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The Effects of Experiential Value and Customer Experience Quality on Local Gastronomy Perception and e-WOM Intention among Customers of MICHELIN Guide-Listed Restaurants in Thailand

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Abstract

This study examines the effects of experiential value and customer experience quality on local gastronomy perception and e-WOM intention among customers of MICHELIN Guide-listed restaurants in Thailand. Using purposive sampling, data were collected through a structured questionnaire from 280 respondents who had dined at MICHELIN Guide-listed restaurants in Thailand within the previous 12 months. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis. The findings indicate that both experiential value and customer experience quality exert significant positive effects on local gastronomy perception and e-WOM intention ($p < .01$). Customer experience quality showed a stronger effect on local gastronomy perception ($\beta = .60$) than experiential value ($\beta = .34$), and a stronger effect on e-WOM intention ($\beta = .74$) than experiential value ($\beta = .16$). The two predictors explained 82.75% of the variance in local gastronomy perception and 77.90% of the variance in e-WOM intention. These findings suggest that both experiential and quality-based evaluations are important in shaping customers' perceptions of local gastronomy and their intentions to share dining experiences online in the context of MICHELIN Guide-listed restaurants in Thailand.

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Keywords

Experiential value, customer experience quality, local gastronomy perception, e-WOM intention, MICHELIN Guide-listed restaurants

Introduction

In recent years, the premium restaurant market has shifted toward experience-centered competition. Customers no longer evaluate service encounters solely based on food attributes; rather, they seek broader emotional engagement, symbolic meaning, and reputational signals. Because these judgments emerge from an integrated assessment of both experiential and performance-based cues, they profoundly influence post-consumption communication. As a result, strategic management of the holistic customer experience has become essential for long-term performance and differentiation among premium service firms (Bonfanti et al., 2025, 2855-2874; Panchapakesan et al., 2022, 311-330).

In Thailand, gastronomic tourism has emerged as an important driver of destination competitiveness and value-driven tourism. The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has highlighted the MICHELIN Guide as a strategic mechanism for promoting Thai culinary identity and quality tourism. Recent industry evidence indicates that 74% of travelers consider MICHELIN Guide restaurants when selecting destinations, whereas 76% are willing to extend their trips to dine at recommended establishments. Furthermore, international visitors generated incremental food expenditures of THB 822.85 million at MICHELIN Guide restaurants in 2025. By 2026, the MICHELIN Guide Thailand had expanded to 468 establishments across 11 destinations nationwide, demonstrating the growing economic and tourism significance of premium dining experiences in Thailand (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2026).

A particularly high-expectation environment is found among MICHELIN Guide-listed restaurants in Thailand. In this study, MICHELIN Guide-listed restaurants refer to establishments included in the official MICHELIN Guide selections, including MICHELIN Star, Bib Gourmand, and MICHELIN Selected categories. Inclusion in the Guide functions as a strong reputational signal of culinary quality and consistency, but it should not be interpreted as a formal certification. (MICHELIN Guide, 2025). In such settings, diners evaluate not only the functional aspects of food and service but also the emotional and symbolic meanings associated with

the overall dining experience. These multidimensional evaluations reflect the notion of experiential value, which refers to customers' perceived emotional, hedonic, symbolic, and social benefits derived from consumption experiences beyond utilitarian attributes (Han et al., 2022, 1668-1691). By capturing the affective and symbolic dimensions embedded in service encounters, experiential value provides a holistic understanding of customers' consumption experiences (Jin et al., 2013, 679–700). Past empirical evidence has consistently demonstrated that experiential value positively influences customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions in hospitality settings (Adha et al., 2023, 1804–1819; Maghnati et al., 2012, 169-177; Nigam, 2012, 70–79; Yanto et al., 2020, 34–42).

At the same time, premium restaurant evaluation is strongly shaped by performance-based judgments of service excellence. Customer experience quality captures customers' overall assessment of service performance across the consumption process, commonly grounded in evaluations of food performance, service interaction, and the physical environment (Bonfanti et al., 2025, 2855-2874; Panchapakesan et al., 2022, 311-330). Prior research indicates that experience quality significantly influences perceived value, satisfaction, image, and behavioral intentions (Armbrecht, 2021, 169-191; Ghorbanzadeh et al., 2021, 3090-3106). In MICHELIN Guide-listed contexts, consistent service delivery may act as a credibility cue that reinforces customers' perceptions of authenticity and legitimacy in the overall gastronomic offering.

Beyond internal evaluations, premium restaurant firms operate within digitally mediated markets where e-WOM shapes reputation and influences consumer decision-making (Haro-Sosa et al., 2024, 615-632). While e-WOM refers to actual customer-generated opinions and recommendations shared through digital platforms, e-WOM intention refers to customers' willingness or likelihood to engage in such communication in the future. This distinction is important because the present study focuses on behavioral intention rather than actual online posting behavior. (Anastasiei et al., 2026, 449-469).

