

The Value and Assurance Factors in Tourists' Culinary Visit : Application of Involvement Theory

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ABSTRACT

During the transition of tourism activity from the early pandemic to the post-pandemic period, the amount of domestic travel by tourists is gradually increasing. Tourists are presumed to be more concerned with the value and assurance aspects of their culinary visits to the travel destination. This study utilized the involvement theory model to analyze the effect of value and assurance as the antecedents to tourist involvement while simultaneously predicting the impact of tourist involvement on variety-seeking behavior. The role of knowledge in moderating the relationship between value and assurance of tourist involvement is also presented. Structural path modelling was designed to explore the causal relationships among variables. An online survey was distributed to 200 local tourists who have travelled to Medan, North Sumatra, Indonesia. This study revealed the significant results of value and assurance in influencing tourist involvement positively, and so did tourist involvement in variety seeking. Research also extended previous studies that addressed the moderating role of knowledge in creating involvement. Knowledge only served a slight effect on the involvement relationship. However, managerial actors in the culinary business still need to focus on maintaining the availability of information to consumers, especially in the value and assurance aspect.

Keywords: *value and assurance, knowledge, tourist involvement, variety seeking*

ABSTRAK

Di tengah pergeseran aktivitas pariwisata dari awal pandemi ke pasca pandemi, atau dikenal dengan *new normal*, jumlah perjalanan wisatawan domestik perlahan meningkat. Wisatawan dianggap lebih memperhatikan aspek nilai dan jaminan dalam kunjungan kuliner di tempat tujuan wisata. Penelitian ini menggunakan model teori keterlibatan untuk menganalisis pengaruh nilai dan jaminan sebagai anteseden terhadap keterlibatan wisatawan, sekaligus memprediksi pengaruh keterlibatan wisatawan terhadap perilaku *variety seeking*. Adapun penelitian juga menyajikan penjelasan terkait peran pengetahuan dalam memoderasi hubungan antara nilai dan jaminan terhadap keterlibatan wisatawan. Pemodelan jalur (*path modelling*) dirancang untuk mengeksplorasi hubungan sebab akibat antarvariabel. Survei secara *online* dibagikan kepada 200 wisatawan lokal yang pernah berwisata ke Kota Medan, Sumatera Utara, Indonesia. Studi ini mengungkapkan hasil yang signifikan dari nilai dan jaminan dalam mempengaruhi keterlibatan wisatawan secara positif, begitu pula keterlibatan wisatawan terhadap *variety seeking*. Penelitian ini juga memperluas penelitian sebelumnya yang membahas peran moderasi pengetahuan dalam menciptakan keterlibatan. Terlihat bahwa pengetahuan hanya memberikan sedikit pengaruh terhadap hubungan keterlibatan, namun pelaku manajerial dalam bisnis kuliner tetap perlu fokus untuk menjaga ketersediaan informasi kepada konsumen, terutama yang berkaitan dengan aspek nilai dan jaminan.

Kata Kunci: *nilai dan jaminan, pengetahuan, keterlibatan wisatawan, variety seeking*

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1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the growth of domestic travel has been inseparable from their interest in food-related activities (Andersson & Mossberg, 2016; Gurbaskan Akyuz, 2019; Guzel & Apaydin, 2017). Food has been sought as the strategic element for tourism development globally. The United Nations of World Tourism Organization (2012) described food as the most dynamic tourism segment, as well as its primary role as a cultural experience medium for tourists by involving them with new communities while travelling (Ellis *et al.*, 2018). It is also interesting to discover that the major of tourists' budget to travel is allocated to food and beverages activities (Gheorghe *et al.*, 2014).

Despite the excitement of local food interests while travelling, tourism decisions are considered highly risky (Mak *et al.*, 2013) due to the high monetary and non-monetary costs associated (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005). In the current condition of pandemic, the food tourism sector is more perceived as a high-risk activity, noting that Kim *et al.* (2010) and Mak *et al.* (2013) also demonstrated that health concern is crucial for tourists' consideration. The process of buying tourism products, including local foods, is very engaging as well as it needs considerable effort. Accordingly, the enhancement of personal knowledge can be a tool for diminishing the risk obtained while travelling (Shi *et al.*, 2022).

Previous research concluded that involvement is critical in explaining what attracts tourists to products and how they make their buying decisions (Seabra *et al.*, 2016). Taking into this account, perception of value and assurance expected to define the extent of tourists in deciding to get involved into a certain culinary activity. This research has become essential to conduct as well as to clarify whether one's involvement can be a potential benchmarking for culinary business strategy, exceedingly on the post-pandemic uncertainties period.

