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# Intellectual Capital as A Strategic Driver of Food Destination Image: The Role of Shared Culinary Heritage In Sarawak and Indonesia

Santy Mayda Batubara<sup>1\*</sup>, Salawati Sahari<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1\*</sup>Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Muhammadiyah Pontianak, Pontianak, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Faculty of Economics and Business, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, Sarawak, Malaysia

### ABSTRACT

Food destinations increasingly rely on intangible knowledge resources and cultural assets to create distinctive visitor experiences. However, limited empirical evidence explains how Intellectual Capital and Shared Culinary Heritage jointly shape Food Destination Image, particularly across the culturally connected settings of Sarawak and Indonesia. This study examines the influence of four dimensions of Intellectual Capital—Human Capital, Structural Capital, Financial Capital, and Physical Capital—and Shared Culinary Heritage on Food Destination Image. Data were collected from 300 domestic and international tourists who had visited Sarawak, Indonesia, or both destinations and experienced their local cuisine. Respondents were selected through purposive sampling, and the data were analysed using partial least squares structural equation modelling with SmartPLS 4. The significance of the proposed relationships was assessed through bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples. The model explained 80.3% of the variance in Food Destination Image, indicating strong explanatory power. Human Capital, Physical Capital, and Shared Culinary Heritage had significant positive effects on Food Destination Image, whereas Structural Capital and Financial Capital showed no significant direct effects. Physical Capital and Shared Culinary Heritage emerged as the most influential predictors. These findings demonstrate that Intellectual Capital contributes to Food Destination Image through specific dimensions rather than as a uniform resource. Tourism facilities, local capabilities, and shared culinary traditions are therefore central to strengthening tourists' perceptions of Sarawak and Indonesia as food destinations. The study concludes that destination development strategies should integrate Intellectual Capital with the preservation and promotion of Shared Culinary Heritage to build a distinctive and competitive Food Destination Image.

**Keywords:** Intellectual Capital, Resource-Based View, Food Destination Image, Shared Culinary Heritage

## INTRODUCTION

Tourism has historically been viewed as one of the major contributions to economic growth and job creation. In addition to facilitating economic development, tourism plays a role in cultural exchange, enhances social integration and contributes to mutual understanding among societies [38], [39], [21]. The number of international arrivals from tourists increased in 2025 by around 4% which displays not only the recovery of the tourism industry globally, but also indicates changes in the behavior of modern tourists [23], [21], [29]. The modern tourist prefers a more authentic experience and culture than one where they travel only for enjoyment. In light of the above-mentioned, one aspect of tourism which has received massive impetus happens to be food-related tourism. Local food has progressed substantially from its primary function as a basic travel necessity and has grown to be one of the easiest and most genuine means through which tourists get acquainted with the essence of a certain destination [20], [31]. An authentic dish prepared according to ancient traditions and using local resources contains numerous layers of history, identity, and cultural memory that museums or guides cannot reproduce [19], [34]. Being aware of this fact, destination managers have started to perceive culinary experiences as great resources utilized for the purpose of molding tourism perceptions, stimulating the level of satisfaction, and determining travel choices [41], [34]. Thus, many destinations have started to treat their culinary heritage not as a static cultural element but as a dynamic and competitive asset being exploited for the purpose of enhancing their appeal, regional identity, and presence in the market [20], [16]. The successful transformation of culinary heritage into a competitive tourism asset, however, depends on the effective utilization of Intellectual Capital, particularly human expertise, organizational capabilities, financial resources, and physical infrastructure that collectively shape tourists' destination experiences. In the ASEAN region, food heritage is of increasing importance. Due to the great diversity in culture and long-

established culinary history that characterizes the area, food heritage has emerged as one of the area's most important tourism offerings, despite being still underutilized [30], [29], [20]. The case of Sarawak and Indonesia is particularly interesting. Their connection is more than geographical proximity, as it has developed through many centuries of history, as well as cultural and culinary bonds [10], [30]. Many of the same traditional cooking methods, techniques, as well as rituals can be found in both regions, particularly between Sarawak and Kalimantan, indicating the culinary landscape shared by them [10], [32]. Food heritage represents not only a legacy of the past, but also provides important elements of identity, cultural development, and tourism resources for both regions of Sarawak and Kalimantan [32], [20], [16].