The context of MICHELIN Guide-listed restaurants differs from conventional restaurant settings because customers typically enter the service encounter with elevated expectations and stronger reputational cues. Moreover, restaurants included in the MICHELIN Guide are closely associated with gastronomic tourism and often serve as vehicles for experiencing local culture and destination identity. Consequently, customers' evaluations extend beyond service

performance to encompass perceptions of local gastronomy and the overall destination experience (Lin et al., 2022, 2778). Therefore, understanding how experiential and quality-based evaluations shape both gastronomic perception and online advocacy behavior is strategically important for restaurant operators and tourism stakeholders.

Although prior studies have examined experiential value and customer experience quality in hospitality research, most have focused on outcomes such as satisfaction, loyalty, revisit intention, and purchase intention (Adha et al., 2023, 1804–1819; Han et al., 2022, 1668-1691). Empirical evidence on local gastronomy perception remains limited, and studies rarely examine how experiential and performance-based evaluations jointly shape both local gastronomy perception and e-WOM intention in the same model. This gap is particularly important in the context of MICHELIN Guide-listed restaurants in Thailand, where customers face stronger reputational cues, higher expectations, and closer links between dining experiences and destination identity than in conventional restaurant settings. Therefore, this study investigates the parallel effects of experiential value and customer experience quality on local gastronomy perception and e-WOM intention among customers of MICHELIN Guide-listed restaurants in Thailand.

Research Objectives

This study aims to:

1. Examine the effect of experiential value on local gastronomy perception among customers of MICHELIN Guide-listed restaurants in Thailand.

2. Examine the effect of customer experience quality on local gastronomy perception among customers of MICHELIN Guide-listed restaurants in Thailand.

3. Examine the effect of experiential value on e-WOM intention among customers of MICHELIN Guide-listed restaurants in Thailand.

4. Examine the effect of customer experience quality on e-WOM intention among customers of MICHELIN Guide-listed restaurants in Thailand.

By positioning experiential and quality-based evaluations as strategic drivers of perception formation and digital advocacy behavior, this study contributes to service management literature and provides managerial insights for premium restaurant operators seeking to enhance competitive positioning through experience-centered strategies.

Literature Reviews

This section reviews the theoretical foundations of experiential value, customer experience quality, local gastronomy perception, and e-WOM intention and develops the hypotheses of the study. The discussion focuses on how experiential and performance-based evaluations shape customers' interpretations of local gastronomy and their intentions to engage in online advocacy in the context of MICHELIN Guide-listed restaurants in Thailand.

This study adopts a direct-effects perspective in which experiential value and customer experience quality are conceptualized as complementary managerial constructs influencing customers' cognitive interpretations and behavioral intentions in premium restaurant settings. Specifically, the study focuses on the direct effects of experiential and performance-based evaluations on local gastronomy perception and e-WOM intention. This perspective is consistent with recent hospitality and tourism studies emphasizing the role of customer experiences as strategic drivers of perception formation and post-consumption behavior. (Tuncer et al., 2021, 447-475; Peng et al., 2021).

Experiential value in Premium Service Management

Experiential value refers to customers' subjective assessment of the benefits derived from consumption experiences beyond utilitarian performance. Recent studies suggest that experiential value is a multidimensional construct encompassing emotional value, hedonic value, symbolic value, and social value, reflecting customers' feelings, enjoyment, self-expression, and social meanings associated with service encounters (Jin et al., 2013, 679–700). In premium restaurant settings, experiential value is generated through sensory stimulation, atmosphere, personalized interaction, and culinary presentation, making dining experiences meaningful beyond functional consumption.

From a strategic management perspective, experiential value functions as an intangible asset that supports differentiation in competitive markets. Experience-based strategies enable firms to compete beyond price and functional performance and to build deeper emotional attachment that strengthens relational outcomes. Recent empirical evidence suggests that experiential value positively influences customer satisfaction, loyalty, and post-consumption behavioral intentions in hospitality contexts (Adha et al., 2023, 1804–1819; Han et al., 2022). Accordingly, experiential value can be treated as a meaningful driver that shapes how

customers interpret premium service encounters and decide whether to share them with others.

Local gastronomy perception

Local gastronomy perception refers to customers' cognitive interpretation of local cuisine as a reflection of cultural identity, authenticity, and destination distinctiveness. Gastronomy tourism literature suggests that culinary experiences enable consumers to understand local heritage and construct destination meanings through food consumption (Sormaz et al., 2016, 725-730).

