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Local Foodservice Brand Choice in Makassar, Indonesia: Authenticity Is Not Enough

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ABSTRACT

Local foodservice businesses in Makassar, Indonesia, increasingly compete through cultural authenticity, hygiene assurance, food quality, digital visibility, and customer experience. This study examines how these factors shape foodservice brand choice intention in a local culinary market known for distinctive regional dishes such as Coto Makassar, Pallubasa, Konro, Sop Saudara, and Barongko. Drawing on the Stimulus Organism Response framework, the study proposes that food authenticity, perceived hygiene, food quality, and social media visibility influence foodservice brand experience, which subsequently enhances emotional attachment, brand loyalty, and foodservice brand choice intention. Perceived price fairness is also examined as a moderator of the relationship between foodservice brand experience and brand loyalty. Data from 348 customers of traditional restaurants, street food vendors, food stalls, culinary markets, and culinary small and medium enterprises in Makassar were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling. The findings show that food quality is the strongest predictor of foodservice brand experience, followed by food authenticity, perceived hygiene, and social media visibility. Foodservice brand experience significantly strengthens emotional attachment, while emotional attachment significantly enhances brand loyalty. Brand loyalty is the strongest predictor of foodservice brand choice intention. However, emotional attachment does not directly influence brand choice intention, indicating that emotional connection becomes behaviorally meaningful primarily through loyalty. The moderation analysis further shows that perceived price fairness strengthens the relationship between foodservice brand experience and brand loyalty. The study contributes to foodservice business research by demonstrating that authenticity alone is insufficient to secure customer choice. Local foodservice brands must combine authentic culinary identity with quality consistency, hygiene visibility, digital presence, emotional experience, loyalty building, and fair pricing.

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INTRODUCTION

Local foodservice businesses operate in an increasingly competitive marketplace where customers no longer evaluate food outlets only through taste, price, or convenience. Customers also assess whether a foodservice experience feels authentic, hygienic, emotionally meaningful, digitally visible, and consistently reliable. This issue is particularly relevant in Makassar, Indonesia, a city known for distinctive local dishes such as Coto Makassar, Pallubasa, Konro, Sop Saudara, Pisang Epe, and Barongko. Traditional restaurants, street food vendors, food stalls, culinary markets, and culinary SMEs in Makassar must therefore balance cultural distinctiveness with modern service expectations. Food authenticity may attract customer attention, but actual brand choice depends on whether customers perceive the overall foodservice experience as trustworthy, memorable, and worth repeating.

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Food authenticity has become a central construct in foodservice and culinary consumption research. Authentic food experiences allow customers to encounter local culture through ingredients, preparation methods, service atmosphere, and culinary narratives. Recent studies show that authentic street food experiences can influence perceived authenticity and behavioral intentions, while perceived heritage can shape customer behavior in both independent and franchise restaurant contexts (Ahn, 2025; Chompupor et al., 2024). However, authenticity alone may not be sufficient to secure loyalty or brand choice. Customers often evaluate authenticity together with hygiene, food quality, service reliability, and physical cleanliness. This is especially important for street food and culinary SMEs in Makassar, where customers may appreciate traditional taste but still hesitate to choose a vendor if hygiene, food safety, or quality consistency is uncertain. Prior foodservice research confirms that food quality, service quality, and hygiene practices influence satisfaction, revisit intention, and behavioral responses (Sirimongkol, 2022; Üstünsoy et al., 2024).

The digital environment further complicates foodservice brand competition. Customers increasingly discover, evaluate, and compare foodservice brands through social media platforms, online reviews, short videos, food influencers, and location based digital recommendations. In this context, social media visibility functions as a market signal that shapes perceived popularity, credibility, and desirability. For culinary SMEs in Makassar, digital visibility can expand market reach beyond physical location and transform small food outlets into recognizable foodservice brands. Studies on street food consumer behavior show that social media celebrities and digital content can shape consumption decisions by influencing perceived risk, attractiveness, and behavioral intention (Zhou & Ali, 2024). Thus, foodservice brand choice is increasingly shaped by the interaction between offline consumption experience and online visibility.

Although prior research has examined authenticity, heritage, food quality, hygiene, social media, and behavioral intention, limited attention has been given to how these factors jointly form foodservice brand choice. Many studies treat authenticity, food quality, price fairness, or hygiene as direct predictors of satisfaction, trust, purchase intention, or behavioral intention, which may overlook the psychological process through which customers transform foodservice cues into brand related responses (Leksana, 2025; Ratasuk, 2023). A customer may perceive a Makassar dish as authentic, but this perception may not lead to loyalty or future choice unless the experience is also hygienic, high quality, emotionally engaging, and socially visible. Therefore, foodservice brand choice should be examined through an integrated cognitive and affective pathway in which cultural, operational, and digital cues first shape brand experience and emotional attachment before influencing loyalty and future choice.

To address this gap, the present study proposes a foodservice brand choice model that integrates food authenticity, perceived hygiene, food quality, and social media visibility as antecedents of foodservice brand experience. The model further proposes that brand experience strengthens emotional attachment, which subsequently increases brand loyalty and foodservice brand choice intention. Perceived price fairness is included as a moderating factor because customers may respond more favorably to a foodservice experience when the price is considered reasonable relative to authenticity, hygiene, quality, and overall value. This study contributes to foodservice business research by positioning authenticity as a business resource that becomes meaningful when supported by operational trust, digital visibility, emotional experience, and fair pricing. It investigates these relationships among customers of traditional restaurants, street food vendors, food stalls, culinary markets, and culinary SMEs in Makassar, Indonesia.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Theoretical foundation: Stimulus Organism Response perspective

The present study is grounded in the Stimulus Organism Response framework, which explains how external environmental cues shape internal consumer evaluations and subsequently influence behavioral responses (Jacoby, 2002; Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). This perspective is appropriate for foodservice business research because customer choice is rarely formed from a single attribute. Instead, customers evaluate a combination of cultural, operational, and digital cues before developing attitudes, emotions, and behavioral intentions toward a foodservice brand. Recent foodservice studies have also applied the SOR logic to explain how restaurant related



stimuli influence customer experience, satisfaction, engagement, and behavioral responses (Jun & Yoon, 2024; Kabadayi et al., 2023).

In this study, the stimulus components consist of food authenticity, perceived hygiene, food quality, and social media visibility. These cues represent different dimensions of local foodservice evaluation. Food authenticity reflects cultural credibility and heritage value, perceived hygiene reflects safety and trust, food quality reflects the reliability of the core offering, and social media visibility reflects digital salience and market recognition. Together, these cues provide the basis through which customers interpret the value of a local foodservice brand.