The performance of both the tourism industries of Sarawak and Indonesia is yet another proof for the importance of the current research. In 2025, Sarawak welcomed around 4.97 million tourists and earned RM 12.67 billion from tourism receipts [33]. Similarly, in Indonesia, approximately 13.98 million tourists entered the country between January and November 2025, which shows an impressive rise by 10.44% in comparison with the previous year [3]. However, there is something more negative behind good statistics. Although the cuisines of Sarawak and Indonesia are rich and varied, their culinary heritage needs to be carefully preserved, documented, and applied in the development of tourism [13], [24]. The phenomenon of culinary heritage is a reflection of culture and thus its preservation should be treated as very important, especially in the context of a changing society and culture [35], [24]. At the same time, even though gastronomy can be promoted as part of tourist experience, it influences the identity of the region. [13], [22].

These issues seem to be more important when taken into account the high level of competition in tourism that exists today. Nowadays, tourism destinations do not only compete on the level of attractions and facilities, but also in terms of how good the travel experience is and what the destination image in the eyes of potential visitors is. Researchers have previously established that food experience and Food Destination Image are important factors influencing the way a destination is perceived by visitors and acts as an impetus for their intention to travel to that destination in the future [9], [14], [17]. More specifically, the eating experience connected with local food has an effect on visitors' perceptions and intention to travel again [9], [14]. Nonetheless, it should be stated that having a powerful culinary tradition does not automatically lead to a good Food Destination Image. In order for the local traditional cuisine to be acknowledged and valued by tourists, the available culinary resources should be completely turned into valuable tourism experiences and be incorporated into the whole destination package [37], [17].

Although Intellectual Capital has been extensively studied, research has predominantly examined its contribution to organizational performance, competitiveness, sustainability, and value creation, while its application in explaining Food Destination Image remains limited [6], [40]. Likewise, despite the fact that a significant relationship has been discovered between local or heritage food experience and destination image [15], [19], [12], the empirical foundation linking Shared Culinary Heritage to destination image formation is underdeveloped. Thus, the previous studies have mainly focused on culinary heritage in terms of food experience, destination image, destination branding, and tourists' behavior, while the interaction between culinary heritage and destination resources has not been studied adequately either [15], [19], [12]. Moreover, the association between the image of the tourist destination with regard to food and tourists' behaviour is not necessarily simple, because the association could be influenced by variables like risk perception and the degree of tourists' emotional attachment to the destination [36]. Even with all of these advancements, not much is known about the relationship of Intellectual Capital and Shared Culinary Heritage in the development of the Food Destination Image. Previous research has largely dealt with the two concepts independently and thus robbed of much understanding of how each of them influences the formation of the destination's image through its food and gastronomy identity. This issue is particularly relevant for Sarawak and Indonesia because their strong culture and culinary connections make it a unique case.

Thus, this study aims to investigate the role of Intellectual Capital and Shared Culinary Heritage on Food Destination Image in Sarawak and Indonesia, with the intent of developing an analytical framework by bringing together the two concepts. The study expects to contribute to the understanding of culinary tourism and destination image, as well as to provide practical recommendations for various tourism stakeholders, including destination authorities, managers, and policy-makers interested in improving destination competitiveness through culinary tourism and heritage resources.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Research Design**

This study adopts a quantitative research approach to examine the influence of Intellectual Capital and Shared Culinary Heritage on Food Destination Image in Sarawak and Indonesia. A cross-sectional survey design was employed to collect primary data from tourists who have experienced local culinary attractions and food-related tourism activities in Sarawak or Indonesia. The quantitative approach was considered appropriate for this study because it enables the systematic examination of relationships among study variables and facilitates hypothesis testing through established statistical techniques. Cross-sectional surveys are widely adopted in

tourism research as they allow for efficient data collection across diverse respondent groups within a defined timeframe [11].