Within restaurants listed in the MICHELIN Guide, experiential value may extend beyond personal enjoyment to influence broader cultural interpretation. Culinary encounters can function as symbolic experiences through which customers interpret local identity and cultural distinctiveness (Lau et al., 2026, 1-15). When customers perceive strong experiential value, such as refined presentation, memorable atmosphere, and emotional engagement, they may be more likely to interpret the cuisine as authentic, distinctive, and representative of local gastronomy rather than merely consumptive. Therefore, experiential value is expected to enhance Local gastronomy perception.

H1: Experiential value positively influences local gastronomy perception in MICHELIN Guide-listed restaurants in Thailand.

Experiential value may also influence outward communication behavior. Emotionally engaging and memorable consumption experiences are more likely to motivate customers to share their experiences in digitally mediated environments. Recent studies indicate that perceived value and emotional engagement significantly influence customers' willingness to communicate their experiences online (Anastasiei et al., 2026, 449-469; Haro-Sosa et al., 2024, 615-632).

e-WOM intention

e-WOM intention refers to customers' willingness and likelihood to share their experiences and recommendations through digital platforms in the future. Unlike actual e-WOM behavior, which reflects realized communication, e-WOM intention represents a behavioral predisposition that precedes online advocacy behavior (Ramadhan et al., 2022, 102592). Positive online recommendations contribute to brand visibility and reputational

capital, making e-WOM intention particularly important in premium restaurant markets (Chao et al., 2022, 1-15).

Accordingly, customers who derive high experiential value from MICHELIN Guide-listed dining experiences may be more inclined to engage in positive e-WOM.

H2: Experiential value positively influences e-WOM intention in MICHELIN Guide-listed restaurants in Thailand.

Customer experience quality as a Strategic Performance Indicator

Customer experience quality refers to customers' holistic evaluation of service excellence throughout the consumption journey (Lemke et al., 2011). In hospitality contexts, this construct is generally reflected through several dimensions, including food quality, employee interaction, physical environment, atmosphere, and service reliability (Bonfanti et al., 2025, 2855-2874; Ghorbanzadeh et al., 2021, 3090-3106). Unlike experiential value, which emphasizes emotional and symbolic benefits, customer experience quality focuses on customers' judgments regarding operational performance and consistency across service encounters.

From a premium service management perspective, experience quality functions as a strategic performance indicator. High service standards reduce perceived risk, strengthen trust, and enhance credibility. Empirical evidence indicates that experience quality positively affects perceived value, satisfaction, image, and behavioral intentions across hospitality contexts (Armbrecht, 2021, 169-191; Bonfanti et al., 2025, 2855-2874; Ghorbanzadeh et al., 2021, 3090-3106). In premium settings, customers may rely on experience quality as an evaluative anchor that stabilizes judgments and supports confidence in recommending the service provider.

In restaurants listed in the MICHELIN Guide Thailand, experience quality may also shape cultural interpretation. Elevated expectations associated with MICHELIN Guide recognition can intensify the role of operational excellence, as customers interpret superior service performance as evidence of professionalism and legitimacy. As a result, experience quality may reinforce Local gastronomy perception by signaling consistency and reliability in culinary delivery, strengthening customers' belief that the gastronomic offering represents a credible and high-standard reflection of local cuisine.

H3: Customer experience quality positively influences local gastronomy perception in MICHELIN Guide-listed restaurants in Thailand.

Customer experience quality may further influence customers' intention to communicate their experiences online. High-quality service encounters increase customer confidence, encourage advocacy, and reduce perceived risk in recommending a restaurant. Recent studies suggest that trust, credibility, and service excellence are important antecedents of customers' online recommendation intentions (Anastasiei et al., 2026, 449-469; Haro-Sosa et al., 2024, 615-632). In digital environments where reputation is continuously evaluated, customers who perceive superior experience quality may be more inclined to engage in positive e-WOM and recommend the restaurant to others online.

H4: Customer experience quality positively influences e-WOM intention in MICHELIN Guide-listed restaurants in Thailand.

Conceptual Framework

Integrating the arguments above, this study proposes a direct-effects model in which experiential value and customer experience quality function as parallel determinants of both local gastronomy perception and e-WOM intention. The model assumes that experiential and performance-based evaluations independently shape customers' interpretations of local gastronomy and their intentions to engage in positive electronic word-of-mouth. Figure 1 presents the proposed conceptual framework.

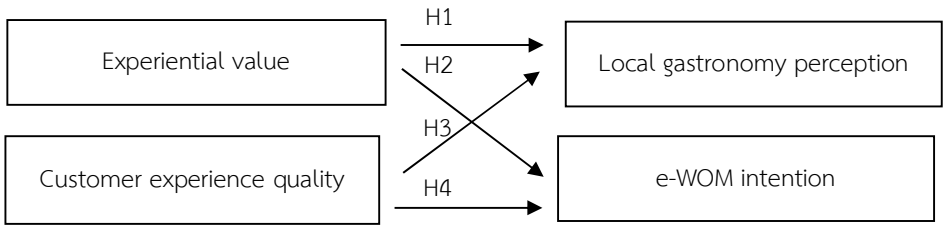


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework.

