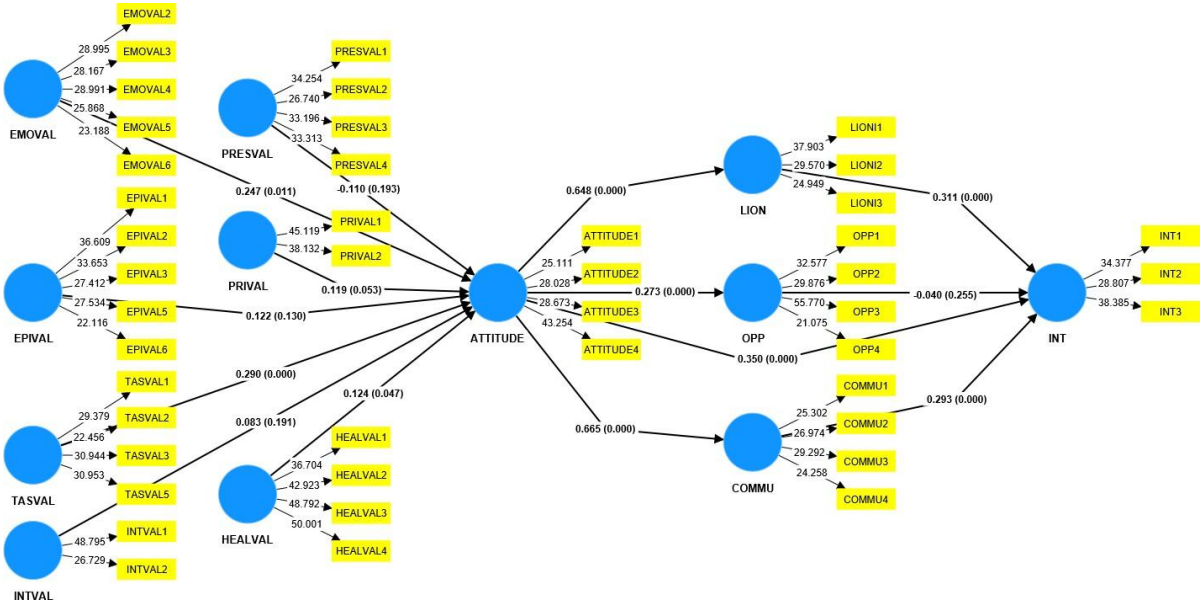

Figure 3. *Research Model Results*

Based on the study's conclusions, lionization has a significant positive mediating effect between attitude toward local food (ßPFC>>DestF>>DTA= .016, t= 1.434, p< .001) and intention to purchase local foods. Similarly, communalization also exhibits a significant positive mediating effect between attitude toward local food (ßPFC>>DestF>>DTA= .016, t= 1.434, p< .001) and intention to purchase local foods. However, the opposition does not show a significant positive mediating effect between attitude toward local food (ßPFC>>DestF>>DTA= .016, t= 1.434, p< .001) and intention to purchase local foods. Therefore, H3a and H3c are accepted, while H3b is not accepted. H3a and H3c indicate partial mediation (Zhao et al., 2010) (see Table 7).

Table 7. *Locavorism Mediating Effect Results*

Hypotheses	**β**	***x̄***	**SD**	***t-statistic***	***p-value***	***Results***
H_{3a} ATT->LION->INT	.202	.202	.043	4.718	.000***	*Accepted*
H_{3b} ATT->OPP->INT	-.011	-.010	.010	1.073	.283	*Not accepted*
H_{3c} ATT->COMMU->INT	.195	.198	.045	4.336	.000***	*Accepted*

*p=< .01***, ATT= Attitude toward local food, LION= Lionization, OPP= Opposition, COMMU= Communalization, INT= Intention to purchase local food*

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

We aimed to investigate the effect of food consumption on local food, locavorism, and intention to purchase local food. According to the results, a positive attitude toward local food considerably increases to intention to purchase local food. The results show that targeting quality and taste in restaurants can lead to positive perceptions and satisfaction rather than profit-based marketing. Similarly, Choe and Kim (2018) stated that taste and quality value directly affect positive attitudes toward local food. According to our results, emotional value affected considerably to attitudes toward local Food and stressed consumer's sense of traditional marketing methods. It was found that epistemic, prestige, price, and interaction values do not significantly influence attitudes toward local food. These findings suggest that although these values possess their unique forms of authenticity, they do not necessarily translate into favorable attitudes toward local food consumption. Unlike the results of Kim and Huang (2021), our study demonstrates that not all value dimensions are effective predictors of consumer attitudes toward local food. Moreover, prestige value does not have a significant positive effect on attitudes toward local food. This finding aligns with the results of Thio et al. (2024), who examined 468 international tourists visiting Bali and Java Islands in Indonesia and found that prestige value had no significant impact on either attitude or purchase intention. Our study further reinforces this by demonstrating that preferences for local food can be interpreted through the lens of diverse personalities and socio-cultural backgrounds, suggesting that motivations beyond prestige play a more substantial role.