## 2.2 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The foundation of the present study is on Resource-Based View, which reveals how the strategic resources and capabilities help with creating value and competitive advantage. In regard to tourism, not only physical attributes but also intangible resources are utilized by destinations for creating a unique tourism experience as well as enhancing the competitiveness of the destination [26], [6]. Intellectual Capital and Shared Culinary Heritage are considered by this view as strategic resources that contribute to Food Destination Image formation.

Both the Intellectual Capital used in this paper uses Ev-VAIC Framework, brought into existence by Batubara et al. [1]. The framework contains four components; namely, Human Capital, Structural Capital, Financial Capital and Physical Capital. Human Capital is defined as the experience, knowledge and skills which contribute towards the success of the culinary tourism sector. Structural Capital is defined as the institutional support for culinary tourism such as governance, branding, and systems of organizations. Financial Capital is defined as the funds or money spent on development of culinary tourism. Physical Capital is defined as the infrastructure and facilities which tourists use to experience food and culinary tourism. The study examines all the components individually to find their impacts on Food Destination Image.

Shared Culinary Heritage is incorporated as a distinct cultural resource reflecting culinary traditions, recipes, ingredients, cooking methods, and food-related practices shared by communities with historical and cultural connections [30]. In the context of Sarawak and Indonesia, Shared Culinary Heritage provides a relevant basis for examining how culturally connected culinary traditions contribute to tourists' perceptions of a destination. Food Destination Image, as the outcome variable, represents tourists' overall perceptions and evaluations of a destination based on its culinary offerings, gastronomic experiences, and food-related identity.

Utilizing this theoretical basis, the conceptual framework claims that the Human Capital, Structural Capital, Financial Capital, Physical Capital and Shared Culinary Heritage is a determinant of the Food Destination Image. Hence, the hypotheses stated are:

H1: Human Capital positively influences Food Destination Image.

H2: Structural Capital positively influences Food Destination Image.

H3: Financial Capital positively influences Food Destination Image.

H4: Physical Capital positively influences Food Destination Image.

H5: Shared Culinary Heritage positively influences Food Destination Image.

The proposed relationships are illustrated in Figure 1.

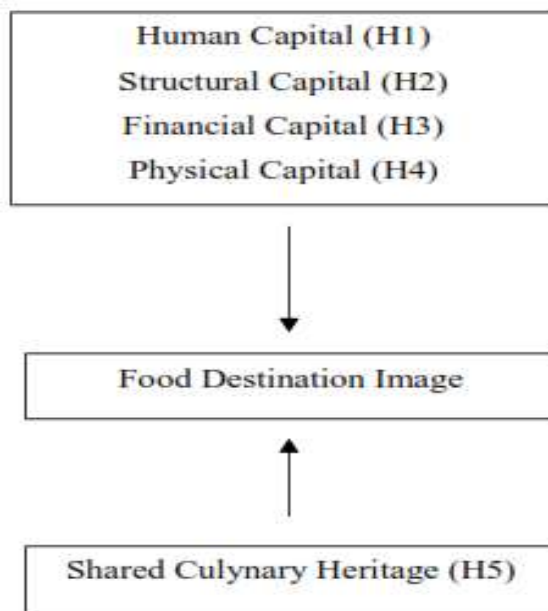


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

## 2.3 Population and Sample

A target population was defined to be both the domestic (in-country) and international tourist willing to try out culinary tourism in Sarawak, Indonesia and (or) both areas. Research utilized purposive sampling because it was important to have respondents available who had the time spent experiencing the phenomenon of this research [8]. Participants in the survey needed to meet the following criteria: (1) over 18 years old, (2) have

