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**DEVELOPING A FRAMEWORK OF CRITICAL SUCCESS  
FACTORS OF GUILIN AS A FOOD TOURISM DESTINATION**

**LONG BIYUE**



**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
UNIVERSITI UTARA MALAYSIA  
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**DEVELOPING A FRAMEWORK OF CRITICAL SUCCESS  
FACTORS OF GUILIN AS A FOOD TOURISM DESTINATION**

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**A thesis submitted to the Ghazalie Shafie Graduate School of Government in  
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Universiti Utara Malaysia**



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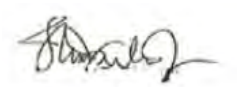
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## ABSTRACT

Food tourism has gained increasing attention, positioning the development of food tourism destinations as a key strategy for enhancing the competitiveness of the tourism industry in many cities. Identifying destination Critical Success Factors (CSFs) is therefore crucial. However, empirical studies on food tourism destinations in Southeast Asia have not adequately explored the destination's natural, cultural, and social resources. Consequently, the CSFs for developing food tourism destinations remain insufficiently clear, necessitating the creation of a comprehensive theoretical framework of CSFs. This study addresses this gap by focusing on the CSFs of a successful food tourism destination in Guilin, a renowned tourist destination in mainland China. Through a systematic literature review, this study examines the CSFs of Guilin as a food tourism destination in depth, based on the Total Product Concept (TPC) and the Delphi method. The investigation encompasses Guilin's rich natural, social, and cultural resources, proposing six dimensions and 22 factors affecting the food tourism destination. With the assistance of a team of experts, an instrument was developed to identify the CSFs of Guilin as a food tourism destination. To improve the reliability and validity of the study, a quantitative research methodology was employed, collecting data through a structured questionnaire from various stakeholders in Guilin's food tourism industry, including restaurant operators, government officials, service providers, and tourists. This study identified six CSFs for Guilin's food tourism success using Multiple Linear Regression (MLR) analysis including destination marketing, visitor experience, destination image, stakeholder involvement, core food products, and government support. Among these factors, destination marketing emerged as the most influential, underscoring the crucial role of marketing campaigns and social media in shaping visitor perceptions and decision-making. The study contributed to developing a framework of CSFs for food tourism destinations, providing valuable insights into destination marketing and strategy development. These findings enrich the academic discourse on food tourism development and offer practical guidance to policymakers and business practitioners to enhance the competitiveness and attractiveness of food tourism destinations such as Guilin.

**Keywords:** Food Tourism Destination, CSF, Quantitative Research, Mlr, Guilin

## ABSTRAK

Pelancongan makanan semakin mendapat perhatian, menjadikan pembangunan destinasi pelancongan makanan sebagai strategi utama untuk meningkatkan daya saing industri pelancongan di banyak bandar. Oleh itu, mengenal pasti Faktor Kejayaan Kritikal (CSF) destinasi adalah penting. Namun, kajian empirikal mengenai destinasi pelancongan makanan di Asia Tenggara belum cukup mendalami sumber semula jadi, budaya, dan sosial destinasi. Akibatnya, CSF untuk pembangunan destinasi pelancongan makanan masih tidak jelas, memerlukan pembangunan kerangka teori yang komprehensif mengenai CSF. Kajian ini menangani jurang ini dengan menumpukan perhatian kepada CSF destinasi pelancongan makanan yang berjaya di Guilin, sebuah destinasi pelancongan terkenal di tanah besar China. Melalui tinjauan literatur yang sistematik, kajian ini mendalami CSF Guilin sebagai destinasi pelancongan makanan, berdasarkan Konsep Produk Keseluruhan (TPC) yang digabungkan dengan kaedah Delphi. Penyelidikan ini merangkumi sumber semula jadi, sosial, dan budaya yang kaya di Guilin, membawa kepada cadangan enam dimensi dan 22 faktor yang mempengaruhi destinasi pelancongan makanan. Dengan bantuan pasukan pakar, satu instrumen telah dibangunkan untuk mengenal pasti CSF Guilin sebagai destinasi pelancongan makanan. Untuk meningkatkan kebolehpercayaan dan kesahihan kajian, metodologi penyelidikan kuantitatif telah digunakan, mengumpul data melalui soal selidik berstruktur daripada pelbagai pihak berkepentingan dalam industri pelancongan makanan Guilin, termasuk pengendali restoran, pegawai kerajaan, penyedia perkhidmatan, dan pelancong. Kajian ini mengenal pasti enam CSF untuk kejayaan pelancongan makanan Guilin menggunakan analisis Regresi Linear Berganda (MLR) termasuk pemasaran destinasi, pengalaman pelawat, imej destinasi, penglibatan pihak berkepentingan, produk makanan teras, dan sokongan kerajaan. Antara faktor-faktor ini, pemasaran destinasi muncul sebagai yang paling berpengaruh, menekankan peranan penting kempen pemasaran dan media sosial dalam membentuk persepsi dan keputusan pelawat. Kajian ini berakhir dengan pembangunan kerangka CSF untuk destinasi pelancongan makanan, memberikan wawasan berharga mengenai pemasaran destinasi dan pembangunan strategi. Penemuan ini bukan sahaja memperkayakan wacana akademik mengenai pembangunan pelancongan makanan tetapi juga menawarkan panduan praktikal kepada pembuat dasar dan pengamal perniagaan untuk meningkatkan daya saing dan daya tarikan destinasi pelancongan makanan seperti Guilin.

**Kata Kunci:** Destinasi Pelancongan Makanan, Faktor Kejayaan Kritikal (CSF), Penyelidikan Kuantitatif, Regresi Linear Berganda (MLR), Guilin



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

|               |                                                                  |
|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>CR</b>     | Cultural Resources                                               |
| <b>CSF</b>    | Critical Success Factors                                         |
| <b>DV</b>     | Dependent Variable                                               |
| <b>EFA</b>    | Exploratory Factor Analysis                                      |
| <b>ICH</b>    | Intangible Culture Heritage                                      |
| <b>IV</b>     | Independent Variables                                            |
| <b>KMO</b>    | Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin                                               |
| <b>KSF</b>    | Key Success Factors                                              |
| <b>NGOs</b>   | Non-Governmental Organizations                                   |
| <b>NR</b>     | Natural Resources                                                |
| <b>PCA</b>    | Principal Component Analysis                                     |
| <b>SLR</b>    | Systematic Literature Review                                     |
| <b>SPSS</b>   | Statistical Package for the Social Sciences                      |
| <b>SR</b>     | Social Resources                                                 |
| <b>TECLS</b>  | Travele Commerce Live Streaming                                  |
| <b>TPC</b>    | Total Product Concept                                            |
| <b>UNESCO</b> | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| <b>UNWTO</b>  | United Nations World Tourism Organization                        |
| <b>VIF</b>    | variance inflation factor                                        |
| <b>WHC</b>    | World Heritage Committee                                         |

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, we delve into the various key aspects that form the basis of this study. These include the background of the study, the problem statement, the research questions, the objectives of the study, the significance of the study and the organisation of the thesis.

### **1.2 Background of Study**

According to the World Association for Food Tourism (2020), around 25% of a traveler's total expenditure is allocated to food. Food plays a vital role in enhancing tourist satisfaction while visiting a particular destination (Yousaf & Xiucheng, 2018). The connection between local food and tourism is crucial, as evidenced by the growing trend of individuals embarking on journeys to discover distinctive culinary experiences (Ab Karim & Chi, 2010). The presence of authentic local cuisine in a destination not only represents its heritage but also enables tourists to engage with the local culture through consumption and active involvement in the food environment (Hall & Sharples, 2003). Food holds a vital role in fulfilling the dietary needs of tourists and serves as a fundamental component of regional culture. Recognizing its significance in showcasing a destination's identity and cultural heritage, food consumption emerges as a crucial factor in the development of destination marketing (Kim et al., 2021; Quan & Wang, 2004).

Additionally, food consumption provides an opportunity for local food producers to enhance the value of their products by curating tourism experiences centered around local ingredients. This approach not only attracts a greater number of tourists to the region but also promotes regional tourism, ultimately establishing the area as a distinguished food tourism destination (Hiamey et al., 2020; Ting et al., 2019).

Over the past few years, the blending of cultural and natural tourism has progressively gained prominence, emerging as the prevailing trend in the tourism industry (Godovykh & Tasci, 2020). This trend is often reflected in the combination of culture and scenic spots. Food tourism and tourism experience services are neglected as important links in the industry chain and even become constraints to the development of the tourism industry (Lian, 2016). More and more Chinese scholars realize that feeling and experience are the most important aspects of tourism activities (Duan et al., 2018). Therefore, developing the tourism product system should not only focus on physical products but also bring unique feelings and experiences to tourists, including food, hotel, and transport (Institute, 2016; Zhao & Liu, 2020). Food consumption serves not only as a revenue-generating avenue for destinations but also holds significant value as an integral part of the overall tourism experience. Japan and Korea have made tourism the backbone of their economies. They have established a tourism product system including physical tourism products and experiential tourism products, with particular attention to the development of experiential tourism products that allow tourists to experience local traditional festivals and food culture (Institute, 2016; Ohe & Kurihara, 2013; Yousaf & Xiucheng, 2018). Korean spares no effort to create a food culture, with all its tourism product portfolio designed around concepts such as cultural festivals, regional and folkloric characteristics. Korea creates a folk culture

atmosphere to attract travellers and increases travellers' consumption to boost the economy (G. Richards, 2012).

China has emerged as the global leader in both the tourism market and as a source of outbound tourists (Forum, 2019). Simultaneously, China's domestic tourism continues to hold a prominent position on the global stage (Zhao & Liu, 2020). Influenced by the trend, the tourism industry in mainland Chinese cities has also increased rapidly, such as Guilin (ChinaNews, 2021). Guilin is a city with a history of 2000 years and a total population of 5.4 million in southwest China. Guilin has over 5,180 square kilometres of karst landscapes of extraordinary natural beauty, with many pagodas and stone pillars arranged in orderly rows along the banks of the Li River, covered by verdant shrubs. The pagoda karst formations found in Guilin are regarded as one of the most captivating and magnificent amalgamations of landforms, both within China and worldwide (He et al., 2021). Its precious cultural resources and karst geographical environment have given birth to Guilin's unique tourism resources (Li & Wang, 2021). Guilin is a multi-ethnic gathering area of different ethnic groups, which helps to develop unique and colourful folk customs, such as the Song Festival of March of Zhuang, the King Pan festival of Yao, the fireworks festival of Dong (He et al., 2021; Qi et al., 2013). These ethnic minorities still maintain their customs, including clothing, food, festivals, religious beliefs, and even languages, which are attractive to domestic and international tourists (He et al., 2021). Guilin welcomed approximately 138 million international and domestic tourists in 2019, generating over 2.8 billion USD in tourism revenue, accounting for about 87.5 per cent of the city's GDP (Research, 2021). The tourism industry has assumed a pivotal role in Guilin's local economy, experiencing significant growth over the past two decades (Finance, 2021). Fostering the expansion of the local tourism sector proves particularly beneficial for numerous

ethnic regions with limited development opportunities resulting from factors such as geographical constraints, historical circumstances, cultural influences, and more (CPPCC, 2017). In this context, tourism product system can be designed to effectively connect local folk culture, tourism product development, and tourism industry development, unquestionably, to boost Guilin's economy (Tourism, 2017). The design of the tourism product system has attracted interest from the government, industry, and academia (CPPCC, 2017).

According to Kim et al. (2010), the fundamental elements that constitute the tourist experience encompass knowledge acquisition, rejuvenation, hedonistic enjoyment, immersion in local culture, sense of significance, active engagement, and the discovery of novelty. Eating had the highest repetition rate throughout the trip. Tourists' experience of food during travel will affect the feeling of the whole travel journey (Quan & Wang, 2004). Food has always been considered a requirement for visitor consumption and an essential part of the regional culture (Jones, 2002). Food, hotels, transportation, attractions, and entertainment are all part of the tourism experience, a broad social and cultural activity with food highlighted as essential and significant in this context (Quan & Wang, 2004). According to the government report, Guilin lacks food-related tourism items, the local cuisine culture has not been well inherited and propagated. And the research on experiential products in Guilin's tourism product system is lacking, particularly in food tourism (Cheng, 2002). Within the realm of the tourism experience, various elements contribute to its richness, including food, hotels, transportation, attractions, and entertainment. As a broad social and cultural activity, food holds a particularly crucial and noteworthy position, emphasizing its essentiality and significance in this context (ChinaNews, 2021). Tourism practitioners have made concerted efforts to broaden their offerings and cater to the desires of certain customers



seeking authentic experiences of minority cultures and traditions. By responding to these needs, they aim to provide a diverse range of commodities that capture the essence of these unique cultural experiences (Tu & Zhang, 2020). Given the current state of Guilin's tourism industry, exploring the development of food tourism and identifying the critical success factors (CSFs) for food tourism destinations is particularly important. In management theory, CSFs serve as essential criteria supporting strategic decision-making, helping enterprises enhance competitive advantage, expand differentiated competitive pathways, and achieve long-term sustainable development. Applying the identification of CSFs to the local tourism industry demonstrates an effective transfer of mature management theories into the practice of tourism management.

Although scholars have examined the CSFs for food tourism development, the key success factors for a globally renowned World Heritage site like Guilin, as a food tourism destination, have yet to be deeply researched and systematically explored. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by focusing on Guilin as a case study, with the goal of developing a framework for the CSFs of food tourism destinations.

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

Despite the current emphasis on research and development of cultural and creative products in tourism, there is a noticeable gap in incorporating food culture into the development of food tourism products (Gonda et al., 2021; Zhou et al., 2020). Furthermore, few studies have approached this topic from the perspective of the Total Product Concept (TPC) theory (Levitt, 1983). There is no systematic and in-depth research on the tourism product system of Guilin and Other tourist cities in China (Guan, 2010). Meanwhile, most studies discuss the benefits of strategies for

developing food tourism destinations from either the supply side or demand side (Ellis et al., 2018; Pamukçu et al., 2021; Smith & Xiao, 2008; Zain, 2019), paying less attention to promote the food tourism from both sides. Besides, there is a lack of research on integrating food into the tourism product system (Chen, 2016; Lai et al., 2018), which was investigated in this study.

The need to investigate the role of natural, social and cultural resources for food tourism products development. Food is vital in tourism (Axelsen & Swan, 2009; Lai et al., 2018; Mora et al., 2021; Pamukçu et al., 2021; Zain, 2019). As social and economic standards have risen, tourists have increasingly prioritized the culinary aspect of their travel experiences (Abeal Vázquez et al., 2021). Furthermore, several studies emphasize the substantial role that food plays in shaping the overall tourism experience (Berbel-Pineda et al., 2019; Chang, 2021; Fusté-Forné et al., 2021). Many scholars have discussed the relationship between food and tourism destinations. As an example, Qian Chen (2016) conducted a study exploring the influence of food tourism on promoting Chinese regions. This research examined the food experiences of domestic tourists from the demand side, revealing that food was a crucial factor influencing tourists' decision-making during the pre-travel stage. Mehul et al. (2019) analysed that food tourism development can complement destinations like Andaman and Nicobar Islands, which are overly dependent on natural resource tourism. It indicates that Guilin, which shares a similar situation, can also utilise food tourism as a key enabler in boosting the local economy.

Government support and favourable macro policies greatly aid the development of food tourism destinations (Vargas, 2020). In some Asian countries, the government has absolute power in economic development and industrial layout (Wang & Xu,

2014). Some studies indicate that the successful development of tourism for some World Heritage sites requires the involvement of both government and communities, which can positively impact the development of the destination (Mohamed et al., 2017). However, the role of government and community have not been thoroughly investigated in previous studies.

The involvement of stakeholders such as businesses, associations and communities also significantly promotes tourism (Stone et al., 2021). Social resources are, therefore, an essential factor to consider when developing a food tourism destination. However, researchers have focused more on the taste of the food and the visitor experiences. Some scholars have only given the impact of social resources on food tourism more attention in recent years. There are few empirical studies on constructing a food tourism destination with government support. It remains to be clarified what expectations business owners, food service providers and tourists have of the government in promoting food tourism.

Local food possesses significant qualities such as cultural significance, authenticity, and novelty, making it a pivotal factor in attracting tourists (Ellis et al., 2018). The pivotal role of both traditional and non-traditional gastronomy in fostering food tourism. By utilizing local ingredients and accentuating the destination's distinctive cultural attributes, gastronomic experiences become instrumental in promoting food tourism. In the last 30 years, Guilin's tourism industry has over-emphasized its karst landscape, such as carve tours, Li River, and parks, which caused Guilin's food tourism to expand slowly (He et al., 2021; Sofield et al., 2016). Drawing from the aforementioned studies, it is recommended that food tourism be embraced as a valuable complement to promoting Guilin's tourism economy. Given the significance

of the food experience in food tourism destinations, particular attention should be given to enhancing and showcasing the culinary aspects of the region. However, analysis of the recent studies reveals that the research on utilising natural and cultural resources to improve the food experience in Guilin has yet to be thoroughly investigated (Lai et al., 2018; Okumus, 2020; Zain, 2019). Research to understand the use of natural and cultural resources to improve the food and drink experience in a destination like Guilin thus requires recognition.

From the above points, it is clear that food tourism can have a significant impact on local tourism development, however, many factors influence food tourism and there is a need to identify the Critical Success Factors (CSFs) for Guilin as a food tourism destination. Meanwhile, a current research trend also shows that various researchers have contributed their efforts to identify a tourism destination's CSFs. For example, Chen Qi (2006) points out that motivation is the prerequisite for tourists' choice, and the regional characteristics of the destination are one of the motives for promoting tourists' choice. According to Silkes et al. (2013), effective marketing plays a pivotal role in ensuring the success of tourism destinations. Additionally, Hiamey et al. (2020) emphasized that the success of a food tourism destination should take into account the socio-cultural perspective of the tourists. Later, Aziz et al. (2021) argue that distinctive food culture heritage can attract tourists, and the regional and national culture of the destination is an obvious attraction to tourists. Researchers have offered different perspectives on the CSFs of food tourism destinations; however, it is argued that the research is still at an early stage (Marais et al., 2017; Park & Widyanta, 2022).

Based on the extensive research conducted by scholars in the field of food tourism destinations, further investigations have been undertaken to explore the CSFs that

drive the development of such destinations. From a sociocultural angle, Hiamey et al. (2020) analysed the sensory characteristics, mediating factors and behavioural intentions of the CSFs of food tourism destinations. Authenticity in tourism is what most tourists want to get (Yang et al., 2020). Anton Martin et al. (2021) argue that core food products with authenticity in destinations have significant symbolic value as they represent and express local culture and identity, thereby attracting tourists and influencing their behavioural intentions (Benur & Bramwell, 2015). On this basis Guojun (2020) confirmed that the authenticity of destination ingredients is an important factor in attracting tourists' choice. At the same time, experiencing the food culture of the tourist destination while watching and participating in the preparation of local specialties will bring a sense of accomplishment to the tourists, who can obtain both physiological and psychological satisfaction when enjoying the food (Rachão et al., 2021)..

Existing research indicates a growing demand and potential for core food tourism products in destinations, yet there is a scarcity of studies examining both the supply and demand aspects (Marais et al., 2017). Investigating the CSFs of a food tourism destination like Guilin necessitates an examination of both the supply and demand sides, with a particular focus on defining the core food tourism product. Such research will provide stakeholders with accurate insights to facilitate the development of food products that offer an enhanced tourism experience.

CSFs vary across industries. To delve deeper into CSFs in food destinations, it is necessary to further explore the aforementioned factors (Marais et al., 2017). The identification of CSFs in food tourism destinations will equip destination marketers with a better understanding of effective promotional strategies. A literature search has

revealed a significant amount of research on food tourism in Southeast Asia; however, there is a lack of English literature on mainland China, particularly in terms of CSFs for food tourism. Therefore, continuous research efforts are needed to investigate CSFs in food tourism destinations such as Guilin.

Through a comprehensive literature review, a noteworthy observation emerges: the majority of English publications focusing on food tourism destinations primarily examine research contexts rooted in Western cities (Debrecéniová, 2016; Fusté-Forné et al., 2021; Hillel et al., 2013; Lai et al., 2018; Noguer-Juncà et al., 2021), with fewer studies focused on the Asian cities (Choe & Kim, 2018; Henderson, 2016). The researchers of these studies generally focused on identifying the significance of the success factors of food tourism destinations in some Asian countries, and they used them to build a structural framework (Chaney & Ryan, 2012; Chang, 2021; May et al., 2021).

Despite the efforts of previous studies, there remains a need to develop a framework of CSFs for food tourism destinations in Asian countries, particularly in a vast, populous, and culturally diverse country like China, which encompasses numerous tourist attractions. In Guilin, in particular, studies focused on deeply exploring local ethnic culture for the development of food tourism products are especially scarce (Cheng, 2002; Guan, 2010). It is still a research gap to develop Guilin's core food tourism products from both supply and demand perspectives and to construct a CSF framework for Guilin's food tourism destinations through quantitative research methods. By undertaking such efforts, it becomes possible to determine the key factors that can apply to similar destinations in China, irrespective of their various stages of

tourism development. Therefore, further research is needed to construct a framework of CSFs for Guilin as a food tourism destination.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

The following four questions will be addressed to achieve the research aims.

- 1) What are the natural, social, and cultural resources that can be used for food and tourism product development?
- 2) What are the critical success factors for Guilin to build a food tourism destination?
- 3) How to build the framework of critical success factors of Guilin as a food tourism destination?

#### **1.5 Research Objectives**

This study research objectives are:

- 1) To examine the natural, social, and cultural resources that could be used for regional food tourism products development in Guilin city as a tourism destination.
- 2) To determine the critical success factors of building a food tourism destination.
- 3) To develop a framework of critical success factors of Guilin as a food tourism destination.

## **1.6 Significance of Study**

This study analyses the natural and social resources of the world-famous tourist city of Guilin from the perspective of food tourism and proposes critical success factors that influence food tourism destinations. From both the supply and demand sides, it analyses tourists' demand for local cuisine during tourism, identifies the destination's core food products and proposes a framework of food-focused critical success factors. Meanwhile, it provides a theoretical analysis model for studying the relationship between food products and tourism destinations in food tourism. These will enrich the theoretical study of food tourism.

From a social science research perspective, this study has both theoretical and empirical research contributions. To address theoretical gaps, this study innovatively connects TPC theory with the development of food tourism destinations, extending management theory into the tourism discipline. This approach integrates multiple dispersed factors within a single framework and employs rigorous quantitative analysis to explore the critical success factors influencing food tourism destinations. Additionally, the study emphasizes both the supply and demand needs of tourists during the travel experience, analyzing the interrelationships between tourists, food tourism products, and the destination. In terms of empirical research, a framework of success factors for food tourism destinations has been developed, which is instructive for tourism development in Guilin and other similar cities in Asia.

The success factor framework centred on the destination food product is not a simple classification of tourism products; it is based on supply-demand and market demand and is based on consumer demand (Abeal Vázquez et al., 2021; Benur & Bramwell, 2015). Based on the analysis of tourists' needs, the content of the framework of food



tourism products is refined. In contrast, the expectations of food tourism product providers are analyzed to follow or guide tourists' experiential needs and increase their intention to be loyal to the destination. From the standpoint of food tourism, achieving a balance between the supply and demand sides is vital in enhancing the tourism competitiveness of the destination city.

Guilin is a world-famous tourist city in China with typical karst natural scenery, long history, and diversified ethnic culture. It has long relied on natural landscape tourism resources, with few tourism products focusing on tourists' needs and experiences. It lacks tourism products that can create attachments to stimulate repeat experiences and consumption. Local food and products are considered important in tourism activities (Pamukçu et al., 2021), but food tourism in Guilin is still in its early stages. Based on current market demand and objectives, core food tourism products with local cultural and geographical characteristics, events, cuisines, and experiences directly impact the sustainable development of Guilin and other similar cities highly dependent on tourism.

By continuously optimizing the core food product and adapting the critical success factors framework to changes in food tourism, the fundamental competitiveness of Guilin's tourism industry can be improved. And the city, which has long relied on natural landscape income, can become a food tourism destination with a new tourism development path.

### **1.7 Scope of the Study**

This study uses Guilin as a case study and analyses the natural and social resources of the region based on a food perspective. The CSFs influencing the food tourism destination are summarised, and the expectations and demands on the supply and

demand sides for different dimensions of the core food tourism product are investigated. The demand forecasts carried out simultaneously are closely related to the development of food tourism destinations. Two primary reasons justify their inclusion in this study. Firstly, previous research has demonstrated that the appeal of a food tourism destination stems from the natural resources and cultural heritage of the region. Secondly, there is a notable scarcity of forecasts based on resource-oriented assessments conducted in previous literature on both the demand and supply sides, thus warranting further research in this area.

This study limited its scope by seeking the views of tourists and food providers in Guilin to understand their expectations and needs for different dimensions of Guilin's food tourism products. The survey is a self-administered questionnaire collected among Guilin scenic spots, business operators, travel agencies, other stakeholders, including government agencies, and ingredient growers. As food tourism is at a preliminary stage of development in Guilin, other stakeholders are not included in this study. On the other hand, tourists and food providers are the focus of this study as they are the key stakeholders that significantly influence and are influenced by the food tourism destination.

This study will undertake quantitative research, and the research design follows the hypothetical deduction method. The data will be collected using a questionnaire to confirm the hypothesis through data analysis. The data from the questionnaire will be combined with publicly available data published on government websites to carry out comprehensive analysis to identify the core food products of the destination.

First by exploring the proposing hypotheses through Delphi method, and then by testing these hypotheses through quantitative research. Delphi method was used to enhance the robust and reliability of the quantitative method, researchers can gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the research topic. In this study, researchers establish theories and propose hypotheses based on insights surrounding the RO1 and RO2, and then use quantitative methods to test these theories. And the study required careful planning and coordination of each phase. It involves two rounds of the Delphi method, which assisted in the design of quantitative measurement instruments. In contrast, the quantitative research phase utilized a survey method to collect data from both the supply and demand sides to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings.

The Guilin government is committed to making the city a world-class tourist destination, and the development of Guilin's local cuisine has been a policy direction for the past four years. While there has been a strong demand for local food products, foreign tourists are less aware of Guilin culture and local cuisine. Not many domestic scholars have studied the success factors of a food tourism destination, but China is a major food country with no shortage of successful food tourism destinations. Guilin's geographical location on the border with Southeast Asia has led to a study of Guilin's food tourism destinations that combines the perspectives of domestic visitors from other food destinations and several Southeast Asian tourists.

### **1.8 Definition of Terms**

The important terms used for this present study are explained below:

### **1.8.1 Critical Success Factors**

Critical success factors refer to factors that are critical to the success of an industry. It is a concept commonly used when exploring the relationship between industry characteristics and business strategy. The CSFs approach involves analysing and identifying the key factors that make a business successful, and then identifying and planning system requirements around these key factors. This helps to construct a competitive advantage for the industry.

### **1.8.2 Total Product Concept**

Total Product Concept theory is a concept often mentioned in marketing. The TPC theory emphasizes a holistic and systematic view of products and uses social marketing concepts to guide product design, production, sales, and service (Nickels, 1982). The TPC theory includes three levels of products (Smith, 1994), in the case of food tourism products, it includes core food products, a synthesis of tangible and intangible products, and enhanced products (Xu, 2010). These three levels of products can form a scale or system and even develop into a supply chain in terms of marketing, running through supply and demand (Smith, 1994; Smith & Xiao, 2008).

### **1.8.3 Food Tourism Destination**

A food tourism destination is an area that combines tourism and culinary offerings to attract visitors. To be recognized as such, it needs resources, accessibility, sustained tourist interest, and a strong brand image (Guan et al., 2019; Lee & Arcodia, 2011; Lin et al., 2011). Food is both a revenue driver and a cultural symbol, according to studies (Badu-Baiden et al., 2022; Park & Widyanta, 2022).

#### **1.8.4 Food Tourism**

Food tourism, also known as culinary tourism, involves travel motivated by the desire to experience a destination's cuisine (Ellis et al., 2018). It includes activities such as dining at local restaurants, visiting food markets, participating in cooking classes, and attending food festivals.

#### **1.8.5 Food Culture**

Food culture encompasses the practices, traditions, and beliefs surrounding the production, preparation, and consumption of food within a particular community or region. It reflects the local identity, heritage, and social customs related to food (Dwyer, 2021).

#### **1.8.6 Destination Marketing**

Destination marketing refers to the strategic promotion and advertising of a specific location to attract tourists (Buhalis, 1999). It involves a coordinated set of actions by various stakeholders, including tourism boards, travel agencies, and local businesses, to highlight the unique attractions, services, and experiences that a destination offers (Breda et al., 2006). Effective destination marketing aims to enhance the visibility and appeal of the destination, thereby increasing tourist arrivals and boosting the local economy.

#### **1.8.7 Destination Image**

Destination image is the perception or impression that tourists have of a destination (Baloglu et al., 1999; Quan & Wang, 2004). It includes the destination's physical attributes, cultural heritage, social environment, and overall atmosphere. The image of

a destination can significantly influences tourists' decision-making processes and their satisfaction with their travel experience (Leong et al., 2010; Okumus et al., 2007).

#### **1.8.8 Visitor Experience**

Visitor experience refers to the overall satisfaction and enjoyment that tourists derive from their visit to a destination (Kim and Iwashita, 2016). This includes their interactions with local services, attractions, hospitality, and the environment (Hall & Sharples, 2003; Timothy & Ron, 2013). Key elements influencing visitor experience include the quality of service, accessibility, safety, authenticity, and personal interactions.

#### **1.8.9 Stakeholder Involvement**

Stakeholder involvement refers to the active participation and collaboration of various groups and individuals who have an interest or stake in the tourism destination (Beltramo et al., 2021). These stakeholders include government bodies, local businesses, community organizations, tourists, and residents (Ellis et al., 2018).

#### **1.8.10 Core Food Products**

Core food products are the essential and distinctive food items that are emblematic of a destination's culinary heritage (Anton Martin et al., 2021; Özdemir & Seyitoğlu, 2017). These products often have historical, cultural, and economic significance and are a major draw for food tourists (Liberato et al., 2020; Lin et al., 2022).

#### **1.8.11 Government Support**

Government support encompasses the policies, funding, and initiatives provided by local, regional, and national governments to facilitate the development and

sustainability of tourism destinations (Wang & Xu, 2014). This support can include infrastructure development, regulatory frameworks, promotional activities, and investment incentives (Ellis et al., 2018; Leong et al., 2010; Zain, 2019).

#### **1.8.12 Corporate Social Responsibility**

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) theory posits that businesses have an obligation beyond profit-making to consider the social, environmental, and ethical impacts of their operations that from Freeman, R. E. (1984). It emphasizes that companies should integrate sustainable and socially responsible practices into their core strategies, benefiting stakeholders such as employees, communities, and the environment. CSR theory is rooted in the idea that responsible corporate behavior enhances long-term value, builds trust, and promotes a balance between economic success and societal well-being (Carroll, A. B, 1991; Porter, M. E., & Kramer, M. R, 2006).

#### **1.9 Organization of the Thesis**

The paper is organized into five chapters. Chapter One lays the groundwork by detailing the study's background, articulating the problem statement, formulating research questions and objectives, highlighting the study's significance, and delineating its scope. The subsequent chapter, Chapter Two, conducts an extensive literature review to establish a theoretical framework for the CSFs in food tourism, focusing on Guilin's food resources. It delves into the CSF concept, scrutinizes the determinants of food tourism success, analyzes demand, and pinpoints the destination's core food products, culminating in the generation of testable hypotheses. Chapter Three outlines the methodological approach, describing the research design, instruments, data collection methods, and quantitative analysis techniques adopted to

fulfill the study's aims. In Chapter Four, the gathered data is rigorously analyzed to extract relevant patterns, relationships, and insights that align with the research goals. Finally, Chapter Five synthesizes the research findings, discussing how the study's objectives were met, its contributions to the field, practical implications, limitations, and future research avenues. This comprehensive structure ensures a systematic exploration of the factors driving the success of Guilin as a food tourism destination.





## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter explores the natural and social resources of Guilin through the lens of food tourism, while examining the concept of a food tourism destination and its CSFs. A comprehensive literature review was conducted, leading to the identification of 22 factors that were then categorized into six key dimensions: government support, stakeholder involvement, visitor experience, destination image, destination marketing, and core food products.

Using Guilin as a case study, this paper highlights the significance of leveraging local intangible cultural heritage food as the core product for Guilin's food tourism. To analyze the success of a food tourism destination, this study assumes six dimensions as independent variables (IV), and the success of food tourism destinations as the dependent variable (DV).

#### **2.2 The Development of Food Tourism and Food Tourism Destinations**

China, as the world's largest ethnic nation, encompasses a unified multi-ethnic country with 56 distinct ethnic groups. These ethnic minorities are scattered across two-thirds of China's territory, primarily residing in remote areas in the northwest and west regions. To foster economic development in these ethnic minority areas, the Chinese government has implemented a range of preferential policies tailored to meet the needs of these communities.

And many ethnic minority regions have used tourism for economic development. Guilin, a place with many ethnic minorities in southwest China (Guilin Bureau of Statistics, 2020), has seen tourism gradually become a pillar industry in promoting local economic development since the 1980s.

The geographical environment and the multi-ethnic integration and gathering have led Guilin to form its unique food system. Meanwhile, Guilin has a moderate subtropical monsoon climate, with mild and rainy conditions, and the weather is suitable for the growth of many crops, animals, and plants (He et al., 2021). Examples include rice, taro, water chestnut, *Momordica Grosvenor*, tea trees, and bamboo. The multi-ethnic habits and food habits have formed a unique culture, which reflects in the various traditional folk festivals, such as the March Song Festival, the Qingming Festival, the Dragon Boat Festival, and the Mid-Autumn Festival involves different foods. From the food tourism perspective, we will discuss Guilin's natural resources (NR), social resources (SR), and cultural resources (CR) in the subsections.

### **2.2.1 Natural Resources to Support Guilin's Food Tourism**

Guilin (coordinates: 109°36'50" - 111°29'30"E, 24°15'23" - 26°23'30"N) is situated in a captivating alluvial plain amidst limestone karst formations in the northeastern part of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, with a total area of 27,800 square kilometres. In Guilin, over 5,180 square kilometres of karst landscapes result from the perfect alchemy of geological conditions. Because of its extraordinary natural beauty and aesthetic value, the World Heritage Committee (WHC) inscribed the extension of the Guilin Karst on UNESCO's World Heritage List on 23 June 2014 at its 38th session (He et al., 2021). Along the banks of the Li River, many pinnacles and stone pillars are arranged orderly and covered by verdant shrubs. The pagoda karsts of Guilin are

some of the most beautiful and spectacular landform assemblages in China and the world, as shown in Figure 2.1. Many ethnic regions with limited development options (Qi et al., 2013) have adopted tourism for economic development due to geographical features, historical factors, and cultural factors (Chaowu Xie et al., 2022). Tour operators are actively diversifying their offerings to meet the growing demand for authentic experiences of ethnic minority cultures and traditions (Tu & Zhang, 2020). This trend aligns with the potential economic development opportunities that tourism offers for ethnic regions, benefiting both the demand and supply sides.



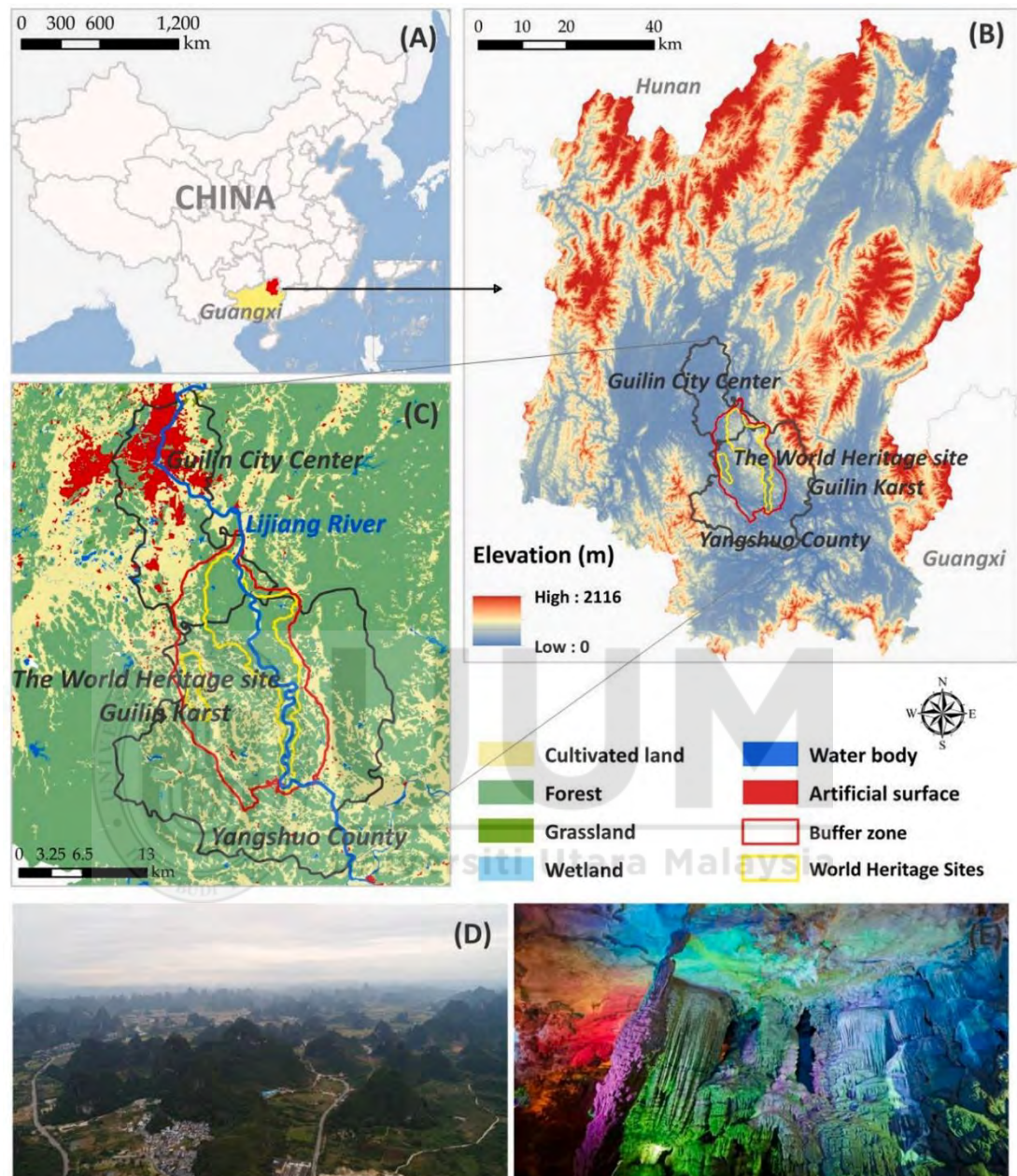


Figure 2.1 Study Area and Location of Guilin Karst World Heritage Site.

(A) Location of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, China; (B) Elevation of geological environment; (C) Land use type map; (D) Karst landscape; (E) Stalactites and stalagmites in Crown cave.

#### 2.2.1.1 Natural Environment of Guilin

The Guilin locates in the northeastern region of the Guangxi province, with a complex topography dominated by karst peaks from valleys, mountains, and hills, and the Yue

Cheng Ling mountain range to the north (Guo, 2022). The topography gradually rises in the northwest and gradually slopes down towards the southeast, with uneven ups and downs, and the Peak of Cat Mountain is the highest in South China. The mountain vegetation is well-developed, with extensive forest cover, and flowers and trees flourish all year round. Wild vegetables and fruits of all kinds are abundant and prolific. Guilin is located in the central subtropical humid monsoon zone, with a humid climate and ample rainfall, with an annual rainfall of 1500-2250 mm and an average yearly temperature of 16 to 20 degrees Celsius (He et al., 2021). Due to the topography, Guilin has an excellent climate, many streams and rivers and a well-developed water system, with the Li River and the Xiangjiang River in its territory and abundant water and excellent water quality. The favorable geographical and ecological environment, along with favorable climatic conditions, abundantly provide the local population with a rich variety of products and food sources (Zhou, 2022).

The natural environment nurtures each region's unique ingredients, which influence local dietary and food products (Murphy et al., 2000). In southwest China, Guilin has a unique dietary structure, ethnic flavours and diverse food products.

#### **2.2.1.2 Unique natural environment produces rich and varied ingredients**

The unique natural environment of Guilin is fundamental in shaping its rich and diverse food resources, particularly evident in the culinary traditions of its ethnic minorities, including the Zhuang, Dong, Miao, and Yao groups. The geographic and climatic conditions of this region, located south of the Lingnan area, are highly conducive to agriculture, which has cultivated a food culture grounded in rice as a staple. Over centuries, this agrarian base gave rise to a diet and culinary culture that

heavily relies on local resources and reflects the distinct ecological and agricultural features of Guilin (Guilin, 2020).

The region's food structure can be divided into staple and secondary food categories, showcasing the natural variety available. Rice remains the foundation of Guilin's cuisine, reflecting its importance in local agriculture and the influence of the region's subtropical environment, which supports abundant rice production. However, Guilin's secondary food structure reveals even greater diversity, shaped by the availability of a wide range of meats, oils, vegetables, fruits, and wild ingredients. Local dishes often incorporate pork, beef, mutton, and poultry such as chicken, duck, and goose, as well as freshwater fish sourced from the area's rivers. Additionally, a variety of oils—lard, peanut oil, rapeseed oil, tea oil, sesame oil, and the uniquely local fire hemp oil—serve as essential ingredients in many dishes, adding distinctive flavors and catering to diverse culinary techniques.

Guilin's climate and fertile soils also support a vast selection of vegetables and wild edible plants, which are integral to local ethnic cuisines. Leafy greens like mustard, cabbage, spinach, and wild vegetables such as leeks, ferns, and bamboo shoots feature prominently, providing both nutritional value and unique textures. A variety of mushrooms, gourds like pumpkin and bitter melon, and legumes—including soybeans, peas, and mung beans—further enhance the range of dishes. Seasonal fruits like sugar cane, citrus, grapes, and dates add natural sweetness and balance to the cuisine, reflecting the region's biodiversity (Guo, 2022; Wendian, 2008).

The diversity of ingredients in Guilin's food culture offers an authentic and enriching culinary experience. Traditional dishes are crafted from locally sourced, high-quality

ingredients that capture the essence of the region's environment and cultural heritage. This variety not only enriches Guilin's cuisine but also enhances its appeal as a food tourism destination.

### **2.2.2 Social Resources to Support Guilin's Food Tourism**

The development of Guilin's food industry is strengthened by various social resources, including government support, associations, educational institutions, and public participation, each contributing to the industry's growth, cultural richness, and sustainable tourism appeal.

#### **2.2.2.1 Government plays an important role**

The government plays an essential role in shaping the food tourism landscape. Policy initiatives, such as the "Chinese culinary tourism" theme introduced by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in 2003 and subsequent plans, have established frameworks to integrate tourism and local culture. Notably, the "13th Five-Year Plan for Tourism Development" in Guangxi emphasized exploring local specialties, while the "14th Five-Year Plan for Food Safety in Guilin" further focused on quality standards and food safety. These policy efforts were reinforced in 2022 when Guilin's government aimed to build the city into a "World Food Capital," demonstrating a strong administrative commitment to leveraging local food culture as a global tourism asset. Furthermore, the involvement of government leaders in promoting traditional dishes, such as Guilin rice noodles, has heightened awareness of local cuisine, bridging traditional and digital marketing efforts to reach diverse audiences.

#### **2.2.2.2 Active participation of all relevant organisations**

Organizations like the Guilin Culinary and Catering Association play a key role in promoting Guilin's food culture and supporting the local culinary industry. These groups bring together businesses, schools, and experts to highlight regional dishes, including those with roots in minority cultures like the Zhuang, Miao, and Dong. By hosting events, competitions, and training programs, they help preserve and promote traditional foods, making them more accessible to the public and aiding the development of culinary professionals. Such efforts ensure that Guilin's unique food traditions not only draw in tourists but also strengthen local pride and identity.

Local colleges and universities also contribute by training chefs and tourism experts. Their programs combine cooking skills with knowledge of health, aesthetics, and culture, preparing students for careers in food and hospitality. By working closely with local businesses and government, these institutions help raise Guilin's reputation as a food tourism destination and create a steady supply of skilled workers for the industry.

The involvement of local communities, particularly ethnic minority groups, is crucial in keeping Guilin's food traditions alive. The Zhuang, Miao, and Dong people have unique cooking methods like roasting, pickling, and bamboo cooking, which use local spices and ecological knowledge. As more people from these groups move into cities, their traditional foods have gained popularity, both locally and among tourists. Surveys show that these dishes are highly valued, further emphasizing their role in Guilin's food tourism success.

In summary, Guilin's culinary tourism thrives thanks to the collaboration of associations, educational institutions, and local communities, with government support



providing additional structure and promotion. This teamwork preserves cultural heritage while adapting to modern tastes, ensuring that Guilin remains a top destination for food lovers.

### **2.2.3 Culture Resources to Support Guilin's Food Tourism**

Food culture encompasses a comprehensive system that encompasses the processing and preparation of foods, the act of consuming food, as well as the associated beliefs, foodways, culinary practices, and eating habits (Dwyer, 2021). The local food culture and environment serve as invaluable tourism resources, playing a significant role in the development of local food tourism. The unique culinary traditions, flavors, and food-related experiences derived from the local culture and environment become key attractions for tourists, enhancing their overall travel experiences (Si & Couto, 2020). For instance, the gastronomic heritage, distinctive food culture, and foodways of Yogyakarta in Indonesia have garnered increasing attention from international tourists. These unique culinary aspects of Yogyakarta offer visitors a rich and authentic experience, contributing to the region's growing popularity as a sought-after destination for food tourism (Park & Widyanta, 2022). Guilin has a long history and a unique food culture, providing a sound basis for creating a food tourism destination.

#### **2.2.3.1 Variety of food cultures of ethnic groups**

Guilin's ethnic minorities, including the Zhuang, Dong, Miao, and Yao, have cultivated a rich and vibrant culinary culture, deeply rooted in their traditions and natural environment. Each ethnic group showcases unique food customs that highlight their history, hospitality, and creative use of local ingredients.

Food and festivities play a central role in these ethnic cultures. For example, when visiting Yao, Dong, or Miao families, guests are greeted with strong and hot oil tea, symbolizing warmth and hospitality. Banquets among the Zhuang, Yao, and Dong are often vibrant celebrations featuring singing, dancing, and traditional toasts. The Zhuang people's "Longji Water Wine" is a signature welcome, often accompanied by songs that deepen the cultural experience. During these gatherings, long tables are set up, and bamboo musical instruments are played, creating a festive atmosphere that intertwines food and artistic expression.

Guilin's ethnic cuisines are equally diverse and rich in cultural significance. Signature dishes like rice noodles, oil tea, and duck with vinegar and blood are steeped in history and folklore, reflecting the region's intangible cultural heritage. Local festivals further showcase these culinary traditions. Events like the March 3 Song Festival and the Dragon Boat Festival combine traditional foods—such as five-colored glutinous rice, zongzi, and sour meat—with vibrant cultural activities like dragon boat races, tea picking competitions, and singing contests. These festivals allow locals and tourists to immerse themselves in Guilin's unique ethnic flavors and customs.

The local government plays a significant role in preserving and promoting these food traditions. Annual festivals, cooking competitions, and food fairs are organized to develop and showcase the culinary resources of Guilin's ethnic groups. These efforts have created a comprehensive catering industry system, encompassing everything from raw material cultivation to dining experiences. Such initiatives ensure the sustainability of traditional cuisines while integrating them into Guilin's tourism economy.

Guilin's natural environment, with its fertile land and biodiversity, supports the growth of high-quality, authentic ingredients that are integral to its ethnic cuisines. Combined with government policies that encourage food tourism, the region is well-positioned to develop as a premier food tourism destination. By leveraging its culinary diversity and cultural richness, Guilin offers tourists a multifaceted experience that includes tasting, learning, and participating in local traditions. This blend of gastronomy and culture not only enhances the region's tourism appeal but also ensures the preservation of its ethnic heritage.

In conclusion, the variety of food cultures among Guilin's ethnic groups is a testament to the region's historical depth, natural abundance, and cultural vibrancy. These culinary traditions provide a foundation for sustainable tourism, offering visitors an authentic taste of Guilin's ethnic diversity and fostering an appreciation for its rich heritage (Committee, 1992).

#### **2.2.3.2 Guilin Intangible Cultural Heritage Cuisine**

With its mystique and heritage, food culture is like a silent book, and local governments actively explore regional culinary resources and promote the preservation of intangible cultural heritage projects. Many foods have been named intangible cultural heritage. These unique local culinary skills are well preserved, including the traditional brewing process of Guilin Sanhua wine, the production process of Guilin bean curd milk, oil tea, rice noodles, Quanzhou vinegared blood duck, Lingui plate duck, Guilin sandwich meat (Wei, 2005; Zhou, 2022).

Table 2.1  
*Ethnic Cuisines and Festivals in Various Regions of Guilin*

| Area                                 | Guan yang                                                                           | Gongcheng                                                                                                                      | Lingui                                                                                          | Urban                                                                                                                            |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ethnic                               | Dong                                                                                | Yao                                                                                                                            | Miao                                                                                            | Zhuang                                                                                                                           |
| Staple Food                          | Glutinous rice and rice mixed with sweet potatoes, corn, taro and yams.             | Rice and maize mixed with sweet potatoes, cool potatoes, taro, corn, grits, sorghum, buckwheat, cassava and mountain potatoes. | Mainly rice, maize and glutinous rice mixed with sweet potatoes and taro.                       | Mainly rice, mixed with sorghum, maize, sweet potatoes, taro, etc.                                                               |
| Products                             | Sticky rice, sticky rice patties, sticky rice dumplings, sticky rice porridge, etc. | Rice dumplings, patties, reassuring rice, tri-coloured rice, etc.                                                              | There are rice dumplings, mochi, fancy glutinous rice, congee in meat soup and rice in vinegar. | Beans and rice, bamboo rice, five-coloured rice, minced pork congee, mugwort congee, rice dumplings, patties, rice noodles, etc. |
| Festivals                            | Agricultural tools festival                                                         | King Pan Festival<br>Firecracker Festival                                                                                      | Wind Festival<br>God Festival                                                                   | Rice noodle Festival                                                                                                             |
| Intangible Cultural Heritage Cuisine | Oil tea, Sweet potato flour                                                         | Oil tea<br>Steamed pork<br>Mugwort Patties                                                                                     | Plate duck, Water Chestnut Cake, Soya bean curd                                                 | Rice noodle, Sanhua Wine, Osmanthus tea                                                                                          |

Guilin's food tourism is shaped by the diverse culinary traditions of its ethnic minorities, such as the Zhuang, Dong, Miao, and Yao. Dishes like rice noodles, oil tea, and duck with vinegar reflect the region's cultural heritage. Local festivals and events further highlight these food traditions. The government plays a key role in preserving and promoting these culinary practices through festivals and food fairs. With its rich culture, fertile land, and supportive policies, Guilin is poised to become a leading food tourism destination, offering visitors authentic and immersive culinary experiences.

#### 2.2.4 The History of Food Tourism

Food tourism has garnered sustained attention from tourists over an extended period. Originating in the 1990s as a distinct form of special interest tourism (Ellis et al., 2018),

the study of food tourism gained momentum with the inaugural international conference on local cuisine and tourism in Cyprus in 2000 (Cohen & Avieli, 2004). Since then, numerous publications and papers have delved into various aspects of food tourism, including food tourism products, food tourists, and the intricate relationship between food and tourism (Marais et al., 2017).

Food tourism is a multifaceted concept that varies in its definition across different regions. According to Hall et al., (2003), it involves trips primarily motivated by visiting food producers, festivals, restaurants, and production areas. This allows travelers to explore new tastes and learn about different cultures and lifestyles (Long, 2004). Smith and Xiao (2008) further specify that food tourism is driven by the understanding, appreciation, and consumption of local food resources. Gastronomy takes center stage in food tourism, shaping tourists' travel behavior and providing a unique and culturally embedded experience (Ellis et al., 2018). In this context, food becomes a symbol representing a destination's local culture and identity, turning food tourism into a showcase of history and place (Anton Martin et al., 2021).

In conclusion, food tourism holds significant importance in the realm of tourism marketing. The incorporation of food as a primary or secondary component in travel experiences has gained popularity and shows promising potential. Food and cuisine play a crucial role in shaping a destination's brand image, as they are integral elements in the overall tourism experience. Therefore, the study of food tourism should duly acknowledge the central role of food activities in tourism and take into account the purpose and motivation of tourists (Yousaf & Xiucheng, 2018).

### **2.2.5 The Development of Food Tourism Destinations**

A tourism destination refers to a specific area that possesses unique tourism resources and has the potential to attract a significant number of tourists for various tourism activities (Ab Karim & Chi, 2010). For an area to become a tourism destination, it must meet three essential conditions: it should have sufficient tourism resources to satisfy the tourists' needs for tourism activities, a variety of suitable tourism and transport facilities that enable visitors to reach the destination with ease and stay comfortably, and a steady flow of tourism demand. In food tourism, a destination must fulfill the above three conditions and have high-quality food resources, a wide range of food tourism products, a gastronomic attraction that is central to the destination's identity, and a food tourism brand image that is visible and well-regarded (Lee & Arcodia, 2011; Lin et al., 2011).

The role of food and beverages in the tourism industry is of paramount importance and can substantially contribute to a destination's revenue (Kivela & Crofts, 2016). Moreover, food holds significant cultural significance, serving as a symbol of a destination's uniqueness and providing an avenue for tourists to immerse themselves in its distinctiveness (Marais et al., 2017). Experiencing local cuisine has emerged as a significant avenue for tourists to immerse themselves in the culture of a destination (Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Ellis et al., 2018; Okumus, 2020). The diverse geographical and human environments contribute to the development of a distinct food culture in each destination. This food culture, in turn, enhances the differentiation of tourism destinations (Leong et al., 2010). The unique food culture of a destination can differentiate it from others and enhance its identity, image, and branding, making it an essential tool for destination marketing (Lai et al., 2017). However, more research is necessary to utilize food and drink as a marketing tool fully. The promotion process

should reflect the destination's food culture, residents' food life, and the exchange and sharing of food culture, instead of just focusing on the food product (Frochot, 2008).

Food and drink can also create a peak experience for tourists, with the opportunity to try new foods and participate in food festivals and formal food events, which can influence the tourist experience, satisfaction, and impression of the destination (Kivela & Crofts, 2016; Quan & Wang, 2004). A negative experience with the food service can indeed have a detrimental effect on the overall tourist experience, potentially resulting in a negative impression of the destination (Nield et al., 2000), even making them flee the destination or choose not to visit again (Alderighi et al., 2016). A review of the literature on food and tourist destinations indicates that destination image, destination marketing, and tourist experience are the key elements that promote tourist motivation and satisfaction. These areas require further attention to enhance the impact of food and drink as an essential part of a tourism destination.

#### **2.2.6 The Development of World-Famous Food Tourism Destinations**

The establishment of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network in 2004 marked a significant step towards promoting the growth of cultural and creative industries on an international scale. The network encompasses seven distinct disciplines, which include crafts and folk-art design, film, gastronomy, literature, media arts, and music. This global initiative aims to foster collaboration and exchange among cities that excel in these creative fields, contributing to the overall advancement of cultural and creative industries. In particular, the City of Gastronomy has garnered participation from 36 countries worldwide, with four Chinese cities earning recognition for their exceptional contributions to innovation and creativity (Yu & Sun, 2019). UNESCO designates the City of Gastronomy every two years, with a current total of 36 cities holding this

esteemed title. The selection process for inclusion in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network follows rigorous criteria. These include the presence of distinctive and well-established gastronomy, a vibrant community of traditional restaurants and chefs, the utilization of indigenous ingredients and preservation of local culinary techniques, the existence of traditional food markets and industry, a history of hosting food festivals and contests, and a commitment to environmental conservation and sustainable local products.

Food tourism plays a crucial role in advancing several Sustainable Development Goals, as outlined by the UNWTO and UNDP. These goals include promoting agricultural development, food security, nutrition, sustainable food production, and biodiversity conservation (Sosa et al., 2021). Encouraging public appreciation, integrating nutrition education in schools, and incorporating biodiversity conservation initiatives in culinary education all contribute to these objectives. UNESCO recognition for cities in various disciplines, including food, is subject to periodic monitoring and review every four years.

Table 2.2 presents a comparative analysis of key cities in food tourism, using 2019 data to consider the global pandemic's impact. This analysis is crucial for formulating post-pandemic tourism development strategies, offering insights to foster recovery and stabilize the tourism industry in the evolving economic context.