Research Methodology

Sampling Process and Sample Selection

The target population comprised customers who had previously dined at restaurants listed in the MICHELIN Guide Thailand. The present study focused on MICHELIN Guide-listed restaurants because these establishments represent premium dining settings characterized by elevated customer expectations, strong reputational signals, and close associations with gastronomic tourism. Accordingly, they provide an appropriate context for investigating how

experiential and quality-based evaluations shape customers' perceptions and behavioral intentions. For the purpose of this study, MICHELIN Guide-listed restaurants include all establishments appearing in the official Guide, namely MICHELIN-starred restaurants, Bib Gourmand recipients, and MICHELIN-selected restaurants. This classification follows the categorization adopted by the MICHELIN Guide and captures different levels of recognized dining experiences while maintaining a consistent premium restaurant context.

A purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure that respondents possessed relevant experiential knowledge. Data collection was conducted between February and March 2026. The questionnaire was distributed through several online dining communities and social media platforms targeting food enthusiasts in Thailand, including Facebook groups and restaurant review communities. A total of 334 questionnaires were returned. After eliminating incomplete responses and cases failing the screening criteria, 280 valid questionnaires were retained for analysis. This sampling procedure was designed to ensure that all respondents had recent and relevant experience with the research context, thereby improving the contextual validity of the findings.

To ensure that respondents had genuine experience with the research context, screening questions were placed at the beginning of the questionnaire. Only respondents who confirmed that they had visited at least one MICHELIN Guide-listed restaurant in Thailand (MICHELIN Star, Bib Gourmand, or MICHELIN Selected) within the previous 12 months and could identify the category of restaurant they had visited were allowed to proceed. This procedure helped reduce the possibility of self-selection bias and enhanced the relevance of the collected data.

The final sample size of 280 respondents was considered adequate for multiple regression analysis. Following Hair et al. (2019), the sample size exceeded the minimum recommendations for multiple regression analysis and was considered sufficient to obtain stable parameter estimates and adequate statistical power. Therefore, the sample size employed in this study was considered appropriate for hypothesis testing.

Measurement of Variables

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of two sections. The first section captured demographic and behavioral characteristics, including gender, age, occupation, dining frequency, and average spending per visit.

The second section consisted of 60 measurement items covering four constructs: experiential value (15 items), customer experience quality (15 items), local gastronomy perception (15 items), and e-WOM intention (15 items). All items were measured using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

The questionnaire items were adapted from established studies and modified to fit the context of MICHELIN Guide-listed restaurants in Thailand. Items for experiential value were adapted from Bai et al. (2018, 2309-2323), Matsumoto and Nakayama (2017, 30), Shamsabadi et al. (2019), Senaratne et al. (2024, 583), and Yamada et al. (2013, 1-6). Customer experience quality items were developed based on Alam and Mezbah-ul-Islam (2023, 12-30), Hoseini et al. (2018, 58–67), and Yusefi et al. (2022, 653). Local gastronomy perception items were adapted from Carvache-Franco et al. (2022, 11437), Solunoğlu and Örgün (2024, 464–473), Sutiadiningsih et al. (2024, 195-202), Fanelli (2019, 2), Nicoletti et al. (2019, 2686), and Hu (2010, 582-590). e-WOM intention items were adapted from Ismagilova et al. (2020, 1203-1226), González-Rodríguez et al. (2022, 855-874), Yadav et al. (2022, 1135-1152), Liu et al. (2024, 114587), and Hossain et al. (2019, 759).

Because the original measurement items were derived from English-language studies, the questionnaire was first prepared in English and then translated into Thai using a translation and back-translation procedure. To ensure semantic equivalence and contextual appropriateness, the Thai version was independently reviewed by bilingual academics familiar with hospitality and tourism research (Brislin, 1980).

Content validity was evaluated using the Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) technique. Three experts in hospitality and tourism management assessed the relevance of each item to its corresponding construct. All items achieved IOC values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.50, indicating satisfactory content validity.

Reliability and Instrument Quality

Prior to the main survey, a pilot study involving 30 respondents was conducted to assess instrument reliability. Internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficients.

The results indicated satisfactory reliability across all constructs. The 15 items measuring experiential value yielded a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.91. Customer experience quality produced an alpha value of 0.93, while local gastronomy perception and

e-WOM intention achieved alpha values of 0.92 and 0.90, respectively. All coefficients exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating satisfactory internal consistency and measurement reliability (Hair et al., 2019).