The organism stage is represented by foodservice brand experience and emotional attachment. Foodservice brand experience captures customers' holistic sensory, cognitive, emotional, and relational evaluation of the foodservice encounter. Emotional attachment represents the affective bond that develops when the experience becomes personally meaningful. The response stage is represented by brand loyalty and foodservice brand choice intention, reflecting customers' willingness to revisit, recommend, and prioritize a local foodservice brand in future consumption decisions.

This framework is useful because it avoids treating customer choice as a direct reaction to authenticity alone. Customers may value traditional recipes, local ingredients, and cultural narratives, but these cues do not automatically produce loyalty or brand choice. Rather, customers process authenticity together with hygiene, quality, and digital visibility. These stimuli shape the overall brand experience, which then creates emotional attachment and behavioral loyalty. Thus, the SOR perspective provides a coherent theoretical basis for explaining how local foodservice businesses transform cultural and operational cues into customer brand choice.

Food authenticity and foodservice brand experience

Food authenticity is a central cultural cue in local foodservice markets because it communicates the perceived genuineness of a food offering. In traditional restaurants, street food outlets, and culinary SMEs, authenticity may be expressed through local ingredients, inherited recipes, traditional preparation methods, regional serving styles, and narratives about culinary heritage. These elements allow customers to interpret a foodservice encounter not only as a functional act of eating, but also as a symbolic experience connected to local identity and cultural continuity. Recent foodservice research on Thai street food shows that street food experiences can shape authenticity perceptions and behavioral intentions, confirming that authenticity is relevant not only to tourism experience but also to foodservice business value (Chompupor et al., 2024). Similarly, research on perceived heritage in restaurant contexts indicates that heritage-based cues influence customer behavior across both independent and franchise restaurant settings, suggesting that cultural continuity can strengthen foodservice brand meaning (Ahn, 2025).

Within the Stimulus Organism Response logic, food authenticity functions as an external stimulus that shapes the customer's internal brand experience. When customers perceive a local foodservice brand as authentic, they are more likely to experience the brand through richer sensory, cognitive, emotional, and relational responses. Traditional taste and preparation can strengthen sensory experience, while cultural narratives and local identity can deepen cognitive and emotional engagement. This argument is consistent with the broader brand authenticity literature, which shows that authenticity is associated with continuity, credibility, integrity, and symbolic value in consumer brand evaluation (Morhart et al., 2015). Authenticity also helps customers distinguish one local foodservice brand from competing alternatives because it provides a symbolic basis for differentiation and trust. This is particularly important in emerging culinary markets, where many foodservice operators offer similar dishes and compete for customer attention through perceived originality, heritage, and cultural credibility. Therefore, authenticity is expected to enhance foodservice brand experience by making the encounter more meaningful, memorable, and distinctive.

H1. Food authenticity positively influences foodservice brand experience.

Perceived hygiene, food quality, and foodservice brand experience

Foodservice brand experience is shaped not only by cultural authenticity but also by customers' confidence in the operational reliability of the food provider. In local culinary SMEs, traditional restaurants, food stalls, and street food settings, customers may appreciate heritage recipes and local preparation methods, yet their overall experience can weaken when the foodservice environment appears unsafe, inconsistent, or poorly managed.

Perceived hygiene and food quality are therefore critical cues because they influence whether customers interpret a local foodservice encounter as trustworthy and worth repeating. Food quality has been consistently identified as a core driver of restaurant satisfaction and behavioral intention because it reflects taste, freshness, presentation, and consistency (Canny, 2014; Ha & Jang, 2010). In addition, food safety and hygiene related cues reduce perceived risk and strengthen customer confidence, particularly in informal or high contact foodservice environments (Al-Ansi et al., 2019; Knight et al., 2007).

Perceived hygiene refers to customers' judgment that the food outlet, food handlers, utensils, preparation process, and dining environment are clean and safe. In foodservice contexts, hygiene reduces perceived risk and strengthens customer confidence, particularly when customers consume food in informal or highly traditional settings. This is important because authenticity can sometimes be associated with simplicity, informality, or traditional preparation, but such cues must still be accompanied by visible cleanliness. Research in *Journal of Foodservice Business Research* shows that restaurant service quality influences customer trust and revisit intention, confirming that operational assurance remains central to foodservice decision making (Sirimongkol, 2022). Thus, hygiene is expected to strengthen foodservice brand experience by making the consumption encounter feel safer, more comfortable, and more reliable.

Food quality also plays a central role in shaping foodservice brand experience because it reflects the perceived excellence of the core product. Customers evaluate food quality through taste, freshness, ingredient standards, portion suitability, presentation, and consistency across visits. In local culinary businesses, high food quality allows traditional dishes to be experienced not only as culturally meaningful but also as professionally delivered. This distinction is important because customers may recognize a dish as authentic but still develop a weak brand experience if the taste, freshness, or preparation consistency does not meet expectations. Prior foodservice research indicates that service quality and related operational attributes are important in shaping trust and revisit related responses in restaurant settings (Sirimongkol, 2022). Therefore, food quality is expected to enhance foodservice brand experience by strengthening sensory satisfaction, perceived value, and confidence in the brand.

Taken together, perceived hygiene and food quality represent operational trust cues that complement food authenticity. They help transform local cuisine from a culturally interesting product into a credible foodservice brand experience. For local foodservice operators, this means that authenticity must be supported by visible cleanliness and consistent product quality if it is to generate favorable customer responses.

H2. Perceived hygiene positively influences foodservice brand experience.

H3. Food quality positively influences foodservice brand experience.

Social media visibility and foodservice brand experience

Social media visibility has become an important digital cue in foodservice markets because customers increasingly encounter brands before visiting them physically. Restaurants, street food vendors, food stalls, and culinary SMEs are now evaluated through Instagram posts, TikTok videos, Google reviews, online ratings, food influencers, and user generated content. These cues shape how customers imagine the food, assess outlet popularity, and form expectations about the dining experience. For small foodservice operators in Makassar, social media visibility can function as a market signal that increases familiarity, credibility, and curiosity. Prior research shows that social media based engagement can strengthen brand outcomes by increasing customer interaction, trust, and involvement (Harrigan et al., 2017; Sashi et al., 2019). In restaurant contexts, social media marketing has also been linked to brand experience, brand image, customer engagement, and loyalty (Keni and Clarissa, 2024).