travelled to Sarawak, Indonesia, (3) have tried the local food, (4) consented to take part. The number of required samples was calculated according to the formula recommended by Kock and Hadaya [42] for calculating the inverse square root for the required sample size when conducting PLS-SEM analyses based on a 5% significance level, 80% of enough statistical power to detect miss specified model coefficients, and requiring an approximate minimum path coefficient of 0.15. Based on the application of these parameters, the minimum sample size necessary to conduct this study was computed with the following equation.  $N_{min} = (2.486 / \beta_{min})^2$  where  $N_{min}$  represents the minimum required sample size, 2.486 is the constant corresponding to a significance level of 5% and statistical power of 80%, and  $\beta_{min}$  represents the minimum anticipated path coefficient. That is an anticipated minimum path coefficient of 0.15, the required sample size was calculated as follows:  $N_{min} = (2.486 / 0.15)^2 = 274.67 \approx 275$ . The minimum number of respondents necessary, based on the calculation of a sample size, was 275. A total responses was rounded up being 300 responses to accommodate ease of analysis using PLS-SEM and SmartPLS 4 [28].

## 2.4 Data Collection Procedure

Data was obtained from both an online and offline survey. An electronic version of the questionnaire was disseminated through social media and tourism related groups while hard copy questionnaires were delivered to eligible participants at selected culinary tourism sites in Sarawak and Indonesia. Screening was conducted on all the returned surveys for completeness and usability. Following completion of the screening process, 300 complete and usable responses were deemed valid for the final analysis. The combination of both methods (online and offline) was intended to maximize the number of respondents and to achieve an adequate representation of both destinations [11].

## 2.5 Measurement of Variables

There are six constructs in the measurement instrument: Human Capital, Structural Capital, Financial Capital, Physical Capital, Shared Culinary Heritage and Food Destination Image. The four dimensions of Intellectual Capital (Human Capital, Structural Capital, Financial Capital, and Physical Capital) are derived conceptually from the Ev-VAIC framework [1] but have been contextualised to reflect how tourists perceive the resources that support culinary tourism. Shared Culinary Heritage was measured based on the food heritage conceptualisation [30] and Food Destination Image was determined from research into gastronomy and destination image [27] with insights into how Shared Culinary Heritage shapes tourists' perceptions of a food destination, informed Mohamed et al. [18] and Chu et al. [4]. All constructs were measured on the basis of a five-point Likert scale. Prior to data collection, the questionnaire was revised and edited to ensure the clarity, relevance, and consistency of the measurement items.

## 2.6 Questionnaire Development

The survey had seven parts. Part A was for demographic information and information on travel preference. The other four (B to E) measured Human Capital; Structural Capital; Financial Capital; and Physical Capital. Part F measured Shared Culinary Heritage; Part G measured Food Destination Image based on perception of food identity; authenticity; reputation; overall impression; and recommendations. The survey used a five point Likert scale (1 being strong disagree and 5 being strong agree) to measure all items.

## 2.7 Data Analysis Technique

The research framework to be examined using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was created using SmartPLS 4. To determine whether the reliability and validity of the measurement models were established, the measurement model had to be assessed using the two-stage analytical procedure suggested by Hair et al. [11]. The assessment of the measurement model included the evaluation of indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. After establishing the reliability and validity of the measurement model, the structural model was evaluated by means of path coefficients ( $\beta$ ), coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), effect size ( $f^2$ ), and predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ). Finally, the significance of each of the hypothesized relationships was evaluated by bootstrapping 5,000 resamples using t-values and p-values obtained from the structural model analysis.

# 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

## 3.1 Descriptive Profile of Respondents

The analysis included 300 valid responses to the survey instrument from culinary tourists that had travelled to either or both Sarawak and Indonesia. The male and female respondents had a fairly even distribution, consists of 152 males versus 148 females. A number of respondents were between 26 and 35 years old (which is 116 respondents or 38.7%) and the next highest number of respondents were aged 36 to 45 years (which is 77 respondents or 25.7%) and 18 to 25 years (which is 67 respondents or 22.3%). Those respondents who were older than 45 years were the least represented among the respondent group (which is 40 respondents or

13.3%).

