

# Repost, Recommend, Revisit: Social Media, Influencer and Facilities Impact on Gastronomic Loyalty in Heritage Cities

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## ABSTRACT

The rapid evolution of digital communication and cultural tourism has reshaped gastronomic experiences into key drivers of destination loyalty. This study objectives are to examine the relationship of social media, social influencers, and facility quality towards tourists' intention to revisit Melaka, Malaysia, a city renowned for its multicultural culinary heritage.

Using a quantitative approach, data were collected from 250 domestic respondents through structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis. The findings reveal that all three independent variables, social media, social influencers, and facilities, exert statistically significant effects on revisit intention. Notably, social influencers emerged as the most influential predictor, followed by facilities and social media.

These results highlight the fundamental role of digital platforms and tourism infrastructure in shaping revisit behaviors in the context of gastronomy tourism. This study offers theoretical and practical insights for policymakers and tourism stakeholders, suggesting that effective influencer partnerships, facility enhancements, and targeted social media strategies are essential for sustaining repeat visitation. The findings further contribute to the growing body of literature on experiential and gastronomic tourism in heritage destinations.

**Keywords:** Gastronomic Tourism, Revisit Intention, Social Media Influence, Tourism Marketing, Tourist Behavior, Destination Loyalty

## INTRODUCTION

Melaka, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, has long been a renowned cultural and culinary destination in Malaysia, drawing tourists with its distinctive blend of history, heritage, and gastronomic experiences. Therefore, the city's culinary landscape is characterized by a rich convergence of Portuguese, Chinese, Indian, Malay, and Peranakan influences, making it a notable center for gastronomic tourism (Tourism Melaka—Official Portal, 2023). Traditional dishes such as Asam Pedas, Nyonya Laksa, Ayam Pongteh, and Devil Curry have become iconic symbols of the region's cuisine. At the same time, local flavors such as Belacan and Cencaluk offer a distinctive taste that reflects the cultural depth of Melaka's food heritage. Eventually, the growing presence of contemporary bistros, cafes, and international eateries has further enhanced the city's appeal, offering both traditional and modern culinary experiences for visitors (Tourism Melaka Official Portal, 2023).

Melaka's evolution into a leading gastronomy tourism hub is driven not only by its diverse cuisine but also by strategic efforts to integrate food into the broader tourism ecosystem. Food events, culinary trails, and traditional food workshops have been rolled out to promote local heritage and support economic growth

(Ibrahim et al., 2023). However, in an increasingly competitive tourism landscape, destinations like Melaka must continually innovate and address emerging challenges to encourage repeat visits. Among the key determinants influencing tourist loyalty are digital engagement, influencer marketing, and the quality of tourism infrastructure (Zhu & Weng, 2024).

Social media platforms have revolutionized the way tourists interact with destinations. Food-related posts, hashtags, reviews, and viral videos serve as digital word-of-mouth, shaping travelers' destination choices and encouraging revisits (Dinc, 2023; Yu & Sun, 2019). In the case of Melaka, however, viral trends have also sparked concern. During Visit Melaka Year 2024, numerous complaints were lodged with the Ministry of Domestic Trade and Cost of Living (KPDN) over vendors inflating prices of 'viral' dishes by as much as 200% (Jamal, 2023). Such actions not only affect visitor satisfaction but also undermine the authenticity and credibility of Melaka's gastronomic reputation. These issues call for critical examination of how digital content influences tourist perceptions and decisions.

In parallel, social media influencers have emerged as powerful intermediaries in tourism marketing, capable of shaping revisit behaviors through curated, relatable, and engaging food narratives (Eleni, 2024). By showcasing local food experiences in visually compelling and emotionally resonant ways, influencers contribute to the formation of destination image and perceived value (Chourasia, 2024). Despite their growing role, empirical research examining the effectiveness of influencer marketing in Malaysia's gastronomy tourism context remains limited (Hussin, 2018).

Furthermore, the quality of tourism facilities, including hygiene standards, accessibility, and comfort, plays a vital role in shaping visitor satisfaction and loyalty. In 2024 alone, the Melaka Health Department ordered the closure of 49 eateries due to serious sanitary violations, such as the presence of cockroaches and rat droppings (Murali, 2024). These infrastructural issues can severely impact the tourist experience and deter repeat visits. Research suggests that well-maintained and welcoming food establishments not only enhance the overall dining experience but also encourage positive word-of-mouth and long-term destination loyalty (Jaharuddin et al., 2023; Chong et al., 2023).