Given that the data were collected through self-reported measures from a single source, Harman's single-factor test was conducted to assess the potential presence of common method variance (CMV). The analysis revealed that the first unrotated factor explained 44.792% of the total variance, which is below the commonly accepted threshold of 50% (Podsakoff et al., 2003, 879–903). This result suggests that CMV is not a serious concern and is unlikely to substantially affect the validity of the study's results.

Statistical Techniques

Descriptive statistics were first used to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics. Pearson correlation coefficients were subsequently examined to assess the relationships among variables and identify potential multicollinearity problems prior to regression analysis.

Regression assumptions were then evaluated. Normality was assessed through skewness and kurtosis statistics, with all values falling within the acceptable range of ±2. Linearity and homoscedasticity were examined using standardized residual plots, whereas multicollinearity was assessed through variance inflation factor (VIF) values. All VIF values were below the threshold of 5, indicating that multicollinearity was not a concern (Hair et al., 2019; Srinivasan & Lohith, 2017).

Multiple regression analysis using the enter method was employed to test the proposed hypotheses. The enter method was selected because the objective of this study was theory-driven hypothesis testing rather than predictive variable selection. Two regression models were estimated. In Model 1, experiential value and customer experience quality were specified as predictors of local gastronomy perception. In Model 2, the same independent variables were used to predict e-WOM intention. Standardized beta coefficients and adjusted R^2 values were used to evaluate the relative explanatory power of each predictor.

Results

Respondent Characteristics

The majority of respondents were female (52.5%), whereas male and LGBTQA++ respondents accounted for 33.9% and 13.6%, respectively. Most participants belonged to Generation Y (58.9%), followed by Generation X (21.4%) and Generation Z (19.6%). Regarding occupation, company employees and freelancers/self-employed individuals each represented 27.1%, followed by government officers (18.9%) and business owners (18.2%).

Regarding dining frequency, 37.9% of respondents visited MICHELIN Guide-listed restaurants every 2–3 months, whereas 22.1% dined once a month and 14.6% more than once a month. In terms of spending behavior, 40.4% spent less than 1,000 Baht per visit, followed by 37.9% who spent between 1,000 and 5,000 Baht. Approximately 15.7% reported expenditures between 5,000 and 10,000 Baht.

Descriptive Statistics and Preliminary Diagnostics

Descriptive statistics indicated relatively favorable evaluations across all constructs. e-WOM intention exhibited the highest mean (M = 5.90, SD = 0.66), followed by local gastronomy perception (M = 5.89, SD = 0.66), customer experience quality (M = 5.88, SD = 0.65), and experiential value (M = 5.85, SD = 0.70).

Prior to regression analysis, the normality assumption was examined using skewness and kurtosis statistics. Hair et al. (2019) suggested that skewness values between –2 and +2 and kurtosis values between –7 and +7 indicate acceptable normality for multivariate analysis. In the present study, skewness ranged from –0.88 to –0.46 and kurtosis ranged from –0.21 to 2.07, indicating that the data satisfied the normality assumption (Hair et al., 2019).

In addition, preliminary diagnostic tests indicated that the assumptions underlying multiple regression analysis were satisfactorily met. All variables exhibited statistically significant correlations, and multicollinearity diagnostics revealed tolerance values above the recommended threshold of 0.20 and VIF values below 5.00, suggesting that the data were appropriate for subsequent regression analysis (Hair et al., 2019).

Pearson correlation coefficients among the variables are presented in Table 1. All relationships were positive and statistically significant at the .01 level. Experiential value was strongly correlated with customer experience quality (r = .882), local gastronomy perception (r = .865), and e-WOM intention (r = .811). Customer experience quality also exhibited strong

correlations with local gastronomy perception (r = .896) and e-WOM intention (r = .879). The highest correlation was observed between local gastronomy perception and e-WOM intention (r = .903).

Although several correlations were relatively high, none exceeded the conservative threshold of 0.95 recommended by Hair et al. (2019), suggesting that the constructs are highly related but not empirically indistinguishable. From a theoretical perspective, experiential value captures emotional, symbolic, and hedonic evaluations, whereas customer experience quality reflects performance-based assessments of service delivery. Likewise, local gastronomy perception represents customers' cognitive interpretation of local culinary identity, while e-WOM intention reflects a behavioral predisposition toward online advocacy. Therefore, the strong correlations observed in this study are likely attributable to the integrated nature of premium dining experiences rather than to construct redundancy.

Furthermore, the particularly strong relationship between local gastronomy perception and e-WOM intention (r = .903) suggests that customers who perceive Thai cuisine as authentic, distinctive, and representative of local culture are also more willing to communicate their experiences and recommendations through digital platforms. This finding is theoretically plausible because perception formation and advocacy behavior often occur simultaneously in premium gastronomic experiences.