Table 2.2  
*Comparative Analysis of Several Prominent Cities Related to Food Tourism*

| City/Country     | Overview                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Representative Foods                                                                                                            |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Popayán/Colombia | Popayán cuisine is a fusion of three distinct traditions: pre-Columbian, African, and Spanish. Its richness extends beyond flavors to encompass symbolism, rituals, legends, and customs deeply embedded within the local culture. | Chulkiness, tortilla soup, cornbread, and various canned foods featuring peanuts are among the culinary delights of the region. |



|                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Östersund/Sweden     | <p>Östersund, situated in a sparsely populated region in central Sweden, is renowned for its food culture that revolves around sustainable local ingredients and embraces longstanding culinary traditions. The city is known for its craft breweries, cheese production, and a range of dairy products derived from goat or cow's milk.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | The region offers a diverse selection of food products, including sausages, chocolates, and truffles.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Chengdu/China        | <p>Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan Province in southwest China, holds the distinction of being the hometown of giant pandas. It is also renowned as the birthplace of Sichuan cuisine, one of the four major traditional Chinese culinary styles. Throughout history, Chengdu has been a pioneering city in various gastronomic aspects in China. It boasts several notable firsts, including the establishment of the first food museum, cultural tea center, brewery, and the distinction of being the first city in the country to have professional chefs.</p>                          | Chengdu is renowned for its signature dish, Kung Pao Chicken, which consists of chicken, peppers, garlic, chives, ginger, peanuts, and the distinctive Sichuan pepper, derived from a local tree. Other notable dishes from the region include Mapo Tofu, Guo Kui (a traditional pancake), and Hui Guo Rou.                                                         |
| Bendigo/Australia    | <p>Located in Victoria, Australia, Bendigo has a diverse cultural heritage stemming from 19th-century gold mining and the arrival of English, Irish, German, and Chinese immigrants. As a creative city of gastronomy, Bendigo is dedicated to reviving and promoting the rich Aboriginal food culture that thrived in the region for thousands of years. The city lies on the ancestral lands of the Dja Dja Wurrung tribe, who had a sustainable food system dating back 40,000 years.</p>                                                                                                | Bendigo is renowned for its wineries and breweries, as well as its production of various food items such as cheese, pears, apples, mushrooms, grains, and potatoes.                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Alba/Italy           | <p>Alba is situated in the province of Cuneo, within the Piedmont region, which was recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2014 for its stunning wineries. The city of Alba holds significance as a crucial contributor to the creation of the Slow Food movement, which emphasizes food quality, environmental sustainability, and fair pricing for producers and consumers. Alongside its renowned truffles, Alba is celebrated for its wines, peaches, and hazelnuts.</p>                                                                                                         | The city holds the distinction of being recognized as the "Capital of the white truffle," which is regarded as one of the most luxurious and sought-after delicacies globally.                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Tsuruoka/Japan       | <p>Tsuruoka, located in Yamagata Prefecture, is renowned for its role as the host of the Dewa Sanzan, which consists of three sacred mountains integral to the Shugendō religion blending Buddhism and Shinto practices. The surrounding mountains, plains, and proximity to the Sea of Japan greatly influence Tsuruoka's cuisine. The region produces a wide variety of foods, including notable dishes like gomadōfu (sesame tofu) and dadacha-mame, a type of green soybean specific to the area.</p>                                                                                   | One notable example is the shōjin ryōri, a type of vegan Buddhist cuisine that mountaineers can experience at the Saikan temple, situated atop one of the mountains.                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Tucson/United States | <p>Nestled in the Sonoran Desert of Arizona, Tucson boasts a rich agricultural heritage spanning 300 years, making it home to the largest agricultural history in the United States. This vibrant city has nurtured a unique cuisine, shaped by its diverse cultural history and traditional food preparation techniques handed down through generations. Recognized for its thriving culinary sector, Tucson has established itself as a pioneer in innovative food security programs and regulations, placing a strong emphasis on sustainable production and distribution practices.</p> | Tucson hosts a multitude of annual food festivals, fairs, and tastings, totaling over two dozen in number. These events serve as platforms to highlight the region's distinctive food specialties and traditions. A notable example is the Tucson Meet Yourself event, featuring shows, crafts, and traditional foods, drawing in over 100,000 attendees each year. |

|             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Macao/China | Macanese cuisine is heavily influenced by Portuguese maritime culture, as it incorporates spices and culinary traditions brought from Africa, India, and the Malaccan coast over centuries. This unique blend of Eastern and Western flavors, known as "Fusion Cuisine," has earned Macanese cuisine the prestigious designation of intangible heritage by the local government, highlighting its cultural significance and culinary richness. | An example of the culinary fusion in the city is African chicken, a dish that combines Asian ingredients with peri-peri peppers introduced by Portuguese explorers from Mozambique. Tucson hosts events like the Macao Food Festival and other food-related festivities that celebrate the diverse culinary offerings in the city. |
|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

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\* The data is from the website of <https://foodandroad.com/unesco-creative-cities-gastronomy>.

As can be seen from the representative cities mentioned above, having their cultural background is a common feature for each city to be selected as a World Food Capital. In addition, iconic cuisine, especially food with a local ethnic identity and a broad popular base, is the core attraction of these cities and towns and serves as a bridge for cultural export. As can be seen from Table 2.2, the iconic cuisine of each city is essential as the core food products and the soul of a food tourism destination. Some of the culinary skills specific to these cuisines are intangible cultural heritage, reflecting the unique local food habits and local taste preferences in food preparation. It is a behavioural choice hidden in the taste and habits of life, passed on through generations. It is what anthropology, and the social sciences are interested in studying and which is the core attraction worth promoting and shaping when developing local tourism. It shows that identifying iconic or core food products in tourism destinations with food resources is an important task to broaden the industrial pathway, develop the supply chain of this type of food, and expand its impact.

## **2.3 Critical Success Factor Theory**

### **2.3.1 Overview of Critical Success Factor Theory**

The exploration of Critical Success Factors or Key Success Factors dates to the 1860s and was initially applied in the domain of information systems. However, over the past two decades, it has been broadened to encompass a more extensive range of management practices. The concept of CSFs originated from the work of D. Ronald Daniel at McKinsey & Company in 1961. Since then, the CSF approach has been widely utilized to identify crucial information in strategic management (Nieh, 2012). Recognizing and understanding critical success factors has become an integral part of strategic management processes (Nieh & Chingyung, 2012).

The configuration and interplay of CSFs are crucial in helping organizations or projects accomplish their goals, maintain a competitive edge, prosper, meet management targets, and ultimately achieve success (Avcikurt et al., 2010). Focusing on key areas such as constraints, characteristics, circumstances, situations, events, activities, strategic factors, and variables is essential. When these elements are appropriately leveraged and consistently managed, they significantly contribute to the success and profitability of an event, individual, department, organization, or company (Huo, 2017). Since industries aim to achieve various objectives, each specific market and industry possesses its own unique set of CSFs (A. Neal & Geller, 1985).

The suggested number of CSFs has evolved over time, with Daniel (1961) initially proposing that each sector should have six associated with it, and subsequently, it was recommended that each sector should have between three and ten CSFs. Joel et al. (1984) introduced a method for identifying and determining CSFs that has since

become a vital principle in strategic management. Identifying CSFs has been instrumental in identifying information requirements, compiling a list of essential components for system success, and clarifying and concentrating management's responsibilities and efforts. According to research, identifying key success characteristics can have several advantages, including effective resource management, positioning, increased success, satisfied clients, increased revenue, sustainability, growth & development (Marais et al., 2017).

Relevant CSFs vary across industries, encompassing both tangible physical and intangible service factors specific to each market (Wang & Hung, 2015). In recent years, the application of CSFs theory has extended to the study of the catering industry (Gadelrab & Ekiz, 2019; May et al., 2021; Nieh & Chingyung, 2012) and tourism sector (Juwaidah et al., 2021; Marais et al., 2017; Zhou et al., 2019), reflecting its wide-ranging influence.

### **2.3.2 Critical Success Factors in Tourism**

The field of CSFs in tourism has received significant attention in academic literature. Key elements frequently discussed in relation to tourism CSFs include visitors, human resources, marketing, safety, food and beverages, and local services. These factors play a crucial role in shaping the success of tourism endeavors (Juwaidah et al., 2021; Marais et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2022; Zhou et al., 2019). The study of CSFs in tourism is rooted in strategic management, which helps businesses achieve success and gain a competitive advantage.

The identification of CSFs is a key aspect of strategic management. In a review conducted by Marais et al. (2017), 52 relevant academic research articles on tourism

CSFs were collected from mainstream journals. The studies were categorized into supply-side, demand-side, or a combination of both approaches. Most of the studies (67%) focused on the supply side, while 21% focused on the demand side, and 12% examined both supply and demand approaches ( Marais et al., 2017, Chang, 2021; Jones et al., 2015; Kozak & Buhalis, 2019).

The distribution of core tourism businesses in the studies shows a focus on management studies of accommodation and hotels (35%), activities (10%), ecotourism (8%), marketing (8%), food and beverage (6%), travel agencies (6%), wine tourism (6%), business tourism (4%), and cities (4%). This underscores the popularity of identifying critical success factors in the tourism industry, with the choice of methodology influencing the obtained results (Chaney & Ryan, 2012; Kozak & Buhalis, 2019; Mak et al., 2012). Additionally, most scholars have conducted research on either the supply or demand side of tourism CSFs.

The percentage of studies on CSFs for food tourism destinations is notable, accounting for only 6% of the total. The research focus of these papers primarily revolves around the catering and wine business. Existing literature reviews reveal a limited increase in the number of studies on CSFs for food destinations. Most of these studies concentrate on tourism, destination management, CSFs for the image of food destinations, or provide sociological perspectives on the success factors of food destinations.

Previous studies on tourism success factors date back to 1985, with researchers primarily examining CSFs that affect tourism operations management using quantitative, qualitative, or a combination of both methods. Their investigations encompassed both the supply and demand sides of tourism, as well as the division of

intersectoral functions. Through descriptive statistical analysis, they identified five critical success factors in tourism management: human resources, financial management, customer-related factors, quality, and facilities. These factors were deemed essential for success in the industry. In comparison, the remaining five related success factors were management efficiency, marketing, system cooperation, health conditions, and product development (A.Neal & Geller, 1985; Getz et al., 1999; Juwaidah et al., 2021; Leidecker & Bruno, 1984; Marais et al., 2017b; May et al., 2021).

### **2.3.3 The Identification of Critical Success Factors**

To improve the identification of CSFs, numerous well-established methods have been proposed by researchers. These methods comprise Rochart's five components (1979), two approaches highlighted in Kenichi's book (1982), and eight analytical techniques suggested by Leidecker et al., (1984).

From the perspective of business development, Rochart (1979) categorizes the sources of CSFs into specific industry structure, competitive strategy, industry position, geographical location, and environmental factors. Kenichi (1982) subsequently introduced two additional methods for identifying CSFs, namely market analysis and comparative analysis. Furthermore, to facilitate the strategic planning and development process, Leidecker et al (1984) recommend analyzing and identifying CSFs using eight analytical techniques, including environmental analysis, industry structure analysis, industrial enterprise experts, competitive analysis, industry leaders, enterprise ontology analysis, temporary emergent factors, and analysis of the impact of market strategy on profitability.

Rochart's (1979) approach utilizes the SWOT analysis to identify a company's CSFs by analyzing both its external environment and internal strengths. Meanwhile, Leidecker et al. (1984) suggest a three-level relationship between CSFs and the strategic planning process, consisting of the general environment, industrial environment, and the company itself. After identifying opportunities and threats, the five forces model is applied to assess strengths. Their theory provides an important reference for companies seeking to identify their CSFs, while Kenichi's (1982) theory is more widely applicable across various sectors. Many previous studies have employed these methods to identify the CSFs of tourism destinations.

The existing methods for identifying Critical Success Factors (CSFs) have significantly contributed to management theory and provided practical guidance. However, they lack sufficient consideration of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Based on the research context of food tourism destination development, this study creatively integrates these theories and argues for the inclusion of CSR (Donaldson, T., & Preston, L. E, 1995).

CSR theory emphasizes that while pursuing economic benefits, enterprises should also assume responsibilities toward society, the environment, and stakeholders (Carroll, A. B, 1991; Porter, M. E., & Kramer, M. R, 2006). For food tourism destinations like Guilin, identifying CSFs should not only focus on delivering high-quality food and services but also on protecting and preserving local cultural heritage to prevent the distortion of traditional foods caused by commercialization. Additionally, the development of food tourism must account for environmental impacts and foster positive relationships with local communities, residents, and visitors. By creating job

opportunities and improving the quality of life for residents, enterprises can better fulfill their social responsibilities.

Therefore, CSR should be incorporated into the framework for identifying CSFs to comprehensively capture influential factors and avoid overlooking critical elements. This study adopted and amalgamated the eight analytical techniques introduced by Leidecker et al., (1984) and Rochart's (1979) methodology to meticulously analyse and identify the Critical Success Factors (CSFs). This comprehensive approach is characterized by its practicality, offering well-defined steps throughout the empirical research process, enhancing the reliability and precision of our findings. This study analyses the natural and social resources of Guilin as a food tourism destination, with one of the key components being a detailed assessment of the differentiating resources and influencing factors as well as the unique food elements. This nuanced research greatly contributes to the discovery of CSFs that contribute to the prosperity of food tourism destinations. This methodological rigour, based on empirical and systematic analysis, ensures that our findings are both comprehensive and applicable.

One of the pivotal components of this research analysis focused on the detailed evaluation of available resources and the distinct environmental elements pertaining to the firms' locales. This meticulous examination significantly contributed to the unearthing of the CSFs specifically instrumental to the prosperity of food tourism destinations. This study aims to pinpoint the CSFs essential for the strategic planning and advancement of food tourism destinations. To ensure a thorough and impartial grasp of the existing knowledge in this area, a systematic literature review (SLR) was conducted. From a pool of 210 articles about food tourism destinations, a rigorous selection and exclusion process narrowed the focus to 41 articles for in-depth analysis



(Biyue et al., 2023). These selected articles were meticulously reviewed to gain a broad perspective. This review identified 49 CSFs relevant to food tourism destinations, illustrated in Figure 2.2 (Kim et al., 2021; Okumus et al., 2020; Rojas-Rivas et al., 2021). The five most prominent factors emerging from this analysis were marketing, food quality, products, cultural identity, and visitor experience.

Furthermore, the author enriched our study by incorporating the insights of Japanese economist Kenichi (1982), particularly his astute perspectives on brand image differentiation, product differentiation, and service differentiation. These elements, foundational to understanding the multifaceted nature of CSFs, were illuminated through a systematic literature review. The author's exploration delved deeply into an analysis of both the natural and social resources of Guilin.

In the process of identifying CSFs, the application of CSR theory in food tourism destinations emphasizes the multifaceted responsibilities of enterprises in promoting economic development, preserving cultural heritage, advancing sustainable development, and enhancing visitor experiences. In this context, corporate social responsibility is not only a necessary condition for enterprise growth but also a core factor for the competitiveness and sustainable development of food tourism destinations. By integrating the CSR concept, this study incorporates economic, social, and environmental benefits into the identification of CSFs. The next phase of this study saw an engaging collaboration with industry stalwarts and seasoned leaders. Their nuanced insights and veteran perspectives were instrumental in deepening our understanding of the CSFs pivotal to Guilin's standing as a renowned gastronomic tourism destination. Their invaluable contributions not only enriched these qualitative

insights but also fortified the foundational groundwork for the subsequent quantitative analysis.

This synergistic combination of established methodologies, grounded in Rochart's and Leidecker's foundational works, and enhanced by Kenichi's broad applications, facilitated a holistic and multidimensional exploration of CSFs. This harmonious integration, characterized by empirical rigor and qualitative depth, promises to offer actionable insights and strategic directions for stakeholders, aiming to optimize the allure and competitiveness of food tourism destinations globally.

These results are thus characterized by their comprehensiveness, depth, and actionable insights, poised to significantly contribute to the strategic planning and operational optimization of food tourism destinations, aligning their offerings with the identified CSFs to ensure sustainable growth and competitive advantage.

#### **2.4 Critical Success Factors of Food Tourism Destinations**

Figure 2.2 shows that 23 repeatedly mentioned the success factors from the systematic literature review, and these factors were frequently cited in different papers. The rest of the factors, which were mentioned less than four times or were overly segmented, were not universally representative. Some of the 23 factors are interconnected, with similar attributes or overlapping content, and have been extensively discussed in previous works and publications. For example, food tourism destination participants include residents, tourists, tourism businesses, governments, and other stakeholders. Thus, these relevant factors should be considered holistically when considering a destination's development (Cooper et al., 2008; Marais et al., 2017).

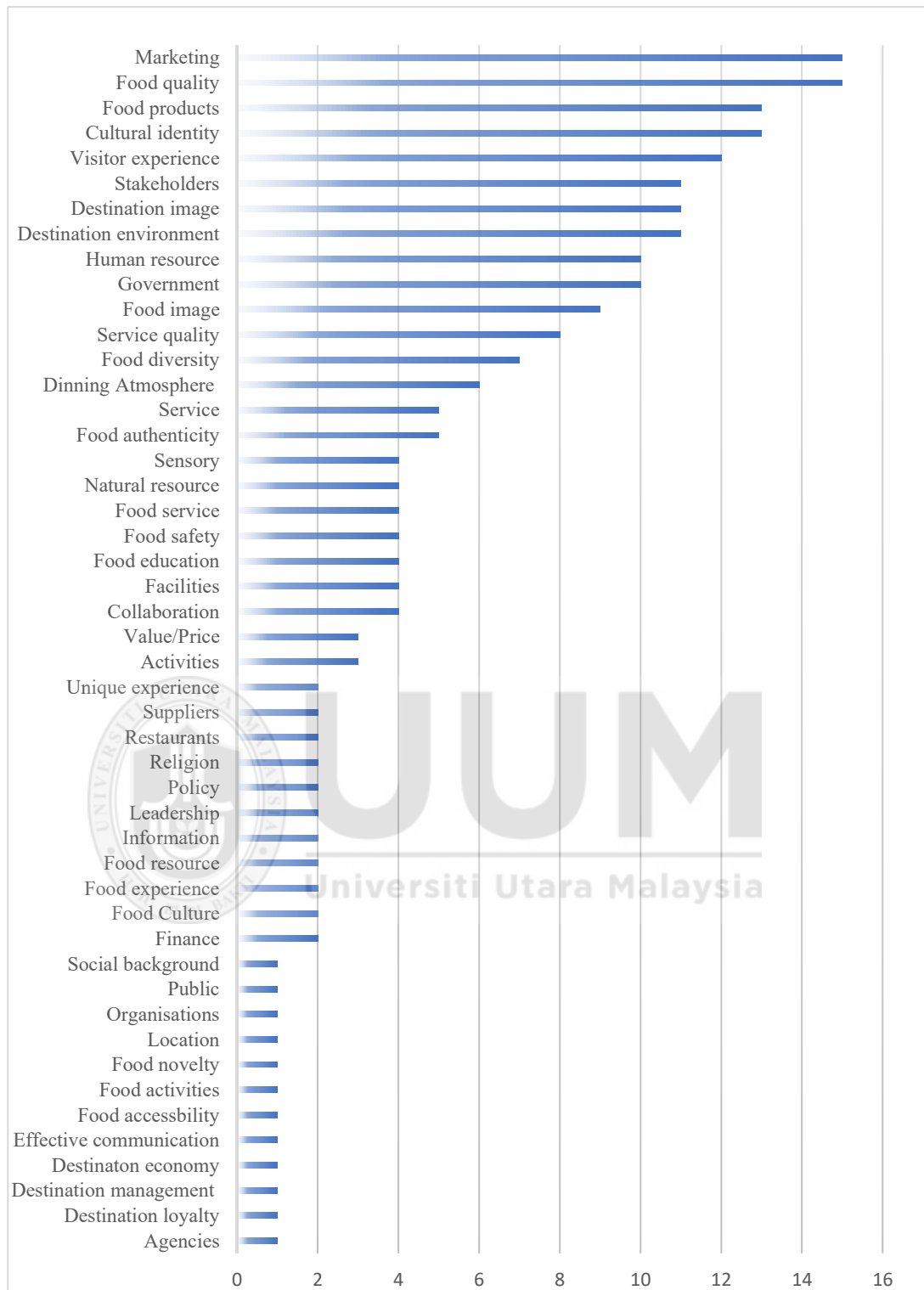


Figure 2.2 Most Frequently Mentioned Success Factors in the Literature Review.

This study discovered that some scholars have presented models of tourism product systems based on TPC theory (Guan, 2010), models of destination competitiveness

based on Diamond Model theory (Fei, 2013; Huo, 2017), models of critical success factors for tourism destinations based on resource theory, and models of key factors influencing food tourism (Lingyi, 2013; Zhou et al., 2019). These models and research findings integrate several factors influencing tourism destinations, including product, brand image, destination marketing, and visitor experience. Scholars with different research perspectives have reached varying conclusions on different destination cities. Thus, this study has utilized the first 23 factors as a crucial reference point, considering the frequency of occurrence of all 49 factors while eliminating unique and overly segmented factors. Factors with strong content relevance have been combined and clustered into 5 dimensions (government support, organizational involvement, visitor experience, destination image, destination marketing), and the sixth key independent variable has been identified by considering the core food products in Guilin.

This study specifically decided to use government support, organizational involvement, visitor experience, destination image, and destination marketing as critical variables to study the development of food tourism pathways in Guilin, a famous tourist city in Southeast Asia. Government support was chosen because it is a key component in influencing local tourism development and effectively driving the regional economy. In China, government policy support and management involvement dominate local development (Wang & Xu, 2014). Government involvement will provide financial, technical, and human resource support for major projects. In a study of tourism recovery initiatives in Macau, Wan et al. (2022) noted, "With the government taking a decisive role, industry stakeholders became very cooperative in working towards the common goals of survival and recovery". The influence of the government was a recurring theme in the statistics of the SLR. Given the urban characteristics of Guilin, which is the focus of this study, and the current situation in China, considering the

government as a factor involves examining policy, leadership, and human resource factors. Since these factors are predominantly controlled by the government in China, further analysis specific to this context will be conducted in the next subsection (Vargas, 2020; Wang & Xu, 2014).

Stakeholder participation, involving local organizations and individuals, plays a vital role in the sustainable development and effective management of food tourism. Various stakeholders, including food service providers, companies, industry alliances, associations, and communities, are involved in monitoring, promoting, and facilitating the development of the local food and beverage industry (Stone et al., 2021). Their participation is crucial for the overall success of food tourism initiatives (Stone et al., 2021). Each industry has its stakeholders, and the tourism industry is no exception. For developing tourism destinations, the participation and cooperation of stakeholders are the mainstays of government policy implementation. The introduction of multiple actors allows for the acquisition of different evaluative information and the assessment of the desirability and feasibility of an event or political decision, in addition to the probability of its realisation (Bellia et al., 2021). The involvement of associations, businesses, and people has a significant contribution to tourism (Getz & Brown, 2006) and can be a positive driver for developing destination operations (Mwesiumo et al., 2022).

Stephen E. Hiamey (2020) is one of the few scholars to have studied the CSFs of food tourism destinations in developing countries. The visitor experience and destination image perception encompass the visitor's overall perception of local culture, history, natural landscape, business management, service quality, food quality, value, restaurants and culinary activities, and for food tourism purposes, these indicators are

tested to a large extent to represent the overall situation of the local tourism industry (Park et al., 2018).

Effective destination marketing plays a crucial role in the sustainable development of the local tourism industry and the economic growth of the region through food tourism (Kozak & Buhalis, 2019). It serves as a key tool for creating a positive destination image, enhancing attractiveness, and motivating tourists to visit. This systematic study highlights the significance of tourists' social context and experiences, which greatly influence the perception of the destination image. The success of tourism destinations is closely tied to effective destination marketing, which optimizes the destination's impact and helps achieve strategic goals for all stakeholders involved (Bornhorst et al., 2010; Lazzeretti & Petrillo, 2006; Vargas, 2020).

The above studies provide references for studying food tourism destinations and can be a guideline for this thesis. Based on the previous literature review, the main constructs of CSFs in this study include six elements: government support, stakeholder involvement, destination image, visitor experience, destination marketing and core food products, which are defined as the independent variables respectively. A comprehensive analysis of these variables and their corresponding indicators will be provided in the upcoming sections of this study.

#### **2.4.1 Government Support for Food Tourism Destination (SR)**

The government plays a vital role in a country, as it possesses the authority to control and allocate resources, including the establishment of a destination management organization. Additionally, the government has the power to allocate funds to a region to provide essential infrastructure, facilities, and environmental protection for the

destination (Wang & Xu, 2014). Moreover, the government can collaborate with stakeholders and associations to make timely regulatory decisions, develop policies and programs through transparent communication, and provide human resources to encourage the economic development of regional industries (Ellis et al., 2018; Leong et al., 2010; Zain, 2019).

The credibility of governments enables it to initiate trial programs that leverage the distinctive characteristics of each state, region, and community to attract tourists and promote various unique tourism experiences. For instance, Malaysia, Japan, and South Korea's governments have launched food trail programs to encourage tourists to experience local cuisine (Yousaf & Xiucheng, 2018; Zain, 2019). Additionally, the Chinese government has participated in an e-commerce marketing program to encourage local private tourism enterprises to carry out online marketing (Hu & Chaudhry, 2020). During the 14th Five-Year Plan period, Guilin's human and social resources security department and the Ministry of Commerce will jointly train culinary skills inherited from Guilin's local specialties. As Guilin's intangible cultural heritage, Rice noodles will have more than 800 trainees in its production skills in 2021 alone (Association, 2022).

#### **2.4.1.1 Policy Guidance for Promoting a Food Tourism Destination**

The growth of the tourism industry depends heavily on governmental policy support and cross-sector collaboration. In nations where tourism significantly contributes to the GDP, governments often implement policies to stimulate economic growth, enhancing opportunities for tourism enterprises and boosting local welfare (Huo, 2017). These policies serve as a framework, ensuring transparent, efficient communication among local associations, businesses, and residents, thereby

facilitating organized and collaborative efforts across stakeholders (Wan et al., 2022; de Jong & Varley, 2017).

Initiatives like Portugal's Prove, Spain's Gastronomy Tourism Strategy, and Italy's Slow Food movement illustrate successful cooperation between governments, food producers, and tourism organizations (Greg Richards, 2012).. In Newfoundland, Canada, government-industry partnerships create quality tourism experiences that highlight local distinctions, attracting visitors, lengthening stays, and increasing tourism revenue (Tourism, 2017).

In Macao, policy guidance from the central government has empowered the Chief Executive to work closely with tourism stakeholders, enabling a swift response to post-pandemic challenges and fostering resilience through unified survival and recovery efforts (Yim King Penny Wan et al., 2022). Similarly, Guangxi's Thirteenth Five-Year Plan for Tourism Development (2016–2020) promotes a distinctive culinary tourism culture by deeply exploring local specialties, establishing a diverse catering system, and supporting a department focused on Gui and ASEAN cuisines to boost Guangxi's appeal as a food tourism destination (GXZF, 2021).

Research highlights policy as a key driver in tourism development; Malaysia, for example, has prioritized Islamic considerations in its tourism policies and developed religious facilities at attractions to attract more Muslim visitors (Yusof et al., 2019). These cases demonstrate the essential role of policy in fostering tourism growth and enriching cultural and economic landscapes.



#### **2.4.1.2 Leadership Involvement**

According to Porter's model of competition, leadership is a critical factor in the successful implementation of tourism strategies (Fei, 2013; Huo, 2017). Marais et al. (2017) also emphasized the importance of leadership involvement in promoting tourism destinations. From a management perspective, strong leadership is necessary to maximize the benefits of tourism activities (Munira Saaidin, 2019). However, the lack of stakeholder management and leadership in a destination can impede the progress of planned strategies (Seyitoğlu & Ivanov, 2020).

Leadership has been identified as a key factor in the success of culinary tourism activities in various contexts. Ottenbacher et al. (2013) highlighted its importance in Germany's culinary tourism industry, while in China, leaders play a crucial role in the government's power structure, contributing to the rapid development of the tourism industry (Zhao & Liu, 2020). Leaders can utilize their credibility and influence to attract attention and allocate resources to project development. For instance, the mayor of Guilin took the initiative to promote Guilin's intangible cultural food products and the food and cultural festival through online broadcasts, resulting in increased sales of the products (Huang, 2020).

#### **2.4.1.3 Human Resources**

Food tourism destinations prioritize training human resources to meet high-quality service demands (Liberato, 2021). While food tourism may seem like a small-scale operation, producing gourmet food requires a certain skill set. This involves investing in professional skills and educational resources. The number of tourists to a destination may require a corresponding amount of food consumption, which can impact the local food supply system (Ellis et al., 2018) and put a strain on the local human resource

system that delivers the food experience. The availability and quality of human resources impact the tourism experience (Ellis et al., 2018).

In the context of intangible cultural heritage food, involving various stakeholders and the local government is crucial for planning and establishing sustainable local resource management and human resource practices in the food supply and commercialization. The government's involvement is particularly important for achieving balanced allocation in the labor-intensive food and beverage industry (Li, 2021). High-quality human resources in an economy can ensure that the industry can attract more investors. Additionally, it is a critical indicator of a country or region's ability to develop a skilled workforce through education and training, ultimately improving tourism's sustainability in a destination (Forum, 2019).

Despite existing research on this issue, specific quantitative analyses and analysis models are still lacking, and further research is needed. Therefore, the role of the government in promoting the tourism industry remains challenging to determine. Nonetheless, the government should be considered a crucial research factor in this study.

Real-world examples from Europe and Asia highlight the tangible benefits of government intervention in attracting tourists and bolstering the economy. Underscores the importance of leadership in realizing tourism strategies, with real-world examples like the mayor of Guilin promoting local cuisine and culture. Recognizes the significance of training and developing a skilled workforce to meet the demands of gourmet food preparation and delivery. Therefore, this study has reasons to believe that the gastronomic tourism destination building framework needs to

incorporate government support as a factor. This is a very important part of the social resources. At the same time, it should be noted that while policy support has been mentioned many times in previous studies of food tourism destinations, culinary talent development is an aspect that has been neglected. However, as food and beverage tourism are a labour-intensive industry, this study should pay more attention to the impact of this factor on the development of food tourism destinations.

#### **2.4.2 Stakeholder Involvement (SR)**

The active involvement of local stakeholders can transform areas with significant natural, social, and cultural heritage into tourist destinations (Beltramo et al., 2021). In the case of food tourism, which encompasses intangible heritage, sustainable management is essential, considering the geographical production and consumption of food and involving multiple stakeholders. Therefore, a holistic perspective is needed for effective management of food tourism, rather than an isolated view (Ellis et al., 2018).

The development of any industry cannot be achieved without the investment or participation of various stakeholders, and constructing tourism destinations pursues group profitability and the interests of stakeholders. Examples such as Prove Portugal, Spain's Gastronomy Tourism Strategy, and the Slow Food movement in Italy illustrate the collaboration between government ministries or departments, private sector food producers, and tourism organizations (Greg Richards, 2012).

Stakeholder involvement in tourism is recognized as best practice for achieving a balance of interests (Stone et al., 2021; Timur & Getz, 2008). The stakeholder configuration model includes various stakeholders such as the public, companies,

customers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and media (Chen, 2016; Debrecéniová, 2016; Zain, 2019), these are all social resources. In the context of food tourism, additional stakeholders may include students, researchers, and professional services. In this study, the stakeholders involved in Guilin's food tourism include associations, communities, businesses, educational institutions, and the public.

#### **2.4.2.1 Associations**

The management of tourism destinations involves both tourism authorities and private industry. The private sector's activities encompass association activities, as well as unofficial activities that are organized and managed by private organizations (Huo, 2017). Given China's large population, self-regulatory management and service functions by private tourism industry associations could enhance tourism market supervision and mitigate the potential efficiency issues arising from centralized government power (CPPCC, 2017). In studies concerning tourism destination management and food tourism, stakeholders typically comprise organizations and institutions in positions of authority and control. Nevertheless, when there are numerous local association organizations that are closely linked to the tourism industry, it is appropriate to consider including these associations as stakeholders (Beltramo et al., 2021). Guilin's tourism, catering, hotel associations and catering professional education union are all guided by the government, but the local government does not interfere too much with them in daily activities (CPPCC, 2017). Berbel-Pineda et al. (2019) argue that for food tourism to be booming, the strong cohesion that develops between food associations and organisations cannot be ignored. Food associations create a social order for foodies, developing a network of like-minded people bound by common interests (Chaney & Ryan, 2012). In the industry sector, associations have

public appeal and can dominate human and material resources within the relevant field and are therefore often included as stakeholders in studies involving relevant stakeholders in the tourism industry (Abeal Vázquez et al., 2021; Bessiere, 2013; Debrecéniová, 2016; Institute, 2016), and this study follows the same pattern.

#### **2.4.2.2 Community**

Community participation is crucial for sustainable tourism destinations (Mohamed et al., 2017). In Guilin, local food and snacks are often found in community clusters, with the traffic of snack shops in communities being comparable to that of larger restaurants. Local and ethnic cuisines enjoy a large audience in residential areas, and the city's traditional cuisine is gaining more attention due to China's recent policy direction to develop a community and night-time economy (Chenli, 2021). Tourists, in addition to locals and community residents, make up a significant portion of the audience, and their visits have enriched the variety of community cuisine and boosted the economy in the surrounding areas.

Tourism can have intangible social impacts that promote community support and help preserve cultural values (Abeal Vázquez et al., 2021). Community participation is essential for balancing the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, economic viability, and social equity (Sosa et al., 2021). Gastronomy, as recognized by UNESCO, not only preserves techniques passed down through generations but also fosters a sense of identity and continuity within communities. Food traditions contribute to social cohesion, respecting human creativity (Slocuma & Curtisb, 2017). Food represents the roots and identity of a community, allowing tourists to experience its beliefs, norms, culture, and traditions (Okumus et al., 2007). Tourism can positively contribute to preserving traditional skills and lifestyles and safeguarding food heritage

(Zain, 2019). Communities play a vital role in promoting sustainable tourism development, enhancing social stability, and improving the well-being of local people.

Despite the acknowledged significance of the community in food tourism, its role as a separate success factor has been overlooked in previous research (as shown in Figure 2.2). To enhance our understanding of CSF in food tourism destinations, future studies should focus on investigating the role of the community as a distinct factor.

#### **2.4.2.3 Companies**

In this study, the term "companies" specifically refers to restaurants and food providers, which are closely connected to the food and beverage industry and play a vital role in linking food and consumers. In Chengdu, for example, Sichuan cuisine restaurants, hot pot restaurants, snack shops, and teahouses are all examples of food and beverage enterprises that are part of the food culture resources being studied. It is essential to note that all activities related to the five primary components of tourism, including eating, staying, traveling, touring, and shopping, cannot be separated from the participation of business operators (Li et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2017; Maichi, 2012).

Based on previous study, companies are significant social resources for food tourism development, providing both tangible goods and intangible networks of peers (Carlsen, 2004; Telfer, 2001). Moreover, enterprises are on the front line when it comes to monitoring and enforcing industry standards. For instance, in Guilin, food and beverage companies are invited to participate in local catering industry standards and the production of special dishes (Zhou, 2022).

Marketing activities are the primary focus of most enterprises, and they are often the first to learn about tourists' experiences with local cuisine. As a result, companies can adjust their marketing strategies accordingly, motivating tourists to try local foods and integrate the destination's culinary image into their overall experience (Connell, 2012; Lai et al., 2018). Therefore, conveying local food culture and planning food festival events cannot be done without companies' involvement. In Guilin's mainstream food festivals, such as the March 3 Ethnic Food Festival and the Guilin Landscape Food and Tourism Festival, the government invited many local food and beverage companies and intangible food cultural inheritors to showcase their food and cooking skills (Travel, 2021).

In China, the catering industry is labour-intensive, and each enterprise is a self-contained unit. Companies can influence food tourism growth by collaborating with other regional operators and engaging in occasional events to encourage cooperation across various industries (Hee, 2012). During Australia's economic decline, the implementation of strategies to drive tourism around wine sales was dominated by businesses (Fuentes et al., 2010; Telfer, 2001). In addition, many home attractions, specialty shops, and visitor centers in Korean and Japanese culinary experience locations are mostly run and managed by companies (Wu & Sun, 2017). Thus, numerous scholars recognize enterprises' contribution to tourism development in the literature on food tourism research.

#### **2.4.2.4 Unions/Groups**

In the context of Turkish food research, the establishment of unions has proven beneficial for cooperation and collaboration. Leading private sector organizations, such as the Association of Greek Tourism Enterprises and the Union of Turkish

Chambers and Commodity Exchanges, have played a significant role in developing bilateral partnerships and fostering connections among their members (Kozak & Buhalis, 2019). These alliances have demonstrated their capacity to facilitate information sharing, analyze industry trends, and generate valuable business reports (Forum, 2019).

Apart from providing business resources, some public interest alliances can bring together government and educational resources to enhance the industry structure. For instance, under the government's guidance, Guilin has a culinary professional education union that is formed by food enterprises, local associations, and educational institutions. The union has nearly 300 local enterprises, schools, and associations as its members (CPPCC, 2021). Guilin also has several food-related business groups, which unite companies, scenic spots, and hotels. The members of these groups share commercial resources, allowing visitors to eat, stay, travel, play, and shop, all within the group, thus maximizing their benefits (Corporation, 2022).

#### **2.4.2.5 Public**

Although governments are the primary stakeholders in tourism destinations, their involvement is often limited to management and control. In contrast, tourism authorities focus on responding to the needs of residents (Huo, 2017). Thus, residents should also be a key subject of study. Edwin (2017) argues that sustainable development of tourism destinations is impossible without the support of residents. The participation of residents is crucial in supporting food tourism, as strong public support for traditional food makes it easier to spread and be passed on (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2019).



The development of food tourism destinations requires collaboration among diverse stakeholders, encompassing both public and private entities (Zain, 2019). Active participation of residents not only supports the growth of food tourism businesses but also helps preserve the authenticity of local culture. Building strong relationships with the public and media, delivering authentic experiences, and gaining the support of residents, who play a pivotal role in shaping local food and culinary heritage, are crucial for effective destination promotion (Shyan et al., 2012).

Both public and private support services are indispensable for improving tourism governance, as argued by Manners (2011). In the post-pandemic era, Vargas (2020) proposes a 4Ps (public-private-people partnership) model, suggesting that destination management must address usual public-private partnerships. These studies underscore the important role the public can play in preserving local food culture and cuisine and contributing to the development of tourism businesses. However, it is crucial to examine the implications of such involvement critically.

In summary, drawing from the analysis of prior research and the current state of Guilin's tourism industry, it is imperative to recognize a diverse range of stakeholders in Guilin's status as a gastronomic tourism destination. These stakeholders encompass associations, communities, enterprises, alliances or groups, and the public. To comprehensively investigate Guilin's gastronomic tourism from the supply-side perspective, the research must be centered around these diverse entities.

While previous studies have often limited their focus to associations and enterprises as key stakeholders, a more inclusive approach is warranted for a comprehensive examination. Some studies have acknowledged the role of communities as vital

participants, while others have considered the broader public. Based on insights from food tourism destination research, it is the author's contention that all the entities should be encompassed, given that local specialty foods should ideally enjoy a broad-based public appeal.

#### **2.4.3 The Influence of Food Image Towards a Destination**

The study of tourism destination image has been of significant interest since the 1970s. Baloglu et al. (1999) emphasize that the destination image represents tourists' personal attitudes and exerts a significant influence on the economic, social, and environmental development of the destination. It encompasses individual perceptions, emotions, and impressions of a food tourism destination, with perceptual images closely tied to experiential activities.

During tourism experiences, food plays a vital role in enhancing the value of a holiday, as the destination itself often becomes the focal point of the trip. Therefore, food has been recognized as a significant factor in providing tourist experiences and creating memorable images for marketing purposes (Quan & Wang, 2004). Kivela and Crotts (2008) argue that not all destinations can rely solely on natural beauty like forests, sun, sea, and sand, and that food or gastronomy can serve as a viable alternative for promotional efforts. Additionally, Tellström et al. (2006) state that local and regional food images have a significant impact on consumers' perceptions, as food can engage human senses such as taste, smell, touch, and sound. From a cultural perspective, food represents the roots and identity of a community, allowing tourists to experience the beliefs, norms, culture, and traditions through the consumption of local cuisine (Leong et al., 2010; Okumus et al., 2007).

Globally, various tourism initiatives led by national tourism boards aim to establish successful destination food images through branding strategies (OECD, 2012; UNWTO, 2012). However, there is limited empirical evidence on the effectiveness of food image attributes in representing local food culture and identity, leading to a limited understanding of the strategy's effectiveness. In tourism image research, destination food holds both functional and symbolic value for visitors, satisfying hunger and offering an opportunity to experience local food culture, regional cuisine, and food-related activities such as festivals, events, tours, and cooking classes (Hall & Sharples, 2003; Long, 2004). On the other hand, for local hosts, local food culture represents the destination's culinary identity, cultural heritage, shared food values, and local lifestyle (Smith & Xiao, 2008; Yang et al., 2020). Although visitors and locals have different perspectives on value creation, there is a need for food image metrics that can be used by researchers and industry professionals. These metrics are crucial for local industry stakeholders, providing insights into whether the product aligns with the desired value and appeal of the target visitors. Some scholars have explored perceived image as a set of brand attributes, emphasizing the role of gastronomy in shaping a destination's brand image. This study specifically focuses on metrics such as local and geographical context, food culture, food quality, local restaurants, and related festivals (Frochot, 2008; Lai et al., 2017; Lai et al., 2018; Lin et al., 2011; Sims, 2009).

#### **2.4.3.1 Geographical Context and Environment (NR)**

The geographical features of a food's environment play a crucial role in its overall image and authenticity. Pure water and air in the production destination enhance the ingredients with distinct flavors, meeting the expectations of high-quality ingredient

cultivation in environment resources. When it comes to intangible cultural heritage foods, the origin of ingredients is a significant indicator of the cuisine's authenticity. Modern tourism trends prioritize unique and genuine experiences, which also applies to food experiences (Valjarević et al., 2017). From a food tourism destination's perspective, geographical boundaries are essential in shaping destination planning and policy development. However, studies focused on the demand side tend to overlook the distinct regional characteristics of different cities and areas (Che, 2006; Lai et al., 2017).

Natural geology, climate, and water influence different geographical regions, leading to diverse flora and fauna, farming practices, and variations in ethnic traditions and cultures. Hence, geography, terroir, provenance, and origin of food products are the most representative geographical image factors. From a supply-side perspective, terroir and provenance reflect not only natural environmental factors but also the culture, social techniques, and skills involved in growing, producing, and transforming food into delicacies (Che, 2006; Lai et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2015; Sims, 2009). According to Giovannucci et al. (2010), geographical attributes of food are conducive to local food identification, promotion, and marketing. As these attributes are not owned by anyone but serve as attributes, even smaller producers can leverage the marketing potential of geological identification labels to contribute to the development, protection, and success of local food tourism products.

#### **2.4.3.2 Food Culture (CR)**

Regional culture plays a critical role in attracting tourists, and food culture, which is an essential part of regional culture, is a significant factor in motivating tourists to experience it. This is because food culture reflects the local cultural heritage and way

of life (Bessiere, 2013; Oktay & Sadıkoğlu, 2018; Smith & Xiao, 2008). Food reflects the cultural differences of a region. For instance, Korean cuisine's appeal is reflected in the traditional food culture image, emphasizing health and nutrition (Kim et al., 2012). Similarly, the image of Thai food culture is characterized by spicy and exotic flavors, which are well-known to tourists (Lai et al., 2017).

Food culture reflects not only lifestyle habits but also the customs of a place, such as the aesthetic appeal of the food, local dishes/gastronomy, uniqueness of the food, cooking methods, authenticity/exoticism of the food, variety, well-known foods, cultural diversity, and religion (Aziz et al., 2021). Food culture is an essential indicator in studies on the image of food tourism destinations. Previous studies of destinations from a visitor experience perspective and surveys conducted by businesses and tourism service providers have shown that the success of food destinations is closely linked to the local food culture (Anton Martin et al., 2021; Ellis et al., 2018; Marais et al., 2017; Wang & Hung, 2015).

Guilin, as an ethnic minority habitat in southwest China, possesses unique food culture resources (Shen, 2021; Zhou, 2022). Previous studies have mentioned and reviewed Guilin's food culture resources, but it has not been utilized as an indicator in influencing tourism destinations, and quantitative studies have not been conducted in-depth. Previous research has focused on the Chinese language, but English-language research articles on food culture are hardly relevant to the mainland Chinese context (Chen & Huang, 2018).

#### **2.4.3.3 Food Quality**

A destination's offerings encompass a diverse range of tangible and intangible goods and services, among which food plays a pivotal role. It can serve as a primary or secondary motivator for visitors (Quan & Wang, 2004), contributing to the destination's overall image (Boyne & Hall, 2004; Long, 2004). However, Mun et al., (2018) have noted that food quality indicators, such as hygiene, authenticity and nutrition of ingredients, appearance, smell, and freshness, significantly influence visitors' perception of food quality. A recent study shows that tourists consider the food quality of local cuisine highly related to the ingredients' taste and authenticity (Zeng & Liang, 2020). Furthermore, some tourists prioritize the hygiene and nutrition of food and tend to avoid fast food, instead favoring high-quality local restaurants (Xuelian et al., 2007). Food preferences in China primarily revolve around taste and the authenticity and healthfulness of ingredients, whereas in Japan, Korea, and China, young people prefer lighter food (Hee, 2012; Shyan et al., 2012). However, the freshness and taste of food in Australian food image campaigns is a symbol of food quality, but behind the freshness and taste is a higher price (Lai et al., 2018).

Conversely, most food in China and Southeast Asia is produced in small community shops or rural areas, offering tourists high-quality food at a reasonable price (Zain, 2019). Price is not the most critical factor, and visitors prioritize food quality, such as freshness and ingredient authenticity. However, the Chinese government's quality regulator places food safety and hygiene as the foremost priority before considering market pricing (PRC, 2009), which differs from tourists' concerns. Hence, it is essential to research both the supply and demand sides to address this disparity. Although food quality concerns vary, stakeholders unanimously agree that food quality affects the cuisine's overall image.

#### **2.4.3.4 Specialty Restaurants**

Food tourism presents an exhilarating opportunity for visitors to delve into novel tastes, flavors, textures, and cultures, while embracing the heritage, local culinary customs, and authentic dining experiences of a particular destination (Association, 2019). Local restaurants typically create and offer these experiences to consumers, ranging from grand hotels and Michelin-starred restaurants to small community workshops that offer exceptional food (Hernandez-Rojas & Huete Alcocer, 2021). The choice of dining venue significantly impacts the overall food tourism experience, encompassing factors such as the variety of dining options available (e.g., restaurants, farmers' markets, street markets) and the appeal of the venue itself (e.g., ambiance, welcoming service, convenient accessibility, and informative resources). In Australia, the government's food tourism campaign emphasizes the variety of places to dine and the dining atmosphere with spectacular views, which stakeholders identify as the most advantageous aspects of Australia as a food destination (Lai et al., 2018).

While some argue that popular cuisine has nothing to do with luxury restaurants, street food can also showcase cultural heritage in countries like Korea, Japan, and Southeast Asia (Shyan et al., 2012). Nonetheless, most stakeholders agree that the food and service of destination restaurants should be the primary appeal, positively impacting tourists' place attachment and intention to revisit (Hernandez-Rojas & Huete Alcocer, 2021; Mohamed et al., 2021). In China, traditional foods have gained tremendous popularity, and small and medium-sized enterprises that emphasize cultural identity and traditional cooking methods have proliferated in recent years. The Chinese government launched the "Revitalizing Chinese Old Brands" project in 2006, which has led to the emergence of over 600 food-related products and restaurants in tourist

cities, many of which have formed chains and become a unique sight in tourist destinations (Li et al., 2019; Youn et al., 2020; Zhang & Guo, 2023).

#### **2.4.3.5 Festivals (CR)**

Food events are included in traditional festivals in various places. Food-themed festivals are at the heart of culinary tourism and have long been recognised as a key factor contributing to the competitiveness of a destination (Yang et al., 2020). The local cuisine contributes to the external image of the area (Hall, 2011; Hall & Sharples, 2003) and conveys a sense of authenticity and distinctiveness (Sims, 2009). The impact of culinary festivals on the destination's image and their ability to attract repeat visits is worth examining (Alderighi et al., 2016). Currently, research is focused on the quality and value of these festivals, which ultimately translates into an excellent destination image and increased destination loyalty.

According to Yang et al. (2020), the researchers propose that the food motivation of individuals attending festivals, coupled with their understanding of the event, contributes to forming a favorable perception of the food destination. This perception portrays the destination as a vibrant hub for delectable and genuine cuisine, along with a range of culturally immersive food-related activities. Consequently, this positive perception fosters destination loyalty and encourages visitors to make repeated food-related purchases. Tourists often seek destinations with unique and different cultural backgrounds, and experiencing local cuisine has become integral to experiencing cultural differences. Participation in local traditional festivals allows food tourists to amplify their travel experience and increase their interest in cultural activities, which enhances the destination's attractiveness (Axelsen & Swan, 2009).



Local food festivals provide a blend of sensory elements that encompass lifestyle and personal development experiences. Food is commonly integrated into the traditional festival experience, as the combination of food and festival rituals highlights experiential, cultural, and symbolic meanings (Lee & Kwon, 2021). Many cultural rituals and religious practices are concentrated at festivals, and visitors often have enhanced opportunities to socialize, entertain, gain immersive experiences, and learn about culture during festival participation. Therefore, many scholars agree that festivals have a positive impact on tourism destination images (Horng & Tsai, 2010; Lee & Arcodia, 2011; Lee et al., 2017).

In summary, while numerous studies have delved into destination food image, empirical evidence illuminating the construction of effective food image attributes, specifically those representing local food culture and identity, remains conspicuously scarce. Consequently, this study embarks on an empirical journey to explore various factors that encompass local and geographical environments, food culture, food quality, local restaurants, and related festivals within the realm of destination image. Grounding itself in theories from brand strategy, this research endeavors to craft a comprehensive framework that incorporates specific products. This framework serves a dual purpose: to accentuate local characteristics and the local image while elucidating which factors wield influence over the local image. In the realm of tourism image research, the food of a destination assumes dual roles, offering both functional and symbolic value to tourists. However, for hosts, local food culture serves as a means of articulating the destination's food identity, cultural heritage, shared food values, and the local way of life.

Notably, there exist both disparities and shared perceptions in the ways tourists and hosts perceive the value of local food. Nonetheless, the specific areas of divergence and alignment have yet to be precisely elucidated in the existing literature, necessitating this study's empirical exploration from both the supply side and the demand side.

#### **2.4.4 Visitor Experience**

Kim and Iwashita (2016) extended the definition of food tourism to encompass travel to a particular destination driven by the desire to savor local products, flavors, and aromas, while also gaining insights into the culinary traditions and cooking techniques of the region. This expanded definition highlights the experiential aspect of food tourism, emphasizing the immersive exploration of a location's gastronomic offerings and culinary heritage. Previous research indicates that tourism experiences can be developed around food heritage, whether through local producers, culinary events, restaurants, or food markets (Hall & Sharples, 2003; Timothy & Ron, 2013). The perception of a destination is closely linked to visitors' experience of its local cuisine (Fusté-Forné et al., 2021). Consumption of local food in tourism can be both a peak and supporting consumption experience that not only generates income for the destination but also shapes visitor experiences. Novelty and variety are often motivations for tourism, and trying local cuisine at a destination allows tourists to break away from conventional eating habits and preferences, satisfying the desire for novelty and challenging culturally different behaviors (Quan & Wang, 2004). Experiencing unconventional food and eating in different cultural contexts is a positive factor in facilitating tourists' satisfaction. Food brings a combination of taste, smell and visual that can be deeply ingrained in a person's memory, and Morteza et al., (2020)

argue that visitors' experiences with food can be used to predict and understand the factors that influence visitors to choose the destination again. Specifically, positive food experiences such as excitement, pleasure, fun or relaxation stimulate positive behavioural intentions regarding taste, health, and price (Soltani et al., 2020).

Elli et al. (2018) argue that regardless of the perspective from which food tourism is defined, the essence of the experience is cultural, the experience of all the food resources of the destination, which can be either a simple experience of food or an engagement with activities. Such a view is too broad to capture what tourists specifically care about when they enjoy food. Experience is the backbone of a visitor's motivation and subsequent satisfaction and loyalty at a destination. Different people share different levels of appreciation for food. Interest in food means that people have significantly different perceptions of the attributes of local cuisine. Mora et al. (2021) found that the food experience is influenced by traditional cuisine, price and food quality, and these factors are increasingly valued. However, all of these arguments ignore the importance of the food experience in the tourism process, the influence of price on the tourist experience and the fact that price is an important reality in tourists' decisions (Quan & Wang, 2004).

Furthermore, Hillel et al. (2013) mentioned that the basic elements of a destination cuisine are to satisfy the visitor's experience of authentic products and tastes. Visitors are attached to the destination and community through their food experience. Moreover, tourism involves learning about the culture of others, and food plays an essential role in that experience. This study considers hygiene and safety, food taste, authenticity, and price as critical elements of the visitor experience, based on local

government regulations in the food and beverage industry, which are the main concerns of most tourists (Chen, 2016).

#### **2.4.4.1 Food Safety and Hygiene**

Food safety is a crucial aspect of people's lives and health, particularly when it comes to dining during tourism activities. It is a prerequisite for all tourism activities, and governments have established comprehensive guidelines for food, accommodation, travel, entertainment, and shopping in the tourism industry. Basic food safety and hygiene protocols are critical to the local food industry in a destination, and a safety incident in a destination or tourism company can have devastating consequences. Promoting food safety, hygiene, health, and nutrition in the promotion of food tourism can help alleviate tourists' concerns about dining in the destination. Additionally, providing visitors with accurate product information is essential for enhancing their perception of food safety and dispelling misconceptions about local food (Quan & Wang, 2004). Familiarizing tourists with the relevant information can stimulate loss aversion, encouraging them to try new and previously untested local foods (Yuchen Xu & Zeng, 2022). Marais et al. (2017) reviewed 52 papers on tourism critical success factors, and hygiene factors were repeatedly identified in 14 articles, ranking as the 4th most important factor of consumer concern. Food safety and hygiene concerns are frequently highlighted in government news releases. According to Maslow's theory, safety is a fundamental human need, and it is not difficult to understand why safety and hygiene are the key motivators in many studies related to food that influence tourists' decisions to try local cuisine (Shenoy, 2005).

#### **2.4.4.2 The Taste of Food (Sensory)**

The taste of food directly impacts the consumer's experience of food tourism (Quan & Wang, 2004). Dann et al., (2002) emphasise that an important aspect of culinary tourism is that the taste of local cuisine differs from that of the same food in the home country or region. Based on Kim's five-dimensional model, Testa et al. (2019) investigate the importance of local food for tourists on their holiday has a load factor of 0.693, which indicates that for most people, a good food experience is an important factor in enhancing the travel experience. A survey on motivations for consuming local cuisine found that 41 per cent of people would taste local food because "this dish tastes different from the dishes in my area" as the main motivation for trying local cuisine (Pérez Gálvez, López-Guzmán, et al., 2017). Gastronomy, as an element of cultural tourism, is a way to bring visitors new flavours while providing them with opportunities for challenge and learning (Widjaja et al., 2020). Tourists who strongly desire local food may seek out novel culinary experiences. In contrast, those who experience local food may have a memorable experience due to its unique taste, which may positively impact their satisfaction and intention to revisit (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2019). The preference for food flavours can stimulate people to choose the same food multiple times (Kim et al., 2021). Therefore, the motivation to promote food tourism requires continuous research of food flavours. In addition, tourist destinations will have a strong image due to the food, including its unique food and cultural values.

#### **2.4.4.3 Food Authenticity (NR)**

The origin effect refers to consumers' perception and impression of the region where a product is produced and its relationship to the product's authenticity. According to Schooler (1965), destination marketers can utilize the origin effect to persuade visitors

that genuine local cuisine can be truly experienced only in the destination itself, thereby enhancing their culinary experiences. Previous research has emphasized the significance of food authenticity as an effective intervention variable, which can be contextually enhanced through distinct food names or the incorporation of unfamiliar ingredients. Additionally, informing visitors about the historical background and origin of the food can contribute to the perception of authenticity (Kim et al., 2017).

