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**Authenticity and Social Media in Finnish Culinary Tourism: Impacts on Satisfaction,
Sharing Behaviour, and Revisit Intention**

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates if tourists' perceptions of the authenticity of Finnish cuisine influence their feelings, conversations, and revisit intentions. To determine both visitor satisfaction and social media sharing have an impact on the intention to return, it emphasizes on three outcomes: intention to return, social media sharing, and tourist satisfaction. 117 valid answers to an open-ended online survey were obtained from foreign tourists who had tasted Finnish cuisine while traveling. The SPSS software was used to analyse the items. Following the scales' effective use, correlations and regressions were used to analyse the links, and Hayes' PROCESS was used to test the mediation hypotheses. For analysis, the measurement model proved suitable. The findings were clear that authenticity is linked to greater levels of sharing and enjoyment, which in turn indicate the intention to return. Mediation tests reveal that while a positive immediate influence persists, satisfaction and sharing each partially transmit authenticity's impact on revisit intention. In Simple terms, having authentic dining experiences makes people happier about their vacation and gives them moments to share on social media, which helps to explain why tourists want to return. The study provides data from Finland by comparing social media sharing and satisfaction as mediators of gastronomic loyalty. Practically speaking, to boost eWOM and promote return visits, locations and providers should emphasize reliable authenticity indicators (the seasons, vendors, and tales) and make sharing effortless (via images, videos, tagging).

Keywords: Food tourism, Finnish cuisine, Authenticity, social media, Tourist satisfaction, Revisit intentions.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Food tourism, also known as culinary tourism, is a unique type of travel where the goal of experiencing the local cuisine is a primary driving force. It has grown into one of the most vibrant areas of tourism, acting as a platform for areas to promote their cultural identities and pull in a wide range of tourists as well as being a leisure activity. According to Ellis et al. (2018), Food tourism is a travel in which food serves as the main source of inspiration, whereas Long (2004) pinpoints the concept's official academic development to the 1990s, when researchers started to specifically delve into the relationship between travel attitudes and culinary preferences. Participating in cooking classes, enjoying street food at local markets and fairs, and dining at luxury or traditional restaurants are all examples of food-oriented travel activities that offer an immersion in local cuisines (Kim & Iwashita, 2016).

While supporting local economies, conserving culinary traditions, and promoting heritage, food tourism has grown in relevance and is now acknowledged as a driver of destination marketing and regional development (Hall & Gössling, 2016). According to Henderson (2009), modern culinary tourism has also created subcategories including farm-to-plate experiences, food festivals and beverage & wine-based tourism to boost consumer experience. It has progressed from being considered as an additional travel activity to becoming an essential element of making travel decisions, impacting expectations and motivations (Rašan & Laškarin Ažić, 2024).

The field of culinary tourism has developed extensively in the last 20 years, with a focus on sustainability, destination branding, authenticity, and cutting-edge culinary experiences. Through culinary tours, food-related events, and media involvement tourists are eager to invest more time and money in gastronomy, highlighting its expanding value (Okumus, 2020). The ability of local foods to rejuvenate agriculture and promote sustainable community growth has led to being acknowledged as important resources for the development of tourism. Food is portrayed as an integral component of experience travel, with scholars highlighting that devouring local cuisine allows tourists to interact positively with local cultures (Hsu et al., 2022).

Culinary experiences have multiple experiences from the viewpoint of the tourist. Food-related tourism encompasses emotions, experiential value, behavioural objectives, attachment to place, memorability, and satisfaction (Rašan & Laškarin Ažić, 2024). These factors contribute to complete trip rating and quality of life. In turn, these elements affect the image and branding of the location. The social ties that surround meals, physical location, and the time of the encounter influence how people experience food. Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016 discovered that gastronomic experiences go beyond mere consumption, starting with anticipation before a trip and continuing through recollections and mementos long after the trip. This long-lasting effect emphasizes how crucial gastronomy is as an integral part of destination promotional efforts.

Finland offers a wide variety of culinary tourism experiences, from harvesting trips and outdoor meals in natural settings to fine dining and culinary classes (Havas & Adamsson, 2015). Finnish cuisine has a great emphasis on localization, freshness, and purity, all of which are closely associated with nature. Despite these advantages, Finnish cuisine is nevertheless comparatively underrepresented in marketing for overseas travel. Although foreign visitors frequently consider Finnish cuisine to be excellent, safe, genuine, fresh, and traditional, it does not have an equal level of popularity as other Nordic cuisines (Sthapit, 2017). One of the purest and most unique cuisines in Europe is Finnish food, which is closely linked to local farmers, stories, and traditions. In addition to the "New Nordic Kitchen" concept, which has been internationally recognized, the nation's culinary identity supports its wider Scandinavian perspective (Havas & Adamsson, 2015).

According to studies, international tourists are very interested in trying authentic Finnish food made with local ingredients. They frequently prefer casual settings like markets, small eating places, or home cooking (Sthapit, 2017; Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016). Finland has a lot of room to grow, despite obstacles including comparatively high costs and the need for more robust rural infrastructure. According to Havas and Adamsson (2015), food experiences are positioned as a key component of future growth, with tourism exports already reaching €4.2 billion in 2012. Finland's culinary tourism focuses on sustainability, meaningful engagement, and authenticity, which is in line with worldwide trends towards experiencing tourism and local food cultures.

The emergence of social media has changed the way that food and travel are promoted and enjoyed, correlating with these culinary breakthroughs. Through its wide reach, affordability, and real-time user involvement, social media helps small, large businesses and destinations to effectively market their brands. Platforms like YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and review websites impact dining choices, inspire tourists, and confirm impressions of authenticity (Gupta et al., 2023). Social media has a significant impact on travellers' food-related decision-making, influencing both where and what people eat while traveling. Additionally, social media offers a unique chance to communicate culturally with internet users around the world by promoting the global distribution of regional culinary narratives, customs, and cuisine.

Finland's genuine, culturally inspired food makes a strong argument for exploration in this aspect. Although sustainability and authenticity have emerged as major concerns in international culinary tourism, little is known about how tourists view Finland's authenticity and how these views affect their satisfaction level and behavioural responses. Sharing culinary experiences on social media has also become a public behavioural expression that has the power to influence or change people's travel inclinations. The focus of this thesis is to explore the relationship between authentic Finnish culinary experiences, tourist satisfaction, and the impact of social media on intentions to visit again. The research gap arising from this background is pointed out in the section that follows.

1.2 Research Gap

According to prior studies, memorable culinary experiences are shaped by authenticity, distinctiveness, hospitality, social interaction, regional flavours, and service ambiance (Sthapit, 2017). Local cuisine cultures can support experience tourism, as evidenced by case studies in a variety of settings, including Madrid's traditional markets (Garcia Henche, 2018) and the rapidly growing culinary tourism industry in Northern Norway (Tran et al., 2024). Despite Finland's deep connection with locality, purity, and the new Nordic kitchen movement, little research has been done on the country as a destination for culinary tourism. Studies have recognized Finland's unique culinary legacy (Pasanen & Konu, 2016; Korhonen et al., 2017), but few have looked at how visitors truly taste real Finnish cuisine or how these encounters result in satisfaction and commitment.

Research indicates that social media is crucial for marketing and influencing customer behavior, and its function in tourism has grown immensely at the same time (Pasanen & Konu, 2016). However, little is known about how Finnish culinary tourists actively share their experiences on social media and how successive travel choices are influenced by this sharing behavior. According to recent research, social media sharing acts as a bridge between memorable experiences and the intention to return, and food authenticity is an excellent indicator of satisfaction and behavioural results (Wong et al., 2019). Unfortunately, these connections haven't been investigated scientifically in the context of Finnish cuisine at present.

To fill this void, this thesis examines how perceptions about authentic Finnish cuisine impact visitor pleasure and social media sharing, which in turn impact intentions to visit again. The study advances both theory and practice by combining authenticity, satisfaction, and sharing behavior into a single model which leads to re-visit intentions in tourists. It applies and expands on international findings to the little-known Finnish context and offers practical advice for travel agents looking to better position Finland through authentic and social media enhanced culinary experiences.

1.3 Aim of the study

The purpose of this research is to examine how tourist perceptions of the authenticity of Finnish cuisine affect their levels of satisfaction, social media sharing, and revisit intentions. The study specifically looks at how social media can be used to find new culinary experiences as well as to share actual experiences that could influence or change travellers' future travel habits. The study aims to expand current theories of social media sharing (Wong et al., 2019) and food authenticity (Li et al., 2022) into the Finnish culinary context by examining these relationships. This study combines social media sharing, cuisine authenticity, and tourist satisfaction into a unified paradigm that explains revisit intentions in culinary tourism. In terms of practicality, it gives Finnish tourist organizations and companies, ideas on how to emphasize authentic culinary experiences and use social media to improve destination branding and support.

To direct the study, the following research questions are put forth in considering the study's background, aim and noticed research gaps:

- i. What view do tourists feel of the authenticity of Finnish food, and how does this feeling influence how satisfied they are with their culinary experiences? (RQ1)
- ii. How significant do social media sharing about Finnish culinary have on tourists' intentions for visiting again? (RQ2)
- iii. How do social media sharing, authenticity, and satisfaction all work together to promote Finland's culinary tourism? (RQ3)

1.4 Structure of the study

There are eight chapters in this thesis. The purpose and research topics of the study, as well as its scope and essential words, are explained in Chapter 1, along with the significance of Finnish food and social media and what is yet to be found. To illustrate the gap this study fills, Chapter 2 maps the important literature on culinary tourism, Finnish food authenticity, social media, traveler satisfaction, and willingness to return. In Chapter 3, concepts are transformed into a model, hypotheses (H1–H5) are given, and the measurement of each concept is explained. Data screening, reliability, factor analysis, descriptives, correlations, regressions, and mediation are all covered in Chapter 4, along with the study's concept, sampling and data collecting, questionnaire and ethics, and the data analysis plan. The results are presented in Chapter 5, along with any indirect impacts. They are interpreted, connected to earlier research, and provide useful insights for Finnish destination management organizations (DMOs) and food enterprises in Chapter 6. The research questions and recommendations are addressed in the conclusion of Chapter 7. Further study is proposed and limits are noted in Chapter 8.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Culinary Tourism and Its Influence

According to research, gastronomy now plays an immense part in tourists' culinary preferences and overall experiences. Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen (2014) discovered that 87% of travellers claimed that their choice of holiday destination was influenced by their food, with 25% stating that it had a major influence. This demonstrates how food serves as both nutrition and an aesthetic as well as symbolic component that has a significant impact on the motives and behaviours of tourists. It has also been demonstrated in various contexts that culinary experiences improve the perception of a destination and help create memorable travel experiences that promote repeated customer loyalty (Kovalenko et al., 2023; Rašan & Laškarin Ažić, 2024). In this sense, food has been positioned as an essential component of experience consumption, influencing tourist's intentions to revisit and satisfaction through the meanings rooted in regional cuisines.

The authenticity of culinary preferences in a city atmosphere was examined by Lindblom and Mustonen (2015) in Finland, with an emphasis on Helsinki. Among the most consumed foods were pizza, fast food, and Italian food, while young people aged 25–44 chose Italian and traditional Nordic cuisine, according to their findings. Fascinatingly, Nordic cuisine maintained a high cultural value even though foreign cuisines like French and Korean were considered authentic. These revelations show that food preferences are multifaceted and influenced by both local and global factors. The idea of “gastronationalism,” as DeSoucey (2010) explains, shows how food can be used to express and protect national and cultural identities. Therefore, food serves as a metaphorical boundary indicator that connects the concepts of identity, roots, and belonging to culinary traditions.

More recent research focuses on the behavioural impacts of food tourism, going beyond descriptions. Research indicates that a key mechanism connecting food-related experiences to intentions to return and promote is tourist satisfaction. Consuming local food, for instance, indirectly encourages revisit intentions through enjoyment, as confirmed by Doğan (2025). Likewise, in wellness and gastronomy tourist contexts, Seow et al. (2024) and Sutiadiningsih et al. (2024) find that satisfaction acts as a mediator between gastronomic experiences and loyalty. The idea that culinary experiences play a key role for creating satisfaction, which in

turn influences customer loyalty and overall behavior, is strongly supported by these data taken together. Despite Finland's strong but under-marketed culinary identity, little research has particularly looked at how such mechanisms work there, despite these studies confirming the global relevance of food tourism. This difference stresses how crucial it is to investigate how Finnish food experiences impact satisfaction and loyalty, especially when viewed through the perspectives of social media and authenticity.

Digital platforms have also transformed culinary tourism, with social media now playing a major role in the communication and consumption of food-related experiences. Foodstagramming, or the habit of sharing food online, is an example of how travellers use digital and visual media to both consume and describe their culinary experiences (Magdy & Hassan, 2025). Wong et al., 2019 showed that social media sharing mediates the relationship between visitors' intentions to return and memorable travel experiences, indicating that sharing has behavioural effects outside of the experience itself. Like this, several researchers have emphasized how social media participation boosts culinary tourism's inventiveness and memorability, increasing its impact on intentions to return and suggest it (Magdy & Hassan, 2025; Sartika et al., 2025). Because of this, social media serves as both a tool for discovery that shapes decisions and a behavioural outcome that allows people to share real and meaningful experiences with one another.

The collective findings of these studies indicate that culinary tourism is a phenomenon that is both cultural and behavioural. In addition to being focused on the future, it has roots in identity and tradition and shapes digital engagement, loyalty, and satisfaction. These observations highlight how crucial it is to investigate how tourists perceive Finnish cuisine as well as how social media and authenticity combine to influence satisfaction and plans to return. A key aspect of gastronomy that supports both visitor happiness and behavioural outcomes is authenticity in culinary experiences, which is discussed further on.