According to the results, health value has a positive effect on attitudes toward local food. This result stressed the requirements of comprehensive health regulations and policy which led to sectoral development in the local food industry. According to our results taste/quality value and emotional value affect attitudes toward local food positively. The results are similar to Choe and Kim's (2008) study. According to the results, lionization and communalization mediate positively between attitudes toward local food and intention to purchase local food. Rousta and Jamshidi (2020) showed that there were close relations between attitude and consumer intentions. The results verify Kim and Huang (2021)'s results. According to Kim and Huang's (2021) results taste/quality value and support for local farmers could direct the productivity of local food and affect local food quality. The results explain that a favorable connection between locavorism and consumer attitudes

towards purchasing local foods affects the purchase intention considerably. Similarly, Zhang et al. (2020) have same directions as our results.

Rousta and Jamshidi (2020) revealed that positive behaviour toward local food increased taste/quality and emotional value. Besides, Sulek and Hensley (2004) have found that taste and quality value affect positive attitudes toward local food. Our results have contributed to the effects locavorism and its dimensions; lionization and communalization on attitudes toward local food and purchase intention comprehensively. Lionization and communalization can positively develop consumer attitudes toward local foods positively and transform the attitude toward purchase intentions. As Onozaka and McFadden (2011) indicated, local food value was related closely to cultural and social value besides taste and deliciousness. The results on locality and local food effect on food preferences, purchase intention, and positive attitude have similarities with previous research (Reich et al., 2018; Varman & Russell, 2009). Besides, Thio et al. (2022) indicated the importance of price value and prestige value on attitude behavior. Our results have shown that communalization and lionization can play crucial importance in industrial projects to promote local food, industrial development, and community protection. For example, lionization and communalization can be supported by the open kitchen concept and health-based practices and sustain local development. According to Hwang et al. (2021), some traditional events, such as cook & shop workshops, can provide emotional sharing, consumer satisfaction, and emotional value by purchasing local products and having similar experiences with local and non-local participants. Cultural tours to rural areas, trekking to unique places, and gastronomy tours can increase local economic development, and this can lead to optimism and hope for local people. These activities can empower communalization and support to protect and sustain cultural values and heritage. Promoting local places and rural areas must be based on storytelling and marketing strategy with historical features and local gastronomy (Wan et al. 2020). On the other hand, the opposition does not exhibit a significant mediating effect between attitudes toward local food and the intention to purchase local food. This aligns with the findings of Peral-Peral et al. (2022), who, in a study involving 1,200 consumers in Southern European cities, also reported that opposition does not significantly influence consumers' purchase intentions regarding local food. These results suggest that consumers may perceive local food consumption through a more global and distinctive lens, rather than being driven by resistance or opposition to non-local products. In conclusion, some practices such as open kitchens, cook & shop workshops, and local

food festivals focuses on quality value, taste, and emotional connections and provide consumer attitudes and intentions toward local foods. Besides, these activities can increase local food consumption and support local development, cultural preservation, and community heritage.

Theoretical Implications

Our results show that consumer attitude toward local products can be affected by consumption value dimensions such as taste, quality, health, emotional, epistemic, price, prestige, and interaction. The main contribution is to Consumption Value Theory. Our study extends the Consumption Value Theory (CVT) by demonstrating that health value, following quality value, plays a crucial role in shaping consumer attitudes toward local food. This finding refines the existing framework by emphasizing the hierarchical importance of value dimensions in local gastronomy consumption. Prior research has primarily focused on functional and emotional values, with limited consideration of health as a distinct and influential factor (Kim et al., 2013). By addressing this gap, our study provides a more comprehensive understanding of how different value dimensions interact in shaping consumer preferences.

The present study contributes to the CVT in many aspects. For example, this study expands the understanding of how multiple consumption values drive consumers' intention to purchase local food. This theory mainly focuses on locavorism and local food consumption which was the main objective of this research. Moreover, this theory explains not only the tangible benefits (e.g., price or taste) but also focuses on epistemic, social, and emotional values attached to purchasing local food again and again. This provides a unique understanding of consumer behavior and the decision-making process in the context of ethical consumption, local food systems, and sustainability. In addition, our model contributes to the existing theory by introducing locavorism as an intervening mechanism between the perceived value of local food consumption and the intention to purchase local food. Moreover, our study also elaborates on how locavorism acts as a cultural and psychological factor that might influence food consumption patterns. Additionally, by establishing the link between local food consumption value and consumer purchase intention via locavorism, the present research offers a theoretical insight into how value-based decisions lead to actionable behaviors, thus enhancing our understanding of the emotional and cognitive drivers behind the intention to purchase local food. Similarly, consumption value theory elaborates on various dimensions of consumption value, however, the theory does not

discover the intervening factors between value perception and consumer behaviors. Therefore, the present research fills this gap by introducing locavorism as a possible intervening variable that influences the link between local food consumption and purchase intention. In the traditional CVT application, the relationship between consumer behavior and value perception can be seen as somewhat linear. Our study offers a unique interaction, where locavorism acts as a social and psychological filter that amplifies how consumers respond to various consumption values. Our study suggests that even if a consumer perceives local food as valuable from a social, emotional, or functional perspective, it is their locavore identity that truly activates the purchase intention.