Food authenticity encompasses several factors such as local terroir, geography, culture, and taste, all of which contribute to a food tourist's pursuit of unique experiences. Traveling involves breaking away from routine life, and the demand for standardized or fast-food options contrasts with the motivation for differentiated food experiences. Food authenticity, therefore, embodies the concept of provenance and heritage, where the creation process and location, as well as the ingredients, specialized techniques, and consumption rituals, make the experience more distinctive (Ellis et al., 2018; Maccannell & Dean, 1973).

Successful food destinations meet tourists' authenticity needs by offering genuine products and experiences that highlight the connection between food, place, and community (Hillel et al., 2013). In China, traditional restaurants recognize the importance of authentic traditional food in facilitating cultural exchange, especially in transmitting food heritage. Guilin, a city renowned for its rich history and culture, has developed a unique cuisine that uses locally sourced ingredients to create "hometown dishes" with a strong sense of originality. Offering tourists authentic traditional food and sharing local culture through food stories enhances their culinary experience, leading to higher satisfaction and destination loyalty (Hernandez-Rojas & Huete Alcocer, 2021).

The alleys and streets of Guilin are home to various cuisines that embody the city's cultural heritage and development, making the surrounding scenic spots gathering places for food enthusiasts. By immersing themselves in Guilin's food culture, tourists can trace the city's cultural roots and development.

#### **2.4.4.4 Value /Price**

The cost of food is a crucial factor in visitors' decision-making process. The question of whether the value of food equates to its quality has long been a subject of debate among the public. Nevertheless, the perceived value of food strongly influences people's emotional response during their food experience (Ab Karim & Chi, 2010; SooCheong et al., 2008). In fine dining restaurants, food serves more than just a functional purpose, satisfying a desire for luxury. Conversely, local specialties at a roadside restaurant for a fraction of the cost can provide a sense of accomplishment (Sims, 2009).

According to interviews on food experiences conducted by Peter Björk et al. (2019), those surveyed were willing to pay a premium for fine dining, while street food must remain affordable. As such, both quality and monetary value play a significant role in shaping visitors' perceptions of their food experience. Visitors are more satisfied when they have a great food experience at a reasonable price. On the other hand, unrealistic prices can lead to a sense of being deceived, resulting in a negative impact on the overall image of the destination and the tourism experience. Lai et al. (2017) believe that the cost of food is a crucial factor in shaping the destination's image. This study aims to continue their work, taking a deeper dive into other factors influencing visitors' food experience.

In summary, in the realm of food tourism research, the visitor experience holds paramount importance. This study synthesizes the various factors that influence tourists' experiences during the development of food tourism destinations. These factors encompass the holistic sensory encounter of taste, aroma, and visual appeal, alongside considerations of safety, tradition, pricing, and food quality. It is worth noting that previous studies have neglected empirical investigations and surveys from these multifaceted perspectives. Many studies have remained entrenched in the belief that a positive experience solely hinges on the acquisition or utilization of tangible products, overlooking the added value stemming from intangible elements. Furthermore, there has been an oversight of the intrinsic value of intangible aspects; for instance, the allure of a culinary destination transcends mere taste satisfaction—it also forges a connection between tourists and the locale, offering them a palpable taste of local culture.

Undoubtedly, authenticity and genuineness stand as linchpins in shaping the visitor experience. Therefore, this study endeavors to construct a comprehensive framework grounded in these multifarious factors. This framework aims to bridge the gaps in previous research, ultimately striving for a more holistic comprehension of the pivotal success factors for food tourism destinations.

#### **2.4.5 Destination Marketing**

Food transcends its role as mere sustenance and serves as a reflection of a destination's language, origin, and evolution. It embodies a distinctive cultural heritage that enables visitors to engage with a destination's culture and history by indulging in tastes, experiences, and purchases. Destination marketing is an essential part of tourism development, and food tourism has been a crucial aspect of it. Destinations provide



tourism products and experiences that can be effectively clustered and networked (Breda et al., 2006). Destination marketing aims to achieve strategic objectives for all stakeholders and optimize tourism impacts (Buhalis, 1999). Responding to consumer preferences and fulfilling their needs is a shortcut to achieving this goal (Kozak & Buhalis, 2019), and food can be an effective tool for differentiating and competing in the tourism industry.

Okumus et al. (2007) found that tourists prefer personal sources of information and rely on their previous experiences to save time searching for potential destinations. With the rise of personal social media, it is essential to keep pace with the development of social media in the way destinations are marketed.

Pyo et al. (1991) found that food is among the most pleasurable activities for tourists during their holidays, and it is the aspect they are least willing to compromise on when it comes to expenses. To attract more tourists, food tourism destinations should emphasize their distinctive tangible and intangible products and services. They can differentiate themselves from other destinations and generate increased visitor interest. In destination marketing for food tourism, the twin goals are to boost tourist numbers and foster sustainable tourism development.

Hong Kong and Turkey are both destinations with traditional food cultures. Hong Kong's destination marketing for food tourism emphasizes various exhibitions, festivals, competitions, high-quality restaurants' environment and service, and various promotional media, which makes it superior to Turkey's promotion of local culture, attracting more food tourism enthusiasts (Hillel et al., 2013). By highlighting their

unique features and effectively promoting them, destinations can stand out and compete effectively in the food tourism industry.

#### **2.4.5.1 Marketing Activities**

Destination marketing activities, such as promotions, demonstrations, and culinary courses, have a positive impact on destination promotion. By targeting specific markets, these marketing activities can be purposefully planned and executed to generate socio-cultural benefits. From a supply-side perspective, timely campaigns during the off-season can enable companies and businesses to attract tourists and allocate resources efficiently. By creating favorable events, festivals, conferences, and other marketing activities, both demand and supply sides of the tourism industry can achieve significant benefits.

The food-related tourism experience is much more than just the activities related to food. Events such as food shows and festivals have proven to be effective promotional tools for culinary tourism. These events offer a wide range of experiences that attract tourists and enhance their social interactions, enabling them to taste local cuisine and visit various sites. For example, in Hong Kong, food events have been shown to foster interaction between people and meet diverse tourist needs (Yousaf & Xiucheng, 2018).

Such events bring together like-minded people who co-create memorable tourism experiences, enhance their mutual identity, and ultimately achieve shared value benefits (Kozak & Buhalis, 2019). Sociologically, tourists can use such events to better understand the cultural values and concepts of the region they visit, thereby improving their overall experience. Through a combination of main and complementary events during festivals, a destination can become a major attraction (Black, 2016).

#### **2.4.5.2 Services**

Destinations are a fusion of tourism services and experiences, and as a member of the service industry, tourism offers visitors a wide array of services, such as accommodation, dining, and shopping. The quality of visitor experience is closely tied to their perception of the services received, which plays a significant role in the success or failure of the catering industry (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2019).

Once tourists have had tangible interactions with the food and service of local restaurants, they tend to rely on, identify with, and feel a sense of belonging to the destination, ultimately leading to repeat visits (Mohamed et al., 2021). A comparison between the restaurant industries in two inland cities in China, Nanjing, and Chengdu, both rich in natural resources and culture, reveals stark differences. Nanjing suffers from a lack of talent in restaurant management and service, resulting in less efficient and poor-quality service perception, which is supported primarily by residents. In contrast, Chengdu's developed food and drink scene, standardized catering management system, polite service, attention to service efficiency, and hygiene quality has made it significantly more competitive (Liu et al., 2017; Zhang, 2019).

Experts have identified high-quality, standardized service as one of the CSFs for catering companies, as food-related services are direct to the consumer and closely tied to sales. Thus, food tourism destinations must focus on service indicators, which are also a CSF of the destination (Marais et al., 2017).

While many studies related to food tourism destinations examine the relationship between local culture, tourism resources, ingredients, and tastes, the relationship between service and marketing is often overlooked (Hiamey et al., 2020; Lai et al.,

2017). Hence, it is essential to recognize and address the importance of service in food tourism marketing strategies to enhance visitor experience and the overall success of the destination.

#### **2.4.5.3 Information and Social Media**

According to Boyne & Hall (2004), potential visitors tend to consult government-sponsored tourism websites as a primary source for information about a destination, including activities, facilities, and services. Destination tourism websites serve as the starting point for information dissemination, directing online visitors to tourist attractions, restaurants, and hotels (Beldona & Cai, 2006). Therefore, the presentation and promotion of local cuisine and related services on these websites play a crucial role in addressing tourists' concerns before they choose a destination (Yousaf & Xiucheng, 2018).

Tourists can access personalized information through social media in addition to official tourism websites. Live streaming on e-commerce platforms has gained popularity as an online marketing tool globally (Stoica et al., 2014; Wongkitrungrueng et al., 2020). Live streaming involves streamers providing consumers with product demonstrations and purchase services through product trials and experience sharing on online streaming platforms (Hu & Chaudhry, 2020). Travele Commerce Live Streaming (TECLS) has become a popular and essential tool for tourism promotion worldwide, with many countries implementing TECLS activities (Deng et al., 2021). For instance, China's largest online travel agency, Ctrip Group, initiated the "Boss Live Session" activity, which attracted a large number of fans and much traffic for destination promotion on the web (Chaowu Xie et al., 2022).

As a food tourism destination, Guilin should expand its marketing approach, and some Guilin government officials have taken to the internet to share their experiences with local food. The future marketing of Guilin as a food destination will rely heavily on the dissemination of information.

In conclusion, after analyzing cases from various regions, it is evident that the essence of destination marketing remains closely tied to the pivotal factors discussed in this paper, including destination image, products, and culture. Notably, in a comprehensive review of the literature, the provision of high-quality services emerges as the foremost concern among the means of destination marketing activities. Furthermore, in the era of social media, the impact of online platforms on the promotion of tourism destinations has outstripped that of traditional printed media. Social media has evolved into a pivotal marketing tool for destination promotion.

Nevertheless, when it comes to the more effective implementation of marketing strategies for culinary tourism destinations, prior studies have predominantly centered around specific locales, such as Turkey, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. Given the influence of regional disparities, it is essential to acknowledge that experiences from these cases may not be directly applicable to Guilin as a distinct city. Unfortunately, there is a noticeable dearth of substantial research evidence regarding Guilin's marketing strategy for the development of food tourism destinations. It is our aspiration that this study will serve as a pioneering effort in addressing this knowledge gap.

## **2.4.6 Core Food Products of a Destination**

### **2.4.6.1 The Concept of a Core Tourism Destination Product (CR)**

Smith et al. (1994) defined tourism products as items that fulfill both the physical and spiritual needs of tourists during their travels. Core food products of a destination, on the other hand, serve as symbols that embody the local culture and identity of the region, attracting tourists and influencing their behavioral intentions (Anton Martin et al., 2021; Özdemir & Seyitoğlu, 2017). The previous survey of UNESCO's World Culinary Capitals found that each city that received the award had its iconic culinary product, with iconic foods being unique and typical dishes representing and identifying a destination and inspiring visitors to visit. Anton et al. (2021) discovered that iconic food reinforces the perceived value of repeated experiences and plays a significant role in constructing food tourism destinations. Iconic food also evokes memories and motivates tourists to revisit destinations.

Many destinations highlight the importance of their core offerings, such as the Melbourne Food and Wine Festival or the Lisbon Backstreet Restaurant Experience, which are must-see events for visitors. Haggis has become synonymous with Scotland, egg tarts with Bakewell, cheese with Stilton, and kimchi with Korea, all of which represent a place's customs and behavioral preferences, and have high regional visibility and broad appeal (Ellis et al., 2018). From a cultural standpoint, these foods have unique characteristics and distinct differences, which pique the curiosity of tourists. Trying representative regional foods, whether it be a cooking class, food tasting, participation in the food production process, or visiting an area where ingredients are grown, is a novel and motivating experience for tourists (Liberato et al., 2020; Lin et al., 2022).

In promoting a destination and establishing its image, every tourist destination should have its core food product, an indispensable attraction. Iconic cuisine is a product of authenticity and can foster a cycle of motivation, sustainability, local communities, and food tourism (Ellis et al., 2018).

#### **2.4.6.2 Analysis of Visitor Demand for Core Food Products in Destinations**

The demand for a destination's primary food offerings plays a crucial role in the decision-making process of most tourists. However, while recent travel studies have covered representative destination cuisines extensively, they have mostly focused on the culinary experience in traditional festival scenarios or the promotion of flavors and regional ingredients. Consequently, research on the role of intangible cultural heritage cuisines in regional tourism development is still in its early stages (Kim et al., 2017; Youn et al., 2020). Moreover, there is a lack of in-depth exploration regarding the role of a destination's primary food product in the critical success factors of food tourism destinations.

To understand the relationship between a destination's core food product and the supply and demand side, it is crucial to consider the core food product as a demand variable. The motivations of tourists to try a destination's cuisine typically include exploration based on novel experiences, emotionally driven by loss aversion, driven by an interest in different cultures, and influenced by herd mentality. While some scholars have studied tourists' behavior in choosing destination cuisine, no definitive research results have established the relationship between the supply side and the demand side of a destination's core food products (Liberato, 2021).

Food is a concept related to a place's culture, identity, destination positioning, and iconic food. Thus, in the case of Guilin as a food tourism destination, its core food products should have local cultural elements attached to them. The food products listed in Guilin's local intangible cultural heritage include rice noodles, oil tea, Duck in vinegar blood, and Steamed pork sandwich. Data from local tourism websites and food websites indicate that rice noodles and oil tea are the most popular foods, with Beer fish, a local specialty, also receiving high levels of attention. However, it remains to be investigated whether these foods match the taste preferences of tourists worldwide.

Guilin has many scenic spots based on Guilin's intangible cultural heritage cuisine. Examples include the Guihua Commune, the Rice Noodle Cultural Street, and the Traditional Food Farm. These facilities and experiences are built around traditional craftsmanship and have become must-visit destinations for many tourists (Chenli et al. 2021). This unique tourism model deserves attention as the number of tourists choosing this approach is increasing and has a significant impact on promoting traditional food culture and driving tourism traffic. There is a need for subsequent research on tourism activities based around Guilin's traditional cuisine to determine the impact of core food tourism on the CSFs.

Table 2.3

*The Six Dimensions of the Success Factors of a Food Tourism Destination*

| <b>Dimensions</b>       | <b>Success factors</b> |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Government support      | Policy guidance        |
|                         | Leadership involvement |
|                         | Human resources        |
|                         | Associations           |
| Stakeholder involvement | Community              |
|                         | Companies/Business     |
|                         | Union/Groups           |
|                         | Public                 |



|                       |                                                 |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
|                       | Geographical context (environment)              |
|                       | Food culture                                    |
| Destination image     | Food quality                                    |
|                       | Special restaurants                             |
|                       | Festivals                                       |
|                       | Food safety and hygiene                         |
| Visitor experience    | The taste of food(sensory)                      |
|                       | Food authentic                                  |
|                       | Value/Price                                     |
|                       | Marketing activities                            |
| Destination marketing | Services                                        |
|                       | Information (social media)                      |
| Core food products    | Intangible Culture Heritage (ICH) food products |
|                       | Iconic Food                                     |

In conclusion, further investigation is needed to identify Guilin's most representative core food products from both the supply and demand sides and verify their impact on the CSFs of food tourism destinations. After the thoroughly literature review, this study identified of 21 factors that were then categorized into six key dimensions: government support, stakeholder involvement, visitor experience, destination image, destination marketing, and core food products as shown in Table 2.3.

## 2.5 The Success of a Food Tourism Destination

### 2.5.1 Evaluating the Content of a Food Tourism Destination

The argument presented by Otto and Ritchie (1996) advocating for success measures to concentrate on the most significant competitive factors as determined by visitors is compelling from a marketing perspective. However, Pearce (1997) conducted a comparative study from the supplier perspective, examining various destinations in Southeast Asia based on supplier attributes. It is important to note that the sample selection and choice of destinations in Pearce's study were confined to a specific region, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings. In a similar vein, Kozak et al. (2002) employed tourist satisfaction as a foundation for destination benchmarking,

focusing on Mallorca and Turkey. However, relying solely on either the supply or demand side may introduce bias when investigating destination attributes. While the data derived from these studies is informative, it should be regarded as a steppingstone for further in-depth exploration and analysis.

Prior research has primarily focused on specific aspects of destination performance and success from an internal standpoint. These investigations have examined diverse factors, including marketing (Buhalis, 1999), pricing (Chen & Huang, 2018; Hernandez-Rojas & Huete Alcocer, 2021), product availability (Yang et al., 2020), membership (Ab Karim & Chi, 2010), and quality (Hiamey et al., 2020). By exploring these individual elements, these studies have contributed valuable insights into their respective impacts on destination outcomes. However, to gain a comprehensive understanding of destination performance, a more integrated approach is necessary.

Ritchie and Crouch (2000) argue convincingly for the utilization of multiple variables to assess destination success comprehensively. Their approach emphasizes the inclusion of input and output variables, comparative and competitive advantages, and stakeholder perspectives. This highlights the scientific validity of considering multiple factors rather than relying solely on economic income data. However, it is important to note that overemphasizing input-output ratios from the perspective of sustainable tourism destinations may introduce bias. Additionally, their evaluation overlooks the significance of tourists' feelings and experiences, which are vital in understanding destination success.

Enright and Newton (2004) applied this model quantitatively to China and conducted a comparative analysis of destinations including Hong Kong, Singapore, and Bangkok.

Despite this, there is a lack of specific studies exploring the impact of destination management organizations on overall destination success. However, Hassan (2000) implicitly establishes a link between local tourism stakeholders and market competitiveness, and Dwyer and Kim (2003) highlight the importance of destination management for overall destination competitiveness. Dwyer and Kim (2004) and Mazanec et al. (2007) further refine the model of destination competitiveness. The objective of this study is to transform the comprehensive destination competitiveness model from a definitional system to an explanatory one.

In addition to the studies, it is important to acknowledge that achieving tourism success necessitates factors such as supplier relationships, effective management, strategic planning, organizational focus and motivation, appropriate funding, and a skilled workforce. These elements play a crucial role in shaping the outcomes of a destination and should be considered when evaluating and striving for tourism success (Bornhorst et al., 2010). Based on the above factors, it is reasonable to believe that social resources are also important factors that cannot be ignored and that a comprehensive analysis of destination tourism success is still lacking and research on CSFs is both lacking and necessary.



Figure 2.3 A Framework for Evaluating the Success of Food Tourism Destinations

Food tourism destinations have a more precise orientation to the above concept of tourism destinations. From the previous review, it is clear that a good food experience in food tourism, a physical experience of local customs and culture during the food

experience, or participation in the preparation of local specialties, gaining knowledge and experience, will increase tourists' satisfaction, enhance their willingness to revisit and prolong their stay. Tourists will increase their spending on food, positively impacting the destination's revenue, and a win-win situation for both the supply and demand sides reflects the success of a food tourism destination. Therefore, this study investigates the CSFs, including government support, stakeholder involvement, tourist experience, destination image, and visitor experience from the supply and demand sides. Besides, the relationship between Guilin's core food products and Guilin as a food tourism destination is also examined. Meanwhile, a framework is proposed for evaluating the success of influencing food tourism destinations in Figure 2.3.

The success of food tourism destinations is ultimately reflected in achieving a win-win situation on both the supply and demand sides (Bornhorst et al., 2010). Effective destination management, strategic planning, organizational focus and drive, appropriate funding and quality personnel are all matters within the function of government. They cannot be separated from government support for local industry development. Undoubtedly, the government aims to boost the local economy, but for any strategy or plan to succeed, it requires the participation of people and various organizational groups to implement it (Wang & Xu, 2014). The involvement of stakeholders on supply and demand sides will ultimately affect the development of the destination. From the demand side, the goal is achieved when visitors' needs are met, and they have a satisfying experience. On the supply side, with the government's support and the coordination of the various groups, it is possible to provide high-quality services to tourists. The most intuitive expression of the increased satisfaction of the tourists is the increased willingness to spend and to repeat, thus contributing to

the economic benefits of the destination, and the residents will benefit from the development.

### **2.5.2 Measuring the Success of a Food Tourism Destination**

The evaluation of the success of a food tourism destination must be conducted from the supply and demand perspectives. Surveys and interviews have been widely recognized as a common and effective method for this purpose (Guizzardi & Mariani, 2020; Lai et al., 2017; Testa et al., 2019). To evaluate the success of the destination, it is appropriate to carry out survey research on tourist satisfaction (Guizzardi & Mariani, 2020; Lai et al., 2017; Testa et al., 2019), tourists' willingness to revisit (Hernandez-Rojas & Huete Alcocer, 2021), willingness to consume core food products (Lin et al., 2011; Murphy et al., 2000), and the economic impact of the destination, including the impact on residents' well-being (Mazanec & Ring, 2011), and then collect and analyze data.

The satisfaction of tourists is a key indicator of a destination's success, as it reflects the quality of their experience at the destination. If tourists are satisfied with their experience, they are more likely to recommend the destination to others, which can increase the number of future visitors. Conversely, if tourists are dissatisfied with their experience, they are unlikely to return or recommend the destination, which could damage the destination's reputation and economic performance. If tourists have a positive experience and intend to revisit, this could result in repeat visits and an increase in tourism revenue. Moreover, tourists who plan to visit again are more likely to suggest the destination to others, which can attract new tourists and boost overall tourism revenue. An increase in the number of tourists, longer stays, and higher spending can lead to revenue growth for local businesses and the destination (Huang

et al., 2023). These benefits can all be reflected in economic growth indicators and the creation of employment opportunities in the tourism industry.

Tourist satisfaction can be assessed by conducting interviews or surveys that inquire about the tourist's experience at a food tourism destination (Park et al., 2018; Widjaja et al., 2020). These surveys can ask about food quality, service, cleanliness, and overall experience. Surveys can be carried out in person or online, and open-ended questions can be included to gather more detailed feedback (Nield et al., 2000). The intent to revisit refers to the likelihood of tourists returning to the same food tourism destination in the future. This can also be measured by surveys that ask if the tourist is willing to revisit the destination and whether they would recommend it to others. Tracking repeat visits can also be used to measure the success of a food tourism destination. Additionally, monitoring the number of return visitors and the reasons for their return can provide valuable insights into the factors contributing to a successful food tourism destination (Loukaitou-Sideris & Soureli, 2011). Economic impact indicators, including the number of tourists, duration of stay, and expenditure patterns, can be utilized to assess the economic impact of a food tourism destination. These indicators provide measurable data to quantify the economic benefits that a food tourism destination contributes to the region (Forum, 2019). By analyzing these indicators, stakeholders can better understand the financial implications and positive outcomes associated with food tourism in each destination.

In summary, tourist satisfaction, intent to revisit, and destination economic indicators are all significant criteria for measuring the success of a destination. These indicators reflect the quality of the tourist experience, the likelihood of repeat visits, and the economic impact of tourism on a destination (Li et al., 2023). By monitoring these

indicators, governments and stakeholders of destinations can make efforts to improve the tourist experience, increase tourism revenue, and achieve long-term success (Li & Yu, 2023; Yong et al., 2023).

## **2.6 Fundamental Theory**

Scholars have studied food tourism destinations through various lenses, including brand image (Che, 2006; CPPCC, 2017; Lai et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2015; Li et al., 2018; Lin et al., 2011; Ohe & Kurihara, 2013; Yang et al., 2020), sociological perspectives (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2019; Ueda & Poulain, 2021), and experiential approaches (Gonzalez Santa Cruz et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2010; Mora et al., 2021). These studies often rely on theories like the experience economy (Pine & Gilmore, 1999), destination competitiveness, and resource-based perspectives (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). While debates exist around the application of the experience economy, food tourism research remains critical for understanding destination development.

Competitiveness, a key focus in tourism studies, evolved with Porter's Diamond Model, which highlights factors such as natural and human resources (Porter, 1980). Despite its limitations, the model offers valuable insights for developing food tourism destinations, especially in developing regions like Guilin, where factors like authentic experiences and marketing play significant roles. However, the theory does not give enough consideration to demand diversification and product diversity. Kenichi Ohmae's 3C Strategy emphasizes customer needs, resources (Ohmae, 1991), and differentiation as key to success. Applying this to Guilin highlights the importance of leveraging local resources to create unique culinary products and enhance visitor experiences. This aligns with sustainable and competitive tourism development. But

the theory pays insufficient attention to supply and demand. Resource-based theory, while useful for analyzing supply-side strengths, lacks focus on demand (Lingyi, 2013). In food tourism, sensory and cultural experiences are crucial, requiring integration of visitor needs. Core products are essential to food tourism success, as highlighted by UNESCO and case studies (Chen, 2016; Liu et al., 2017; Pérez Gálvez, López-Guzmán, et al., 2017; Yu & Sun, 2019). A comprehensive framework combining resource-based and TPC theories addresses both material and emotional visitor needs.

Although the above theories are helpful in establishing critical success factors for food tourism destinations, it is not enough to rely on them alone. Through the literature review, it is more helpful to establish a CSF framework for food tourism destination by focusing on the TPC theory.

This study is based on the TPC theory, which was developed after World War II in response to the Consumer Rights Movement of the 1970s. The TPC theory emphasizes a holistic and systematic view of products and uses social marketing concepts to guide product design, production, sales, and service (Nickels, 1982). Additionally, Levitt (1983) developed the holistic concept that consumers buy more than just the core product, but also the complementary content, much of which is intangible. In today's marketing, the concept of the whole product is an adaptation of the TPC theory, which considers how intangible elements can be added to a physical product, transforming it into a product that is more valuable than the physical attributes alone. Levitt's vision is particularly well-suited for developing tourism products, as much of the service and perceived pleasure that consumers enjoy during tourism is brought about by intangible products. According to Levitt's theory, Kotler and Armstrong (2010) divided a product into three levels. As in Figure 2.4, the outermost layer, known as the enhanced product,



comprises complementary products, services and benefits designed to facilitate sales (e.g., credit options and delivery terms), promote the use of the product and ensure its correct disposal (e.g., after sales service, guarantees and technical assistance). The whole product concept and the customer value proposition are interlinked. The whole product concept represents what the customer receives, including a package of attributes and benefits.

The TPC theory comprises three levels of products (Smith, 1994). Firstly, the Core product meets the physical and spiritual needs of tourists and is mainly expressed as the function of tourist attraction in food-based tourism products. The purpose of food is to fill stomachs, but tourists also seek novelty and cultural experiences related to food. Secondly, the tangible products, such as tourism facilities and routes, are comprehensive. Food tourism products mainly come in the form of food, providing a variety of services. This level combines tangible and intangible products, including the ingredients and quality, authenticity, freshness, the dining environment, cooking skills, the waiters' dressing and grooming, language expression, service attitude, and manner. Thirdly, the Augmented product aims to provide tourists with a higher-level experience of tourism activities, facilities and equipment, social services, and travel convenience. This level of product is more experiential and not solely functional. Together, these three levels form the overall tourism product (Xu, 2010). The augmented product level of the food tourism product focuses on experiencing the festivals, rituals, traditional eating styles, and related activities behind the food. These three levels of products can form a scale or system and even develop into a supply

chain in terms of marketing, running through supply and demand (Smith, 1994; Smith & Xiao, 2008).

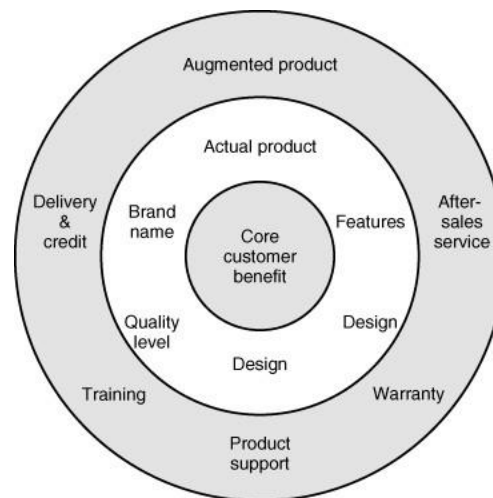


Figure 2.4 The Whole-Product Concept (Kotler and Armstrong 2010).

Taking Guilin's ICH food, oil tea, as an example, a food tourism operator offers a unique experience to visitors. The first level of the food tourism product is constituted by serving oil tea and a variety of side dishes that complement it, such as local specialties like rice cake, fried noodles, and glutinous rice cake. In addition, tourists are guided to the oil tea raw material planting area, where tea trees, mugwort, ginger, and garlic are grown. This offers an opportunity for visitors to understand the authenticity of ingredients and their various health benefits, forming the second level of the food tourism product. Finally, visitors can witness the extraction and cooking process of oil tea, and even participate in traditional cooking skills. This stage of the experience forms the third level of the food tourism product.

According to the TPC theory, the development of Guilin as a food tourism destination should follow the resource-oriented principle. The operator should have a broad and systematic understanding of the local resources while developing food tourism resources. Natural tourism resources, such as landscape and karst formations, should be developed, along with social resources that focus on government support and

stakeholders, and cultural tourism resources that highlight ethnic customs and historical heritage. Tangible resources, such as landscape, climate, and historical sites, should be developed equally, along with intangible resources related to ethnic festivals and conference activities.

In the development of a food tourism destination, operators should consider creating a destination image, enhancing the tourist experience, and carrying out destination marketing around the core food products. Operators must also recognize the importance of obtaining government support, the key role of the government in promoting a food tourism destination, and the relationship with stakeholders.

Guilin city, which is a tourist destination, has not understood the contribution of food tourism products to regional development (CPPCC, 2017; Jiajian & Peng, 2021; Wenhua, 2021). The area is like Mount Fuji, Phuket, and Bali in that the tourism industry is dependent on natural resources. This study explores the CSFs of Guilin as a food tourism destination and aims to develop a CSFs framework for food destinations in the city. In terms of the research on food tourism products in this paper, the framework of tourism products will be built based on TPC theory. Focusing on the TPC theory, when developing a food tourism destination, this study should consider creating a destination image, improving the visitor experience, and developing destination marketing around core food products. And noted that operators must also understand the importance of getting government support, the key role of government in promoting food tourism destinations, and the relationship with stakeholders. The choice of these key variables was decided after considering the recommendations of the diamond model for gastronomic tourism destinations regarding the elements of competitiveness.

## **2.7 Gaps in the Literature**

Based on a detailed literature review, this study identifies three research gaps.

### **2.7.1 Lack of Studies on Resources for Regional Food Tourism Research**

Few domestic and international studies have made food resources the main resource for regional tourism to attract tourists, and the studies from both supply and demand sides to identify core food products are even fewer. Most studies focus on what types of products tourist destinations can offer tourists. Most of the strategic suggestions focus on industry sectors, for instance, centred on the restaurant and tourism industries and using associations to provide tangible or intangible resources for developing tourist destinations. However, the natural, social, and cultural resources that attract tourists to the destination have not been studied and examined in depth.

### **2.7.2 Lack of Studies on CSFs for a Food Tourism Destination**

The strategy recommendations given by researchers on food tourism are too generalized, the studies on the critical success factors of food tourism destinations are not comprehensive, and such studies based on Southeast Asia are even more limited. Variables related to destination development, such as government involvement, stakeholder participation, destination image, visitor experience, and destination marketing, are all studied in isolation. There is no definitive research or data analysis to support which variables contribute most to the destination food and beverage industry and tourism, so there is no way to verify the exact relationship between these variables and destination success. Some studies focus singularly on tourists' motivation, satisfaction, and behavioural choices. There is also a lack of research and evidence on

the relationship between core destination products and CSFs and the extent of their impact on destination development.

### **2.7.3 Lack of a Framework of CSFs for Guilin as a Food Tourism Destination**

The current research has shown an increasing demand and growth of core food tourism products for destinations, and it is interesting to notice that few studies have been done from both the supply and demand sides. Research on supply-demand sides will provide shareholders with more accurate insights that will benefit food product development to offer visitors better experiences. Guilin's income relies too much on tickets, and its food products have been neglected for a long time. Therefore, the investigation of Guilin's core food tourism products as a food tourism destination based on both the supply and demand sides is needed.

Despite the efforts from the previous studies, research is still needed on how to systematically identify the critical success factors of food tourism destinations in Asian countries, especially as vast, populous, and culturally diverse as China which contains so many tourist attractions. Typically, in Guilin, the research on in-depth exploitation of the local ethnic culture to develop food tourism products is even less. A research gap exists to consider developing Guilin's core food tourism products and build a framework of critical success factors for Guilin as a food tourism destination using a mixed approach. Such efforts will be able to identify which key factors could apply in similar destinations with different stages of tourism development in China. Therefore, further research is needed to construct a framework of CSFs for Guilin as a food tourism destination.

## 2.8 Propositional Hypothesis

This paper presents a set of research hypotheses derived from an extensive literature review and analysis of factors pertinent to food tourism destinations. The research hypotheses formulated for this study are as follows:

H1: Government's support is important for the critical success factors of a food tourism destination.

H2: Stakeholder involvement is important for the critical success factors of a food tourism destination.

H3: Destination image is important for the critical success factors of a food tourism destination.

H4: Visitor experience is important for the critical success factors of a food tourism destination.

H5: Destination marketing is important for the critical success factors of a food tourism destination.

H6: Core food products are important for the critical success factors of a food tourism destination.

This study uses quantitative research as the main method. Based on the TPC theory, literature review and expert interviews, six dimensions were set as IVs in this study, which contained 22 specific factors. The IV include government support, stakeholder involvement, destination image (Kozak & Buhalis, 2019; Lin & Chang, 2013; May et al., 2021; Wang & Hung, 2015), visitor experience, destination marketing (Kim et al.,

2021; Park & Widyanta, 2022; Rand et al., 2008; Singh & Hsiung, 2016) and core food products (Zhang et al., 2022). As shown in Figure 2.5, the DV was set to be the success of the food destination, consistent with the objective of this study.

This research acknowledges the integral role of natural resources (NR), cultural resources (CR), and social resources (SR) in developing food tourism destinations, while not isolating them as distinct dimensions. Instead, factors pertinent to NR, CR, and SR are interwoven into the six dimensions of the research framework, each labeled accordingly within the framework diagram. The study employs the Delphi method to refine the questionnaire design, focusing on Guilin for the empirical analysis. Expert opinions, coupled with literature review findings, guided the careful formulation of hypotheses. The resulting framework delineates hypothesized relationships between independent and dependent variables, addressing RO1 and RQ2.

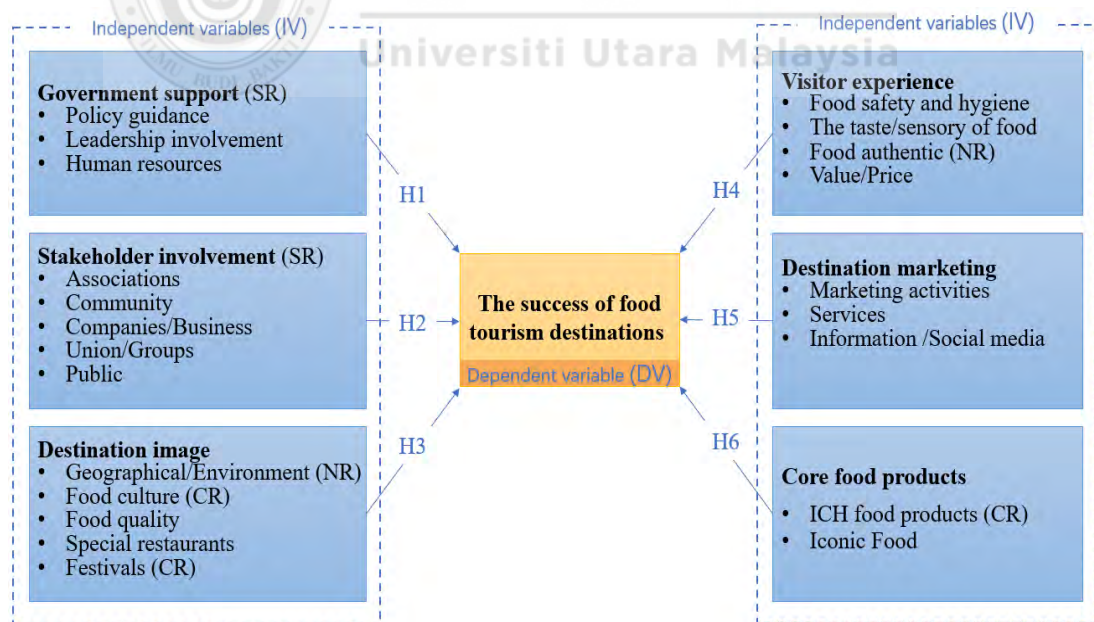


Figure 2.5 The Framework of Hypothetical Relationships Between the IVs and DV.

## **2.9 Summary**

This chapter analyzes the resources of Guilin from the perspective of food tourism and analyzes earlier studies on all indicators in the six dimensions in the framework of this study in a literature review. Hypotheses are made about the influence between the six independent and dependent variables.





## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The primary objective of this study is to examine the CSFs involved in establishing Guilin as a food tourism destination. Furthermore, the study aims to develop a comprehensive framework of CSFs specific to Guilin. This chapter provides a detailed explanation of the research philosophy, approaches and methods employed in this study. The research design is thoroughly discussed, followed by an overview of the instrumentation used, data collection procedures, data processing and data analysis techniques.

#### **3.1 Research Philosophy and Approach**

The research design provides a strategic framework for conducting a study, ensuring feasibility, and facilitating the derivation of conclusions from the results (Naftali, 1992). This section delineates the research philosophy and approach adopted in this study to investigate the multifaceted domain of food tourism development in Guilin.

##### **3.1.1 Research Philosophy**

The study is grounded in a positivist philosophy, which prioritizes the practical implications and efficacy of research methodologies in addressing complex phenomena. Positivism, synonymous with quantitative research or empirical science, represents a distinct scientific approach apart from social and human research methodologies (Creswell, 2009).

Its essence lies in the utilization of statistical analyses to meticulously examine data, emphasizing a rigorous scientific framework. Positivism permits the precise testing of theories and concepts derived from a study through quantitative research (Bryman, 2016). A fundamental assumption of positivism is that only observable and measurable phenomena are deemed acceptable as knowledge, thereby sidelining emotions and experiences typically considered in social research.

Within the context of this study, positivism highlights the dynamic interplay between theory and practice, advocating for adaptable approaches that yield actionable insights to inform decision-making in real-world settings. The positivist orientation of this study is pertinent considering the multifaceted nature of the research objectives. These objectives encompass exploring the natural, social, and cultural dimensions contributing to food tourism development in Guilin, identifying crucial success factors for establishing a food tourism destination, and developing a framework to guide this endeavour. Positivism recognizes the diverse perspectives and contextual intricacies inherent in these objectives, underscoring the significance of bridging theoretical insights with empirical evidence to make meaningful contributions to the field.

### **3.1.2 Research Approach**

Building upon the positivist philosophy, this study primarily adopts a quantitative research approach to systematically examine the identified research objectives. The quantitative method enables the systematic collection and analysis of numerical data, facilitating objective evaluation and comparison of variables related to research aims of this research.

Furthermore, to enhance the reliability and robustness of the quantitative instruments, the study integrates the Delphi method. This iterative approach fosters consensus among stakeholders and mitigates biases, ultimately enhancing the validity and reliability of the research findings. By combining the quantitative methodology with the Delphi method, this study aims to generate rigorous empirical evidence that informs strategic decision-making in food tourism development.

In summary, the positivist philosophy underlying this study emphasizes the practical significance and real-world applications of research methodologies in addressing complex research questions in the tourism industry. By integrating theoretical insights with empirical evidence and leveraging innovative research approaches, this study endeavors to advance knowledge and contribute to the sustainable development of Guilin as a food tourism destination.

### **3.2 Research Design**

This study focuses on quantitative research. In the preliminary stage, the literature review is used to understand the current state of research and formulate hypotheses, followed by expert interviews to understand the situation of food tourism in destinations and to collect relevant information, and the Delphi method is used to assist in the design of the instruments for CSFs, to make the results of the survey more authoritative and objective. In addition, the identified CSFs will be analyzed quantitatively to test the hypotheses proposed in the qualitative phase and to quantify the relationships between the variables. Finally, the study will discuss the findings in depth and generalize them to a larger population. The following section outlines the steps involved in conducting the study, and Figure 3.1 illustrates the specific steps of this study.

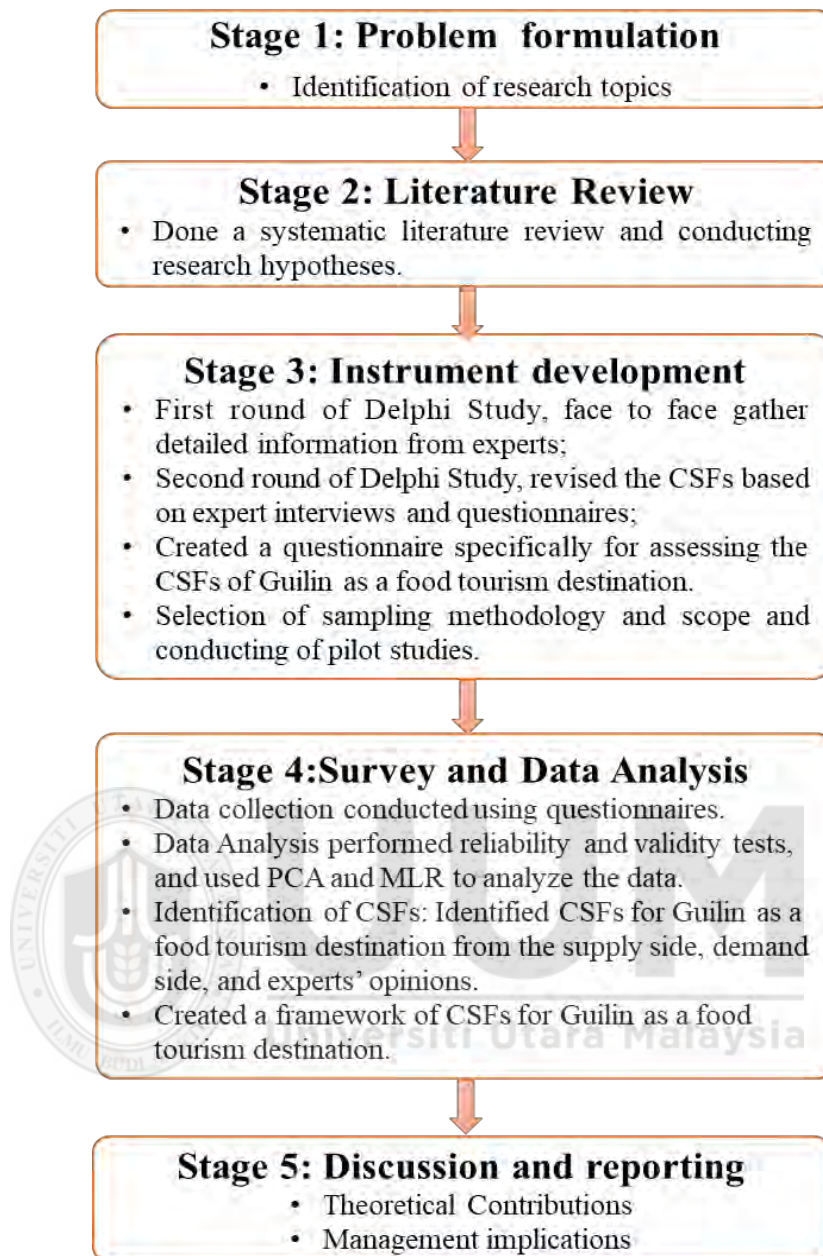


Figure 3.1 Research Design

Phase 1: Identify the research topic and research objectives. Discuss the research gaps that exist in the topic. Also, define the scope and significance of the research for the project.

Phase 2: A systematic literature review was conducted and hypotheses were formulated based on this research question and research objectives.

Phase 3: The Delphi method was used to identify the CSFs of food tourism destinations. The first round of the Delphi study was conducted through face-to-face interviews, using open-ended questions to gather information. The questionnaire for the second round of the Delphi study was designed to balance the views of all parties and to collect expert opinions more objectively in the form of data. Based on the literature review and two rounds of Delphi Study, the Guilin food tourism destination CSFs questionnaire was designed. Selection of sampling approach and scope for pilot studies.

Phase 4: Distributed the questionnaire and conducted the research. The scope of the questionnaire survey included restaurant operators, government officials, service providers and tourists, residents, etc. Information on the CSFs of Guilin as a food tourism destination was obtained from the supply and demand side questionnaires. Conducting data analysis. This study used a structured questionnaire to conduct the survey, and the interview with the questionnaire results strived for a scientific and rational research process. After obtaining the data, the reliability and validity tests were carried out. The data was analyzed by Principal Component Analysis methods to summarize and analyze the research results to obtain the CSFs of Guilin as a food tourism destination. After a rigorous and objective analysis, the framework of the success factors of a food tourism destination was proposed.

Phase 5: Concluding the Study. Based on data analysis, this stage involves a comprehensive discussion of the research hypotheses, research questions, research contributions, research limitations, and future research directions. It serves as the conclusion of the entire study, offering a thorough review of the key aspects of the study and providing in-depth explanations of the substantive aspects of the research.

### **3.3 Population and Sampling**

A sample survey is an effective way to estimate the number of respondents representing the population being studied. Using a sample means significant cost and time savings compared to conducting a census of the entire population.

The Delphi method is widely recognized as a qualitative approach for collecting expert judgments (Linstone & Turoff, 1975). Skulmoski et al. (2007) emphasize that the Delphi method can be adapted and modified based on specific situations and research questions. Previous studies employing the Delphi method have demonstrated variations in sample sizes, ranging from large to small panels. Consequently, no fixed number of experts are typically involved in the Delphi method (Skulmoski & Hartman, 2007). Shengrong (1997) suggests that having more than five participants yields more comprehensive public opinions than individual interviews, proposing a minimum of six experts and scholars for the questionnaire in this study. Regarding the Delphi rounds, evidence indicates that Delphi studies have been conducted using a single round or up to three rounds (Ritchie & Crouch, 2000). While previous research emphasizes that the sample size and number of rounds in the Delphi method are not strictly defined, this study will collect information regarding the issue under study through the second round of the Delphi.

The selection of appropriate research participants holds significance in the Delphi method as it guarantees the quality of the outcomes. The Delphi approach's primary objective is to solicit expert opinions (Skulmoski & Hartman, 2007). Additionally, in the Delphi method, the quantity of panellists is not a crucial factor as it prioritizes the expertise of the individuals in addressing the research inquiries rather than representing the entire population. Within this study, the participants involved in the

catering and tourism sectors possess ample knowledge in the relevant study area, qualifying them as experts.

The expert panel selection in this study followed the criteria proposed by Adler and Ziglio (1996). These criteria encompass factors such as the panellists' knowledge and experience about the subject under investigation, willingness, and ability to participate in the Delphi process, availability to dedicate sufficient time, and proficiency in effective communication. Hence, the population of interest for this study comprised general managers from four and five-star rated hotels, senior government officials responsible for the catering industry, and researchers with extensive backgrounds in tourism in Guilin.

To identify the experts for the Delphi method, six experts in Guilin-related fields are interviewees based on the above principles, as shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1  
*List of Experts*

| <b>Name</b>    | <b>Employment status</b>                                                                                |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Liu Meilian    | Professor and Doctoral Supervisor, School of Management, Guilin University of Electronic and Technology |
| Liu Lanjiang   | Professor and Doctoral Supervisor, College of Tourism, Guilin University of Tourism                     |
| Wang Yixing    | Guilin City Trade Bureau Deputy Director, in charge of the Guilin catering industry                     |
| Tang Changrong | Guilin Liangjiang Sihua Tourism Management Co., Ltd, Secretary                                          |
| Shen Linjie    | Chairman of Guilin Ronghu Restaurant President of Guilin Restaurant Association                         |
| Xie Yuping     | Dean, College of Tourism, Guilin University of Tourism                                                  |

These experts are from different departments of the Guilin government, universities, and large tourism enterprises, with more than 20 years of experience in their respective fields. They are familiar with the history and culture of Guilin and are dedicated to researching its tourism and catering industries. The expert team includes professors

and members of academic committees in the fields of management and tourism (Liu Meilian, Xie Yuping, Liu Lanjiang), leaders and policy makers in government food management departments (Wang Yixing, Shen Linjie), and managers of large tourism companies (Shen Linjie, Tang Changrong). They have extensive experience and can provide objective suggestions for this research from both theoretical and practical perspectives, which were helpful in advancing the research.

After the second round of the Delphi questionnaire, this study proceeded with a questionnaire survey targeting the supply and demand sides. For the supply side, a proportionate random sampling design is deemed suitable. The Guilin Catering Industry Association member list, which includes most local catering enterprises, was utilized for systematic random sampling. Specifically, every 3rd restaurant on the list was selected to participate in the self-administered questionnaire. The target population includes restaurants in Guilin, and a sampling proportion of 15% of the registered business entities were used. This corresponds to a minimum of 178 restaurants. However, to enhance the accuracy of the sampling method, the number of samples were increased to 200 restaurants. A larger sample size provides a more representative data tabulation of the population (Hall, 2000).

Regarding the demand side, the target population comprises Chinese domestic adult tourists currently traveling in Guilin during the survey period. Due to the unavailability of precise statistics on the number of domestic tourists in Guilin at that time, non-probability sampling was employed for sample selection. PCA was used to analyze the collected data. Although there is no specific or standardized sample size requirement for PCA, it is generally recommended to have a minimum sample size of 100 (Gray, 2017; Sang & Yao, 2019).



Guilin has received an average of 16 million tourists per year in the past five years, and the density of tourists varies significantly with the seasons. Visitor density is highest from June to October and from December to January each year. The downtown scenic area is the most concentrated area of passenger flow, receiving 28,467,400 tourists in the first quarter of 2023. About 30% of tourists chose to visit the five major scenic spots in Guilin, and the rest were scattered to the suburbs or counties of Guilin, so setting the survey scope in the urban area can obtain a more diversified sample. The demand side of this study collects data from the 5 hottest scenic spots in the city, which receive 17,000 visits per day on average, and randomly samples 200 visits within the 5 scenic spots at the 95% confidence level, 40-50 people per scenic spot and completes the questionnaire collection within one month. The total sample size of residents was determined based on Krejcie and Morgan (1970) as found in Sekaran (2000). This sample size is relatively large because the overall size is large, and the sampling error is small. In practice, non-probability sampling is often used in conjunction with probability sampling. This is the case in this study, Since the exact number of domestic tourists in Guilin during the survey is unknown. In fact, this is based on random sampling after grouping. Therefore, a larger random sample of 200 tourists will be selected for the demand side questionnaire in Guilin. Actually, in practice the use of non-probability sampling is frequent.

### **3.4 Instrumentation**

#### **3.4.1 Research Based on the Delphi Method**

The Delphi method was employed in this study, consisting of two rounds of expert research. Widely utilized in previous research to explore the future trajectory of various topics, the Delphi method is a valuable tool in tourism research (Adler & Ziglio,

1996; Razak, 2020). This structured process involves collecting and synthesizing information from a panel of experts through a series of questionnaires, accompanied by controlled feedback of opinions. The Delphi method effectively identifies problems, defines needs, establishes priorities, and determines potential solutions.

The Delphi method can be considered a form of organized group communication, emphasizing the importance of repeated questioning and feedback to achieve consensus on complex issues. Relying solely on interviews may reflect participants' perceptions and not provide comprehensive information (Hall, 2000). Therefore, researchers need to employ additional sources of data, such as observational and quantitative studies, to ensure verification and validation (Skulmoski & Hartman, 2007).

In this study, the first round of research consisted of interviews with the experts, utilizing open-ended questions to allow for the expression of their thoughts and opinions. However, one disadvantage of this method is that the collected information may be ambiguous (Johnson et al., 2007). Based on the findings from the first round, the second round employed a questionnaire format where all panelists' opinions were replaced with numerical responses to present the results. This numerical representation helps to reduce the ambiguity associated with qualitative concepts (Mason, 2002).

Two documents were designed in this study to be used as tools for conducting the expert investigation for the first interview and the second consultation.

- I. An outline of expert interviews on CSFs for a food tourism destination.

- II. An expert evaluation scale for the suitability of CSFs for a food tourism destination.

According to the interview outline, one-on-one and in-person interviews were conducted with the experts in a non-intrusive environment. After that, the experts' opinions were balanced, and the "Expert evaluation scale for the suitability of CSFs for a food tourism destination" was designed. Then, the opinions and the information on the evaluation form were summarized to form a list of questions in the subsequent questionnaire design.

#### **3.4.1.1 Expert Interview Outline**

In developing the interview structure, this research integrated relevant questions from the survey. Respondents encompassed government officials, corporate leaders, experts, scholars, and diverse participants. Against the backdrop of Guilin evolving into an international tourist hub, the study seeks to pinpoint the CSFs for a food tourism destination. The interview outline consisted of four sections, as follows:

Basic information: This section includes details such as the interview date, respondent's age, position, and other pertinent information.

Natural, social, and cultural resources for food and tourism product development: This section, referred to as RO1 in this study, examines the various resources that contribute to the development of food and tourism products, encompassing natural, social, and cultural aspects (Association, 2018, 2019; Chatibura, 2021; Ellis et al., 2018; GXZF, 2021; Horng & Tsai, 2010; Seyitoğlu & Ivanov, 2020; Wang & Xu, 2014; Yousaf & Xiucheng, 2018).

Elements of CSFs for a food tourism destination: This section addresses RO2 in this study and explores the key factors that determine the success of a food tourism destination. These factors are assumed to be independent variables in this study (Bornhorst et al., 2010; Kim et al., 2021; Lai et al., 2017; Leong et al., 2010; Lin et al., 2011; Seo et al., 2014; Yasami et al., 2020).

The success of a food tourism destination: This section considers the success of food tourism destinations as the dependent variable in this study (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2019; Buhalis, 1999; Dalgiç & Birdir, 2020; Kozak & Buhalis, 2019; Okumus et al., 2007; Rand et al., 2008; Testa et al., 2019).

The interview outline was developed based on a comprehensive literature review and research hypotheses. An independent interview format was adopted to gather more realistic information, reduce pressure during exchanges, and encourage interviewees to express themselves willingly. The use of open-ended questions stimulated the interviewees' thinking. Consequently, the first round of interviews predominantly utilized open-ended questions in the outline design. This interview outline was utilized for the first round of the Expert Group Study, and the specific outline can be found in Appendix A.

#### **3.4.1.2 CSFs Suitability Expert Scale**

Since unilateral recordings during the interview process can have barriers to information acquisition, the expert interviews were collected to guarantee the accuracy, authenticity, and rigor of the study. And the experts' opinions were summarized to design the "Expert evaluation scale for the suitability of CSFs for a food tourism destination". The design of the form is described as follows.

#### 3.4.1.2.1 Suitability Assessment of the Six IVs

Designing the evaluation table of independent variables suitability. The suitability of the IVs evaluation table is designed according to the evaluation scale of CSFs for a food tourism destination, as shown in Table 3.2, and more details are shown in Appendix B.

Table 3.2

*Expert Measurements of the Suitability of IVs Evaluation Scale*

| IVs                     | Suitability of the Dimension |          |            |                 |         |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|----------|------------|-----------------|---------|
|                         | Perfect                      | Suitable | Unsuitable | Very unsuitable | Deleted |
| Government support      | 5                            | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Stakeholder involvement | 5                            | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Destination image       | 5                            | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Visitor experience      | 5                            | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Destination marketing   | 5                            | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Core food products      | 5                            | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Comments                |                              |          |            |                 |         |

#### 3.4.1.2.2 Suitability Measurement of Factors in Each IV

Design the evaluation table of the suitability of factors of each IV, as shown in Table 3.3. According to the expert mentioned above evaluation scale of CSFs of a food tourism destination, the evaluation table of the suitability of each dimension was designed, and more details of the evaluation table are shown in Appendix B.

#### 3.4.1.2.3 Evaluation Criteria for the Success of a Food Tourism Destination

Design the suitability evaluation table that reflects the success criteria of a food tourism destination, as shown in Table 3.4.