2.2 Food Authenticity and Its Outcomes

Although tourists view authenticity differently, authenticity is generally recognized as an important part of memorable food experiences. While local and traditional food is often viewed as authentic, Stone et al. (2018) illustrate that depending on the context of consumption, tourists could perceive authenticity in non-local or hybrid food experiences also. This indicates that

authenticity is a subjective social construction that is generated by the food experience, influenced by local or abstract ingredients, an atmosphere, context, and the meaning associated with food, rather than an inherent quality. In agreement, Wondirad and Verheye (2023, p. 12) assert that authenticity is customer-orientated and encompasses a range of factors, including the narrative identity of the food and its symbolism, the cooking process, the environment of the food service, and that which is associated with the food's origin. These findings highlight how complex authenticity is and how critical it is to food being experienced for the purpose of an occasion to be remembered.

Geographic and cultural differences permeate food authenticity in Finland. There are some very divergent traditions in western and eastern Finnish cuisine (Grönholm 2008). The western traditions are influenced by methods typically found in Swedish cuisine, while the eastern traditions are influenced by Slavonic and Orthodox customs, such as making pies, foraging mushrooms, and cooking fish. Karelian refugees integrated into other countries after World War II is an excellent example of how food has influenced national symbols of Finland. Wells (2016) describes how Karelian pies (*karjalanpiirakat*) gained importance because they were once ascribed to a province; however, because of the success of Karelian refugees, they are now connected to Finnish culture and identity. Overall, studies demonstrate how significantly Finnish cuisine is tied to a place, its identity, and the cultural heritage of that identity. Emphasizing authenticity from a cultural and experiential point of view, studies also illustrate that a local experience is more comprehensive than just food; it includes the context in which that food is eaten (Aaltojärvi et al., 2018).

Recent studies have emphasized the implications of authenticity in culinary tourism in terms of behavioural outcomes. Li et al., 2022 found that authentic cuisine provided emotional outcomes that included memory and destination attachment, which influenced behavioural outcomes. Taking it a step further, the studies by Doğan (2025) and Sutiadiningsih et al. (2024) provide empirical evidence in various contexts that connects eating experiences to return intentions - in the cases that the satisfaction of ultimate experience appears to mediate the relationship. These findings emphasize the role of authenticity as a trigger of satisfaction, which subsequently affects loyalty. This is consistent with broader tourism literature indicating that authenticity is often associated with positive perceptions on the quality of the experience and likelihood to return to the destination.

Authenticity and modern digital behaviours are linked as well. Authentic food experiences are frequently the ones that are most likely to be shared on social media as culinary tourism grows more participatory and visual. Authenticity increases the perceived value and share-worthiness of culinary experiences, which tourists replicate in digital narratives, according to research on "foodstagramming" and social media engagement (Magdy & Hassan, 2025; Sartika et al., 2025). Furthermore, Wong et al., 2019 contend that real and memorable experiences are especially likely to be shared, and that doing so not only expresses personal fulfilment but also promotes plans to revisit through digital storytelling and peer validation. Therefore, authenticity serves as an extension into sharing and expressing loyalty as well as an internal assessment that promotes fulfilment.

Overall, authenticity is a key component of culinary tourism since it enriches eating experiences with cultural significance, promotes satisfaction, and strengthens behavioural results. In the context of Finland, where geography, tradition, and cultural history are closely associated with culinary identity, authenticity is important for understanding how visitors perceive and gain culinary experiences. Analysing the ways in which food tourism affects revisit intentions is made easier by authenticity, which links experiencing quality to satisfaction and willingness to share.

2.3 Finland's Culinary Identity

Many factors affect what might be called Finnish cuisine, such as time, place and the landscape. Various food customs can be impacted based on where the people have lived geographically, around the time, and what the environment has allowed. For example, the affection for sweet foods in Western cuisine have origins based on Sweden; whereas Orthodox aspects can mostly be found in Eastern cuisine for stews, mushrooms and fermented food (Raento & Husso, 2002; Wells, 2016). Karelian pies, or *karjalanpiirakat* can be thought of as a significant food item with cultural symbolism intently tied to identity of the self and collective. Once upon a time, Karelian refugees considered these totems in respect of locally known foods, which ascended to national importance post-World War II, and now exist both in the consciousness of the national cuisine and communal memory (Wells, 2016). Example such as this help support the idea that the notion of authenticity in Finnish cuisine includes more than simply the local ingredients, and involves migration, history, and cultural discourses.

The Finnish identity of cuisine is also characterized by nature and seasonality. For example, traditional food such as lohikeitto (salmon soup) uses local food products like local salmon from lakes and rivers, potatoes, cream, and dill (Kallio & Saira, 2017). Local farm products included berries (varying in styles like lingonberries, bilberries, cloudberries), mushrooms, root vegetables, and game such as moose, or reindeer are tied to not only home-cooking but even fine dining (Finnish Offering, 2022). When food products are in season, they are described as pure in Finland which goes deep in creating a “clean” food culture, and often relates to the food culture that is turning to trends of authenticity and sustainability. Additionally, the New Nordic Cuisine movement emphasizes sustainability, responsibility, and locality, while ensuring the establishment of more food identity within the dialogue of Finnish cuisine in relation to environmental awareness on a larger global scale (Raippalinna, 2020).

Nevertheless, Finnish foods that are foreign to other culinary traditions such as salmiakki (salty liquorice), mustamakkara (in some case served with lingonberry jam), and kalakukko (cooked bread with fish) also indicate how the Fins assert their distinctive food heritage. They are also connecting foods normal people eat to cultural memory and regional pride, which encompasses the simple and functional essences of Finnish cuisine while amplifying the authenticity (NH Hotels, n.d.). The Finnish baked goods of lihapiirakka (meat pies) and korvapuusti (cinnamon buns) suggest an added layer of comfort, ease to prepare, and a cultural reference. Together these provide a sense that practices of everyday life and symbolic histories are enacted to signify one's food identity.

Finland's food identity has also been shaped by national dietary recommendations. With a focus on vegetables, berries, and whole grains as the foundation of the diet, occasional use of fish or rapeseed oil, and a restriction on red meat and sweets, the Baltic Sea Diet Pyramid closely resembles Finland's food pyramid (Nouripour & Hejazi, 2019). These narratives that support health are consistent with those used in tourism advertisements that portray Finland as a place of balance, purity, and health (Visit Finland, 2020). The significance of regional identities, using storytelling to market a destination, and enjoying cuisine in a natural setting have all been incorporated into food tourism initiatives (Finland's cuisine Tourism Strategy 2024-2028).

Furthermore, studies have indicated that Finland's cuisines are influenced by geographical characteristics. While some visitors to southern Finland value the freshness and health benefits

of local foods, unless they are promoted, visitors may not be aware of or comprehend certain regional delicacies (Mynttinen et al., 2015). Food tourism experts say that branding, food routes, and tales help showcase visibility (Wahlberg & Vahela, 2025). On the other hand, consumers in southern Finland have started to value sustainability and seasonality in the current global shift towards responsible tourism (Hoppu et al., 2024). Finnish cuisine also includes traditional drinks, such as the more recent local craft beer, sahti, which tastes like juniper and is protected by the EU (Finnish Offering, 2022).

Although there is a long history of Finnish cuisine, research indicates that genuine comprehension frequently results from repeated trips, where one is fully immersed in the culture and history of the cuisine, as opposed to only reading promotional materials (Havas & Adamsson, 2015). This demonstrates how culinary identity is experienced and communicated as cultural tourists partake in it in a variety of settings, such as supermarkets, festivals, kitchens, and natural settings. Since culinary identity is widely shared on social media in the digital era, these authentic experiences are even more crucial. Finnish culinary traditions that are rooted in geography, authenticity, and cultural history are so savoured, shared, co-created, and spread throughout the world. This gives the framework to investigate how social media might influence behavioural responses and improve authenticity, which is covered in the next section.

2.4 Social Media and Sharing Food Experiences

The emergence of social media, as a critical current consideration of culinary tourism, has changed the way in which tourists express and learn about cuisine. Tourists now can capture food experiences, express their stories, and validate their cuisine experiences through images and descriptions shared on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube (Mengjia et al., 2023; Garcia-Carrion et al., 2022). For example, during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, local bakers were able to utilize social media sites such as Instagram to remain visible, support their community, and organize their culinary traditions (Fusté-Forné & Filimon, 2021). As another example, food tourism is defined as the dissemination of culinary experiences visual and narrative symbols, shared in a global society, rather than simply consuming food. In food marketing, it is, after all, one of the, potentially, safest ways to communicate localness and authenticity to a global market, which is a key component to the identity of a place, such as Finland.

Research indicates that user-generated content co-creates value through peer exchanges, evaluations, and virtual communities in addition to documenting experiences. Kempniak et al., 2016 point out that travellers are using digital platforms more and more to create and share their food tourism experiences, which strengthens their sense of attachment and co-creation. According to Pasanen and Konu (2016), despite issues with resources and experience, Finnish event planners see social media as an essential medium for consumer-driven innovation and publicity. These results demonstrate how social media serves as a platform for experiences to be publicly confirmed and expanded, as well as a discovery tool that shapes travellers' decisions.

The visual component of food-related content is another significant element impacting engagement. While local narrative, customs, and sustainability messaging support identity building and branding, as demonstrated by Tellström et al., 2006 and Fusté-Forné & Filimon, 2021, Gamebetti & Han, 2022 draw attention to the ways in which the visual representation of food influences user responses. Therefore, Finnish food experience becomes a worthy topic for tourists to be shared on social media because of its narratives and authenticity. Genuine dining experiences are more likely to be photographed, shared, and remembered, which boosts customer satisfaction and loyalty, according to recent research (Magdy & Hassan, 2025; Sartika et al., 2025).

Research indicates that the sharing habits of visitors have a wider impact on their loyalty. The intention to return and the on-site experience are mediated by the sharing of memorable travel experiences on mobile social media, according to Wong et al., 2019. Electronic word-of-mouth also serves as a conduit for converting consumer happiness into loyalty outcomes, according to Seow et al. (2024). These results show that sharing on social media is a behavioural mechanism that links fulfilment and authenticity to revisit goals rather than just being a type of self-expression.

To sum up, social media has become a crucial component of culinary tourism, allowing travellers to bring real food experiences online where they can acquire more significance and exposure. Social media serves two purposes by associating the authenticity of Finnish culinary traditions (covered in section 2.3) with sharing and co-creation practices. This enhances cultural identification and influences behavioural outcomes like loyalty and revisit. As a result, the next

section examines how social media sharing influences a tourist plans to return and fortifies the connections between genuineness, contentment, and their future actions.

2.5 Social Media Sharing and Revisit Intentions

The choice of a culinary establishment is increasingly influenced by social media among consumers. Sites like Instagram, Facebook, and Tik Tok not only provide such establishments a chance to advertise at minimal cost, but also offer an inexpensive way to broaden the scope of their outreach (Liang et al., 2023). Marketers of food and other related products are not exempt from the advantages of social media and can equally benefit from them. Methods such as 'Instabranding' serve to promote travel and other related services and offers using social media marketing, especially with the use of images, videos, location-based tags, and hashtags (Ingrassia et al., 2022; Putra et al., 2023). Unlike the traditional means of advertising and marketing, these channels permit the discovery of culinary pleasures and other delights from a more authentic and heartfelt perspective, as they are dominated by peer-influenced content.

The trustworthiness of user-generated material is distinctive when compared to traditional forms of advertising. As per Nawaz Baba et al., 2023, the peer reviews, images, and recommendations received help in elevating expectations, in reducing worries related to trying new dishes, and in setting realness benchmarks. Instagram and related channels give an opportunity to fine-tune the food-related audience segment, and through experience sharing, the visitors themselves become co-promoters. The pressure of peers highlights the fact that sharing on social media transcends the consumption of content; it is also about building narratives that influence decision-making and endorse shared beliefs of trust.

In what way one shares information affects not just future travellers but tourists themselves. Wong et al. (2019) have shown that the sharing of a trip's memorable culinary experiences is one of the best indicators of intending to revisit a place as sharing acts as a bridge between sincere experiences and future actions. This is supported by Seow et al. (2024), who find that electronic word-of-mouth is one of the primary channels through which satisfaction translates to loyalty metrics. More broadly, newer food tourism studies (Magdy & Hassan, 2025; Sartika et al., 2025) point out that genuine and creative culinary experiences food tourists get are more likely to be shared, which increases the emotional attraction of the place. Collectively, all these

points imply that sharing on social media impacts return intentions, besides being an indicator of satisfaction and genuineness.

In the case of Finland, this network has special importance. Finnish food culture basically revolves around the concept of purity, seasonality, and the country's history told with the aid of digital narratives and image media (Visit Finland, 2020; Havas & Adamsson, 2015). With Like Promo's wide network, tourists can tell and share their wonderful experiences about Finland's local food, special seasonal delicacies, and open-air dining, which significantly contributes to Finland's reputation as a culinary destination. With the aid of these social media platforms, Finnish food is not only advertised to the outside world, but the unique local dining experiences are also converted into everyday social communal interactions that help strengthen consumer loyalty.