Within the Stimulus Organism Response framework, social media visibility is conceptualized as a stimulus that shapes how customers interpret the brand experience. Repeated exposure to positive reviews, attractive food images, short video recommendations, and influencer content can make a foodservice brand appear more accessible, socially validated, and worth trying. This is particularly relevant for local culinary businesses because many small operators have limited formal advertising resources. Digital visibility allows Makassar foodservice brands to communicate their menu, atmosphere, customer experiences, hygiene practices, and cultural identity at relatively low cost. It also allows customers to participate in brand meaning through reviews, photos, recommendations, and shared dining stories. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:



H4. Social media visibility positively influences foodservice brand experience..

Foodservice brand experience and emotional attachment

Foodservice brand experience refers to customers' holistic response to a foodservice brand across sensory, cognitive, emotional, and relational dimensions. In local culinary businesses, this experience is shaped by the taste and aroma of food, the perceived meaning of the cuisine, interactions with employees or vendors, the dining atmosphere, and the symbolic value of the brand. Brand experience is broader than satisfaction because it captures how customers feel, think, and relate to a brand during and after consumption (Brakus et al., 2009; Schmitt, 1999). In the Makassar foodservice context, a strong brand experience allows customers to remember a brand not only as a place that provides food, but also as part of a meaningful culinary and social experience.

Emotional attachment develops when a brand becomes personally significant and emotionally meaningful to customers. Attachment theory suggests that emotional bonds emerge when an object, place, or brand provides familiarity, comfort, identity relevance, or memorable meaning (Bowlby, 1982; Thomson et al., 2005). In local foodservice settings, customers may become attached to a brand when repeated positive experiences create memories, nostalgia, pride, or a sense of connection to Makassar's culinary culture. Within the Stimulus Organism Response framework, foodservice brand experience represents an internal evaluative state that can lead to deeper affective bonding. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H5. Foodservice brand experience positively influences emotional attachment.

Emotional attachment, brand loyalty, and brand choice intention

Emotional attachment represents the affective bond that connects customers to a brand beyond functional evaluation. In foodservice settings, this bond may emerge when customers associate a restaurant, street food vendor, food stall, or culinary SME with meaningful memories, comfort, identity, or social experience. Compared with satisfaction, emotional attachment reflects a deeper psychological connection because customers do not merely evaluate the brand positively; they feel connected to it. This distinction is important in local foodservice markets where customers may develop attachment to brands that represent familiar tastes, family memories, local pride, or culturally meaningful dining experiences. Prior research on brand attachment shows that emotionally attached customers tend to develop stronger commitment because the brand becomes personally significant and difficult to replace (Park et al., 2010; Thomson et al., 2005). In restaurant settings, identity based and emotion based attachment have also been found to enhance brand loyalty, indicating that affective bonds are highly relevant to foodservice relationships (Rather & Hollebeek, 2019).

Emotional attachment is expected to strengthen brand loyalty because emotionally attached customers are more likely to maintain a relationship with the brand over time. They may revisit the same outlet, recommend it to others, defend it against negative evaluations, and continue choosing it even when competing alternatives are available. In this sense, emotional attachment functions as an affective bridge between foodservice experience and behavioral commitment. Prior consumer research shows that strong brand attachment can increase commitment, willingness to maintain relationships, and loyalty related behaviors because attached brands become personally significant to customers (Park et al., 2010; Thomson et al., 2005). In foodservice markets, this implies that customers who feel emotionally connected to a local culinary brand are more likely to transform positive experience into enduring loyalty.

Emotional attachment may also directly influence foodservice brand choice intention. When customers form emotional bonds with a foodservice brand, the brand becomes more salient during future decision making. This salience can make customers more likely to prioritize the brand when deciding where to eat, what local cuisine to recommend, or which culinary outlet to revisit. Therefore, emotional attachment does not only operate through loyalty but may also directly influence brand choice because emotionally meaningful brands are easier to recall, more difficult to replace, and more likely to be selected in future consumption situations.

H6. Emotional attachment positively influences brand loyalty.

H8. Emotional attachment positively influences foodservice brand choice intention.

Brand loyalty and foodservice brand choice intention

Brand loyalty reflects both attitudinal commitment and behavioral preference toward a particular foodservice brand. In local foodservice markets, loyal customers are more likely to revisit the same restaurant, food stall, street food vendor, or culinary SME, even when competing alternatives are available. Loyalty also increases customers' willingness to recommend the brand and to prioritize it in future consumption decisions. This is especially important in culinary markets where customers often face many similar food choices and rely on prior positive experiences to reduce decision uncertainty. Prior restaurant research has shown that positive dining experiences and satisfaction can strengthen revisit intention and recommendation behavior, indicating that loyalty is a central mechanism in foodservice customer retention (Han & Hyun, 2017; Kim et al., 2009).

Foodservice brand choice intention refers to the customer's intention to select a particular foodservice brand in future dining situations. Loyal customers are more likely to choose the same brand because the brand has already established trust, familiarity, and perceived value. In this sense, loyalty functions as a decision shortcut that reduces the need to compare alternatives repeatedly. Prior consumer behavior research suggests that loyalty strengthens future choice because committed customers develop stable preferences and stronger resistance to switching (Dick & Basu, 1994; Oliver, 1999). Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

