

CULINARY HERITAGE VIDEOS AND AGRITOURISM INTEREST IN THE MEKONG DELTA

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Abstract: Local food in the Mekong Delta is closely connected with the daily life of the region, and it reveals cultural identity and stories of the region. Based on Cultural Heritage Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory, this study examines tourists' responses to short-form culinary videos on social media. Data collected from 358 tourists at agricultural and ecological tourist attractions in the Mekong Delta were analysed using partial least squares structural equation modelling. The model includes three cultural features of the videos: culinary symbolism, dish uniqueness, and community food value. It then considers how content satisfaction and positive emotional response relate to content sharing and culinary tourism intention. The findings link these cultural features to content satisfaction and positive emotional response, which are associated with content sharing and culinary tourism intention. Positive emotional response had a stronger association with content sharing than content satisfaction did ($\beta = 0.396$ versus 0.314). The results demonstrate the significance of emotional appeal and cultural engagement in marketing culinary tourism using short-form media. Community media programs should focus on developing content that creates "content enjoyment" and "emotional engagement" to improve shareability and positive destination awareness. The analysis builds on the literature in the hospitality and tourism sector by theorizing culinary heritage video to mean a cultural stimulus that influences engagement and destination intentions. Culturally based video storytelling and satisfaction-based content design are effective ways for destination actors to increase interest in culinary tourism.

Keywords: culinary, Mekong Delta, agritourism, media engagement, emotional response, short video

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INTRODUCTION

Cuisine is a way for people to access and visualize the culture, history and identity of different communities around the world (Cook & Crang, 1996). River cuisine is the expression of the interaction between human imagination and nature (Jackson et al., 2022; Thomas et al., 2026). Culinary activities of the Mekong Delta are in direct connection with the local ecosystem and depend on raw materials in the area (Le Minh & Anh, 2025). These are fish, rice, tropical fruits, as well as folk knowledge and traditional rituals (Tri et al., 2023). These dishes not only have nutritional value but also tell the story of the relationship between people and the living environment, thereby reflecting the cultural identity of the local community (Suhud et al., 2025). Although cuisine has become a popular topic of tourism and cultural research worldwide, there is little literature on its use to attract viewers. More specifically, they have not analyzed modern media sites like short films and documentaries (Connell, 2012). Though most studies are devoted to material cultural heritage like monuments and festivals, less attention has been paid to intangible dimensions, including cuisine (Zhang & Zhang, 2025).

The core problem is that there is no realization of how the diversity in taste, form, and uniqueness may be addressed (S. Li et al., 2025). Furthermore, the possible contribution of media in influencing perception and promoting regional foods has not been explored sufficiently. It remains unclear how culinary practices can be employed to promote cultural sensibility and understanding (Yong et al., 2022); (Hashemi et al., 2025). The gap in the research is that the use of gastronomy as an intangible cultural heritage has not been fully exploited (Masmoudi, 2025). It also demonstrates the absence of particular analysis on how media involvement can enhance agritourism activities in places like the Mekong Delta.

Clarifying this connection is necessary to demonstrate the importance of gastronomic media engagement for both cultural preservation and tourism development (Pahor Zvanut & Zabukovec Baruca, 2025). The cultural value of cuisine is a theoretical approach adopted in this study to examine how rural areas act as cultural commodities that help in the preservation of intangible heritage (Hølleland et al., 2017). According to cultural theory, culture should be maintained as a form of cultural capital, which includes culinary practices. Thus, while being a culinary science study, this research focuses on cuisine and how it can act as a mediator for intergenerational and geopolitical memory transmission. Additionally, this study adopts concepts from the uses and gratifications theory as a framework for assessing the intermediate role of viewer

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engagement (Lin et al., 2018). The focus of this theory is on the belief that the audience searches programs that satisfy their information, entertainment or inspiration needs. In the context of short films about riverine cuisine, this theory helps explain how such content transfers value to viewers (Jongsuksomsakul, 2024). It also clarifies how this process shapes their perceptions and recognition of culinary richness (Connell, 2012; Harmeling et al., 2017). From the approach of the two theoretical frameworks above, the study focuses on analyzing how symbolic elements in river cuisine can stimulate viewers' interactions, emotions, and perceptions. This analysis is conducted through short media products.

The previous literature is largely devoted to protecting intangible cultural heritage or the motivations of the media audiences (Zhang, 2026). The study is based on two aspects, namely the portrayal of riverine food in a short film and the concurrent celebration of culture and audience involvement (Poelina et al., 2022). In particular, recent review literature points to the fact that the combination of agritourism, rural tourism, and ecotourism promotes sustainable rural development. This perception also strengthens the value of agritourism in the long term for local communities.

In this study, the sample was composed of tourists visiting agricultural and ecotourism locations in the Mekong Delta, who were exposed to and assessed short culinary videos that were posted on online sources. This strategy assists in explaining how culinary heritage is used as a communication tool (Adirestuty et al., 2025). It can also support the preservation of cultural values and enhance sustainable tourism development. From there, the study makes two contributions. Academically, the research has contributed to the theoretical discussion by combining cultural heritage theory and uses and gratifications theory in an agritourism setting. In doing so, it helps address a gap in research on culinary communication (Masmoudi, 2025). In practical terms, the study will provide an understanding to filmmakers, cultural policymakers, and local stakeholders on the application of culinary communication. Such lessons can improve tourist experiences and help promote tourism in the areas (Duhamel et al., 2024).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theory background

Cultural values have been transmitted widely through digital media, which increases attention to heritage and media convergence (Balogun & Aruoture, 2024). Cuisine is also a widely discussed intangible heritage that provides access to cultural experiences and historical memory that spreads intensely on social media (Bessiere, 1998; XIA et al., 2024).