Given these concerns, there is a demanding need to holistically examine how digital media engagement, influencer content, and facility quality interact to influence revisit intentions in food tourism. While previous studies have explored these factors in isolation, few have integrated them into a unified framework specific to Malaysia's gastronomic tourism sector (Hossain et al., 2024; Zaeimoedin et al., 2022). Addressing this gap will allow tourism stakeholders to better understand the dynamics of repeat visitation and develop sustainable strategies to preserve Melaka's culinary identity while enhancing its competitiveness as a gastronomy destination. Therefore, the study objectives of this research are to identify the relationship between three different variables namely social media, social influencer and facilities relationship towards Melaka Gastronomy.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Gastronomic tourism has emerged as a vital component of cultural travel, with destinations leveraging their culinary heritage to attract and retain tourists. In Malaysia, Melaka exemplifies this trend through its rich fusion of Peranakan, Chinese, Indian, and Malay cuisines, offering a distinctive food experience that complements its historical identity (Tourism Melaka Official Portal, 2023). Tourists increasingly select destinations based on culinary appeal, and food is now widely recognized as both a cultural artifact and an economic driver (Sthapit et al., 2019; Lai et al., 2019). As the second most visited country in Southeast Asia, Malaysia benefits from the diversity of its food culture, with Melaka serving as a focal point for heritage-based culinary tourism (Tan, Mohamad, & Kek, 2024). While past studies have highlighted the role of food in shaping destination image and tourist satisfaction, further investigation is needed into how digital engagement, influencer marketing, and facility quality influence revisit intentions in the context of gastronomy tourism.

### **Intention to Revisit Melaka**

The intention to revisit a destination is a key indicator of tourist loyalty and sustained engagement, particularly

in the context of gastronomic tourism. In Melaka, this behavioral intention is strongly influenced by the overall food experience, which includes taste, authenticity, variety, and ambiance. Positive culinary experiences foster emotional satisfaction and encourage repeat visitation, especially when reinforced through social and digital interactions (Ibrahim et al., 2023). Furthermore, social media serves as a powerful medium, enabling tourists to share their food adventures, discover new dining venues, and build anticipation for future return visits. Posts by influencers or peers amplify this effect by highlighting both mainstream and hidden culinary gems, creating a sense of urgency and curiosity among prospective visitors (Dwivedi et al., 2020). Additionally, the diversity of Melaka's food offerings, ranging from heritage dishes to modern fusion cuisine, provides tourists with evolving gastronomic options that encourage repeat visits. Promotional events, food festivals, and service quality also play crucial roles in shaping revisit intentions, as they enhance the overall value perception and emotional attachment to the destination (Li et al., 2021). As such, revisit intention is shaped by a holistic blend of experiential satisfaction, digital engagement, and dynamic culinary offerings.

However, contrasting earlier work that focused on infrastructure or cultural heritage as primary motivators for repeat visits, recent research emphasizes the experiential and emotional dimensions of food tourism. In this regard, social media functions not only as a medium for documentation but also as a stimulus for future behaviour. Posts shared by peers or influencers on food experiences can create a sense of aspiration or "FOMO" (fear of missing out), triggering revisit intentions among prospective tourists (Dwivedi et al., 2020). Li et al. (2021) further expands on this by emphasizing the role of events and promotional campaigns in shaping destination image. While earlier models treated food tourism as a supplementary activity, emerging literature positions it as a core experiential anchor for return tourism, particularly when supported by digital engagement strategies.

Thus, the dependent variable intention to revisit is not only a function of personal satisfaction but is also shaped by the interactive dynamics of social proof, digital visibility, and the emotional resonance of food experiences. This more holistic framing suggests that the revisit intention is reinforced through a triangulation of positive past experiences, perceived social endorsement, and ongoing online engagement.