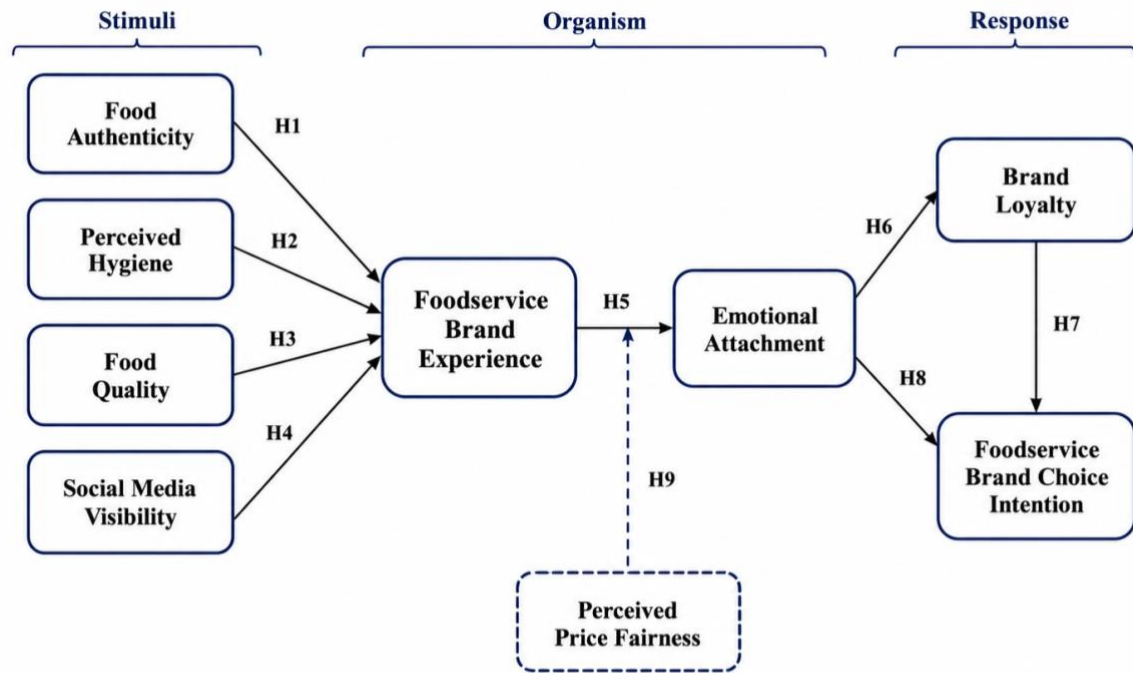
H7. Brand loyalty positively influences foodservice brand choice intention.

Moderating role of perceived price fairness

Perceived price fairness refers to customers' judgment that the price paid is reasonable and appropriate relative to the value received. In foodservice settings, customers evaluate price not only through portion size or taste, but also through hygiene, authenticity, food quality, service atmosphere, and the total consumption experience. Customers form fairness judgments by comparing the actual price with expected benefits, competitor prices, previous prices, and perceived seller motives (Vaidyanathan & Aggarwal, 2003; Xia et al., 2004). In restaurant contexts, perceived price fairness has also been linked to perceived value, satisfaction, revisit intention, and word of mouth (Konuk, 2019).

Perceived price fairness is expected to moderate the relationship between foodservice brand experience and brand loyalty. A positive brand experience may not produce loyalty when customers perceive the price as excessive or unfair. In contrast, when the price is perceived as fair, customers are more likely to view the experience as valuable and respond with stronger loyalty. From an equity based perspective, customers respond more favorably when the exchange between what they pay and what they receive is perceived as balanced (Herrmann et al., 2007; Konuk, 2019). Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H9. Perceived price fairness moderates the relationship between foodservice brand experience and brand loyalty, such that the relationship is stronger when perceived price fairness is high.



Note: H9 represents a moderating effect.

Figure 1. Research Framework

Taken together, the proposed framework explains foodservice brand choice as a sequential process in which external foodservice cues are transformed into internal customer evaluations and subsequent behavioral responses. Food authenticity, perceived hygiene, food quality, and social media visibility are conceptualized as stimuli that shape foodservice brand experience, while emotional attachment represents the affective mechanism through which positive experiences become personally meaningful. Brand loyalty and foodservice brand choice intention represent the response stage, reflecting customers' commitment to revisit, recommend, and prioritize a local foodservice brand. Perceived price fairness is included as a boundary condition that strengthens or weakens the effect of foodservice brand experience on loyalty. The full conceptual model and hypothesized relationships are presented in Figure 1.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research design

This study employed a quantitative explanatory research design to examine the relationships among food authenticity, perceived hygiene, food quality, social media visibility, foodservice brand experience, emotional attachment, brand loyalty, and foodservice brand choice intention. The study was developed using the Stimulus Organism Response framework. Food authenticity, perceived hygiene, food quality, and social media visibility were conceptualized as external foodservice stimuli. Foodservice brand experience and emotional attachment represented the organism stage, while brand loyalty and foodservice brand choice intention represented behavioral responses.

The empirical context of the study was local foodservice businesses in Makassar, Indonesia. Makassar was selected because it is widely recognized for distinctive regional dishes such as Coto Makassar, Pallubasa, Konro, Sop Saudara, Pisang Epe, and Barongko. These dishes are commonly offered through traditional restaurants, street food vendors, food stalls, culinary markets, and culinary small and medium enterprises. This setting is appropriate because local foodservice businesses in Makassar compete not only through traditional taste and cultural identity, but also through hygiene, food quality, digital visibility, customer experience, and perceived

price fairness. Therefore, Makassar provides a suitable context for examining how authenticity and other foodservice cues are transformed into brand experience, emotional attachment, loyalty, and brand choice intention.

Population and sample

The target population consisted of customers who had consumed traditional Makassar cuisine from local foodservice businesses in Makassar, Indonesia. Respondents were defined as individuals who had purchased or consumed food from traditional restaurants, street food vendors, food stalls, culinary markets, or culinary SMEs in Makassar within the previous six months. The study included both local customers and domestic culinary visitors because both groups represent important customer segments for Makassar foodservice operators.

A purposive sampling approach was used because the study required respondents with direct experience of local foodservice consumption in Makassar. Respondents were required to meet three screening criteria: they were at least 17 years old, had consumed traditional Makassar cuisine from a local foodservice business within the previous six months, and were able to identify a specific Makassar foodservice brand or outlet that they had visited.

The dataset consisted of 372 responses. After screening for incomplete responses, straight lining, and inconsistent answers, 24 responses were removed. The final data consisted of 348 valid responses. This sample size was considered adequate for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling because it exceeded the minimum recommended sample for estimating a model with multiple predictors, mediating constructs, and a moderating variable.

Measurement instrument

Data were measured using a structured questionnaire. All constructs were assessed using multi-item scales adapted from previous studies in foodservice, hospitality, tourism, and consumer behavior. The items were modified to fit the local foodservice context. Each item was measured using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1, strongly disagree, to 7, strongly agree.

Table 1. Measurement items and sources

Construct	Code	Measurement item	Source
Food authenticity	FA1	The Makassar food I consumed reflected the genuine culinary identity of the region.	Adapted from Kolar and Zabkar (2010), Chompupor et al. (2024)
	FA2	The food was prepared in a way that represented Makassar culinary traditions.	
	FA3	The ingredients, taste, and presentation made the food feel authentic.	
	FA4	The overall foodservice experience reflected Makassar's local culture and culinary heritage.	
Perceived hygiene	PH1	The foodservice outlet appeared clean and well maintained.	Adapted from Üstünsoy et al. (2024), Liu and Jang (2009)
	PH2	The food preparation area appeared hygienic.	
	PH3	The food handlers appeared to follow proper cleanliness practices.	
	PH4	I felt safe consuming food from this foodservice outlet.	
Food quality	FQ1	The food served by this Makassar foodservice brand was fresh.	Adapted from Namkung and Jang (2007), Ryu et al. (2012)
	FQ2	The taste of the food met my expectations.	