Nevertheless, other studies conducted do not often describe how the content related to digital food connects heritage objectives with emotional and exploration interests of viewers in riverine lands (Timothy & Boyd, 2006; Zheng et al., 2023). Recent bibliometric reviews show that little attention has been given to the dynamics of media in the study of culinary heritage (Masmoudi, 2025). Similarly, the digital media review in tourism also provides disjointed frameworks, particularly in the context of agriculture and gastronomy (Pahor Zvanut & Zabukovec Baruca, 2025).

To address this gap, this study adopts Cultural Heritage Theory to capture symbolism, uniqueness and value to the community in culinary traditions (Silverman, 2014; Muñoz-Viñas, 2023). It also applies Uses and Gratifications Theory to explain the reasons why audiences look for information, entertainment, and recognition from media content (Katz et al., 1973). These perspectives enable the investigation of short movies about cuisines and affiliating them to participation and agritourism function (Chi et al., 2024; Sun et al., 2025).

Developing hypotheses

Culinary symbolism and experience of the viewer

Symbolism of culinary culture means the meanings and values embedded in local food that reflect cultural identity, traditions and communal narratives (Cwierka, 2007; Ghaderi & Shekari, 2025). The communication situation involves using local dishes to convey identity based on participation in culture and emotional engagement with the audience (Smith, 2015). According to the findings, the study of symbolic stimulation may produce a positive effect on a higher level of identification, cultural reality, and emotional involvement (Stone et al., 2018). Persons are more likely to appreciate content that reminds them of their heritage and culture in a creative manner. These characteristics contribute to content satisfaction by providing culturally relevant information (Wang et al., 2025). They also generate positive emotional responses, such as pride, nostalgia, or a sense of community connection (Hernández-Garrido et al., 2026).

Furthermore, symbolism in culinary culture does not only meets information requirements but also gives rise to denotative reactions (Jiang et al., 2014). In this aspect, food evokes emotions and memories, and viewers perceive the dishes as familiar and appealing until they learn the traditions behind them (Chatterjee & Chattaraj, 2025).

According to research, whenever the audience feels such emotions, it becomes easier for the content to make them have a positive emotion towards the content (Xu et al., 2025). This process improves the user experience and raises consciousness regarding its cultural values. On that basis, the study hypothesizes that culinary cultural symbols are positively associated with content satisfaction and viewers' emotional responses. This relationship is examined within the specific geographical context in which the culinary content is presented.

H1.a Symbolism of culinary culture has a positive relationship with content satisfaction.

H1.b Symbolism of culinary culture has a positive relationship with positive emotional response.

The effect of dish distinctiveness on the experience of viewers

The uniqueness of dishes refers to distinctive features that differentiate one dish from another (Wang & Guo, 2026). In other words, it reflects culinary creations shaped by cultural context and the creative ability of cooks (Di Giovine & Brulotte, 2018). In riverscape regions, both local ingredients and preparation techniques are used to capture viewers'

attention (Yousaf, 2022). The recent studies indicate that unusual or innovatively served dishes are likely to produce more satisfaction among the audience. The experimental results show that audiences perceive these culinary expressions as new experiences. This finding helps explain the mechanism behind this phenomenon (Ahmed et al., 2024). In particular, when the audience sees dishes decorated with elements that carry cultural or social significance, curiosity is often aroused (Youssef et al., 2026). This reaction also increases the perceived value of the media content.

Moreover, the communication of dish uniqueness may be associated with positive emotional responses, which can be reflected in viewers' facial expressions (Górska-Warsewicz, 2026). This is about how visual and storytelling aspects of differentiated culinary elements can make viewers feel happy (Chi et al., 2024). Research shows that these emotional appeals help to increase viewers' engagement with the cultural content since they attribute uniqueness of the dishes with the identity and richness of the culture depicted (Steriopoulos et al., 2024).

The analysis of relevant publications shows that dish uniqueness is positively associated with content satisfaction. This satisfaction helps stimulate positive emotional responses among viewers. Based on this relationship, it can be assumed that emphasizing the uniqueness of cuisine through the media will help attract the attention of the audience.

H2.a Uniqueness of dishes has a positive relationship with content satisfaction.

H2.b Uniqueness of dishes has a positive relationship with positive emotional response.

The importance of community food values in increasing viewer engagement

The role of food within a community reflects its social functions associated with culinary practices (Arcadu & Migliorini, 2024). It also shapes how people define their identity in relation to food and culture (Pratt, 2008). This value is frequently expressed through rituals and customs manifested in local culinary traditions (Fattah et al., 2025). In communities that live beside rivers, food is often a representation of communal rituals and traditions that are meaningful to viewers (Stone et al., 2018). According to prior studies, the social aspect enhances viewers' enjoyment of the content. Viewers gain satisfaction from discovering the role of food in fostering community unity and preserving cultural traditions (Cheraghi et al., 2025). As a result, viewers may have a more immersive and warm viewing experience through representations of the food as a link to a given culture (de la Barre & Brouder, 2013; Zhao et al., 2026).

Furthermore, an important reason for a positive reception by the target audience is the community value of food. By displaying the power of food to trigger shared memories, cultural pride and a sense of belonging, media content helps to build strong emotional connections (Ye, 2026; Groszlik & Lerner, 2021). These relationships enhance content satisfaction and also contribute to the development of a stronger emotional bond (Gao et al., 2026). Research on emotionally resonant storytelling suggests that content that provokes an immersive experience and emotional engagement promotes greater appreciation and connection of the viewer (Ahmed et al., 2024). This emotional involvement not only improves their viewing experience, but it also improves the degree to which they are attached to the values of the community depicted.

Based on previous analyses of the community role of food, the study develops the following hypothesis: community food values are positively associated with viewer satisfaction and positive emotional responses.

H3.a Community value of food has a positive relationship with content satisfaction.

H3.b Community value of food has a positive relationship with positive emotional response.