Tourists are becoming more demanding in their travel behavior so conducting related studies is way more complex. As Andrews *et al.* (1990) suggested, the degree of involvement towards a certain object can simultaneously generate the likelihood of searching for variety (Çanakçı & Birdir, 2019; Kim *et al.*, 2010). Tourists' tendency to seek variety is hard to

avoid as it has become one of the food-related personality traits (Van Trijp & Steenkamp, 1992).

Indonesian food tourism encompassed the various types of local cuisines, differ as fresh, cooked, or processed products. One of many fresh local foods in Indonesia is durian, exactly Ukok Durian Medan. The present study focused on tourists who have visited Ukok Durian Medan as per Ukok Durian Medan denoted as one of popular local culinary destination. Meanwhile, the study of domestic tourist involvement has received limited attention than the international ones. This research also expected to provide more understanding on it, due to the numbers of domestic tourists' trip in North Sumatra in 2020 have fallen into 79.5 per cent compared to domestic trips in 2019. The more in-depth investigation and explanation of factors affecting tourist involvement will be defined to elaborate the phenomenon using the involvement model of Andrews *et al.* (1990).

Research on involvement has been done in various contexts, including on tourism area of study. It is also rarely to found inconsistencies finding of the linkage served by involvement on tourist behavior. To best of our knowledge, research in extending the model of Andrews *et al.* (1990) is still limited, except Lim *et al.* (2020). Thus, the present study aims to fill the gap in the availability of theoretical use of the conceptual involvement model. Research also contributes to business administration literature as well as for tourism marketing strategy by empirically confirming the relationship of value and assurance, tourist involvement, and variety seeking, with knowledge in moderating its relationship as suggested by the Andrews *et al.* (1990)'s model.

Following the introduction, the organization of this article will include: relevant evidence of literatures while developing the research hypotheses, the research methods, and the results from path modelling. Additionally, key points of the result will be discussed, along with the direction for further studies.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

a. Involvement Theory (Andrews *et al.*, 1990)

The involvement theory was postulated by Andrews *et al.* (1990) to measure the degree of individual involvement based on specific triggers (antecedents) with several possible

following behaviors (consequences). Anytime people demonstrate how much they feel involved in a particular object, place, or activity; they are more likely to generate positive behavior. It could be a searching behavior, processing information, also persuasion behavior (Andrews *et al.*, 1990).

The research model was modified from *Involvement Theory Model* by Andrews *et al.* (1990). Several situational and decisional factors would create involvement. The present study developed the model with *value and assurance* (Mak *et al.*, 2016) as the antecedent. Meanwhile, *variety seeking* (Çanakçı & Birdir, 2019) represented search behavior consequences. Tourist involvement or knowledge was deployed on the research model as formerly proposed in the model by Andrews *et al.* (1990).

b. Tourist Involvement

As aforementioned, *tourist involvement* would be a basis of this study to broaden the significance of Andrews' theory. Supporting Çanakçı & Birdir (2019); Prebensen *et al.* (2013), involvement refers to personal relevance to perceived experience towards a recreational activity based on how much it implies the level of pleasure and self-expression as well as their values and expected goals. The general perspective of involvement in tourism context has been focused on tourists' relevance with destination. That is, Kim *et al.* (2009) highlighted that tourists' level of involvement can be determined by the extent of destination attributes are associated with personal needs, goals and values.

Within previous statements, it can be said that one's level of involvement towards a product or service could be vary, hence resulting different responses. Most of highly involved individuals emerges different behavioral profiles compared with less involved ones (Hu & Yu, 2007). For instance, high involvement with a product is claimed to have a greater attributes' perception, which in turn lead to a higher commitment of the selected product, and vice versa (Leong *et al.*, 2017).

The power of involvement to predict and explain consumer attitudes and behaviors are largely recognized, especially in food-related activities and tourism contexts (Burusnukul *et al.*, 2015; Caber *et al.*, 2018; Çanakçı & Birdir, 2019; Dedeoğlu *et al.*, 2019; Di-Clemente *et al.*,

2019; Huang *et al.*, 2010; Kim *et al.*, 2009; Lim *et al.*, 2020). The study of involvement in food tourism context was actually due to excitement on people's eating experience and the engagement in tasting foods is mostly prompted by the need of unique and adventurous experiences in life (Kim & Eves, 2012), which is quite relevant with personal inherent needs, values, and interests (Kiatkawsin & Han, 2019). Similar justification to conduct involvement studies in food tourism is that involvement in local foods and the intention to eat are related to both hedonic and utilitarian side of human needs (Caber *et al.*, 2018).