Overall, this suggests that social media sharing about food experiences greatly impacts travellers' intentions to revisit for culinary tourism. Here the term "food experiences" indicates the transformation from food-based activities into greater behaviours. This also helps experts employ food authenticity as a marketing tool. This completes the cycle of validation because culinary tourism reinforces satisfaction, authenticity validates social media sharing, and social media sharing converts culinary tourism into loyalty. This provides the conceptual framework for a strong foundation that allows validation of the relationships among food authenticity, satisfaction, social media sharing and revisit intentions.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Motivation for Food Tourism and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

In the context of tourism, food serves higher-order purposes beyond physiological necessities, even though it is widely acknowledged as a basic human need. A helpful place to start when trying to figure out these levels of motivation is Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Fundamentally, food satisfies physiological demands by supplying energy. But in tourist contexts, food is also linked to identity expression, social engagement, self-actualization, and even the discovery of new cultural practices (Maslow, 1943; Tikkanen, 2007). According to Mak et al. (2012), culinary encounters foster cultural learning, a sense of community, and the desire for new experiences in addition to satisfying basic requirements.

Food tourism encompasses a variety of reasons, from participating in culinary classes and farm-to-table experiences to visiting food festivals and dining at local eateries. Activities of this nature show how gastronomy allows travellers to successfully meet a variety of demands. For instance, eating on a cruise ship may satisfy physiological needs, taking part in local food programs may satisfy esteem needs, and experiencing food in the natural world can promote self-actualization through cultural immersion (Tikkanen, 2007).

Although Maslow's theory explains why food is a strong motivation when traveling, it falls short in capturing the sensations of food and its behavioural effects. Continuing from this basis, more recent research emphasizes how authenticity influences how eating experiences are assessed, how enjoyment arises from them, and how social media sharing intensifies them. These elements will be looked at in the following sections and are essential for establishing how culinary tourism influences desire to return.

3.2 Food Authenticity and Tourist Satisfaction

In tourism theory and practice, authenticity has emerged as an increasingly important term, especially in the domains of culinary and cultural tourism. It's a socially created and bendable perception that arises from interaction, cultural setting, and the emotional values that travellers attach to food rather than a fixed quality (Moore et al., 2021). Cultural narratives, memory, and social connection are examples of intangible aspects of authenticity in culinary tourism,

whereas ingredients and preparation techniques are examples of physical aspects. This suggests that the key to creating meaningful tourism experiences is food authenticity, which is co-created by producers, hosts, and guests.

Authenticity is often linked to environment, elegance, and history in Finland. Food that is cooked locally and is frequently associated with personal recollections and ancestral roots is highly regarded as authentic, according to Autio et al., 2013. The emotional component of authenticity is highlighted by these studies, where visitors' feeling of place is reinforced by recollection, souvenirs, and tradition (Goulding, 2001). Like this, Kim and Iwashita (2016) show that cultural background such as the setting in which food is consumed and the stories that surround it is just as significant in influencing how people perceive authenticity as the food itself. Furthermore, by fostering connections between people during culinary experiences, participative activities such as catering with people from the area enhance authenticity (Carvalho et al., 2021). These findings imply that gastronomic authenticity is both solid and metaphorical, rooted in tradition but also jointly produced by participation.

In terms of destination image and identity creation, authenticity is also essential. Kladou and Trihas (2022) assert that location branding can be effectively achieved through culinary experiences that include material and metaphorical components, such as traditional foods combined with storytelling. In a similar vein, Gheorghită and Bulin (2017) contend that by providing distinctive, culturally infused culinary experiences, regional cuisines can set destinations apart. This is particularly applicable to Finland, where the national food identity places a strong emphasis on authenticity markers including availability, conservation, and quality. According to Galati et al., 2023, ethical behavior, local sourcing, and sustainability are frequently cited by modern travellers as characteristics of authentic travel experiences. These results establish authenticity as a selling point that draws in adventurous tourists as well as a value to society.

In addition to its marketing and symbolic value, authenticity has direct behavioural effects. It influences travellers' perceptions of quality as well as their level of satisfaction with their travels. Perceptions of authenticity improve positive affective states like memory and attachment, which raise loyalty and satisfaction. Adding to this, empirical research shows that authenticity and inclinations to return are mediated by satisfaction. Sutiadiningsih et al., 2024

verified comparable mediation effects in gastronomy situations, whereas Doğan (2025) demonstrated that local food incentives indirectly influenced revisit through satisfaction. This pathway is further supported by Seow et al., 2024, who find that enjoyment is the crucial connection between eating experiences and loyalty results. When taken as a whole, these results demonstrate that authenticity is a result of satisfaction, and that contentment is the process by which intentions to return are established.

This connection is especially significant in the Finnish setting. Travelers frequently characterize Finnish food as pure, original, and based in surroundings that are natural, even though it is not as well-known worldwide as that of other Nordic nations (Sthapit, 2017). This shows that travellers' satisfaction with Finnish food experiences is strongly influenced by their views of authenticity, which in turn affects their willingness to return or recommend Finland as a gastronomic destination. As a result, authenticity is essential to Finnish cuisine's cultural significance as well as its capacity to foster attachment and positive behavioural impacts.

In brief, regional belonging, feelings of connection, sustainable principles, and tangible characteristics are all connected by the multifaceted concept of authenticity. Furthermore, it establishes the basis for visitor pleasure, which forms the link between genuine interactions and plans to return. The study's initial set of hypotheses, which argue that authenticity has a beneficial impact on satisfaction and that satisfaction influences the relationship between authenticity and revisit intentions, are based on this concept.

3.3 User-Generated Content, Social Media Sharing, and Tourist Behaviour

The emergence of digital platforms has changed how travelers interact with and discuss cuisine. Written messages, photos, and videos produced by travelers alone and posted on social media platforms are referred to as user-generated content (UGC) (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014; O'Hern & Kahle, 2013). Since user-generated content (UGC) comes from peer experiences rather than promotional resources, it is typically seen to be greater authentic and reliable than typical advertising. UGC has two functions in the setting of food tourism: it serves as an archive and confirmation of experiences for individuals who share them, while also inspiring prospective travelers. Its collaborative aspect emphasizes the growing co-creation of culinary tourism, which goes from consuming to include media representation (Kempiak et al., 2016).

These days, social media sites are essential venues for such collaborative work. Pasanen and Konu (2016) shown that even in regardless of their lack of funding and experience, gathering and entertainment planners in Finland saw social media as an essential instrument for customer-centred development and exposure. Due to the emphasis on attractiveness on platforms like Instagram and TikTok, food is especially well-suited for online sharing. Gamebetti & Han, 2022 discovered that consumer loyalty is greatly influenced by the graphical portrayal of food, whereas Tellström et al., 2006 and Fusté-Forné & Filimon, 2021 emphasized that environmental themes and traditional narrative enhance identification and brand development. As a result, authenticity and uniqueness make culinary experiences more "share-worthy," as travellers try to convey not just the food they consumed but also its cultural significance.

The act of sharing has quantifiable effects on customer loyalty in addition to altering impressions. Posting vivid memories on the smartphones platforms influences the association between on-site experiences and revisit intentions, according to empirical findings presented by Wong et al., 2019. Seow et al., 2024 also showed that digital word-of-mouth serves as a channel for converting contentment into commitment. These results demonstrate that sharing content on social media is a behavioural mechanism that links future traveling plans to authenticity and happiness rather than being only a side effect. Sharing thus serves as a forecast of thoughts to return as well because of valuable experiences.

This change is especially significant for Finnish culinary tourism. Travelers that provide authenticity characteristics like seasons, transparency, and regional norms through photos, ratings, or storytelling increase their prominence. Hence, social media serves as a connection among an international appreciation of Finnish cuisine and its experiential authenticity. In addition to enhancing their own enjoyment, travellers' sharing their culinary experiences enhances Finland's reputation as an attractive vacation spot, increasing revenue and probability of return.

Therefore, social media sharing and user-generated content (UGC) are essential components of modern food tourism, connecting enjoyment and authenticity with plans to return. Additionally, because of genuine food memories and as a way to facilitate that expands its impact through next step sharing behaviour functions. The following set of hypotheses, which suggest that social media sharing is influenced by authenticity, that revisit intentions are precisely predicted

by sharing, and that sharing influences the relationship between authenticity and revisit, are theoretically supported by these studies.

3.4 Hypotheses Development and Conceptual Model

The three interrelated constructs authenticity, satisfaction, and social media sharing which influence revisit intentions in culinary tourism are highlighted in the literature review and theoretical framework created in the sections before it. Five hypotheses that capture the direct and symbolic connections among these constructs in the Finnish environment are put forth in this study, which builds on earlier research. Every hypothesis is supported by the studied literature and logically expands upon the key ideas of sharing behavior, authenticity, and satisfaction.

H1: Tourist satisfaction is positively influenced by the perceived authenticity of Finnish food.

In the fields of food and heritage tourism, authenticity has repeatedly been found to be a key factor in tourist satisfaction. Local products, traditional cooking techniques, and cultural stories about food are all examples of authenticity that tourists find appealing and contribute to the perceived quality of experiences (Moore et al., 2021; Wondirad & Verheye, 2023). These beliefs are further reinforced in Finland by authenticity markers like seasonality, simplicity, and purity (Autio et al., 2013; Sthapit, 2017).

Through the reinforcement of place connection and cultural meaning, authenticity not only influences affective assessments but also produces satisfaction, according to empirical research. The authenticity of food improves memory and emotional attachment, which results in higher satisfaction levels, according to Li et al., 2022. Similar findings were made by Doğan (2025), who showed that incentives to eat locally affect inclinations to return immediately by means of satisfaction.

H2: Social media sharing is positively influenced by the perceived authenticity of Finnish food experiences.

Social media has emerged as a crucial platform for travellers to record and verify their culinary adventures. Because authentic and meaningful interactions have cultural and symbolic significance that travellers want to share with their peers, they are particularly likely to be shared (Magdy & Hassan, 2025). According to studies, authenticity gives food uniqueness and narrative value, which raises its "share-worthiness" (Sartika et al., 2025). In the Finnish context, authenticity characteristics that appeal to consumers around the world, including location, reliability, and changing seasons make sharing captivating. Research indicates that travellers frequently share genuine culinary experiences to communicate cultural value to other people and to retain their personal recollections (Carvalho et al., 2021; Fusté-Forné & Filimon, 2021). Therefore, authenticity serves to act as motivator driving externalized behavior, including sharing content on social media, while also serving as a personal assessment on value.

H3: Social media sharing of Finnish food experiences positively influences tourists' revisit intentions.

Food tourism is extended beyond consumption right away by sharing behaviours, which turn it into a socially approved story which shapes behavior. Sharing is a behavioural channel, as demonstrated by Wong et al., 2019 research proof that posting special moments on social media platforms directs revisit desires. Digital word-of-mouth provides a technique that converts satisfaction into attachment results, as demonstrated by Seow et al., 2024. Nawaz Baba et al., 2023 contend such peer-shared experiences show a bigger influence on revisit and recommendation behavior because they are seen as more trustworthy than standard advertising. Specifically, images, evaluations, and narratives pertaining to food have been demonstrated to increase destination exposure and encourage return visits (Ingrassia et al., 2022; Liang et al., 2023). Therefore, by enhancing both individual happiness and the general understanding of authenticity, it is anticipated that posting about Finnish culinary delights online will increase travelers' intents to return to Finland.

H4: Tourist satisfaction bridges the relationship between perceived authenticity and tourist revisit intentions.

In tourist studies, satisfaction is commonly recognized as the link between commitment and experience level. By strengthening cultural ties, feelings of connection, and tangibleness, authenticity has been shown to produce satisfaction (Li et al., 2022). Consequently, contentment increases intentions to return and enhances loyalty (Seow et al., 2024). Although Sutiadiningsih et al., (2024) demonstrate that satisfaction translates the impact of gastronomy experiences on behavioural outcomes, Doğan (2025) verified that reasons for tasting regional foods are indirectly influencing revisit by means of satisfaction. Since culinary customs are strongly linked to reliability, location, and traditional heritage all of which tourists favour authenticity is a crucial component of satisfaction within the Finnish environment (Sthapit, 2017). Accordingly, satisfaction is viewed as the link that converts the perceived authenticity of Finnish cuisine into plans to return.

H5: Social media sharing bridges the relationship between perceived authenticity and tourist revisit intentions.

In addition to being a behavioural result, social media sharing serves like a bridging system, strengthening the impact of authenticity on revisit intention. The relationship between memorable interactions and intentions to revisit is mediated by sharing experiences on social media, as shown by Wong et al., 2019. Since authentic culinary experiences offer unique material that promotes both individual creativity and location visibility, they are especially prone to be widely shared (Magdy & Hassan, 2025). Additionally, Seow et al., 2024 emphasized that authenticity as well as satisfaction are converted into loyalty using digital word-of-mouth. Finland places a high importance on authenticity indicators like seasons and quality and sharing serves to tell the story and reinforce these values around the world. Considering this, social media sharing is suggested as a link between desires to return and authentic Finnish culinary experiences.