To further assess potential statistical concerns, multicollinearity diagnostics were examined. The tolerance value was 0.22 and the variance inflation factor (VIF) was 4.50, satisfying the recommended criteria of Tolerance > 0.20 and VIF < 5.00 (Hair et al., 2019). In addition, the inter-construct correlations remained below the 0.95 criterion suggested by Hair et al. (2019), providing preliminary evidence of acceptable discriminant validity. Therefore, although the constructs are strongly associated, the findings indicate that they represent related but conceptually distinct dimensions rather than severe multicollinearity or statistical redundancy.

Furthermore, the observed correlations are theoretically consistent with the premium dining context, where experiential value, service quality evaluations, gastronomy perceptions, and communication intentions are often formed simultaneously during a single consumption episode. Therefore, high correlations may reflect the integrated nature of customer evaluations rather than measurement redundancy.

Overall, the diagnostic results suggest that the assumptions required for multiple regression analysis were satisfactorily fulfilled. Normality statistics fell within the acceptable ranges proposed by Hair et al. (2019), all correlations were statistically significant, and multicollinearity indicators remained below the critical thresholds. Therefore, the dataset was considered suitable for hypothesis testing using multiple regression analysis.

Table 1 The correlation between constructs (n=280)

Mean variables	EXV	CEQ	LCG	WOM
Experiential value	1.00			
Customer experience quality	.882**	1.00		
Local gastronomy perception	.865**	.896**	1.00	
e-WOM intention	.811**	.879**	.903**	1.00

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

Effects on Local gastronomy perception

To examine the effects of experiential value and customer experience quality on local gastronomy perception, multiple regression analysis using the enter method was performed. As shown in Table 2, the model was statistically significant ($F(2, 277) = 664.17$, $p < .001$) and explained 82.75% of the variance in local gastronomy perception ($R^2 = .827$, Adjusted $R^2 = .826$). The standard error of estimate was 0.275, indicating satisfactory prediction accuracy.

Both independent variables exerted significant positive effects on local gastronomy perception. Experiential value positively influenced local gastronomy perception ($\beta = .34$, B = 0.32, SE = 0.05, t = 6.38, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.22, 0.42]), supporting H1. Customer experience quality also had a positive effect ($\beta = .60$, B = 0.61, SE = 0.05, t = 11.29, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.50, 0.72]), supporting H3. Among the two predictors, customer experience quality exhibited the stronger effect, suggesting that performance-based evaluations play a more important role than experiential value in shaping customers' perceptions of local gastronomy.

Although the model exhibited high explanatory power, the findings should be interpreted cautiously because the relatively high R^2 value may partly reflect the interrelated nature of the constructs examined. Nevertheless, the Harman's single-factor test indicated that common method variance was unlikely to be a serious concern, and multicollinearity diagnostics (Tolerance = .22; VIF = 4.50) remained within acceptable thresholds (Hair et al., 2019), supporting the stability of the regression estimates.

Table 2 Local gastronomy perception Coefficients[a] (n=280)

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	0.46	0.15		3.04	0.003		
EXV	0.32	0.05	0.34	6.38	0.000	0.22	4.50
CEQ	0.61	0.05	0.60	11.29	0.000	0.22	4.50

a. Dependent Variable: LCG

R Square = 0.8275, Adjusted R-Square = 0.8262, F = 664.17, Sig = 0.00 Significant level at 0.05

Effects on Electronic Word-of-Mouth Intention

Multiple regression analysis was further conducted to investigate the effects of experiential value and customer experience quality on e-WOM intention. As presented in Table 3, the model was statistically significant ($F(2, 277) = 488.18$, $p < .001$) and accounted for 77.90% of the variance in e-WOM intention ($R^2 = .779$, Adjusted $R^2 = .777$). The standard error of estimate was 0.314.

Both predictors significantly influenced e-WOM intention. Experiential value exerted a positive effect ($\beta = .16$, B = 0.15, SE = 0.06, t = 2.66, $p = .008$, 95% CI [0.04, 0.26]), thereby supporting H2. Customer experience quality also positively influenced e-WOM intention ($\beta = .74$, B = 0.76, SE = 0.06, t = 12.33, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.64, 0.88]), supporting H4. Customer experience quality emerged as the strongest determinant of e-WOM intention, indicating that customers are more likely to recommend and share their experiences online when they perceive consistently high levels of service performance.

As with Model 1, the relatively high explanatory power should be interpreted with caution because some degree of construct overlap may exist among variables associated with premium dining experiences. However, the acceptable multicollinearity statistics (Tolerance = .22; VIF = 4.50) and the results of the common method variance assessment suggest that the observed relationships are unlikely to be attributable to statistical artifacts alone.