The importance of involvement in understanding tourists' behavior and decision-making processes have been well discussed. Most of studies suggested the positive link given by involvement on ethnic food consumption (Burusnukul *et al.*, 2015), memorability and behavioral intention on food-based experiences (Di-Clemente *et al.*, 2019), food variety seeking on foreign tourists (Çanakçı & Birdir, 2019), decision making in buying tourism products (Seabra *et al.*, 2016), behavioral intention regarding to gastronomy online reviews (Lim *et al.*, 2020), and ads in travel blogs (Huang *et al.*, 2010). The negative linkage of involvement toward food consumption intention is rarely found (Caber *et al.*, 2018).

On the other hand, only few attentions in figuring out factors affect the extent of tourist involvement, such as the linkage between social media content sharing towards destination involvement (Dedeoğlu *et al.*, 2019), and motivation towards product involvement in wine tourism (Afonso *et al.*, 2018). The present research is proposed to articulate better understanding of tourists' involvement. Business achievement could yield more by developing strategies that matched with consumers' needs, thus, factors increasing involvement should be identified (Dedeoğlu *et al.*, 2019).

c. Value and Assurance

Value and assurance were earlier introduced by Mak *et al.* (2013) as two different yet interrelated factors affecting tourist motivation. The initiated ideas in formulating value and assurance factors in that the food-consumption activities while travelling acquire a higher perceived risk (Mak *et al.*, 2013; Seabra

et al., 2016; Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005) both in product value, security, and health concern (Arsil *et al.*, 2016; Kim *et al.*, 2009). Based on these previous statements, the present study summarized and defined that value and assurance are the personal perception of product fairness and other supporting aspects of certainty, security, as well as the health of the product.

Meanwhile, Mak *et al.* (2016) previously proposed value and assurance as factors affecting food-related personality traits in tourists. Value and product price are positively related to consumers' involvement in deciding product purchasing (Aghdaie *et al.*, 2014), and reasonable product price value is more likely to attract consumers. As far as it has been discussed, investigation of value and assurance towards tourist involvement while culinary visits are still limited. Therefore, the variable is utilized in the research model, and the following hypothesis is formulated:

H1: The influence of value and assurance towards tourist involvement is positive and significant

d. Knowledge

Knowledge has become a crucial factor of involvement as knowledge refers to the personal ability to process information from stored memory or prior experiences from others. Knowledge and involvement perceived as the fundamental explainers of consumer behavior, and because of that both dimensions are often studied together (Kiatkawsin & Han, 2019). The degree of personal exposure to a certain object might control one's involvement (Leong *et al.*, 2017; Prebensen *et al.*, 2013). Several sources of information are possible to elevate knowledge, e.g., media. For instance, the empirical finding has stated how media positively inflict consumers' interest to engage in food products (Burusnukul *et al.*, 2015).

Given this, food consumption activities during travel are regarded as hedonic products (Kivela & Crotts, 2006; Mak *et al.*, 2016). Meanwhile, most tourists also consider health concerns and the physical environment as motivational factors (Kim *et al.*, 2009). Along with the previous studies, high level of involvement and knowledge increases consumers' confidence in evaluating their choice of luxury restaurants (Kiatkawsin & Han, 2019).

Those knowledgeable ones can justify the better evaluation in deciding to involve on certain culinary activity. It is also mentioned that price reasonableness can be easily judged according to the level of consumer knowledge (Kiatkawsin & Han, 2019).

These bases adequately provide relevance to assume that knowledge can moderately affect the relationship between value and assurance in creating tourist involvement. Hence, the hypothesis proposed as follows:

H2: Knowledge has a moderating effect on the relationship between value and assurance towards tourist involvement

e. Variety Seeking

Variety seeking is defined as consumers' likelihood to seek different, new, unfamiliar choices of particular objects (Beldona *et al.*, 2010; Çanakçı & Birdir, 2019; Van Trijp & Steenkamp, 1992). In specific culinary experiences, a person with high variety-seeking has more choice of foods and prefers to taste unfamiliar ones to eliminate boredom (Meixner & Knoll, 2012). As empirically stated, one with a high level of involvement is generally a variety-seekers (Beldona *et al.*, 2010).