Table 3.3

*Expert Measurement of IV Suitability Evaluation Scale*

| Government support | Suitability of the factors |          |            |                 |         |
|--------------------|----------------------------|----------|------------|-----------------|---------|
|                    | Perfect                    | Suitable | Unsuitable | Very unsuitable | Deleted |
| Policy guidance    | 5                          | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |

|                        |   |   |   |   |   |
|------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Leadership involvement | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Human Resources        | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Comments               |   |   |   |   |   |

| Stakeholder involvement | Suitability of the factors |          |            |                 |         |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|----------|------------|-----------------|---------|
|                         | Perfect                    | Suitable | Unsuitable | Very unsuitable | Deleted |
| Associations            | 5                          | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Community               | 5                          | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Companies/Business      | 5                          | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Unions / Groups         | 5                          | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Public                  | 5                          | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Comments                |                            |          |            |                 |         |

| Destination Image     | Suitability of factors |          |            |                 |         |
|-----------------------|------------------------|----------|------------|-----------------|---------|
|                       | Perfect                | Suitable | Unsuitable | Very unsuitable | Deleted |
| Geographical context  | 5                      | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Food culture          | 5                      | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Food Quality          | 5                      | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Specialty Restaurants | 5                      | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Festivals             | 5                      | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Comments              |                        |          |            |                 |         |

| Visitor experience    | Suitability of factors |          |            |                 |         |
|-----------------------|------------------------|----------|------------|-----------------|---------|
|                       | Perfect                | Suitable | Unsuitable | Very unsuitable | Deleted |
| Safety and hygiene    | 5                      | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| The Taste of Food     | 5                      | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Authentic ingredients | 5                      | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Value /Price          | 5                      | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Comments              |                        |          |            |                 |         |

| Destination marketing | Suitability of factors |          |            |                 |         |
|-----------------------|------------------------|----------|------------|-----------------|---------|
|                       | Perfect                | Suitable | Unsuitable | Very unsuitable | Deleted |
| Activities            | 5                      | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Services              | 5                      | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Social media          | 5                      | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Comments              |                        |          |            |                 |         |

According to the literature review in Section 2.4, the suitability evaluation table of the success factors of a food tourism destination was designed, and the details of the evaluation table are shown in Appendix B.

Table 3.4

*Suitability Scale for Experts to Measure the Success of a Food Tourism Destination*

| Suitability of indicators |
|---------------------------|
|---------------------------|

| <b>Tourism<br/>Destination<br/>Success Indicators</b> | <b>Perfect</b> | <b>Suitable</b> | <b>Unsuitable</b> | <b>Very<br/>unsuitable</b> | <b>Deleted</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|-------------------|----------------------------|----------------|
| Visitor satisfaction                                  | 5              | 4               | 3                 | 2                          | 1              |
| The willingness of<br>visitors to re-visit            | 5              | 4               | 3                 | 2                          | 1              |
| Creating economic<br>benefits                         | 5              | 4               | 3                 | 2                          | 1              |
| Enhance the<br>competitiveness of<br>the destination  | 5              | 4               | 3                 | 2                          | 1              |
| Comments                                              |                |                 |                   |                            |                |

### 3.4.2 Questionnaire Design

A questionnaire was designed based on the 20-25 relevant factors identified in the literature review and identified by the experts and the model mentioned above of CSFs of a food tourism destination.

After the completion of the questionnaire, each option was analyzed individually, or specific groups of options were aggregated and formulated into a scale. The Likert scale, a commonly employed summative scale, was utilized wherein items within the same construct are scored in a summative manner. It is important to note that individual items hold little meaning on their own and must be considered collectively as part of the scale (Likert, 1932). The five-point scale consists of statements with five responses for each statement. "Strongly agree", "Agree", "Neutral", "Disagree", and "Strongly disagree" are recorded as 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1. The five levels of varying degrees follow the traditional form of Likert scale setting. That is, it expresses the extent to which the respondent agrees with the option, and how important the item is in the respondent's consciousness.

Many of the investigations in this study involve conceptual thinking or intuitive questions, and some more were from the investigation of respondents' subjective behaviours, motivations, and attitudes, which are qualitative analyses. Therefore, in

this study, the respondents completed the questionnaires based on the Likert 5-point scale.

Survey research mainly uses structured questionnaires as measurement tools to collect data. Therefore, questionnaire development becomes an essential aspect of survey research. Salant and Dillman (1994) proposed a series of principles of measurement instrument development to guide the process of questionnaire development and reduce questionnaire bias. These principles were applied to the questionnaire development process in this study (Dolnicar, 2021; Yamashita, 2022). The questionnaire comprises 7 sections with 70 questions, which took about 7 minutes to complete. All the details of the questionnaire are shown in Appendix C. The questionnaire initially developed in English is intended for Chinese domestic tourists as the target respondents. Consequently, the questionnaire undergone a subsequent translation process to be rendered into simplified Chinese. This translation ensures that the questionnaire is easily understandable and accessible to the target respondents for accurate data collection and analysis.

The first section of the questionnaire introduces the researcher's identity, outlines the purpose of the study, and provides instructions for answering the questions. It also collects basic demographic and travel-related information about the respondents, such as gender, age, annual travel plans, budget for food consumption, and travel motivations. This section is designed to gather foundational data, which serves as a basis for subsequent descriptive and categorical analysis. By completing this section, respondents provide informed consent and acknowledge compliance with the study's ethical certification requirements.



The second part of the questionnaire aims to quantitatively assess the CSFs of Guilin as a food tourism destination. All the questions in this section were designed using Likert's 5-point scale. Respondents had the options of "very necessary, necessary, optional, unnecessary, and very unnecessary" to indicate their level of agreement or preference (Dalgıç & Birdir, 2020).. This scale allows for the systematic measurement and evaluation of the importance and relevance of each CSF in the context of Guilin's food tourism development.

### 3.4.2.1 Government Support

The second section of the questionnaire addresses questions related to the design of the government support (Q8-Q15), as shown in Table 3.5. This section uses a multiple-scale model for each test. For example, "Government policy support is necessary". The multi-item scale represents respondents' perceptions, and the data is more scientific.

Table 3.5  
*CSFs for a Food Tourism Destination - Government Support*

| No.                                             | Questions                                                          | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| In the development of food tourism destinations |                                                                    |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 8                                               | Government policy support is necessary                             | 5              | 4     | 3       | 2        | 1                 |
| 9                                               | Government leaders' involvement will bring a positive contribution | 5              | 4     | 3       | 2        | 1                 |
| 10                                              | Human resource security is important                               | 5              | 4     | 3       | 2        | 1                 |
| 11                                              | Government funding support is important                            | 5              | 4     | 3       | 2        | 1                 |
| In the process of promoting Guilin's cuisine,   |                                                                    |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 12                                              | Guilin government has given appropriate policy support             | 5              | 4     | 3       | 2        | 1                 |
| 13                                              | Guilin government leaders play an active role                      | 5              | 4     | 3       | 2        | 1                 |
| 14                                              | Guilin government provides for the catering talent pool            | 5              | 4     | 3       | 2        | 1                 |

|    |                                                   |   |   |   |   |   |
|----|---------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15 | Guilin government gave adequate financial support | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|----|---------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|

### 3.4.2.2 Stakeholder Involvement

The third section addresses questions related to the design of stakeholder involvement (Q16-Q26), including a survey on stakeholder engagement in developing Guilin as a food tourism destination, as shown in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6

*CSFs for a Food Tourism Destination - Stakeholder Involvement*

| No.                                                      | Questions                                                                            | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| <b>In the development of a food tourism destination,</b> |                                                                                      |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 16                                                       | Involvement of industry associations is important                                    | 5              | 4     | 3       | 2        | 1                 |
| 17                                                       | Community involvement is important                                                   | 5              | 4     | 3       | 2        | 1                 |
| 18                                                       | Travel company involvement is important                                              | 5              | 4     | 3       | 2        | 1                 |
| 19                                                       | Participation of restaurant operators is important                                   | 5              | 4     | 3       | 2        | 1                 |
| 20                                                       | Involvement of civil society organizations is necessary                              | 5              | 4     | 3       | 2        | 1                 |
| 21                                                       | Involvement of educational groups and coalitions is important                        | 5              | 4     | 3       | 2        | 1                 |
| 22                                                       | Public and local resident involvement is important                                   | 5              | 4     | 3       | 2        | 1                 |
| <b>In the process of promoting Guilin's cuisine,</b>     |                                                                                      |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 23                                                       | Guilin's industry associations promote the promotion of Guilin cuisine               | 5              | 4     | 3       | 2        | 1                 |
| 24                                                       | Guilin's tourism companies play a leading role in food tourism                       | 5              | 4     | 3       | 2        | 1                 |
| 25                                                       | Guilin's restaurant operators play a major role in the promotion of Guilin's cuisine | 5              | 4     | 3       | 2        | 1                 |

|    |                                                                     |   |   |   |   |   |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 26 | Guilin's citizens play an important role in Guilin's food promotion | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|

### 3.4.2.3 Destination Image

The fourth section investigates the issues related to the design of the destination image framework and the advantages of Guilin's image as a food tourism destination (Q26-Q34), as shown in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7

*CSFs for a Food Tourism Destination - Destination Image*

| No.                                                                               | Questions                                                        | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| <b>In the development of a food tourism destination,</b>                          |                                                                  |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 27                                                                                | Geography is important                                           | 5              | 4     | 3       | 2        | 1                 |
| 28                                                                                | Food culture is important                                        | 5              | 4     | 3       | 2        | 1                 |
| 29                                                                                | Specialty restaurants contribute to the image of the destination | 5              | 4     | 3       | 2        | 1                 |
| 30                                                                                | Festivals contribute to the destination image                    | 5              | 4     | 3       | 2        | 1                 |
| 31                                                                                | High-quality food reflects well on the destination image         | 5              | 4     | 3       | 2        | 1                 |
| <b>Guilin's image as a food tourism destination has the following advantages.</b> |                                                                  |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 32                                                                                | Beautiful geographical environment                               | 5              | 4     | 3       | 2        | 1                 |
| 33                                                                                | Unique food culture                                              | 5              | 4     | 3       | 2        | 1                 |
| 34                                                                                | Ethnic characteristics of the festival                           | 5              | 4     | 3       | 2        | 1                 |
| 35                                                                                | Numerous high-quality cuisines                                   | 5              | 4     | 3       | 2        | 1                 |

### 3.4.2.4 Visitor Experience

The fifth section addresses questions about the visitor experience, including visitors' perceptions of Guilin's cuisine (Q36-Q46), as shown in Table 3.8.

Table 3.8

*CSFs for a Food Tourism Destination - Visitor Experience*

| No.                                                                                              | Questions | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| <b>A tourist's food experience in a tourist destination is related to the following factors.</b> |           |                |       |         |          |                   |

|                              |                                         |   |   |   |   |   |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 36                           | Food Safety and Health                  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 37                           | Taste of food                           | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 38                           | Authenticity of ingredients             | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 39                           | Price of the food                       | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 40                           | Local consumption level                 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 41                           | Many specialties                        | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| <b>Guilin's cuisines are</b> |                                         |   |   |   |   |   |
| 42                           | Safe, hygienic and good for your health | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 43                           | Good taste                              | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 44                           | Authentic ingredients                   | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 45                           | Moderate price                          | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 46                           | Wide variety and special features       | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

#### 3.4.2.5 Destination Marketing

The sixth section addresses questions related to the design of the destination Marketing facet and investigates the factors that attract tourists to Guilin (Q47-Q54), as shown in Table 3.9.

#### 3.4.2.6 Core Food Products

The seventh section measures the core food products of a food tourism destination in Guilin (Q55-Q58), as shown in Table 3.10. This includes what a successful food tourism destination should contain and identifying Guilin's most representative destination intangible cultural heritage cuisines.

Table 3.9

*CSFs for a Food Tourism Destination - Destination Marketing*

| No.                                                                            | Questions                                      | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| <b>Food tourism destination marketing is related to the following factors.</b> |                                                |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 47                                                                             | Special events can boost destination marketing | 5              | 4     | 3       | 2        | 1                 |
| 48                                                                             | Service quality affects destination marketing  | 5              | 4     | 3       | 2        | 1                 |
| 49                                                                             | Application of social media tools is necessary | 5              | 4     | 3       | 2        | 1                 |

|                                        |                                            |   |   |   |   |   |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 50                                     | Well-equipped food outlets                 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| <b>You are visiting Guilin because</b> |                                            |   |   |   |   |   |
| 51                                     | Influenced by social media                 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 52                                     | Enjoying comfortable travel services       | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 53                                     | Influenced by special festivals and events | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 54                                     | Influenced by local food                   | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

The authors felt during their theoretical development that these factors had the potential to influence the growth and success of a food tourism destination but were not included in the research model as they did not have a solid theoretical foundation. The authors nevertheless hope to do some exploration of the influence of these factors in the empirical study.

Table 3.10  
*CSFs for a Food Tourism Destination - Core Food Products*

| <b>You are interested and enjoyed Guilin's iconic cuisine below</b> |                     | <b>Strongly agree</b> | <b>Agree</b> | <b>Neutral</b> | <b>Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly disagree</b> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 55                                                                  | Guilin Rice Noodles | 5                     | 4            | 3              | 2               | 1                        |
| 56                                                                  | Oil Tea             | 5                     | 4            | 3              | 2               | 1                        |
| 57                                                                  | Taro Sandwich       | 5                     | 4            | 3              | 2               | 1                        |
| 58                                                                  | Pork Beer Fish      | 5                     | 4            | 3              | 2               | 1                        |

#### 3.4.2.7 The Success of a Food Tourism Destination

The eighth section measures the core food products of a food tourism destination in Guilin (Q59-Q70), as shown in Table 3.11. This includes what a successful food tourism destination should contain. The authors felt during their theoretical development that these factors had the potential to influence the growth and success of a food tourism destination but were not included in the research model as they did not have a solid theoretical foundation. The authors nevertheless hope to do some exploration of the influence of these factors in the empirical study.

Table 3.11

*The Success of a Food Tourism Destination*

| No.                                                                                | Questions                                     | Strongly agree | Agree | Unsure | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|----------------|-------|--------|----------|-------------------|
| <b>What do you think are the factors of a successful food tourism destination?</b> |                                               |                |       |        |          |                   |
| 59                                                                                 | Meeting the needs of visitors                 | 5              | 4     | 3      | 2        | 1                 |
| 60                                                                                 | Visitors have a desire to repeat their visit  | 5              | 4     | 3      | 2        | 1                 |
| 61                                                                                 | Length of stay of tourists at the destination | 5              | 4     | 3      | 2        | 1                 |
| 62                                                                                 | Local economic benefits are enhanced          | 5              | 4     | 3      | 2        | 1                 |
| 63                                                                                 | Increased well-being of residents             | 5              | 4     | 3      | 2        | 1                 |
| 64                                                                                 | Increased competitiveness of the destination  | 5              | 4     | 3      | 2        | 1                 |
| <b>To taste the iconic cuisine of the destination you will</b>                     |                                               |                |       |        |          |                   |
| 65                                                                                 | Increase spending                             | 5              | 4     | 3      | 2        | 1                 |
| 66                                                                                 | Make more stops                               | 5              | 4     | 3      | 2        | 1                 |
| 67                                                                                 | Travel to the same location again             | 5              | 4     | 3      | 2        | 1                 |
| <b>To taste Guilin's iconic cuisine of the destination you will</b>                |                                               |                |       |        |          |                   |
| 68                                                                                 | Visit Guilin again                            | 5              | 4     | 3      | 2        | 1                 |
| 69                                                                                 | Increase spending                             | 5              | 4     | 3      | 2        | 1                 |
| 70                                                                                 | Extend travel time                            | 5              | 4     | 3      | 2        | 1                 |

To summarise, this study involved two rounds of Delphi and one questionnaire research on both the supply and demand sides of Guilin's tourism industry. The first round of the Delphi study focused on gathering relevant information on the success factors of Guilin as a food tourism destination. It also identified the natural, social, and cultural resources used for food and tourism product development. The interview outline was based on the literature review and research hypothesis.

In the second round of the Delphi study, the data obtained from the first round was used to prepare the second round of the Delphi expert questionnaire. A new questionnaire was also provided in this round.

Finally, in the third round of the survey, the data obtained from the second round was used to prepare a third round of questionnaires for both the supply and demand sides of Guilin's tourism industry. These two rounds of Delphi studies and one round of an extensive questionnaire were designed to achieve the RO1 and RO2 of this study.

### **3.4.3 Delphi Summary: Expert Opinions of CSFs**

Data collection for this study employed a quantitative research method. By integrating two rounds of the Delphi method, utilizing interviews and questionnaires with a panel of experts to enhance the robust and reliability of the instrument. Quantitative research will utilize a questionnaire administered to respondents from the supply and demand sides of Guilin's food tourism industry. This approach ensures a comprehensive exploration of CSFs and captures both expert insights and perspectives from industry stakeholders and tourists.

#### **3.4.3.1 Summary of Expert Interview**

Descriptive analysis was used in this round of Delphi research. Descriptive analysis was used to understand the characteristics of the respondents, for example, gender, age, organisation, current position, and length of employment. The Delphi method summarised expert opinions after conducting online or in-person interviews with each of the above experts in January 2023. In addition, experts have suggested the following important criteria regarding the CSFs of a food tourism destination:

### **3.4.3.2 Main Opinions from The Experts**

#### **3.4.3.2.1 Impact of Local Economy on Food Choices**

Yixing and Meilian suggested that the level of tourism destination consumption and the price of core food products can impact tourists' choice to experience local cuisine. The more the consumption level of a tourist destination is consistent with the consumption background of tourists, the higher the degree of interest of tourists in destination cuisine and the stronger the willingness of tourists to choose to consume local cuisine. There are a few exceptions to this rule, where the prices of destination specialties are substantially higher than tourists' daily food consumption levels, but driven by curiosity, challenge, exploration, and conquest, the sales of luxury specialties often exceed the demand.

#### **3.4.3.2.2 The Variety of Stakeholders**

Changrong and Linjie believe that food tourism involves stakeholders, including local communities, food producers, restaurateurs, and tourists. The differing perspectives of these stakeholders on promoting local food in a specific area or region can pose challenges for destination marketing and branding. This is because food products are often deeply tied to locations, and stakeholders may have conflicting views on the best promotional strategies. For instance, in Guilin, some stakeholders might favor promoting night market snacks, while others might support highlighting specialty restaurants. These differing perspectives can complicate the development of a cohesive marketing strategy that appeals to all stakeholders and effectively showcases the destination's unique culinary offerings. Researchers must consider the views and interests of all stakeholders to develop a comprehensive understanding of CSFs. By gathering diverse perspectives, researchers can identify core offerings that define a



food tourism destination and provide a competitive edge. This understanding can then inform the creation of effective marketing strategies to attract visitors.

#### **3.4.3.2.3 The Complexity of Factors**

Yuping and Lanjiang suggested that that CSFs for food tourism destinations are intricate and multifaceted. Researchers must consider a broad spectrum of elements, including food quality, cultural heritage, sustainability, accessibility, and technology. Incorporating perspectives from both supply and demand sides can provide a comprehensive understanding and uncover overlooked factors. Research that includes statistical data from both sides of the market is deemed more reliable. Future research directions could involve developing more advanced models and methods to analyze these complex factors thoroughly.

#### **3.4.3.2.4 The Success of a Food Tourism Destination**

There are two main views among experts on the success criteria of food tourism destinations: on the one hand, Meilian and Wuxiang argued that the success of a food tourism destination is measured by its ability to achieve sustainable development goals; on the other hand, Yixing and Changrong argued that the success of a destination could be measured by economic indicators, such as the revenue generated by tourism each quarter. Experts agree that food tourism holds the potential for a greater economic impact compared to other tourism sectors, as it involves a broader array of complementary businesses and attracts a more diverse visitor base. The future development of food tourism could benefit from conducting longitudinal studies to track the evolution of CSFs over time.

### 3.4.3.3 Summarized List of Measurement Items

A survey scale of CSFs in a food tourism destination was obtained for this study based on experts' opinions, as shown in Table 3.12. During the investigation, experts expressed their insights on CSFs in a food tourism destination from different perspectives. The experts assessed the research constructs and related indicators and suggested improvement.

Table 3.12

*List of Items in the CSFs for a Food Tourism Destination*

|                                     | Dimension               | Indicators                                 | List of measurement items                                                                       |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| CSFs for a food tourism destination | Government support      | Policy guidance                            | "Government policy support is necessary".                                                       |
|                                     |                         | Leadership involvement                     | "Involvement of government leaders leads to a positive contribution".                           |
|                                     |                         | Human Resources                            | "Human resource security is important".                                                         |
|                                     | Stakeholder involvement | Associations                               | "Industry association involvement is important".                                                |
|                                     |                         | Community                                  | "Community involvement is important".                                                           |
|                                     |                         | Companies / Business                       | "Corporate business engagement is necessary".                                                   |
|                                     |                         | Unions / Groups                            | "Participation of civil society organizations and coalitions is necessary".                     |
|                                     | Public                  | Public                                     | "Public and resident involvement is important".                                                 |
|                                     |                         | Geographical context                       | "Geography is important".                                                                       |
|                                     |                         | Food culture                               | "Food culture is very important"; "food quality reflects well on the image of the destination". |
|                                     | Destination image       | Food Quality                               | "Specialty restaurants contribute to the destination image".                                    |
|                                     |                         | Specialty Restaurants                      | "Festivals contribute to the destination image".                                                |
|                                     |                         | Festivals                                  | "Safety and health".                                                                            |
|                                     | Visitor experience      | Safety and hygiene                         | "Consumers value the taste of food".                                                            |
|                                     |                         | The Taste of Food                          | "Consumers value the authenticity of food".                                                     |
|                                     |                         | Authentic ingredients                      | "Value or pricing of food affects consumer experience".                                         |
| Tourism Destination Success         | Demand-side             | Value /Price                               | "The level of local consumption affects the consumer experience".                               |
|                                     |                         | Local consumption level (added by experts) | "Events can contribute to destination marketing".                                               |
|                                     |                         | Activities                                 | "Quality of service affects destination marketing".                                             |
|                                     | Destination marketing   | Services                                   | "Application of social media tools is necessary".                                               |
|                                     |                         | Social media                               |                                                                                                 |
|                                     | Demand-side             | Visitor satisfaction increased             | "What should be included in the success of a food tourism destination?"                         |
|                                     |                         | Get a good experience                      |                                                                                                 |

|             |                                                  |                                                               |
|-------------|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Supply-side | Increase consumption intention                   | "To what extent the above elements can be called successful." |
|             | Create economic benefits                         |                                                               |
|             | Enhancing the well-being of residents            |                                                               |
|             | Enhancing the competitiveness of the destination |                                                               |

The list of items in the CSFs of a food tourism destination questionnaire was summarized by combining the expert evaluation form on the suitability of CSFs of a food tourism destination completed by the experts. The following questionnaire design will include 30 items on identifying the CSFs of a food tourism destination and questions on determining the success criteria and core food products of a destination.

#### 3.4.3.4 Summary of Expert Measurements

The experts' measurement of the dimensional suitability scale was completed, and it took one month (Sep 2023) from when the questionnaire was distributed to when it was fully returned. During this period, all experts completed the questionnaire and sent it back through email, and one expert completed it face-to-face in paper form. The author's use of email and social media made this process more efficient, and the experts were very cooperative in carrying out the second round of the Delphi method research. The statistical list below shows how each expert scored in the second round of measurement.

As seen in Figure 3.2, the statistical results show a high degree of agreement among the experts on the first item, "Assess the suitability of the six independent variables", with no choice of "Unsuitable". This shows that the experts agreed with the six dimensions of CSFs for a food tourism destination. This measurement is a recognition of the researcher's previous work on literature review.

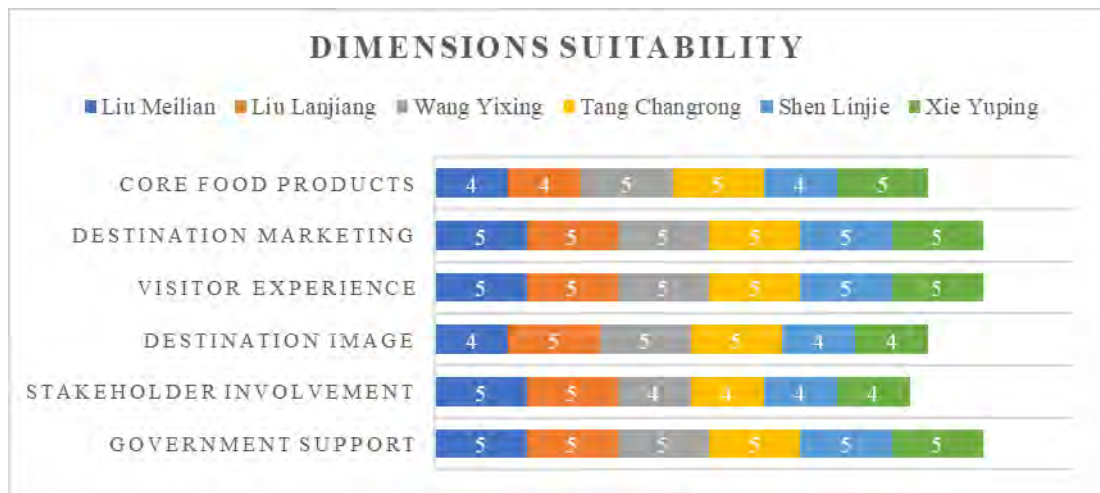


Figure 3.2 Expert Measurements of Suitability of IVs Evaluation Scale

No significant divergent results were found when doing the statistics on the specific factors in each dimension. As shown in Figure 3.3, this indicates that the experts' opinions were already agreed upon in the second round of Delphi research. As with most studies in the Delphi method, most of the experts' opinions already agreed in the second round. They agreed that 22 of the six dimensions in this study were suitable factors in the questionnaire.

Figure 3.4 presents the experts' evaluation of the success criteria for tourist destinations. The experts gave the scores for the "Visitor satisfaction" and "The willingness of visitors to make re-visit" indicators that were relatively consistent. Meanwhile, differences arose in the "Creating economic benefits" and "Enhancing the competitiveness of the destination" indicators. Some experts believed that the descriptions of economic indicators' growth and enhancing the destination's

competitiveness were somewhat vague and should focus on the changes in the tourism industry's economic indicators.

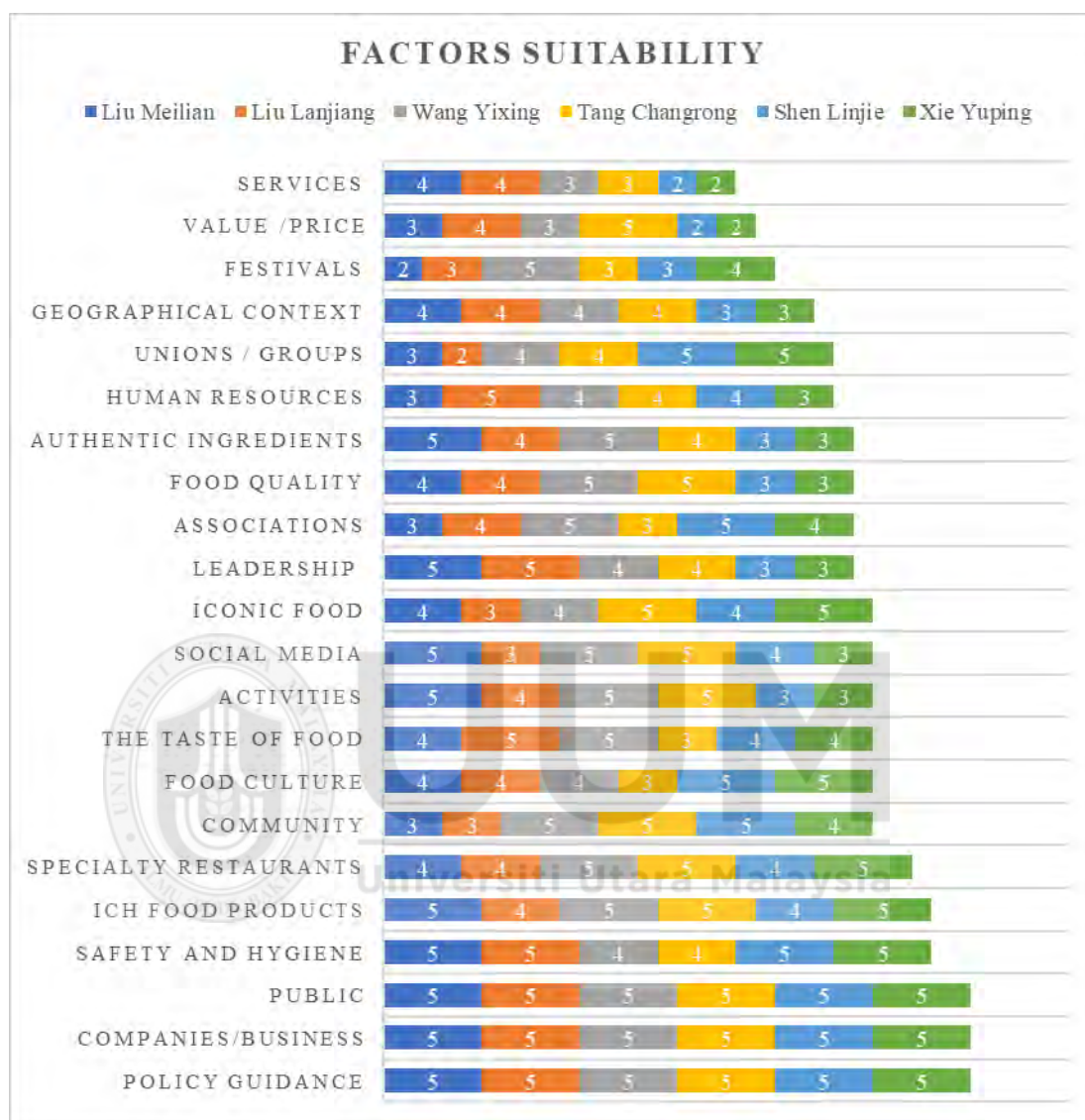


Figure 3.3 Expert Measurements of Suitability of IVs Evaluation

Additionally, when describing the enhancement of the destination's competitiveness, it should be made clear that the development of gastronomic tourism strengthens the destination's competitive advantage in the tourism industry. However, the other five experts all gave scores greater than or equal to 3, indicating their agreement with evaluating the destination's success based on this criterion. After considering the experts' opinions, the author still adheres to these four criteria and considered the

experts' suggestions when the survey questionnaire was designed, ensuring further clarity in the question design.

The second Delphi data analysis round was ready and then applied in designing the subsequent questionnaire with a large group of visitors, suppliers, and business managers.

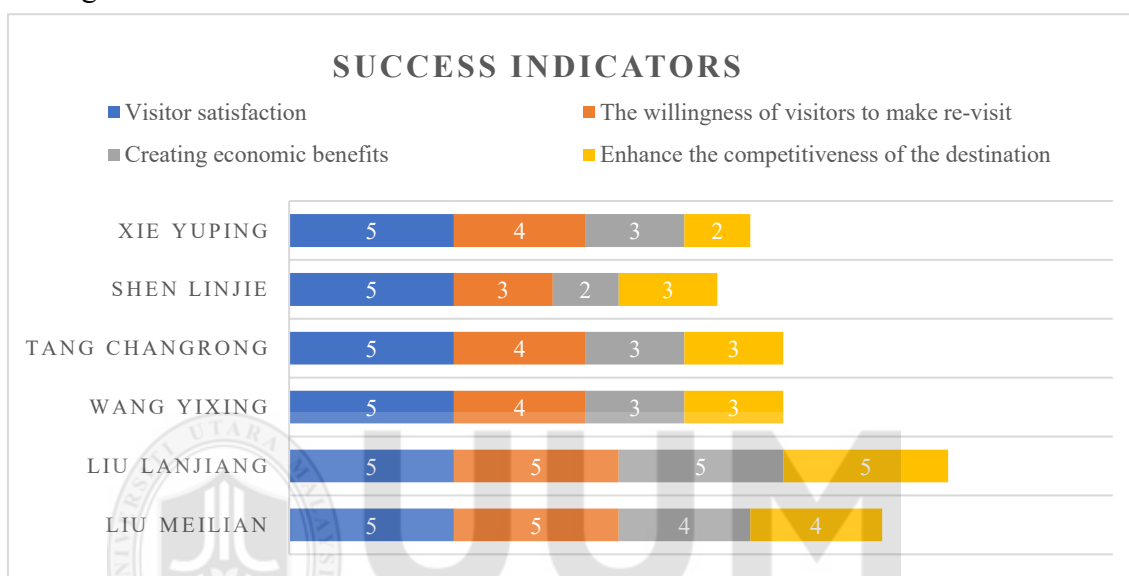


Figure 3.4 Suitability Scale for Experts to Measure the Success of a Food Tourism Destination

#### 3.4.4 Content validity of the questionnaire

In this study, we rigorously evaluate the reliability of the Delphi method using established qualitative study criteria by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Our focus on credibility and trustworthiness guides our assessment.

We carefully select panels of individuals with relevant expertise to establish credibility, ensuring valuable insights for our research questions. Incorporating diverse backgrounds and experiences, as suggested by Ziglio (1996), enriches response quality, and enhances the impact of our Delphi study's results, reinforcing their validity and significance.

For reliability, we adopt a rigorous selection process for our experts from reputable establishments, including managers from four and five-star hotels, senior government officials, and accomplished professors in related fields. Engaging such esteemed individuals ensures unwavering reliability in the insights and perspectives shared during the study.

The iterative nature of the Delphi method plays a pivotal role in enhancing the scrutiny of our expert panels, facilitating a comprehensive exploration of our research topic, and further fortifying the reliability of our findings. Employing multiple rounds of questionnaires, as endorsed by Habibi et al. (2014), acts as an additional safeguard, contributing to the overall validity of this Delphi study.

This study adopted several measures to ensure the questionnaire's validity and reliability. Initially, a thorough literature review was conducted, developing specific, measurable factors for each dimension. Subsequently, the questionnaire underwent scrutiny by experts and academics for aspects such as length, language fluency, and question comprehensiveness and reasonableness. Three experts were then tasked with assessing the questionnaire's validity. Following two rounds of expert evaluation and scale revision, a field survey was conducted with 2 Guilin restaurant workers and tourists, utilizing both Chinese and English versions of the questionnaire.

After expert reviews and the collective opinions of the expert team, duplicate question items in the questionnaire were eliminated. The final questionnaire comprised 67 questions. In Section 7 (Core food products), the questionnaire specified food products included in the intangible cultural heritage list, those with original local authenticity and raw materials, items most favoured by social media, and the most popular local

food products. The questions were structured around the research hypotheses and the 22 influencing factors, as indicated in Table 3.13. The original questionnaire with duplicated items and those deviating from the influencing factors was eliminated, as demonstrated in Table 3.14. The revised questionnaire, being more concise, adhered to adult reading habits, and featured comprehensible items, ultimately enhancing the efficiency of data collection.

Table 3.13

*Questions Optimised*

| No. | Questions                                                            | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
|     | Your interest in Guilin's iconic cuisine                             |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 55  | Guilin Rice Noodles- Most Popular Local Food                         |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 56  | Oil Tea- Intangible Cultural Heritage Food                           |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 57  | Taro Sandwich Pork- Local food with authentic ingredients            |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 58  | Beer Fish- The most popular foods favoured by online self-publishers |                |       |         |          |                   |

Table 3.14

*Deleted Questions*

| To taste the iconic cuisine of the destination you will |                                   |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 65                                                      | Increase spending                 |
| 66                                                      | Make more stops                   |
| 67                                                      | Travel to the same location again |

To further validate the reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted with 40 participants. Pilot studies are important initial small-scale investigations undertaken to assess the feasibility of a full-scale research project. The pilot study helps to refine the research questions in this study, identify potential errors in the research design, and highlight areas that require further investigation (Jia et al., 2021; Zhang & Guo, 2023). This enabled this study to revise the research questions, hypotheses, and variables before commencing the full survey. Many studies in tourism have used this approach to verify the reliability of the research design and data collection (Jia et al., 2021;



Yadegaridehkordi et al., 2018; Yasami et al., 2020). In addition, pilot studies are important for testing the data analysis methods used in a research project to ensure that the data analysis plan is appropriate and effective and that any problems can be identified and resolved before starting the full investigation. Conducting a pilot study ensures that the research is well-designed, rigorous and produces high-quality data.

The validity and reliability of a questionnaire serve as crucial benchmarks for the effectiveness and credibility of the survey instrument employed by the researcher. A pivotal phase in the questionnaire design process is the pilot test, wherein the reliability and validity of the questionnaire are examined, and necessary modifications are made in response to identified issues. This is imperative, as only a questionnaire with high reliability and validity can yield more dependable and valuable research findings.

In this research, the SPSS software served as the primary tool for assessing reliability and validity. The Cronbach's alpha value is employed as a benchmark in reliability measurement. The reliability coefficient is a quantitative measure assessing the consistency of a questionnaire. This coefficient provides insight into the level of internal consistency within the measurement instrument. The reliability coefficient ranges from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating greater questionnaire reliability. Generally, a reliability coefficient exceeding 0.9 is considered very good; Hair et al. (2010) proposes that a coefficient falling between 0.7 and 0.8 is acceptable, while a coefficient below 0.7 suggests the need for questionnaire modification or discarding certain questions. Therefore, items with alpha values surpassing 0.7 were selected for inclusion in this study.

Validity pertains to the extent to which a measurement tool accurately measures the intended purpose and meaning of the quantity it claims to assess. The primary approach for measurement is the expert judgment method, involving experts who analyze and assess the items of a test in relation to the intended scope of the measured content. The utilization of the Delphi method in this study involves a team of experts during the questionnaire design phase. The experts systematically evaluated each question item to ensure the questionnaire's validity. In subsequent research, factor analysis was employed to examine structural validity, focusing on the critical success factors exploration theme. In SPSS, this study utilized Buckminster Spheres and KMO values to assess the suitability of variables for factor analysis.

### **3.5 Pilot Study**

The creation of a questionnaire is a time-intensive process that entails its construction, modification, and refinement before data collection can commence, as highlighted by Oppenheim (2003). Even when adapting or borrowing a questionnaire from prior studies, it is crucial to ensure its appropriateness for the specific population under investigation (Oppenheim, 2003).

The selection of a sample size for a pilot study is a critical consideration, as it needs to be large enough to ensure reliable data while being manageable within the scope of the research project. According to the guidelines of Treece and Treece (1982) and Connely (2008), a common recommendation is to select approximately 10% of the research project's total sample size for the pilot test. Given the target sample size of 200 individuals in this study, following this recommendation would suggest a pilot sample of 20 participants.

However, other scholars, such as Isaac and Michael (1995) and Hill (1998), propose a broader range for pilot study sample sizes, recommending between 10 to 30 participants. Based on these suggestions, a pilot sample size of 40 participants, which falls within the higher end of this range, would be considered sufficient for testing the research methodology, instruments, and data collection procedures. The sample size of 40 ensures that both sides of the co-need are represented, offering a balanced perspective. This helps in understanding the applicability of the research instruments across different subgroups, which is particularly important for refining the study's design and ensuring that all potential variables are considered. With 40 respondents, the pilot study allows for an evaluation of the research tools, such as surveys or interview guides, to assess clarity, response rates, and potential issues in data collection. A sample of 40 participants is manageable within the constraints of most research projects in terms of time, cost, and resource availability. It provides a balance between ensuring sufficient data and maintaining efficiency in conducting the pilot study.

On 16-17 December 2023, 20 draft questionnaires were randomly distributed to adult tourists in Guilin is the centre of popular scenic spots, Wangcheng and East-West Alley, and 20 managers from the management of Shangri-La Hotel and the management of Guilin Reed Flute Cave Scenic Spot were selected for the pilot test. Respondents found the questionnaire to be extensive and accurate.

The pilot test assessed the time taken to complete the questionnaire and assessed how well the respondents understood the instructions, which allowed the researchers to improve the wording, question order and other issues. The pilot study was also important in determining the internal consistency of the questionnaire items, i.e. the

extent to which the questions were understood similarly by different test subjects (Udaya Sekhar, 2003). The final questionnaire will be distributed to a larger sample after making necessary changes based on respondents' suggestions.

Table 3.15  
*Basic Information on Pilot Study Samples*

| Questions                                                                        | N  | Percentage (%) |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|----------------|
| <b>1. Age</b>                                                                    |    |                |
| Under 18 years old                                                               | 3  | 7.5            |
| 19-29 years old                                                                  | 10 | 25.0           |
| 30-45 years old                                                                  | 11 | 27.5           |
| 45-60 years old                                                                  | 13 | 32.5           |
| Above 60 years old                                                               | 3  | 7.5            |
| <b>2. Vocational</b>                                                             |    |                |
| Service workers                                                                  | 4  | 10.0           |
| Student                                                                          | 4  | 10.0           |
| Civil servant                                                                    | 1  | 2.5            |
| Labourer                                                                         | 4  | 10.0           |
| Business administrators                                                          | 1  | 2.5            |
| Teachers                                                                         | 3  | 3.0            |
| Retirees                                                                         | 2  | 5.0            |
| Farmers                                                                          | 1  | 2.5            |
| Catering related jobs                                                            | 23 | 57.5           |
| <b>3. Types of tourism of interest (Multiple choice)</b>                         |    |                |
| Leisure and entertainment tourism                                                | 22 | 55.0           |
| Touring natural scenery                                                          | 20 | 50.0           |
| Scenic tours                                                                     | 13 | 32.5           |
| Food Tourism                                                                     | 17 | 42.5           |
| Conference and Leisure Tourism                                                   | 6  | 15.0           |
| Study Tourism                                                                    | 17 | 42.5           |
| Cultural Festivals                                                               | 8  | 20.0           |
| <b>4. Enjoying food as a proportion of travelling expenses</b>                   |    |                |
| One third                                                                        | 15 | 37.5           |
| One quarter                                                                      | 16 | 40.0           |
| One fifth                                                                        | 9  | 22.5           |
| <b>5. Reasons for choosing the same destination repeatedly (Multiple choice)</b> |    |                |
| Attractiveness of local natural and cultural landscapes                          | 21 | 52.5           |
| Attractiveness of local festivals and events                                     | 11 | 27.5           |
| The attractiveness of local food                                                 | 18 | 45.0           |
| Attractiveness of local tourist facilities                                       | 11 | 27.5           |
| Attentive local tourism services                                                 | 12 | 30.0           |
| Cost-effective local tourism spending                                            | 12 | 30.0           |
| Good local shopping environment                                                  | 9  | 22.5           |
| Convenient local transport facilities                                            | 13 | 32.5           |

### 3.5.1 Description of Basic Information About the Pilot Test Sample

A pilot study was conducted on a sample of 40 participants (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2018). The basic information about the participants is shown in Table 3.15.

The 40 samples in the pilot test came from 20 each from the supply side and the demand side. The age distribution of the respondents is mainly from 19 to 60 years old, and this age group is the main labour force if not the main consumer. Therefore, their opinions dominate the market. Members from the supply side are mainly engaged in catering-related industries, which is shown in the sample data as 23 people, accounting for more than half. In terms of travelling preferences, the two traditional modes of travelling, namely leisure and entertainment, and visiting scenic spots, are still the most popular. They are closely followed by food tourism and study tourism, which are new modes in the development of the tourism industry and are also the hotspots of concern for many consumers, entrepreneurs, and scholars. The influence of food on tourism occupies an important position as seen in the two statistical situations of the cost budget of travelling and the choice of travel destination. This also indicates that this study is of great significance. In general, the age and occupation of the 40 test sample people are reasonably distributed, and the respondents have a certain understanding and preference for gastronomic tourism and are interested in this survey. This is conducive to obtaining authentic and reliable information for this study.

### **3.5.2 Descriptive Analysis**

This study employs SPSS software for data preparation and organization. Utilizing the information within the research framework, 22 factors influencing the development of food tourism destinations were identified. These factors were then categorized into 6 dimensions, with the hypothesis that these dimensions would serve as independent variables, while the success of food tourism destinations would be the dependent variable. The initial questionnaire, designed based on this hypothesis, underwent

adjustments by a panel of experts, resulting in a final 67-item questionnaire measured on a 5-point Richter scale.

Table 3.16  
*Mean and Standard Deviation for Independent Variables (Original Items Number)*

| IV                        | No. | Questions                                                                                            | Average value | Standard deviation | Variance (statistics) |
|---------------------------|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Government support</b> | 8   | In the development of food tourism destinations, Government policy support is necessary              | 4.13          | 1.042              | 1.042                 |
|                           | 9   | Government leaders' involvement will bring a positive contribution                                   | 3.93          | 0.971              | 0.971                 |
|                           | 10  | Human resource security is important                                                                 | 3.93          | 1.118              | 1.118                 |
|                           | 11  | Government funding support is important                                                              | 4.18          | 0.931              | 0.866                 |
|                           | 12  | In the process of promoting Guilin's cuisine, Guilin government has given appropriate policy support | 3.98          | 1.097              | 1.204                 |
| Human resources           | 13  | Guilin government leaders play an active role                                                        | 3.93          | 1.047              | 1.097                 |
|                           | 14  | Guilin government provides for the catering talent pool                                              | 3.78          | 1.050              | 1.102                 |
|                           | 15  | Guilin government gave adequate financial support                                                    | 3.88          | 1.067              | 1.138                 |

The data obtained from the initial 40 samples were imported into SPSS 27.0 for scrutiny, checking for missing values, outliers, or inaccuracies to ensure data completeness and accuracy. To analyze the data, questions related to the 22 factors were organized into six dimensions, and the mean and standard deviation of each question were calculated individually. The results for the independent variable "Government support" are presented in Table 3.16, while the remaining independent and dependent variables can be found in Appendix D.

According to the table above, the questionnaire was based on a 5-point Likert scale, and the mean values of the respondents' scores for the measures under the six

independent variables and one dependent variable were all greater than 3. The results of the scales were all above the medium level, which indicated that the respondents had a certain perception of the development of gastronomic tourism destinations. Respondents from both the supply and demand sides fully integrated the actual situation of their businesses in the process of answering the questions. In terms of the standard deviation values of the variables, the data fluctuated around 1 between 0.928 and 1.265. It indicates that there is a difference between the sample data with less fluctuation, this phenomenon indicates that the data is statistically significant and there is room for further exploration and analysis. In the above table, variance is a statistic that indicates a discrete trend and is the average of the squares of the differences between the individual data and the mean. The researcher can get an idea of the magnitude of change in the data from the variance (Hair, 2010). The greater the variance the greater the fluctuation of the data, the statistics of the six independent variables in this study show that the variance value fluctuates between 0.971 and 1.138, which indicates that the data are different but not too fluctuating, which makes it suitable for research and analysis.

Furthermore, this study conducted normal distribution statistics based on a sample size of 40. The PP chart depicting the normal distribution of the six independent variables reveals that most data points align in a straight line, demonstrating a noticeable trend without significant deviation, as shown in Figure 3.5. This conformity to a continuous distribution suggests that the data can be considered to approximately follow a normal distribution (Čaplová & Švábová, 2020; Liberato, 2021). This observation underscores the reasoned design of the questionnaire, suggesting that the content effectively engages respondents' interest, resulting in more realistic and reasonable data outcomes.

### 3.5.3 Questionnaire Reliability Analysis

Reliability pertains to the examination of the credibility of questionnaire items concerning their impact on both IVs and DV. The reliability test serves to assess whether the questions are well formulated and to analyze the stability of the sample data obtained. This study conducted an overall internal consistency test using Cronbach's coefficient alpha. As per the recommendations of Hair et al. (2010), the minimum acceptable value for Cronbach's alpha in social science research is 0.6 to 0.7, and the closer alpha is to 1, the more it indicates the researcher's desire to attain higher reliability for the questionnaire. Subsequently, Cronbach's alpha values for each of the six dimensions were analyzed, with specific parameters presented in Table 3.17.





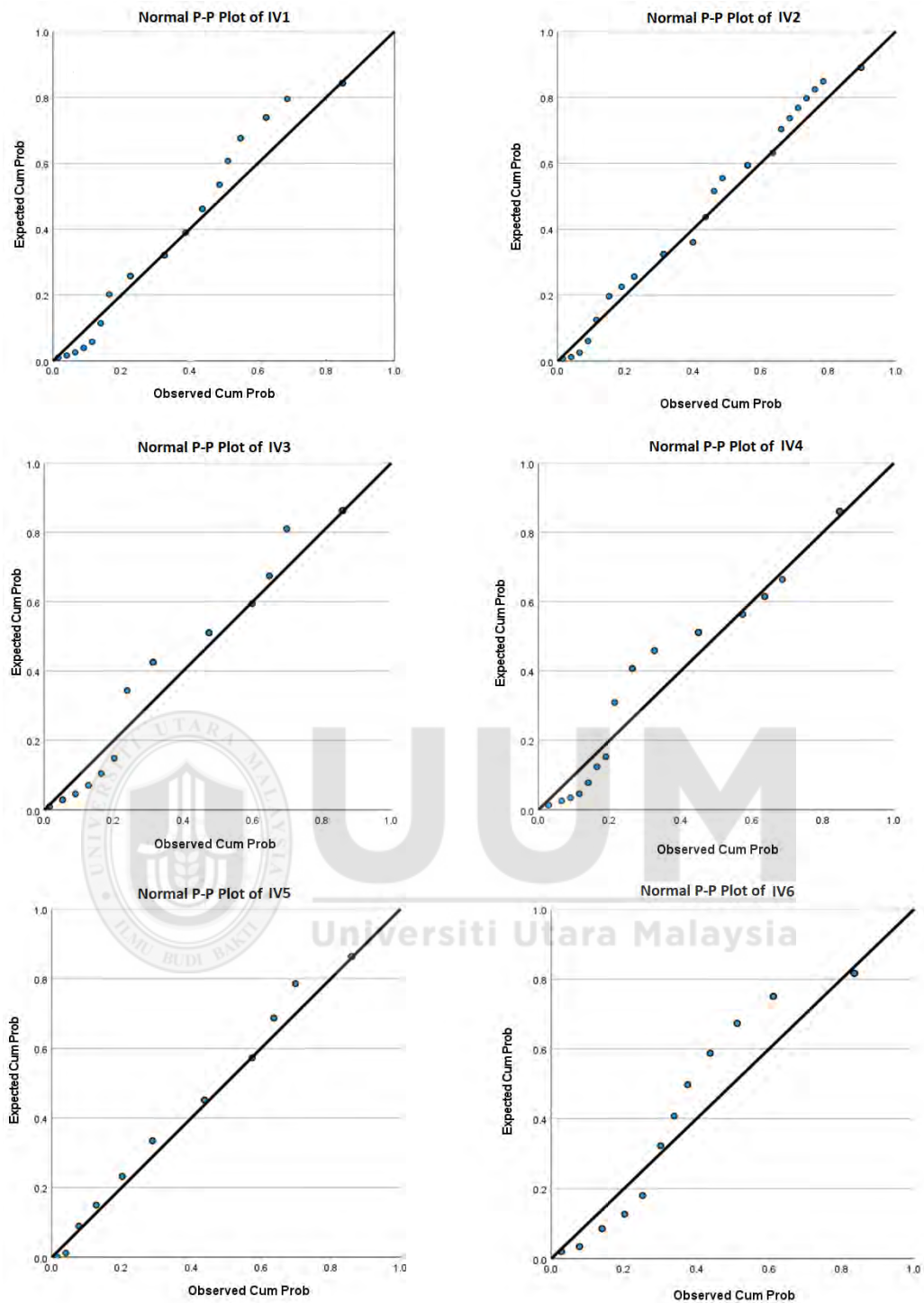


Figure 3.5 PP Chart of Normal Distribution of IVs (Pilot Study)

Table 3.17  
*Reliability Test from Pilot Study*

| <b>Variables tested</b> | <b>No. of items</b> | <b>Cronbach's Alpha Value</b> |
|-------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| Government support      | 8                   | 0.930                         |
| Stakeholder involvement | 11                  | 0.957                         |
| Destination image       | 9                   | 0.921                         |
| Visitor experience      | 11                  | 0.958                         |
| Destination marketing   | 8                   | 0.893                         |
| Core food products      | 4                   | 0.897                         |

The widely accepted view is that the Cronbach's alpha coefficient is directly linked to the reliability of the questionnaire. An alpha within the range of 0.7-0.8 suggests that the scale possesses respectable reliability, while alpha coefficients falling within 0.8-0.9 indicate very good reliability of the scale (Hair, 2010). Examining the table above, it is evident that all variables exhibit Cronbach's alpha in the range of 0.893-0.958, with a cumulative value of 0.926. These values affirm that the internal consistency of items measuring the same construct is at a commendable level.

The questionnaire demonstrates a high level of consistency and stability among its items, indicating strong reliability. The data obtained from this measurement tool is deemed suitable for further research. Furthermore, the involvement of a team of experts in the questionnaire design process has enhanced content validity. The KMO value suggests that the dependent variable can undergo further factor analysis, awaiting the completion of overall data collection.

#### **3.5.4 Questionnaire Validity Analysis**

The questionnaire design in this study involved continuous review and adjustment by experts in relevant fields, ensuring the content's validity and consistency. Additionally, efforts were made to optimize the language, ensuring clarity and ease of understanding

in the questionnaire semantics. For a comprehensive discussion, refer to section 3.3.5. Consequently, the questionnaire exhibits robust content validity.

The KMO value serves as a widely acknowledged indicator of structural validity, with a threshold of 0.6 considered indicative of a scale possessing structural validity and usability (Abdul-Rahman et al., 2022). In this study, the KMO value, calculated from a sample size of 40, is 0.910, denoting excellent validity and suitability for factor analysis.

Moreover, the p-value below 0.05 in Bartlett's test of sphericity further supports its appropriateness for factor analysis. As illustrated in Table 3.18, a p-value below 0.01 signifies a correlation among the raw data variables. Both the KMO values and Bartlett's test of sphericity affirm that the sample data are well-suited for factor analysis (Abdul-Rahman et al., 2022; Han et al., 2018; Rachão et al., 2021).

Table 3.18  
*KMO and Bartlett's Test (Pilot Study)*

| <b>KMO and Bartlett's test</b> |                        |          |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|----------|
| KMO Sampling Suitability       |                        | 0.910    |
|                                | Approximate chi-square | 1182.955 |
| Bartlett's test of sphericity  | Degrees of freedom     | 231      |
|                                | Significance           | < 0.01   |

The computational starting point for factor analysis is the correlation coefficient array. As seen in Table 3.19, the elements on the diagonal of the correlation coefficient array are 1, and the elements on the off-diagonal indicate the correlation coefficients between the variables two-by-two, with absolute values ranging from 0-1.

Table 3.19

*Correlation Statistics of IVs (Pilot Study)*

|     |              | IV1    | IV2    | IV3    | IV4    | IV5    | IV6    |
|-----|--------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| IV1 | Pearson      | 1      | .697** | .680** | .504** | .620** | .676** |
|     | Correlation  |        |        |        |        |        |        |
|     | Significance |        | 0.000  | 0.000  | 0.001  | 0.000  | 0.000  |
|     | (two-tailed) |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| IV2 | Sample size  | 40     | 40     | 40     | 40     | 40     | 40     |
|     | Pearson      | .697** | 1      | .701** | .619** | .463** | .705** |
|     | Correlation  |        |        |        |        |        |        |
|     | Significance | 0.000  |        | 0.000  | 0.000  | 0.003  | 0.000  |
| IV3 | (two-tailed) |        |        |        |        |        |        |
|     | Sample size  | 40     | 40     | 40     | 40     | 40     | 40     |
|     | Pearson      | .680** | .701** | 1      | .752** | .602** | .707** |
|     | Correlation  |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| IV4 | Significance | 0.000  | 0.000  |        | 0.000  | 0.000  | 0.000  |
|     | (two-tailed) |        |        |        |        |        |        |
|     | Sample size  | 40     | 40     | 40     | 40     | 40     | 40     |
|     | Pearson      | .504** | .619** | .752** | 1      | .585** | .683** |
| IV5 | Correlation  |        |        |        |        |        |        |
|     | Significance | 0.001  | 0.000  | 0.000  |        | 0.000  | 0.000  |
|     | (two-tailed) |        |        |        |        |        |        |
|     | Sample size  | 40     | 40     | 40     | 40     | 40     | 40     |
| IV6 | Pearson      | .620** | .463** | .602** | .585** | 1      | .643** |
|     | Correlation  |        |        |        |        |        |        |
|     | Significance | 0.000  | 0.003  | 0.000  | 0.000  |        | 0.000  |
|     | (two-tailed) |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| IV6 | Sample size  | 40     | 40     | 40     | 40     | 40     | 40     |
|     | Pearson      | .676** | .705** | .707** | .683** | .643** | 1      |
|     | Correlation  |        |        |        |        |        |        |
|     | Significance | 0.000  | 0.000  | 0.000  | 0.000  | 0.000  |        |
| IV6 | (two-tailed) |        |        |        |        |        |        |
|     | Sample size  | 40     | 40     | 40     | 40     | 40     | 40     |

\*\* . At the 0.01 level (two-tailed), the correlation is significant.

IV1 (Government support), IV2 (Stakeholder involvement), IV3 (Destination image), IV4 (Visitor experience), IV5 (Destination marketing), IV6 (Core food products).

The closer the absolute value is to 1, the more suitable the dataset is for factor analysis; the closer it is to 0 (the correlation coefficient array is close to the unit array), the less suitable the dataset is for factor analysis (Kim et al., 2010; Liberato, 2021). Further correlation tests on the IVs in the pilot test can provide support for the next data analysis strategy and further confirm the feasibility of doing factor analysis on the data of independent variables in this study.