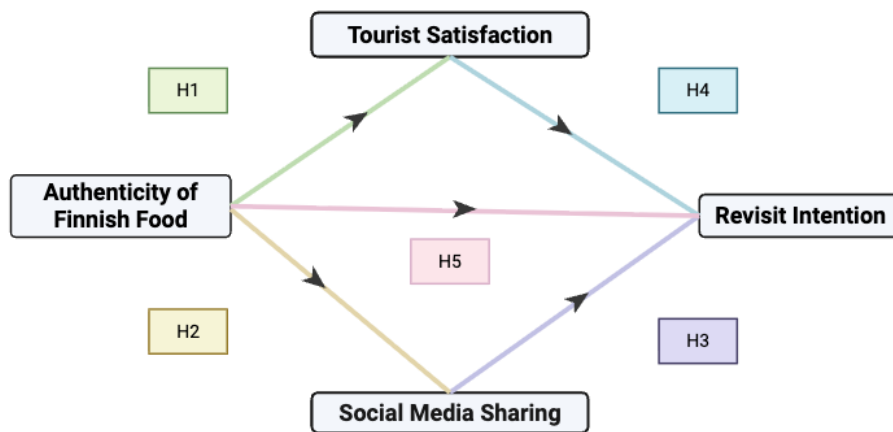


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of the study (Figure created using BioRender)

The conceptual model shown in Figure 1 (adapted from Li et al., 2022; Wong et al., 2019; Seow et al., 2024) depicts the hypothesized connections observed in the available literature. As demonstrated, the perception of the authenticity of Finnish food acts as the main factor influencing tourist satisfaction (H1) and social media sharing (H2). Social media sharing has the potential to increase revisit intention (H3), while visitor satisfaction (H4) and sharing habit (H5) serve as bridging factors between authenticity and revisit intention. This concept incorporates previous findings showing authentic food boosts enjoyment (Li et al., 2022), motivates tourists to express their experience and thoughts using social media platforms (Wong et al., 2019), and improves attachment factors by increasing the willingness to return (Seow et al., 2024). As a result, the representation gives an easily understood visual framework to test the hypotheses raised in the research.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research design

A survey-based research design was used in the above study. To collect data from foreign visitors who had travelled to Finland and sampled Finnish cuisine, a systematic questionnaire was developed. A survey was used primarily to examine the opinions and actions of tourists in an analytical manner and to test the connections among the study's core concepts such as social media sharing, food authenticity, visitor satisfaction, and intention to re-visit (Li et al., 2022; Wong et al., 2019). Given that they allow for gathering of data from a large number of respondents and the identification of trends in responses, questionnaires are frequently employed in tourism research (Bryman, 2016; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The study used an approach that was quantitative, which means that data were collected numerically and examined statistically. This approach makes it easy to test hypotheses, compare outcomes to previous studies, and report findings accurately (Hair et al. 2019). Despite closed-ended questions, the questionnaire had one open-ended item at the end. This allowed participants to explain their experiences with Finnish cuisine in their own words, as well as if social media was useful for locating food-related experiences. Open-ended inquiries are encouraged in tourist research due to how they provide better insights, capture human meanings, and add deeper perspective to quantitative results (Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2013; Veal, 2017).

4.2 Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire was divided into six major sections that included both closed and open-ended questions. Section one contained the research information and permission form, which provided details about the study's objective, voluntary participation, and the confidentiality of responses. This follows ethical guidelines for tourism research (TENK, 2019). The section 2 gathered demographic data such as gender, age, nationality, occupation, travel frequency, year of last visit to Finland, regions visited, and trip purpose. It also included two control questions about the significance of food in travel decisions and the usage of social media to identify Finnish food. These items were included to better understand respondents' backgrounds and to account for variations in food-related behavior (Sthapit, 2017; Fusté-Forné & Filimon, 2021).

The sections from 3 to section 6, measured the study's four key constructs, which were developed from existing literature. Section 3 perceived authenticity (Li et al., 2022; Autio et al., 2013) was assessed using five questions that captured cultural, natural, and experiential characteristics of Finnish food, as well as one reverse-coded statement. A reverse-coded item was added to the questionnaire to ensure that participants respond attentively and repeatedly, which increases data dependability (Weijters & Baumgartner, 2012). It also lowers the likelihood of participants reflexively agreeing to every statement, which is known as acquiescence bias (Barnette, 2000). Whereas other items were incorporated to measure if Finnish food experiences were deemed traditional, cultural, and real, as authenticity is an important factor in how tourists judge local cuisine and build long-term impressions of a region (Li et al., 2022). The section 4 was to assess tourist satisfaction used four measures like, overall contentment, perceived quality, food contribution to the travel, and their memorable experiences.

There were five items used to assess social media sharing behavior in section 5 such as, sharing posts, tagging locations, and posting reviews as well as authenticity-driven sharing items (Wong et al., 2019; Zhu et al., 2019). These items were included to investigate travellers' habits and reasons for posting and rating Finnish cuisine, as sharing food experiences online has been demonstrated to increase their impact and affect other people's travel decisions (Wong et al. 2019). For revisit intention, section 6 used four items to measure intention to return, recommending Finland to others for its cuisine, actively pursuing Finnish food on future trips, and enhanced chances of revisiting (Seow et al., 2024; Sutiadiningsih et al., 2024). These items were chosen to determine if food experiences increase loyalty to Finland as a vacation spot, considering that gastronomic fulfilment and uniqueness are crucial factors that influence tourists' desire to return (Sutiadiningsih et al., 2024).

All items were assessed using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = Strongly agree). The same value was used for each item while measuring and analysing. The Likert format is extensively used in tourism and hospitality research because it promotes consistency between studies and is simple for respondents to grasp (Joshi et al., 2015; Li et al., 2022). Finally, the questionnaire included a brief open-ended question that allowed individuals to explain their Finnish culinary and social media experiences in their own words. This qualitative element was included to supplement the quantitative measures, capturing more personal and memorable feelings (Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2013).

4.3 Data Collection

The data were collected using an online questionnaire generated in Google Forms, which included all essential instructions as well as a consent form. The target audience consisted of international travellers aged 18 and above who had visited Finland and tasted Finnish food. This selection ensured that respondents could constructively reflect on their Finnish dining experiences as well as their use of social media while traveling. It also made sure participation in this research was totally voluntary, with respondents providing full permission at the start of the questionnaire. No private data was obtained, maintaining privacy and adhering to both the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (TENK, 2019) and the GDPR rules for ethical research.

The questionnaire link was circulated via a non-probability convenience sampling technique, mostly through social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. The approach of convenience sampling was chosen because it helps researchers to reach respondents who are most available and willing to participate, particularly in observational studies when the population is spread out and difficult to reach (Etikan et al. 2016). This method is extensively utilized in tourism research since foreign travellers cannot be reached by a single sampling frame, and online communities give a cost-effective and time-efficient means to collect responses (Altinay & Paraskevas, 2008). While limited resources and the online distribution approach made probability sampling difficult, efforts were made to include a range of demographic groupings such as age, gender, nationality, and travel frequency (Statistics Canada, 2010).

Another reason for circulating the survey via social media is that social media is one of the study's primary variables. Sharing the questionnaire link in online communities where tourists actively communicate experiences, images, and feedback became both a practical means to contact the sample and a strategically appropriate form of data collection. Previous research has shown that social media platforms are good venues for capturing data on tourists' food-related activities because they represent genuine spaces where travellers discuss and discover knowledge about destinations (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010; Leung et al., 2013). This study planned to collect approximately 100 valid responses, which is deemed adequate for exploratory factor analysis and multiple regression analysis that is further explained in the next sections. (Hair et al., 2019).

4.4 Data Analysis

After collecting data using Google Forms, the responses were exported to SPSS version 29 for macOS for analysis. Before beginning the main analysis, the data were thoroughly examined. This includes eliminating incomplete responses, verifying for missing values, and assessing the data's normalcy. These processes are required to ensure that the dataset is clean and suitable for subsequent analysis (Hair et al., 2019; Pallant, 2020).

The following stage was to assess the measurement scales' validity. An Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was carried out on the four primary constructs: perceived authenticity, tourist satisfaction, social media sharing, and revisit intention. Because the factors were predicted to be correlated, the analysis used primary axis factoring with oblique rotation. Only elements with factor loadings above 0.50 and no significant cross-loadings were retained, ensuring that every element were well-stated. Cronbach's alpha (α) was used to assess construct reliability after validating factor structure. This test determines if the items on a scale measure the same idea consistently. A score of 0.70 or higher is normally regarded as appropriate for research, but values greater than 0.80 indicate good dependability (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994; Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). In this study, Cronbach's alpha was assessed individually for authenticity, contentment, social media sharing, and revisit intention.

Once the constructs' reliability and validity were established, the relationships between them were investigated. Bivariate correlations were utilized first to determine how the constructs connected to one another. Then, multiple regression analyses were carried out to investigate the direct effects proposed in hypotheses H1–H3. This allows researchers to investigate whether authenticity impacts satisfaction, social media sharing, and revisit intention (Li et al., 2022; Wong et al., 2019). The PROCESS macro for SPSS (Model 4) was used to test the mediation hypotheses (H4 and H5) using 5,000 bootstrap samples (Hayes, 2018). Bootstrapping was chosen because it gives accurate estimates of indirect effects and does not rely on the assumption of normal distribution. This study investigated if visitor satisfaction mediated the association between food authenticity and intention to return, as well as whether social media sharing served as a mediator. This technique is commonly used in tourism research to explain how experiences impact behavioral outcomes (Seow et al., 2024).

Finally, thematic analysis was applied to the open-ended question towards the end of the questionnaire. Responses were processed and categorized into themes to find similar opinions about Finnish food and social media. This phase increased qualitative depth and allowed

participants to convey what they experienced in their very own perspectives (Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2013).

4.5 Ethics

This study had a significant ethical component. Before starting the questionnaire, participants were provided a lengthy consent form that outlined the purpose of the study, the willingness of participation, and the confidentiality of their responses. The consent form mentioned explicitly that the research was part of a master's thesis at the University of Lapland and that the obtained data would only be used for educational reasons. It also mentioned the aim of the research so the participant knew what they were about to handle and a small gesture on the topic was added before to keep them informed. It further said that no personal or identifying information would be collected, and all responses would be kept private.

Respondents were given details about their eligibility requirements at the start of the survey. Only international travelers aged 18 and above who have visited Finland and sampled Finnish food were asked to participate. This guaranteed that responses were associated with the research aims. The form also said that participants might withdraw at any moment without giving a reason, so taking the survey was entirely voluntary.

Additionally, the form of consent said that the questionnaire required only 8 to 10 minutes to complete along with that there were no potential no potential risks or sensitive themes involved. Respondents were given the researcher's contact information in case they had any problems, questions, or requests for additional information. Since the study did not address vulnerable groups or sensitive problems, a separate ethical evaluation was unnecessary. However, the study followed the ethical principles of the Finnish National Board for Research Integrity (TENK, 2019), which emphasize honesty, openness, and consideration of participant privacy.

4.6 Using Artificial Intelligence Tool for Language Accuracy

The usage of Quill-Bot as a final editing tool during writing and review was restricted to grammar, punctuation, simple rephrasing, and styles with vocabulary refining to guarantee grammatical accuracy, consistency of academic tone, and readability coherence. Ideas, arguments, and interpretations were not produced by this program; instead, each suggestion was carefully examined and approved only when it maintained academic complexity and

significance. By lowering minor mistakes and preserving a consistent register throughout chapters, this strategy made it possible to keep the emphasis on methodology, analysis, and additional facts.

5. RESULTS

An online survey was available from September 22, 2025, to September 30, 2025. Out of the 121 questionnaires that were submitted during this period, 117 were completed and utilized for study. A total of 117 accurate responses to all of the background items included below (0 missing). The final sample ($n = 117$) serves the purpose for the SPSS analyses for regression models with a limited number of variables. Green's guideline suggests $N \approx 50 + 8m$ for medium outcomes, and Fritz and MacKinnon's statistical tables suggest that most recommended tests attain sufficient reliability via samples around 100 when results are moderate, putting $n = 117$ within the suggested range (Green, 1991; Fritz & MacKinnon, 2007). This final dataset offers a solid foundation for investigating tourists' perceptions of Finnish cuisine, their usage of social media, tourists satisfaction and intentions to return.

The data were analyzed with IBM SPSS Statistics, that provided a systematic and transparent method for managing questionnaire responses. This technique was preferred since it allowed the study to first evaluate measurement quality before testing the hypothesized correlations between constructs in a detailed method. Similar analysis approaches are extensively used in tourism and food experience research, guaranteeing that the findings are reliable and similar to previous studies (Hair et al, 2019; Pallant, 2020).

5.1 Description of Respondents

Analyzing the respondents at beginning is usual in tourism/food-tourism questionnaire studies since demographic and travel backgrounds influence information search, sharing, and post-travel intentions; that setting improves in the understanding of subsequent constructs linking authenticity, satisfaction, sharing, and revisit intent. For instance, a recent scoping assessment of social media and local-food experiences followed a similar pattern (Sartika et al., 2025).

To establish the context regarding the hypothesis tests, (Table 1) first reports the demographic and travel background, followed by (Table 2), which reports food orientation and social media behavior.

Table 1. Respondent's demographics and travel backgrounds (N = 117)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	65	55.6
	Female	49	41.9
	Other / Prefer not to say	3	2.6
Age group	18–25	46	39.3
	26–35	50	42.7
	36–45	18	15.4
	46–60	2	1.7
	61+	1	0.9
Nationality	Asia	49	41.9
	Europe	39	33.3
	North America	18	15.4
	South America	5	4.3
	Africa	3	2.6
	Oceania	3	2.6
Occupation	Student	45	38.5
	Employed full-time	44	37.6
	Employed part-time	7	6.0
	Self-employed	8	6.8
	Unemployed	10	8.5
	Retired	2	1.7

	Other	1	0.9
Travel frequency (past years)	Once a year	22	18.8
	2–3 times a year	54	46.2
	>3 times a year	20	17.1
	Rarely	21	17.9
Year of last visit to Finland	2025	41	35.0
	2024	36	30.8
	2023	17	14.5
	2020–2022	13	11.1
	Before 2020	10	8.5
Regions visited in Finland	South	51	43.6
	North	18	15.4
	East	3	2.6
	West	5	4.3
	Multiple regions	40	34.2
Main reason for visit	Leisure	42	35.9
	Study	28	23.9
	Visiting family/friends	18	15.4
	Business	7	6.0

		Other	22	18.8
Visited	Finland	Yes	74	63.2
more than once		No	43	36.8

NOTE: All statistics are based on a sample size of n=117, and the numbers match to those in Table 1 & 2.