The majority of respondents were from Indonesia (consists of 138 respondents or 46.0%) and Malaysia (consists of 111 respondents or 37.0%) and the remainder from other countries (51 respondents or 17.0%). A total of 170 respondents or 56.7% of the sample had an experience with culinary tourism prior to the time they took the survey while 130 respondents or 43.3% indicated that this survey was their first experience as a culinary tourist. In terms of the destinations travelled, a total of 135 respondents or 45.0% of the sample travelled to Sarawak and 119 respondents or 39.7% of the sample travelled to Indonesia whereas the remaining respondents travelled to both destinations. All of the respondents represented different demographic backgrounds, levels of culinary tourism experience, and visitation patterns that were appropriate to the purpose of this study.

### 3.2 Measurement Model Assessment (Outer Model)

The measurement model assessment covered indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Indicator reliability was assessed based on the outer loadings, while internal consistency reliability was examined using Cronbach's alpha, rho\_A, and composite reliability (rho\_C). Convergent validity was evaluated using the average variance extracted (AVE), whereas discriminant validity was assessed using the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT). The results are presented in the following subsections.

#### 3.2.1 Convergent Validity and Construct Reliability

Indicator reliability was assessed based on the outer loadings, while internal consistency reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, rho\_A, and composite reliability (rho\_C). Convergent validity was assessed using the average variance extracted (AVE). As presented in Table 1, all outer loadings exceeded 0.70, while the Cronbach's alpha, rho\_A, and composite reliability values were above 0.70. Furthermore, all AVE values exceeded 0.50. Therefore, the measurement model demonstrated satisfactory indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, and convergent validity. The results are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Measurement Model Assessment (Validity and Reliability Results)**

| Construct                      | Indicators | Loadings Range | Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) | rho_A | Composite Reliability (rho_C) | AVE   |
|--------------------------------|------------|----------------|-------------------------------|-------|-------------------------------|-------|
| Human Capital (HC)             | HC1-HC5    | 0.825-0.872    | 0.901                         | 0.903 | 0.927                         | 0.717 |
| Structural Capital (SC)        | SC1-SC5    | 0.814-0.865    | 0.899                         | 0.902 | 0.925                         | 0.713 |
| Financial Capital (FC)         | FC1-FC4    | 0.919-0.943    | 0.951                         | 0.951 | 0.965                         | 0.872 |
| Physical Capital (PC)          | PC1-PC5    | 0.811-0.863    | 0.900                         | 0.902 | 0.925                         | 0.713 |
| Shared Culinary Heritage (SCH) | SCH1-SCH5  | 0.816-0.859    | 0.901                         | 0.904 | 0.925                         | 0.713 |
| Food Destination Image (FDI)   | FDI1-FDI5  | 0.757-0.836    | 0.871                         | 0.875 | 0.906                         | 0.659 |

The data presented in Table 1 illustrate that all of the outer loadings ranged between 0.757 and 0.943 and were well above the recommended cutoff of 0.70. All AVE measures were greater than the required cutoff of 0.50 and indicate good levels of convergent validity. The range of Cronbach's alpha was 0.871 to 0.951, the range for rho\_A was 0.875 to 0.951 and for rho\_C was 0.906 to 0.965; with all reliability metrics exceeding the minimum standard of 0.70. Therefore, all measures demonstrated sufficient levels of internal consistency reliability. In conclusion, all three thresholds (i.e., indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability and convergent validity) were met [11].

#### 3.2.2 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was tested using the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT). Table 2 shows that HTMT values range from 0.695 to 0.864 and are all below the recommended threshold of 0.90. The highest HTMT value occurs between Physical Capital and Food Destination Image (0.864) and the lowest value of Financial Capital and Shared Culinary Heritage (0.695). Therefore, the results demonstrate that all constructs have acceptable discriminant validity.