The correlation coefficients among the independent variables are presented in Table 3.19, indicating the presence of significant correlations between the variables. A correlation coefficient less than 0.2 or lacking significance may suggest a weak correlation between the question items. However, excessively high correlation coefficients (greater than 0.8) can lead to severe covariance, which is detrimental to subsequent linear regression analysis (Han et al., 2018; Rachão et al., 2021). Consequently, Pearson's correlation coefficient between analytical items is generally expected to fall between 0.3 and 0.7. In this study, the coefficients range from 0.463 to 0.752, signifying significant correlations between the variables. With the obtained comprehensive research data and high reliability and validity of the questionnaire, the significance between the independent variables being less than 0.01 suggests suitability for multiple linear regression analysis (Pérez Gálvez, Granda, et al., 2017).

Given the intentional differentiation between the supply and demand sides in the data samples, an independent samples t-test was executed in the pilot testing phase to assess the significance of differences between the two datasets. As shown in Table 3.20, the p-values for the homogeneity of variance test are all greater than 0.05 for IV1, IV2,

Table 3.20

*Result of Independent T-Test*

|     |                                | Levene's Test of<br>Equality of Variances |      | t-test for Equality of Means |       |                     |                    |                          | 95% Confidence Interval for the<br>Difference |             |
|-----|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|------|------------------------------|-------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-------------|
|     |                                | F                                         | Sig. | t                            | df    | Sig. (2-<br>tailed) | Mean<br>Difference | Std. Error<br>Difference | Upper Bound                                   | Lower Bound |
| IV1 | Equal Variances<br>assumed     | 2.52                                      | 0.12 | -4.22                        | 38.00 | 0.00                | -1.01              | 0.24                     | -1.49                                         | -0.52       |
|     | Equal Variances<br>not assumed |                                           |      | -4.22                        | 31.84 | 0.00                | -1.01              | 0.24                     | -1.50                                         | -0.52       |
| IV2 | Equal Variances<br>assumed     | 0.94                                      | 0.34 | -5.24                        | 38.00 | 0.00                | -1.08              | 0.21                     | -1.49                                         | -0.66       |
|     | Equal Variances<br>not assumed |                                           |      | -5.24                        | 33.40 | 0.00                | -1.08              | 0.21                     | -1.49                                         | -0.66       |
| IV3 | Equal Variances<br>assumed     | 6.27                                      | 0.02 | -3.79                        | 38.00 | 0.00                | -0.97              | 0.26                     | -1.49                                         | -0.45       |
|     | Equal Variances<br>not assumed |                                           |      | -3.79                        | 31.71 | 0.00                | -0.97              | 0.26                     | -1.49                                         | -0.45       |
| IV4 | Equal Variances<br>assumed     | 6.02                                      | 0.02 | -3.99                        | 38.00 | 0.00                | -1.02              | 0.26                     | -1.54                                         | -0.50       |
|     | Equal Variances<br>not assumed |                                           |      | -3.99                        | 31.35 | 0.00                | -1.02              | 0.26                     | -1.54                                         | -0.50       |
| IV5 | Equal Variances<br>assumed     | 0.55                                      | 0.46 | -3.09                        | 38.00 | 0.00                | -0.73              | 0.23                     | -1.20                                         | -0.25       |
|     | Equal Variances<br>not assumed |                                           |      | -3.09                        | 33.79 | 0.00                | -0.73              | 0.23                     | -1.20                                         | -0.25       |
| IV6 | Equal Variances<br>assumed     | 19.31                                     | 0.00 | -4.66                        | 38.00 | 0.00                | -1.31              | 0.28                     | -1.88                                         | -0.74       |
|     | Equal Variances<br>not assumed |                                           |      | -4.66                        | 28.38 | 0.00                | -1.31              | 0.28                     | -1.89                                         | -0.74       |
| DV  | Equal Variances<br>assumed     | 3.42                                      | 0.07 | -6.24                        | 38.00 | 0.00                | -1.48              | 0.24                     | -1.95                                         | -1.00       |
|     | Equal Variances<br>not assumed |                                           |      | -6.24                        | 32.75 | 0.00                | -1.48              | 0.24                     | -1.96                                         | -0.99       |

IV1 (Government support), IV2 (Stakeholder involvement), IV3 (Destination image), IV4 (Visitor experience), IV5 (Destination marketing), IV6 (Core food products).

IV5, and DV. This implies that these variables from the two groups on the supply and demand sides do not adhere to the assumption of homogeneity of variances. Consequently, the t-test results considering "unequal variances" (i.e., the second row of t-test results) need to be scrutinized. The p-value for the t-test is  $<0.001$ , rejecting the null hypothesis of no difference in means between the two groups of cases, indicating a disparity in the means of the two sample groups. Analysis of the confidence interval data further reveals that both the upper and lower limits align with 0, confirming differences between the two datasets. This deliberate statistical analysis for the supply and demand sides holds significance. Therefore, in subsequent analyses, the samples from the supply and demand sides can be aggregated for analysis, with separate comparisons made during comparative analyses.

Following the pilot test results, further analysis of the overall data can be pursued through exploratory factor analysis to ascertain structural validity. Subsequently, employing multiple linear regression equations for computation emerges as a viable approach. However, in the pilot test, in line with prior research experiences, the sample size for questionnaires requiring factor analysis should be at least 5-10 times the number of factors. Due to the limitation in sample size, conducting exploratory factor analysis in the pilot test lacks meaningful significance. Consequently, this study focused solely on testing questionnaire validity and exploring the relationship between independent variables using KMO and Bartlett's test of sphericity with the dependent variable correlation matrix to determine the questionnaire's usability and formulate a data analysis strategy for subsequent stages.

The pilot study highlighted an increasing preference for e-questionnaires, facilitated by the widespread adoption of mobile technology. E-questionnaires provide a user-

friendly interface, offering greater flexibility and convenience compared to traditional paper-based surveys. They are also time-efficient, with respondents completing them approximately two-thirds faster than paper versions. Additionally, e-questionnaires help prevent incomplete responses by prompting users to fill in missed sections. Advanced questionnaire applications allow for real-time survey tracking and direct data exportation to software like SPSS or Excel. The integration of e-questionnaires in research, especially in the context of big data and artificial intelligence, not only reduces costs but also improves the efficiency of data collection. Therefore, for the main phase of the study, leveraging e-questionnaires will be a strategic choice.

### **3.6 Data Collection**

Surveying both the supply and demand sides of a food tourism destination offers numerous advantages, fostering a comprehensive understanding of the destination. This approach ensures a holistic perspective, incorporates diverse viewpoints, aligns stakeholder interests, supports effective policy and planning, and facilitates data validation and triangulation. These advantages contribute to a robust and well-informed analysis of CSFs, thereby promoting the sustainable development of the destination (Abdul-Rahman et al., 2022; Sang & Yao, 2019). A total of 480 questionnaires were distributed for this study: 230 from the supply side and 250 from the demand side.

To collect data on the supply side, a proportionate random sampling method was employed to select 230 restaurants from Guilin's catering industry. Initially, every third restaurant was randomly chosen from the population list, totaling approximately 208 restaurants. However, to enhance accuracy and provide a better representation of the total population, the sample size was increased to 230 restaurants. The Guilin Catering



Industry Association's member list, encompassing most local restaurants, served as the sampling frame. Selected restaurants affiliated with the association received e-questionnaires accompanied by detailed instructions from the researcher.

Conversely, data collection on the demand side targeted adult Chinese tourists visiting Guilin who met specific criteria. Questionnaires were distributed based on the following criteria: 1) respondents had to be adults, 2) non-residents of the surveyed destinations, 3) Chinese domestic tourists, and 4) individuals who had experienced local cuisine. Since the exact number of domestic tourists during the survey period was unknown, a non-probability sampling method was utilized. A larger sample of 250 tourists was randomly selected to ensure sufficient data for analysis. Face-to-face questionnaires were administered at six popular tourist attractions in downtown Guilin (Dongxi Lane, Wangcheng Scenic Area, Seven Star Park, Elephant Trunk Hill Park, Reed Flute Cave Park, and Lujia Village Ancient Town.), with trained enumerators helping. Respondents were given the option to choose between an e-questionnaire via scanning a QR code with their mobile phones. The survey was conducted from December 20, 2023, to January 25, 2024.

### **3.7 Data Processing and Analysis Strategy**

#### **3.7.1 Descriptive Analyses**

Descriptive statistics play a crucial role in generalizing and analyzing data, aiming to offer an initial comprehension of the overall characteristics of the data. In this study, the analysis of frequency distribution, central tendency (mean), variance, and standard deviation serves to assess the scale's quality, coding, data entry accuracy, and readiness for factor analysis and Cronbach's alpha.

**Frequency Distribution:** The frequency distribution table illustrates the values taken by each variable and the corresponding frequency. This aids in understanding variable distribution, identifying outliers, or missing values, and evaluating the overall data structure. Frequency distributions are instrumental in determining the range of values and the frequency distribution of a variable.

**Central Tendency (Mean):** The mean, calculated as the sum of all observations divided by the number of observations, provides the central point of the data. It aids in grasping the overall tendency of the data, allowing for an initial assessment of relative positions by comparing means across different variables.

**Variance and Standard Deviation:** Variance measures how far data points deviate from the mean, and standard deviation is the square root of the variance. These statistics indicate the extent of variation in the data. When applied to a set of variables, a comparison of variance and standard deviation can reveal their dispersion.

**Cronbach's Alpha:** Cronbach's alpha, a commonly used statistic for measuring internal consistency, is particularly valuable for assessing scale reliability. By calculating Cronbach's alpha, one can gauge how well items in the scale correlate with each other and how internally consistent the entire scale is in measuring the same concept.

**Preparation for Factor Analysis:** Descriptive statistics serve as a preparatory step for factor analysis. While factor analysis aims to identify potential factor structures, descriptive statistics offer basic information about each variable, aiding in determining which variables are suitable for factor analysis.

By prioritizing the analysis of these descriptive statistics, this study ensures data quality, identifies potential issues, and sets the foundation for subsequent statistical analysis and interpretive research. Descriptive statistics not only provide an overall understanding of the data but also serve as valuable reference points for further analysis.

### **3.7.2 Factor Analysis**

This study utilized the Delphi method as a qualitative approach to gather expert opinions. Data analysis for the Delphi study involved descriptive analysis in the first round, while the second round employed a scaled format with numerical scores for more specific analysis.

For the subsequent analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaire, the PCA method will be employed. PCA, a widely used multivariate statistical method, is known for its ability to analyze and simplify complex data sets (Gray, 2017). It serves as a common approach for dimensionality reduction, transforming potentially correlated variables into linearly uncorrelated variables called principal components. The primary objective of PCA is to capture the most relevant information about the original variables in a more manageable and interpretable form, enabling a deeper understanding of the underlying patterns and structures within the data. Further multiple regression analysis was carried out based on principal component analysis to obtain the final data results.

PCA is a statistical technique that performs an orthogonal transformation on the data, resulting in a new set of variables known as principal components. These components are linearly uncorrelated and ordered based on their ability to explain the variance in

the original data, with the first principal component accounting for the maximum variance, followed by the second, and so on (Anton Martin et al., 2021; Niavis & Tsiotas, 2018).

PCA is particularly useful for reducing the dimensionality of a dataset while retaining the most important features that contribute to the variance. By selecting lower-order principal components and disregarding higher-order ones, the technique preserves the most significant aspects of the data. This enables researchers to analyze and interpret the data more effectively while reducing complexity.

PCA was invented by Karl Pearson in 1901 and has since become an essential tool in various fields, including finance, biology, engineering, and social sciences (Gray, 2017). The method is based on the eigen decomposition of the covariance matrix to derive the data's principal components (i.e., eigenvectors) and their weights (i.e., eigenvalues). PCA can help researchers gain insights into the underlying structure of their data and build mathematical models that accurately capture the patterns and relationships within the data. Based on principal component analysis, further multiple regression analysis was conducted to obtain the final data results.

The primary objective of this study was to identify the CSFs (RQ2) of Guilin as a city for food tourism. The data analysis process involved factor analysis, which identified 22 factors across six dimensions. These constructs were derived from the literature review and expert qualitative analysis. To ensure the objectivity and credibility of the study, PCA was used to identify CSFs, as has been done in previous studies (Avcikurt et al., 2010; Brotherton, 2004; Sang & Yao, 2019). The advantage of using PCA is that it eliminates the influence of correlation between assessment indicators, as the

principal components formed are independent of each other after transforming the original data indicator variables. It has been shown that the higher the correlation between indicators, the more effective the PCA is. Given that some of the success factors in this study are highly correlated, such as companies, restaurants and associations, it was necessary to identify the principal components through the PCA method before carrying out multiple regression analyses (Sang & Yao, 2019).

SPSS was employed as the tool for statistical analysis, aiming to identify CSFs contributing to Guilin's food tourism industry. These factors can inform policymakers and businesses in Guilin to develop effective strategies, enhancing the city's attractiveness as a food tourism destination. The study's results hold significant implications for the development of Guilin's tourism industry and can serve as a basis for future research in this field (Čaplová & Švábová, 2020).

### **3.7.3 Reliability and Validity Methods**

The questionnaire's validity and reliability are pivotal benchmarks in evaluating the efficiency and trustworthiness of the survey instrument utilized by researchers. A critical step in the questionnaire design process is pilot testing, wherein the questionnaire's reliability and validity are scrutinized, prompting necessary adjustments based on identified issues. Employing SPSS as a tool in this study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient serves as a benchmark for measuring reliability. This coefficient gauges the internal consistency of the measurement tool, with values ranging from 0 to 1, higher values indicating greater questionnaire reliability. Generally, a reliability coefficient surpassing 0.9 denotes high reliability, a range between 0.7 and 0.8 is deemed acceptable, and values below 0.7 may necessitate

modifications or the exclusion of specific questions (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2018; Williams et al., 2010).

In this study, items with an  $\alpha$  value exceeding 0.7 have been selected (Kitchenham & Charters, 2007; Marais et al., 2017). Validity refers to the effectiveness of a measurement tool, indicating the tool's ability to measure the intended quantity's purpose and intent. Validity measurement methods encompass expert judgment, where experts infer and assess test items concerning the designed content scope. In this study, the Delphi method has been employed, leveraging a team of specialists to individually evaluate each questionnaire item, ensuring its effectiveness.

In future research, with a focus on exploring CSFs, structural validity will be examined using factor analysis. The Bartlett's sphere test and KMO value, in conjunction with SPSS, will assess whether variables are suitable for factor analysis. Subsequent analyses will include assessments of convergent and discriminant validity.

#### **3.7.4 Multiple Linear Regression Analysis**

Regression analysis is utilized to evaluate the predictive power of an IV on a DV. Specifically, multiple linear regression analysis is a statistical technique used to analyze the relationship between a single DV and multiple IVs (Hair, 2010; Williams et al., 2010). This method examines how a linear combination of IVs statistically predicts the DV. In the context of this study, the relationships analyzed include Government support, Stakeholder involvement, Visitor experience, Destination image, Destination marketing, and Core food products in relation to the success of a food tourism destination. The regression model can be summarized using the following formula (Equation 3.1):

$$\hat{Y} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \cdot X_1 + \beta_2 \cdot X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 \cdot X_4 + \beta_5 \cdot X_5 + \beta_6 \cdot X_6 \quad (3.1)$$

$\hat{Y}$  represents the predicted or estimated value of the dependent variable,  $\beta_0$  is the intercept of the regression equation,  $\beta_1, \beta_2, \dots, \beta_6$  are the regression coefficients associated with each independent variable  $X_1, X_2, \dots, X_6$  are the values of the independent variables (Niavis & Tsiotas, 2018).

To conduct MLR analysis, adherence to several assumptions is imperative. Firstly, a normality test must be executed to ensure that the sample data conforms to a normal distribution. Secondly, the linearity between variables must be observed to identify any U-shaped or other curvilinear relationships that might disrupt the regression analysis. Thirdly, homoscedasticity of the data is essential, which can be assessed by plotting a straight line on the scatter plot of the predictor variable and the dependent variable. Fourthly, it is crucial to avoid the presence of multicollinearity (Niavis & Tsiotas, 2018). Multicollinearity is identified when the tolerance value is below 0.10, and the variance inflation factor (VIF) exceeds 10, indicating a high correlation among IVs (Pallant, 2020). Multicollinearity hampers the ability to discern the individual impact of each independent variable on the dependent variable (Hair, 2010).

Lastly, there should be correlations between IVs and the DV. However, as per Talib (2015), the correlation should not be excessively high, preferably not exceeding 0.7, to establish a robust multiple regression model. These assumptions collectively contribute to the robustness and reliability of the multiple regression analysis.

### **3.8 Summary**

This chapter provided a detailed exposition of the research design, instrumentation, data collection, and analysis methodologies. The reliability and credibility of the Delphi method underwent a thorough evaluation, applying established qualitative study criteria. The selection of expert panels with diverse backgrounds and relevant expertise aimed to ensure the acquisition of valuable insights, thereby enhancing the overall validity of the research. The iterative nature of the Delphi method, coupled with the use of multiple rounds of questionnaires, further fortified the scrutiny of expert opinions.

The questionnaire's validity and reliability were meticulously addressed through an extensive literature review and expert review processes. To further validate the questionnaire's reliability, a pilot study will be conducted using Cronbach's coefficient alpha. Additionally, the PCA method will be employed to analyze and identify critical success factors in the context of a food tourism destination. These rigorous methodological approaches contribute significantly to the overall credibility and trustworthiness of the study, enabling a robust analysis of critical success factors within the realm of food tourism destinations.



## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, the data collected from the study undergoes comprehensive analysis to discern patterns, relationships, and insights pertinent to the research objectives. The analysis encompasses various stages, including data screening, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), reliability and validity testing, and statistical validation of CSFs in food tourism destinations. Furthermore, this chapter culminates in the development of a robust conceptual framework synthesizing the empirical findings with theoretical underpinnings.

#### **4.2 Data Overview**

##### **4.2.1 Profile of Respondents**

A total of 480 questionnaires were distributed for this study, with 451 collected (demand side 224, supply side 227), excluding 13 irregular samples, 438 (demand side 221, supply side 217) valid samples were used for data analysis, resulting in an effective rate of 91.3%.

Valid samples from the demand side were 221. Given the research focus on popular urban attractions, the predominant composition of respondents (93%) comprised Chinese individuals, while 4.9% were tourists from Southeast Asia, and 2.1% originated from Europe and the United States.

The survey took place from December 20, 2023, to January 25, 2024, covering six major hotspots in downtown Guilin: Dongxi Lane, Wangcheng Scenic Area, Seven Star Park, Elephant Trunk Hill Park, Reed Flute Cave Park, and Lujia Village Ancient Town.

Valid samples from the supply side 217, including professionals managing the catering market, companies, managers, and workers in the catering industry. Those aged 30 and above possessed cumulative experience of over 5 years in tourism and catering-related fields. The survey period ranged from December 17, 2023, to January 25, 2024. The demographic profile of respondents is presented in Table 4.1.

In summary, most respondents fell within the age range of 30 to 40, constituting 37.44% of the total. Respondents under 18 exclusively represented the demand side. The supply side predominantly comprised individuals in service-related roles, food-related professions, and managerial positions. In terms of tourism preferences, the top three choices in the multiple-selection item were food-themed tourism, nature sightseeing, and leisure travel. Nearly half of the respondents allocated one-third of their travel expenses to experiencing local cuisines, highlighting the enduring popularity of culinary tourism. Insights from inquiries about the willingness to revisit indicated that local natural landscapes and culture were the primary attractions, followed by local cuisine and festivals. Approximately half of the respondents unanimously acknowledged Guilin's natural landscapes. Most individuals demonstrated familiarity with Guilin's distinctive cuisines, with one-third considering themselves highly knowledgeable about Guilin's culinary culture. This trend may be attributed to recent social media marketing and big data promotions. Subsequent data analysis in this study will delve deeper into these aspects.

Table 4.1

*The Demographic Profile of Respondents (N=438)*

| Questions                                                                        | N   | Percentage (%) |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|----------------|
| <b>1. Age</b>                                                                    |     |                |
| Under 18                                                                         | 24  | 5.48           |
| 19-29                                                                            | 120 | 27.40          |
| 30-45                                                                            | 164 | 37.44          |
| 46-60                                                                            | 106 | 24.20          |
| Above 60                                                                         | 24  | 5.48           |
| <b>2. Occupation</b>                                                             |     |                |
| Service industry workers                                                         | 105 | 23.97          |
| Military                                                                         | 3   | 0.68           |
| Student                                                                          | 33  | 7.53           |
| Civil servant                                                                    | 8   | 1.83           |
| Worker                                                                           | 27  | 6.16           |
| Business managers                                                                | 46  | 10.50          |
| Teachers                                                                         | 37  | 8.45           |
| Retirees                                                                         | 26  | 5.94           |
| Farmers                                                                          | 9   | 2.05           |
| Catering related jobs                                                            | 144 | 32.88          |
| <b>3. Types of tourism of interest (Multiple choice)</b>                         |     |                |
| Leisure and entertainment                                                        | 219 | 50.00          |
| Touring natural scenery                                                          | 199 | 45.43          |
| Scenic tours                                                                     | 170 | 38.81          |
| Food Tourism                                                                     | 223 | 50.91          |
| Conference and Leisure                                                           | 77  | 17.58          |
| Study                                                                            | 101 | 23.06          |
| Cultural Festivals                                                               | 101 | 23.06          |
| <b>4. Enjoying food as a proportion of travelling expenses</b>                   |     |                |
| One third                                                                        | 218 | 49.77          |
| One quarter                                                                      | 129 | 29.45          |
| One fifth                                                                        | 91  | 20.78          |
| <b>5. Reasons for choosing the same destination repeatedly (Multiple choice)</b> |     |                |
| Attractiveness of local natural and cultural landscapes                          | 226 | 51.60          |
| Attractiveness of local festivals and events                                     | 121 | 27.63          |
| The attractiveness of local food                                                 | 213 | 48.63          |
| Attractiveness of local tourist facilities                                       | 115 | 26.26          |
| Attentive local tourism services                                                 | 146 | 33.33          |
| Cost-effective local tourism spending                                            | 145 | 33.11          |
| Good local shopping environment                                                  | 111 | 25.34          |
| Convenient local transport facilities                                            | 153 | 34.93          |
| <b>6. The most attractive part of Guilin?</b>                                    |     |                |
| Natural scenery                                                                  | 202 | 46.12          |
| Famous monuments                                                                 | 47  | 10.73          |
| Delicious food                                                                   | 71  | 16.21          |
| Ethnic culture                                                                   | 34  | 7.76           |
| Friendly residents                                                               | 19  | 4.34           |
| Reasonable tourist spending                                                      | 45  | 10.27          |
| Good shopping environment                                                        | 20  | 4.57           |
| <b>7. Do you know the specialties of Guilin?</b>                                 |     |                |
| Very well                                                                        | 146 | 33.33          |
| know                                                                             | 198 | 45.21          |
| generally known                                                                  | 74  | 16.89          |
| not very well                                                                    | 16  | 3.65           |
| not at all                                                                       | 4   | 0.91           |

#### **4.2.2 Data Description**

To overcome temporal and spatial limitations and optimize research efficiency, this study employed e-questionnaires for extensive data collection, leveraging insights obtained from the pilot phase respondents. Most respondents efficiently completed the questionnaire within a timeframe of 3 to 6 minutes, ensuring brevity in time consumption and contributing to a high questionnaire retrieval rate. The initial questionnaire section covered respondents' basic information, tourism preferences, interest in food tourism, and familiarity with Guilin, the focal city in the empirical section of this study. Distinct perspectives on the development of food tourism destinations were observed between the supply and demand sides.

The second section employed a Likert 5-point scale for measurement, and the e-questionnaire effectively minimized the occurrence of missing values. Among the 451 collected questionnaires, no instances of missing data were identified. As anticipated from the t-tests conducted during the pilot phase, noteworthy disparities in opinions were evident between the supply and demand sides, underscoring the considerable value of collecting data from both perspectives in this research.

#### **4.2.3 Geographical Distribution**

Guilin, a well-established tourist destination, annually attracts visitors from various regions of China. For data collection from the demand side, sources were diversified to cover all provinces in China, ensuring a comprehensive representation. The empirical focus of this research is on Guilin, Guangxi, where individuals from industries and enterprises within Guangxi on the supply side are expected to provide a more representative sample. The geographical distribution of participants in the survey can be traced back to their respective provinces through the IP addresses of the e-

questionnaire respondents, as illustrated in Figure 4.1. The diagram shows respondents from the demand side spanning across 21 provinces nationwide. Additionally, there were 16 respondents originating from Southeast Asia, Europe, and the United States.

Respondents from the supply side predominantly originate from Guangxi Province, as depicted in Figure 4.2, corresponding to the geographical region of the empirical research. This distribution is consistent with observed factual patterns. Within Guangxi, respondents from Guilin, the city under empirical study, constitute the majority, exceedingly more than half of the total supply-side sample. Among individuals providing services and technical support to Guilin's culinary tourism industry from neighboring cities, a notable presence of respondents from nearby cities such as Liuzhou and Nanning are observed. Furthermore, some catering and tourism enterprise owners have expanded their operations into adjacent provinces, making them pivotal subjects for research on the supply side.

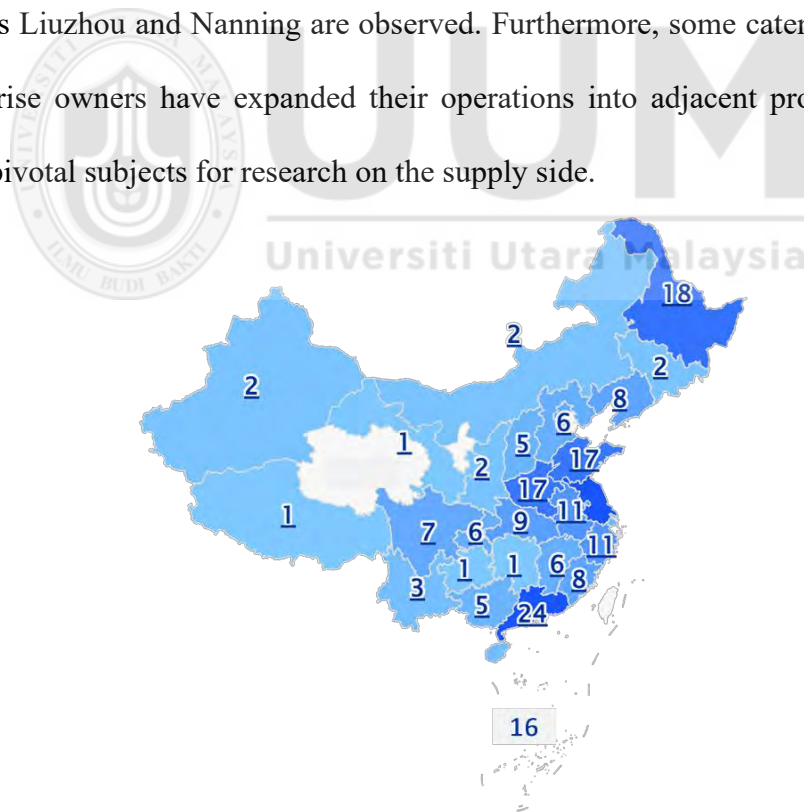


Figure 4.1 Geographical Distribution of Data from the Demand Side



Figure 4.2 Geographical Distribution of Data from the Supply Side

### 4.3 Data Screening

Upon acquiring the gathered data, the initial phase encompasses data filtering, a crucial step for ensuring data accuracy before proceeding to further analysis. In line with the insights from various scholars' research experiences, data filtering facilitates the management of missing values, identification, and resolution of univariate and multivariate outliers, as well as evaluation of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity.

#### 4.3.1 Accuracy of Data Input

The ubiquity of mobile Internet in the age of big data has introduced effective and accurate advantages to statistical survey endeavors. The selected questionnaire app in this study effectively directs respondents and provides corrective prompts, ensuring that the collected data adheres to the 5-point Likert scale without defaults or responses beyond the specified range. Through clustering in the collected data sets from both supply sides, no values were identified surpassing the predefined range. The accuracy of data input in descriptive analysis will be further validated in this study by scrutinizing mean values and standard deviations (Chen, 2016).

### 4.3.2 Univariate and Multivariate Outliers

Outliers in a dataset are measurements that deviate from the mean by more than two times the standard deviation (considered moderate outliers) or by more than three times the standard deviation (considered extreme outliers). It is advisable to exclude highly extreme outliers when handling data. Univariate outliers can be identified using z-scores. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), when the sample size exceeds 80, the z-score should be less than  $\pm 3.29$ . Therefore, the standardized means method is employed for outlier detection. Visualizing outliers through box plots offers a more intuitive understanding, as illustrated in Figure 4.3.

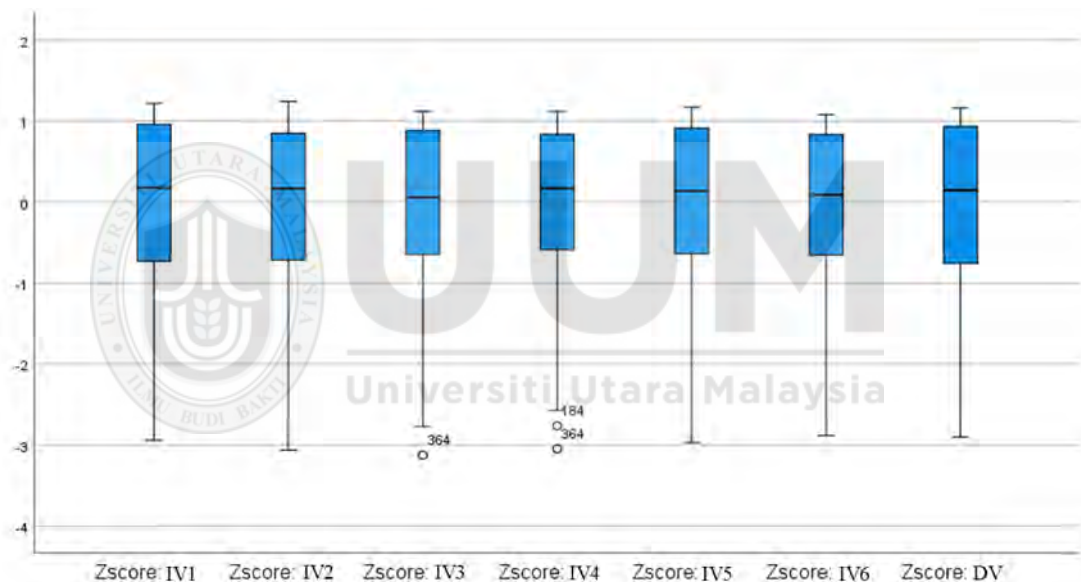


Figure 4.3 Box Plot of Observed Univariate Outlier

Additionally, observing multivariate outliers using Cook's distance is a common approach. Cook's distance is defined as the sum of changes in regression model upon the removal of sample observations. It serves as a prevalent indicator of how observations affect the regression model. Generally, larger Cook's distances indicate more outlying observations, exerting a more significant impact on the fit of the

regression line (Mohamed, 2017). Figure 4.4 provides an intuitive means to identify outlier samples.

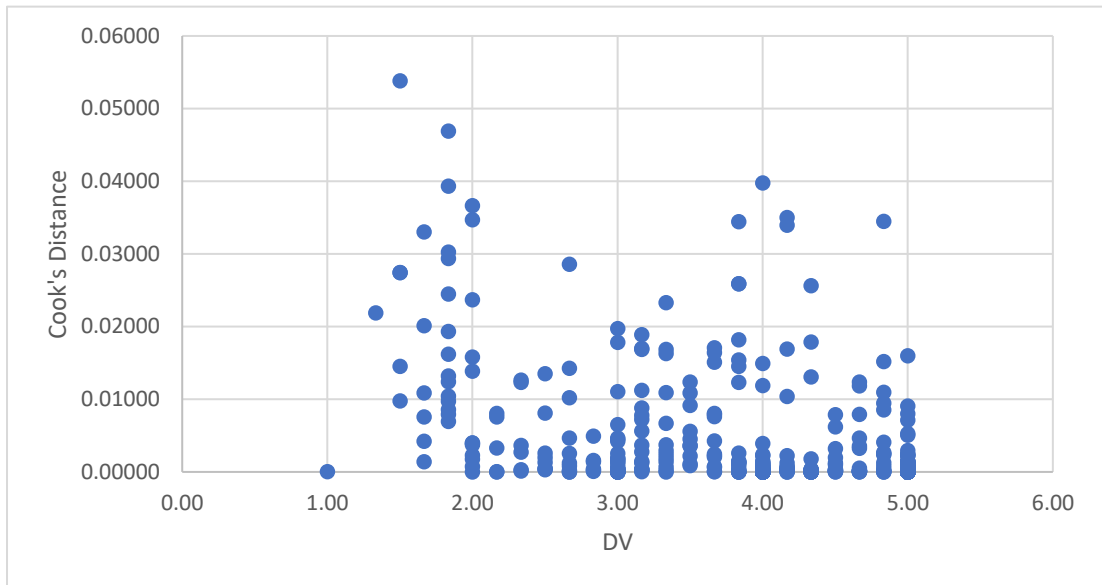


Figure 4.4 Cook's Distance Plot

Through the combined observation of univariate and multivariate analyses, this study identified 11 outliers among the independent variables exceeding  $\pm 3.29$ . The cases involved are 17, 28, 79, 91, 131, 140, 167, 184, 187, 200, and 364. Consequently, 11 samples were removed, constituting 2.51% of the total sample size. Additionally, due to substantial inconsistencies between responses, two more samples were excluded. Ultimately, 438 samples were retained for further analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2018).

### 4.3.3 Normality Test

Testing for normality aims to assess whether the dataset follows a normal distribution. Following the guidance of Ferguson and Cox (1993), examinations were carried out on the skewness and kurtosis of the dataset. Skewness, a numerical measure, indicates whether the data distribution is normal, positively skewed (skewed to the right), or negatively skewed (skewed to the left). A skewness value of zero signifies a normal



distribution. Kurtosis determines the "peakedness" or "flatness" of the probability density curve; higher kurtosis results in a flatter curve, while lower kurtosis leads to a sharper curve. As depicted in Figure 4.5, the overall dataset demonstrates a satisfactory fit for the dependent variable, displaying a standard bell-shaped curve indicative of a well-fitted normal distribution.

Normal distribution is essential for subsequent analyses like factor analysis and multiple regression (Hair et al., 2010). Attaining a perfectly normal distribution is challenging in social science research. However, as per Coakes and Steed (2003), as long as the skewness and kurtosis values range between  $\pm 3.0$ , some degree of skewness and kurtosis is acceptable. Scholars such as Hu, Bentler, and Kano (1992) even propose that deviations within  $\pm 7.0$  do not significantly affect analyses when the sample size exceeds 200.

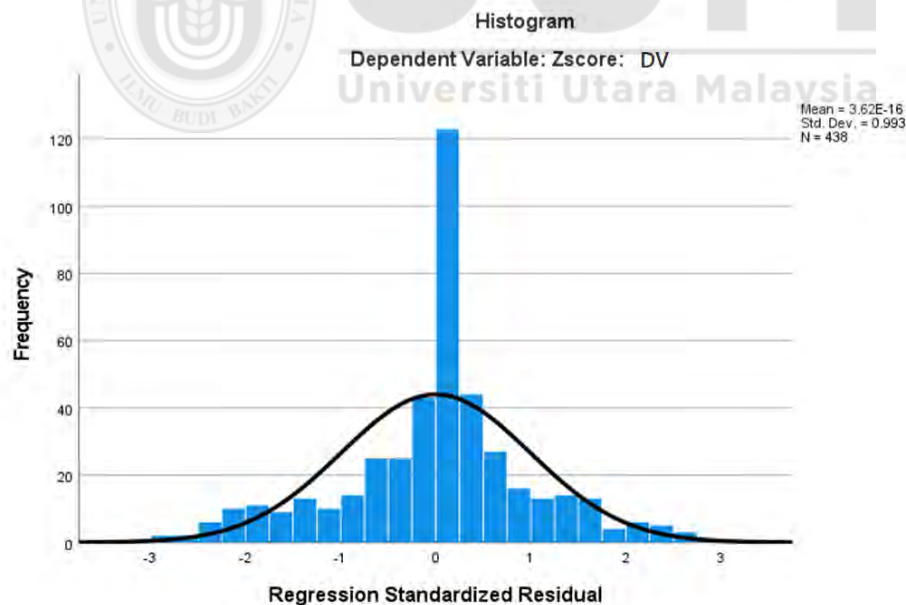


Figure 4.5 Normal Distribution Observation Curve and Histogram

In this study, an examination of kurtosis and skewness values revealed standard deviations within  $\pm 1.96$ , indicating adherence to a normal distribution. The scatterplot inspection of standard deviations for each variable also demonstrates no data points exceeding the  $\pm 3.0$  interval range, Appendix E shows the partial regression plots. Additionally, in the Quantile-Quantile (Q-Q) plots for normal distribution, data points predominantly align along the diagonal line, signifying conformity to normality. Therefore, there is reason to believe that the data in this study adheres to a normal distribution (Mohamed, 2017). Appendix F provides charts depicting the normality of individual variables for further insights.

#### **4.4 Exploratory Factor Data Analysis**

The following sections present the results of factor analysis for the research variables, including Government Support, Stakeholder Involvement, Destination Image, Tourist Experience, Destination Marketing, Core Food Products, and the Success of a Food Tourism Destination. Utilizing the SPSS, each variable underwent individual analysis using PCA. The analysis initiated with continuous data, encompassing items 8 to 67 in the questionnaire, while data for categorical variables (items 1-7) will be addressed in the descriptive analysis. The item numbering in the analysis corresponds to the original item numbers in the questionnaire. Additionally, the factor validity of the tools employed in this study was assessed during the exploratory factor analysis.

##### **4.4.1 Factor Analysis of Government Support**

The PCA indicated that only one factor had an eigenvalue exceeding 1, explaining 71.382% of the total variance, as shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

*Factor Loading for Government Support (Original Items Numbers)*

| No. | Variables / Items                                                  | Factor loadings |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
|     | In the development of food tourism destinations                    |                 |
| 8   | Government policy support is necessary                             | 0.846           |
| 9   | Government leaders' involvement will bring a positive contribution | 0.837           |
| 10  | Human resource security is important                               | 0.847           |
| 11  | Government funding support is important                            | 0.836           |
|     | In the process of promoting Guilin's cuisine,                      |                 |
| 12  | Guilin government has given appropriate policy support             | 0.859           |
| 13  | Guilin government leaders play an active role                      | 0.848           |
| 14  | Guilin government provides for the catering talent pool            | 0.837           |
| 15  | Guilin government gave adequate financial support                  | 0.848           |
|     | Eigenvalue                                                         | 5.711           |
|     | % of explained variance                                            | 71.382          |

Upon completing PCA, it was noted that all eight items in the Government Support (IV1) dimension exhibited factor loadings exceeding 0.5, signifying the effectiveness of each item within this dimension. The KMO value reached 0.933, surpassing the minimum threshold of 0.6. Correlation matrix analysis indicated that all inter-item correlations exceeded 0.3, indicating the appropriateness of the data for factor analysis. Bartlett's Sphericity Test achieved statistical significance ( $p < 0.05$ ) (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016), affirming the factorability of the correlation matrix, as illustrated in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

*Factor Analysis Result for Government Support*

| No. | Factorability assessment                                                 | Results                             | Value required for factor analysis                                     |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | KMO measure of sampling adequacy                                         | 0.933                               | Min value is 0.6                                                       |
| 2   | Bartlett's test of Sphericity<br>Approx. Chi-Square<br>df<br>significant | 2975.952<br>28<br>0.000             | P < 0.05                                                               |
| 3   | Strength of inter-correlation among items                                | All values greater than 0.3         | Correlation coefficient > 0.3                                          |
| No. | Methods                                                                  | Results                             | Remarks                                                                |
| 1   | Kaiser's Criteria                                                        | One factor exceeded eigenvalue of 1 | Minimum eigenvalue of 1 is acceptable to retain the factors            |
| 2   | Catell's scree test                                                      | One factor retained                 | Only one factors was above the value of 1 and above elbow of the curve |

The scree plot demonstrated a distinct break after one factor, depicted in Figure 4.6, leading to the retention of only one component for subsequent examination (Cattell, 1966).

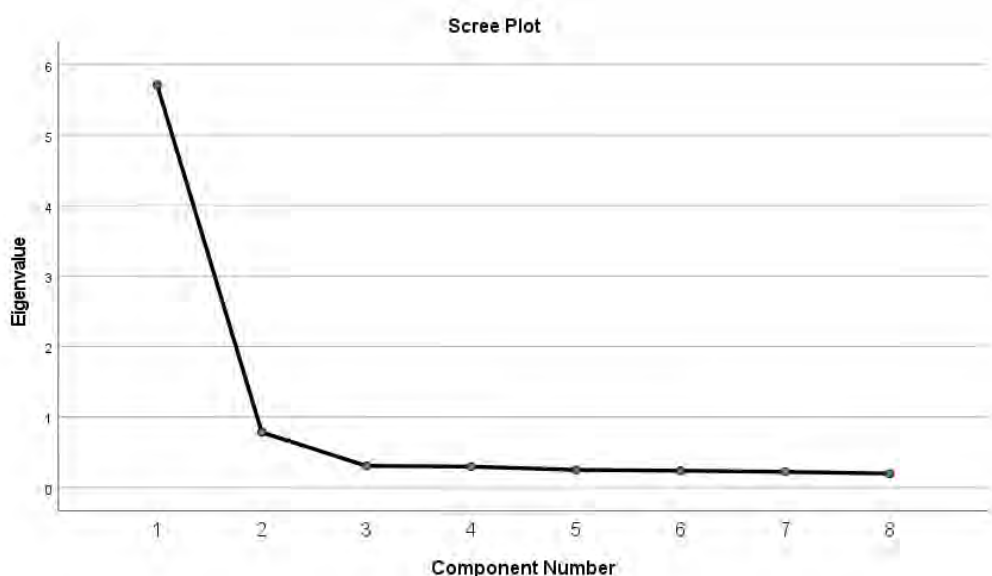


Figure 4.6 Scree Plot for Government Support

#### 4.4.2 Factor Analysis of Stakeholder Involvement

Continuing the analysis for the second dimension with PCA, the factor loadings for stakeholder involvement (IV2) were examined, detailing the specific values in Table 4.4. The analysis indicated that all 11 items associated with stakeholder involvement demonstrated factor loadings surpassing 0.45, justifying the retention of all questionnaire items.

The KMO measure of sampling adequacy produced a result of 0.968, surpassing the 0.9 threshold. Typically, a KMO value exceeding 0.9 is considered highly suitable for factor analysis. This high KMO value suggests a strong correlation among variables in the data, making it conducive for factor analysis to extract common factors. Principal Component Analysis indicated that only one factor had an eigenvalue exceeding 1, accounting for 72.3% of the total variance. Additionally, correlation

matrix analysis revealed that all inter-item correlations exceeded 0.3, indicating suitability for factor analysis. Bartlett's Sphericity Test achieved statistical significance ( $p < 0.05$ ), supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix, as detailed in Table 4.5.

Table 4.4

*Factor Loading for Stakeholder Involvement (Original Items Numbers)*

| No.                                             | Variables / Items                                                                    | Factor loadings |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| In the development of food tourism destinations |                                                                                      |                 |
| 16                                              | Involvement of industry associations is important                                    | 0.842           |
| 17                                              | Community involvement is important                                                   | 0.862           |
| 18                                              | Travel company involvement is important                                              | 0.858           |
| 19                                              | Participation of restaurant operators is important                                   | 0.863           |
| 20                                              | Involvement of civil society organizations is necessary                              | 0.869           |
| 21                                              | Involvement of educational groups and coalitions is important                        | 0.844           |
| 22                                              | Public and local resident involvement is important                                   | 0.850           |
| In the process of promoting Guilin's cuisine,   |                                                                                      |                 |
| 23                                              | Guilin's industry associations promote the promotion of Guilin cuisine               | 0.837           |
| 24                                              | Guilin's tourism companies play a leading role in food tourism                       | 0.825           |
| 25                                              | Guilin's restaurant operators play a major role in the promotion of Guilin's cuisine | 0.861           |
| 26                                              | Guilin's citizens play an important role in Guilin's food promotion                  | 0.843           |
| Eigenvalue                                      |                                                                                      | 7.954           |
| % of explained variance                         |                                                                                      | 72.312          |

Table 4.5

*Factor Analysis Result for Stakeholder Involvement*

| No. | Factorability assessment                                                 | Results                             | Value required for factor analysis                                     |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | KMO measure of sampling adequacy                                         | 0.968                               | Min value is 0.6                                                       |
| 2   | Bartlett's test of Sphericity<br>Approx. Chi-Square<br>df<br>significant | 4406.205<br>55<br>0.000             | P < 0.05                                                               |
| 3   | Strength of inter-correlation among items                                | All values greater than 0.3         | Correlation coefficient > 0.3                                          |
| No. | Methods                                                                  | Results                             | Remarks                                                                |
| 1   | Kaiser's Criteria                                                        | One factor exceeded eigenvalue of 1 | Minimum eigenvalue of 1 is acceptable to retain the factors            |
| 2   | Catell's scree test                                                      | One factor retained                 | Only one factors was above the value of 1 and above elbow of the curve |

Examination of the scree plot revealed a distinct break after single factor, further explicated in the scree plot in Figure 4.7.

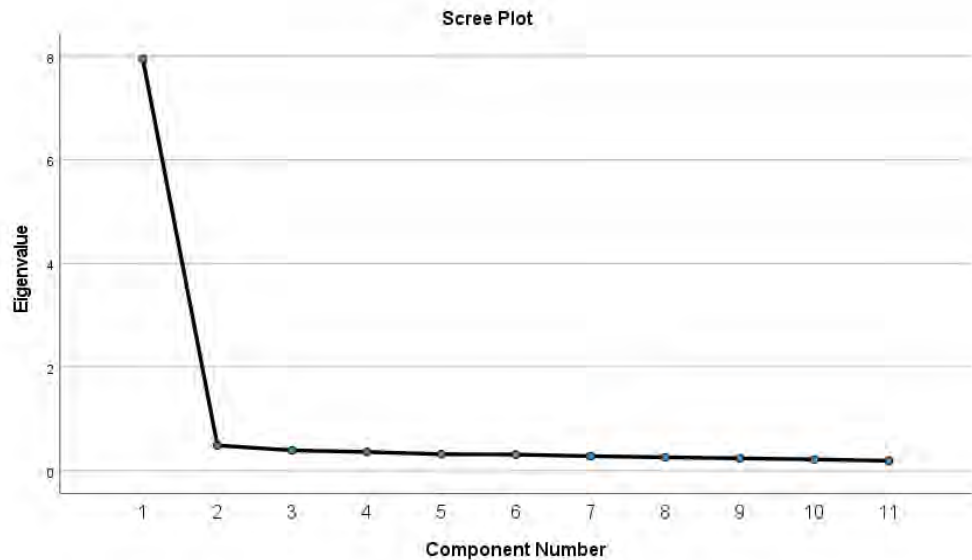


Figure 4.7 Scree Plot for Stakeholder Involvement

#### 4.4.3 Factor Analysis of Destination Image

Continuing the analysis with PCA for the factor loading of destination Image (IV3), as illustrated in Table 4.6, it was found that all nine items related to destination image exhibited factor loadings surpassing 0.45. This observation necessitated the retention of all items within this dimension.

The KMO measure of sampling adequacy yielded a result of 0.959, surpassing the 0.9 threshold, indicating high suitability for factor analysis. PCA indicated that only one factor had an eigenvalue exceeding 1, explaining 74.5% of the total variance. Additionally, correlation matrix analysis revealed that all inter-item correlations exceeded 0.3, indicating suitability for factor analysis within this dimension. Bartlett's Sphericity Test also reached statistical significance, as evidenced in Table 4.7, with a

significance level (p-value) below 0.05, supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix.

Table 4.6

*Factor Loading for Destination Image (Original Items Numbers)*

| No.                                                                        | Variables / Items                                                | Factor loadings |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| In the development of food tourism destinations                            |                                                                  |                 |
| 27                                                                         | Geography is important                                           | 0.858           |
| 28                                                                         | Food culture is important                                        | 0.862           |
| 29                                                                         | Specialty restaurants contribute to the image of the destination | 0.886           |
| 30                                                                         | Festivals contribute to the destination image                    | 0.850           |
| 31                                                                         | High-quality food reflects well on the destination image         | 0.886           |
| Guilin's image as a food tourism destination has the following advantages. |                                                                  |                 |
| 32                                                                         | Beautiful geographical environment                               | 0.853           |
| 33                                                                         | Unique food culture                                              | 0.885           |
| 34                                                                         | Ethnic characteristics of the festival                           | 0.859           |
| 35                                                                         | Numerous high-quality cuisines                                   | 0.827           |
| Eigenvalue                                                                 |                                                                  | 6.705           |
| % of explained variance                                                    |                                                                  | 74.501          |

Table 4.7

*Factor Analysis Result for Destination Image*

| No. | Factorability assessment                                                 | Results                             | Value required for factor analysis                                     |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | KMO measure of sampling adequacy                                         | 0.959                               | Min value is 0.6                                                       |
| 2   | Bartlett's test of Sphericity<br>Approx. Chi-Square<br>df<br>significant | 3632.134<br>36<br>0.000             | P < 0.05                                                               |
| 3   | Strength of inter-correlation among items                                | All values greater than 0.3         | Correlation coefficient > 0.3                                          |
| No. | Methods                                                                  | Results                             | Remarks                                                                |
| 1   | Kaiser's Criteria                                                        | One factor exceeded eigenvalue of 1 | Minimum eigenvalue of 1 is acceptable to retain the factors            |
| 2   | Catell's scree test                                                      | One factor retained                 | Only one factors was above the value of 1 and above elbow of the curve |

Examination of the scree plot revealed a distinct break after single factor, further detailed in Figure 4.8.

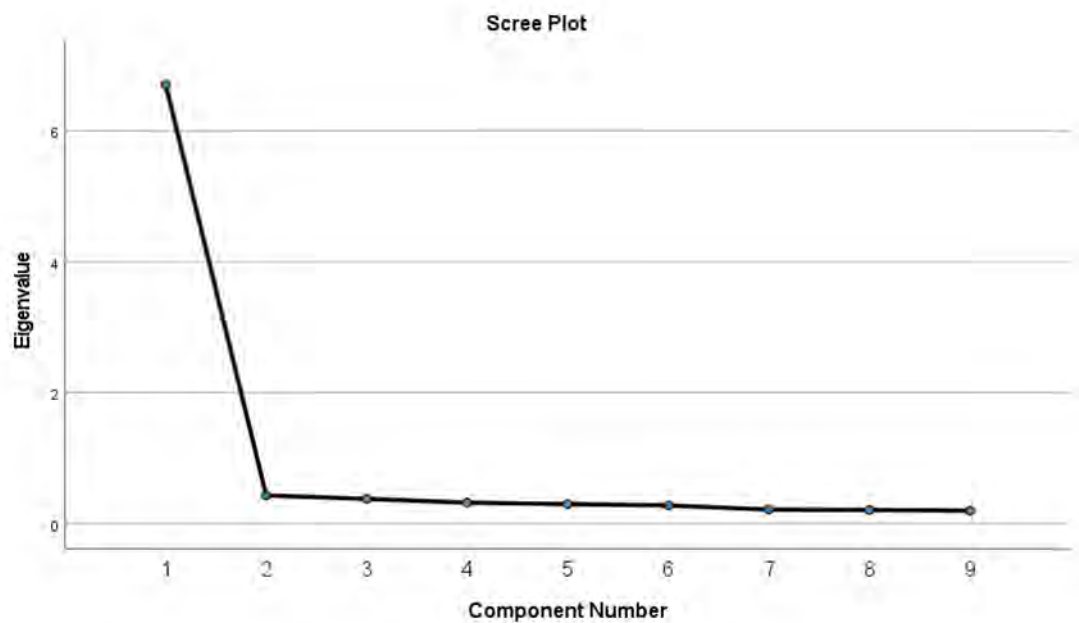


Figure 4.8 Scree Plot for Destination Image

#### 4.4.4 Factor Analysis of Visitor Experience

Continuing the PCA analysis, with factor loadings surpassing 0.45 for all 11 items related to visitor experience (IV4), all items within this dimension were retained. The PCA results indicated that only one factor had an eigenvalue exceeding 1, explaining 75.2% of the total variance, as presented in Table 4.8.

The KMO measure of sampling adequacy exceeded 0.9, indicating high suitability for analysis. Correlation matrix analysis demonstrated that all inter-item correlations exceeded 0.3, supporting the suitability for factor analysis. Bartlett's Sphericity Test also achieved statistical significance ( $p < 0.05$ ), as shown in Table 4.9, further endorsing the factorability of the correlation matrix.



Inspection of the scree plot revealed a distinct break after one factor. Following the scree test, the decision was made to retain only one component for further investigation, as detailed in Figure 4.9.

Table 4.8

*Factor Loading for Visitor Experience (Original Items Numbers)*

| No.                                                                                       | Variables / Items                        | Factor loadings |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| A tourist's food experience in a tourist destination is related to the following factors. |                                          |                 |
| 36                                                                                        | Food Safety and Health                   | 0.863           |
| 37                                                                                        | Taste of food                            | 0.875           |
| 38                                                                                        | Authenticity of ingredients              | 0.876           |
| 39                                                                                        | Price of the food                        | 0.842           |
| 40                                                                                        | Local consumption level                  | 0.860           |
| 41                                                                                        | Many specialties                         | 0.873           |
| Guilin's cuisine is                                                                       |                                          |                 |
| 42                                                                                        | Safe, hygienic, and good for your health | 0.878           |
| 43                                                                                        | Good taste                               | 0.869           |
| 44                                                                                        | Authentic ingredients                    | 0.877           |
| 45                                                                                        | Moderate price                           | 0.866           |
| 46                                                                                        | Wide variety and special features        | 0.862           |
| Eigenvalue                                                                                |                                          | 8.277           |
| % of explained variance                                                                   |                                          | 75.246          |

Table 4.9

*Factor Analysis Result for Visitor Experience*

| No. | Factorability assessment                                                 | Results                             | Value required for factor analysis                                     |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | KMO measure of sampling adequacy                                         | 0.971                               | Min value is 0.6                                                       |
| 2   | Bartlett's test of Sphericity<br>Approx. Chi-Square<br>df<br>significant | 4898.028<br>55<br>0.000             | P < 0.05                                                               |
| 3   | Strength of inter-correlation among items                                | All values greater than 0.3         | Correlation coefficient > 0.3                                          |
| No. | Methods                                                                  | Results                             | Remarks                                                                |
| 1   | Kaiser's Criteria                                                        | One factor exceeded eigenvalue of 1 | Minimum eigenvalue of 1 is acceptable to retain the factors            |
| 2   | Catell's scree test                                                      | One factor retained                 | Only one factors was above the value of 1 and above elbow of the curve |

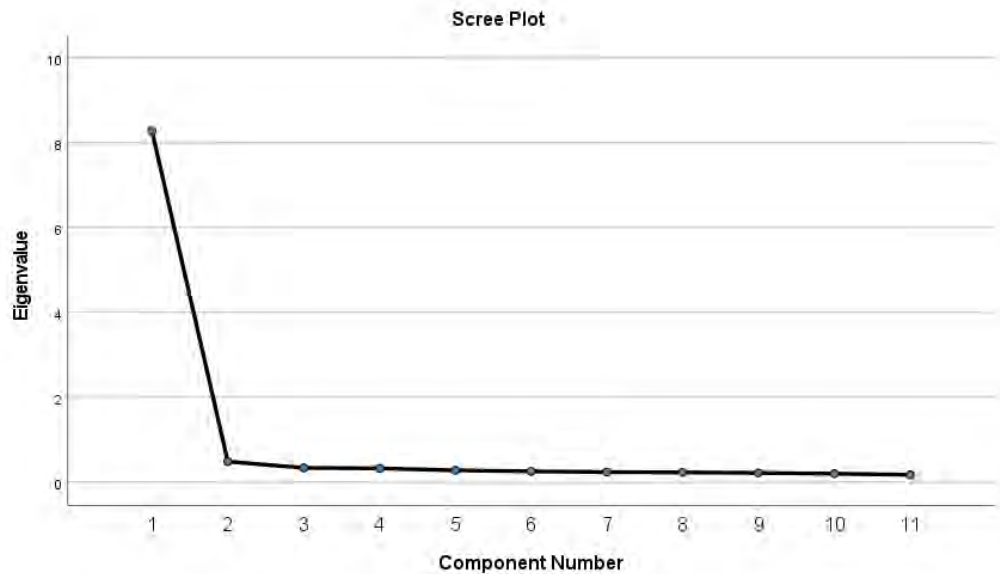


Figure 4.9 Scree Plot for Visitor Experience

#### 4.4.5 Factor Analysis of Destination Marketing

Continuing the exploratory analysis with PCA for the dimension of destination marketing (IV5), it was observed that all eight items within this dimension exhibited factor loadings exceeding 0.45. Consequently, all items within this dimension were retained for further analysis. The Principal Component Analysis indicated that only one factor had an eigenvalue exceeding 1, explaining 76% of the total variance, as depicted in Table 4.10.