The gender distribution revealed the male majorities (n=65, 55.6%), followed by female participants (n=49, 41.9%), and three of the participants (2.6%) who chose "other/prefer not to say." The age distribution was extremely concentrated between a younger population, with the 26-35 category accounting for the largest percentage (n=50, 42.7%), next followed by the 18-25 age group (n=46, 39.3%), while respondents aged 36-45 formed 15.4% (n=18), and individuals aged 46 and above comprised only 2.6% collectively (n=3), suggesting a primarily young-to-middle adult sample. Geographic representation was significantly diversified, with Asia (n=49, 41.9%) and Europe (n=39, 33.3%) accounting for the bulk of respondents, followed by North America (n=18, 15.4%), South America (n=5, 4.3%), Africa (n=3, 2.6%), and Oceania (n=3, 2.6%). Occupational variables matched with a tourist audience consisting primarily of students and early-career professionals, with students being the largest group (n=45, 38.5%), following closely by full-time employees (n=44, 37.6%), while part-time employment (n=7, 6.0%), self-employment (n=8, 6.8%), unemployment (n=10, 8.5%), retirement (n=2, 1.7%), and other employment status (n=1, 0.9%) contributed in progressively smaller percentages. These demographic variables indicate an analysis suitable for examining culinary tourism experiences and social media habits as young individuals have higher levels of internet involvement with platforms and more involvement in immersive tourist activities, as documented in the current studies.

The respondents showed significant international travel background, with most of them claiming frequent overseas travel. A total of 54 respondents (46.2%) traveled abroad 2-3 times each year, 22 (18.8%) once per year, and 20 (17.1%) more than three times per year, however only 21 (17.9%) traveled rarely. The rate of visitor frequency to Finland was exceptionally high, about 65.8% of respondents visiting within the last two years, comprising 41 (35.0%) in 2025, 36 (30.8%) in 2024, 17 (14.5%) in 2023, 13 (11.1%) between 2020 and 2022 wherein Covid-

19 could be the major reason for such small numbers in this category, and 10 (8.5%) before 2020. The geographical breakdown across Finland demonstrated both concentrated and broad travel patterns, to Southern Finland being the most often visited area (n=51, 43.6%), then being multiple-region trips (n=40, 34.2%), Northern Finland (n=18, 15.4%), Western Finland (n=5, 4.3%), and Eastern Finland (n=3, 2.6%).

The most recently completed vacation to Finland was mainly for leisure (n=42, 35.9%), then for study (n=28, 23.9%), visiting family/friends (n=18, 15.4%), business (n=7, 6.0%), and other purposes (n=22, 18.8%). Particularly, 63.2% of the participants (n=74) were frequent visitors, whereas 36.8% were tourists for the first time (n=43). These tourist attributes reflect a representative set with diverse destination experience and travel objective, which is useful for analyzing revisit intentions and tourist satisfaction. The large number of recent trips improves the trustworthiness of individual reports on culinary experiences and social media habits, but the prevalence of leisure and study travel represents tourist segments that are more likely to engage in exploratory activities and experiencing culinary authenticity.

Table 2. Food preference and social media activity (N = 117)

Variable	Category	n	%
Tried Finnish food during visit	Yes	117	100.0
	No	0	0.00
Importance of food when choosing destination	Not important at all	13	11.1
	Slightly important	28	23.9
	Moderately important	22	18.8
	Important	30	25.6
	Very important	24	20.5
When social media was used for food information	Before travel	21	17.9

Variable	Category	n	%
	During travel	28	23.9
	Both before and during travel	50	42.7
	Did not use social media	18	15.4
Platforms used for food/travel information	Review-sites (TripAdvisor/Google)	75	64.1
	Instagram	67	57.3
	TikTok	66	56.4
	YouTube	43	36.8
	Facebook	22	18.8
	WhatsApp/WeChat	13	11.1
	Other platforms	7	6.0

All responders (n=117, 100%) claimed to have tried Finnish food during their most recent visit. The relevance of food in destination selection indicated a significant range. A total of 30 individuals (25.6%) ranked it as “important”, 24 (20.5%) as “very important”, 22 (18.8%) as “somewhat important”, and 41 (35.0%) as “not or slightly important”. Social media involvement for food-related information was prevalent, with 99 respondents (84.6%) engaging digital channels at some point during their journey. Information-searching patterns adapted over time, with 50 respondents (42.7%) seeking information both before and during travel, 28 (23.9%) during travel only, 21 (17.9%) prior to travel only, and 18 (15.4%) reporting no social media use. Social media usage exhibited multi-channel behavior, with TripAdvisor and Google being the most popular (n=75, 64.1%), followed by Instagram (n=67, 57.3%), TikTok (n=66, 56.4%), YouTube (n=43, 36.8%), Facebook (n=22, 18.8%), WhatsApp/WeChat (n=13, 11.1%), and other platforms (n=7, 6.0%). The above findings suggest a sample with prevalent culinary experience, diverse perceptions of food's impact on selecting a location, and significant social

media involvement, making them a suitable empirical base for investigating relationships between authenticity perceptions, satisfaction, sharing behaviors, and revisit intentions.

5.2 Descriptive Profile of Food Experience Constructs

The questionnaire incorporated four constructs that reflect the research's proposed framework, including perceived authenticity (5 items), satisfaction (4 items), social media sharing (5 items), and revisit intention (4 items). Every item were assessed using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree); one reverse-worded authenticity item was recoded prior to analysis. In accordance with the research questions (RQ1-RQ3), the results are provided by first validating that the items constitute the planned constructs, followed by explaining the overall tendency and dispersion of each construct to provide empirical context for the forthcoming correlation tests.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the four constructs (N = 117)

Construct	N	Min.	Max.	Mean (M)	SD
Authenticity	117	1.60	5.00	3.752	0.672
Satisfaction	117	1.00	5.00	3.603	0.863
Social-media sharing	117	1.00	5.00	2.602	1.150
Revisit intention	117	1.00	5.00	3.105	1.008

The constructs followed diverse patterns within the data set. Perceived authenticity was among the most strongly supported element with $M = 3.75$ and $SD = 0.67$), indicating broad agreement that participants' dining experiences represented local products, culinary values, along with authentic Finnish foods. Satisfaction levels also proved high ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 0.86$), showing that people were pleased with the cuisine and its contribution to their overall vacation experience. In contrast, social media sharing had the lowest mean and highest range ($M = 2.60$, $SD = 1.15$), indicating that participants' posting patterns fluctuated. Revisit intention was moderate ($M = 3.10$, $SD = 1.01$), showing a broad readiness to return that differed greatly across the group. The standard deviations obtained with all constructs (range from 0.67 to 1.15), confirm enough variability to investigate the hypothesized links in following studies.

Table 4. KMO and Bartlett's test (N = 117)

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.862
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1717.899
	df	153
	Sig.	<.001

The items collected is ideally suited to the exploratory factor analysis; the KMO = .862 suggests the item connections contain significant similar variation, i.e., the correlation matrix is sufficient in size to yield reliable factors; Bartlett's $\chi^2(153) = 1,717.90$, $p < .001$ rejects the null assumption that the matrix is an identical set, demonstrating that factor analysis is suitable. The underpinning construct-level correlation matrix for these evaluations is shown in Appendix A, Table A2. In the data extraction process (principal axis factoring), the proportion of every item's variation explained by the retained factors ranged from sufficient to high across the scale. Furthermore, both of the authenticity indicators anchoring "actual and locally rooted" food had high extracted communalities (.817 and .872), and the reverse-worded authenticity item behaved as planned after recoding (high extraction), strengthening the authenticity concept. Sharing items also performed well (extractions ranging from .717 to .845), and satisfaction and revisit items were consistently represented. The above analyses demonstrate that the items fit into the four planned constructs: authenticity, satisfaction, sharing, and revisit intention, thereby the composite scores provided in Table 3 are valid descriptions for the relationship analyses that follow (see Table 4 and Appendix A - Table 1).

Following the establishment of consistent constructs and a clear descriptive profile, the following section investigates whether authenticity predicts satisfaction and sharing, as well as if satisfaction and sharing predict revisit intention, followed by mediation tests.

5.3 Relationships Between Authenticity, Satisfaction, Sharing, and Revisit Intention

The direct relationships proposed in H1, H2, and H3 were tested using a simple linear regression analysis in accordance with the conceptual framework. In advance of the regression process, bivariate correlations between the four constructs were investigated (see Appendix B - Table

2). Perceived authenticity had a moderate correlation with satisfaction ($r = .547$) and an increasingly modest correlation with sharing ($r = .320$), while both sharing ($r = .552$) and satisfaction ($r = .656$) had a relationship with revisit intention. All of these connections were positive and statistically significant ($ps < .01$). The slight correlation ($r = .274$) between sharing and satisfaction suggests that the H3 predictors are related but not redundant when entered together. Therefore, confirming the hypothesized directional relationships and indicating no bivariate redundancy concerns among factors that predicted.

5.3.1 Authenticity's Impact on Satisfaction

According to H1, visitors are more likely to be satisfied when they perceive Finnish cuisine to be more authentic. According to Li et al., 2022, authenticity is conceptually defined as capturing clues that give eating cultural significance, such as locale, seasonality, and traditional preparation. These indicators should improve affective and critical reactions to the food and the entire experience. Thus, satisfaction was the dependent variable and perceived authenticity was a contributor in the simple linear regression.

The regression analysis of the link between perceived authenticity and satisfaction produced statistically significant results ($F(1,115) = 49.025$, $p < .001$), and the R^2 value measured .299, signifying that perceived authenticity accounts for about 29.9% of the overall variation in satisfaction. The standardized regression coefficient showed a significant and positive influence ($B = 0.702$; $\beta = .547$; $t = 7.002$; $p < .001$), showing that greater levels of pleasure are linked to higher judgments of authenticity. These results are consistent with the body of research on food tourism, which holds strong authentic culinary qualities raise the significance of the experience and, in turn, tourism assessments. In particular, in accordance with the already mentioned theoretical framework, participants who thought Finnish food was more authentic also expressed greater happiness with their culinary experience. As a result, H1 is supported.

Table 5. H1- Regression of Satisfaction on Perceived Authenticity (N = 117)

Model fit	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	SE	F(df)	p
Overall model	.547	.299	.293	.726	49.025 (1,115)	< .001
Coefficients (DV = Satisfaction)	B	SE(B)	Std. β	t	p	95% CI (B)
Constant	0.968	0.382	-	2.532	.013	[0.211, 1.725]
Authenticity	0.702	0.100	.547	7.002	< .001	[0.504, 0.901]

These results are consistent with previous studies on travel-associated experience consumption. Food that is authentically expressive of Finnish culinary identity through regional ingredients, customary cooking techniques, and cultural customs fosters a deep connection with the destination that goes beyond taste, which increases visitor happiness. This process is in line with studies in the tourism sector showing the fact authentic culinary experiences meet requirements for identity, cultural connection, and symbolic meaning that go beyond simple consumption (Andersson & Mossberg, 2004). Interestingly, authenticity has a much stronger effect on satisfaction ($\beta = .547$) than it does on sharing behavior (analyzed in H2). This makes theoretical sense because authenticity affects tourists' evaluations of the experience before influencing their social media involvement behaviors.

5.3.2 Authenticity's Impact on Social Media Sharing

According to H2, social media sharing behavior is positively influenced by perceived authenticity. Based on theoretical frameworks, travelers are motivated to record and share these memories on social media because authentic food experiences have storytelling and identification significance (Wong et al; 2019; Zhu et al., 2019).

Table 6. H2 - Regression of Sharing on Perceived Authenticity (N = 117)

Model fit	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	SE	F(df)	p
Overall model	.320	.102	.094	1.094	13.094 (1,115)	< .001
Coefficients (DV = Sharing)						
	B	SE(B)	Std. β	t	p	95% CI (B)
Constant	0.549	0.576	-	0.953	.343	[-0.592, 1.690]
Authenticity	0.547	0.151	.320	3.619	< .001	[0.248, 0.846]

Considering an R² value of .102 and significant findings ($F(1,115) = 13.094$, $p < .001$), the regression analysis that looked at this connection showed that perceived authenticity accounts for about 10.2% of the variation in social media sharing behavior. The impact size is significantly smaller than that found in H1 ($R^2 = .299$), indicating that although sharing behavior is influenced by authenticity, a significant amount of the variance can be attributed to other factors like audience characteristics, personal social media practices, and the perceived advantages of sharing on social media. The connection between increased sharing activity and better judgments of authenticity was confirmed by the regression coefficient, which showed a significant positive link ($B = 0.547$, $\beta = .320$, $t = 3.619$, $p < .001$). However, compared to H1 ($\beta = .547$), the standardized coefficient ($\beta = .320$) is significantly lower, indicating that sharing behavior is optional in comparison to the more basic evaluative reaction of enjoyment. That means H2 is supported.

The idea that social media sharing is a cognitive consequence that goes beyond simple experiential assessment is conceptually supported by these data. Sharing behavior is still optional and influenced by platform-specific standards, perception management issues, and individual variations in social media engagement patterns, even while authenticity produces valuable content that is worthy of being documented. This view acknowledges that platform-related elements add extra variance besides the tangible characteristics themselves, yet it is consistent with earlier research showing that pleasant and significant tourism experiences

impact mobile sharing behaviors and subsequent travel decisions. As a result, the study's moderate impact size aligns with the body of research on experience-sharing relationships in travel scenarios (Wong et al., 2019).