Satisfaction with content and its association with exploration and sharing

Content satisfaction refers to the extent to which the audience thinks about media content as providing information, feelings, or entertainment (Chi et al., 2024; Tahat, 2025). When content about river food clearly expresses cultural aspects and different types of cuisine, it positively impacts viewers' emotional state and enjoyment (Xia et al., 2023). Those people who become interested in the experiences depicted in content and the customs of different cultures may develop a stronger interest in culinary culture (Mainolfi et al., 2022; Phrammanachot et al., 2026). Studies have shown that satisfied viewers are more likely to try to find more information or actively interact with the information provided. Through this interaction, they are able to be more connected to the cultural setting of the riverine regions (Wang, 2024).

More than exploration, content satisfaction also affects the audience's likelihood of sharing what they watch (Ganobčik et al., 2026; Jung & Hwang, 2023). The audience which consumes content related to food tends to share it because of the desire to contribute to their friends' improved perception of culture and similar interests (Mukherjee, 2024). Recent studies indicate that emotional satisfaction increases viewers' intention to share content through social media and word of mouth (Kusuma et al., 2026). This behavior reflects their commitment to cultural values (Martínez García de Leaniz et al., 2025). Acts of sharing, even when personal and spontaneous, go toward disseminating cultural messages to more people (Farzin & Makvandi, 2025).

Therefore, content satisfaction increases viewers' interest in exploring culinary culture. It also encourages information sharing, which supports the spread of cultural values within the community. On that basis, this study proposes two hypotheses regarding the role of satisfaction in forming the intention to explore and share content.

H4.a Content satisfaction has a positive relationship with content sharing behavior

H4.b Content satisfaction has a positive relationship with culinary tourism intention

Emotional response as predictor of exploring and sharing behaviour

Positive emotional response is a system that comes with positive psychological interventions, such as joy and happiness. It is defined as the emotional boost that comes with the audience relating with cultural media productions. The following might help a person's mental health, their ability to cope with life stress, as well as individual development

(Stone et al., 2018); (Xu et al., 2025). Whenever the content shared in the media engages with culture and reaches out for genuine depth about the riverside culinary practices, a positive emotional appeal is triggered (Wang, 2024).

These feelings are particularly important in increasing the intention to examine the culinary culture as the desires of the audience rise up for interacting with the shown traditions, practices, and life occasions (Mainolfi et al., 2022). Being affected emotionally, the viewers will get more curious and encouraged to learn more about the culture of the place, broadening their understanding of the culinary customs. Furthermore, positive emotional response also contributes to guiding content-sharing behaviour. It indicates that, consumers who experience any form of emotional connections on cultural messages in media are likely to pass on the content (Lin, 2024). All this behavior is driven by the need to share emotions, have somebody listen to an exciting story or show the brightness of the cultures depicted (Masmoudi, 2025).

Compared to neutral content, this type of content post is more likely to be shared more and therefore assists in spreading culture (Chi et al., 2024). Moreover, the mediating role of emotional appeal in cultural understanding is supported by a strong positive association between the two outcomes. Specifically, culinary tourism intention is positively related to the willingness to share culture-related media. On this basis, this study proposes the following hypotheses.

H5.a Positive emotional response has a positive relationship with content sharing behavior

H5.b Positive emotional response has a positive relationship with culinary tourism intention.

Consequently, intention to culinary tourism and sharing behavior are two complementary results that are indicative of the externalities of this work. Figure 1 illustrates the impact of media in advancing first-hand experiences of culture and the process of cultural communication and the perception based on emotional reaction.

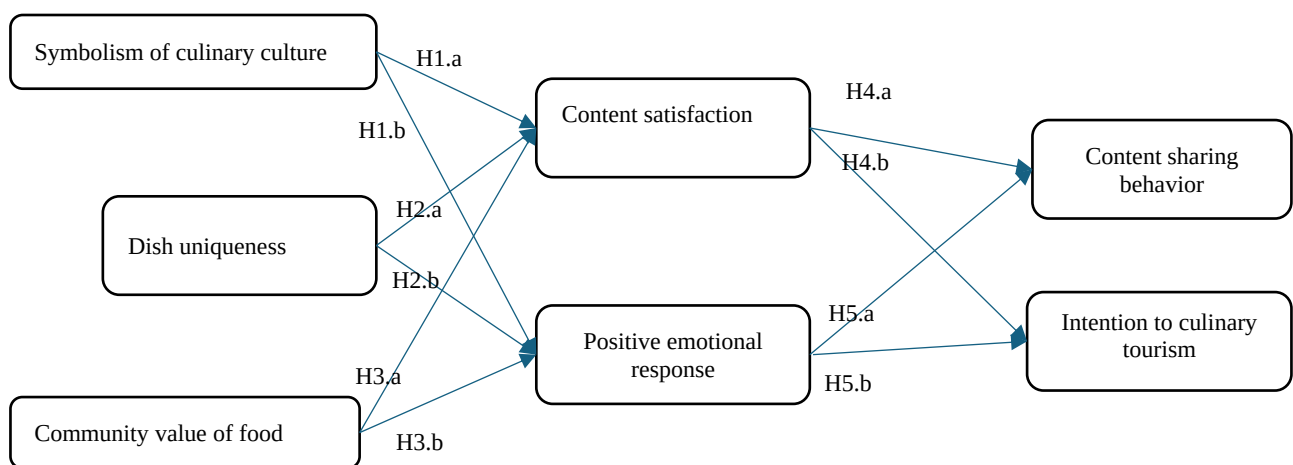


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of riverine culinary appeal (Source: author's systematization, 2025)

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Questionnaire development

The assessment instruments used in this study are standardized scales. The theoretical framework is grounded in Cultural Heritage Theory (Timothy & Boyd, 2006; Bessiere, 1998) and Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz et al., 1973). To increase the reliability and validity of these constructs, the operationalization of these constructs has been based on the items already investigated and validated in the literature (Kim et al., 2012).