**Table 2. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) Matrix**

| Construct                      | FC    | FDI   | HC    | PC    | SCH   | SC |
|--------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|----|
| Financial Capital (FC)         |       |       |       |       |       |    |
| Food Destination Image (FDI)   | 0.724 |       |       |       |       |    |
| Human Capital (HC)             | 0.74  | 0.835 |       |       |       |    |
| Physical Capital (PC)          | 0.729 | 0.864 | 0.808 |       |       |    |
| Shared Culinary Heritage (SCH) | 0.695 | 0.854 | 0.767 | 0.776 |       |    |
| Structural Capital (SC)        | 0.713 | 0.828 | 0.841 | 0.788 | 0.762 |    |
|                                |       |       |       |       |       |    |

As presented in Table 2, the HTMT values ranged from 0.695 to 0.864, with all values below the recommended threshold of 0.90. The highest HTMT value was observed between Physical Capital and Food Destination Image (0.864), followed by Shared Culinary Heritage and Food Destination Image (0.854). These results indicate that all constructs were empirically distinct, thereby establishing satisfactory discriminant validity. Consequently, the measurement model was considered suitable for subsequent structural model assessment.

### 3.3 Structural Model Assessment (Inner Model) & Hypothesis Testing

After the measurement model was evaluated positively, the structural equation model was assessed for the R<sup>2</sup> values and the f-square values to assess effect sizes. After this analysis was completed, the hypothesized relationships were investigated with the use of the bootstrapping procedure which provided path coefficients, t-stats and p-values. The results of this assessment will be discussed in the sections that follow.

#### 3.3.1. Explanatory Power (R<sup>2</sup>) and Effect Sizes (f<sup>2</sup>)

The coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>) has been used to assess the amount of explanation provided by the proposed model and the effect size (f<sup>2</sup>) has been used to measure the value of each predictor in the model. As shown in Table 3, the proposed model explains 80.3% of the variance in the Food Destination Image with an R<sup>2</sup> = 0.803 and an Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = 0.799 which demonstrates that the proposed model has a high explanatory ability. In addition, a thorough analysis of the effect sizes of each predictor has also been conducted [11], [2].

**Table 3. Structural Model Effect Sizes (f<sup>2</sup>)**

| Path Relationship                                  | f <sup>2</sup> Value | Predictive Impact Level |
|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Financial Capital -> Food Destination Image        | 0.003                | Negligible / No Effect  |
| Human Capital -> Food Destination Image            | 0.134                | Small to Medium         |
| Physical Capital -> Food Destination Image         | 0.288                | Medium to Large         |
| Shared Culinary Heritage -> Food Destination Image | 0.354                | Large Effect            |
| Structural Capital -> Food Destination Image       | 0.003                | Negligible / No Effect  |

According based on Table 3 that variables affecting Food Destination Image, Shared Culinary Heritage had the most significant positive impact (f<sup>2</sup> = 0.354). Physical Capital had the next highest impact (f<sup>2</sup> = 0.288). Human Capital had only a minor positive influence (f<sup>2</sup> = 0.134). Meanwhile, neither Financial Capital nor Structural Capital appeared to be major contributors to Food Destination Image since their contributions resulted in negligible impacts (f<sup>2</sup> = 0.003). Therefore, the most important factors contributing to the overall Food Destination Image were Shared Culinary Heritage and Physical Capital.

#### 3.3.2 Hypothesis Testing and Path Coefficients

The bootstrapping procedure of SmartPLS 4 was utilized to evaluate the hypotheses of this study by generating 5,000 bootstrap resampling. The p-values (p) for each individual relationship evaluated through path coefficient (β), t-statistic (t) & p-value (p) that was generated and is shown in Table 4. Below summarizes this information.

**Table 4. Results of Structural Path Analysis and Hypothesis Testing**

| Hyp. | Structural Path Relationship                       | Path Coeff. ( $\beta$ ) | Sample Mean (M) | Std. Dev. (STDEV) | T-Statistics | p-Values | Empirical Decision |
|------|----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|--------------|----------|--------------------|
| H1   | Human Capital -> Food Destination Image            | 0.299                   | 0.301           | 0.039             | 7.748        | 0.000    | Supported ***      |
| H2   | Structural Capital -> Food Destination Image       | 0.039                   | 0.046           | 0.040             | 0.974        | 0.330    | Not Supported      |
| H3   | Financial Capital -> Food Destination Image        | 0.038                   | 0.043           | 0.051             | 0.751        | 0.453    | Not Supported      |
| H4   | Physical Capital -> Food Destination Image         | 0.453                   | 0.45            | 0.038             | 12.067       | 0.000    | Supported ***      |
| H5   | Shared Culinary Heritage -> Food Destination Image | 0.453                   | 0.451           | 0.038             | 11.787       | 0.000    | Supported ***      |

Note: \*\*\* Significant at  $p < 0.001$  (T-statistic  $> 3.29$ ).