Sensory dimensions, dining experience, restaurant performance, and quality of local gastronomy events enhance positive consumer experience and repeat visitation. Besides, health value is second most important after quality value in consumer evaluations (Kim et al., 2013). It can be said that there was a significant contribution to future research theoretically. Local food can be a significant driver to direct positive attitudes and purchase behavior. Additionally, this research contributes by illustrating how sensory and experiential factors in dining—beyond traditional value dimensions—affect consumer attitudes and purchasing behavior. Unlike previous studies, which have mainly examined functional aspects such as price and quality, our findings highlight the role of sensory dimensions, dining experience, restaurant performance, and the quality of local gastronomy events in enhancing positive consumer experiences and repeat visitation (Björk & Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2016; Goolaup & Mossberg, 2017). This expansion of the Consumption Value Theory framework integrates experiential factors, offering a broader perspective on consumer decision-making in gastronomy tourism. Furthermore, our study strengthens the theoretical foundation by explicitly incorporating the five core consumption values identified by Sheth et al. (1991): functional, social, emotional, epistemic, and conditional values. While previous studies have primarily focused on functional and emotional values, our research highlights the significance of epistemic value—consumers' curiosity and desire for novel experiences—in driving local gastronomy consumption. Moreover, our findings suggest that health can be considered a key component within the functional value dimension, further refining the theoretical framework of Consumption Value Theory.

Our paper has found that the effect of locavorism on consumer attitude and purchase intention can be useful for tourism initiatives. Generally, many studies focus on specific areas and places with limited

dimensions (Choe & Kim, 2018). Our paper contributes to the literature by examining purchase intention and attitude toward local food across general consumer markets, rather than focusing on a specific destination. Our findings also underscore the significant impact of locavorism on consumer attitudes and purchase intentions. While many studies focus on specific geographic regions with limited scope (Choe & Kim, 2018), our research provides a more generalizable contribution by analyzing purchase intention and attitude toward local food across broader consumer markets. This aligns with previous research highlighting the growing importance of local food consumption in tourism contexts (Sims, 2009). These insights allow for the development of more effective tourism management strategies that promote local food consumption based on consumer behavior patterns. We suggest that tourism management can develop strategies based on consumer behavior insights to promote local food consumption more broadly. Overall, by refining the Consumption Value Theory to incorporate hierarchical value dimensions and emphasizing the influence of experiential factors, our study fills a crucial theoretical gap in the literature. Future research can further explore these findings by examining additional contextual factors that may influence consumer behavior in local gastronomy consumption.

Practical Implications

Local food is a significant tool to attract tourists. Local food initiatives can use these results to direct tourist behavior and attitude. Local management can promote local tastes, experiences, and activities to empower the locality. Considering increasing interest in healthy food; management can focus on the health and quality value of local products by pushing on local food features such as fresh, nutritious, hygienic, and unique. Moreover, management and initiatives should consider the importance of emotional and social factors of consumers being related to food consumption and consumer attitude. It can be investigated research on food consumption, tourist behavior, and consumer value to learn current trends and perceptions of tourists. Managers and owners can organize training on understanding and analyzing tourist behavior and local heritage. Locavorism can be successful through flawless and open communication with different stakeholders, institutions, and private sectors. It can be realized more collaborations between two or more parties in the destination to conduct tourist movements smoothly. Local festivals, workshops, and tours can increase consumer attitudes and sustain cultural consciousness and responsible tourist behavior. Also, organizing these activities can help

all stakeholders in different parts of the community. This can provide balanced growth and development. Managements can use effective social media and digital marketing tools to promote local products. Another point is that local food can be licensed and certified to promote their products safely. Rural destinations can be developed with a holistic view. All stakeholders and communities can be included in local tourism activities and campaigns.

Limitation and Future Research

One limitation of this study is that it focuses on general consumer behavior and does not examine possible variations across specific tourism destinations. Future research may apply the model to more diverse and broader samples to explore possible differences and enhance generalizability.

Secondly, the paper investigated the Consumption Value Theory with some variables with self-reports of participants. Future research may be focus on different dimensions as cultural, environmental, cultural, and psychological actors. Considering the great interest and uses of artificial intelligence and technology in many managements, future papers can analyze effects and relations with local food behavior. Research on local food, and tourist behavior can develop promotion and marketing strategies, empower balanced growth, sustain cultural and economic developments, and provide effective collaborations between stakeholders, governmental structures, tourism industry. In future research, it can be focused on collaborations, sustainable development within local food, and consumption.

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