The scale uses a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) to measure the strength of viewers' impressions and attitudinal responses (Likert, 2017). According to the research objectives, each measurement item is developed to represent specific theoretical constructs derived from the theoretical background (Kim et al., 2010).

All scale items were written in English and translated into Vietnamese language by a university lecturer specialized in English language education. A back-translation procedure was then performed to ensure semantic and conceptual equivalence (Chen & Boore, 2010). Minor revisions focusing on local language words and meanings were made based on comparison between the original and back-translated versions. A pilot study was performed among 20 lecturers specializing in tourism and 10 final-year undergraduate students in the same discipline as indicated in Table 1. The majority of feedback concerned the wording and consistency of subject references (Byon & Zhang, 2010).

Table 1. Test results of 30 responses on measurement structure (Source: Author's analysis, 2025)

Note: Composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE)

Symbol	Measurement concepts	Cronbach's Alpha	Outer loadings	CR	AVE
SC	Symbolism of culinary culture	0.836	0.766 - 0.841	0.889	0.668
UD	Unique dishes	0.840	0.727 - 0.891	0.888	0.666
CF	Community value of food	0.910	0.871 - 0.911	0.936	0.785
CS	Content satisfaction	0.886	0.825 - 0.919	0.921	0.746
ER	Positive emotional response	0.847	0.737 - 0.913	0.894	0.679
CT	Intention to culinary tourism	0.875	0.811 - 0.870	0.912	0.722
SB	Content sharing behavior	0.820	0.766 - 0.822	0.879	0.644

Before the official survey, the research team performed a pre-test on the scale using 30 samples to ensure the reliability and validity of the test. The results in Table 1 show that the scales all met the criteria for internal reliability. The outcomes presented that all scales meet the acceptance threshold with Cronbach's Alpha > 0.80, CR > 0.87 and AVE > 0.63. In addition, the outer loading coefficient of the observed variables ranges from 0.727 to 0.919, reflecting the level of positive contribution to the conceptual structure (Dash & Paul, 2021). This shows that the scale has good reliability and can be used in the official survey.

Data collection and sample size

Samples for this research were collected at agrotourism and farm-to-table ecotourism sites in the Mekong Delta. Tourists were briefly introduced to the study through a 10-15 minutes face-to-face session. In this interaction, they were asked to watch a 3-5 minutes video on the riverine cuisine and the cultural background.

Participants who agreed received a QR code for the video and were then asked to complete an online questionnaire that was designed to assess their media experience. All of the responses given by the survey were kept securely in Google Drive (Appendix A) in encrypted folders accessible only by the research team, to ensure anonymity and prevent unauthorized access (Alamoudi et al., 2024). At the survey sites, the research team was supported by 10 trained final year students who helped approach tourists, explain the study and guide participation. In a study design that is conscious of minimizing interviewer bias, all assistants had a standardized script to use when approaching participants. Tourists were clearly informed that no personal data would be collected and could withdraw at any time. The questionnaire was designed with only mandatory questions to ensure data completeness (Newcomer & Triplett, 2015).

The purpose of the study and the method applied, the cross-sectional survey studies were used as the recommended way to estimate sample size (Wagner & Grimm, 2023). The minimum sample size was determined to be 280 based on the 10-fold rule, with 7 concepts; each concept consists of 4 observed variables (Hair et al., 2017). In fact, the convenience and feasibility of sampling at tourist sites offer advantages in terms of speed and accessibility. However, limitations in representativeness still pose a challenge for ensuring reliable results (Daniel Staetsky, 2019).

However, the intended sample size was 500 because of the potential non-responses, and 358 valid responses were used in the analysis. Moreover, in this last sample, 34 respondents were recruited through snowball sampling to expand on the idea of recruitment which is narrowly based on convenience sampling.

The independent t-test was conducted to compare the main group and the subgroup. The results showed no statistically significant difference between the two groups based on the measured variables ($p > 0.05$). Thus, the findings indicate the compatibility of groups and enhance the validity of the primary data (Walters, 2021).

During the collection process, including before participation, tourists were informed that no personal data would be collected, and they were encouraged to discontinue if privacy concerns arose. Data collection began in the month of May and was finished on the 24th of December 2024, when the link for the survey was deactivated.

Finally, the research team manually reviewed the survey responses in order to discard low-quality responses, such as responses where the same answer was chosen for 20 questions in a row, to ensure the integrity of the dataset (Wang, 2024). To reduce the bias introduced by generic methods, set up Google Forms to be anonymous in order to avoid duplicate and incomplete responses. Concurrently, two diagnostic checks were to be performed in order to evaluate the possibility of common method bias. In particular, the single-factor test by Harman showed that no single factor could explain most of the variance (under 50 percent) and values of VIF in the PLS-SEM model had to be less than 5 (Hair Jr. et al., 2017).

Data analysis

The first, according to the data processing guidelines in social research. Nominal level analysis applies demographic frequency distributions to provide information about the study and sample attributes. Furthermore, frequency check is a standard initial procedure of social research to determine demographics and potential outliers.

This issue has set the questions in the survey form as mandatory, helping to limit the case of missing data right from the beginning. In addition, the data was not standardized because the Likert scale is ordinal, and PLS-SEM does not require standardization for such non-metric data (Sarstedt et al., 2022).

Second, all the analysis is done using software SmartPLS. Internal consistency is evaluated with Cronbach's Alpha while outer loading and VIF are used to evaluate the constructs for scale consistency and multicollinearity respectively (Bonett & Wright, 2015). In the measurement model analysis phase, SmartPLS software was used to test the overall reliability through Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. Next, the consistency between measured variables and multicollinearity were evaluated by using the outer loading factor and VIF index; all values were lower than 5, the popular recommended threshold (Hair et al., 2019).

Thirdly, construct validity was assessed using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) employs composite reliability and average variance extracted (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). All latent constructs were tested in terms of convergent validity and composite reliability by applying the CR and AVE indices.