## **social media**

Social media has become a central driver in shaping tourists' destination preferences, particularly within the food tourism sector. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook facilitate the widespread dissemination of visually appealing food content, which significantly enhances a destination's image (Dinc, 2023). Trending hashtags, reviews, and geo-tagged photos serve as digital ambassadors, directing potential tourists toward specific culinary experiences (Yu & Sun, 2019). These platforms also support travel planning by offering real-time, user-generated recommendations, which are perceived as trustworthy and relatable (Saboureau, 2020). In the context of Melaka, the ability of social media to showcase culturally rich and sensory-driven dining experiences creates compelling motivations for return visits. Thus, social media not only influences first-time tourist behaviors but also plays a vital role in sustaining revisit intention by continuously reinforcing positive food-related memories.

However, a gap remains in the literature regarding the differentiated impact of platform types such as centric platforms like Instagram may evoke stronger emotional responses than text-based platforms like Twitter. While most scholars agree on social media's importance, the extent to which it independently motivates revisit behavior remains debated. Some argue it acts merely as a facilitator (Saboureau, 2020), while others see it as an active trigger for behavioral intention (Dinc, 2023). This indicates a need for further empirical research to disentangle its direct and mediated effects on revisit intention.

## **Social Influencers**

Social influencers are increasingly recognized as credible intermediaries in the tourism decision-making process. By sharing authentic narratives, personal dining experiences, and high-quality food imagery, influencers play a significant role in shaping tourists' perceptions and expectations of a destination (Chourasia, 2024). Their capacity to humanize brand experiences and create emotional appeal encouraged their followers to seek the same gastronomic experiences they promote (Saboureau, 2020). In Melaka's context, influencers

have proven instrumental in highlighting lesser-known food spots, promoting local food culture and generating sustained interest in revisiting. Their perceived authenticity and trustworthiness strengthen their persuasive impact, especially when compared to traditional advertising. Despite their growing influence, empirical research on the role of influencers in Malaysian gastronomy tourism remains limited, indicating a critical gap in the literature. Contrasting earlier models that prioritized institutional endorsements or celebrity advertising, newer frameworks emphasize the micro-influencer model, which relies on peer-level authenticity rather than mass appeal. Chourasia (2024) and Saboureau (2020) both argue that influencer marketing not only affects first-time visitation but also fosters a sense of continuity, making tourists want to revisit to complete or expand their culinary experience. This continuous engagement supports long-term loyalty and helps sustain interest in evolving food trends within Melaka.

## Facilities

Facilities, encompassing both tangible and intangible aspects of the tourism experience, are determinants of tourist satisfaction and revisit intention. For gastronomy tourism, this includes the quality and hygiene of food establishments, accessibility, comfort, ambiance, and the overall physical environment (Chong et al., 2023). Clean, well-maintained facilities improve the dining experience and reinforce tourists' perceptions of professionalism and safety (Hsu et al., 2020). In particular, factors such as convenient locations, adequate seating, sanitary conditions, and friendly service have been found to significantly influence tourists' willingness to return (Jaharuddin et al., 2023). Chong et al. (2023) also argue that the spatial arrangement and quality of food outlets can significantly influence tourists' satisfaction and, by extension, their intention to revisit. Jaharuddin et al. (2023) further emphasize the importance of hygiene, accessibility, and comfort as determinants of overall visitor satisfaction. Therefore, what distinguishes recent literature from earlier discussions is a growing emphasis on the integration between digital appeal and physical experience. That is, even the most compelling online content will fail to generate repeat visitation if not matched by corresponding offline quality. Therefore, effective food tourism strategy requires a synergy between digital marketing and high-standard facilities, ensuring that expectations set online are met or exceeded in real-life experiences. In Melaka, where gastronomy is one of the core attractions, therefore enhancing these infrastructural elements is essential to maintaining destination appeal and ensuring repeat visitation. Eventually, facilities support the delivery of services and act as a physical complement to the digital narrative promoted through social media and influencer content.