Table 3 Electronic Word-of-Mouth Intention Coefficients[a] (n=280)

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	0.55	0.17		3.22	0.001		
EXV	0.15	0.06	0.16	2.66	0.008	0.22	4.50
CEQ	0.76	0.06	0.74	12.33	0.000	0.22	4.50

a. Dependent Variable: WOM

R Square = 0.7790, Adjusted R-Square = 0.7774, F = 488.18, Sig = 0.00 Significant level at 0.05

Discussion

Taken together, the findings demonstrate that experiential value and customer experience quality operate as parallel strategic determinants shaping both local gastronomy perception and e-WOM intention in restaurants listed in the MICHELIN Guide Thailand. Across both models, customer experience quality consistently exhibits stronger explanatory power than experiential value. Specifically, customer experience quality and experiential value jointly explained 82.75% of the variance in local gastronomy perception (R^2 = .8275) and 77.90% of the variance in e-WOM intention (R^2 = .7790), indicating that both perceptual and behavioral outcomes are strongly influenced by customers' evaluations of their dining experiences.

The findings indicate that both experiential value and customer experience quality positively influence local gastronomy perception and e-WOM intention. Across both regression models, customer experience quality consistently exhibits a stronger effect than experiential value, suggesting that performance-based evaluations play a foundational role in shaping customers' interpretations and communication intentions in MICHELIN Guide-listed restaurant settings.

Regarding H1 and H3, both experiential value and customer experience quality positively influenced local gastronomy perception. This finding suggests that customers do not interpret local gastronomy solely through food taste or cultural symbolism, but through the overall dining experience. In the context of MICHELIN Guide-listed restaurants, customer experience quality showed a stronger effect than experiential value, possibly because high service consistency, professionalism, and reliability strengthen the credibility of the culinary experience. When customers pay premium prices and enter a high-expectation setting,

operational excellence may serve as a cue that the restaurant genuinely represents local culinary quality rather than merely offering an attractive experience. (Bonfanti et al., 2025, 2855-2874; Panchapakesan et al., 2022, 311-330).

Customer experience quality demonstrated a stronger effect than experiential value on local gastronomy perception. In the context of MICHELIN Guide Thailand, this finding may reflect the high expectations associated with premium dining. Because customers incur relatively high monetary and psychological costs when selecting MICHELIN Guide-listed restaurants, evaluations of the overall experience quality appear to play a more influential role than affective value alone in shaping how customers interpret local gastronomy. Consequently, perceptions of Thai gastronomy are likely to be formed not only through emotional enjoyment but also through customers' comprehensive evaluations of the dining experience itself.

Regarding H2 and H4, both experiential value and customer experience quality positively influenced e-WOM intention. However, customer experience quality again emerged as the stronger predictor. This result may reflect the fact that online advocacy in premium restaurant contexts is closely tied to customers' confidence in recommending the restaurant to others. In MICHELIN Guide-listed settings, where reputational expectations and perceived consumption risk are relatively high, customers may be more willing to post or recommend online when they perceive the service to be consistently reliable, credible, and worth the price paid. (Kamal Abdien & Helmy, 2024, 257-274; Souki et al., 2023, 2255-2281).

Customer experience quality again emerged as the strongest predictor of e-WOM intention. This finding may be particularly relevant in the MICHELIN Guide Thailand context, where consumers often rely on online reviews and recommendations when choosing premium restaurants. Because dining at MICHELIN Guide-listed restaurants involves higher price expectations and greater perceived consumption risk, customers may place greater importance on the overall quality of the experience when deciding whether to recommend a restaurant to others. Consequently, experience quality appears to function as a key antecedent of customers' online advocacy behavior.

The relatively high correlations observed between experiential value and customer experience quality (r = .882), and between local gastronomy perception and e-WOM intention (r = .903), should be interpreted in light of the holistic nature of premium dining experiences

rather than as evidence of construct redundancy. Although these constructs are conceptually distinct, customers may simultaneously experience emotional value, quality evaluations, gastronomic interpretations, and sharing intentions as interconnected components of a single consumption episode. Since all inter-construct correlations remained below the conservative threshold of 0.95 recommended by Hair et al. (2019), the results provide preliminary support for discriminant validity. Furthermore, acceptable tolerance and VIF values indicate that multicollinearity did not threaten the stability of the regression estimates.

The relatively high explanatory power of the regression models should also be interpreted cautiously. The R^2 values of .8275 for local gastronomy perception and .7790 for e-WOM intention may partly reflect the integrated nature of premium dining evaluations, in which experiential value and customer experience quality are closely associated. Nevertheless, the results of Harman's single-factor test and the multicollinearity diagnostics suggest that the observed relationships are unlikely to be attributable solely to common method bias or statistical redundancy.