Fourth, the relationships among variables were tested using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) to test both direct and indirect relationships among cognitive measures. This approach is suitable for exploratory approaches, complex models, medium sample sizes, and for non-normally distributed data. Utilizing its analytical technique, PLS-SEM is unique among CB-SEM methods for the following: It requires fewer statistical assumptions, and focuses on prediction and explanation rather than validation of a theoretical model (Hair. et al., 2017; Hair et al., 2019).

Finally, the structural model was visualized with the help of SmartPLS, where construct relationships became more evident and the power and importance of paths were outlined. The assessment of the model's suitability was performed based on common indices and all met acceptable thresholds, indicating that the measurement model and the structural model were suitable. The results were visualized using a path diagram on SmartPLS 4 software, in which statistically significant relationships ($p < 0.05$) were shown in bold lines to support the analysis.

Table 2 shows a summary of the assessment indices and their reference thresholds.

Table 2. Indicators of model compatibility (Source: Author's analysis, 2025)

Index of model fit	Results	Threshold
SRMR	0.061	< 0.08 (Hair et al., 2021)
NFI (Normed Fit Index)	0.884	> 0.80 (Hair et al., 2017)
Chi-square (χ^2)	728.087	Report only, no strict cutoff (Hair et al., 2019)
d_ULS	1.525	Not standardized – for relative comparison
d_G (Geodesic discrepancy)	0.345	Same as d_ULS, no universal threshold
R ² (SB)	0.334	≥ 0.25 : moderate; ≥ 0.50 : substantial (Hair et al., 2019)
Adjusted R ² (SB)	0.33	Used to correct for number of predictors
VIF (inner)	All < 3	< 3.3 indicates no multicollinearity (Hair et al., 2021)

RESULTS

Sample information collected

The research context is on the interaction behavior with culinary content on digital platforms in the context of cultural heritage values and media experiences. To characterize the participant group, Table 3 details demographic variables including gender, age, and job position. and characteristics of the target group.

This information may suggest further research on the relationship between viewer characteristics and the level of interaction with cultural culinary content on digital platforms.

Table 3. Characteristics of demographics of the participants (Source: Author's analysis, 2025)

Demographic variables	Details	Participants	Frequency (%)
Gender	Female	229	63.97
	Male	129	36.03
Age	18 - 29	62	17.32
	30 - 39	112	31.28
	40 - 49	70	19.55
	50 - 59	80	22.35
	Up 60	34	9.50
Job position	Employee	202	56.42
	Management	103	28.77
	Unemployed	53	14.80

Table 3 shows the detailed statistical data of the demographic characteristics of the research sample. It shows that there is diversity in terms of gender, age, and job categories. Female respondents constitute 63.97% of the sample, while male respondents comprise 36.03% of the sample, a fact that suggests that the survey favoured women. The age status shows that most of the participants fall in the age bracket of 30-39 years (31.28%) and 50- 59 (22.35%).

The employees constitute the largest group 56.42%, followed by managerial respondent 28.77%, while the unemployed level occupies 14.80%. The results may be explained regarding the research on demographic variables including age, gender, and occupation in the formation of culinary content selection and consumption. (Chi et al., 2024; Jung & Hwang, 2023). Moreover, the sample is diverse, which may support the argument that demographic diversity can improve the generality of the culinary tourism findings (Yousaf, 2022). Such demographics ensure that the research includes a variety of views for the research, improving relevance and generalisability.

Evaluate the reliability of each concept according to Cronbach Alpha

Table 4 evaluates Cronbach's Alpha, Outer loadings, and VIF standard based on guidelines set by (Hair et al., 2017). All of these measures at once affirm the stability of the conceptual structure.

First, the estimates of Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for all constructs are above the accepted level of 0.7 (Bonett & Wright, 2015). For example, content satisfaction has a coefficient of 0.903, and intention to culinary tourism is 0.853, which proves the reliability of the constructs.

Second, outer loadings are all above the recommended threshold of 0.708, which has affirmed the reliability of all the used indicators (Hair et al., 2019). For instance, both SC2 has a value of 0.893, and CF4, with 0.879, indicating their importance to the constructs, based on loadings. This contributes to the convergent validity of the measurement model.

Finally, the outer VIF values are all < 5, as suggested by (Hair et al., 2017). Based on these results, there is no apparent multicollinearity, which means that all items are measures that are entirely distinct and have their own distinct measure on their respective constructs.

Table 4. Measurement items and reliability indicators (Source: Author's analysis, 2025)