## Research Framework

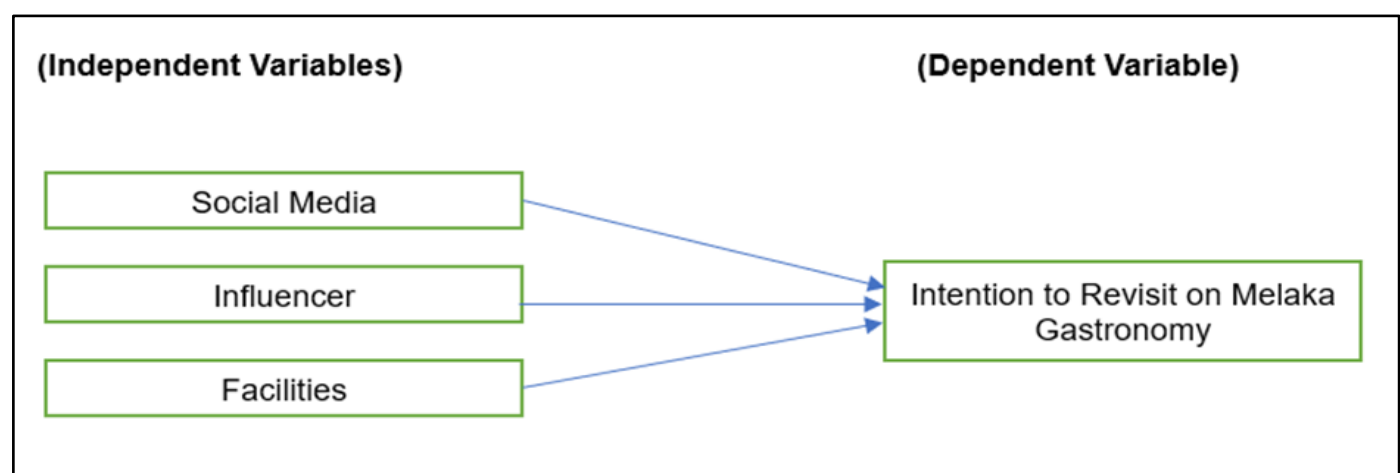


Figure 1: The conceptual structure referenced in this study finds its origins in the scholarly work of Soltani et al. (2020)

The present study adopts and extends the framework developed by Soltani et al. (2020), which conceptualizes food tourists' behavioural intentions as outcomes of multi-sensory, emotional, and contextual food consumption experiences. In their original model, key experiential elements, such as food quality, service, authenticity, and sensory satisfaction, shape tourists' perceived value and satisfaction, which in turn predict



behavioural outcomes, including revisit intention. Therefore, this study aligns with the core of Soltani et al.'s framework by examining revisit intention as the central dependent variable. However, this study advances the model by incorporating digital and environmental stimuli, specifically social media engagement, social influencer content, and facility quality as primary antecedents influencing tourists' overall experience in Melaka's culinary tourism. Theoretically, social media and influencer content are interpreted as external affective stimuli that enhance tourists' expectations, emotional arousal, and destination imagery before and during the visit. Similarly, the quality of gastronomic facilities is treated as a tangible experiential dimension, affecting comfort, hygiene, and access, which contributes to tourists' satisfaction and future behavioral intentions. Therefore, this study operationalizes Soltani et al. 's (2020) experiential behavioral framework within a digital and service enriched context, which offers new insights into how modern tourists engage with gastronomy destinations in an era shaped by online influence and service quality expectations.

## **Hypotheses Development and Relationship**

### **H1: Relationship Between social media and Intention to Revisit Melaka Gastronomy**

Social media platforms serve as powerful tools in shaping tourists' behavioral intentions, particularly in gastronomy tourism, where visual and narrative appeal play essential roles. In the context of Melaka, social media enables users to engage with high-quality images, videos, and reviews of local dishes, which collectively enhance the destination's gastronomic image and appeal (Ahmad et al., 2024). Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok function not only as sources of inspiration but also as digital ecosystems where tourists share personal food experiences, join interest-based communities, and interact with travel-related content. These ongoing engagements strengthen emotional attachment to the destination and increase the likelihood of revisitation. Moreover, tourism boards and businesses leverage social media to maintain visibility through continuous content dissemination, thereby keeping Melaka top of mind among prospective and past visitors. The visual richness and immediacy of social media content reinforce tourists' memories and perceptions, stimulating a desire to return and further explore Melaka's evolving culinary landscape.