	FQ3	The food was consistently prepared with good quality.	
	FQ4	The food provided good value through its taste, portion, and ingredients.	
Social media visibility	SMV1	I often see this Makassar foodservice brand or similar local food brands on social media.	Adapted from Kim and Ko (2012), Sokolova and Kefi (2020)
	SMV2	Online reviews, ratings, or posts make this foodservice brand more noticeable to me.	
	SMV3	Social media content makes this foodservice brand appear popular.	
	SMV4	Photos, videos, or recommendations on social media make me interested in this foodservice brand.	
Foodservice brand experience	FBE1	My experience with this Makassar foodservice brand was enjoyable.	Adapted from Brakus et al. (2009), Schmitt (1999)
	FBE2	This foodservice brand created a strong sensory impression through its food, atmosphere, or presentation.	
	FBE3	This foodservice brand stimulated my interest in Makassar cuisine.	
	FBE4	My experience with this foodservice brand was memorable.	
Emotional attachment	EA1	I feel emotionally connected to this Makassar foodservice brand.	Adapted from Thomson et al. (2005), Park et al. (2010)
	EA2	This foodservice brand creates meaningful memories for me.	
	EA3	I feel a sense of affection toward this foodservice brand.	
	EA4	This foodservice brand feels personally meaningful to me.	
Brand loyalty	BL1	I intend to revisit this Makassar foodservice brand.	Adapted from Oliver (1999), Zeithaml et al. (1996)
	BL2	I would recommend this foodservice brand to others.	
	BL3	I prefer this foodservice brand over other similar alternatives.	
	BL4	I would continue choosing this foodservice brand in the future.	
Foodservice brand choice intention	FBCI1	I am likely to choose this Makassar foodservice brand again.	Adapted from Lu et al. (2015), Phung et al. (2019)
	FBCI2	I would prioritize this foodservice brand when I want Makassar cuisine.	
	FBCI3	This foodservice brand would be one of my first choices among similar local food options.	
Perceived price fairness	PPF1	The price of this foodservice brand is reasonable for what I received.	Adapted from Xia et al. (2004), Vaidyanathan and Aggarwal (2003), Herrmann et al. (2007)
	PPF2	The price is fair compared with similar Makassar foodservice alternatives.	



PPF3	The quality and experience I received justified the price paid.
PPF4	I feel that this foodservice brand offers fair value for its price.

Data collection procedure

The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling with SmartPLS 4. PLS SEM was selected because the model is prediction oriented and contains multiple latent variables, mediating relationships, and a moderating effect. The analysis followed a two-stage procedure.

First, the measurement model was assessed using indicator loadings, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted. Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell Larcker criterion and the heterotrait monotrait ratio. Second, the structural model was evaluated using path coefficients, t values, p values, coefficient of determination, effect size, and predictive relevance. Bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples was used to test the significance of direct, indirect, and moderating effects.

Data analysis

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RESULTS

Respondent profile

Table 2 presents the respondent profile. The sample consisted of 348 respondents who had consumed Makassar cuisine from traditional restaurants, street food vendors, food stalls, culinary markets, or culinary SMEs within the previous six months. The respondent profile shows a relatively balanced gender composition, with 54.6% female and 45.4% male respondents. Most respondents were between 18 and 34 years old, indicating that the sample represented a young and digitally active customer segment. In terms of education, most respondents had completed diploma or undergraduate education. Regarding customer type, 61.2% were local customers, while 38.8% were domestic culinary visitors. Traditional restaurants were the most frequently visited foodservice format, followed by street food vendors and food stalls or culinary markets. Most respondents reported consuming local cuisine at least two to three times per month, suggesting sufficient familiarity with local foodservice offerings. Instagram and TikTok were the dominant sources of foodservice information, confirming the relevance of social media visibility in local culinary brand evaluation.

Table 2. Measurement items and sources

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	158	45.4
	Female	190	54.6
Age	17 to 24 years	112	32.2
	25 to 34 years	139	39.9
	35 to 44 years	61	17.5
	45 years and above	36	10.4
Education	Senior high school or below	74	21.3
	Diploma or bachelor's degree	219	62.9
	Master's degree or above	55	15.8



Customer type	Local customer	213	61.2
	Domestic culinary visitor	135	38.8
Foodservice format visited	Traditional restaurant	122	35.1
	Street food vendor	99	28.4
	Food stall or culinary market	75	21.6
	Culinary SME or home-based food business	52	14.9
	Once per month or less	57	16.4
Frequency of consuming local cuisine	Two to three times per month	136	39.1
	Once per week	95	27.3
	More than once per week	60	17.2
	Instagram	112	32.2
Main source of foodservice information	TikTok	98	28.2
	Google reviews	56	16.1
	Friends or family	61	17.5
	Food influencers	21	6

Descriptive statistics

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics for the study constructs. All constructs were measured using a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 1, strongly disagree, to 7, strongly agree. Overall, the mean values indicate that respondents provided moderately high evaluations of the local foodservice brands. Food quality recorded the highest mean score, followed by food authenticity and perceived hygiene, suggesting that respondents generally viewed the local foodservice offerings as reliable, culturally genuine, and sufficiently clean. Social media visibility also received a moderately high score, indicating that respondents were frequently exposed to local foodservice brands through digital platforms. Foodservice brand experience and perceived price fairness were evaluated positively, while emotional attachment and brand loyalty showed slightly lower but still favorable mean values. Foodservice brand choice intention also showed a positive tendency, indicating that respondents were generally willing to prioritize the local foodservice brands in future consumption decisions.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of constructs

Construct	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Food authenticity	5.42	0.91	2.25	7.00
Perceived hygiene	5.31	0.96	2.00	7.00
Food quality	5.58	0.88	2.50	7.00
Social media visibility	5.16	1.04	1.75	7.00
Foodservice brand experience	5.27	0.93	2.25	7.00
Emotional attachment	4.89	1.08	1.75	7.00
Brand loyalty	4.96	1.02	2.00	7.00
Foodservice brand choice intention	5.08	1.00	2.00	7.00
Perceived price fairness	5.22	0.95	2.25	7.00

The descriptive results suggest that respondents perceived local foodservice brands favorably across cultural, operational, digital, experiential, and behavioral dimensions. The relatively higher scores for food authenticity and food quality indicate that local culinary businesses were evaluated positively in terms of cultural credibility and core product performance. Meanwhile, the moderate scores for emotional attachment and brand loyalty suggest that although customers had positive experiences, emotional bonding and repeated brand commitment may still require stronger managerial attention.