Items	Measurement content	Cronbach's alpha	Outer loading	VIF
SC	Symbolism of culinary culture	0.888		
SC1	Visitors perceive the rituals associated with local cuisine as reflective of cultural identity		0.863	2.378
SC2	Visitors feel that historical significance in local dishes enhances their cultural authenticity		0.893	2.737
SC3	Visitors are emotionally connected to food that evokes nostalgic memories.		0.895	2.679
SC4	Visitors appreciate local cuisine for its ability to inspire curiosity about cultural traditions		0.807	1.945
UD	Unique dishes	0.879		
UD1	Visitors perceive locally sourced ingredients in dishes as a reflection of regional creativity and heritage		0.860	2.209
UD2	Visitors have expressed interest in how foods served by the restaurant are prepared using traditional methods		0.840	2.084
UD3	Visitors catch interest and cultural fever when seeing special food		0.846	2.107
UD4	Visitors appreciate the distinctiveness of dishes for enriching their viewing experience and cultural understanding		0.879	2.549
CF	Community value of food	0.888		
CF1	Visitors transcend food as a representation of shared traditions and rituals in a community		0.872	2.464
CF2	Visitors feel connected to the cultural identity of a region via its culinary practices		0.872	2.480
CF3	Visitors equate food as providing a sense of community and shared memories		0.839	2.047
CF4	Visitors find it meaningful to explore food in relation to community unity and heritage preservation		0.879	2.472
CS	Content satisfaction	0.903		
CS1	Visitors feel that media content about riverine cuisine fulfills their need for cultural information		0.884	2.651
CS2	Visitors find satisfaction in content that highlights unique culinary traditions and practices		0.877	2.468
CS3	Visitors are motivated to explore cultural heritage after engaging with satisfying culinary content		0.886	2.691
CS4	Visitors are inclined to share culinary-themed media content that provides emotional and entertainment satisfaction		0.873	2.557
ER	Positive emotional response	0.876		
ER1	Visitors enjoy cultural authentic content on riverine cuisine		0.825	1.980
ER2	Visitors feel nostalgia when exposed to media which emphasizes cultural traditions in riverine cuisine		0.880	2.634
ER3	Visitors in riverine cuisine readings get the feeling of surprise about its richness and reality		0.877	2.596
ER4	Visitors develop emotional connections to cultural stories portrayed through culinary media		0.832	1.988
CT	Intention to culinary tourism	0.853		
CT1	Visitors intend to visit places that demonstrate the authentic culinary customs		0.826	1.859
CT2	Visitors inspired to experience the cultural heritage through unique food		0.825	1.925
CT3	Visitors plan to participate in immersive culinary activities at featured destinations		0.821	1.885
CT4	Visitors are inspired to engage with regional cuisine after viewing culturally rich media content		0.859	2.085
SB	Content sharing behavior	0.888		
SB1	Visitors will most likely be sharing culinary content that emphasizes regional authenticity		0.866	2.317
SB2	Visitors feel motivated to share emotionally engaging culinary narratives with others		0.866	2.364
SB3	Visitors enjoy sharing content to highlight the cultural diversity of riverine cuisine		0.852	2.123
SB4	Visitors post videos of food to show others cultural peculiarities		0.877	2.599

Result of convergent validity, discriminant validity

Table 5 presents the Cronbach's Alpha (CA) index, composite reliability (CR or rho_c), average variance extracted (AVE), and correlation matrix according to the Fornell–Larcker criterion. This synthesis is to ensure that the measured variables meet the requirements before analyzing the structural model.

Table 5. Construct reliability and correlation matrix based on the Fornell–Larcker criterion (Source: Author's analysis, 2025)

Note: Cronbach's alpha (CA), Composite reliability (rho_c), Average variance extracted (AVE)

	CA	Rho_c	AVE	CF	CS	CT	ER	SB	SC	UD
CF	0.888	0.923	0.749	0.866						
CS	0.903	0.932	0.774	0.360	0.880					
CT	0.853	0.901	0.694	0.357	0.272	0.833				
ER	0.876	0.915	0.729	0.425	0.314	0.434	0.854			
SB	0.888	0.923	0.749	0.385	0.438	0.427	0.495	0.865		
SC	0.888	0.922	0.748	0.388	0.387	0.293	0.346	0.387	0.865	
UD	0.879	0.917	0.734	0.297	0.324	0.111	0.381	0.290	0.262	0.857

Table 5 reveals the correlation matrix and the reliability measures such as composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) that were analyzed by using the Fornell-Larcker criterion. The results indicate that all constructs are above reliability and validity thresholds suggested (Hair et al., 2019).

First, the CR values of all constructs vary from 0.901 (culinary tourism) to 0.932 (content satisfaction), which is greater than the minimum threshold of 0.7. These results show a high internal consistency for the constructs, with emotional response (CR=0.915) and culinary symbolism (CR=0.901) also showing excellent reliability.

Second, average variance extracted (AVE) values exceed recommended values (i.e., 0.5) as a measure of convergent validity. Example, the latent variables content satisfaction with the culinary culture (AVE = 0.774) and symbolism of the culinary culture (AVE = 0.748) ensure that the remaining indicators have a high explained communality (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Additionally, discriminant validity tested by the Fornell-Larcker criterion showed success because construct diagonal elements were greater than construct cross-correlations. The obtained consistent results confirm the accurate measurement model will be used during the upcoming structural analysis (Hair et al., 2019).

Testing statistical hypotheses

To test the proposed hypotheses, the study used the bootstrapping method with 5,000 samples to estimate path coefficients and determine the corresponding statistical significance level. Table 6 presents detailed estimates of coefficients, standard deviations, T-values and P-values for each relationship between variables. These results are the basis for assessing the level of support of data for the research hypotheses.

This research examines how riverine cuisine's cultural values, symbolism, originality, and communal value engage viewers in media material. Cultural heritage social factors impact emotional responses and perceived pleasure, thereby increasing content sharing behavior and culinary tourism intention, as reported in Table 6.

Table 6. Path coefficients and significance levels from bootstrapping (N = 5000) (Source: Author's analysis, 2025)

Note: Symbolism of culinary culture (SC), uniqueness of dishes (UD), Community value of food (CF), content satisfaction (CS), emotional response (ER), content sharing behavior (SB), culinary tourism (CT)

Hypothesis	Paths	Estimation coefficient (β)	Standard deviation	T-statistics	P-values
H1.a	SC -> CS	0.257	0.063	4.085	0.000
H1.b	SC -> ER	0.169	0.054	3.118	0.002
H2.a	UD -> CS	0.196	0.064	3.071	0.002
H2.b	UD -> ER	0.252	0.060	4.170	0.000
H3.a	CF -> CS	0.202	0.071	2.844	0.004
H3.b	CF -> ER	0.284	0.055	5.185	0.000
H4.a	CS -> SB	0.314	0.055	5.687	0.000
H4.b	CS -> CT	0.151	0.062	2.423	0.015
H5.a	ER -> SB	0.396	0.054	7.407	0.000
H5.b	ER -> CT	0.386	0.052	7.429	0.000

Table 7. Specific indirect effects (Source: Author's analysis, 2025)

Note: Symbolism of culinary culture (SC), Uniqueness of dishes (UD), Community value of food (CF), Content satisfaction (CS), Emotional response (ER), Content Sharing behavior (SB), Culinary tourism (CT)