### **H2: Relationship Between Social Media Influencers and Intention to Revisit Melaka Gastronomy**

Social media influencers are playing an increasingly prominent role in contemporary destination marketing, particularly within the realm of food tourism. By sharing personal, visually engaging content and trustworthy recommendations, influencers shape public perceptions of gastronomic destinations. In Melaka, influencers often highlight iconic local dishes such as *Nyonya Laksa* and, thereby enhancing the visibility and desirability of the destination (Ibrahim et al., 2024). Their credibility, rooted in perceived sincerity and subject-matter expertise, has been shown to influence consumer trust and behavioral intention (Lee & Eastin, 2021). Influencers not only promote the appeal of specific eateries but also foster aspirational travel narratives that encourage followers to replicate similar experiences. Their ability to engage audiences through storytelling, interactive content, and direct recommendations creates a persuasive context that fosters revisit intention. Thus, influencers function as opinion leaders whose endorsements can drive sustained interest and repeat visitation to Melaka's gastronomic attractions.

### **H3: Relationship Between Facilities and Intention to Revisit Melaka Gastronomy**

Facility quality is a fundamental determinant of tourist satisfaction and behavioral intention, particularly in food-related tourism contexts. Tourists' willingness to revisit a destination is closely linked to their evaluation of essential physical and service-related infrastructure, including hygiene standards, accessibility, comfort, and convenience (Zaeimoedin et al., 2022). In Melaka, the availability of clean dining environments, accessible washrooms, convenient parking, and well-located food outlets significantly enhances the overall dining experience. Conversely, poor facility conditions such as overcrowding, unsanitary premises, or inadequate signage can diminish satisfaction and reduce the likelihood of return visits (Adriatico et al., 2022). High-quality service delivery, including prompt service and a welcoming ambience, further contributes to the emotional and functional value perceived by tourists. Therefore, facilities serve as a tangible reinforcement of the destination's culinary brand and play a central role in shaping revisit behaviors. Maintaining consistently high standards is essential for fostering loyalty among gastronomy tourists.

## Integrated Perspective

Collectively, social media engagement, influencer content, and facility quality create a synergistic ecosystem that reinforces positive tourist experiences and strengthens the intention to revisit. When these elements align effectively, they produce a feedback loop of satisfaction and loyalty that encourages repeated engagement with the destination. Conversely, negative experiences in any of these domains can disrupt this cycle, reduce perceived value, and weaken behavioral intentions (Wang et al., 2022). Understanding the interplay among these factors is therefore critical for destination managers seeking to promote sustainable tourism growth in gastronomically driven cities like Melaka.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to investigate the factors influencing tourists' intentions to revisit Melaka's gastronomic attractions. Specifically, the research focused on how food-related imagery disseminated via social media and influencer content, as well as the perceived quality of local facilities, affects tourists' revisit behaviors. A descriptive approach was adopted to explore the perceptions and behavioral tendencies of repeat visitors, with particular attention to the influence of visual stimuli and experiential factors on travel decision-making (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study was grounded in the context of Melaka's diverse culinary offerings, which include Malay, Chinese, Indian, and Peranakan cuisine, thereby providing a holistic understanding of gastronomy tourism in a multicultural setting.

### Population and Sampling

The target population comprised Malaysian tourists aged 18 and above who had previously visited Melaka. A convenience sampling method was employed to gather responses from individuals with firsthand experience of Melaka's food tourism. This non-probability approach was selected due to its practicality and efficiency in accessing a broad and relevant sample. The minimum sample size of 74 respondents was determined using G\*Power analysis to ensure adequate statistical power. Ultimately, the study achieved a total of 250 valid responses. The timing of the study coincided with the Visit Melaka Year 2024 (TMM2024), during which the city welcomed 12.32 million visitors, including 9.43 million domestic tourists, further reinforcing the significance of the selected research context.

### Design and Structure

Data collection was facilitated through a structured questionnaire administered online via Google Forms. The instrument was bilingual (English and Malay) and designed to be accessible and comprehensible for a diverse respondent pool. Items were adapted from established literature on tourism and consumer behaviors to ensure construct validity and reliability (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Responses were recorded using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). The questionnaire was divided into five sections.

The study examines various aspects using specific sets of items: demographic information is captured through six items covering age, gender, occupation, origin, visit frequency, and purpose of visit; social media influence is assessed with five items focusing on its role in shaping food tourism decisions; the impact of social influencers is explored through five items measuring their effect on revisit motivation; facilities perception is evaluated using five items related to the quality of food-related infrastructure and services; and revisit intention is measured with four items gauging tourists' willingness to return to Melaka for culinary experiences.