The KMO sampling adequacy test result exceeds 0.9. The analysis of the correlation matrix indicates that all coefficients between the items are higher than 0.3. Bartlett's sphericity test shows a significance level of  $p < 0.05$ , supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix, as shown in Table 4.11.

Table 4.10

*Factor Loading for Destination Marketing (Original Items Numbers)*

| No.                                                                     | Variables / Items                              | Factor loadings |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Food tourism destination marketing is related to the following factors. |                                                |                 |
| 47                                                                      | Special events can boost destination marketing | 0.879           |
| 48                                                                      | Service quality affects destination marketing  | 0.880           |
| 49                                                                      | Application of social media tools is necessary | 0.861           |
| 50                                                                      | Well-equipped food outlets                     | 0.870           |
| You are visiting Guilin because                                         |                                                |                 |
| 51                                                                      | Influenced by social media                     | 0.876           |
| 52                                                                      | Enjoying comfortable travel services           | 0.883           |
| 53                                                                      | Influenced by special festivals and events     | 0.851           |
| 54                                                                      | Influenced by local food                       | 0.878           |
| Eigenvalue                                                              |                                                | 6.086           |
| % of explained variance                                                 |                                                | 76.080          |

Table 4.11

*Factor Analysis Result for Destination Marketing*

| No. | Factorability assessment                                                 | Results                             | Value required for factor analysis                                     |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | KMO measure of sampling adequacy                                         | 0.955                               | Min value is 0.6                                                       |
| 2   | Bartlett's test of Sphericity<br>Approx. Chi-Square<br>df<br>significant | 3227.601<br>28<br>0.000             | P < 0.05                                                               |
| 3   | Strength of inter-correlation among items                                | All values greater than 0.3         | Correlation coefficient > 0.3                                          |
| No. | Methods                                                                  | Results                             | Remarks                                                                |
| 1   | Kaiser's Criteria                                                        | One factor exceeded eigenvalue of 1 | Minimum eigenvalue of 1 is acceptable to retain the factors            |
| 2   | Catell's scree test                                                      | One factor retained                 | Only one factors was above the value of 1 and above elbow of the curve |

From the scree plot, it is evident that a clear break occurs after one factor. It has been decided to retain only one component for further investigation. For more details, please refer to the scree plot in Figure 4.10.

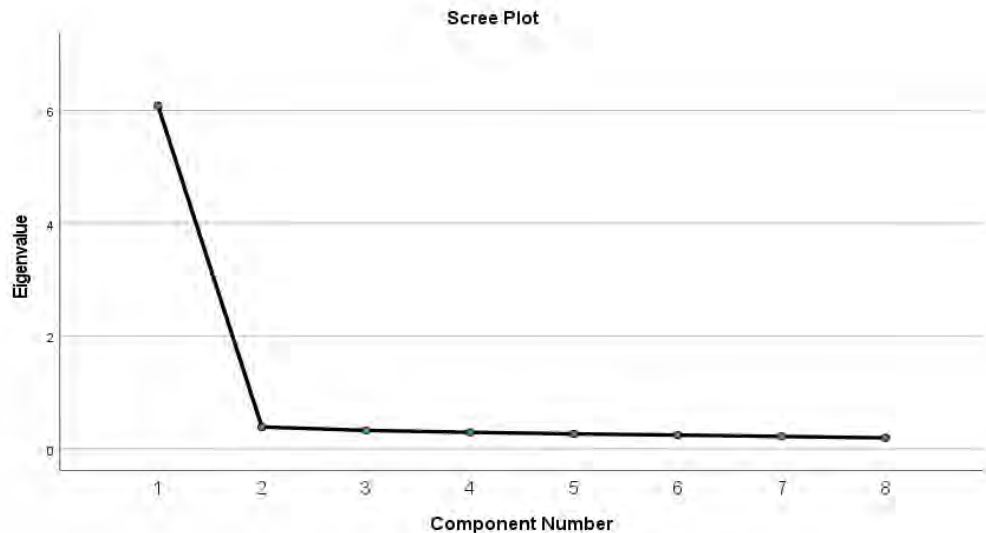


Figure 4.10 Scree Plot for Destination Marking

#### 4.4.6 Factor Analysis of Core Food Products

Upon conducting exploratory analysis for the Core Food Products (IV6), it was observed that the factor loadings for the four core products within this dimension all exceeded 0.45. Consequently, all items within this dimension were retained for further analysis. The PCA revealed that only one factor had an eigenvalue exceeding 1, explaining 79.2% of the total variance, as illustrated in Table 4.12.

The KMO measure of sampling adequacy yielded a result of 0.849, highly suitable for factor analysis. Correlation matrix analysis indicated that all inter-item correlations exceeded 0.3, supporting the suitability for factor analysis. Bartlett's Sphericity Test achieved statistical significance ( $p < 0.05$ ), as depicted in Table 4.13, further endorsing the factorability of the correlation matrix.

Table 4.12

*Factor Loading for Core Food Products (Original Items Numbers)*

| No.                                                                                       | Variables / Items   | Factor loadings |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| A tourist's food experience in a tourist destination is related to the following factors. |                     |                 |
| 55                                                                                        | Guilin Rice Noodles | 0.884           |
| 56                                                                                        | Oil Tea             | 0.900           |
| 57                                                                                        | Taro Sandwich Pork  | 0.889           |
| 58                                                                                        | Beer Fish           | 0.888           |
| Eigenvalue                                                                                |                     | 3.171           |
| % of explained variance                                                                   |                     | 79.271          |

Table 4.13

*Factor Analysis Result for Core Food Products*

| No. | Factorability assessment                                                 | Results                             | Value required for factor analysis                                     |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | KMO measure of sampling adequacy                                         | 0.849                               | Min value is 0.6                                                       |
| 2   | Bartlett's test of Sphericity<br>Approx. Chi-Square<br>df<br>significant | 1186.181<br>6<br>0.000              | P < 0.05                                                               |
| 3   | Strength of inter-correlation among items                                | All values greater than 0.3         | Correlation coefficient > 0.3                                          |
| No. | Methods                                                                  | Results                             | Remarks                                                                |
| 1   | Kaiser's Criteria                                                        | One factor exceeded eigenvalue of 1 | Minimum eigenvalue of 1 is acceptable to retain the factors            |
| 2   | Catell's scree test                                                      | One factor retained                 | Only one factors was above the value of 1 and above elbow of the curve |

Examination of the scree plot revealed a distinct break after one factor. Following Catell's scree test, the decision was made to retain only one component for further investigation, detailed in Figure 4.11.

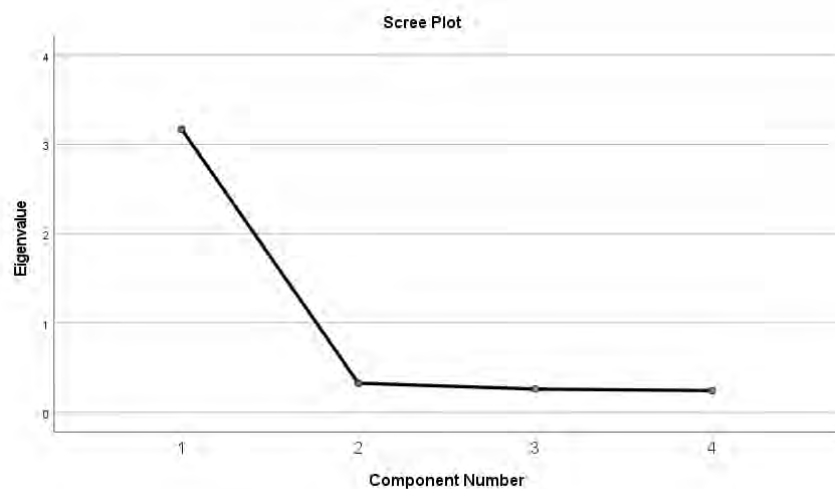


Figure 4.11 Scree Plot for Core Food Products

#### 4.4.7 Factor Analysis of Success of a Food Tourism Destination

Conducting exploratory analysis for all items within the success of a food tourism destination (DV) dimension, it was observed that the factor loadings for all nine items within this dimension exceeded 0.45. Consequently, all items within this dimension were retained for further analysis. The PCA indicated that only one factor had an eigenvalue exceeding 1, explaining 79.2% of the total variance, as depicted in Table 4.14.

The KMO measure of sampling adequacy yielded a result of 0.962, highly suitable for factor analysis. Correlation matrix analysis showed that all inter-item correlations exceeded 0.3, indicating suitability for factor analysis. Bartlett's Sphericity Test achieved statistical significance ( $p < 0.05$ ), as shown in Table 4.15, supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix.

Table 4.14

*Factor Loading for a Successful Food Tourism Destination (Original Items Numbers)*

| No.                                                                         | Variables / Items                             | Factor loadings |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| What do you think are the factors of a successful food tourism destination? |                                               |                 |
| 59                                                                          | Meeting the needs of visitors                 | 0.881           |
| 60                                                                          | Visitors have a desire to repeat their visit  | 0.892           |
| 61                                                                          | Length of stay of tourists at the destination | 0.889           |
| 62                                                                          | Local economic benefits are enhanced          | 0.898           |
| 63                                                                          | Increased well-being of residents             | 0.869           |
| 64                                                                          | Increased competitiveness of the destination  | 0.882           |
| To taste Guilin's iconic cuisine of the destination you will                |                                               |                 |
| 65                                                                          | Visit Guilin again                            | 0.835           |
| 66                                                                          | Increase spending                             | 0.847           |
| 67                                                                          | Extend travel time                            | 0.854           |
| Eigenvalue                                                                  |                                               | 6.848           |
| % of explained variance                                                     |                                               | 76.090          |

Table 4.15

*Factor Analysis Result for a Successful Food Tourism Destination*

| No. | Factorability assessment                                                 | Results                             | Value required for factor analysis                                     |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | KMO measure of sampling adequacy                                         | 0.962                               | Min value is 0.6                                                       |
| 2   | Bartlett's test of Sphericity<br>Approx. Chi-Square<br>df<br>significant | 3876.657<br>36<br>0.000             | P < 0.05                                                               |
| 3   | Strength of inter-correlation among items                                | All values greater than 0.3         | Correlation coefficient > 0.3                                          |
| No. | Methods                                                                  | Results                             | Remarks                                                                |
| 1   | Kaiser's Criteria                                                        | One factor exceeded eigenvalue of 1 | Minimum eigenvalue of 1 is acceptable to retain the factors            |
| 2   | Catell's scree test                                                      | One factor retained                 | Only one factors was above the value of 1 and above elbow of the curve |

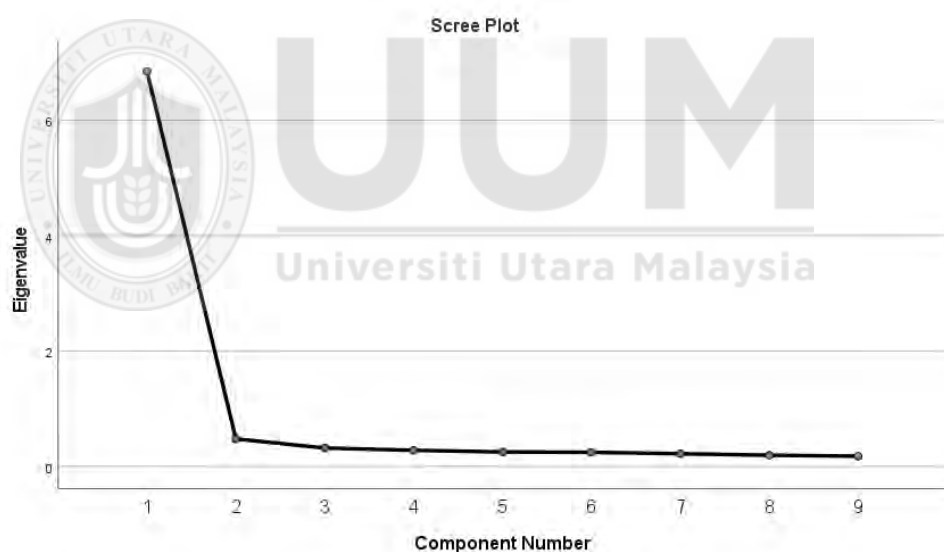


Figure 4.12 Scree Plot for a Successful Food Tourism Destination

The scree plot revealed a clear break after one component. Thus, according to the scree test, it was decided to retain only one component for further investigation as detailed in Figure 4.12.

## **4.5 Reliability and Validity Testing**

Reliability and validity testing were conducted to evaluate all the items in this study's constructs, focusing on their test-retest reliability and internal consistency. This was accomplished through the utilization of the Cronbach's alpha test, item-total statistics analysis, and convergent and discriminant validity analysis.

### **4.5.1 Cronbach's Alpha**

All quantitative data representing alternative research variables, namely Government support, Stakeholder involvement, Destination image, Visitor experience, Destination marketing, Core food products, and the success of a food tourism destination, underwent a reliability test to assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire items. The method employed in this study to evaluate the internal consistency reliability among items is the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, as recommended by Sekaran (2000). Subsequently, the total corrected item-total correlations were computed following the reliability assessment method mentioned above.

Table 4.16 presents the results of the reliability analysis, indicating that all Cronbach's alpha values for the variables exceeded 0.6. According to Hair et al. (2010), in social science research, Cronbach's alpha value between 0.6 and 0.7 is considered minimally acceptable. Values above 0.9 suggest that the sample data are highly suitable for factor analysis, indicating significant reliability. Moreover, the next section includes a measurement of inter-item correlations to assess the tool's ability to represent all variables.



Table 4.16  
*Result of Reliability Test*

| Variables tested                      | No. of items | Cronbach's Alpha Value |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|------------------------|
| Government support                    | 8            | 0.943                  |
| Stakeholder involvement               | 11           | 0.961                  |
| Destination image                     | 9            | 0.957                  |
| Visitor experience                    | 11           | 0.967                  |
| Destination marketing                 | 8            | 0.931                  |
| Core food products                    | 4            | 0.913                  |
| A successful food tourism destination | 9            | 0.961                  |

#### 4.5.2 Item-total Statistics Analysis

Item-total statistics are employed to assess the strength of the correlation between each item in the questionnaire and the total score, evaluating each item's contribution to the overall dimension. This analysis encompasses all variables studied, namely: Government support, Stakeholder involvement, Destination image, Visitor experience, Destination marketing, and Core food products, along with their correlations.

Table 4.17 demonstrates the Item-Total statistics for the government support dimension. As Cronbach's alpha for the independent variable 1 (government support) has exceeded 0.9, signifying excellent internal consistency within the dimension, considering item deletion is unnecessary. Hence, the focus in the following table is on corrected Item-Total correlation, which showcases each item's correlation with the overall questionnaire score. Typically, a correlation coefficient above 0.3 is deemed a reasonable threshold, indicating a moderate to strong correlation with the total score. The Total Correlation values in the table all exceed 0.7, signifying a moderate to strong correlation between each item and the total score. This analysis indicates strong interrelatedness among all items used in this study, contributing to its reliability (Murphy et al., 2000; Niavis & Tsiotas, 2018). For brevity, the Item-Total Statistics tables for other dimensions can be found in Appendix G.

Table 4.17

*Results From Item Analysis for Government Support (Original Items Numbers)*

| <b>IV1-Item-Total Statistics</b> |                                  |                                         |                                        |                                    |                                        |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| <b>No.</b>                       | Scale Mean<br>if Item<br>Deleted | Scale<br>Variance if<br>Item<br>Deleted | Corrected<br>Item-Total<br>Correlation | Squared<br>Multiple<br>Correlation | Cronbach's<br>Alpha if Item<br>Deleted |
| 8                                | 26.63                            | 45.744                                  | 0.794                                  | 0.705                              | 0.935                                  |
| 9                                | 26.71                            | 45.920                                  | 0.782                                  | 0.673                              | 0.936                                  |
| 10                               | 26.69                            | 45.851                                  | 0.795                                  | 0.677                              | 0.935                                  |
| 11                               | 26.66                            | 45.817                                  | 0.782                                  | 0.669                              | 0.936                                  |
| 12                               | 26.83                            | 45.279                                  | 0.812                                  | 0.689                              | 0.934                                  |
| 13                               | 26.91                            | 45.312                                  | 0.798                                  | 0.700                              | 0.935                                  |
| 14                               | 26.92                            | 45.822                                  | 0.785                                  | 0.686                              | 0.936                                  |
| 15                               | 26.98                            | 44.933                                  | 0.798                                  | 0.723                              | 0.935                                  |

#### 4.5.3 Convergent and Discriminant Validity Analysis

Following the reliability assessment, this study conducted an analysis of convergent and discriminant validity, as depicted in Table 4.18. The AVE (Average Variance Extracted) values for all dimensions in this study exceed 0.7, indicating a high level of convergent validity across all dimensions. AVE values closer to 1 suggest a greater shared variance between the measured items and their constructs, indicating higher reliability and validity of the measurement model. Generally, when AVE values surpass 0.5, it signifies good convergent and discriminant validity for the construct measurement model (Rid et al., 2014; Sano et al., 2024).

Moreover, the correlation analysis among constructs reveals that the coefficients around the lower triangle are approximately 0.7, indicating a moderate to strong relationship. This suggests not only a good correlation but also a low possibility of collinearity. According to Hair (2010), the square root of AVE for each construct, namely 0.845, 0.85, 0.863, 0.867, 0.872, 0.89, and 0.872, respectively, is higher than the correlation coefficients in the lower triangle. This signifies significant discriminant validity (Liu et al., 2024).

Table 4.18  
*Items Analysis and Correlation Between Items*

|      | Convergent<br>validity | Discriminant validity |             |              |              |              |             |              | Mean | Std.<br>D |
|------|------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|------|-----------|
|      | AVE                    | IV 1                  | IV 2        | IV 3         | IV 4         | IV 5         | IV 6        | DV           |      |           |
| IV 1 | 0.714                  | <b>0.845</b>          | 0.647       | 0.66         | 0.64         | 0.686        | 0.618       | 0.688        | 3.83 | 0.96      |
| IV 2 | 0.723                  | 0.647                 | <b>0.85</b> | 0.707        | 0.704        | 0.664        | 0.669       | 0.718        | 3.85 | 0.93      |
| IV 3 | 0.745                  | 0.66                  | 0.707       | <b>0.863</b> | 0.755        | 0.671        | 0.686       | 0.736        | 3.94 | 0.94      |
| IV 4 | 0.752                  | 0.64                  | 0.704       | 0.755        | <b>0.867</b> | 0.707        | 0.677       | 0.743        | 3.93 | 0.96      |
| IV 5 | 0.761                  | 0.686                 | 0.664       | 0.671        | 0.707        | <b>0.872</b> | 0.643       | 0.731        | 3.87 | 0.97      |
| IV 6 | 0.793                  | 0.618                 | 0.669       | 0.686        | 0.677        | 0.643        | <b>0.89</b> | 0.699        | 3.91 | 1.01      |
| DV   | 0.761                  | 0.688                 | 0.718       | 0.736        | 0.743        | 0.731        | 0.699       | <b>0.872</b> | 3.86 | 0.98      |

IV1 (Government support), IV2 (Stakeholder involvement), IV3 (Destination image), IV4 (Visitor experience), IV5 (Destination marketing), IV6 (Core food products).

#### 4.6 Statistical Validation of CSFs in a Food Tourism Destination

##### 4.6.1 Descriptive Analysis

This study involves 6 independent variables and 1 dependent variable. Table 4.19 below presents the results of the descriptive analysis for each variable.

The statistics show that the most important issues for the development of food tourism destinations are the safety and hygiene of the food and the price of the food, which are highly relevant to their own survival interests. This is followed by the culture of the food and the impact of high-quality food on the image of the destination. This is followed by interest in the destination's location and environment, the diversity of local food as well as service facilities and food flavour. Interest in core local food products was more evenly split across categories, with the most popular products remaining the most recognisable and those with local heritage. Respondents were more divided in their opinion that “government funding support is important” (3.96). However, there was a low level of agreement with the Guilin government's funding support for building a culinary tourism destination (3.64) and a low level of agreement with the Guilin government's “provides for the catering talent pool” (3.70).

Table 4.19  
*Mean And Standard Deviation for Independent Variables*

| <b>Items</b>                                                                         | <b>Mean</b> | <b>Std. D.</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|----------------|
| <b><u>Government Support</u></b>                                                     |             |                |
| Government policy support is necessary                                               | 3.99        | 1.122          |
| Government leaders' involvement will bring a positive contribution                   | 3.91        | 1.121          |
| Human resource security is important                                                 | 3.92        | 1.112          |
| Government funding support is important                                              | 3.96        | 1.130          |
| Guilin government has given appropriate policy support                               | 3.79        | 1.142          |
| Guilin government leaders play an active role                                        | 3.71        | 1.155          |
| Guilin government provides for the catering talent pool                              | 3.70        | 1.126          |
| Guilin government gave adequate financial support                                    | 3.64        | 1.188          |
| <b><u>Stakeholder involvement</u></b>                                                |             |                |
| Involvement of industry associations is important                                    | 3.87        | 1.081          |
| Community involvement is important                                                   | 3.80        | 1.106          |
| Travel company involvement is important                                              | 3.85        | 1.087          |
| Participation of restaurant operators is important                                   | 3.90        | 1.086          |
| Involvement of civil society organizations is necessary                              | 3.86        | 1.082          |
| Involvement of educational groups and coalitions is important                        | 3.77        | 1.102          |
| Public and local resident involvement is important                                   | 3.88        | 1.085          |
| Guilin's industry associations promote the promotion of Guilin cuisine               | 3.84        | 1.090          |
| Guilin's tourism companies play a leading role in food tourism                       | 3.81        | 1.093          |
| Guilin's restaurant operators play a major role in the promotion of Guilin's cuisine | 3.84        | 1.126          |
| Guilin's citizens play an important role in Guilin's food promotion                  | 3.88        | 1.075          |
| <b><u>Destination image</u></b>                                                      |             |                |
| Geography is important                                                               | 3.96        | 1.080          |
| Food culture is important                                                            | 4.01        | 1.057          |
| Specialty restaurants contribute to the image of the destination                     | 3.96        | 1.104          |
| Festivals contribute to the destination image                                        | 3.93        | 1.073          |
| High-quality food reflects well on the destination image                             | 4.01        | 1.106          |
| Beautiful geographical environment                                                   | 3.99        | 1.067          |
| Unique food culture                                                                  | 3.96        | 1.114          |
| Ethnic characteristics of the festival                                               | 3.84        | 1.098          |
| Numerous high-quality cuisines                                                       | 3.84        | 1.128          |
| <b><u>Visitor experience</u></b>                                                     |             |                |
| Food Safety and Health                                                               | 4.03        | 1.109          |
| Taste of food                                                                        | 3.97        | 1.130          |
| Authenticity of ingredients                                                          | 3.99        | 1.124          |
| Price of the food                                                                    | 4.00        | 1.074          |
| Local consumption level                                                              | 3.86        | 1.114          |
| Many specialties                                                                     | 3.93        | 1.093          |
| Safe, hygienic, and good for your health                                             | 3.86        | 1.120          |
| Good taste                                                                           | 3.89        | 1.088          |
| Authentic ingredients                                                                | 3.87        | 1.133          |
| Moderate price                                                                       | 3.89        | 1.121          |
| Wide variety and special features                                                    | 3.91        | 1.075          |
| <b><u>Destination Marketing</u></b>                                                  |             |                |
| Special events can boost destination marketing                                       | 3.90        | 1.114          |
| Service quality affects destination marketing                                        | 3.93        | 1.116          |
| Application of social media tools is necessary                                       | 3.94        | 1.105          |
| Well-equipped food outlets                                                           | 3.91        | 1.106          |
| Influenced by social media                                                           | 3.82        | 1.094          |
| Enjoying comfortable travel services                                                 | 3.79        | 1.103          |
| Influenced by special festivals and events                                           | 3.78        | 1.106          |
| Influenced by local food                                                             | 3.85        | 1.121          |
| <b><u>Core food products</u></b>                                                     |             |                |
| Guilin Rice Noodles                                                                  | 3.99        | 1.166          |
| Oil Tea                                                                              | 3.97        | 1.114          |
| Taro Sandwich Pork                                                                   | 3.88        | 1.113          |
| Beer Fish                                                                            | 3.80        | 1.142          |

The dependent variable in this study is the success of the food tourism destination.

Table 4.20 presents the descriptive statistical results for the dependent.

Table 4.20

*Mean and Standard Deviation for Dependent Variables*

| <b>Items</b>                                  | <b>Mean</b> | <b>Std. D.</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------------|----------------|
| Meeting the needs of visitors                 | 3.87        | 1.174          |
| Visitors have a desire to repeat their visit  | 3.93        | 1.158          |
| Length of stay of tourists at the destination | 3.90        | 1.149          |
| Local economic benefits are enhanced          | 3.86        | 1.132          |
| Increased well-being of residents             | 3.87        | 1.102          |
| Increased competitiveness of the destination  | 3.91        | 1.092          |
| Visit Guilin again                            | 3.79        | 1.085          |
| Increase spending                             | 3.76        | 1.143          |
| Extend travel time                            | 3.82        | 1.121          |

The results reveal diverse perspectives among respondents regarding the success of the food tourism destination. Among the 438 samples, it is evident that respondents exhibit a high level of interest in food tourism. The top three highest-rated items are "Visitors have a desire to repeat their visit" (M=3.93), "Increased competitiveness of the destination" (M=3.91), and "Length of stay of tourists at the destination" (M=3.90). This implies a robust correlation between the success of the food tourism destination and visitor willingness to revisit, highlighting its significant role in promoting local development.

#### **4.6.1.1 Data Preparation**

In constructing the questionnaire, multiple items are often employed to evaluate a single factor, promoting content validity, ensuring coherence in respondents' attitudes, and maintaining logical alignment in statements. Typically, when the weights of these items are equal, studies frequently use the average as a consolidation method. In this study, following the validation of reliability and validity across six independent

variables and 22 influencing factors, we aggregated multiple items measuring one factor into 22 factors by averaging their values, aligned with the hypothesis model. This consolidation facilitates a clearer understanding of primary information during regression analysis, contingent upon the assumption of well-distributed normality in the data and performed after ensuring reliability, consistency, and validity through the mentioned assessments (Lai et al., 2018). Table 4.21 presents the factors and their mean values for the independent variables used in regression analysis. Normalizing continuous variables through averaging is a common practice in multivariate regression analysis using SPSS.

Before proceeding with further multivariate analyses, to enhance data visualization and facilitate graphical representations, the data was named and labeled based on the research framework after importing it into SPSS. This step aims to provide a clearer representation of each variable and factor in the output of data analysis results.

The data in Table 4.21 are derived from the results of data collection using Likert 5-point scales as the collection tool in the questionnaire. It includes the mean values of the 22 factors within the six dimensions of this study and relevant research conducted on the empirical destination of Guilin. The statistics of the mean values of the data reflect the overall attitude, and the mean values of the 22 factors are basically distributed between 3.80-4.03, indicating that the respondents are generally in favour of the factors proposed in this study. In addition, the results of the empirical studies on Guilin also show positive attitudes, with mean values above 3.6, indicating that respondents are interested in Guilin as a food tourism destination.

Table 4.21  
*Descriptive Statistics*

| <b>IV1 Government Support</b>                                              | <b>N</b> | <b>item's Mean</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|--------------------|
| Policy Guidance                                                            | 438      | 3.97               |
| Leadership Involvement                                                     | 438      | 3.91               |
| Human Resources                                                            | 438      | 3.92               |
| Guilin's government has given appropriate policy support                   | 438      | 3.79               |
| Guilin's government leaders play an active role                            | 438      | 3.71               |
| Guilin's government provides for the catering talent pool                  | 438      | 3.70               |
| Guilin's government gave adequate financial support                        | 438      | 3.64               |
| IV1'S mean                                                                 |          | 3.81               |
| <b>IV2 Stakeholder Involvement</b>                                         | <b>N</b> | <b>item's Mean</b> |
| Associations                                                               | 438      | 3.87               |
| Community                                                                  | 438      | 3.80               |
| Companies/Business                                                         | 438      | 3.87               |
| Union/Groups                                                               | 438      | 3.82               |
| Public                                                                     | 438      | 3.88               |
| Guilin's industry associations promote the promotion of Guilin cuisine     | 438      | 3.84               |
| Guilin's tourism companies play a leading role in food tourism             | 438      | 3.81               |
| Guilin's restaurant operators play a major role in promoting local cuisine | 438      | 3.84               |
| Guilin's citizens play an important role in Guilin's food promotion        | 438      | 3.88               |
| IV2'S mean                                                                 |          | 3.85               |
| <b>IV3 Destination Image</b>                                               | <b>N</b> | <b>item's Mean</b> |
| Geographical/Environment                                                   | 438      | 3.96               |
| Food Culture                                                               | 438      | 4.01               |
| Food Quality                                                               | 438      | 4.01               |
| Special Restaurants                                                        | 438      | 3.96               |
| Festivals                                                                  | 438      | 3.93               |
| Guilin offers Beautiful geographical environment                           | 438      | 3.99               |
| Guilin offers Unique food culture                                          | 438      | 3.96               |
| Guilin offers Ethnic characteristics of the festival                       | 438      | 3.84               |
| Guilin offers Numerous high-quality cuisines                               | 438      | 3.84               |
| IV3'S mean                                                                 |          | 3.94               |
| <b>IV4 Visitor Experience</b>                                              | <b>N</b> | <b>item's Mean</b> |
| Food Safety and Hygiene                                                    | 438      | 4.03               |
| The Taste/Sensory of Food                                                  | 438      | 3.97               |
| Food Authentic                                                             | 438      | 3.96               |
| Value/Price                                                                | 438      | 3.93               |
| Guilin's cuisines are safe, hygienic, and good for your health             | 438      | 3.86               |
| Guilin's cuisines have a good taste                                        | 438      | 3.89               |
| Guilin's cuisines are authentic ingredients                                | 438      | 3.87               |
| Guilin's cuisines are moderate price                                       | 438      | 3.89               |
| Guilin's cuisine are wide variety and special features                     | 438      | 3.91               |
| IV4'S mean                                                                 |          | 3.92               |
| <b>IV5 Destination Marketing</b>                                           | <b>N</b> | <b>item's Mean</b> |
| Marketing Activities                                                       | 438      | 3.90               |
| Services                                                                   | 438      | 3.93               |
| Information/social media                                                   | 438      | 3.93               |
| (Why visiting Guilin) Influenced by social media                           | 438      | 3.82               |
| (Why visiting Guilin) Enjoying comfortable travel services                 | 438      | 3.79               |
| (Why visiting Guilin) Influenced by special festivals and events           | 438      | 3.78               |
| (Why visiting Guilin) Influenced by local food                             | 438      | 3.85               |
| IV5'S mean                                                                 |          | 3.86               |
| <b>IV6 Core Food Products</b>                                              | <b>N</b> | <b>item's Mean</b> |
| ICH Food Products                                                          | 438      | 3.98               |
| Iconic Food                                                                | 438      | 3.84               |
| Guilin Rice Noodles (Iconic Food)                                          | 438      | 3.99               |
| Oil Tea (ICH Food)                                                         | 438      | 3.97               |
| Taro Sandwich Pork (Local Special Food)                                    | 438      | 3.88               |
| Beer Fish (Most Popular Food on Social Media)                              | 438      | 3.80               |
| IV6'S mean                                                                 |          | 3.91               |

Taking a comprehensive view, the mean value for IV3 Destination Image is the highest at 3.94. This is attributed to respondents' strong interest in the destination's culinary culture (4.01), geographical environment (3.96), and specialty restaurants (3.96). The following closely is IV4 Visitor Experience with a mean value of 3.92. Respondents express particular concern about food safety within this construct, with the highest mean value of 4.03 among the 22 factors. Additionally, taste (3.97) and the authenticity of food (3.96) are aspects of significant interest to visitors, contributing to the overall high mean value of this construct.

IV6 Core Food Products have a mean value of 3.91, where the popularity of ICH Food Products (3.98) notably exceeds that of Iconic Food (3.84). This suggests that local cuisine becomes more popular when labeled as intangible cultural heritage. In IV5 Destination Marketing, the two highest-scoring elements are the importance of service and social media (3.93) in information dissemination, as well as the significant role played by marketing activities. The consistency in mean values within this construct is relatively high.

IV2 Stakeholder Involvement has a mean value of 3.85, with public participation (3.88) perceived as the most important, followed by businesses and association organizations (3.87), Union/Groups (3.82), and Community (3.80) showing relatively weaker importance. IV1 Government Support has the lowest mean value at 3.83. This is due to survey responses related to Guilin, which have mean values below 3.80, indicating significant differences. In contrast, survey items in other constructs related to Guilin, such as "Guilin offers a beautiful geographical environment" (mean value of 3.99) in IV3, "Guilin offers unique food culture" (mean value of 3.96) also in IV3, and "Guilin's



cuisine are wide variety and have special features" (mean value of 3.91) in IV4, generally have mean values higher than 3.80 or around 3.80.

Overall, respondents generally endorse all 22 factors, as their mean values are above 3.82. However, the research on Guilin reflects some differences. To gain a more precise understanding of the impact magnitude of independent variables on dependent variables, further regression analysis is necessary.

#### **4.6.2 Multiple Linear Regression Analysis**

Regression analysis is a statistical method used to explore the relationship between one or more IVs and a DV. In multiple regression analysis, several IVs are used to predict the value of a DV simultaneously. Before conducting this analysis, several assumptions must be met. These include normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity. Normality testing has already been conducted to ensure the data is suitable for multivariate analysis. The next steps involve assessing linearity, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity in line with the research hypothesis framework before proceeding with MLR analysis.

##### **4.6.2.1 Linearity of Phenomenon**

The linearity of phenomena holds significant importance for regression analysis. An essential aspect involves understanding the relationship between research variables, particularly through scatter plots with fitted lines, which are crucial for assessing linearity, especially in residual plots (Nield et al., 2000). The results regarding linearity are visually presented through scatter plots in Appendix H. These plots effectively illustrate the presence of linear relationships in the regression analysis. The linear

phenomenon in each scatter plot is quite evident, indicating the presence of a linear relationship in the regression analysis of each dimension.

#### 4.6.2.2 Pearson Correlation and Multicollinearity Analysis

Conducting a correlation analysis before regression analysis is a crucial step, as the existence of correlations is a prerequisite for identifying regression influence relationships. Table 4.22 illustrates that the Pearson correlation test values are approximately 0.7, below 0.8. As per Sekaran (2010), a correlation reaching 0.80 or higher is the initial indicator of substantial multicollinearity. Additionally, the VIF values for IV1, IV2, IV5, and IV6 are below 3, while IV3 and IV4 are around 3. According to Pallant (2007), a small tolerance value below 0.10 and a VIF above 10 indicate multicollinearity. As seen in Table 4.22, the largest tolerance value of the six independent variables in this study comes from IV1 of 0.426 and VIF value of 2.347. The smallest tolerance value comes from IV4 of 0.323 and VIF value of 3.097. These findings suggest a strong correlation among variables in this study but no multicollinearity, indicating suitability for multiple linear regression analysis (Niavis & Tsiotas, 2018; Nield et al., 2000).

Table 4.22  
*Analysis For Multicollinearity by Pearson Correlation, Tolerance and VIF Values*

|      | IV 1  | IV 2  | IV 3  | IV 4  | IV 5  | IV 6  | Collinearity Statistics |       |
|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------------------------|-------|
|      |       |       |       |       |       |       | Tolerance               | VIF   |
| IV 1 | 1     | 0.647 | 0.66  | 0.64  | 0.686 | 0.618 | 0.426                   | 2.347 |
| IV 2 | 0.647 | 1     | 0.707 | 0.704 | 0.664 | 0.669 | 0.376                   | 2.657 |
| IV 3 | 0.66  | 0.707 | 1     | 0.755 | 0.671 | 0.686 | 0.327                   | 3.055 |
| IV 4 | 0.64  | 0.704 | 0.755 | 1     | 0.707 | 0.677 | 0.323                   | 3.097 |
| IV 5 | 0.686 | 0.664 | 0.671 | 0.707 | 1     | 0.643 | 0.377                   | 2.653 |
| IV 6 | 0.618 | 0.669 | 0.686 | 0.677 | 0.643 | 1     | 0.416                   | 2.403 |

\*IV1 (Government support), IV2 (Stakeholder involvement), IV3 (Destination image), IV4 (Visitor experience), IV5 (Destination marketing), IV6 (Core food products).

#### 4.6.2.3 Independence Analysis

Independence refers to the residuals being independent. Specific reference to the Durbin-Watson value in Table 4.23 indicates the presence of autocorrelation. Generally, a DW value around 2 (e.g., between 1.7 and 2.3) signifies the absence of autocorrelation and suggests a well-constructed model. In this study, the DW value is 1.96, indicating that the residuals possess independence, indicating a well-constructed model (Murphy et al., 2000; Niavis & Tsiotas, 2018; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2018).

Table 4.23

*Result of Goodness-Of-Fit Test (N=438)*

| Model Summary <sup>b</sup> |       |
|----------------------------|-------|
| Model                      | 1     |
| R                          | .842a |
| R <sup>2</sup>             | 0.71  |
| Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>    | 0.706 |
| Std. Error of the Estimate | 0.53  |
| Durbin-Watson              | 1.96  |

a. Predictors: (Constant), IV6, IV1, IV2, IV5, IV3, IV4

b. Dependent Variable: DV

\*IV1 (Government support), IV2 (Stakeholder involvement), IV3 (Destination image), IV4 (Visitor experience), IV5 (Destination marketing), IV6 (Core food products).

The R-squared value, representing the model's fitness, is 0.710 as shown in Table 4.23. The adjusted R-squared value of 0.706 indicates that the independent variables explain over 70% of the variance in the dependent variable. A value closer to 1 suggests a better fit for the model (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2019).

#### 4.6.2.4 Result of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

The linear regression model constructed for this study encompasses "the Success of a Food Tourism Destination" as the dependent variable and "Government support, Stakeholder involvement, Destination image, Visitor experience, Destination

marketing, Core food products" as the independent variables. The assessment of model effectiveness involves the F-test and model fitness (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2018).

The F-test scrutinizes the presence of a significant linear relationship with the dependent variable. From Table 4.24, the F-statistic is 175.55, accompanied by a p-value smaller than 0.05. This result signifies a significant linear relationship with the explained variable, affirming the model's validity.

Table 4.24  
ANOVA Result

| ANOVA <sup>a</sup> |            |                |     |             |         |                   |
|--------------------|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|---------|-------------------|
| Model              |            | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F       | Sig.              |
| 1                  | Regression | 300.410        | 6   | 50.068      | 175.550 | .000 <sup>b</sup> |
|                    | Residual   | 122.925        | 431 | 0.285       |         |                   |
|                    | Total      | 423.336        | 437 |             |         |                   |

a. Dependent Variable: DV

b. Predictors: (Constant), IV6, IV1, IV2, IV5, IV3, IV4

\*IV1 (Government support), IV2 (Stakeholder involvement), IV3 (Destination image), IV4 (Visitor experience), IV5 (Destination marketing), IV6 (Core food products).

#### 4.6.2.5 Interpretation of the MLR Result

In this study, as shown in Table 4.25, the t-values for the six independent variables are IV1(Government Support) 3.306, IV2 (Stakeholder involvement) 3.630, IV3 (Destination image) 3.660, IV4 (Visitor experience) 3.976, IV5 (Destination Marketing) 4.847, and IV6 (Core food products) 3.629, with corresponding p-values all below 0.05, showing significant correlations. A higher absolute t-value indicates a stronger correlation, reducing the likelihood of chance. A positive t-value signifies a positive correlation, indicating the positive influence of all six independent variables on the dependent variable. This implies that all six independent variables significantly impact the dependent variable. To assess the extent of influence, the magnitude can be

examined through standardized coefficients. Larger absolute values of standardized coefficients indicate a greater impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable. As presented in Table 4.25, the standardized coefficients from largest to smallest are IV5 (Destination Marketing) 0.205, IV4 (Visitor experience) 0.182, IV3 (Destination image) 0.166, IV2 (Stakeholder involvement) 0.154, IV6 (Core food products) 0.146, IV1(Government Support) 0.131. This suggests that destination marketing has the most significant impact on the success of a food tourism destination, while government support has the least influence.

Table 4.25

*Summary of Multiple Regressions Between Independent Variables and the Success of a Food Tourism Destination (N=438)*

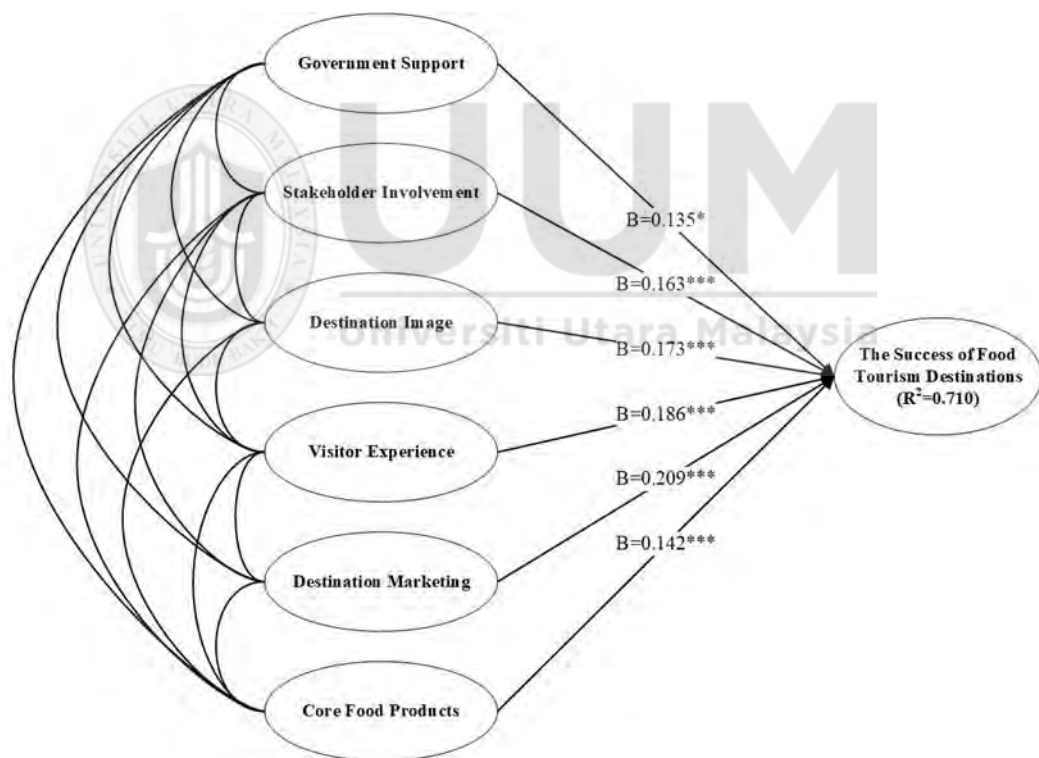
| Model      | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | t      | Sig.  | 95.0% Confidence Interval for B |             |
|------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|-------|---------------------------------|-------------|
|            | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |        |       | Lower Bound                     | Upper Bound |
| (Constant) | -0.064                      | 0.124      |                           | -0.515 | 0.607 | -0.307                          | 0.180       |
| IV1        | 0.135                       | 0.041      | 0.131                     | 3.306  | 0.001 | 0.055                           | 0.215       |
| IV2        | 0.163                       | 0.045      | 0.154                     | 3.630  | 0.000 | 0.075                           | 0.251       |
| IV3        | 0.173                       | 0.047      | 0.166                     | 3.660  | 0.000 | 0.080                           | 0.267       |
| IV4        | 0.186                       | 0.047      | 0.182                     | 3.976  | 0.000 | 0.094                           | 0.278       |
| IV5        | 0.209                       | 0.043      | 0.205                     | 4.847  | 0.000 | 0.124                           | 0.293       |
| IV6        | 0.142                       | 0.039      | 0.146                     | 3.629  | 0.000 | 0.065                           | 0.219       |

\* IV1 (Government support), IV2 (Stakeholder involvement), IV3 (Destination image), IV4 (Visitor experience), IV5 (Destination marketing), IV6 (Core food products).

A 95.0% confidence interval indicates that during regression analysis, the parameters' B values (regression coefficients in linear regression) have a 95% probability of truly lying within the calculated confidence interval through sampling and statistical inference. The narrow interval observed in this study, not exceeding 0.25, reflects a high level of confidence in the values (Liu et al., 2024; Sano et al., 2024).

#### 4.6.3 Hypothesis Testing Summary

Based on the results of the multiple regression analysis, this study obtained Figure 4.13, which presents more concise and clear relationships among the six independent variables. The B values are all positive, indicating that all six independent variables have a positive impact on the dependent variable. Each independent variable exhibits both independence and correlation with others. The p-values are all less than 0.05, indicating that they all have a significant effect on the dependent variable. Therefore, it can be inferred that the regression model of the independent variables on the dependent variable is valid.

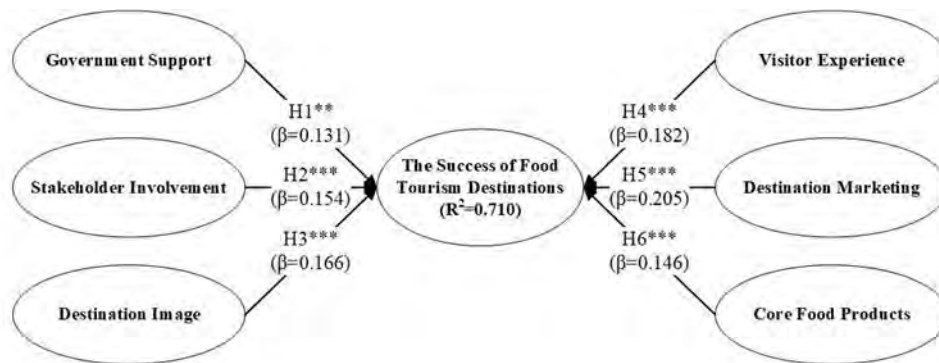


The statistics are unstandardized regression coefficients, the significant standards are \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

Figure 4.13 Results of Significance and Correlation

On the other hand, this study obtained a more specific understanding of the importance of each independent variable's impact on the dependent variable, as shown in Figure

4.14. The independent variables explain over 70% of the variance in the critical success factors of culinary tourism destinations ( $R^2=0.71$ ,  $F=175.55$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). The  $\beta$  values of the six independent variables differ, indicating varying degrees of influence. Their impact on the dependent variable is highly significant, consistent with the expected hypothesis.



The statistics are unstandardized regression coefficients, the significant standards are \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

Figure 4.14 Result of Multiple Linear Regression

After conducting a literature review, this study proposed six hypothesis relationships. The validation of these hypotheses is carried out by synthesizing the content of Figures 4.13 and 4.14 as follows:

H1: Government's Support and Critical Success Factors in Food Tourism Destinations

IV1: Government support has a significant positive impact on the critical success factors of food tourism destinations ( $B=0.135$ ,  $\beta=0.131$ ,  $t=3.306$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). The  $p$ -value, much smaller than 0.05, indicates the significant influence of government support on critical success factors in food tourism destinations, confirming the pivotal role of government support in fostering success in such destinations. Thus, the H1 is supported.

H2: Stakeholder Involvement is important for the critical success factors of a food tourism destination.

IV2: Stakeholder involvement significantly positively influences the success of food tourism destinations ( $B=0.163$ ,  $\beta=0.154$ ,  $t=3.630$ ,  $p<0.0001$ ). The values of  $B$ ,  $\beta$ ,  $t$  statistics, and the extremely low  $p$ -value indicate that stakeholder involvement is crucial for the success of food tourism destinations, demonstrating a strong positive impact and high statistical significance. Therefore, the H2 is supported.

H3: Destination Image is important for the critical success factors of a food tourism destination.

IV3: Destination image significantly positively affects the success of food tourism destinations ( $B=0.173$ ,  $\beta=0.166$ ,  $t=3.660$ ,  $p<0.0001$ ), as confirmed by the values of  $B$ ,  $\beta$ ,  $t$  statistics, and the very small  $p$ -value. This emphasizes the importance of an excellent destination image in attracting tourists and enhancing the tourism experience. This finding highlights the critical role of destination image, supporting H3.

H4: Visitor experience is important for the critical success factors of a food tourism destination.

IV4: Visitor experience significantly positively influences the success of food tourism destinations ( $B=0.186$ ,  $\beta=0.182$ ,  $t=3.976$ ,  $p<0.0001$ ). The values of  $B$ ,  $\beta$ ,  $t$  statistics, and the extremely low  $p$ -value collectively indicate that visitor experience occupies a central role in the success of food tourism destinations, making a significant positive contribution to the success factors. Thus, the H4 is supported.



H5: Destination marketing is important for the critical success factors of a food tourism destination.

IV5: Destination marketing significantly positively impacts the success of food tourism destinations ( $B=0.209$ ,  $\beta=0.205$ ,  $t=4.847$ ,  $p<0.0001$ ). The very small p-value indicates the strong statistical significance of destination marketing. The values of  $B$ ,  $\beta$ ,  $t$  statistics, and p-value all indicate that effective destination marketing strategies have a significant impact on the success of food tourism destinations, making it a key factor in promoting destination visibility and attractiveness. Therefore, the H5 is supported.

H6: Core food products are important for the critical success factors of a food tourism destination.

IV6: Core food products significantly positively influence the success of food tourism destinations ( $B=0.142$ ,  $\beta=0.146$ ,  $t=3.629$ ,  $p<0.0001$ ). The extremely small p-value confirms the importance of core food products, indicating that providing high-quality food experiences is an essential factor in attracting tourists. Hence, the H6 is supported.

The six hypotheses proposed based on the literature review were all supported by the data. This leads to Table 4.26 Results of Hypotheses, where all six independent variable hypotheses from the literature review are supported.

Table 4.26  
*Results of Hypotheses*

| Hypotheses                                                                                               | Results   | Beta  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-------|
| H1: Government's support is important for the critical success factors of a food tourism destination.    | Supported | 0.131 |
| H2: Stakeholder involvement is important for the critical success factors of a food tourism destination. | Supported | 0.154 |
| H3: Destination image is important for the critical success factors of a food tourism destination.       | Supported | 0.166 |
| H4: Visitor experience is important for the critical success factors of a food tourism destination.      | Supported | 0.182 |
| H5: Destination marketing is important for the critical success factors of a food tourism destination.   | Supported | 0.205 |
| H6: Core food products are important for the critical success factors of a food tourism destination.     | Supported | 0.146 |

The comprehensive analysis results indicate that all six hypotheses H1 to H6 are supported, demonstrating that government support, stakeholder involvement, destination image, visitor experience, destination marketing, and core food products all have significant positive effects on the critical success factors of food tourism destinations. The statistical significance of these factors suggests that they are not only crucial for understanding the success of food tourism destinations but also, in practice, managing and optimizing these factors can significantly enhance the attractiveness and success rate of food tourism destinations. These results emphasize the multifaceted factors that need to be considered in the management and development strategies of food tourism destinations. Successful food tourism destinations require not only attractive food products and experiences but also government support, effective marketing strategies, positive destination image building, and strong stakeholder involvement. These factors collectively contribute to the comprehensive foundation of

success for food tourism destinations. This finding provides important theoretical and practical guidance for the planning and management of food tourism destinations.

## **4.7 Framework Development**

### **4.7.1 Framework Definition**

Before elaborating on the proposed framework, it is necessary to clarify the various connotations the term "framework" embodies within the scientific domain. Paim and Flexa's (2011) interpretation position a "framework" as a set of concepts strategically employed to address complex issues within a designated field. This conceptual structure not only serves as a guide but also acts as a cohesive force, providing a unified framework for the analysis and processing of various business entities.

Building upon this, Sekaran (2000) expands the definition of "framework" to a conceptual model, offering a theoretical understanding of the logical relationships among key factors deemed crucial to solving specific problems. In a managerial context, Wiig et al. (1997) define a framework as a comprehensive set of guiding principles and methodologies, offering a detailed roadmap for translating ideas and objectives into operational realities.

In this paper, the framework is meticulously crafted by elucidating the CSFs crucial for the development of food tourism destinations in Guilin. This goes beyond a mere identification of factors; it provides nuanced perspectives on enhancing the food tourism industry by considering CSFs for success. This framework is not a theoretical abstraction but is forged through a rigorous process involving literature review, expert interview, questionnaires conducted on both the demand and supply sides, and comprehensive analysis of empirical data.

Therefore, the proposed framework is a set of CSFs indispensable for the construction and success of Guilin as a food tourism destination. Its formulation is not arbitrary; rather, it is grounded in a synthesis of literature review, insights from expert consultations, and empirical data analysis, thereby ensuring its robustness and applicability in the intricacies of Guilin's food tourism landscape.

#### **4.7.2 Framework Structure**

The foundation of this research framework lies in the TPC theory, emphasizing the equal importance of tangible and experiential products in the tourism industry (Levitt, 1983). This is reflected in the selection of dimensions such as core products, visitor experience, destination image, and destination marketing. Drawing from the TPC theory, the study focuses on developing products with core competitiveness, creating attention-grabbing complementary products, and highlighting the significance of enhancing user experience.

The introduction of the Diamond Model further enriches the research framework by emphasizing factors influencing competitiveness, including factor conditions, demand conditions, related and supporting industries, as well as corporate strategy, structure, and competitive environment (Porter, 1980). The recognition of stakeholders and government support as crucial internal and external resources underscores the pivotal role they play in destination development. This underscores the significance of differentiating competitiveness for the successful implementation of strategies in a destination.

Additionally, Kenichi Ohmae's 3C theory provides strategic guidance, emphasizing the adjustment of supply content based on customer demands (Ohmae, 1991). The

study underscores the need for businesses to flexibly adapt their products and services according to the actual market demands, with data collection focusing on both the supply and demand sides to ensure the effectiveness of strategic formulation. The data collection process in this study considers the core principles of this theory.

The emphasis on resource analysis in strategic decision-making is evident across various theories such as the TPC theory, Porter's theory, and Kenichi Ohmae's 3C theory regarding the formulation of business strategic decisions. The identification of CSFs and competitive advantages for businesses relies on a detailed analysis of their existing resources. Scholars like Huo (2017), Linyi (2013), and Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen (2019) have demonstrated the effectiveness of applying management theories to the development of the tourism industry. Consequently, leveraging the advancements in management theories has proven to be an efficient approach.

In line with this perspective, the current study, focused on developing a framework for food tourism destinations, adopts steps from the resource-based theory. The initial analysis involves a comprehensive examination of natural resources (geographical environment, authenticity of food ingredients), social resources (government support, stakeholders), and cultural resources (food culture, core foods as intangible cultural heritage, festival culture) that are closely associated with the destination and food tourism. Subsequently, the study explores CSFs built upon this foundational resource analysis.

Overall, this research framework integrates TPC theory, Porter's Diamond Model, and Kenichi Ohmae's 3C theory, offering a comprehensive and structured approach to understanding and analyzing competitiveness factors in the tourism industry. By

balancing product development, market demands, and factors enhancing competitiveness, the study aims to provide essential theoretical and practical guidance for the sustainable development of the food tourism industry.

The establishment of the framework for CSFs in this study is primarily based on a systematic review of literature. Six dimensions and 22 sub-factors were derived from the synthesis of over 400 relevant articles. Subsequently, the Delphi method was employed, wherein a highly reputable expert panel rigorously evaluated the conclusions drawn from the literature review and proposed a hypothesis framework for CSFs. Simultaneously, with the assistance of the experts, a questionnaire was developed to ensure the reliability and validity of the data collected from both supply and demand sides.

Finally, through rigorous multiple linear regression analysis, the statistical results indicate the significance of all six hypothesized factors in this study. Building upon this foundation, the study compares the magnitude of the impact indicators (Beta) and determines the influence of the six dimensions on the development of a food tourism destinations, as illustrated in Figure 4.14. Although some constructive opinions and suggestions were provided by respondents regarding certain CSFs in the framework, these remarks did not entail significant modifications or corrections to the framework draft. The overall results of the data analysis in this study confirm the significance of all six CSF elements (six dimensions and 22 sub-factors) and their strong applicability in promoting the development of Guilin as a food tourism destination. Figure 4.15 depicts the improved framework (RO3), where identified CSFs align with the hypothesis based on the Beta value. This is critical for comprehending the relative

importance of various factors that impact the overall success of a food tourism destination.