There is still little evidence that have investigated food consumption behaviors using involvement and variety seeking (Beldona *et al.*, 2010). In fact, the variety seeking behavior tend to have a proper attention for business practitioners as most of consumers more likely to explore and taste varying products (Meixner & Knoll, 2012). Thus, to complete and provide valuable insights for managers, the specific correlation of tourist involvement and variety seeking behavior need to be discussed more deeply.

With respect to the previous empirical statements mentioned, finally the following hypothesis is formulated:

H3: The influence of tourist involvement towards variety seeking is positive and significant

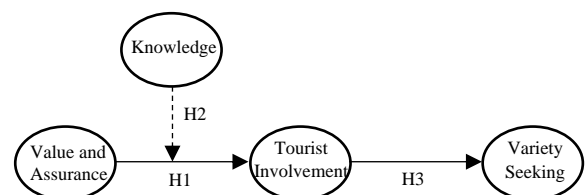


Figure 1. Research Model

Source: Authors (2022)

Considering the preceding descriptions, Figure 1 illustrates the proposed path model of the research. The development of research framework is modified from Andrews *et al.* (1990) conceptual model.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

A quantitative study is conducted to answer the research objectives. This study followed an explanatory research type with an online survey as a data collecting method. It required Indonesian tourists who have visited Ukok Durian Medan during their culinary travel as the target population. In addition, when participating in the survey, specific criteria had to be met by a respondent candidate, including 1) a minimum of 17 years old, 2) Indonesian based tourists, and 3) have been visited Ukok Durian Medan at least one time before the survey. The data collection period lasted for a month (July–August 2022) and distributed to respondents using social media broadcast message. Non probability with purposive sampling method was utilized to determine sample size, as the research population was uncountable. A total of 276 responses were recorded, but only 200 responses were suitable to sample criteria and valid for the next stage of analysis.

An internet-based questionnaire was developed to complete respondents' general information and visualize respondents' perceptions of each variable in quantitative data. In addition, questionnaire also required respondents to answer three filter questions to ensure that all responses submitted to database were appropriate for data analysis. The measurement items in the questionnaire were based on previous empirical works. The value and assurance were measured with six items by Mak *et al.* (2016), knowledge measured with five items by Leong *et al.* (2017) as well as tourist involvement with seven measurement items. Then, seven items from Çanakçı & Birdir (2019) were used to measure the variety-seeking variable (see Appendix 1). All measurement items are served on the questionnaire with 7-point Likert scales to allow objectiveness of the respondent perceptions (Joshi *et al.*, 2015). Respondent is provided range-of-answer options from very agree to very disagree.

Data analysis is conducted with partial least square–structural equation model (PLS-

SEM) analysis. Structural path modelling was developed and estimated using WarpPLS 8.0 software. Since the proposed model included a moderation effect, utilization of WarpPLS seems to be more effective because it allowed direct moderating link when figuring out the SEM model. The significance results of hypotheses determined with two-tailed significance with p -value obtained for each path relationship is <0.05 . In addition, one-tailed significance with $p < 0.001$ also possible with very significant result.

4. RESULT

The online survey compiled 200 respondents and grouped them into seven categories (see Table 1). Female respondents dominated the survey ($n = 107$; 53.5 per cent), while the rest ($n = 93$; 46.5 per cent) completed with male respondents. The major age group was 22–26 ($n = 74$; 37 per cent), whereas the group of 17–21 years old ($n = 5$; 2.5 per cent) represents the minority of survey. Over half of the respondents were Sumatra Island residents ($n = 136$; 68 per cent). In contrast with Nusa Tenggara only consisted of one participant. Regarding to the educational background, respondents with bachelor degree represented most of the research sample ($n = 138$; 69 per cent), followed by those with high school or equivalent education ($n = 20$; 10 per cent). As formerly stated, food-related activities while travelling is depicted as hedonic value activity (Kivela & Crofts, 2006; Mak *et al.*, 2016). It can be seen from the even distribution of respondent' monthly income, with domination of monthly income under 5 million Indonesian Rupiahs ($n = 70$; 35 per cent). Meanwhile, over a half of respondents have visited Ukok Durian Medan for 1–3 times before participating in the survey ($n = 126$; 63 per cent). Information about Ukok Durian Medan mostly derived from family, friends, and relatives ($n = 105$; 52.5 per cent), also followed by the role of social media with total 25 per cent of the survey.