### Pilot Testing

A pilot test involving 30 domestic tourists was conducted to refine the questionnaire, and feedback from hospitality and tourism experts was incorporated to improve content clarity and relevance. To assess internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha was calculated using SPSS (Version 29), and all variables demonstrated

excellent reliability, with alpha coefficients as follows: Social Media (0.917), Social Influencers (0.886), Facilities (0.913), and Revisit Intention (0.933). These values exceed the 0.60 threshold recommended for acceptable reliability (Nawi et al., 2020; Paramalingam et al., 2021), confirming the instrument's suitability for formal data collection.

### **Data Collection**

Primary data were collected through an online survey and face-to-face interviews. The dual-mode approach was adopted to increase response diversity and capture more profound insights. Online distribution provided efficient access to a broad sample, while in-person interviews enabled researchers to clarify complex questions and capture nonverbal cues, thereby enhancing the depth and validity of the data (Oates et al., 2022; Hadley et al., 2022). Google Forms was utilized for its ease of use and integrated analytics features, supporting efficient data collection and management.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics, chosen for its robust statistical capabilities and widespread use in social science research (Pallant, 2020). The analysis procedures included the following steps:

#### **Descriptive Statistics**

Means, frequencies, and percentages were used to analyze respondent demographics and overall patterns in travel and food preferences.

#### **Correlation Analysis**

Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to determine the strength and direction of relationships between key independent variables (social media, influencers, and facilities) and the dependent variable (revisit intention).

#### **Regression Analysis**

Simple linear regression was used to predict the extent to which each independent variable influenced tourists' intention to revisit Melaka. This method allowed for the assessment of the individual contribution of each predictor variable in explaining variance in the dependent variable (Kumari & Yadav, 2018).

## **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

### **Descriptive Analysis**

This study examined the impact of social media, social influencers, and facilities on tourists' intentions to revisit Melaka for gastronomy tourism, employing a descriptive and quantitative approach. Findings revealed that social media content significantly shaped tourist perceptions and behaviors, with high mean values observed for statements such as "social media is a key source of information for gastronomic travel" ( $M = 4.31$ ,  $SD = 0.774$ ) and "positive food reviews influenced visit decisions" ( $M = 4.26$ ,  $SD = 0.835$ ). These results affirm the role of digital content in influencing travel decisions, aligning with prior studies emphasizing social media as a tool for destination branding.

Social influencers were also shown to be influential, as respondents demonstrated high levels of trust in influencer recommendations ( $M = 4.25$ ,  $SD = 0.752$ ) and reported increased interest in Melaka based on influencer content ( $M = 4.33$ ,  $SD = 0.703$ ). This aligns with recent literature that positions influencers as persuasive agents in the digital tourism landscape.

Further, facility-related attributes such as cleanliness, food quality, and ease of access to local cuisines were strongly linked to revisit intention, with statements like "high standards of hygiene" and "quality of food"

receiving mean scores of 4.39 and 4.38, respectively. These findings support prior research that highlights the importance of service environment quality in culinary tourism.

Regarding behavioral intentions, tourists reported a strong willingness to revisit Melaka driven by prior gastronomic experiences ( $M = 4.29$ ,  $SD = 0.716$ ), food variety ( $M = 4.24$ ,  $SD = 0.709$ ), and promotional events ( $M = 4.26$ ,  $SD = 0.713$ ). These results underscore the integrative role of digital content, influencer engagement, and infrastructure in shaping loyalty behaviors.

Collectively, the findings contribute empirical evidence to support the hypothesis that digital and physical experiential factors collaboratively influence revisit intentions among food tourists. The insights are especially valuable for destination marketers and policy planners seeking to enhance Melaka's positioning as a competitive gastronomy tourism hub.