Paths	Estimation coefficient	Standard deviation	T-statistics	P-values
CF -> CS -> SB	0.063	0.028	2.251	0.024
SC -> CS -> SB	0.081	0.024	3.340	0.001
CF -> CS -> CT	0.031	0.019	1.581	0.114
SC -> CS -> CT	0.039	0.019	2.007	0.045
UD -> CS -> CT	0.030	0.015	1.979	0.048
SC -> ER -> CT	0.065	0.024	2.679	0.007
UD -> ER -> CT	0.097	0.025	3.879	0.000
UD -> CS -> SB	0.062	0.024	2.523	0.012
UD -> ER -> SB	0.100	0.027	3.683	0.000
CF -> ER -> SB	0.113	0.027	4.160	0.000
SC -> ER -> SB	0.067	0.025	2.636	0.008
CF -> ER -> CT	0.110	0.028	3.970	0.000

According to the theory of cultural heritage, aesthetics and exclusivity of cuisine components are seen as focus components that embody every culture as well as shared values (Chi et al., 2024). As the findings have shown, symbolism of culinary culture (SC) has a highly positive and significant impact on both content satisfaction ($\beta = 0.257$, $p < 0.01$) and positive affect emotional response ($\beta = 0.169$, $p < 0.05$). Thus, the presented results indicate that the use of traditional symbols involving rituals and presenting historical events is appreciated by participants and opens new possibilities for understanding cultural values transferred through media content. Consequently, the uniqueness of dishes (UD) also significantly contributes to satisfaction ($\beta = 0.196$, $p < 0.05$) and emotional experience ($\beta = 0.252$, $p < 0.01$) as the viewer learns how certain differentiation factors create engaging appeals (Mainolfi et al., 2022).

Similarly, the results also reveal that the elements of the uses and gratifications theory explain how the content provided by media and media technologies fulfills audiences' informational, emotional and entertainment needs (Xu et al., 2025). This research reveals that emotional response (ER), mediated by symbolism and uniqueness play an important role and acts as a bridge, enabling viewers to develop intentions to travel or share content on digital platforms (Stone et al., 2018). The findings show that emotional response is more likely to predict content sharing behavior ($\beta = 0.396$, $p < 0.01$) than content satisfaction ($\beta = 0.314$, $p < 0.01$). Emotional appeal assures satisfaction for viewers because it links them to culture-related stories thereby satisfying their need for engaging and genuine serving media

content (Vorderer & Halfmann, 2019). Through demonstrating that emotional response plays a significant role in the model, media capability to raise feelings of wonder, recall, and fascination is also significant (Kim et al., 2024).

In addition, the effect size analysis (f^2) results showed that emotional response had a medium impact on content sharing behavior ($f^2 = 0.212$) and culinary travel intention ($f^2 = 0.170$), while the other paths were only small. Blindfolding analysis also proved the predictive value (Q^2), where with $Q^2 = 0.242$ for sharing behavior and $Q^2 = 0.192$ for emotional response, which proved the power of predicting with the model (Hair et al., 2017; Hair et al., 2019). Table 7 indicates the findings on the connections between content sharing and travel intention of the visitors. Besides, indirect effects were analyzed with bootstrapping to determine mediation in the structural model. In the findings, the link between the emotional responses of the audience and their behaviour is explained. In the areas of content sharing behavior and intention to investigate culinary tourism, positive emotional reaction was measured, and the findings showed direct effect (Wang, 2024). Finally, the results of hypothesis testing H5.a show that symbolism of culinary culture is associated with emotionally engaged participants and willingness to share cultural values or culinary tourism experiences ($\beta = 0.396$, $p < 0.01$). This confirms that emotions are the bridge between receiving media content and actual behavior, through social sharing or direct participation in the culinary journey (Ahmed et al., 2024). Figure 2 shows direct and indirect effects that describe the formation of intentions to disseminate content on social platforms and engage in culinary tourism.

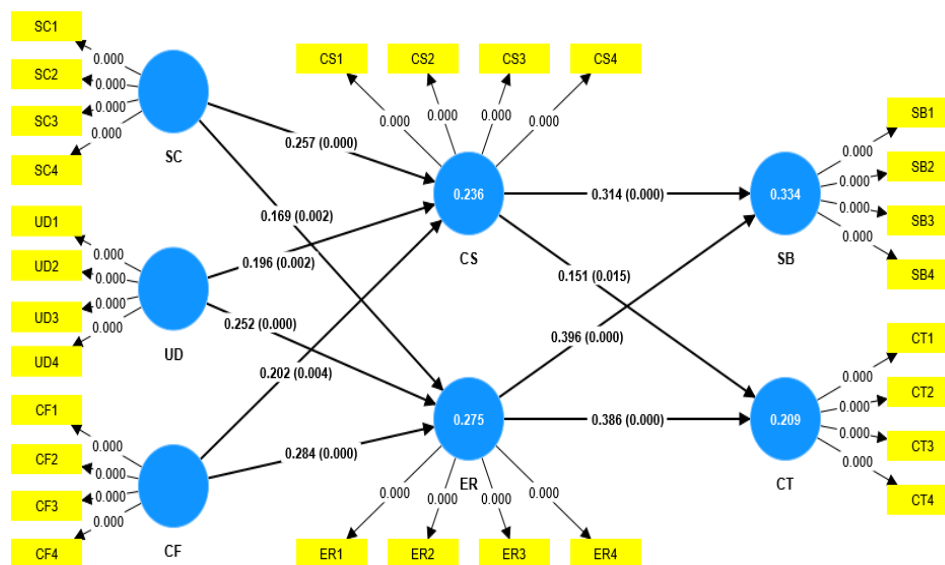


Figure 2. Visualizes the analysis results of the riverine culinary appeal framework (Source: Author's analysis, 2025)
 Note: Symbolism of culinary culture (SC), Uniqueness of dishes (UD), Community value of food (CF), Content satisfaction (CS), Emotional response (ER), Content sharing behavior (SB), Culinary tourism (CT)

DISCUSSION

Cuisine has become an increasingly important tool of cultural communication in the form of short-form video platforms, where response from viewers is more relevant to tourism research. According to previous researches, culinary content may help in preservation of intangible heritage and enable development of tourism (Chi et al., 2024); (Connell, 2012). This particular point of view is consistent with the claim that gastronomy is a cultural resource associated with authenticity-seeking behavior (Bessiere, 1998) and reinforces the position of heritage tourism in frameworks of cultural tourism (Timothy & Boyd, 2006). Consistent with this view, the present study identifies symbolism, uniqueness, and community as core cultural values associated with cuisine (Di Giovine & Brulotte, 2018).