Common method bias assessment

Because the study used a self-reported questionnaire, common method bias was assessed using the full collinearity variance inflation factor approach. This procedure is appropriate in PLS SEM because it evaluates whether excessive collinearity among latent constructs may indicate potential common method bias. As shown in Table 4, all full collinearity VIF values were below the recommended threshold of 3.3. Therefore, common method bias was not considered a serious concern in the dataset.

Table 4. Full collinearity VIF

Construct	VIF value
Food authenticity	2.18
Perceived hygiene	2.05
Food quality	2.31
Social media visibility	2.24
Foodservice brand experience	2.57
Emotional attachment	2.41
Brand loyalty	2.36
Foodservice brand choice intention	2.29
Perceived price fairness	2.12

The results indicate that the VIF values ranged from 2.05 to 2.57, which are all lower than the conservative cut off value of 3.3. This suggests that the observed relationships among the constructs were unlikely to be substantially inflated by common method bias. Thus, the data were considered suitable for subsequent measurement and structural model assessment.

Measurement model assessment

The measurement model was assessed to examine indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, and convergent validity. Indicator reliability was evaluated using outer loadings, while internal consistency reliability was assessed through Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. Convergent validity was examined using average variance extracted. As shown in Table 5, all indicator loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating that each item adequately represented its corresponding construct. Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.814 to 0.902, and composite reliability values ranged from 0.878 to 0.932, exceeding the minimum threshold of 0.70. The AVE values ranged from 0.643 to 0.774, which were all above the recommended threshold of 0.50. These results indicate that the measurement model demonstrated satisfactory reliability and convergent validity.

Table 5. Reliability and convergent validity

Construct	Indicator	Outer loading	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	AVE
Food authenticity	FA1	0.842	0.876	0.915	0.729
	FA2	0.867			
	FA3	0.831			
	FA4	0.874			
Perceived hygiene	PH1	0.818	0.854	0.902	0.697
	PH2	0.846			
	PH3	0.827			



	PH4	0.849			
	FQ1	0.861			
	FQ2	0.884			
Food quality	FQ3	0.853	0.889	0.923	0.751
	FQ4	0.866			
	SMV1	0.809			
	SMV2	0.837			
Social media visibility	SMV3	0.826	0.841	0.894	0.679
	SMV4	0.823			
	FBE1	0.872			
	FBE2	0.893			
Foodservice brand experience	FBE3	0.864	0.902	0.932	0.774
	FBE4	0.891			
	EA1	0.835			
	EA2	0.861			
Emotional attachment	EA3	0.846	0.873	0.913	0.724
	EA4	0.861			
	BL1	0.824			
	BL2	0.851			
Brand loyalty	BL3	0.829	0.858	0.904	0.702
	BL4	0.847			
	FBCI1	0.856			
	FBCI2	0.872			
Foodservice brand choice intention	FBCI3	0.835	0.814	0.890	0.730
	PPF1	0.781			
	PPF2	0.809			
Perceived price fairness	PPF3	0.817	0.815	0.878	0.643
	PPF4	0.798			

The results confirmed that the indicators were reliable measures of their respective constructs. The composite reliability values showed strong internal consistency, while the AVE values indicated that each construct explained more than half of the variance in its indicators. These findings support the adequacy of the measurement model for discriminant validity assessment and structural model testing.

Discriminant validity

Discriminant validity was assessed using the heterotrait monotrait ratio of correlations. The HTMT criterion was used because it provides a more rigorous assessment of discriminant validity than traditional cross loading or Fornell Larcker procedures. As shown in Table 6, all HTMT values were below the conservative threshold of

0.85, indicating that the constructs were empirically distinct from one another. The highest HTMT value was 0.781, observed between foodservice brand experience and emotional attachment, which remains below the recommended cut off. These results confirm that discriminant validity was achieved.

Table 6. HTMT ratios

Construct	FA	PH	FQ	SMV	FBE	EA	BL	FBCI	PPF
FA									
PH	0.536								
FQ	0.612	0.648							
SMV	0.497	0.421	0.506						
FBE	0.693	0.671	0.734	0.646					
EA	0.624	0.591	0.655	0.603	0.781				
BL	0.572	0.558	0.619	0.566	0.702	0.748			
FBCI	0.548	0.526	0.604	0.582	0.684	0.721	0.764		
PPF	0.461	0.573	0.589	0.438	0.612	0.566	0.638	0.594	

The HTMT results confirmed that the constructs were empirically distinct. None of the construct pairs showed problematic overlap, with all values remaining below the recommended threshold. This indicates that food authenticity, perceived hygiene, food quality, social media visibility, foodservice brand experience, emotional attachment, brand loyalty, foodservice brand choice intention, and perceived price fairness captured separate aspects of customer evaluation in the Makassar foodservice context. The measurement model was therefore suitable for structural model testing.

Structural model assessment

The structural model was assessed by examining the coefficient of determination, predictive relevance, and effect size. The coefficient of determination indicates the explanatory power of the model for each endogenous construct. As shown in Table 7, the model explained 68.4% of the variance in foodservice brand experience, suggesting that food authenticity, perceived hygiene, food quality, and social media visibility jointly provided strong explanatory power. The model also explained 57.2% of the variance in emotional attachment, 61.5% of the variance in brand loyalty, and 64.8% of the variance in foodservice brand choice intention. These values indicate moderate to substantial explanatory power. In addition, all Q^2 values were above zero, confirming that the model had adequate predictive relevance for all endogenous constructs.