## Correlation Analysis

Table: Pearson Correlations Matrix for Study Variables

| Factors Influence Intention to Revisit | Test of Significance                | Intention to Revisit |
|--|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Social media</b>                    | Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) | .756**               |
|  | N                                   | .000                 |
|  |                                     | 250                  |
| <b>Social Influencers</b>              | Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) | .851**               |
|  | N                                   | .000                 |
|  |                                     | 250                  |
| <b>Facilities</b>                      | Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) | .780**               |
|  | N                                   | .000                 |
|  |                                     | 250                  |

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

Pearson correlation coefficients revealed strong and statistically significant relationships between all independent variables and the dependent variable. The strongest correlation was observed between social influencers and revisit intention ( $r = 0.851$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), followed by facilities ( $r = 0.780$ ) and social media ( $r = 0.756$ ). These findings suggest that all three variables are positively associated with tourists' likelihood of returning, with influencer content emerging as the most impactful factor.

## Regression Analysis

Table 4.7: Results of Linear Regressions of the Relationship Between Factors Influencing (Social Media, Social Influencers, and Facilities) and Intention to Revisit.

| Model | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1     | .884 <sup>a</sup> | .781     | .778              | .30552                     |

Table 1: Multiple Regression Summary

| Variable |            | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | t     | Sig.  | Collinearity Statistics |     |
|----------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|-------|-------------------------|-----|
|          |            | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |       |       | Tolerance               | VIF |
| 1        | (Constant) | 1.386                       | .160       |                           | 8.658 | <.001 |                         |     |



|                   |      |      |      |        |       |       |       |
|-------------------|------|------|------|--------|-------|-------|-------|
| Social media      | .685 | .038 | .756 | 18.205 | <.001 | 1.000 | 1.000 |
| Social Influencer | .855 | .034 | .851 | 25.507 | <.001 | 1.000 | 1.000 |
| Facilities        | .902 | .046 | .780 | 19.600 | <.001 | 1.000 | 1.000 |

a. Dependent Variable: Intention to Revisit

A linear regression analysis confirmed the explanatory power of the independent variables in predicting the intention to revisit. The model yielded an  $R^2$  value of 0.781, indicating that 78.1% of the variance in revisit intention could be explained by social media, social influencers, and facilities. The adjusted  $R^2$  of 0.778 further validated the model's generalizability. All predictor variables were statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ).

Among the predictors, social influencers had the highest standardized beta coefficient ( $\beta = 0.851$ ), establishing them as the most influential variable. This value was followed by facilities ( $\beta = 0.780$ ) and social media ( $\beta = 0.756$ ). These results emphasize the hierarchical impact of the variables, suggesting that while all are important, influencer engagement has the strongest predictive effect on tourists' intention to revisit Melaka for gastronomic experiences.

## DISCUSSION

This study aimed to explore the key factors influencing the intention to revisit Melaka's gastronomy and the impact of social media, social media influencers, and facilities on tourists' decisions to return. The findings provide valuable insights into how these elements shape tourists' perceptions and behaviors toward Melaka's food culture.

### Social media and Revisit Intention

The results of this study indicate a significant relationship between social media and the intention to revisit Melaka's gastronomic offerings. Social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok play an essential role in informing and influencing tourists about food experiences in Melaka. As tourists share their culinary experiences online, they create a continuous cycle of attraction, where new potential visitors are exposed to positive content, such as vibrant photos and engaging videos, which stimulates their desire to visit (Kim et al., 2020). The social media posts about new food spots and dining experiences in Melaka inspire interest and curiosity, further driving reconsideration intentions. This finding is consistent with research by Gretzel et al. (2020), which suggests that the sharing of positive travel experiences on social media has a significant influence on future destination choices.

### Social Media Influencers and Revisit Intention

In line with previous studies, this research confirms that social media influencers play a critical role in shaping the intention to revisit Melaka's gastronomy. The study found a high Pearson correlation between the influence of social media influencers and tourists' intentions to revisit (Bastrygina et al., 2024). Social influencers leverage their credibility and emotional connection with their audiences to promote tourism destinations, such as Melaka, by sharing authentic and appealing content about local food experiences. The influence of these individuals is significant because they showcase unique gastronomic experiences and foster an aspirational connection between the destination and the tourists (Topbaş & Oktay, 2024). The results suggest that Melaka can enhance its visibility and engagement with potential tourists through strategic partnerships with influencers.