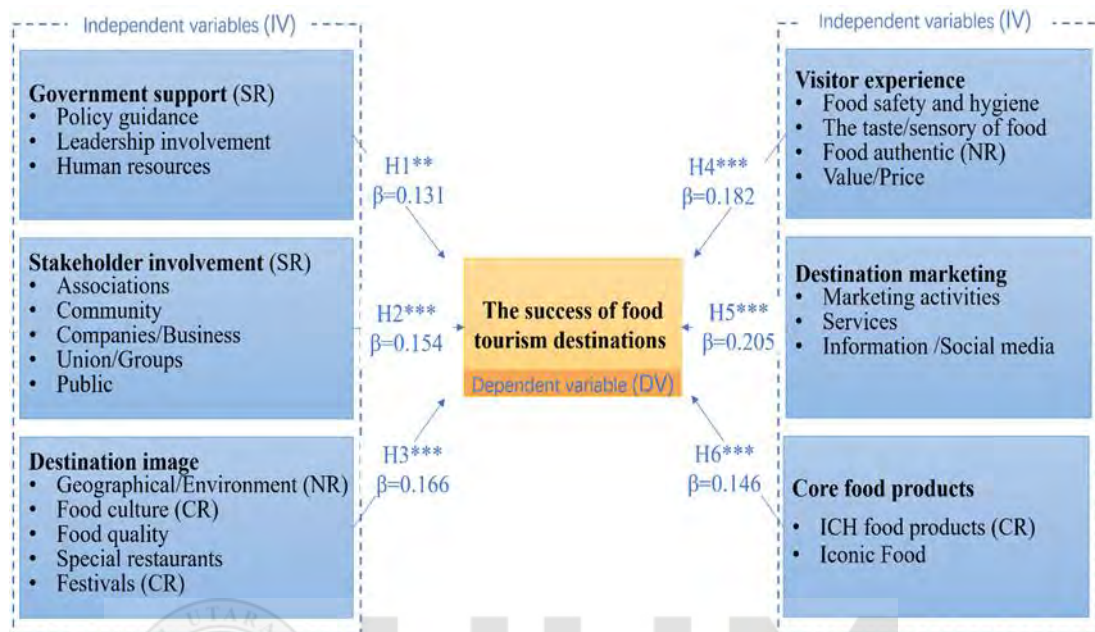


Figure 4.15 Framework of CSFs of The Success of a Food Tourism Destination

#### 4.8 Summary

This chapter encompasses the crucial stage of data statistical analysis in quantitative research. A comprehensive and objective description of the collected survey results is provided. Firstly, a brief overview of the basic characteristics of the data is presented, followed by meticulous screening and rigorous testing and analysis of the data's reliability and validity. In exploring the six dimensions and 22 sub-factors of the research hypotheses, the author employed exploratory factor analysis. This methodology provided an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the data structure and the relationships between variables. Subsequently, the author utilized multiple linear regression to statistically validate the CSFs of a food tourism

destination. Based on the results of hypothesis testing, this study summarized and deduced the framework of CSFs for a food tourism destination.

Through careful examination and analysis of the data, this chapter successfully addresses the third research question (RQ3) and achieves the third research objective (RO3). This process not only enhances the understanding of the CSFs of a food tourism destination but also provides reliable statistical support for subsequent research and decision-making processes.





## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The aim of this study is to explore the CSFs for the development of Guilin as a food tourism destination. Analyzing a total of 438 samples from both the demand and supply sides, most respondents demonstrated interest in Guilin as a food tourism destination. Factor analysis results indicate significant relationships between the six independent variables set and the dependent variable in this study.

#### **5.2 Achievement of the Research Objectives**

##### **5.2.1 RO 1: To Examine the Natural, Social, and Cultural Resources That Could be Used in Guilin as a Food Tourism Destination**

The first aim of this study is to identify the core resources of a food tourism destination which the initial phase of strategic planning based on resource-based theory (Grant, 1991). As highlighted by Murphy et al., (2000) stated that natural environment influences the availability of unique local ingredients, shaping regional dietary habits and food offerings. Additionally, Wang & Xu (2014) and Yousaf & Xiucheng (2018) underscored the pivotal role of social resources in bolstering the tourism industry, including government support, associations, universities, and public participation. Si & Couto (2020) further emphasized the significance of food culture as a tourism resource contribute to developing local food tourism.

During the interviews conducted using the Delphi method, experts expressed full affirmation of the natural, social, and cultural resources available for the development of Guilin as a food tourism destination. So, in this study, systematic statistical analysis was carried out in the questionnaire regarding elements related to natural, social, and cultural resources.

Regarding **natural resources**, the study analyzed destination image and visitor experience from the perspective of **geographic environmental** factors and **food authenticity** factors. Forty-six percent of tourists found Guilin's unique karst geographical environment very appealing, and experts also recognized Guilin's distinctive geographical environment and picturesque scenery as valuable natural resources. Guilin's geographical environment, water pattern, and climate suitable for a variety of foods provide favorable conditions for the authenticity of ingredients and the abundance of species (Zhou, 2022). The multi-ethnic dietaries have nurtured many characteristic cuisines, and experts unanimously also acknowledged Guilin's advantages in developing as a food tourism destination. The results of this study align with Cheng (2002) findings, which asserted that Guilin possesses plentiful ecotourism resources, characterized by abundant flora and fauna as well as a favorable natural ecological setting. These findings were further corroborated by the questionnaire data.

For **social resources**, the study analyzed **government support** and **stakeholder involvement**. Within the dimension of government support, respondents consistently recognized the importance of **policy guidance**, **leadership involvement**, and **human resources** assurance, with mean values exceeding 3.9. These results underscore the critical role of these factors in ensuring the success of a food tourism destination. Specifically, in Guilin, mean values for all three items surpassed 3.7, further

emphasizing their significance in the context of the city's food tourism development. Regarding stakeholder involvement (including associations, communities, unions, and the public), mean values exceeded 3.8. The statistical findings from the questionnaire align with scholars' perspectives discussed in the literature review, including those of Ellis et al. (2018), Leong et al. (2010), Zain (2019), and Mwesiumo et al. (2022). Ellis et al. (2018), Leong et al. (2010), and Zain (2019) highlighted the potential for governmental collaboration with stakeholders and associations to facilitate timely regulatory decisions, formulate transparent policies and programs, and allocate human resources to foster the economic growth of regional industries. Similarly, Mwesiumo et al. (2022) stressed the indispensable role of public support and engagement in achieving the healthy and sustainable development of the tourism sector. Through a comprehensive review of literature and analysis of survey data from both supply and demand perspectives, it is evident that Guilin possesses robust social resources conducive to its status as a food tourism destination.

Concerning **cultural resources**, the current study examined elements such as **food culture, festivals, and ICH cuisines**. The questionnaire from both supply and demand sides regarding food culture and festival culture elements indicate that people generally believe that Guilin's cultural resources in terms of diet and ethnic minority festivals are rich. More than 16% of respondents identified Guilin's unique local food as highly attractive, second only to the scenic beauty of the area, which aligns with the findings of Xuelian et al. (2007), suggesting that authentic food is a key motivator for tourists visiting Guilin. This suggests an increasing awareness and acceptance of Guilin's food and food culture due to recent publicity efforts.

In terms of food culture, which scored a mean value exceeding 4.0, it was the highest-rated item in the questionnaire. This finding is consistent with the research by Park & Widyanta (2022), Lai et al. (2017), and Kim et al. (2012), who observed a growing interest among tourists in gastronomic heritage and distinctive food culture. This indicates that people's perception of Guilin extends beyond its famous scenic spots.

Additionally, business owners generally believe that Guilin's local traditional festival culture contributes to the development of commercial activities. Local special ethnic festivals serve as platforms for promoting food tourism. The selection and promotion of ICH cuisine further enhances the visibility of Guilin's core food products. In the survey regarding core food products, over 45% of respondents were familiar with Guilin's special food products, with over 33% being very familiar. These findings highlight the broad appeal of Guilin's unique food culture and multi-ethnic cuisines.

In conclusion, an exploration of Guilin's natural, social, and cultural resources reveals clear advantages for developing it into a food tourism destination. This assertion finds support from both expert opinion and questionnaire from both the supply and demand sides.

### **5.2.2 RO 2: To Determine the CSFs of Building a Food Tourism Destination**

The second objective of this study is to identify the CSFs for building a food tourism destination. Analysis of CSFs in tourism destinations is crucial for maintaining competitiveness in the market; therefore, countries or tourist destinations must effectively utilize the heterogeneity within their core resources (Shyan et al., 2012). The exploration of six dimensions based on natural, social, and cultural resources informs this endeavor. The next discussion is carried out according to the importance

of the 6 dimensions, starting with the most important influences in the results of this study.

Destination marketing (IV5) was found that the most significant factor influencing food tourism destinations. This dimension includes marketing activities, services, and social media. Contrary to previous systematic literature reviews where activities and high-quality services were considered more important, this study found that obtaining destination information from social media has become the most important means. Word-of-mouth on social media platforms has become a crucial source of information for tourists in deciding their destination, aligning with the views of Rizki Amalia et al. (2018). With the rapid development of the internet economy, high-quality services and marketing activities require promotion and validation through social media. On personal social platforms, sharing information that adults trust more than just advertisements are crucial, as advertisements can sometimes be misleading. With the rapid development of the internet economy, high-quality services and marketing activities require promotion and validation through social media. Additionally, accommodations, dining, and shopping are integral parts of the tourist experience, and the quality of this experience stems from the perceived quality of services received. The success or decline of the food and beverage industry is determined by the quality of service (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2019), a viewpoint validated by the results of this study. The joint development of commercial marketing activities and traditional folk festivals creates a more diverse range of food experiences. These vibrant activities themselves are highly attractive, as food events facilitate social interaction, satisfying various needs of visitors such as socializing, exploring, touring, and tasting (Yousaf & Xiucheng, 2018). Therefore, authorities must encourage tourism service providers to

offer products and services that satisfy visitors, utilizing multi-channel promotion through both traditional and digital media platforms.

Visitor experiences (IV4), derived from the services received, was identified as the second most important factor influencing food tourism destinations confirming previous studies such as (Dann et al. 2002; Quan & Wang, 2004; Hillel et al., 2013; Lai et al. 2017; Testa et al., 2019). Elements such as food safety, taste, authenticity, and value/price were considered in the experience. Quan & Wang (2004) stated that food safety scored the highest mean value, consistent with Maslow's hierarchy of needs which means visitors are more likely to explore food taste and authenticity after ensuring safety. Dann et al. (2002) emphasized that an important aspect of food tourism is that the taste of local cuisine differs from that of the same food in the home country or region. As emphasized by Hillel et al. (2013), by satisfying tourists' desires for authentic product experiences and tastes. Beyond these basic experiences, it is through food that the connection between a place and its community can be conveyed, allowing visitors to feel the local culture. It's important to recognize that the value of intangible products can evoke emotional attachment. Street-side delicacies, authentically flavored "home-cooked meals," and the experience of local cuisine can create unforgettable memories for tourists due to their unique tastes. This can positively influence their satisfaction, intention to revisit, and word-of-mouth recommendations (Testa et al., 2019). Lai et al. (2017) suggested that the cost of food plays a pivotal role in visitors' decision-making process. This study finds that the significance of food prices has decreased, possibly due to the rapid income growth among mainland Chinese tourists. Therefore, the development of food tourism destinations should prioritize enhancing both sensory and economic value experiences. This aspect has also been affirmed in the survey conducted for this research.

Destination image (IV3) is the third factor influencing food tourism destinations. The importance of natural and cultural resources is emphasized once again. Guilin, with its advantageous geographical environment, ranks significantly high in the list of most popular tourist destinations, reflecting its survey results. In tourism image research, the significance of destination cuisine to tourists encompasses both functional and symbolic dimensions. On one hand, it serves as a source to satisfy hunger, while on the other hand, it facilitates the exploration of local food culture, food quality, special restaurants, and participation in food-related events such as food festivals, activities, tours, and cooking classes (Hall & Sharples, 2003; Long, 2004). However, for hosts, local culinary culture serves to express the destination's culinary identity, cultural heritage, shared food values, and local way of life (Smith & Xiao, 2008; Yang et al., 2020). The findings of this study, as observed in the questionnaire conducted with both supply and demand sides, are consistent with these viewpoints. It is imperative for both suppliers and consumers to comprehend these differences, which are not inherently contradictory but rather complementary. Authorities should recognize that integrating the natural and cultural resources of the destination enhances its image significantly. Likewise, food providers should seize the opportunity to develop products that highlight natural landscapes, festivities, and food culture, thereby satisfying tourists' functional needs while also preserving cultural heritage and traditional ways of life.

Stakeholder involvement (IV2) ranks fourth among the factors often overlooked in food tourism studies. This study comprehensively analyzed stakeholders, including the associations, communities, businesses, unions, and public, finding that the development of food tourism relies heavily on their support. In this study, statistical data from the supply side predominantly originate from these groups. Among them, the participation of restaurant operators and public and local resident involvement

receives the highest attention. Residents, being the creators of food, integrate the richness and authenticity of food and culinary heritage into marketing activities and personally promote them, thereby enhancing the attractiveness of local tourism (Shyan et al., 2012). The development of destination centered around food tourism depends on cooperation among various stakeholders as well as between the public and private sectors (Zain, 2019). As the main force on the supply side, enterprises participating in every activity related to the five major tourism behaviors "eating, accommodation, transportation, sightseeing, and shopping" (Li et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2017; Maichi, 2012). On the other hand, local delicacies and snacks in Guilin are often found in community clusters. Organizations such as UNESCO consider food traditions to play a crucial role in social cohesion in these areas and instill a sense of identity and continuity in communities, thereby promoting mutual respect among individuals (Slocuma & Curtisb, 2017). The significance of these organizations is also reflected in the data statistics of this study.

Core food products (IV6) is the fifth factor, with Guilin rice noodles being the most representative local food. Over half of the local restaurants serve this dish, enhancing the perception of repeat experiences. Research by Anton Martin et al. (2021), Liberato et al. (2020), and Lin et al. (2022) found that iconic foods enhance the perceived value of repeat experiences, which may be why rice noodles are so popular. Another representative food is oil tea, which is a local famous intangible cultural heritage (ICH food products), despite its unfriendly taste. Perhaps this food symbolizes and expresses the local culture and identity of the destination, or it may be driven by novelty-seeking, as over half of the respondents are very interested in it. In any case, it can attract tourists and influence their behavioral intentions. Conversely, the popularity of Taro Sandwich Pork, made with local authentic



ingredients, is significantly lower than that of oil tea and rice noodles. The widely recognized and excellent-tasting food, Beer Fish (Iconic food), surprisingly receives the least attention. This is a perplexing result, and which foods tourists are most interested in is a research topic worthy of long-term attention. Given the economic conditions, perhaps most tourists would choose to try all these foods if possible.

Government support (IV1) is the last factor, with policy guidance being the highest-scoring option in this dimension. Financial support from the government follows closely. Interviews revealed concerns among business owners about the level of government support which is a clear consensus among stakeholders for practical economic measures. This is reflected in the research findings from the supply side, where the mean scores for financial support and human resource assurance from the Guilin government are lower than other aspects. Additionally, for labor-intensive industries like restaurants, effective human resource management requires government involvement to achieve balanced staffing ratios (Li, 2021). Strong leadership is necessary for optimal benefits in tourism activities (Munira Saaidin, 2019). Ottenbacher and Harrington (2013) also argue that in the strategic management of tourist destinations, policy adjustments and leadership drive are indispensable factors. China's tourism industry has flourished due to macro-level government regulation and the involvement of leaders at various levels (Zhao & Liu, 2020). In related studies on Southeast Asian tourism destination development, Jalis (2014) and Yusof (2019) and others have consistently highlighted the importance of government support. They believe that government backing encourages cooperation among stakeholders, while the leadership involvement from multiple departments facilitates rapid development in the tourism industry. The involvement of the government in human resources management is crucial for labor-intensive industries such as the restaurant sector.

Strong leadership is essential for optimizing tourism activities, as recognized in various studies on tourism destination construction in Southeast Asia. From the literature review of this study, it is known that the importance of government support is recognised by several studies (Ellis et al., 2018; Leong et al., 2010; Zain, 2019). However, the results of the data analysed in this study show that it is the weakest compared to the other dimensions. This may reflect, from another perspective, that the development of the local economy relies more on the market, and the government merely plays the role of a guide, although it is indispensable.

In summary, the successful development of food tourism destinations requires attention to multiple factors, including destination marketing, visitor experiences, destination image, stakeholder involvement, core food products, and government support. Each factor plays a crucial role in shaping the attractiveness and sustainability of food tourism destinations.

### **5.2.3 RO 3: To Develop a Framework of CSFs of Guilin as a Food Tourism Destination**

The final objective of this study is to build a framework of CSFs of Guilin as a food tourism destination, which can provide a view of how to improve the development of a food tourism destination. This framework, Figure 4.15 in chapter 4, developed based on TPC theory, draws inspiration from its emphasis on developing core products, creating complementary products, and prioritizing visitor experience which underscores the equal importance of tangible and experiential products, forming the basis for factor selection in this research framework, including core food products, visitor experience, destination image, and destination marketing (Smith, 1994). Additionally, insights from Porter's Diamond Model are incorporated, highlighting the

significance of stakeholders and government support as crucial internal and external resources for destinations development (Porter, 1980). Moreover, aligned with Kenichi Ohmae's 3C theory, the strategic formulation is guided by adjusting supply content based on customer demands (Ohmae, 1991). Hence, data collection in this study encompasses both the supply and demand sides.

The data analysis results indicate that the factors explored in this study are interrelated and independent. The three most influential factors are destination marketing, visitor experiences, and destination image. Therefore, the framework reflects a comprehensive set of factors, indicating that in the practical development of food tourism destinations, issues should be considered from a broader perspective. In contrast, previous research has often provided overly general strategic recommendations for food tourism, lacking a comprehensive study of the CSFs for food tourism destinations, especially in Southeast Asia. Variables related to destination development, such as government support, stakeholder involvement, destination image, visitor experiences, and destination marketing, have been studied in isolation lacking clear evidence or data analysis to support which variables contribute most to the restaurant and tourism industries at destinations (Bornhorst et al., 2010; Hiamey et al., 2020; Juwaidah et al., 2021). The proposed framework in this study addresses this research gap.

Data collection for this study was sourced from both supply and demand sides, and the instruments were designed with the assistance of an expert team, enhancing the reliability of the research results. Insights from both supply and demand sides provide convincing evidence for decision-making and strategic development by authorities and destination stakeholders, enhancing the value of empirical research. Suggestions are

provided for the differentiated development of Guilin's tourism industry, allowing for a rational assessment of core food tourism products when planning destination offerings.

The traditional model of Guilin's tourism industry relies on ticket revenue from parks and natural landscapes (Cheng, 2002). While this model once generated significant income, it is no longer sufficient as tourists seek more comprehensive experiences encompassing aspects of "eating, accommodation, transportation, sightseeing, shopping, and entertainment" (Li et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2017; Maichi, 2012). Food tourism satisfies tourists' desires for sensory experiences, cultural enrichment, purchasing local specialty products, and participating in traditional festivals and entertainment (Maichi, 2012). The current study on the development of Guilin as a food tourism destination provides a more systematic and interpretation of leveraging local ethnic cultures to develop food tourism products. Meanwhile, this effort addresses the shortcomings of previous research and can help identify which CSFs are applicable to similar destinations at different stages of tourism development in Southeast Asia.

### **5.3 Contributions of the Study**

#### **5.3.1 Theoretical Contributions**

This study analyzed the natural and social resources of Guilin, a world-renowned tourist city, from the perspective of food tourism and proposed CSFs influencing food tourism destinations. This significant research achievement is developed based on the TPC theory. Emphasizing a holistic and systematic view of products, the TPC theory utilizes concepts of social marketing to guide product design, production, sales, and

service (Nickels, 1982), with Levitt (1983) proposing the concept of totality. Many studies in the food tourism industry in Guilin have focused on issues related to food product development (production and output), such as food materials, dietary structures, and the relevance of restaurants to various industries and ethnic groups, including restaurant businesses in scenic areas, street food, traditional cuisine, community dining, festival cuisine, and ICH cuisine. Although recent research has made some improvements in commercialization and management issues, most studies still merely focus on extolling the benefits of food tourism or showcasing the attractiveness of local cuisine, rather than investigating more detailed practical issues. Based on the foundation of these studies, this research aims to integrate resources for food tourism destination development and explore the relationship between the success factors associated with local resources and the construction of food tourism destinations, thus contributing to the current knowledge system.

This study compiled definitions, driving factors, and barriers of food tourism destinations for future reference, aiming to improve people's perceptions of the food tourism industry. The development of food tourism destinations relies not only on products but also on a comprehensive system of destination marketing, visitor experiences, destination image, stakeholder involvement, and government support. Previous studies relying solely on the product concept lack this comprehensiveness, and their explanations of the relationships between the food tourism industry and destination development are not sufficiently profound. This study compiles effective CSFs and gaps that promote the development of the food tourism industry. The CSFs were evaluated and confirmed to reflect the effective development of the food tourism industry framework and were applied to the food tourism industry in Guilin. Unlike previous studies, this research assembled an expert team with over 20 years of

experience in the industry to address issues related to developing food tourism destinations, conduct expert interviews, and develop questionnaires. Research conducted from both the supply and demand sides rectified the previous shortcomings of lacking comprehensiveness and problem orientation.

This study established a framework for the CSFs in the development of food tourism destinations, drawing on the Diamond Theory Model and Resource-based Theory. The proposed six dimensions and 22 factors were derived from a detailed analysis of Guilin's natural, social, and cultural resources. Factor analysis and regression analysis results demonstrate the significant influence of these variables on the development of food tourism destinations. Through multiple linear regression analysis, the author ranked these six dimensions and conducted a detailed analysis using the empirical study destination of Guilin. This content is considered relatively new in research because previous studies focused on the category of food tourism but did not explore the characteristics of the destination itself sufficiently. While there is ample research on universal aspects, there is insufficient in-depth empirical research on typical cases like Guilin. However, this framework is applicable not only to Guilin but also to other mainland Chinese cities and developing regions in Asia due to similar environmental and cultural contexts. Therefore, the implementation of this framework makes a significant contribution to research and practice in the food tourism industry.

The outcomes of this study can also be used for local education and training, whether in academic courses or professional practice, enhancing understanding of the development of the food tourism industry and the implementation of more comprehensive strategic approaches among students and practitioners. Once academia and industry gain a deeper understanding of this issue, it will directly contribute to

Guilin's food tourism industry offering higher-quality food tourism products in the future.

Another significant contribution of this study is the development and validation of a new instrument designed with the assistance of an expert team. Other researchers conducting studies on food tourism destinations can utilize this instrument, which was developed based on extensive research and then improved through rigorous pilot study phases. Furthermore, the reliability and effectiveness of this tool have been ensured, allowing other researchers to trust that the tool will achieve its intended measurement goals. Finally, this study provides more resources for the limited literature specifically targeting food tourism destinations, thereby enhancing the knowledge system, and providing references for future researchers in related fields.

### **5.3.2 Managerial Implications**

This study provides significant managerial contributions by establishing a comprehensive framework of critical success factors (CSFs) tailored to guide the development of Guilin as a food tourism destination. In a competitive global tourism market, where differentiation is key, the findings address the gap in structured strategies for managing food tourism and offer practical insights to facilitate the coordinated growth of this sector.

This study clearly highlights the crucial role of government regulation and support in the development of food tourism destinations. In the case of Guilin's food tourism development, the government should ensure effective collaboration among stakeholders and promote the innovation and dissemination of traditional culinary culture through policy guidance, resource allocation, and supervisory mechanisms.

The framework emphasizes that **government support** is not only reflected in the formulation of favorable policies and development plans but also includes encouraging the development of key food products, improving infrastructure, and providing technical and financial support. Additionally, by promoting Guilin as a food tourism destination through both traditional and digital media channels, the government can shape its image. Unlike previous approaches where governments relied solely on broad tourism policies, this study provides a targeted CSFs framework that helps the government guide specific actions more efficiently and promote the sustainable development of food tourism.

Collaboration among **stakeholders** is considered one of the key drivers of successful food tourism. In the past, due to the lack of a systematic framework, the stakeholders in Guilin's food tourism often acted independently, resulting in a lack of synergies. This study, through the CSFs framework, clarifies the roles of stakeholders in the development and management of food tourism destinations, emphasizing the need to establish collaborative mechanisms. These mechanisms should unite various forces, including local communities, tourism operators, and food producers, to jointly participate in decision-making and implementation. For instance, the study encourages local communities to actively engage in food tourism projects. At the same time, it promotes deeper connections between catering enterprises and tourism service providers through collaborative platforms such as associations and educational institutions, making products and services more diverse to meet the varied needs of tourists.

This study particularly emphasizes the central role of **destination image** in attracting tourists. For Guilin, its rich natural resources, profound cultural heritage, and unique



food culture provide a distinct advantage in creating a differentiated tourism image. The framework suggests integrating Guilin's cultural and culinary heritage to develop iconic food products and create a brand image with local characteristics. Marketing strategies should focus on both domestic and international markets, promoting Guilin's "food + tourism" image through integrated campaigns across social media, online travel platforms, and traditional media, ensuring it resonates deeply with audiences. Additionally, the study recommends combining Guilin's food with its culture and natural landscapes, offering a comprehensive experience to attract more high-end and niche market tourists.

An exceptional **visitor experience** is a crucial foundation for the success of food tourism destinations. This study argues that simply relying on food itself to attract tourists is far from sufficient; instead, a comprehensive design and optimization of the visitor experience are necessary to enhance its appeal. Specifically, immersive activities such as food festivals, cooking classes, and tasting tours can be developed to provide tourists with a deeper understanding of Guilin's food culture. Additionally, the study suggests establishing a visitor feedback mechanism, utilizing data analysis to understand tourist preferences and needs, and dynamically adjusting products and services accordingly. Furthermore, attention should be given to the construction of accessible facilities, ensuring that all visitors, including families, elderly tourists, and those with special needs, can enjoy a high-quality tourism experience.

In the context of globalization and digitalization, destination marketing has become a key strategy for enhancing the visibility of Guilin's food tourism. This study proposes a series of targeted marketing recommendations, such as adopting an Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) strategy, which combines social media, travel

platforms, content creation, and traditional advertising to comprehensively promote Guilin's culinary culture. By establishing strategic partnerships with travel agencies, airlines, and other collaborators, the coverage of target markets can be expanded. Additionally, the study emphasizes the importance of market segmentation and the customization of promotional strategies for different groups. For example, a "Food Tasting Tour" could be launched for food enthusiasts, while "Sustainable Food Experiences" could be promoted to eco-conscious tourists, thereby maximizing marketing effectiveness.

In the context of globalization and digitalization, destination marketing has become a key strategy for enhancing the visibility of Guilin's food tourism. This study proposes a series of targeted marketing recommendations, such as adopting an Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) strategy, which combines social media, travel platforms, content creation, and traditional advertising to comprehensively promote Guilin's culinary culture. By establishing strategic partnerships with travel agencies, airlines, and other collaborators, the coverage of target markets can be expanded. Additionally, the study emphasizes the importance of market segmentation and the customization of promotional strategies for different groups. For example, a "Food Tasting Tour" could be launched for food enthusiasts, while "Sustainable Food Experiences" could be promoted to eco-conscious tourists, thereby maximizing marketing effectiveness.

The study clearly highlights that core food products are the cornerstone of a food tourism destination's development. As a destination, Guilin should fully leverage its unique food resources and traditional culinary techniques to develop iconic dishes that represent its local characteristics. The study also suggests strengthening local supply

chain management to ensure the quality and stable supply of core food products. To enhance market appeal, local governments and businesses can collaborate to organize food innovation competitions to discover novel and commercially viable food products. In terms of promotion, core food products should be combined with the cultural stories of Guilin, using narrative techniques to enhance their attractiveness. Additionally, the study points out that core food products should integrate modern consumption trends, such as health, organic, and sustainable dining concepts, while maintaining their local uniqueness, thus enhancing the competitiveness of Guilin's food offerings in both domestic and international markets.

One of the key managerial insights of this study is the recognition of the interrelationship of CSFs. The study warns against focusing on individual factors in isolation and emphasizes the necessity of the synergistic effect of multiple CSFs for achieving significant progress. By ranking the CSFs based on the results of regression analysis, the study provides a clear list of the prioritization of influencing factors, helping stakeholders analyze and address the primary and secondary conflicts within strategies. This approach enables dynamic adjustments in response to new challenges or opportunities, ensuring the relevance and effectiveness of the strategies. Although the application of this framework may not immediately make Guilin's food tourism industry a major contributor to GDP, it lays a crucial foundation for more integrated and efficient development.

#### **5.4 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research**

Despite all research questions, objectives, and hypotheses having been addressed, there are still some limitations that restrict the findings of this study. But it also opens opportunities for future research.

The number of respondents used to collect data and validate the framework was limited. This study focused on Guilin as the research subject, so the sample collected only consisted of tourists arriving in Guilin. Additionally, different tourist groups may have varying perceptions of food tourism destinations, and expanding the sample to include international tourists could enhance the study's comprehensiveness. Diversifying the types of surveys, such as categorizing respondents as first-time visitors or repeat visitors, would provide a deeper understanding of food destination development, and potentially assist destinations in improving certain aspects of their products or services to appeal to specific tourist groups. This could enhance practical significance, particularly for destination marketing organizations. Future research could expand research tools and test them on larger populations. Conducting studies in different destinations to validate research findings and facilitate the generalization of results is also recommended.

There may be room to introduce additional research variables, and the results of this study should inspire other scholars to further explore food tourism destinations. This study mainly focused on the CSFs of food tourism destinations, with all variables selected based on a literature review, hence there may be other attributes that were not tested. Considering the limitations identified in this study, researchers suggest expanding this work in the future. Incorporating different variables (such as socio-demographic characteristics) into the proposed destination image model to broaden the scope of research. Collecting additional food tourism destination-related factors not included in this study. Additionally, investigating the impact of socio-demographic or visitor personal factors to increase this study's contribution to the literature. Future research could focus on other aspects, such as the influence of international tourists'

visits on the development of food tourism destinations, or the regulatory role of government and stakeholders' funding in destination development.

While this study conducted in-depth research on both the supply and demand sides, it was limited to analyzing the more comprehensive data obtained. Detailed comparisons were not made on the differences between the supply and demand sides in certain factors. In the future, incorporating advanced models from interdisciplinary fields and employing different analytical methods will be beneficial. For example, introducing mechanisms for digital city construction and analyzing the framework formed by multidimensional factors using methods such as machine learning or artificial intelligence to conduct detailed comparative studies on the obtained data. This would further enhance the scientific rigor and feasibility of this study.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

This study utilized multiple regression analysis to explore the impact of different VIs on the success of a food tourism destination, echoing Ritchie and Crouch's (2000) compelling theoretical argument that the overall success of a destination is determined by multiple variables. Their argument emphasizes the critical role of diversity in understanding and evaluating the success of tourism destinations, consistent with the findings of this research, which identified government support, stakeholder involvement, destination image, visitor experience, destination marketing, and core food products as CSFs in the success of a food tourism destination. On this basis, the study further identifies factors that are closely linked to natural and social resources and distinguishes the degree of influence of different dimensions. A framework for the CSFs of a food tourism destination has been developed, based on 22 factors across six dimensions representing the destination's natural, social, and cultural resources. While

there are differences in the results from the supply and demand sides, the overall data indicates that all six hypothesized dimensions positively influence the development of a food tourism destination.

**Destination marketing** was found to be the variable with the greatest impact on destination success in this study. Respondents generally agreed that destination marketing activities, high-quality services, and social media publicity are crucial in promoting the success of a food tourism destination, influencing tourists' choices. Effective marketing strategies not only enhance the destination's reputation but also strengthen the emotional connection between tourists and the destination.

**Visitor experience** has a decisive influence, and its importance has been mentioned in many studies. Food safety and hygiene, taste/sensory experience, authenticity, and value are determinative elements of the visitor experience. The research reveals that a high-quality visitor experience translates directly into the destination's reputation and repeat visitation rates. This finding aligns with Lockett et al.'s (2000) argument that tourists' perceptions and experiences are decisive factors in their choice of destination.

**Destination image** plays a pivotal role and encompasses various factors, including the geographical environment, food quality, food culture, specialty restaurants, and traditional festivals. This aligns with the findings suggested by Tellström et al. (2006), emphasizing the significance of destination image in their study concerning the impact of local and regional food images on consumers. The combination of natural resources, cultural assets, and distinctive festivals contributes to shaping the destination's image, and this study validates that these elements substantially enhance the destination's

success rate. Furthermore, food culture and quality are regarded as fundamental elements in shaping attractiveness and sustaining tourist interest.

**Stakeholder involvement** has a significant promotional effect on the success of food tourism. Stakeholders include not only businesses and organizations closely related to the catering and tourism industries but also public participation, which can have an important impact, even exceeding community involvement. The success of a food tourism destination cannot be separated from the diversified perspectives and experiences of stakeholders, aligning with the holistic rather than isolated management perspective advocated by Ellis et al. (2018).

**Core food products** play a key role in enhancing the attractiveness of food tourism destinations. Moreover, this study finds that foods listed as intangible cultural heritage are the most popular. Core food products not only provide unique features for food tourism destinations but also deepen visitors' understanding and appreciation of the destination's culture. This echoes the viewpoint of Anton Martin et al. (2021), who regard core food products as having significant symbolic value and the ability to represent and express local culture and identity.

**Government support** significantly enhances the destination's attractiveness and competitiveness. Respondents express a strong belief in the significance of policymaking and leadership involvement for the development of Guilin as a food tourism destination. There is a clear expectation among respondents regarding the role of government support in policy guidance, leadership involvement, and provision of human resources, which are seen as crucial factors for the success of a food tourism destination. Evidence suggests that when the government actively engages in the

planning and promotion of food tourism, it significantly enhances the destination's image.

These factors are closely linked to the destination's natural, social, and cultural resources. The study's results confirm that government support, stakeholder involvement, destination image, visitor experience, destination marketing, and core food products are the six critical factors for the success of a food tourism destination. The proposed framework highlights the importance of each dimension in empirical research conducted in Guilin. These findings contribute to the development of food tourism destinations in Southeast Asia, enrich the existing body of knowledge, offer managerial implications, and provide a foundation for future research. The study's findings not only support theory but also inform the development of strategies aimed at enhancing the attractiveness and success of food tourism destinations. Specific strategies and implementation suggestions for each CSF will have a significant impact on the long-term development of food tourism destinations.



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## **APPENDICES**

### **APPENDIX A Outline of Expert Interviews**

#### 1. Basic information

1). Date of the interview:

2). Interview subjects:

a. Interviewee:

b. Age:

c. Gender:

d. Position held:

e. Years of involvement in the company:

f. Professional competence:

#### 2. Natural, social and cultural resources for food and tourism product development

1) What natural, social and cultural resources can be used for food and tourism product development?

2) In Guilin, what natural, social and cultural resources are closely related to the gastronomic tourism product?

#### 3. Opinions on the critical success factors for food tourism destinations

1). What do you think should be included in the development of a food tourism destination?

2). What is the role of the government in the development of a food tourism destination?  
What support should be provided?

3). What do you think the stakeholders in developing a food tourism destination should include? What is their role?

4). What factors should be included in a food tourism destination in terms of enhancing the visitor experience?

5). What aspects should be included in the image management of a food tourism destination?

6). What should be done in destination marketing for food tourism destinations?

7). What is the relationship between Guilin's core food products and the promotion of food tourism destinations?

4. The success of food tourism destinations

1). What are the elements that should be included in the success of a food tourism destination from the perspective of the supply side and demand side respectively?

2). To what extent can the above elements be called successful?



## APPENDIX B Expert Measurements of Dimension Suitability

Assessment notes.

1. The preliminary draft of this scale construct invited experts and scholars to evaluate the key, based on the evaluation results convergence, and will develop the questionnaire.

2. The purpose of this scale is to measure the critical success factors of family businesses in China. An attempt was made to explore and analyze the critical success factors of food tourism destinations from six dimensions.

3. Please fill in the following format when evaluating.

(1) Evaluation form for measuring the suitability of the dimensions

Please evaluate the suitability of each surface one by one, whether it is suitable for the Dimension. If you think it is suitable, please mark “✓” under the “suitable” column; if not, please mark “✓” under the “unsuitable” column. “✓” and so on. If you think that the name of a structure needs to be revised or other structures need to be added, please prompt and fill out the name of the structure in the comments.

|                         | Suitability of Dimensions |          |            |                 |         |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|----------|------------|-----------------|---------|
|                         | Perfect                   | Suitable | Unsuitable | Very unsuitable | Deleted |
| Government support      | 5                         | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Stakeholder involvement | 5                         | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Destination image       | 5                         | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Visitor experience      | 5                         | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Destination marketing   | 5                         | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Comments                |                           |          |            |                 |         |

(2) Evaluation table for measuring the suitability of each construct.

Please evaluate the option pointer of each facet one by one, whether it is suitable to belong to the facet. If you think it is suitable to belong to the facet, please cross “✓” under the “Suitable” column. If not, please cross “✓” under the “Not suitable. If not, please underline “✓” in the “Not suitable” column. If you think it should be moved to another section, please indicate and mark it in the Comments.

| Government support     | Suitability of the factors |          |            |                 |         |
|------------------------|----------------------------|----------|------------|-----------------|---------|
|                        | Perfect                    | Suitable | Unsuitable | Very unsuitable | Deleted |
| Policy guidance        | 5                          | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Leadership involvement | 5                          | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Human Resources        | 5                          | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Comments               |                            |          |            |                 |         |

| <b>Stakeholder involvement</b> | <b>Suitability of the factors</b> |          |            |                 |         |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------|------------|-----------------|---------|
|                                | Perfect                           | Suitable | Unsuitable | Very unsuitable | Deleted |
| Associations                   | 5                                 | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Community                      | 5                                 | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Companies/Business             | 5                                 | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Unions / Groups                | 5                                 | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Public                         | 5                                 | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Comments                       |                                   |          |            |                 |         |

| <b>Destination Image</b> | <b>Suitability of factors</b> |          |            |                 |         |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|----------|------------|-----------------|---------|
|                          | Perfect                       | Suitable | Unsuitable | Very unsuitable | Deleted |
| Geographical context     | 5                             | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Food culture             | 5                             | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Food Quality             | 5                             | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Speciality Restaurants   | 5                             | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Festivals                | 5                             | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Comments                 |                               |          |            |                 |         |

| <b>Visitor experience</b> | <b>Suitability of factors</b> |          |            |                 |         |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|----------|------------|-----------------|---------|
|                           | Perfect                       | Suitable | Unsuitable | Very unsuitable | Deleted |
| Safety and hygiene        | 5                             | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| The Taste of Food         | 5                             | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Authentic ingredients     | 5                             | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Value /Price              | 5                             | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Comments                  |                               |          |            |                 |         |



| <b>Destination marketing</b> | <b>Suitability of factors</b> |          |            |                 |         |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------|------------|-----------------|---------|
|                              | Perfect                       | Suitable | Unsuitable | Very unsuitable | Deleted |
| Activities                   | 5                             | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Services                     | 5                             | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Social Media                 | 5                             | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Comments                     |                               |          |            |                 |         |

(3) Suitability evaluation table for measuring the success criteria of food tourism destinations

Please evaluate each option indicator of each dimension one by one, whether it is suitable to be included in the dimension. If not, please underline “✓” in the “Unsuitable” column and so on. If you think the language should be moved or modified, please indicate and mark in the Comments.

| <b>Tourism Destination Success Indicators</b>   | <b>Suitability of indicators</b> |          |            |                 |         |
|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------|------------|-----------------|---------|
|                                                 | Perfect                          | Suitable | Unsuitable | Very unsuitable | Deleted |
| Visitor satisfaction                            | 5                                | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| The willingness of visitors to re-visit         | 5                                | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Creating economic benefits                      | 5                                | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Enhance the competitiveness of the destination. | 5                                | 4        | 3          | 2               | 1       |
| Comments                                        |                                  |          |            |                 |         |

## **APPENDIX C Survey Questionnaire**

### **Questionnaire on Critical Success Factors for the Development of a Food Tourism Destination in Guilin**

Dear Participants:

This questionnaire was developed and distributed to meet the research requirements for a PhD thesis. The main idea of this study was to investigate tourists' attitudes towards the development of Guilin as a food tourism destination by examining their satisfaction and experiences during their visit to Guilin, China, and from the perspective of local food suppliers in Guilin. The key themes of these questions relate to food-related contexts, and the researcher needs to know what you consider to be the critical factors regarding the development of a food tourism destination. This questionnaire is divided into 6 sections, except for the first section, which deals with your personal information. The main survey section that follows needs to know your attitude about the topic, which is divided into 5 levels, from strongest agreement to strong opposition. You only need to tick “✓” in the corresponding box.

All answers will be generated by computer (data analysis) to determine the results and subsequently provide empirical evidence for this study through the conceptualization of findings based on the results of this questionnaire. Your participation is greatly appreciated. All your personal information will be stored securely and kept strictly confidential. Your answers will be recorded anonymously and cannot be attributed.

I agree to participate in this study ☐

Thank you for your participation!

## **Part I: Participant Information**

### **1. Your age.**

Under 18 years old ( ) 19-29 years old ( ) 30-45 years old ( ) 45-60 years old ( )

60 years old or above ( )

### **2. Your occupation.**

Civil servant ( ) Military ( ) Teacher ( ) Farmer ( ) Worker ( )

Service industry workers ( ) business managers ( ) students ( ) retired ( )

Please check this box if you are engaged in work related to the food industry ( )

### **3. Which of the following types of tourism activities do you prefer to participate in (multiple choice)?**

Leisure and recreation tourism ( ) Touring natural scenery ( )

Touring scenic spots ( ) Conference and leisure tourism ( )

food tourism ( ) study tourism ( ) Cultural and festive tourism ( )

### **4. How much of your travel budget would you spend on food and drink?**

About one-third ( ) About one-fourth ( ) About one-fifth ( )

### **5. The reason why you repeatedly choose the same destination is (you can choose more than one)**

The attraction of local natural and humanistic scenery ( ) The attraction of local festivals and events ( )

The attraction of local food ( ) The attraction of local tourist facilities ( )

Local considerate and detailed tourism services ( ) Local tourism consumption is cost-effective ( )

Good local shopping environment ( ) Local transportation facilities are favourable ( )

**6. What do you think is the most attractive part of Guilin?**

Natural scenery ( ) Famous monuments ( ) Delicious food ( ) Ethnic culture ( )

Friendly residents ( ) Reasonable tourist spending ( ) Good shopping environment ( )

**7. Do you know the specialties of Guilin?**

Very well known ( ) know ( ) generally known ( ) not very well known ( ) not at all known ( )



## Part II Critical Success Factors for a Food Tourism Destination – Government Support

| No.                                              | Questions                                                          | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| In the development of food tourism destinations, |                                                                    |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 8                                                | Government policy support is necessary                             |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 9                                                | Government leaders' involvement will bring a positive contribution |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 10                                               | Human resource security is important                               |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 11                                               | Government funding support is important                            |                |       |         |          |                   |
| In the process of promoting Guilin's cuisine,    |                                                                    |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 12                                               | Guilin government has given appropriate policy support             |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 13                                               | Guilin government leaders play an active role                      |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 14                                               | Guilin government provides for the catering talent pool            |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 15                                               | Guilin government gave adequate financial support                  |                |       |         |          |                   |



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### Part III Critical Success Factors for a Food Tourism Destination – Stakeholder Involvement

| No                                                | Questions                                                                            | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| In the development of a food tourism destination, |                                                                                      |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 16                                                | The involvement of industry associations is important                                |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 17                                                | Community involvement is important                                                   |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 18                                                | Travel company involvement is important                                              |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 19                                                | Participation of restaurant operators is important                                   |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 20                                                | Involvement of civil society organizations is necessary                              |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 21                                                | Involvement of educational groups and coalitions is important                        |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 22                                                | Public and local resident involvement is important                                   |                |       |         |          |                   |
| In the process of promoting Guilin's cuisine,     |                                                                                      |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 23                                                | Guilin's industry associations promote the promotion of Guilin cuisine               |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 24                                                | Guilin's tourism Community play a leading role in food tourism                       |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 25                                                | Guilin's restaurant operators play a major role in the promotion of Guilin's cuisine |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 26                                                | Guilin's citizens play an important role in Guilin's food promotion                  |                |       |         |          |                   |

#### Part IV Critical Success Factors for a Food Tourism Destination – Destination Image

| No                                                                         | Questions                                                        | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| In the development of a food tourism destination,                          |                                                                  |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 27                                                                         | Geography is important                                           |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 28                                                                         | Food culture is important                                        |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 29                                                                         | Specialty restaurants contribute to the image of the destination |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 30                                                                         | Festivals contribute to the destination image                    |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 31                                                                         | High-quality food reflects well on the destination image         |                |       |         |          |                   |
| Guilin's image as a food tourism destination has the following advantages. |                                                                  |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 32                                                                         | Beautiful geographical environment                               |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 33                                                                         | Unique food culture                                              |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 34                                                                         | Ethnic characteristics of the festival                           |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 35                                                                         | Numerous high-quality cuisines                                   |                |       |         |          |                   |



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## Part V Critical Success Factors for a Food Tourism Destination – Visitor Experience

| No.                                                                                       | Questions                               | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| A tourist's food experience in a tourist destination is related to the following factors. |                                         |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 36                                                                                        | Food Safety and Health                  |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 37                                                                                        | Taste of food                           |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 38                                                                                        | Authenticity of ingredients             |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 39                                                                                        | Price of the food                       |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 40                                                                                        | Local consumption level                 |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 41                                                                                        | Many specialties                        |                |       |         |          |                   |
| Guilin's food are                                                                         |                                         |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 42                                                                                        | Safe, hygienic and good for your health |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 43                                                                                        | Taste good                              |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 44                                                                                        | Authentic ingredients                   |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 45                                                                                        | Moderate price                          |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 46                                                                                        | Wide variety and special features       |                |       |         |          |                   |



## Part VI Critical Success Factors for a Food Tourism Destination – Destination Marketing

| No                                                                      | Questions                                      | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| Food tourism destination marketing is related to the following factors. |                                                |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 47                                                                      | Special events can boost destination marketing |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 48                                                                      | Service quality affects destination marketing  |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 49                                                                      | Application of social media tools is necessary |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 50                                                                      | Well-equipped food outlets                     |                |       |         |          |                   |
| You are visiting Guilin because                                         |                                                |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 51                                                                      | Influenced by social media                     |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 52                                                                      | Enjoying comfortable travel services           |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 53                                                                      | Influenced by special festivals and events     |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 54                                                                      | Influenced by local food                       |                |       |         |          |                   |



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**Part VII Critical Success Factors for a Food Tourism Destination – Your Interest in Guilin’s Core Food Products**

| No                                       | Questions                                                   | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| Your interest in Guilin’s iconic cuisine |                                                             |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 55                                       | Favorite Local Traditional Foods - Guilin Rice Noodles      |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 56                                       | Intangible Cultural Heritage Listed Foods – Oil Tea         |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 57                                       | Local Foods with Authentic Ingredients - Taro Sandwich Pork |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 58                                       | Most Popular Foods in the Self-media – Beer Fish            |                |       |         |          |                   |

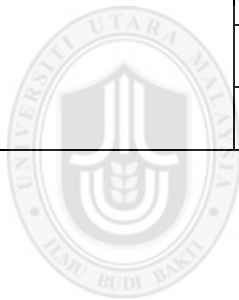
**Part VIII Successful Food Tourism Destination**

| No.                                                                         | Questions                                     | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| What do you think are the factors of a successful food tourism destination? |                                               |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 59                                                                          | Meeting the needs of visitors                 |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 60                                                                          | Visitors have a desire to repeat their visit  |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 61                                                                          | Length of stay of tourists at the destination |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 62                                                                          | Local economic benefits are enhanced          |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 63                                                                          | Increased well-being of residents             |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 64                                                                          | Increased competitiveness of the destination  |                |       |         |          |                   |
| To taste Guilin’s iconic cuisine the destination you will                   |                                               |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 65                                                                          | Visit Guilin again                            |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 66                                                                          | Increase spending                             |                |       |         |          |                   |
| 67                                                                          | Extend travel time                            |                |       |         |          |                   |

## APPENDIX D Descriptive Statistics for Variables (Pilot study)

### Critical Success Factors for a Food Tourism Destination – Government Support

| IV                                                                                        | N<br>o. | Questions                                                          | Mean | standard<br>deviation | variance<br>(statistics) |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Government support</b><br>Policy guidance<br>Leadership involvement<br>Human resources |         | In the development of food tourism destinations,                   |      |                       |                          |
|                                                                                           | 8       | Government policy support is necessary                             | 4.13 | 1.042                 | 1.042                    |
|                                                                                           | 9       | Government leaders' involvement will bring a positive contribution | 3.93 | 0.971                 | 0.971                    |
|                                                                                           | 10      | Human resource security is important                               | 3.93 | 1.118                 | 1.118                    |
|                                                                                           | 11      | Government funding support is important                            | 4.18 | 0.931                 | 0.866                    |
|                                                                                           |         | In the process of promoting Guilin's cuisine,                      |      |                       |                          |
|                                                                                           | 12      | Guilin government has given appropriate policy support             | 3.98 | 1.097                 | 1.204                    |
|                                                                                           | 13      | Guilin government leaders play an active role                      | 3.93 | 1.047                 | 1.097                    |
|                                                                                           | 14      | Guilin government provides for the catering talent pool            | 3.78 | 1.050                 | 1.102                    |
|                                                                                           | 15      | Guilin government gave adequate financial support                  | 3.88 | 1.067                 | 1.138                    |



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### Critical Success Factors for a Food Tourism Destination – Stakeholder Involvement

| IV                                                                                                          | No.                                               | Questions                                                                            | Mean | standard deviation | variance (statistics) |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Stakeholder involvement</b><br>Associations<br>Community<br>Companies/Business<br>Union/Groups<br>Public | In the development of a food tourism destination, |                                                                                      |      |                    |                       |
|                                                                                                             | 16                                                | Involvement of industry associations is important                                    | 3.83 | 1.196              | 1.430                 |
|                                                                                                             | 17                                                | Community involvement is important                                                   | 3.73 | 0.987              | 0.974                 |
|                                                                                                             | 18                                                | Travel company involvement is important                                              | 3.60 | 1.081              | 1.169                 |
|                                                                                                             | 19                                                | Participation of restaurant operators is important                                   | 3.73 | 1.176              | 1.384                 |
|                                                                                                             | 20                                                | Involvement of civil society organizations is necessary                              | 3.75 | 1.127              | 1.269                 |
|                                                                                                             | 21                                                | Involvement of educational groups and coalitions is important                        | 3.55 | 1.218              | 1.485                 |
|                                                                                                             | 22                                                | Public and local resident involvement is important                                   | 3.75 | 1.127              | 1.269                 |
|                                                                                                             | In the process of promoting Guilin's cuisine,     |                                                                                      |      |                    |                       |
|                                                                                                             | 23                                                | Guilin's industry associations promote the promotion of Guilin cuisine               | 3.83 | 1.152              | 1.328                 |
|                                                                                                             | 24                                                | Guilin's tourism Community play a leading role in food tourism                       | 4.00 | 0.961              | 0.923                 |
|                                                                                                             | 25                                                | Guilin's restaurant operators play a major role in the promotion of Guilin's cuisine | 4.00 | 1.132              | 1.282                 |
|                                                                                                             | 26                                                | Guilin's citizens play an important role in Guilin's food promotion                  | 3.78 | 1.121              | 1.256                 |

### Critical Success Factors for a Food Tourism Destination – Destination Image

| IV                                                                                                                       | No.                                                                        | Questions                                                        | Mean | standard deviation | variance (statistics) |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Destination image</b><br>Geographical/Environment<br>Food culture<br>Food quality<br>Special restaurants<br>Festivals | In the development of a food tourism destination,                          |                                                                  |      |                    |                       |
|                                                                                                                          | 27                                                                         | Geography is important                                           | 4.00 | 1.038              | 1.077                 |
|                                                                                                                          | 28                                                                         | Food culture is important                                        | 3.83 | 1.083              | 1.174                 |
|                                                                                                                          | 29                                                                         | Specialty restaurants contribute to the image of the destination | 3.80 | 1.265              | 1.600                 |
|                                                                                                                          | 30                                                                         | Festivals contribute to the destination image                    | 3.73 | 1.240              | 1.538                 |
|                                                                                                                          | 31                                                                         | High-quality food reflects well on the destination image         | 3.75 | 1.149              | 1.321                 |
|                                                                                                                          | Guilin's image as a food tourism destination has the following advantages. |                                                                  |      |                    |                       |
|                                                                                                                          | 32                                                                         | Beautiful geographical environment                               | 4.03 | 1.000              | 0.999                 |
|                                                                                                                          | 33                                                                         | Unique food culture                                              | 3.93 | 1.185              | 1.404                 |
|                                                                                                                          | 34                                                                         | Ethnic characteristics of the festival                           | 3.85 | 1.145              | 1.310                 |
|                                                                                                                          | 35                                                                         | Numerous high-quality cuisines                                   | 3.85 | 1.145              | 1.310                 |



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### Critical Success Factors for a Food Tourism Destination – Visitor Experience

| IV                                                                                                                      | No.                                                                                       | Questions                               | Mean | standard deviation | variance (statistics) |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Visitor experience</b><br>Food safety and hygiene<br>The taste/sensory of food<br>Food authentic (NR)<br>Value/Price | A tourist's food experience in a tourist destination is related to the following factors. |                                         |      |                    |                       |
|                                                                                                                         | 36                                                                                        | Food Safety and Health                  | 3.83 | 1.107              | 1.225                 |
|                                                                                                                         | 37                                                                                        | Taste of food                           | 3.95 | 1.037              | 1.074                 |
|                                                                                                                         | 38                                                                                        | Authenticity of ingredients             | 3.83 | 1.107              | 1.225                 |
|                                                                                                                         | 39                                                                                        | Price of the food                       | 3.90 | 1.172              | 1.374                 |
|                                                                                                                         | 40                                                                                        | Local consumption level                 | 3.90 | 1.081              | 1.169                 |
|                                                                                                                         | 41                                                                                        | Many specialties                        | 4.03 | 1.121              | 1.256                 |
|                                                                                                                         | Guilin's food are                                                                         |                                         |      |                    |                       |
|                                                                                                                         | 42                                                                                        | Safe, hygienic and good for your health | 3.85 | 1.027              | 1.054                 |
|                                                                                                                         | 43                                                                                        | Taste good                              | 3.95 | 1.108              | 1.228                 |
|                                                                                                                         | 44                                                                                        | Authentic ingredients                   | 3.90 | 1.105              | 1.221                 |
|                                                                                                                         | 45                                                                                        | Moderate price                          | 4.03 | 1.097              | 1.204                 |
|                                                                                                                         | 46                                                                                        | Wide variety and special features       | 3.93 | 1.023              | 1.046                 |



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### Critical Success Factors for a Food Tourism Destination – Destination Marketing

| IV                                                                                            | No.                                                                     | Questions                                      | Mean | Std. deviation | variance (statistics) |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|------|----------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Destination marketing</b><br>Marketing activities<br>Services<br>Information /social media | Food tourism destination marketing is related to the following factors. |                                                |      |                |                       |
|                                                                                               | 47                                                                      | Special events can boost destination marketing | 3.93 | 1.071          | 1.148                 |
|                                                                                               | 48                                                                      | Service quality affects destination marketing  | 4.08 | 1.023          | 1.046                 |
|                                                                                               | 49                                                                      | Application of social media tools is necessary | 4.00 | 1.086          | 1.179                 |
|                                                                                               | 50                                                                      | Well-equipped food outlets                     | 3.93 | 0.944          | 0.892                 |
|                                                                                               | You are visiting Guilin because                                         |                                                |      |                |                       |
|                                                                                               | 51                                                                      | Influenced by social media                     | 4.05 | 0.932          | 0.869                 |
|                                                                                               | 52                                                                      | Enjoying comfortable travel services           | 3.90 | 0.928          | 0.862                 |
|                                                                                               | 53                                                                      | Influenced by special festivals and events     | 3.88 | 0.966          | 0.933                 |
|                                                                                               | 54                                                                      | Influenced by local food                       | 4.10 | 0.928          | 0.862                 |