5.3.3 Social Media Sharing and its Impact on Intention to Revisit

According to H3, sharing about Finnish cuisine experiences on social media has a positive effect on the intention to return. In tourist industry and immersive marketing study, information sharing has been shown to improve assessments and boost behavioral intentions by enhancing memorable experiences, triggering social validation, and sustaining destination relevance procedures (Wong et al., 2019; Zhu et al., 2019; Seow et al., 2024).

This link was studied using a regression model that showed high statistical significance ($F(1,115) = 50.302$, $p < .001$) and an R^2 value of .304, showing overall social media sharing explains around 30.4% of the variance in revisit intention. This impact size indicates that sharing behavior acts as a strong proximal predictor of destination loyalty intentions in this scenario, since it is similar to H1 ($R^2 = .299$) and significantly greater than H2 ($R^2 = .102$). A significant and positive effect was shown by the regression coefficient ($B = 0.483$, $\beta = .552$, $t = 7.092$, $p < .001$), showing that higher revisit intentions are linked to more sharing activity. Furthermore, the strongest influence throughout H1–H3 is represented by the standardized coefficient ($\beta = .552$), suggesting that turning experiences into tales that can be shared has both emotionally and morally significant effects. Thus, H3 is supported.

Table 7. H3 - Regression of Revisit Intention on Sharing (N = 117)

Model fit	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	SE	F(df)	p
Overall model	.552	.304	.298	.844	50.302 (1,115)	< .001
Coefficients (DV = Revisit Intention)	B	SE(B)	Std. β	t	p	95% CI (B)
Constant	1.847	0.194	-	9.531	< .001	[1.463, 2.231]
Sharing	0.483	0.068	.552	7.092	< .001	[0.348, 0.619]

These results provide credibility to theoretical viewpoints that suggest sharing behavior strengthens return intentions by broadcasting experiences to social networks and reinforcing personal significance. The significant effect size is consistent with research showing that social validation from likes and comments strengthens assessments and behavioral intentions by allowing memory traces to be consolidated. This emphasizes sharing's dual function as a catalyst for destination involvement and as a byproduct of meaningful encounters (Wong et al., 2019; Zhu et al., 2019; Seow et al., 2024).

5.4 Indirect Pathways from Authenticity to Revisit Intention

Simple mediation models (PROCESS v4.2, Model 4; 5,000 bootstrap samples; N=117) were used in order to test H4 & H5. The hypotheses used perceived authenticity which is (X = authmean) as the predictor, revisit intention (Y = revimean) as the outcome, and social media sharing (sharmean) and tourist satisfaction (satimean) as two simple mediation models. The reader may easily compare direct and indirect paths because the PROCESS output is presented in the same format as the theory part, which makes it evident how the data was created and examined (using Hayes' bootstrapped CIs). All findings include 95% bootstrap confidence intervals (CIs) for the unstandardized regression coefficients (b). If the confidence interval for

an indirect effect does not include zero, it is considered significant. The results are displayed in (Table 8). The sharing model is the MATRIX printout below, and the satisfaction model findings are extracted from the SPSS output file. Appendix C = H4, Appendix D = H5 contains the full PROCESS printouts for both mediation models (Model 4; 5,000 bootstrap resamples).

Table 8. Perceived authenticity's impact on revisit intention is mediated through social media sharing and satisfaction (PROCESS v4.2, Model 4; N = 117; 5,000 percentile bootstrap resamples)

Mediator Variable	Total Effect	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Bootstrapping Lower CI	Bootstrapping Upper CI
Satisfaction	.734	.280	.454	.262	.676
Sharing	.734	.523	.211	.084	.362

Note: Coefficients without standardization (b). Significant indirect effects are indicated by CIs that do not include zero.

Perceived authenticity had a significant overall impact on revisit intention and continued to be so even after controlling for each mediator. This suggests that indirect pathways function alongside a direct path from authenticity to revisit. Authenticity predicted satisfaction ($a = 0.702$, $p < .001$) and satisfaction predicted revisit ($b = 0.647$, $p < .001$) in the satisfaction model (H4) can be seen in (Appendix C). The indirect effect was substantial ($ab = 0.454$, 95% CI [0.262, 0.676]); the direct effect declined but remained significant ($c' = 0.280$, $p = .026$). A portion of mediation is involved here. Essentially, tasting real Finnish food increases visitors' pleasure with their trip, which in turn increases their desire to go again. The similar approach has been reported in previous gastronomy tourism studies are authentic local food increases satisfaction, which in turn promotes loyalty outcomes like revisit (Doğan, 2025; Li, Su, & Ma, 2023).

Authenticity influenced social media sharing ($a = 0.547$, $p = .0004$) and sharing predicted revisit ($b = 0.386$, $p < .001$) in the sharing model (H5). Since the direct impact continued to be positive and significant ($c' = 0.523$, $p < .001$), suggesting partial mediation, the indirect effect was significant yet again ($ab = 0.211$, 95% CI [0.084, 0.362]). According to this tendency, authentic experiences also lead to "shareable" moments that maintain Finland's social and cognitive relevance and support in transforming pleasant emotions into intentions to return. Sharing unforgettable vacation memories on mobile social media influences future travel

choices, and uploading images of food can enhance the dining experience and following feedback, according to evidence from market research and tourism (Wong, Lai, & Tao, 2020; Zhu, Jiang, Dou, & Liang, 2019).

There is a statistical difference between the two paths, but the satisfaction route is the larger of the two ($ab = 0.454$ vs. 0.211 ; completely standardized $ab = .303$ vs. $.141$). Authenticity, thus, operates through two supporting ways: an interpersonal one (eWOM/sharing) which provides additional impact, and an intrapersonal one (pleasure) that accounts for a significant amount of the effect. Seow et al., 2024 and Wong et al., 2020 found that eWOM/sharing serves as a behavior bridge from pleasant experiences to intents, whereas satisfaction mediates links from culinary experiences to loyalty. This empirical style, which uses PROCESS Model 4 with bootstrap confidence intervals to evaluate mediation impacts, is in line with commonly used methods in tourism and hospitality research. Recent tourist studies have widely embraced the criteria that significant indirect impacts are shown by confidence intervals excluding zero (Moreno-Lobato et al., 2025; Doğan, 2025).

Therefore, The combined results support H4 (authenticity-satisfaction-revisit) and H5 (authenticity-sharing-revisit). Authenticity raises the intention to return both directly and indirectly through sharing and satisfaction, with the other one having a greater impact. These results also addresses RQ3 and are consistent with an increasing amount of research that links engagement intentions, social sharing, subjective assessments, and authentic culinary experiences.

5.5 Trends in Subgroups and Thematic Elements

(i) Descriptive differences between constructs

Table 9. Construct means and variation across segments (by age, region, and frequency of travel) for Sharing, Authenticity, and Revisit

Variable	Subgroup	N	Mean	SD
Sharing (H2–H3)	18–25	46	2.85	1.03
	26–35	50	2.37	1.10
	36–45	18	2.62	1.34
	46–60	2	3.30	2.40
	61+	1	1.00	–

Authenticity (H1-H4)	Africa	3	4.53	0.42
	Asia	49	3.75	0.60
	Europe	39	3.63	0.67
	North America	18	4.11	0.57
	South America	5	3.16	1.10
	Oceania	3	3.47	0.42
Revisit (H3-H5)	Once a year	22	3.09	0.84
	2–3 times a year	54	3.12	1.05
	More than 3 times a year	20	2.94	1.00
	Rarely	21	3.24	1.11

The descriptive evaluation produced two more conclusions. First, with mean scores of 2.85 and 2.37, therefore, younger travelers (ages 18–25) published greater information on Finnish cuisine through social media than a little older travelers (ages 26–35). This trend illustrates how different generations interact with food-related material on social media, with younger users showing greater visual attention and participation, which results in more online sharing that affects travel choices (García-Carrion et al., 2022). Research on sharing food photos (also known as "foodstagramming") supports the link among sharing and choice-making examined in H3 by confirming that sharing food photos improves dining experiences and promotes ongoing sharing activity (Magdy & Hassan, 2025; Zhu et al., 2019). Secondly, individuals who travel more than three times a year ($M = 2.94$) indicated slightly lower plans to return than those who go abroad infrequently ($M = 3.24$). While it provides a descriptive observation, it aligns with studies that demonstrate how online word-of-mouth and fulfillment impact the desire to return across various traveler demographics (Seow et al., 2024; Sutiadiningsih et al., 2024).

Lastly, respondents from North America and Africa reported greater authenticity scores compared to those from South America and Europe, indicating that perceived authenticity differed by the cultural backgrounds of the tourists. This variety implies that personal dietary habits and cultural interpretations influence how authenticity is perceived. These differences may be explained by the diverse attitudes that experiencers, enjoyers, and survivors have toward

local cuisine, as identified by previous culinary tourism study (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016). Furthermore, in culinary tourism contexts, authenticity has been found to be a significant determinant of consumer intention and psychological responses (Li et al., 2022).

(ii) Qualitative insights

For the purpose of thematic analysis, 111 open-ended answers from the 117 answered questions were kept. To cut out repetition and keep only the most informative statements (e.g., repetitive dish listings or generic cost-related comments like "good but pricey"), nearly identical and practically equivalent responses were eliminated (see Appendix E) for the qualitative insights with thematic codings. Combining this qualitative element with the quantitative results adds richness to the interpretation by expressing visitors' subjective perceptions and lived experiences of Finnish cuisine and social media in their own words (Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2013; Veal, 2017). A focused thematic reading was carried out to supplement the quantitative path models with participant narratives, which is a well-known methodological technique for adding symbolic meaning to questionnaire results and showing how statistical connections appear in real-world situations. According to research, social media development and usage can amplify experiences and spread eWOM that connects experiences to decisions (Zhu et al., 2019; Magdy & Hassan, 2025; Seow et al., 2024). Authenticity and perceived significance further impacts and downstream intentions (Li et al., 2022).

The findings broadly support the tested hypothesis approach such as Authenticity- (Satisfaction, Sharing) - Revisit (RQ1–RQ3; H1–H5) wherein authenticity indicators included in regional cuisine and components match satisfaction outcomes; social media serves both the roles of authentic exploration and specific sharing of highlights; and revisit intentions arise when online word-of-mouth and satisfaction coincide, yet with the influence on pricing perceptions and destination advertising. The existing literature, which links social media involvement to intention creation, authenticity to satisfaction, and online word-of-mouth as a mediation factor promoting revisit behavior, is in line with this approach.

The sentences collected in Appendix Table A4 form a coherent narrative that substantiates the proposed pathway. Authenticity - (satisfaction, sharing) - revisit and answers to RQs 1–3. First, many statements use place-coded signs like (local fish, berries, rye bread, traditional dishes, and transparency about allergens) to describe Finnish food. This suggests that tourists read authenticity in the food and presentation, which supports H1/H4 and RQ1 because authenticity consistently generates positive evaluations and impacts. Second, comments about using

Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube to find restaurants and share highlights selectively demonstrate that authenticity cues extend beyond rating and influence behavior, supporting H2 and RQ2 because sharing serves as a bridge between experience and choice.

Third, statements about wanting to return for particular foods, moderated by comments about cost, availability, and low online visibility, fit into a partially mediated loyalty pattern (H3–H5; RQ3), such as sharing and satisfaction, which communicate a large portion of the impact of authenticity on revisit, while practical challenges reduce its size. These points of view collectively form an interconnected meaning framework, such as the following: social media enhances exploration and expression; Finnish cuisine is perceived as straightforward, seasonal, and authentic; and intentions to return emerge when perceived authenticity and lasting satisfaction are sufficiently valued and visible (The complete supporting material is in Appendix E).

5.6 Synthesis of Empirical Results

The results of the analyses directly address the research questions when combined. According to RQ1, the perceived authenticity of Finnish cuisine considerably raised social media sharing and visitor happiness, supporting the trends identified in H1 and H2. As anticipated, both sharing and satisfaction for RQ2 positively predicted the intention to return, hence confirming H3. Lastly, in response to RQ3, the PROCESS mediation analysis demonstrated that the impact of authenticity to revisit intention was partially expressed by both sharing and satisfaction, supporting H4 and H5.

The participant testimonials in Appendix E support these quantitative findings. In addition to describing memorable but cost-conscious encounters, respondents frequently defined authenticity through place-specific foods and products and characterized social media as having both broadcasting and discovery purposes. These components work together to create a logical interpretative framework wherein genuine indicators improve contentment and selective sharing, which in turn affect inclinations to return. These relationships are influenced by variables including cost, accessibility, and online visibility. This serves as a basis for the Discussion section, which examines the implications for destination marketing techniques, such as platform visibility and authentic content, as well as service design factors like diversity, value, and inclusivity.

6. DISCUSSION

In light of the theoretical framework introduced in Chapter 2, this chapter examines the empirical results from Chapters 3–5, progressing from the study's particular findings to more general theoretical and practical impacts. Three major steps make up the hourglass-shaped structure of the discussion. Firstly, the results are placed in perspective within the existing research on relevant culinary experiences, demonstrating how numerous food-related indicators are integrated into perceived authenticity to impact customer satisfaction and expressing sharing behavior, both of which in turn impact the intention to return. In order further clarify why this "authenticity-to-satisfaction-and-sharing" pathway can be considered theoretically solid and practically relevant, the twofold function of authenticity in terms of experiential characteristic and as a sharing source is examined by relying on studies of Nordic and Finnish culinary traditions as well as current social media studies. Thirdly, the portability of the results is examined by outlining the circumstances under which these approaches are probably relevant in different settings, connecting this thesis to more general debates in destination development and marketing strategies.