### Facilities and Revisit Intention

This study also emphasizes the importance of facilities in encouraging tourists to revisit Melaka. The quality and maintenance of facilities, such as restaurants, dining spaces, parking areas, and accessible amenities, are crucial determinants of tourists' overall satisfaction. According to Sthapit et al. (2020), positive facility

experiences, such as clean, comfortable, and well-equipped spaces, lead to higher levels of satisfaction and increase the likelihood of revisits. Furthermore, the study found that tourists are particularly motivated by restaurants that offer modern conveniences, such as electronic payment options, free Wi-Fi, and child-friendly features, which enhance the overall dining experience. These findings resonate with the research by Adiatma et al. (2023), which highlights that the comfort and functionality of facilities directly affect tourists' emotional connection to the destination.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, this study highlights the significant factors that drive revisit intentions among tourists in Melaka's gastronomy scene. Social media, social influencers, and facilities are shown to play pivotal roles in shaping tourists' perceptions and behaviors. Social media serves as a powerful tool for promoting food experiences and highlighting new culinary hotspots, while social influencers offer an authentic and emotional connection that enhances engagement and encourages repeat visits. Furthermore, the quality of facilities, particularly in terms of comfort and accessibility, is a key factor in creating positive experiences that motivate tourists to return to Melaka for future food exploration.

The findings of this study offer valuable insights for tourism marketers, destination managers, and local businesses seeking to enhance tourist engagement and satisfaction in Melaka. It is recommended that the Melaka Tourism Promotion Division invest in collaborations with social media influencers and prioritize the improvement and maintenance of tourist-friendly facilities to enhance the overall experience for visitors. Additionally, businesses in Melaka should actively manage their social media presence, creating appealing and engaging content that showcases the diverse gastronomic offerings and highlights the unique aspects of the destination.

Furthermore, this study has several limitations where the research only examines the relationship between social media, influencers, facilities, and revisit intentions without exploring the significance of these relationships in depth. Additionally, the study only included respondents who had previously visited Melaka, which may not fully capture the perceptions and motivations of first-time visitors to the area. As such, future studies should investigate how the factors examined in this study apply to first-time tourists visiting Melaka. Furthermore, the research was limited to Malaysian tourists, and the findings may not be generalizable to international visitors. Including a more diverse sample of tourists from various countries could provide a more comprehensive understanding of Melaka's appeal and its gastronomic offerings. Overall, while this study has contributed valuable insights into the factors influencing revisit intentions, further research is necessary to deepen our understanding of the dynamics that shape tourist behaviors in gastronomic tourism.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

While this study provides significant insights into the factors influencing revisit intentions, it acknowledges several limitations. Future research could explore the unique qualities of Melaka's gastronomy, such as specific dishes or traditional cooking methods, which may further contribute to tourists' intentions to revisit. Examining the cultural and historical context of food experiences could add a deeper layer of understanding. Additionally, the study's focus on Malaysian tourists limits the applicability of the results to an international audience. Future studies should include international visitors to gain a broader perspective on how Melaka's gastronomy appeals to tourists from different cultural backgrounds. Finally, research could be expanded beyond the relationships explored in this study to investigate the significance of these variables and how other factors, such as local culture and food festivals, influence tourists' decisions to return.

To translate these findings into action, a prioritized strategy is proposed. In the short term, the Melaka Tourism Promotion Division (MTPD) should implement a digital influencer marketing campaign by collaborating with regionally recognized content creators, especially on platforms like TikTok and Instagram, to promote unique aspects of Melaka such as local cuisine and cultural heritage. Concurrently, capacity-building workshops should be offered to local tourism businesses to enhance their digital skills and optimize content sharing. In the medium term, a unified branding strategy such as a centralized hashtag (#RediscoverMelaka) could strengthen

user-generated content consistency and increase online visibility. In the long term, Melaka should invest in sustainable infrastructure development, including the upgrading of tourism facilities to meet eco-friendly and family-friendly standards, ensuring cleanliness, accessibility, and digital amenities like free Wi-Fi. Additionally, implementing a systematic visitor feedback mechanism would provide continuous data to inform service improvements. This can be achieved through the integrated approach grounded in behavioral theory and structured by priority can strengthen Melaka's competitiveness and long-term appeal in the tourism sector.

Eventually, this research provides a foundation for future studies examining the impact of social media and influencers on tourism destinations, and demonstrates how enhancing facilities and actively engaging in social media promotion can contribute to increasing revisit intentions and enhancing the overall tourism experience in Melaka.

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