Model estimation results, both outer and inner models, can be seen in the following tables and descriptions. Table 2 presents a summary of measurement (outer) model estimation, including factor loadings (λ), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite reliability, and Cronbach's Alpha (α). Table 3 presents the general inner model fit result, consisting of

Average Path Coefficient (APC), Average R-Square (ARS), and Average Variance inflation Factor (AVIF). Table 4 presents the coefficient determinant result of endogenous variables. Last, Table 5 presents the hypotheses testing result.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Characteristics	<i>n</i>	Percentage (%)
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	93	46.5
Female	107	53.5
<i>Age (years)</i>		
17–21	5	2.5
22–26	74	37
27–31	33	16.5
32–36	8	4
37–41	12	6
42–46	20	10
47–51	13	6.5
>51	35	17.5
<i>Domicile (based on Island)</i>		
Sumatera	136	68
Jawa	63	31.5
Nusa Tenggara	1	0.5
Kalimantan	0	0
<i>Education</i>		
Middle school or equivalent	0	0
High school or equivalent	20	10
Diploma	16	8
Bachelor degree	138	69
Master degree	18	9
Doctor	8	4
<i>Monthly income (IDR)</i>		
<5.000.000	70	35
5.000.000–10.000.000	54	27
10.000.001–15.000.000	32	16
15.000.001–20.000.000	13	6.5
>20.000.001	31	15.5
<i>Number of visits (times)</i>		
1–3	126	63
>3	74	37
<i>Information sources</i>		
Family, friends, relatives	105	52.5
Printed media	18	9
Electronic media	21	10.5
Social media	50	25
Other	6	3
Total	200	100

Source: Authors' primary data (2022)

Outer model estimation was processed two times. The first trial of model estimation revealed some item loadings not greater than 0.7 or below the threshold (Hair *et al.*, 2021), i.e.,

VA6 with outer loadings of 0.572 and KN5 with outer loadings of 0.606 (see Appendix 2). Thus, the second estimation process required item elimination to achieve model fit estimation.

As seen in Table 2, all measurement model estimations have met the threshold. All factor loadings are above 0.7 after items elimination. Additionally, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for all constructs were greater than the cut-off point of 0.50 (Hair *et al.*, 2021). Thereby, it can be concluded that all proposed variables had achieved the convergent validity requirements. The cross-loadings value also fulfilled its threshold of discriminant validity. The value of loadings between each items and its latent variable obtained greater value than the loadings value obtained for other latent variables (Hair *et al.*, 2021).

Moreover, item reliability can be assessed from the obtained value of Composite Reliability and Cronbach's α . All latent variables fulfilled both critical values, i.e., greater than 0.70 and 0.60, respectively. CR value is recommended between 0.70 and 0.90 to classify as "satisfactory to good". On different side, CR value above 0.95 are quite problematic, since they indicate that indicators or items are redundant (Hair *et al.*, 2021). In fact, the value obtained for each criterion on outer model estimation (Table 2) concluded that items on the model were reliable.

Meanwhile, the inner model also supported the statistical requirements as detailed (Table 3). Both APC and ARS required $p < 0.05$ to be significant, based on WarpPLS criteria. AVIF also have to be less than or equal to 5 to indicate no multicollinearity. All three criterions of general model indices were supported the goodness-fit of research model. The proposed model of this study is well-developed and explainable to answer the research objectives. The values of R^2 of the research model indicated moderate results (Table 4). Both endogenous variables are moderately explained by the proposed variables in the model, while the rest is from other factors outside the model. The detailed interpretations of R^2 are as follow: 1) *tourist involvement is moderately explained by value and assurance, also knowledge, for as much as 40.5 per cent, while the rest is explained by other terms outside the proposed model*; and 2) *variety seeking is explained by tourist involvement of 66.6 per cent or moderate, and*

the other explanations is given by variables outside the model.

Table 2. Summary of Measurement Model

Variable	λ	AVE	CR	α
Value and assurance		0.682	0.915	0.883
VA1	0.808			
VA2	0.833			
VA3	0.859			
VA4	0.836			
VA5	0.794			
Knowledge		0.683	0.896	0.844
KN1	0.794			
KN2	0.782			
KN3	0.904			
KN4	0.821			
Tourist involvement		0.659	0.931	0.913
TI1	0.744			
TI2	0.864			
TI3	0.719			
TI4	0.880			
TI5	0.782			
TI6	0.868			
TI7	0.812			
Variety seeking		0.629	0.922	0.901
VS1	0.761			
VS2	0.818			
VS3	0.749			
VS4	0.815			
VS5	0.788			
VS6	0.846			
VS7	0.770			