Table 7. Coefficient of determination and predictive relevance

Endogenous construct	R ²	Q ²	Interpretation
Foodservice brand experience	0.684	0.421	Strong explanatory and predictive relevance
Emotional attachment	0.572	0.356	Moderate explanatory and predictive relevance
Brand loyalty	0.615	0.389	Moderate explanatory and predictive relevance
Foodservice brand choice intention	0.648	0.402	Strong explanatory and predictive relevance

Effect size analysis was also conducted to determine the relative contribution of each predictor to its corresponding endogenous construct. As shown in Table 8, food quality had the largest effect on foodservice brand experience, followed by food authenticity, perceived hygiene, and social media visibility. This indicates that the customer's evaluation of local foodservice brand experience was shaped most strongly by the perceived quality of the food, although cultural authenticity, hygiene, and digital visibility also made meaningful

contributions. Foodservice brand experience had a large effect on emotional attachment, while emotional attachment had a substantial effect on brand loyalty. Brand loyalty also had a strong effect on foodservice brand choice intention. The direct effect of emotional attachment on foodservice brand choice intention showed a small to moderate effect size, suggesting that attachment influenced brand choice both directly and indirectly through loyalty.

Table 8. Effect sizes

Path	f ²
Food authenticity → Foodservice brand experience	0.146
Perceived hygiene → Foodservice brand experience	0.121
Food quality → Foodservice brand experience	0.203
Social media visibility → Foodservice brand experience	0.097
Foodservice brand experience → Emotional attachment	0.432
Emotional attachment → Brand loyalty	0.368
Emotional attachment → Foodservice brand choice intention	0.114
Brand loyalty → Foodservice brand choice intention	0.317
Foodservice brand experience × Perceived price fairness → Brand loyalty	0.058

Hypothesis testing

The structural path results are presented in Table 9. The findings show that seven of the eight direct hypotheses were supported. Food authenticity had a positive and significant effect on foodservice brand experience, indicating that customers who perceived local food as culturally genuine were more likely to evaluate the overall brand experience favorably. Perceived hygiene also had a significant positive effect, confirming that cleanliness and safety cues contribute to customers' interpretation of local foodservice brands.

Food quality showed the strongest influence on foodservice brand experience, suggesting that taste, freshness, consistency, and ingredient standards remain central to customer experience. Social media visibility had a positive but weaker effect. Although the relationship was significant at the 0.05 level, its smaller coefficient suggests that digital exposure may support customer expectations, but it is less influential than direct product and operational cues.

Foodservice brand experience had a strong positive effect on emotional attachment, confirming that memorable and meaningful foodservice encounters can generate affective bonds. Emotional attachment significantly influenced brand loyalty, while brand loyalty strongly predicted foodservice brand choice intention. However, the direct effect of emotional attachment on foodservice brand choice intention was positive but not statistically significant. This suggests that emotional attachment may influence future brand choice mainly through loyalty rather than through an immediate direct path.

Table 9. Hypothesis testing results

Hypothesis	Path	Path coefficient	t value	p value	Decision
H1	Food authenticity → Foodservice brand experience	0.214	3.287	0.001	Supported
H2	Perceived hygiene → Foodservice brand experience	0.176	2.641	0.008	Supported
H3	Food quality → Foodservice brand experience	0.354	5.932	< 0.001	Supported
H4	Social media visibility → Foodservice brand experience	0.128	2.083	0.037	Supported



H5	Foodservice brand experience → Emotional attachment	0.681	12.746	< 0.001	Supported
H6	Emotional attachment → Brand loyalty	0.593	9.418	< 0.001	Supported
H7	Brand loyalty → Foodservice brand choice intention	0.621	8.706	< 0.001	Supported
H8	Emotional attachment → Foodservice brand choice intention	0.104	1.512	0.131	Not supported

Overall, the results support the main Stimulus Organism Response logic of the study. Food authenticity, perceived hygiene, food quality, and social media visibility significantly enhanced foodservice brand experience. Foodservice brand experience then strengthened emotional attachment, which increased brand loyalty. The non-significant direct effect of emotional attachment on foodservice brand choice intention indicates that loyalty plays a more decisive role in converting emotional bonds into future customer choice.

Moderation analysis

The moderating effect of perceived price fairness was examined by testing the interaction between foodservice brand experience and perceived price fairness on brand loyalty. As shown in Table 10, the interaction effect was positive and statistically significant, indicating that perceived price fairness strengthened the relationship between foodservice brand experience and brand loyalty. This means that customers who perceived the price as fair were more likely to translate a positive foodservice brand experience into stronger loyalty.

Table 10. Moderating effect of perceived price fairness

Hypothesis	Interaction path	Path coefficient	t value	p value	Decision
H9	Foodservice brand experience × Perceived price fairness → Brand loyalty	0.137	2.284	0.022	Supported

The simple slope analysis further clarified the moderating effect (See Figure 2). When perceived price fairness was high, the relationship between foodservice brand experience and brand loyalty was stronger. In contrast, when perceived price fairness was low, the effect of foodservice brand experience on loyalty became weaker. This finding suggests that a favorable foodservice experience may not be sufficient to generate loyalty if customers perceive the price as unreasonable or inconsistent with the value received. Conversely, fair pricing reinforces the positive effect of experience by increasing customers' sense of value, trust, and willingness to return.

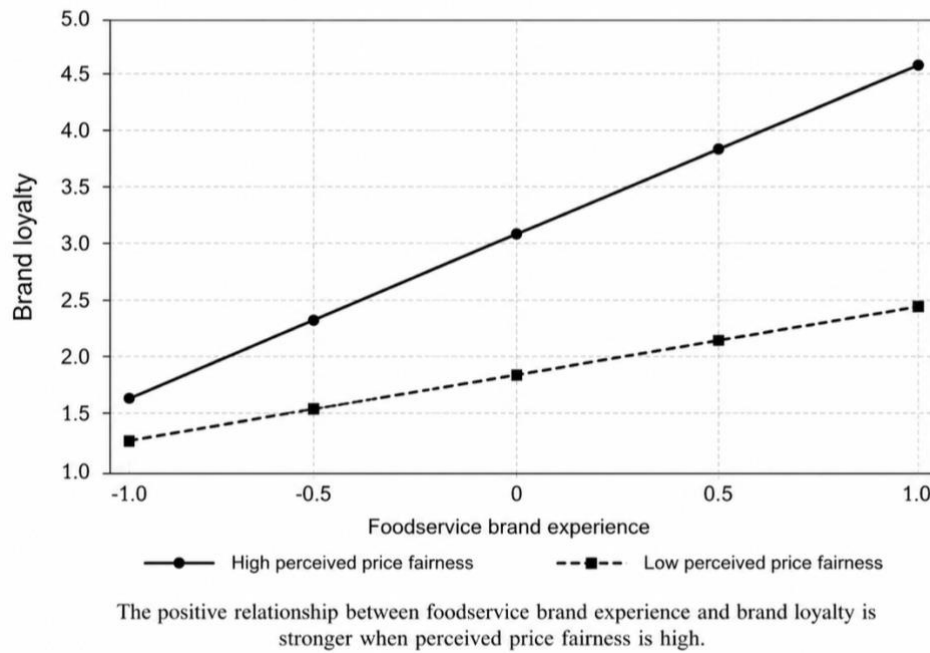


Figure 2. Moderating Effect of Perceived Price Fairness on the Relationship Between Foodservice Brand Experience and Brand Loyalty

Overall, the moderation result supports H9 and highlights the managerial importance of price fairness in local foodservice markets. Foodservice operators should not only improve authenticity, hygiene, quality, and digital visibility, but also ensure that customers perceive the price as fair relative to the total experience offered.