The SmartPLS analysis indicated that Human Capital had a significant and positive effect on Food Destination Image ( $\beta=0.299$ ;  $t=7.748$ ;  $p<0.001$ ), thus supporting H1. Physical Capital and Shared Culinary Heritage also exhibited significant and positive effects illustrated by the two constructs having the greatest standardized path coefficients ( $\beta=0.453$ ), and support H4 & H5. On the contrary, Structural Capital ( $\beta=0.039$ ;  $t=0.974$ ;  $p=0.330$ ) and Financial Capital ( $\beta=0.038$ ;  $t=0.751$ ;  $p=0.453$ ) do not indicate significant relationships with Food Destination Image, and as such H2 & H3 are not supported.

### 3.3.3 Summary of Structural Model Assessment

The structural model was shown to provide excellent explanatory power accounting for 80.3% of Food Destination Image variance. Among the explanatory factors, Physical Capital and Shared Culinary Heritage had the greatest proportion of positive path coefficients while Human Capital also had a significantly positive effect. Beside that, there were no statistically significant direct relationships between either Financial Capital or Structural Capital and Food Destination Image [11], [25], [2]. With respect to effect size, Shared Culinary Heritage contributed the greatest amount of variance in the model, followed by Physical Capital and Human Capital. Therefore, based on the presented results from this chapter, it can be concluded that the structural model provides an adequate account for factors associated with Food Destination Image plus a foundation for the next

### 3.4. Discussion

The findings indicate that the dimensions of Intellectual Capital and Shared Culinary Heritage contributed differently to Food Destination Image in Sarawak and Indonesia. The proposed model explained 80.3% of the variance in Food Destination Image, suggesting that the selected variables provided a strong explanation of tourists' perceptions of these destinations. The following discussion interprets each finding in relation to previous studies and the Resource-Based View (RBV).

#### 3.4.1 Human Capital and Food Destination Image

The results of hypothesis 1, in that human capital has a positive and statistically significant effect on food destination image, with a standardized coefficient of  $\beta = 0.299$ ,  $t = 7.748$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . Knowledgeable practitioners of tourism and the local community are contributors to the authentic culinary experience and thereby affect visitor perceptions. The results are in accordance with the studies performed by Dzenopoljac et al. [7] and Del Gesso et al. [6]. Mohamed et al. [18], result that that role of knowledge and experience as strategic resources competencies for destination competitiveness. Chu et al. [4] mentions that good gastronomic experience creates an image of the destination. It seems that local knowledge and culinary traditions in

Sarawak and Indonesia enable tourists to experience the authentic experience which also improves Food Destination Image.

### 3.4.2 Structural Capital and Food Destination Image

The result of hypothesis 2, Structural Capital did not have any significant impact on Food Destination Image ( $\beta = 0.039$ ,  $t = 0.974$ ,  $p = 0.330$ ); hence, Hypothesis 2 was rejected. This result contradicts the findings by Dzenopoljac et al. [7], Del Gesso et al. [6], Simarmata et al. [26], and Mohamed et al. [18] who argued that the effective management of destinations and organizations will boost the competitiveness of destinations and help in promoting the culinary resources within the destinations. It can be hypothesized that tourists may value the food destinations based on the culinary resources available rather than the management infrastructures used at the food destinations.