Beyond the cultural meaning, the findings show that regional cuisine videos are perceived as entertaining, and they motivate the viewers to look for information or to share something. Emotional reactions seem to have a stronger impact on sharing behavior compared to only being satisfied (Groszlik & Lerner, 2021). This pattern supports the resonance-based storytelling, which focuses on emotional immersion as a factor of audience connection (Vorderer & Halfmann, 2019). Accordingly, culinary heritage communication should integrate culturally based storytelling in order to generate emotional communication (Moreira et al., 2024). Further analysis shows significant relationships between content characteristics, emotional reactions and behavioral intentions. Younger audiences tend to share content more, as expected in previous studies. However, these trends should be interpreted cautiously since there were no group differences for tests of significance (Yousaf, 2022; Chi et al., 2024). Content relevance and emotional response are closely related to symbolic meaning and dish uniqueness (Stone et al., 2018). In addition, content satisfaction and emotional reactions partially mediate the effects of cultural values on exploration and sharing intentions (Mainolfi et al., 2022).

Compared with previous research, the results show similarities and differences in the way culinary media affect audiences. While informational and emotional framing affects sharing and visiting intentions (Jung & Hwang, 2023), the present results confirm that emotional responses are stronger predictors than satisfaction (Y. Zheng et al., 2024). In contrast to influencer centered approaches, the focus of this study is the cultural symbolism and community values ingrained in culinary stories (Di Giovine & Brulotte, 2018). Recent research is also showing an interest, identity, and cultural meaning

to drive audience engagement (Chen et al., 2025). Whereas previous works have focused on novelty, spatial context, and companionship in culinary tourism experiences (Stone et al., 2018), this work develops a focus on communal values and symbolic meanings communicated through short videos. The symbolic aspects of food culture, the individuality of food, and the community value of food as a community value influence content satisfaction and emotional response. In turn, content sharing behavior and culinary tourism intention are determined by content satisfaction and emotional response (R. Li & Yu, 2025; Steriopoulou et al., 2024). These findings support the consideration of food as a medium for the communication of heritage and identity through storytelling (Di Giovine & Brulotte, 2018). By combining the cultural heritage values with emotional processes based on the Uses and Gratifications Theory, the research provides an alternative to explaining, going beyond the frame or influencer-based models (Bessiere, 1998; Chi et al., 2024).

A number of limitations should be recognized. The sample consisted mostly of young females, eventually limiting the generalizability across demographic groups. Although adequate for testing models, the use of more diverse samples would increase the external validity. In addition, the use of self-reported information may introduce perceptual bias, which may suggest the value of qualitative approaches in future research. Overall, the significance of symbolism, uniqueness and community values in the determination of emotional involvement and behavioural intentions. Emotional reactions and content satisfaction influence intentions to explore culinary tourism and share media content. Demographic imbalances and sampling strategy expansion should be addressed in future research. Short cuisine videos are thus a promising tool for conveying the culinary heritage and triggering interest in a digital tourism context.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The study shows how cultural features of Mekong Delta cuisine in short-form videos relate to viewers' satisfaction, emotions, content sharing, and culinary tourism intention. The characteristics of the surveyed tourists should be considered when applying these findings to other audiences. From a cultural heritage perspective, culinary symbols and distinctive dishes help viewers connect with the region's food culture. Rituals and historical accounts can increase content satisfaction and appreciation of cultural authenticity (Chi et al., 2024). The uniqueness of local dishes may also attract attention and encourage viewers to learn more about them (J. Wang et al., 2025). Through these features, culinary videos can help present regional identity to wider audiences (Stone et al., 2018).

Additionally, uses and gratifications theory explains how the media content meets the cognitive and emotional needs of the viewers. Videos that offer information and enjoyment can encourage audience engagement, especially when they evoke positive feelings (Y. Zhang et al., 2025). Emotional response is therefore relevant to how viewers engage with culinary heritage content (Mainolfi et al., 2022; Xu et al., 2025). These responses also help explain viewers' interest in sharing culinary videos and exploring local food during travel. Positive emotions may encourage people to share such content on social media, allowing stories of local cuisine to reach others (Wang, 2024).

As the results of the study show, media creators and cultural stakeholders can target viewers and promote content sharing and cultural exploration by using symbolic and unique aspects of riverine culinary cultures. In practice, they can include cultural ceremonies and local specialties in stories that address viewers' interests and evoke positive emotions (Wu et al., 2026; Moreira et al., 2024). Beyond tourism promotion, sharing these stories may help more people become familiar with local culinary heritage (Wang, 2024). Community storytelling offers local stakeholders a way to present food traditions and strengthen their connection with the destination (Butler & Carr, 2024).

These conclusions should be read in light of the study's sample, which included tourists already engaged with culinary media. Future studies could include more diverse viewers and use experimental designs to examine how emotional responses relate to sharing and culinary tourism intention. Live streaming and virtual reality could also be studied to understand responses to other media formats (Tang & Zhang, 2024).

Author contributions

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Informed Consent Statement: All participants were informed about the study and agreed to take part before completing the questionnaire.

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