From a managerial perspective, these findings indicate that MICHELIN Guide recognition alone may not guarantee favorable customer perceptions or positive online advocacy. Restaurant managers should focus on continuously enhancing customer experience quality while simultaneously creating experiential value that strengthens emotional and symbolic connections with Thai gastronomy. Such an integrated approach may contribute to more favorable perceptions of local gastronomy and encourage customers to voluntarily share positive experiences through digital channels.

Overall, this study contributes to the hospitality and gastronomy literature by demonstrating that experiential value and customer experience quality simultaneously influence both perceptual outcomes (local gastronomy perception) and behavioral outcomes (e-WOM intention). The findings further reveal that customer experience quality exerts a stronger influence than experiential value in premium restaurant settings, highlighting the importance of managing the overall dining experience in highly competitive and high-expectation contexts such as MICHELIN Guide-listed restaurants in Thailand.

Conclusion

Summary of Key Findings

This study produced clear findings across two regression models. In Model 1, both experiential value and customer experience quality positively influenced local gastronomy perception, with customer experience quality showing the stronger effect. In Model 2, both experiential value and customer experience quality also positively influenced e-WOM intention, and customer experience quality again emerged as the stronger predictor. Overall, the findings indicate that both experiential and performance-based evaluations matter, but quality-based evaluations play a more dominant role in shaping customers' perceptions of local gastronomy and their online advocacy intentions in MICHELIN Guide-listed restaurant settings.

Theoretical Contributions

This study contributes to the literature in three ways. First, it extends research on premium dining by examining experiential value and customer experience quality as parallel determinants of both local gastronomy perception and e-WOM intention within a single model. Second, it demonstrates that quality-based evaluations exert stronger influence than experiential value on both outcomes in the context of MICHELIN Guide-listed restaurants in Thailand. Third, by incorporating local gastronomy perception into the model, the study deepens understanding of how restaurant service influences not only customers' behavioral intentions but also their perceptions of local culinary identity.

Managerial Implications

The findings suggest that obtaining recognition from the MICHELIN Guide alone may not be sufficient to sustain favorable customer responses. Rather, restaurant managers should continuously enhance customer experience quality because this construct exhibited the strongest influence on both local gastronomy perception and e-WOM intention.

At the same time, experiential value should not be overlooked, as emotionally and symbolically meaningful experiences also contribute positively to customers' perceptions and online advocacy behavior. Therefore, premium restaurant strategies should emphasize the simultaneous enhancement of experiential value and customer experience quality to strengthen both gastronomic perceptions and customers' willingness to share their experiences online.

From a community and societal perspective, the findings imply that premium gastronomic experiences can serve as a mechanism for promoting awareness and appreciation of local culinary identity. Positive customer experiences may encourage the dissemination of information regarding Thai gastronomy through e-WOM and user-generated content, thereby supporting the visibility and preservation of local food culture.

From a policy perspective, tourism and related public agencies may utilize gastronomy experiences as a strategic instrument to promote Thai culinary heritage and strengthen destination competitiveness. In addition, public organizations and industry associations may encourage premium local restaurants to strategically utilize online reviews, e-WOM, and user-generated content to communicate local culinary identity and enhance destination image.

Beyond managerial implications, the findings also offer academic, social, and policy relevance. Academically, the study highlights the need to examine gastronomic perception as an outcome distinct from conventional behavioral variables in hospitality research. Socially, the findings suggest that well-managed dining experiences can strengthen consumers' recognition of local culinary identity and encourage wider appreciation of Thai gastronomy. From a policy perspective, tourism and hospitality agencies may use these insights to support service standards, destination branding, and digital communication strategies that promote local food businesses through online reviews and user-generated content.

Limitations and Future Research

This study is subject to several limitations.

First, the cross-sectional design restricts causal inference and does not capture how customers' evaluations evolve over time. Future longitudinal studies may provide deeper insights into changes in perception formation and communication behavior.

Second, the present study focused only on direct relationships among the constructs. Future research may investigate potential mediating mechanisms, such as authenticity perception, customer attachment, or destination image, to provide a more comprehensive explanation of how customer evaluations translate into perceptual and behavioral outcomes.

Third, restaurants listed in the MICHELIN Guide Thailand were treated as a single category. Future studies could compare customers across MICHELIN-starred, Bib Gourmand, and MICHELIN-selected restaurants to determine whether evaluation processes differ across recognition levels.

Fourth, future research may incorporate additional contextual variables, including customer involvement, dining motivation, or cultural orientation, to better explain heterogeneity in customers' responses.

Finally, comparative studies across countries and cultural contexts are recommended to enhance the external validity of the findings and to examine whether the relationships observed in the present study are generalizable to other premium gastronomy destinations.

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