Source: Authors' primary data (2022)

Table 3. General Fit Model Result

Criterion	Index	p-value
APC	0.554	<0.001
ARS	0.536	<0.001
AVIF	1.010	

Notes: Supported APC and ARS if $p < 0.05$; supported AVIF if value ≤ 5

Source: Authors' primary data (2022)

This study was actually determined two-tailed significance ($p < 0.05$) for hypotheses decision making. The minimum threshold of the p-value has to be ≤ 0.05 to decide its significant result. In fact, the process of data analysis using WarpPLS software revealed each path relationship indicating one-tailed significance. It appears that all path relationships proposed in the model were very significant, as $p < 0.001$ (see Table 5 and Appendix 3).

Table 4. Coefficient Determinant (R^2)

Variable	Path Model	R^2
Tourist involvement	VA \rightarrow TI VA*KN \rightarrow TI	0.405 (moderate)
Variety seeking	TI \rightarrow VS	0.666 (moderate)

Source: Authors' primary data (2022)

Value and assurance gave a positive and significant effect on tourist involvement as well as its path coefficient obtained 0.663 with a $T_{\text{statistics}}$ value greater than its cut-offs both in one-tailed and two-tailed tests, i.e., 1.65 and 1.97, respectively. Thus, the result supported H1. On a side note, the role of knowledge in moderating the previous path relationship also supports H2, although in the smallest effect ($\beta = 0.184$, $T_{\text{statistics}} = 2.699$). The most significant result of this study also confirmed H3, which tourist involvement positively affects variety seeking ($\beta = 0.816$, $T_{\text{statistics}} = 13.497$).

5. DISCUSSION

Based on the empirical findings, the present study has successfully adjusted the model of involvement theory of Andrews et al. (1990) and previous studies on the relevant context. Research conducted to identify and justify the factor of value and assurance in creating tourist involvement during the unstable circumstances of post-pandemic. Prior finding highlighted that tourists are more critical to value and assurance aspects because culinary visits while travelling are a high-risk activity (Mak *et al.*, 2013). By doing so, it is undeniable that these factors are the most important consideration of tourists before they decide to get involved in certain culinary activities.

This study showed relevant finding to previous work that highlighted the link between value and consumer involvement which simultaneously affected the decision process towards a product (Aghdaie *et al.*, 2014). Unfortunately, the former study did not explain the effect of assurance explicitly. In addition, newest disclosure from this study adequately justified the previous study, which concerning to explore that most consumers were likely to evaluate the value of local foods in terms of their taste, good health, and also served enjoyment and security values as they purchased them (Arsil *et al.*, 2016).

The second point of research purpose was to define whether knowledge is accurately moderate the connection given by value and assurance to tourist involvement. A previous study by Burusnukul *et al.* (2015) empirically demonstrated that knowledge could enhance consumers' interest and motivation to engage in certain behavior. In relevance with this line, this study confirmed that knowledge positively moderates the relationship between value and assurance of tourist involvement. The moderation result disclosed a correlation from previous literature, where food consumption during travel was perceived higher risk (Mak *et al.*, 2013), and the availability of information will provide tourist knowledge, which simultaneously escalated the degree of their involvement (Shi *et al.*, 2022).

Bloch *et al.* (2009) previously mentioned, consumption of media allowed involved individuals to gain more knowledge related to products. These activities thus invigorate the individual's level of involvement. Even though the significance of the moderating result is lower than the direct effect, research can still support the conceptual statement of Andrews *et al.* (1990) that knowledge served as the moderator on the involvement model.

It is assumed that when tourists purchasing any product, they gathered various pieces of information about the product and the alternatives. The best product that suits their needs will be purchased (Kiatkawsin & Han, 2019). Despite the positive moderation effect of knowledge, it is also triggering some debates since the obtained value of path coefficient of moderation effect is less than the direct effect one. If only we could take a look at Andrews *et al.* (1990) recommendation, it emphasized that factors such as opportunity and ability to process can serve to limit or boost the impact of involvement antecedents. Hence, it can be said that the extent of moderation effect given by knowledge is positive, yet not powerful enough to increase the degree of tourist involvement.

Most respondents claimed that information regarding Ucok Durian Medan are based on their family, friends, and relatives, which can be said as others prior experiences. Whereas source of information can come from various forms, including word-of-mouth, guide books, social media, etc.