### 3.4.3 Financial Capital and Food Destination Image

However, Hypothesis 3 (Financial Capital) revealed no statistically significant direct relationship with Food Destination Image ( $\beta = 0.038$ ,  $t = 0.751$ ,  $p = 0.453$ ); thus, hypothesis 3 was rejected. It contradicts the research of Costa et al. [5] and Mohamed et al. [18], according to whom financial investments increase competitiveness of the destination and help to preserve and promote the culinary resources. One possible reason for such results can be considered that tourists are more sensitive to the quality of their experience than to the financial resources behind them. In the case of Sarawak and Indonesia, Financial Capital seems to influence the development of tourism indirectly.

### 3.4.4 Physical Capital and Food Destination Image

The result of hypothesis 4, Physical Capital showed that the strongest predictor of Food Destination Image ( $\beta = 0.453$ ,  $t = 12.067$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). It is supporting H4. The findings are in line by Simarmata et al. [26] that stressed the importance of improving tourism infrastructure to competitiveness of the sustain destination. It is also consistent by result of Mohamed et al. [18] and Sio et al. [27], that the quality of tourism facilities and culinary experiences are important for shaping visitors' perceptions of a destination. In Sarawak and Indonesia, developing tourism infrastructure to support culinary development will allow visitors to experience a wider range of impressive culinary experiences, which will improve the destination's reputation as a foodie destination.

### 3.4.5 Shared Culinary Heritage and Food Destination Image

The result of hypothesis 5, Shared Culinary Heritage had a positive and significant influence on Food Destination Image ( $\beta = 0.453$ ,  $t = 11.787$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). It is supporting H5. This finding confirms the importance of culinary traditions in shaping tourists' perceptions of a destination. In line with the results obtained by Timothy and Ron [30], heritage cuisine is considered as a cultural identity and is regarded as an important resource for tourism. The above-mentioned viewpoint is further strengthened by the contributions of Sio et al. [27], Mohamed et al. [18], and Chu et al. [4], have associated culinary heritage and authentic food experience with destination image and brand. Under the RBV approach, the concept of Shared Culinary Heritage becomes a unique cultural resource that will help create a strong Food Destination Image of Sarawak and Indonesia.

## 4. CONCLUSION

The present research proves that Intellectual Capital acts as a strategic driver of Food Destination Image, where different dimensions contribute differently towards tourists' perceptions of destinations along with Shared Culinary Heritage. It is found that both Physical Capital and Shared Culinary Heritage have the most powerful impact, while Human Capital is the third in magnitude. It is concluded that the provision of quality tourism infrastructure, traditional food of the place, and knowledge about the place contribute immensely to the formation of tourists' impressions about the destination. Financial and Structural Capital have no notable impacts, implying that the resources do not directly affect the image unless translated into something tangible for the visitors.

## 5. IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

### 5.1 Practical Implications

These findings provide important implications for destination management and policy-making processes. Investment of resources into tourism-related infrastructure and culinary services should be considered, since Physical Capital was found to be one of the most important drivers of Food Destination Image. Maintenance of Shared Culinary Heritage is necessary through cultural activities, food festivals, and the promotion of local cuisine in order to preserve the authenticity and uniqueness of the destination. Development of Human Capital can be achieved through hospitality education and customer service education along with local culture education in order to enrich visitors' culinary experience. Financial and Structural Capitals have not revealed



any significant impact on Food Destination Image, but still are relevant if they are invested in the development of tourism facilities and visitors' experience.

## 5.2 Limitations and Future Research

The findings of this research may not be applicable to all tourism locations due to the geographical limits of Sarawak and Indonesia as case studies. The use of purposive sampling may not provide a representative sample. The study also only focused on the direct relationships between Human Capital, Structural Capital, Financial Capital, Physical Capital and Shared Culinary Heritage with the Food Destination Image. Future research that would extend this model could include other variables, including but not limited to, Destination Branding, Perception of Authenticity, Tourist Satisfaction and Social Media Engagement. It is also recommended that additional research be conducted using larger and more diverse samples. Comparative research across multiple destinations and cultural settings would provide an opportunity to validate whether the documented relationships are similar across different tourism contexts.

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