The key result that perceived authenticity increases social media sharing and satisfaction and that both have a positive relationship with intention to revisit supports the experiential viewpoint that food involve multiple experiences in which an overall evaluation converts scattered indicators into wider perceptions of value and future behavioral patterns. The culinary creation is viewed as a central component (food) in traditional dining-experience research, with added elements (ambiance, interior atmosphere, and other consumers) that work together to influence the overall rating. The current findings support this theoretical viewpoint and highlights authenticity as the higher-order judgment that connects these components and ultimately increases satisfaction (Andersson & Mossberg, 2004). Comparing to this, recent research on tourism shows that memorable dining experiences rely on the coordination of food, service, ambiance, and perceived value, and that these coordinations produce enduring affect and loyalty. The model described here makes it clear that authenticity is the unifying perception that connects these elements and promotes satisfaction (Tsaur & Lo, 2020).

The thesis goes on to show that authenticity inspires expressive conduct rather than being limited to personal judgment. Regional flavor, changing seasons, producer tales, geographically specific techniques, and the interaction of material characteristics and sociocultural storytelling are often the sources of authenticity in cuisine. According to Li et al., (2022), these components

are especially noticeable and readable in Nordic contexts, making "this is real and of this place" a valid assessment that has identity worth for tourists. Once this assessment is established, visitors are more satisfied and the experience becomes narratable. Perceived authenticity seems to supply the narrative framework that makes the meal "worth showing," connecting symbolic making to meaning-broadcasting during the same experiential interaction. This tangible pattern of authenticity forecasting both sharing and satisfaction lends specificity to this hypothesis.

This creative aspect is consistent with studies showing that food posting can be an integral part of the experience rather than just an afterthought. As a result, expression and assessment can support each other (Zhu et al., 2019). Sharing food images can improve attention, deepen enjoyment, and consequently raise feedback. In the current framework, this reinforcement results in behavioral consequences; for instance, sharing serves as a public affirmation that helps turn a "good food" into a "returnable" experience by embedding the dining experience in social memory and identity work. This approach is consistent with research that demonstrates how sharing memorable moments on a mobile device shapes future travel decisions by combining memories and creating feedback from others (Wong et al., 2019). In addition to a broader body of research on food-tourism social media marketing, the visibility and narrative of foods and environments increase the scope of these testimonials beyond their current culinary context, linking personal expression to the creation of destination images (Liang et al., 2023).

According to the Finnish setting, the results support the well-known findings that tourists appreciate the seasons, authenticity, and cleanliness and that these signals increase symbolic value when they are presented in a trustworthy way. In Finland, food experiences often focus on local products, environmental care, and producer stories; once tourists understand these qualities, authenticity is easier to assign and protect (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016). This is consistent with data showing that tourists actively seek out "authentic" local cuisine in Finland and frequently choose marketplaces or casual dining establishments where place-based indicators are easily observed (Sthapit, 2017). Since authenticity combines flavor, atmosphere, and social interaction into a cohesive, meaningful whole, its role as a "organizing perception" in such contexts is reasonable and explains the data's substantial correlation with satisfaction (Andersson & Mossberg, 2004).

Conflicting destination-specific data on revisit intention in Lapland are also explained by the hypothesis's twofold pathway, which operates through sharing and satisfaction. According to earlier studies conducted in the area, even in situations where satisfaction is high, "once-in-a-

lifetime" dynamics limit the likelihood of repeat visits. Food experiences are unique because they can be easily incorporated into shifting itineraries, are naturally recurring, and are impacted by seasons, availability and changing cuisines. Social media sharing as well as authenticity-driven fulfillment within these micro-experiences can create social engagement that is not possible with private fulfillment alone (Sthapit, 2017). Therefore, the current findings make clear why culinary components within a destination may have greater loyalty effects than renowned, standalone attractions.

The idea of memorable dining as a means of connecting brief pleasure to long-term purpose is also covered. The combined impacts of outstanding food, service, ambience, and perceived value have been repeatedly linked to memorable dining experiences. These factors all trigger distinct positive feelings like relaxation, excitement, and being valuable, all of which are predictor of customer loyalty. The thesis blends two research areas that are frequently treated separately, such as the experience of brand loyalty field and the social social media and user-generated information literature, by defining authenticity as a view which combines all of these factors and by proving that authenticity additionally promotes social engagement (Tsaur & Lo, 2020; Zhu et al., 2019). In daily life, the most impactful experiences are those that are both satisfying and "shareable." This synthesis is important since expressiveness has become a necessary component of consumerism.

The theoretical framework of the study is also consistent with studies on eWOM, or digital word-of-mouth, as a connection between loyalty outcomes and pleasure in the wider tourism industry. According to Seow et al. (2024), visitors who are satisfied are more likely to participate in electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), which in turn strengthens loyalty and future intention. This relationship is made specialized by focusing on culinary experiences as well as proving that authenticity increases both sharing and satisfaction. The research on destination marketing also shows that carefully planned, narrative-heavy culinary scenes are easy to read on social media, making them effective tools for promoting authentic tourist stories (Liang et al., 2023).

These components, taken together, provide credibility to three theoretical claims. According to Andersson and Mossberg (2004), authenticity in food tourism serves as a direct driver of satisfaction by acting as an overall higher-order judgment that encompasses product, service environment, and social interaction. According to Zhu et al. (2019), authenticity encourages expressive consumption. Guests share authentic food because they hold identity-relevant

narratives that are capable of being expressed without fear of inauthenticity consequences. According to Wong et al. (2019), satisfaction and sharing serve as complementary means of revisiting intention. The first supports its practical significance, while the second embeds the experience within a social economy wherein repetition becomes both acceptable and essential for a person's image. A coherent model of gastronomic loyalty is provided by this thesis that integrates these claims into a single theoretical model.

Beyond Finland, the wider impacts are evident. Where three criteria are satisfied, the techniques described below tend to be relevant. According to Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen 2014, there has to be a trustworthy source of identifiable authentic indicators, such as regional products, seasonality cycles, and evident producer storytelling that guests can recognize and express. In these circumstances, judgments of authenticity are easier to form and uphold, which increases visitor satisfaction and encourages sharing. To ensure that experiences are effectively translated into images and compact narratives that maintain engagement, environmental factors should also be socially and visually accessible. Research on food tourism on social media platforms shows that this increases reach and influential impact (Liang et al., 2023). Further, in order for social support to logically develop into return profits, the experience needs to be repeatable in concept through seasonal food items, shifting marketplaces, and geographical networks. In the absence of non-repeatable unique attractions, rigid menus, or poor local storytelling, the sharing pathway may still create an impression but will be less likely to result in a desire to return (Sthapit, 2017).

The thesis concludes by analyzing the chronological structure of culinary experiences as processes that occur before, during, and after consumption. These processes are arranged according to authenticity and interrupted by representation. Authenticity gives research techniques and sets expectations prior to the food, enhances enjoying and focuses attention on location during the culinary experience, and provides memory indicators and stories that may be shared after the meal has finished. Every step is impacted by social media such as; it helps set expectations, promotes documenting, and turns recollection into a public story. The theoretical framework shows that revisit intention rises when this arc is aligned and sharing, authenticity, and satisfaction work together. In this way, the study moves the field away from subjective claims about "local and pure" and toward a mechanical appreciation of how storytelling shapes authenticity, how authenticity shapes satisfaction, and how narrative shapes the desire to return (Tsaur & Lo, 2020).

From a conceptual standpoint , this chapter concludes the hourglass structure by strengthening a connection to the wider field of literature and practice with a particular contribution that is in culinary tourism, authenticity serves as an organizing perception that both promotes social actions and raises favorable opinions; if both mechanisms are involved, loyalty intentions are more likely to come to light. This dual-pathway approach provides a flexible framework for destinations that can effectively stage and convey their culinary narratives, incorporates social media and experience views, and takes domain-specific differences in revisit patterns inside the same destination into account.

7. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study shows that in Finnish culinary tourism, perceived authenticity serves as an overall judgment that brings together social engagement, service environment, and culinary indicators into a unified "of this place" experience; this evaluation increases satisfaction and simultaneously encourages social media sharing, and both reactions lead to the intention to return. The results, when compared to multifaceted perspectives on dining, shed light on how scattered cues are combined to create value-in-use (satisfaction) and value-on-display (sharing) in a single interaction, promoting experience-quality theory and including the expressive layer of consumerism in the model (Andersson & Mossberg, 2004). The research, which is framed within the logic of stimuli, organisms, and responses, also supports studies that demonstrate that sensory attraction and authenticity trigger affective reactions that influence downstream behavior, while posting enhances savoring and fortifies current assessments; thus, sharing is not just a side effect but rather a component of the experience process itself (Li et al., 2022; Zhu et al., 2019).

The findings, which are based in Finland, explain why gastronomic components might encourage recurring business even in cases when some destination-level attractions are considered unique. Geographic proximity, changing seasons, and producer narratives are indicators of authenticity in Nordic cuisines; when these elements are consistent, tourists assign symbolic value above and beyond practicality and perpetuate that value in memory and storytelling. The current model explains that authenticity is the evaluation that ties those inputs together, and that its communicability via social media enhances their behavioral impact (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016; Tsaur & Lo, 2020). Previous research has demonstrated that local cuisine can function as an attraction magnet and influence tourists by participation, while memorable dining experiences leave cognitive traces that influence future decisions.

The more comprehensive contribution is an overall description of culinary loyalty that connects generating meaning and broadcasting it with authenticity causes contentment and encourages sharing, which in turn convert experience into the desire to return. Theoretically, this means treating communicative acts as essential to the culinary experience rather than exogenous results; practically, it means staging source and production so they are visible and relatable and evaluating performance using indicators which combine satisfaction with dignified shareability. Since eWOM frequently translates satisfaction into loyalty and sharing memorable experiences

predicts future travel decisions, our dual-pathway model provides a portable blueprint for locations where authenticity cues are both publicly accessible and believable (Wong et al., 2020; Seow et al., 2024).

According to the findings these implication ideas can be followed by professionals and can design spaces that are visually accessible for respectful sharing without devolving into simulations, and they can also narrate authenticity and artistry through supplier introductions, open kitchens, and seasonal cuisines. The social component of the dining experience, such as the quality of interactions between guests and hosts, should be prioritized in service design as an instrument that enhances both evaluation and expression. Satisfaction and sharing metrics can be monitored in parallel. To put it briefly, the experience to loyalty pathway highlighted above is more likely to occur when authenticity is tangible, visible, and acceptable through seasonal and geographical variation.

8. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study utilized a non-probability convenience group of foreign tourists and a voluntary online questionnaire in English. Therefore, it's possible that the obtained sample may not accurately reflect the population of tourists visiting Finland across important attributes like nation and age. The language requirement and criteria mentioned probably generated biases in inclusion and selection, overrepresenting respondents who are engaged online and speak English well while underrepresenting those who do not. Since "authenticity" is a culturally and linguistically formed concept in the culinary context, this undercoverage may limit the range of assessments that are recorded. Furthermore, the overall sample size was low; with a bigger and more varied sample improved subgroup representation and better sampling variance can be noticed.

Future studies should use a multilingual, mixed-mode design that combines internet outreach with on-site interviews at market halls, food festivals, restaurants, and seasonal events in place of convenient, single-language recruitment. The authenticity to satisfaction to sharing to revisit pathway is strongest in multi-context comparisons (street food, market halls, fine dining, rural homesteads), and simple field experiments can manipulate source visibility and social sharing affordances to isolate causal effects. By addressing these limitations, a different type of study one that is larger, longitudinal, experimental, and probability-informed would be able to more confidently identify contributing pathways and estimate population-level impacts.

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Appendix A - Table 1 - Communalities (Principal Axis Factoring)

Communalities

Items	Initial	Extraction
My dining experiences felt deeply connected to Finnish culture.	.509	.454
The Finnish food I tasted represented the local ingredients and traditional methods.	.562	.481
Eating Finnish food made me feel connected to Finnish nature and the seasons.	.453	.405
The Finnish food felt more authentic, rather than just made for the tourists.	.912	.817
Certain food items were common and not particularly Finnish (reversed)	.916	.872
I was satisfied with the Finnish food I tasted during my travel.	.684	.601
I was impressed by the quality and taste of the food I ate in Finland.	.688	.627

Finnish food contributed positively to my overall travel experience.	.775	.737
I had a memorable experience with Finnish food.	.734	.680
I shared my Finnish food experience on social media during and after my travel.	.854	.794
I shared photos, videos, reviews of Finnish food on social media.	.868	.845
When I posted, I tagged locations and hashtags connected to Finnish food.	.725	.717
Sharing my Finnish food experience on social media made my travel more meaningful.	.717	.726
I wanted to share photos and videos of food that looked more authentic to me.	.574	.510
I plan to re-visit Finland because of my enjoyable experiences with Finnish foods.	.715	.633
I would suggest Finland to others mainly for its authentic cuisine.	.735	.626

If I re-visit Finland, I will specially look for more Finnish food experiences.	.585	.441
My positive Finnish food experiences increase my chances of re-visiting Finland.	.715	.653

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

Source: SPSS Output.

Appendix B - Table 2 - Construct-level correlation matrix

		Auth_mean	Sat_mean	share_mean	revisit_mean
authenticity_mean	Pearson Correlation	1	.547	.320	.489
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	117	117	117	117
satisfaction_mean	Pearson Correlation	.547	1	.274	.656
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001		.003	<.001
	N	117	117	117	117
sharing_mean	Pearson Correlation	.320	.274	1	.552
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.003		<.001
	N	117	117	117	117
revisit_mean	Pearson Correlation	.489	.656	.552	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	
	N	117	117	117	117

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output.