The following purpose of the research is to explore the tendency of variety seeking on tourist. As Andrews *et al.* (1990) suggested that involvement will generate specific behavior, including the tendency to seek variety. The proposed path relationship between tourist involvement and variety seeking has been proved that the prior suggestion was significant (see Table 5). The more tourists express their involvement in certain activities, the more likely they will explore other similar yet unfamiliar objects, especially food-related activities, while travelling (Beldona *et al.*, 2010). The present study also supported the previous finding from Çanakçı & Birdir (2019), which emphasized the significant effect between food involvement and food variety seeking on local food consumption. This finding closely related to demographic profile of respondents, i.e., gender. Female participants is dominated the research survey, which more likely concerned with experiencing local food while travelling (Caber *et al.*, 2018; Di-Clemente *et al.*, 2019). Thus, revealing the greatest effect on the relationship between tourist involvement and variety seeking.

Along with the previous description, tourists with high level of involvement indicated higher tendency to seeks unfamiliar things. Prior study have been discussed with more detailed about variety seeking behavior in food products choice (Meixner & Knoll, 2012). The research highlighted that consumers will occasionally purchase another similar brand just to gain a change of pace, even if they are completely satisfied to one selected product. Thus, applied to the culinary activity while travelling, tourists will purchase another local food, or decided to visit another destination when travel.

Table 5. Hypotheses Testing Result

Hypothesis	Path Relationship	Path Coefficients (β)	T-statistics	p-value	Conclusion
H1	VA \rightarrow TI	0.663	10.647	<0.001	Significant
H2	KN*VA \rightarrow TI	0.184	2.699	0.004	Significant
H3	TI \rightarrow VS	0.816	13.497	<0.001	Significant

* p-value ≤ 0.05 significant result for two-tailed test, while p-value <0.001 significant for one-tailed test

Source: Authors' primary data (2022)

Since the investigation undertaken from this research asserted significant results, it can be a tool for business development shortly. Value and assurance emerged as potential predictors to create tourist involvement. Thereby, managerial actors are encouraged to offer better product value and ensure that tourists will have proper guarantees while enjoying the culinary visits. As the same goes for providing accurate information to comply with tourist knowledge as well as it will boost the involvement level.

Consumer behavior studies have notified the food-related personality traits, including food neophobia (Pliner & Hobden, 1992) and food neophilia (variety seeking) (Van Trijp & Steenkamp, 1992), as well as an involved tourist seeks more varieties while travelling to avoid boredom (Meixner & Knoll, 2012). When tourists get more involved in a certain activity, especially culinary, it will highly generate their tendency to explore various foods. Thus, the empirical findings of this research would be more beneficial if all business actors—not only those in the culinary business—could also capture this potential opportunity to develop and provide product innovation to their consumers.

Regarding to variety seeking behavior, the present research particularly will be relevant to business managers. Since food products associated with variety-seeking, managers should be wise enough to provide and control the stock of products. Substitute products innovation can be an alternating way to prevent consumers from boredom (Meixner & Knoll, 2012).

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMENDATION

Conclusion

The main objective of this work is to ensure that value and assurance factors are significant to leverage tourist involvement with the destination on the shifting era of post-pandemic, and consequently lead to a variety-seeking behavior as well. It is confirmed that the extent of tourists' perception to value and assurance aspect will generate the higher level of tourist involvement, while also indicating variety seeking behavior significantly. The result revealed similar effects, with or without the moderating role of knowledge on its proposed linkage, which is confirming prior recommendation of Andrews *et al.* (1990).

Consumers, or in this case would be tourists, are assured as the tourism business assets. The presence of this study will be an appropriate tool for conducting market-based initiative moves. Though it sounds a cliché, implementing a sustainable adjustment and innovation of product value and service assurance is necessary while allowing consumer access to product and service-related information.

Findings of the present study have been served as handy information to business actors to understand consumer behavior, as well as for business students to explore further studies. The research has successfully drawn to the readers' attention in expanding the business administration literature, especially on the implementation of involvement theory. Despite its common concept, Andrews *et al.* (1990) introduced the most logical understanding for business to learn about consumer involvement.

This work provides consistent findings, as the previous literature and theory suggested. In addition, it also extended the use of Andrews' involvement theory which still needs to be explored in the related area of study. The present study will greatly assist future researchers in utilizing a similar model in the different contexts of involvement or different region of study to gain more comprehensive understanding consumer and/or tourist involvement.