### Critical Success Factors for a Food Tourism Destination – Your Interest in Guilin's Core Food Products

| IV                                                            | No.                                      | Questions                                                   | Mean | standard deviation | variance (statistics) |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Core food products</b><br>ICH food products<br>Iconic Food | Your interest in Guilin's iconic cuisine |                                                             |      |                    |                       |
|                                                               | 55                                       | Favourite Local Traditional Foods - Guilin Rice Noodles     | 4.10 | 1.163              | 1.353                 |
|                                                               | 56                                       | Intangible Cultural Heritage Listed Foods – Oil Tea         | 4.05 | 1.176              | 1.382                 |
|                                                               | 57                                       | Local Foods with Authentic Ingredients - Taro Sandwich Pork | 3.93 | 1.228              | 1.507                 |
|                                                               | 58                                       | Most Popular Foods in the Self-media – Beer Fish            | 3.88 | 1.265              | 1.599                 |

### Successful a Food Tourism Destination

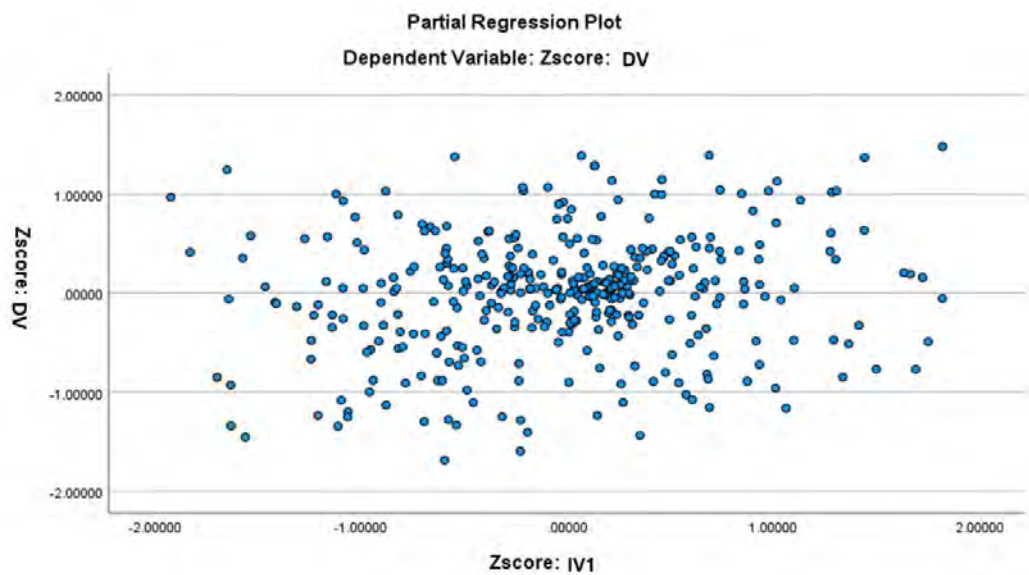
| DV                                       | No.                                                                         | Questions                                     | Mean | standard deviation | variance (statistics) |
|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| The success of food tourism destinations | What do you think are the factors of a successful food tourism destination? |                                               |      |                    |                       |
|                                          | 59                                                                          | Meeting the needs of visitors                 | 3.53 | 1.240              | 1.538                 |
|                                          | 60                                                                          | Visitors have a desire to repeat their visit  | 3.73 | 1.176              | 1.384                 |
|                                          | 61                                                                          | Length of stay of tourists at the destination | 3.78 | 1.221              | 1.666                 |
|                                          | 62                                                                          | Local economic benefits are enhanced          | 3.70 | 1.159              | 1.344                 |
|                                          | 63                                                                          | Increased well-being of residents             | 3.63 | 1.225              | 1.625                 |
|                                          | 64                                                                          | Increased competitiveness of the destination  | 3.70 | 1.043              | 1.087                 |
|                                          | To taste Guilin's iconic cuisine of the destination you will                |                                               |      |                    |                       |
|                                          | 65                                                                          | Visit Guilin again                            | 3.98 | 1.050              | 1.102                 |
|                                          | 66                                                                          | Increase spending                             | 3.68 | 1.185              | 1.404                 |
|                                          | 67                                                                          | Extend travel time                            | 3.80 | 1.114              | 1.241                 |



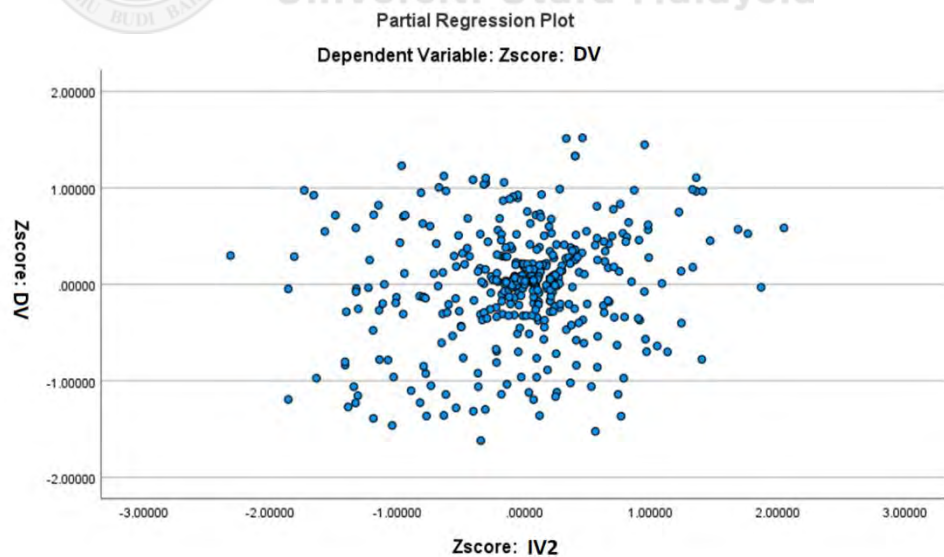
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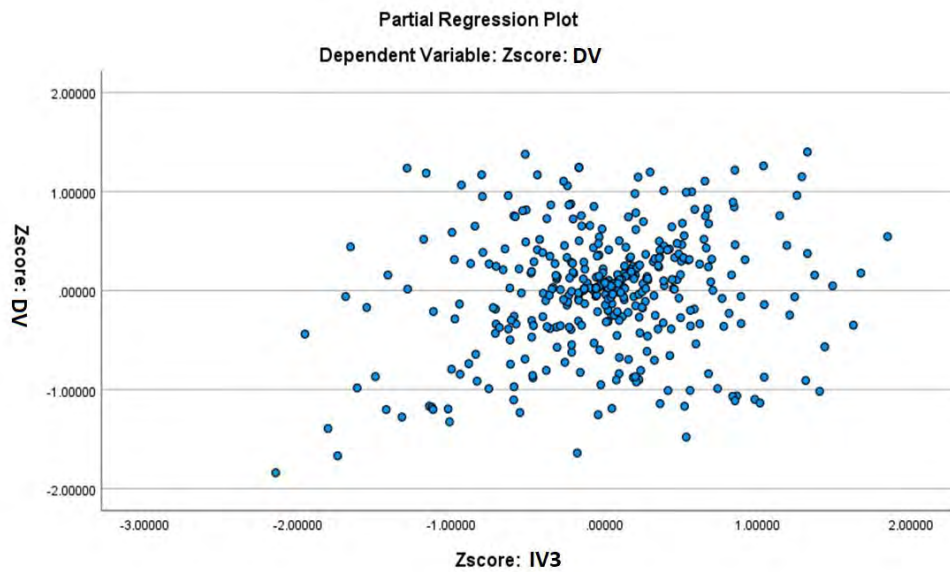
## APPENDIX E Data Analysis-Partial Regression Plots



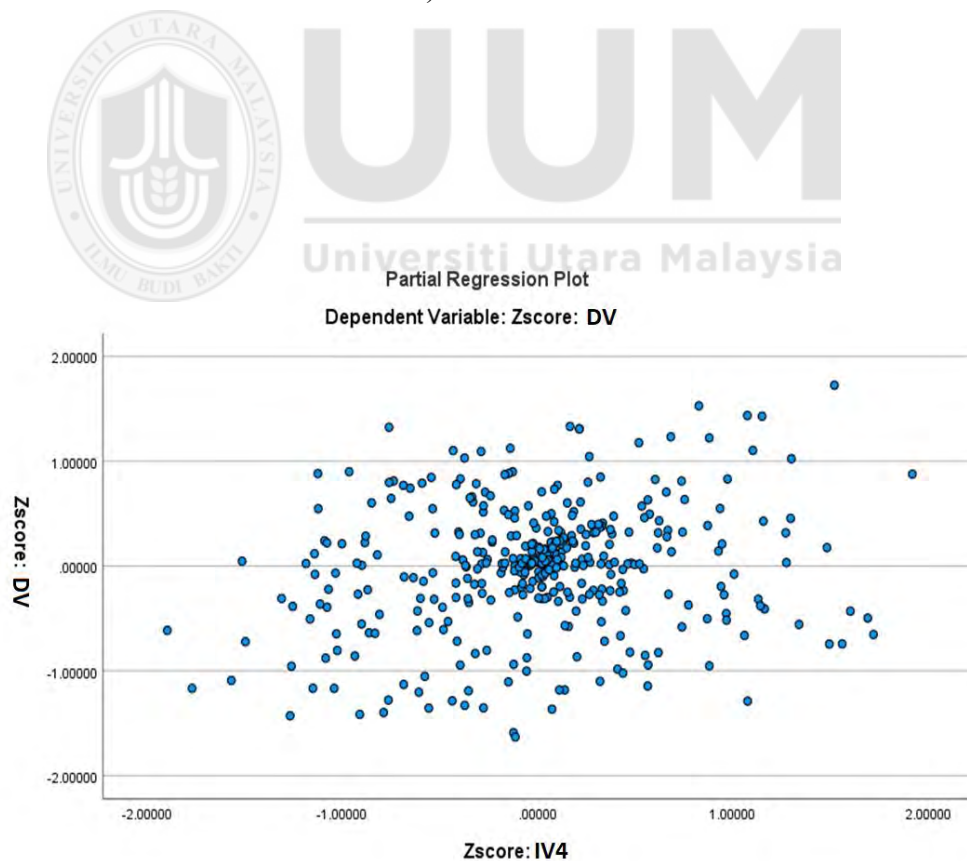
Partial Regression Plot Indicating Linearity in Regression (Government Support Vs. The Success of a Food Tourism Destination)



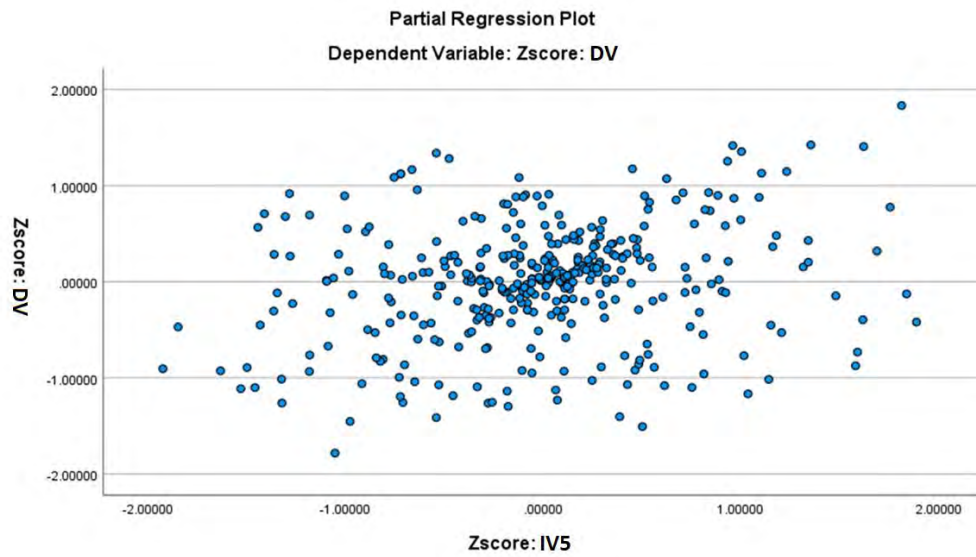
Partial Regression Plot Indicating Linearity in Regression (stakeholder involvement vs. the success of a food tourism destination)



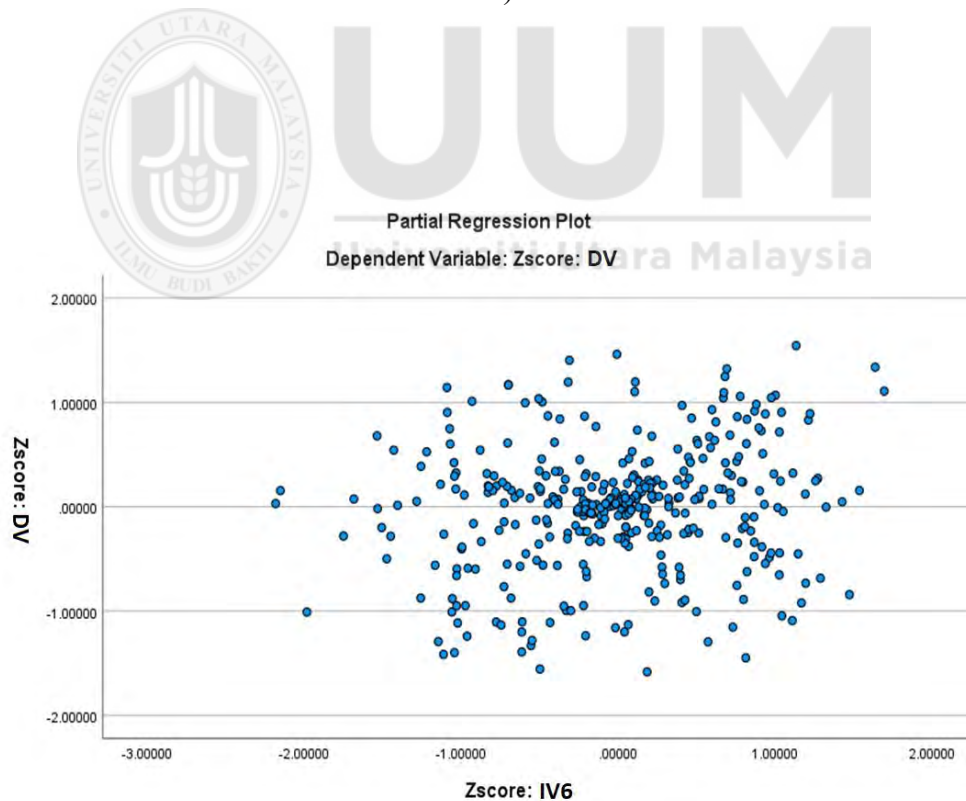
Partial Regression Plot Indicating Linearity in Regression (destination image vs. the success of a food tourism destination)



Partial Regression Plot Indicating Linearity in Regression (visitor experience vs. the success of a food tourism destination)



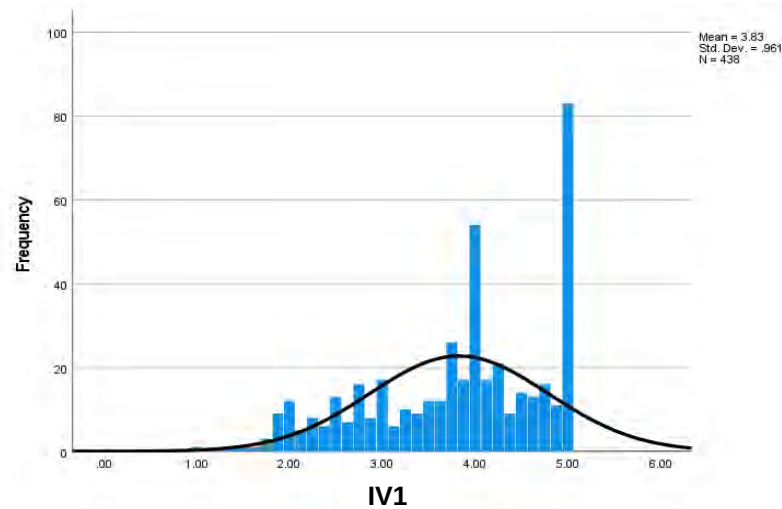
Partial Regression Plot Indicating Linearity in Regression (destination marketing vs. the success of a food tourism destination)



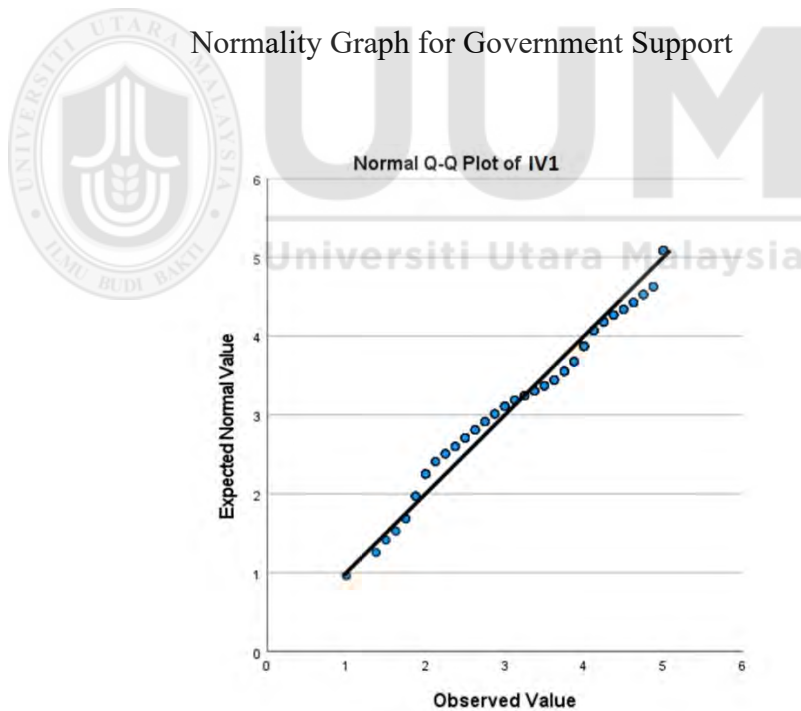
Partial Regression Plot Indicating Linearity in Regression (core food products vs. the success of a food tourism destination)

## APPENDIX F Data Analysis- Normality Graphs and Plots

### Normality Graphs and Plots

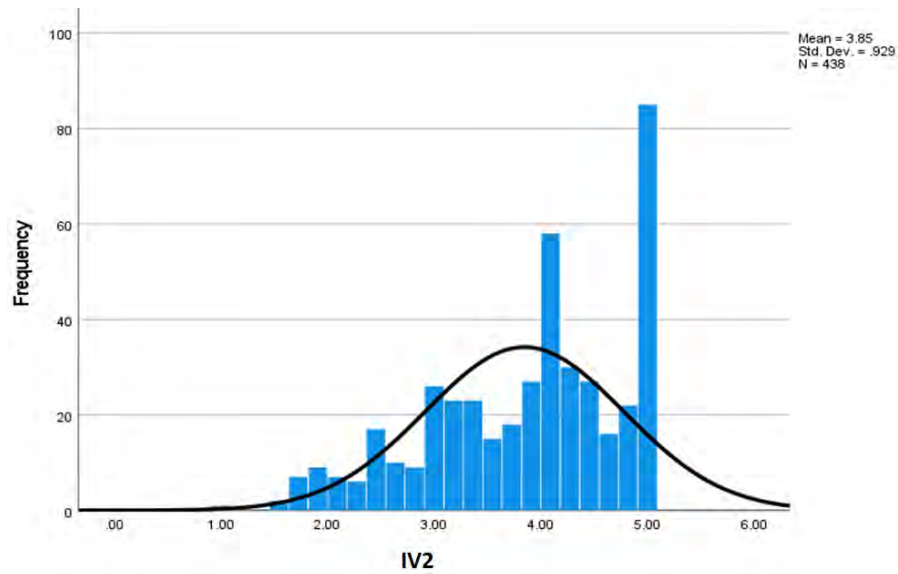


Normality Graph for Government Support

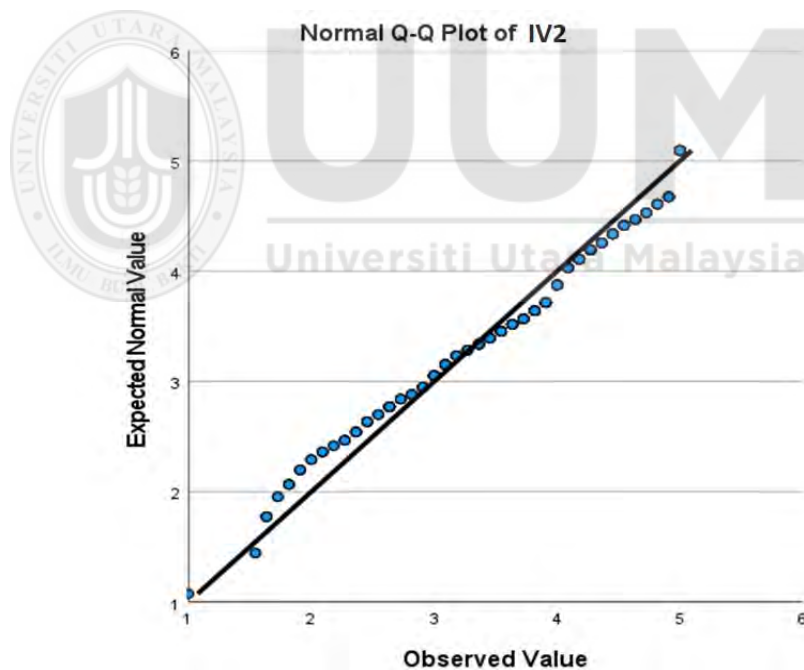


Normal Q-Q Plot Indicating Normality of Observed Variable (government support).

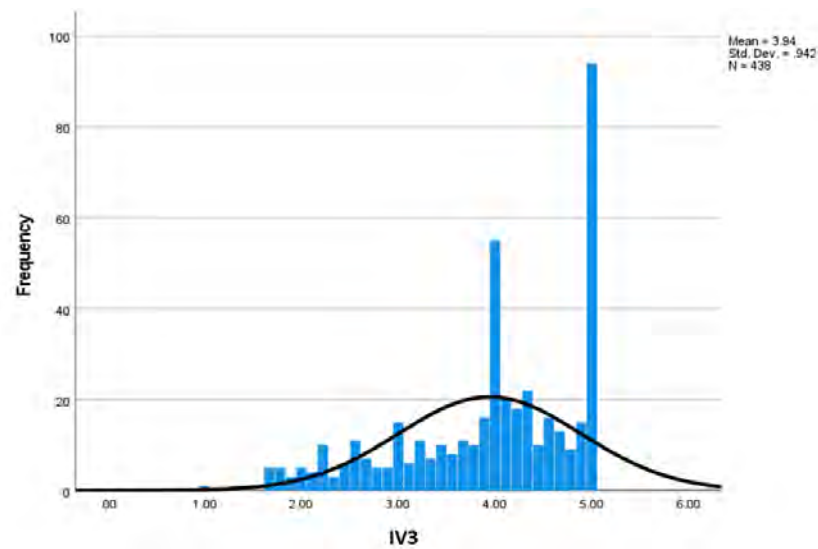
The dots are scattered very close to the straight line indicating the data is normally distributed.



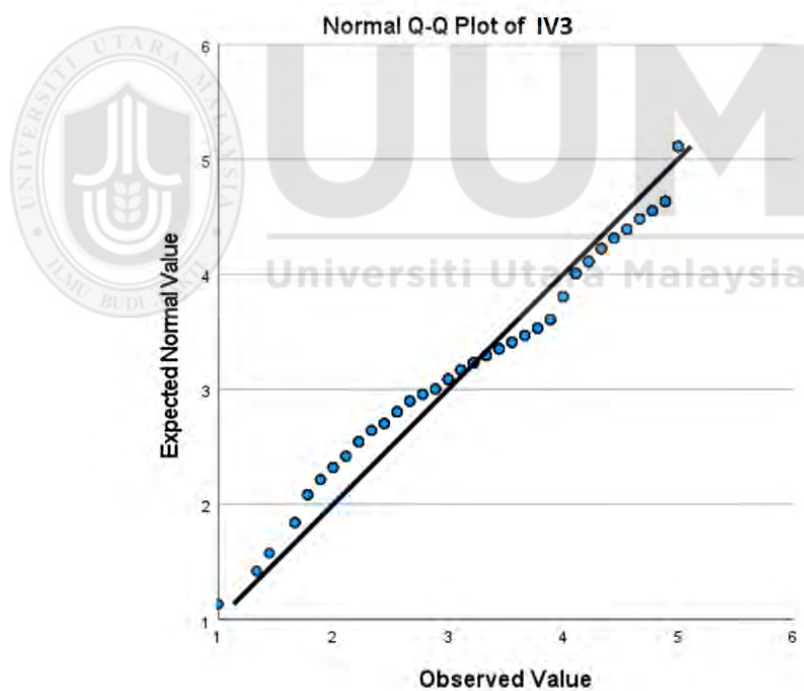
Normality Graph for Stakeholder Involvement



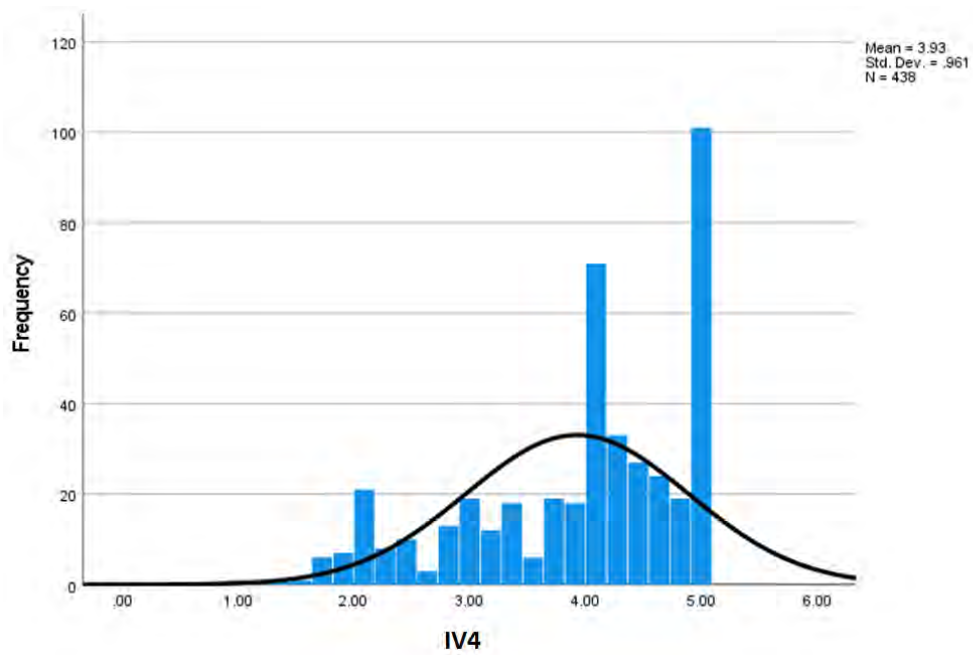
Normal Q-Q Plot Indicating Normality of Observed Variable (Stakeholder involvement). The dots are slightly deviated from the straight line but still within the range of normal distribution.



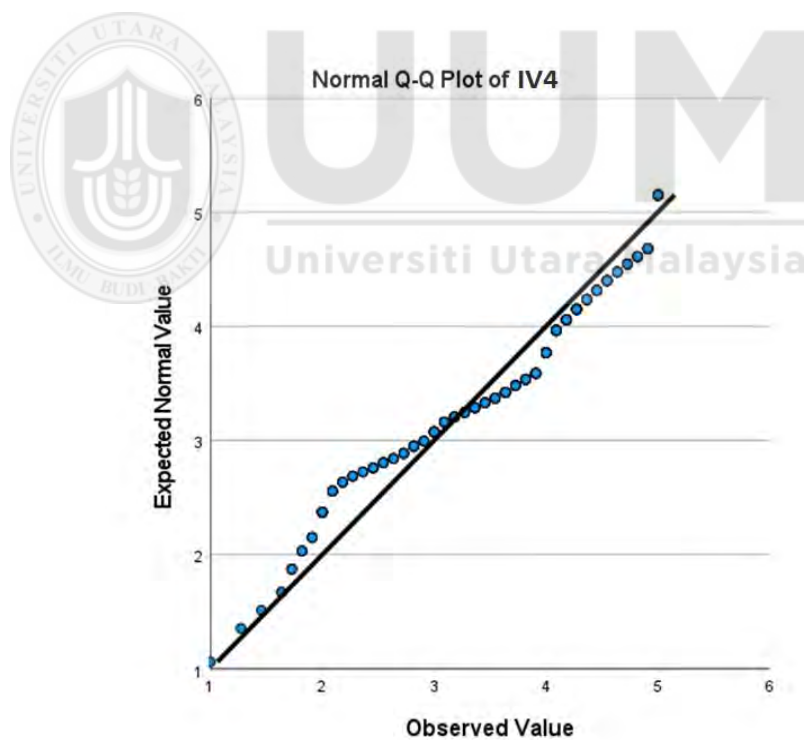
Normality Graph for Perceived Destination Image



Normal Q-Q Plot Indicating Normality of Observed Variable (Destination image). The dots are slightly deviated from the straight line but still within the range of normal distribution.

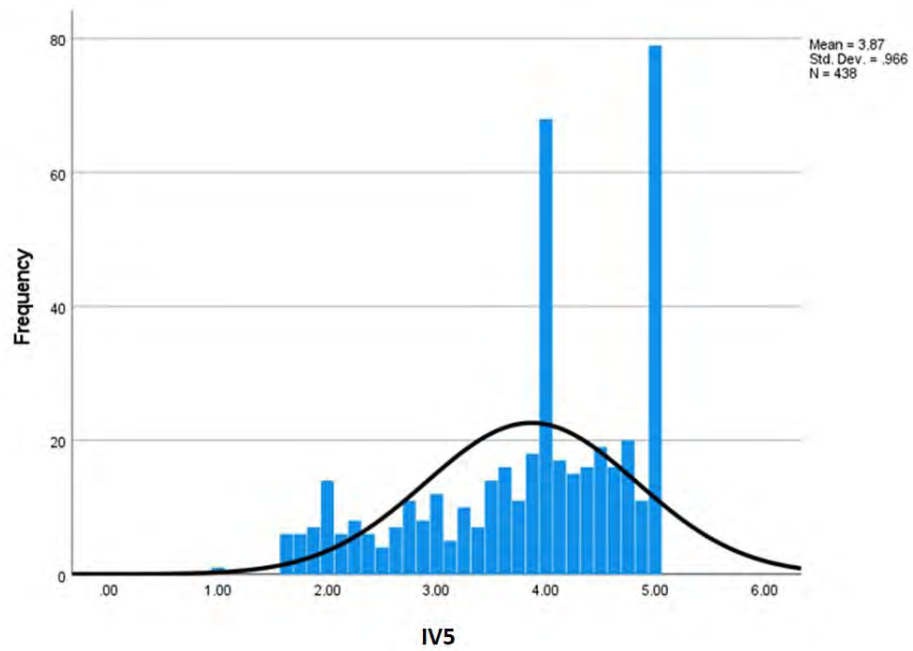


Normality Graph for Visitor Experience

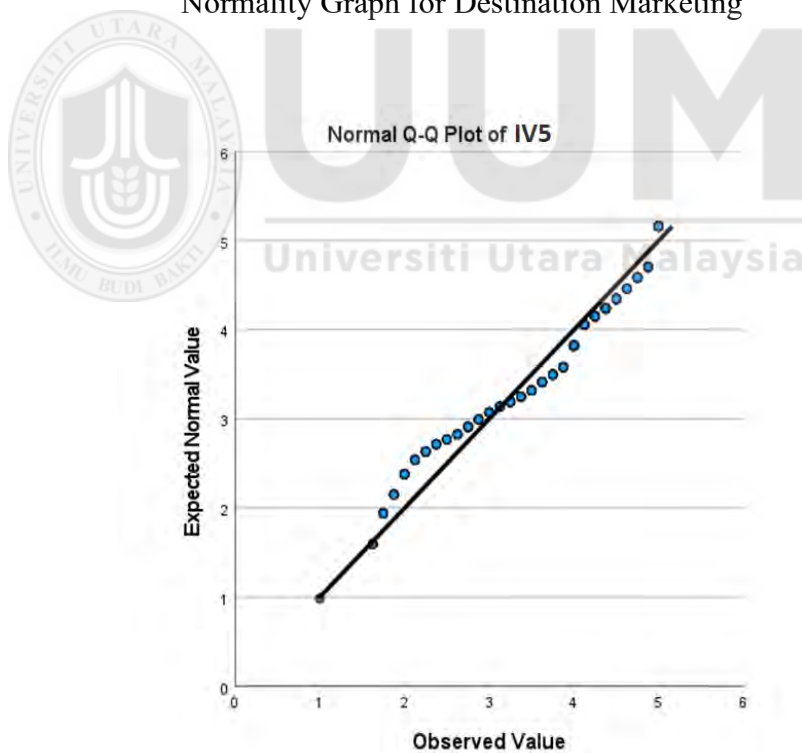


Normal Q-Q Plot Indicating Normality of Observed Variable (Visitor experience). The dots are slightly deviated from the straight line but still within the range of normal distribution.



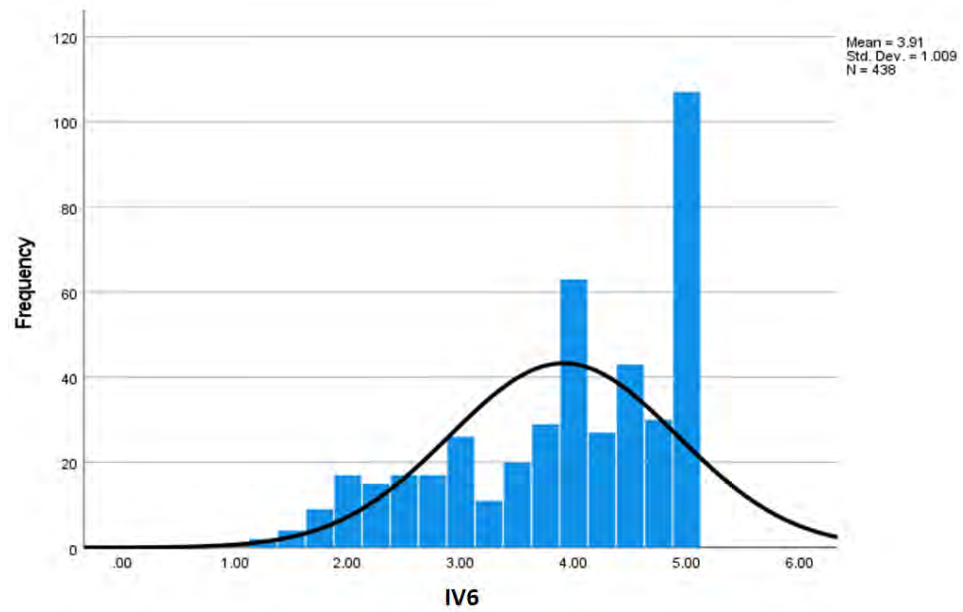


Normality Graph for Destination Marketing

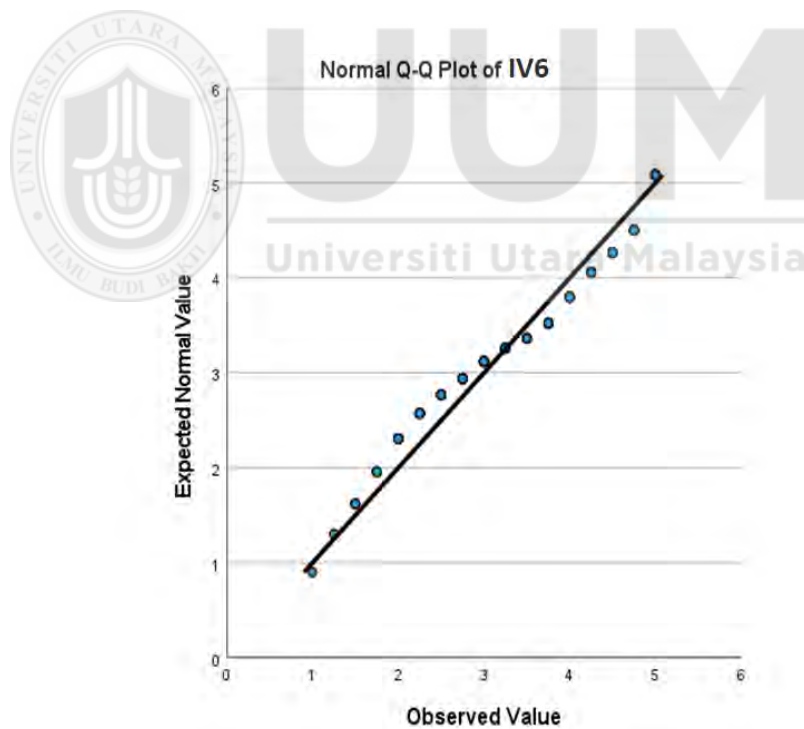


Normal Q-Q Plot Indicating Normality of Observed Variable (destination marketing).  
The dots are slightly deviated from the straight line but still within the range of normal distribution.





Normality Graph for Core Food Products



Normal Q-Q Plot Indicating Normality of Observed Variable (Core food products).

The dots are slightly deviated from the straight line but still within the range of normal distribution.

## APPENDIX G Data Analysis-Item-Total Statistics

| Item-Total Statistics-IV2 |                                                                                      |                            |                                |                                  |                              |                                  |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| No.                       | Items                                                                                | Scale Mean if Item Deleted | Scale Variance if Item Deleted | Corrected Item-Total Correlation | Squared Multiple Correlation | Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted |
| 16                        | The involvement of industry associations is important                                | 23.06                      | 32.825                         | 0.802                            | 0.666                        | 0.939                            |
| 17                        | Community involvement is important                                                   | 23.13                      | 32.202                         | 0.838                            | 0.709                        | 0.936                            |
| 18                        | Travel company involvement is important                                              | 23.08                      | 32.483                         | 0.829                            | 0.692                        | 0.936                            |
| 19                        | Participation of restaurant operators is important                                   | 23.03                      | 32.553                         | 0.823                            | 0.688                        | 0.937                            |
| 20                        | Involvement of civil society organizations is necessary                              | 23.07                      | 32.516                         | 0.831                            | 0.703                        | 0.936                            |
| 21                        | Involvement of educational groups and coalitions is important                        | 23.16                      | 32.600                         | 0.804                            | 0.660                        | 0.939                            |
| 22                        | Public and local resident involvement is important                                   | 23.05                      | 32.814                         | 0.800                            | 0.665                        | 0.939                            |
| 23                        | Guilin's industry associations promote the promotion of Guilin cuisine               | 11.53                      | 8.762                          | 0.788                            | 0.624                        | 0.881                            |
| 24                        | Guilin's tourism Community play a leading role in food tourism                       | 11.56                      | 8.906                          | 0.757                            | 0.574                        | 0.891                            |
| 25                        | Guilin's restaurant operators play a major role in the promotion of Guilin's cuisine | 11.53                      | 8.465                          | 0.810                            | 0.660                        | 0.873                            |
| 26                        | Guilin's citizens play an important role in Guilin's food promotion                  | 11.50                      | 8.754                          | 0.806                            | 0.652                        | 0.874                            |

| Item-Total Statistics-IV3 |                                                                  |                            |                                |                                  |                              |                                  |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| No.                       | Items                                                            | Scale Mean if Item Deleted | Scale Variance if Item Deleted | Corrected Item-Total Correlation | Squared Multiple Correlation | Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted |
| 27                        | Geography is important                                           | 31.54                      | 57.384                         | 0.817                            | 0.682                        | 0.952                            |
| 28                        | Food culture is important                                        | 31.49                      | 57.610                         | 0.822                            | 0.684                        | 0.952                            |
| 29                        | Specialty restaurants contribute to the image of the destination | 31.54                      | 56.560                         | 0.852                            | 0.743                        | 0.951                            |
| 30                        | Festivals contribute to the destination image                    | 31.57                      | 57.610                         | 0.808                            | 0.669                        | 0.953                            |
| 31                        | High-quality food reflects well on the destination image         | 31.49                      | 56.525                         | 0.852                            | 0.742                        | 0.951                            |
| 32                        | Beautiful geographical environment                               | 31.51                      | 57.623                         | 0.812                            | 0.681                        | 0.953                            |
| 33                        | Unique food culture                                              | 31.54                      | 56.441                         | 0.851                            | 0.743                        | 0.951                            |
| 34                        | Ethnic characteristics of the festival                           | 31.66                      | 57.099                         | 0.820                            | 0.697                        | 0.952                            |
| 35                        | Numerous high-quality cuisines                                   | 31.66                      | 57.297                         | 0.782                            | 0.637                        | 0.954                            |

| Item-Total Statistics-IV4 |                                         |                            |                                |                                  |                              |                                  |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| No.                       | Items                                   | Scale Mean if Item Deleted | Scale Variance if Item Deleted | Corrected Item-Total Correlation | Squared Multiple Correlation | Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted |
| 36                        | Food Safety and Health                  | 39.17                      | 92.653                         | 0.832                            | 0.733                        | 0.964                            |
| 37                        | Taste of food                           | 39.23                      | 92.033                         | 0.846                            | 0.734                        | 0.964                            |
| 38                        | Authenticity of ingredients             | 39.21                      | 92.089                         | 0.848                            | 0.744                        | 0.964                            |
| 39                        | Price of the food                       | 39.20                      | 93.691                         | 0.808                            | 0.671                        | 0.965                            |
| 40                        | Local consumption level                 | 39.34                      | 92.637                         | 0.829                            | 0.700                        | 0.964                            |
| 41                        | Many specialties                        | 39.27                      | 92.696                         | 0.844                            | 0.723                        | 0.964                            |
| 42                        | Safe, hygienic and good for your health | 39.34                      | 92.121                         | 0.850                            | 0.746                        | 0.964                            |
| 43                        | Taste good                              | 39.31                      | 92.852                         | 0.840                            | 0.721                        | 0.964                            |
| 44                        | Authentic ingredients                   | 39.33                      | 91.937                         | 0.848                            | 0.750                        | 0.964                            |
| 45                        | Moderate price                          | 39.31                      | 92.393                         | 0.836                            | 0.718                        | 0.964                            |
| 46                        | Wide variety and special features       | 39.29                      | 93.224                         | 0.832                            | 0.713                        | 0.964                            |

| Item-Total Statistics-IV5 |                                                |                            |                                |                                  |                              |                                  |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| No.                       | Items                                          | Scale Mean if Item Deleted | Scale Variance if Item Deleted | Corrected Item-Total Correlation | Squared Multiple Correlation | Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted |
| 47                        | Special events can boost destination marketing | 27.03                      | 45.880                         | 0.838                            | 0.705                        | 0.948                            |
| 48                        | Service quality affects destination marketing  | 27.00                      | 45.835                         | 0.840                            | 0.728                        | 0.948                            |
| 49                        | Application of social media tools is necessary | 26.99                      | 46.268                         | 0.817                            | 0.692                        | 0.950                            |
| 50                        | Well-equipped food outlets                     | 27.03                      | 46.114                         | 0.828                            | 0.694                        | 0.949                            |
| 51                        | Influenced by social media                     | 27.12                      | 46.167                         | 0.835                            | 0.703                        | 0.949                            |
| 52                        | Enjoying comfortable travel services           | 27.14                      | 45.934                         | 0.844                            | 0.727                        | 0.948                            |
| 53                        | Influenced by special festivals and events     | 27.15                      | 46.423                         | 0.804                            | 0.657                        | 0.951                            |
| 54                        | Influenced by local food                       | 27.08                      | 45.803                         | 0.837                            | 0.716                        | 0.949                            |

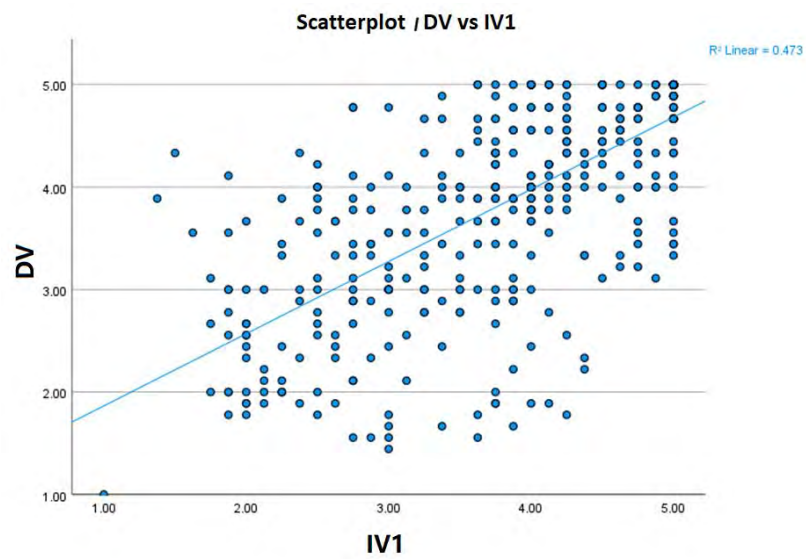
| Item-Total Statistics-IV6 |                                                             |                            |                                |                                  |                              |                                  |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| No.                       | Items                                                       | Scale Mean if Item Deleted | Scale Variance if Item Deleted | Corrected Item-Total Correlation | Squared Multiple Correlation | Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted |
| 55                        | Favourite Local Traditional Foods -Guilin Rice Noodles      | 11.65                      | 9.309                          | 0.792                            | 0.635                        | 0.890                            |
| 56                        | Intangible Cultural Heritage Listed Foods - Oil Tea         | 11.67                      | 9.462                          | 0.816                            | 0.669                        | 0.881                            |
| 57                        | Local Foods with Authentic Ingredients - Taro Sandwich Pork | 11.76                      | 9.559                          | 0.799                            | 0.644                        | 0.887                            |
| 58                        | Most Popular Foods in the Self-media - Beer Fish            | 11.84                      | 9.413                          | 0.797                            | 0.640                        | 0.888                            |

| Item-Total Statistics-DV |                                               |                            |                                |                                  |                              |                                  |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| No.                      | Items                                         | Scale Mean if Item Deleted | Scale Variance if Item Deleted | Corrected Item-Total Correlation | Squared Multiple Correlation | Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted |
| 59                       | Meeting the needs of visitors                 | 30.84                      | 61.501                         | 0.847                            | 0.733                        | 0.955                            |
| 60                       | Visitors have a desire to repeat their visit  | 30.78                      | 61.511                         | 0.860                            | 0.759                        | 0.955                            |
| 61                       | Length of stay of tourists at the destination | 30.81                      | 61.698                         | 0.856                            | 0.735                        | 0.955                            |
| 62                       | Local economic benefits are enhanced          | 30.85                      | 61.764                         | 0.867                            | 0.772                        | 0.954                            |
| 63                       | Increased well-being of residents             | 30.84                      | 62.722                         | 0.832                            | 0.707                        | 0.956                            |
| 64                       | Increased competitiveness of the destination  | 30.80                      | 62.634                         | 0.847                            | 0.739                        | 0.955                            |
| 65                       | Visit Guilin again                            | 30.92                      | 63.570                         | 0.793                            | 0.653                        | 0.958                            |
| 66                       | Increase spending                             | 30.95                      | 62.584                         | 0.806                            | 0.674                        | 0.957                            |
| 67                       | Extend travel time                            | 30.89                      | 62.752                         | 0.814                            | 0.696                        | 0.957                            |

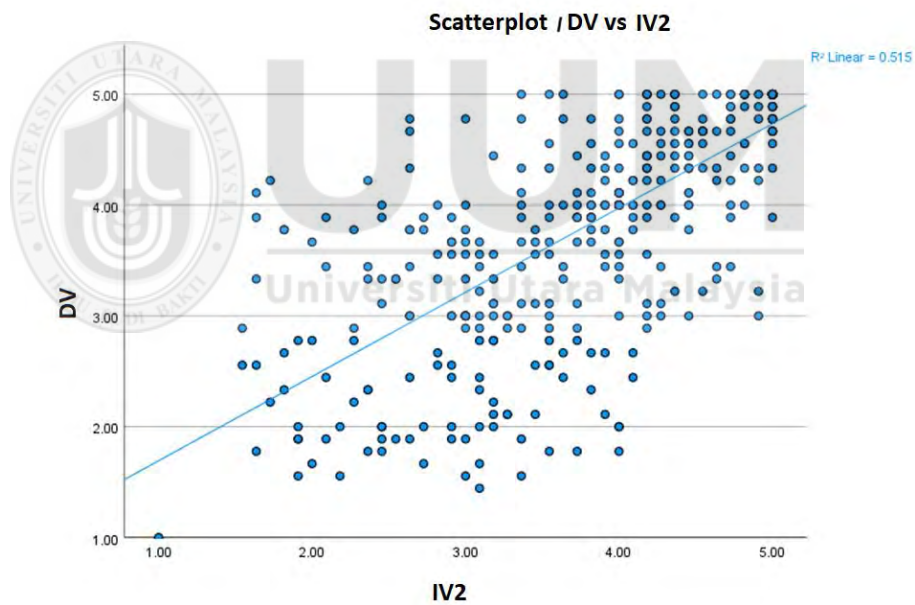


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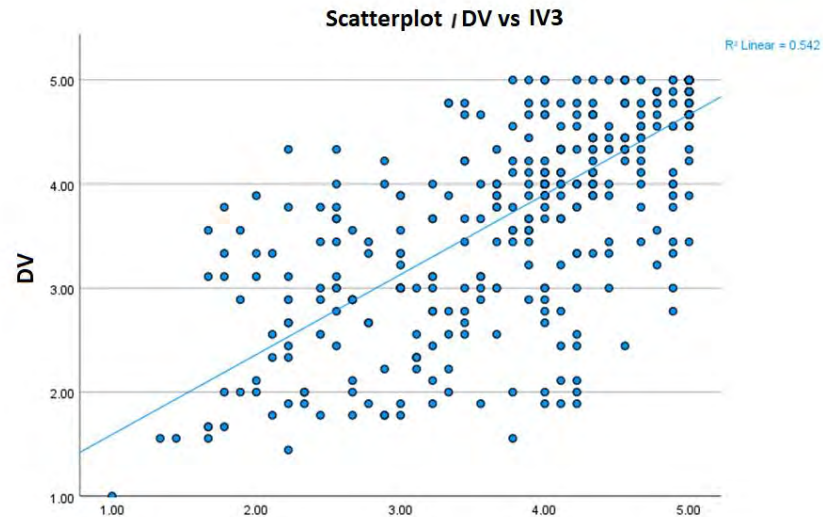
## APPENDIX H Data Analysis- Scatterplot of linear phenomena



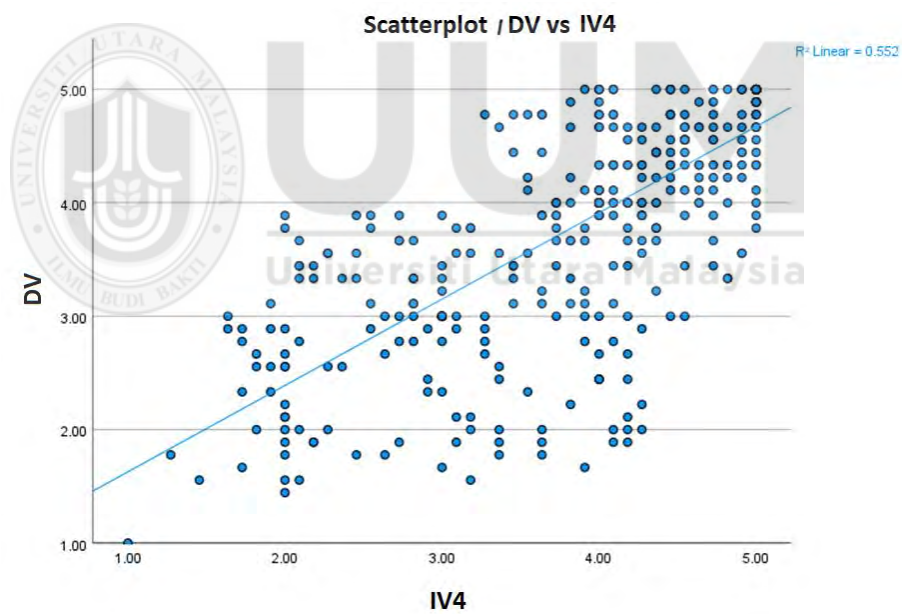
Scatter Plot (government support vs. the success of a food tourism destination)



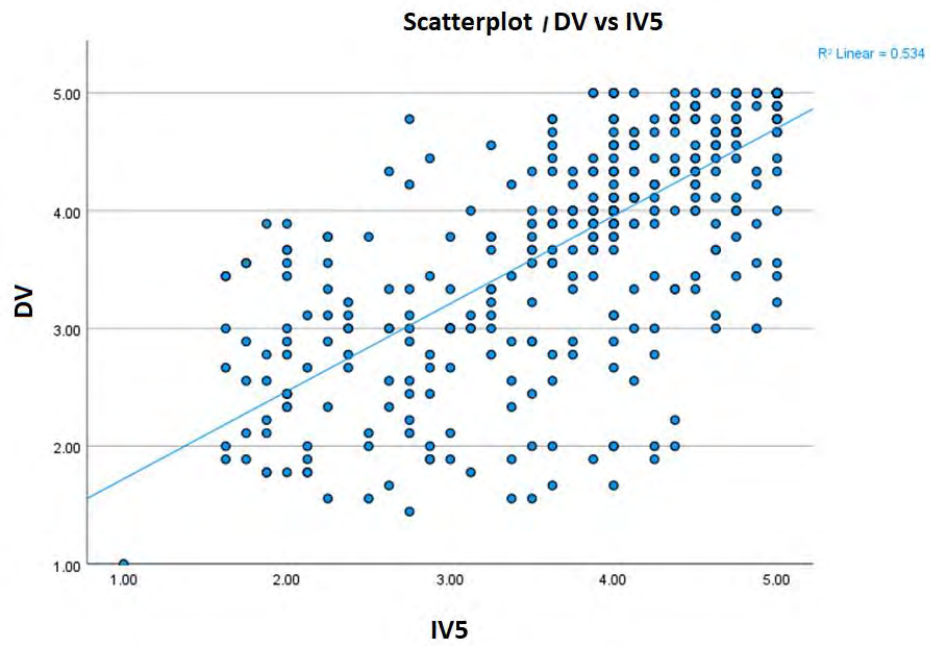
Scatter Plot (stakeholder involvement vs. the success of a food tourism destination)



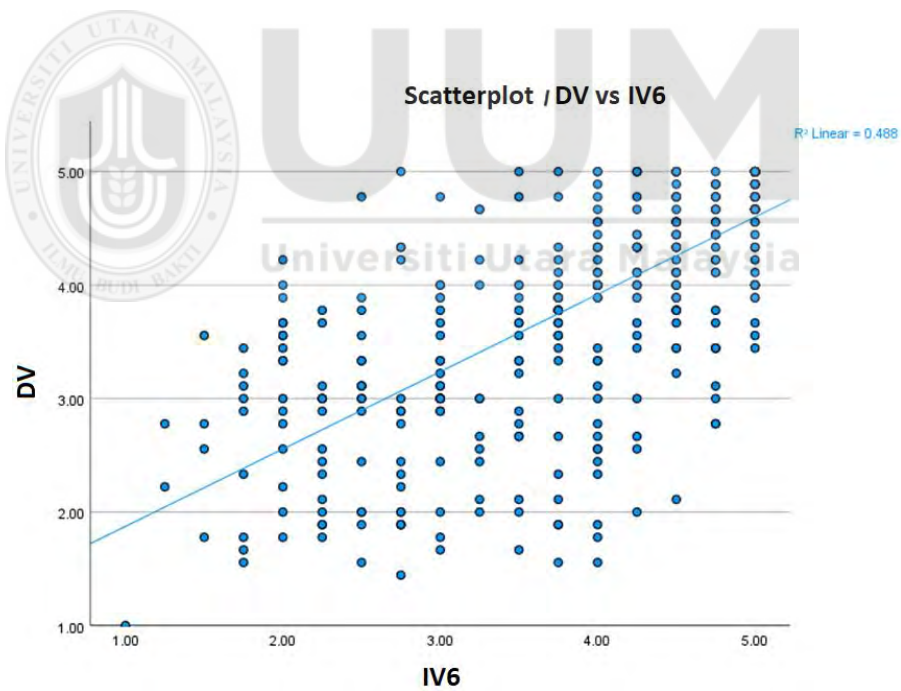
Scatter Plot (destination image vs. the success of a food tourism destination)



Scatter Plot (visitor experience vs. the success of a food tourism destination)



Scatter Plot (destination marketing vs. the success of a food tourism destination)



Scatter Plot (core food products vs. the success of a food tourism destination)