Appendix C - PROCESS output (Model 4; 5,000 bootstrap resamples): Satisfaction as mediator (H4)

Run MATRIX procedure:

***** PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 4.2 *****

Written by Andrew F. Hayes, Ph.D. www.afhayes.com

Documentation available in Hayes (2022). www.guilford.com/p/hayes3

Model : 4, Y : revimean, X : authmean, M : satmean

Sample Size: 117

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

satmean

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.5467	.2989	.5267	49.0248	1.0000	115.0000	.0000

Model

coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
constant	.9679	.3822	2.5323	.0127	.2108	1.7250
authmean	.7022	.1003	7.0018	.0000	.5035	.9008

Standardized coefficients

coeff

authmean .5467

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

revimean

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.6744	.4548	.5633	47.5503	2.0000	114.0000	.0000

Model

coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
constant	-.2753	.4061	-.6778	.4992	-1.0798	.5293
authmean	.2796	.1239	2.2573	.0259	.0342	.5249
satmean	.6470	.0964	6.7097	.0000	.4560	.8381

Standardized coefficients

coeff

authmean .1864

satmean .5542

***** TOTAL EFFECT MODEL *****

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

revimean

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.4894	.2395	.7789	36.2172	1.0000	115.0000	.0000

Model

coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
constant	.3510	.4648	.7551	.4517	-.5697	1.2716
authmean	.7339	.1220	6.0181	.0000	.4923	.9755

Standardized coefficients

coeff

authmean .4894

***** TOTAL, DIRECT, AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y *****

Total effect of X on Y

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c_cs
.7339	.1220	6.0181	.0000	.4923	.9755	.4894

Direct effect of X on Y

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c'_cs
.2796	.1239	2.2573	.0259	.0342	.5249	.1864

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
satmean	.4543	.1072	.2616 .6760

Completely standardized indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
satmean	.3030	.0715	.1731 .4484

***** ANALYSIS NOTES AND ERRORS *****

Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output:

95.0000

Number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals:

5000

----- END MATRIX -----

Appendix D - PROCESS output (Model 4; 5,000 bootstrap resamples): Sharing as mediator (H5)

Run MATRIX procedure:

***** PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 4.2 *****

Written by Andrew F. Hayes, Ph.D. www.afhayes.com

Documentation available in Hayes (2022). www.guilford.com/p/hayes3

Model : 4, Y : revimean, X : authmean, M : sharmean

Sample, Size: 117

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

sharmean

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.3197	.1022	1.1969	13.0939	1.0000	115.0000	.0004

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	.5491	.5762	.9531	.3426	-.5922	1.6904
authmean	.5470	.1512	3.6185	.0004	.2476	.8465

Standardized coefficients

	coeff
authmean	.3197

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

revimean

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
---	------	-----	---	-----	-----	---

.6430 .4134 .6060 40.1773 2.0000 114.0000 .0000

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	.1391	.4116	.3380	.7360	-.6763	.9545
authmean	.5229	.1135	4.6056	.0000	.2980	.7478
sharmean	.3858	.0664	5.8143	.0000	.2543	.5172

Standardized coefficients

	coeff
authmean	.3487
sharmean	.4402

***** TOTAL EFFECT MODEL *****

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

revimean

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.4894	.2395	.7789	36.2172	1.0000	115.0000	.0000

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	.3510	.4648	.7551	.4517	-.5697	1.2716
authmean	.7339	.1220	6.0181	.0000	.4923	.9755

Standardized coefficients

	coeff
authmean	.4894

***** TOTAL, DIRECT, AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y *****

Total effect of X on Y

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c_cs
.7339	.1220	6.0181	.0000	.4923	.9755	.4894

Direct effect of X on Y

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c'_cs	
	.5229	.1135	4.6056	.0000	.2980	.7478	.3487

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
sharmean	.2110	.0716	.3622

Completely standardized indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
sharmean	.1407	.0452	.2323

***** ANALYSIS NOTES AND ERRORS *****

Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output:

95.0000

Number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals:

5000

----- END MATRIX -----

Appendix E - Themes and illustrative quotes derived from the qualitative data

Authenticity & Cultural Connection	<i>“Food is more authentic than normal food from UK, Taste wise it can vary.” (R5)</i> <i>“Slow smoked Salmon is the best which I tried in Finland.” (R49)</i> <i>“Finland’s FOOD grounded me with its purity and simplicity: fresh fish, earthy rye bread, seasonal berries, and comforting flavors that carried a sense of calm and authenticity.” (R45)</i> <i>“Reindeer, interesting, different, traditional.” (R19)</i> <i>“I felt like a lot of the content was posted by foreigners, so I am not sure about the authenticity.” (R I4)</i> <i>“I have eaten mushroom soup in Rovaniemi. It was delicious.” (R67)</i> <i>“I only been to Lapland and the Finnish breakfast buffet is very authentic with different fish spreads, and they give preference to people with food allergy and always have a separate section for allergens.” (R107)</i>
	<i>“My journey through Finland was a flavorful adventure, a steaming bowl of creamy lohikeitto I guess (salmon soup) was the perfect remedy for chilly days in Turku these culinary moments became personal highlight memories.” (R6)</i> <i>“Something not mentioned is the Finnish custom of labeling allergens. Finnish menus and restaurants clearly label gluten and are knowledgeable about cross-contamination and celiac disease</i>

Satisfaction & Food Experiences	<i>that my daughter had and very different in other countries who do not give importance for it.” (R17)</i> <i>“Very excellent and it fulfilled my expectations.” (R42)</i> <i>“Food is fresh but way too expensive.” (R27)</i> <i>“I only post the things that I either liked the most or new unusual things that I've tried, I wish more Finnish food restaurants were opened.” (R73)</i> <i>“Travelling to Finland and being a food vlogger social media helped me discover hidden local gems. Finland’s cuisine fresh salmon, rye bread, and wild berries offered a simple yet deeply authentic taste of the country’s culture.” (R99)</i>
Social Media Influence	<i>“Always use TikTok to find all the cafes - restaurants during my travels.” (R11)</i> <i>“Social media was helpful for finding food before and during my trip.” (R16)</i> <i>“Finnish food should be advertised more I visited Karl Fazer Café and the desserts which I saw on TikTok and tried were the best.” (R22)</i> <i>“Foods I tried based on what I found online were more delicious than I expected I would like to try them again on another trip I was able to find some valuable information on the internet so I knew what to expect.” (R23)</i> <i>“I didn’t really share my experience on social media but did enjoy some reindeer meat and locally sourced trout.” (R34)</i>

	<i>“Did not use social media because there was not much content about Finland food; people should make more videos on it.” (R33)</i> <i>“I loved the food and a lot of TikTok influencers gave me ideas where and what to eat... I travelled 3 times to Lapland and want to travel to other places to try different Finnish food and Finnish-flavored alcohols.” (R106)</i>
Revisit Intention & Loyalty	<i>“The reindeer was my best during the travel, will visit again to Lapland.” (R14)</i> <i>“Rautu, reindeer (Poronkäristys) were my most favorite will explore more when I visit Lapland again.” (R28)</i> <i>“To find a good place I'll check Instagram or YouTube cost issues but among the ones I tried they are really worthy to visit that place again in Finland.” (R88)</i> <i>“The food is interesting and very different than I have had in America; I should try more next year I travel back to Finland.” (R58)</i> <i>“I would visit Finland again mainly for its nature because I did not know it had a specific cuisine.” (R85)</i>

SOURCE: Responses from the open-ended item from the questionnaire.

Appendix F - Questionnaire

Consent Form

Social media influence on tourist's authentic culinary experiences in Finland: Perceptions, satisfaction, and revisit intentions

B I U  

Dear Participants,

This questionnaire is part of a master's thesis project carried out by Joycline Theresa Nelliparamble Mathew at the University of Lapland, Finland, under the guidance of Professor Markku Vieru. The aim of this study is to better understand how tourists experience Finnish food, how social media influences their food-related decisions, and whether these experiences affect their intention to revisit Finland for its food experiences.

Through this questionnaire, you are contributing to research that supports the growth of culinary tourism in Finland. Your answers will be used solely for academic purposes and analysed in a statistical and anonymous manner.

Please keep in mind the following:

- Your participation is completely voluntary, and you are free to discontinue it at any time.
- The survey will take approximately 8 to 10 minutes of your time.
- No personally identifiable information will be collected.
- All answers will be kept completely private and handled in accordance with the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity's ethical guidelines (TENK, 2019).

Please feel free to contact me if you have any queries about this study via mail.

In the comments section at the end of the questionnaire, you can provide your email address if you would like to get a quick summary of the research findings, in the comment section in the end. Your responses privacy won't be affected by this, it is completely optional.

Thank you for your consideration of taking part in this study.

Joycline Nelliparamble

Email: jnellipa@ulapland.fi

Source: Google form

Demographic Information

1. What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Prefer not to say

2. What is your age group?

- ☐ 18–25
- ☐ 26–35
- ☐ 36–45
- ☐ 46–60
- ☐ 61 or older

3. What is your nationality?

- ☐ Africa (Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya, etc.)
- ☐ Asia (China, India, Japan, Southeast Asia, etc.)
- ☐ Europe (United Kingdom, Germany, France, etc.)
- ☐ North America (United States, Canada, Mexico, etc.)
- ☐ South America (Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, etc.)
- ☐ Oceania (Australia, New Zealand, Pacific Islands, etc.)

4. What is your occupation?

- ☐ Student
- ☐ Employed full-time
- ☐ Employed part-time
- ☐ Self-employed
- ☐ Unemployed
- ☐ Retired

☐ Other

5. In the past years how often have you travelled internationally?

☐ Once a year

☐ 2–3 times a year

☐ More than 3 times a year

☐ Rarely

☐ Never

6. When did you last visit Finland?

☐ 2025

☐ 2024

☐ 2023

☐ 2020-2022

☐ Before 2020

☐ Never

7. During your most recent travel to Finland, which regions did you visit? (Select all that apply)

☐ South (e.g., Helsinki)

☐ North (e.g., Lapland)

☐ East

☐ West

☐ Multiple regions

8. What was the main reason for your most recent visit to Finland?

☐ Leisure

☐ Business

☐ Study

☐ Visiting family/friends

☐ Other

9. Have you visited Finland more than once?

☐ Yes

☐ No

10. Did you try any kind of Finnish food during your recent visit to Finland?

☐ Yes

☐ No

11. What social media platforms do you use to find travel or food information? (Select all that apply)

☐ Facebook

☐ Instagram

☐ TikTok

☐ YouTube

☐ WhatsApp/ WeChat

☐ Travel review websites (TripAdvisor, Google Reviews, etc)

☐ Other

☐ I don't use social media for travel/food

12. When did you mostly use social media to look for information about Finnish food?

☐ Before your travel

☐ During your travel

☐ Both before and during your travel

☐ I didn't use social media at all

13. How important is food when you pick a place to travel? (choose only one)

- ☐ Not important at all
- ☐ Slightly important
- ☐ Moderately important
- ☐ Important
- ☐ Very important

14. I used social media to find Finnish food information, before or during my travel.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

Perceived Authenticity

Description for this section: This section focuses on how genuine and real the food felt to you in terms of Finnish culture during your more recent visit to Finland.

In this questionnaire, 'Finnish food' refers to local and traditional foods produced with Finnish ingredients (such as salmon soup, reindeer stew, Karelian pies, rye bread, and berries, etc). It avoids international fast foods and chains such as pizza and hamburgers.



Source: Emilia Hoisko

1. My dining experiences (like local markets, restaurants, tiny cafés) felt deeply connected to Finnish culture.

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly Agree

2. The Finnish food I tasted represented the local ingredients and traditional methods.

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly Agree

3. Eating Finnish food made me feel connected to Finnish nature and the seasons (like berries, fish, etc).

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neutral

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

4. The Finnish food felt more authentic, rather than just made for tourists.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

5. Certain food items were common and not particularly Finnish.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

Tourist Satisfaction

This section is about how much you enjoyed and was satisfied with the Finnish food in your travel.



Source: Stock photo-Getty Images

1. I was satisfied with the Finnish food I tasted during my travel.

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly Agree

2. I was impressed by the quality and taste of the food I ate in Finland.

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly Agree

3. Finnish food contributed positively to my overall travel experience.

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly Agree

4. I had memorable experiences with Finnish food.

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly Agree

Social Media Sharing

This section is regarding how you were using social media (like Instagram, Facebook, YouTube and TikTok) to discover, share, or review Finnish food in your travel.



Source: Om Prakash Jakhar

1. I shared my Finnish food experiences on social media during and after my travel.

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly Agree

2. I shared photos, videos, reviews of Finnish food on social media.

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly Agree

3. When I posted, I tagged locations and hashtags connected to Finnish food.

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree

- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

4. Sharing my Finnish food experiences on social media made my travel more meaningful.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

5. I wanted to share photos and videos of food that looked more authentic to me.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

Revisit Intention

This section is about how much your Finnish food experiences have inspired you to re-visit Finland or recommend it to others.



Source: Getty Images

1. I plan to re-visit Finland because of my enjoyable experiences with Finnish foods.

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly Agree

2. I would suggest Finland to others mainly for its authentic cuisine.

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly Agree

3. If I re-visit Finland, I will specially look for more Finnish food experiences.

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly Agree

4. My positive Finnish food experiences increase my chances of re-visiting Finland.

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly Agree

Open-ended Question

Please write down few words that represents your experience with social media and Finland's cuisine during your travel