Recommendation

Since the limited pieces of literature for deepening discussion of this study, it can be said that it is a good start for future research to explore the same topic. Meanwhile, this study only captured and examined the general perceptions of tourists regarding their culinary visit to one destination in Medan City. Although it was the popular culinary destination in Medan City, the empirical findings might only partially be able to represent the same condition at different places, thus less generalization. Therefore, further research is recommended to deploy a better cross-sectional study by implementing more places as an object or longitudinal study as well.

Another recommendation that could be valuable for further research is to develop a better variable measurement, as this study only proposed the model with a unidimensional construct type. Organizing more specific

measurement using multidimensional construct type, especially for value and assurance, will increase the likelihood of result accuracy.

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Appendix 1. Measurement Scales

Variable	Items	Source
<i>Value and Assurance (VA)</i>	Ucok Durian Medan has a reasonably priced.	Mak et al. (2016)
	Ucok Durian Medan offers a good value of money.	
	Ucok Durian Medan provides a good service.	
	Ucok Durian Medan is a tourist-friendly destination.	
	Ucok Durian Medan provides high hygiene standards.	
	When visiting Ucok Durian Medan, I wish to have a hygienically prepared foods.(*)	
<i>Knowledge (KN)</i>	I have read about Ucok Durian Medan prior to travel.	Leong et al. (2017)
	I am aware about local eating customs.	
	I am knowledgeable about foods in Ucok Durian Medan.	
	I am informed about popular food in Ucok Durian Medan.	
	I am informed about the location of Ucok Durian Medan.	
<i>Tourist Involvement (TI)</i>	I am curious to know about food in Ucok Durian Medan.	Leong et al. (2017)
	I am eager to involve in unfamiliar food activity in Ucok Durian Medan.	
	I always talk/reflect about food.	
	I want to learn about the menu of Ucok Durian Medan.	
	I want to taste the famous menu in Ucok Durian Medan.	
	I am eager to ask local residents about the famous menu in Ucok Durian Medan.	
	My choice to visit Ucok Durian Medan is very important.	
<i>Variety-Seeking (VS)</i>	I think it is fun to try out food items in Ucok Durian Medan that I am not familiar with.	Çanakçı & Birdir (2019)
	I like to eat exotic foods in Ucok Durian Medan	
	I am eager to know what kind of foods do people from other countries eat	
	Items on the menu that I am unfamiliar with, make me curious	
	When I eat out, I like to try the most unusual items, even if I am not sure I would like them	
	I am curious about the food products that I am not familiar with	
	While preparing foods or snacks, I like to try new recipes	

(*) item deleted

Appendix 2. Factor Loadings (before item elimination)

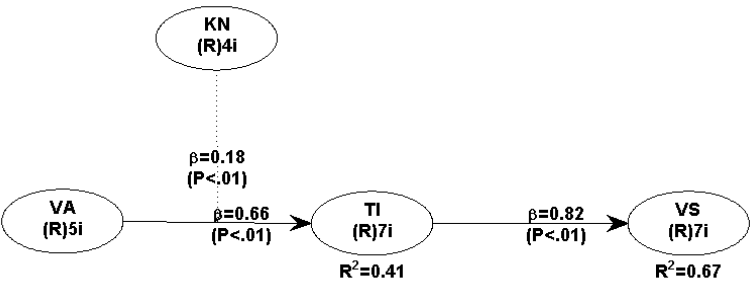
Variable	Item	λ
<i>Value and assurance</i>	VA1	0.790
	VA2	0.817
	VA3	0.853
	VA4	0.835
	VA5	0.795
	VA6	0.572*
<i>Knowledge</i>	KN1	0.762
	KN2	0.774
	KN3	0.887
	KN4	0.823
	KN5	0.606*
<i>Tourist involvement</i>	TI1	0.744
	TI2	0.864
	TI3	0.719
	TI4	0.880
	TI5	0.782
	TI6	0.868
	TI7	0.812

Variable	Item	λ
<i>Variety seeking</i>	VS1	0.761
	VS2	0.818
	VS3	0.749
	VS4	0.815
	VS5	0.788
	VS6	0.846
	VS7	0.770

(*) loadings below 0.70, item deleted

Appendix 3. Data Analysis Result (WarpPLS 8.0 Software)

1. Path model results



2. Path coefficients and P-values

WarpPLS 8.0 - Path coefficients and P values

Close Help

Path coefficients					
	VA	KN	TI	VS	KN*VA
VA					
KN					
TI	0.663			0.184	
VS			0.816		
KN*VA					

P values					
	VA	KN	TI	VS	KN*VA
VA					
KN					
TI	<0.001			0.004	
VS			<0.001		
KN*VA					