DISCUSSION

The findings support the main argument of this study that foodservice brand choice in Makassar, Indonesia, is formed through a sequential process rather than through a direct reaction to one isolated attribute. Food authenticity, perceived hygiene, food quality, and social media visibility significantly influenced foodservice brand experience, while foodservice brand experience enhanced emotional attachment. Emotional attachment strengthened brand loyalty, and brand loyalty became the strongest direct predictor of foodservice brand choice intention. However, emotional attachment did not directly influence foodservice brand choice intention, suggesting that emotional connection must first be translated into loyalty before it becomes a stable basis for future customer choice.

The positive effect of food authenticity on foodservice brand experience confirms that authenticity remains a valuable resource for Makassar foodservice businesses. Customers appear to evaluate local culinary brands more favorably when food offerings reflect genuine regional identity, traditional preparation, local ingredients, and cultural meaning. In the Makassar context, dishes such as Coto Makassar, Pallubasa, Konro, Sop Saudara, Pisang Epe, and Barongko are not only consumed as food products, but also as expressions of local culinary identity. This finding is consistent with Chompupor et al. (2024), who examined Thai street food as an authentic tourism experience, and with Ahn (2025), who showed that perceived heritage influences customer behavior in independent and franchise restaurant contexts. The present study extends this stream of work by showing that authenticity is not only a heritage or tourism concept, but also a brand experience driver in local foodservice markets.

Food quality emerged as the strongest antecedent of foodservice brand experience. This result indicates that customers may appreciate the authenticity of Makassar cuisine, but their overall experience depends heavily on the core product itself, especially taste, freshness, consistency, and ingredient standards. This finding supports prior foodservice research showing that food quality, service quality, and hygiene practices are important in shaping satisfaction and behavioral intentions in street food consumption. Üstünsoy et al. (2024) specifically examined whether food quality, service quality, and hygiene practices influence street food satisfaction and

behavioral intentions, which closely aligns with the operational logic of the present study. For Makassar foodservice operators, this means that traditional recipes and cultural identity must be supported by consistent product quality.

The significant effect of perceived hygiene also reinforces the importance of operational trust in local foodservice consumption. In Makassar's traditional restaurants, street food areas, culinary markets, and culinary SMEs, customers may associate local food with cultural richness, but this positive perception can be weakened when cleanliness, preparation safety, or food handling is uncertain. This finding is consistent with Sirimongkol's (2022) work on restaurant service quality and revisit intention, which suggests that service related assurance remains important for sustaining customer responses in restaurant settings. The implication is clear: authenticity should not be used as an excuse for weak hygiene standards. Local foodservice brands must ensure that traditional food experiences are supported by visible cleanliness and reliable food handling practices.

Social media visibility had a significant but weaker effect on foodservice brand experience. This suggests that digital exposure helps customers recognize and approach Makassar foodservice brands, but it does not replace the importance of food quality, hygiene, and authenticity. Social media may shape expectations before consumption, but the actual experience still depends on what customers encounter at the outlet. For Makassar foodservice businesses, this result implies that TikTok videos, Instagram posts, Google reviews, and influencer recommendations can attract customers, but they must be supported by consistent product and service delivery. Digital visibility can bring customers to the brand, but the foodservice experience determines whether customers remember, trust, and choose the brand again.

The strong relationship between foodservice brand experience and emotional attachment highlights the psychological importance of memorable consumption encounters. Customers become emotionally attached when local foodservice brands provide more than functional food consumption. Taste, cultural meaning, atmosphere, service interaction, and personal memories can together create a sense of attachment. In Makassar, this attachment may emerge when customers associate a foodservice brand with familiar local flavors, family dining memories, regional pride, or repeated positive experiences. This finding supports the theoretical logic of the Stimulus Organism Response framework because external cues first shape internal experience, which then becomes emotional bonding.

The non-significant direct effect of emotional attachment on foodservice brand choice intention is an important finding. It suggests that feeling emotionally connected to a Makassar foodservice brand may not automatically lead to future choice unless the attachment becomes loyalty. In practical terms, customers may like a brand, remember it positively, or feel connected to it, but they may still choose another option if convenience, price, availability, or competing alternatives become more attractive. Therefore, loyalty is the critical mechanism that converts emotional attachment into future brand choice. This finding suggests that Makassar foodservice operators should not stop at creating memorable experiences, but should also develop repeat purchase mechanisms, consistent service delivery, and relationship building strategies that turn emotional attachment into loyalty.

The moderation result shows that perceived price fairness strengthens the relationship between foodservice brand experience and brand loyalty. This means that customers are more likely to become loyal when they believe that the price is reasonable relative to the overall experience. A positive brand experience may lose its effect if customers perceive the price as excessive or inconsistent with value. In the Makassar foodservice context, customers may accept price differences when they believe that the food quality, portion, authenticity, hygiene, and service experience justify the price. This finding strengthens the business relevance of the model because price fairness is a managerial variable that can be adjusted through menu design, portioning, bundling, and value communication.

Theoretical contributions

This study contributes to foodservice business research in three ways. First, it extends the authenticity literature by positioning authenticity as one component of foodservice brand experience rather than as a direct predictor of customer choice. Prior JFBR studies have shown the importance of authenticity and perceived heritage in foodservice and restaurant contexts. This study advances that discussion by demonstrating that



authenticity must operate together with hygiene, quality, and digital visibility to form a stronger customer experience.

Second, the study applies the Stimulus Organism Response framework to explain local foodservice brand choice as a staged process. The findings show that foodservice stimuli influence brand experience, which produces emotional attachment, which then becomes loyalty and future choice. This structure provides a more complete explanation than direct effect models because it clarifies how cultural, operational, and digital cues become behavioral outcomes.

Third, the study contributes by identifying perceived price fairness as a boundary condition. The moderation result shows that brand experience does not create loyalty equally for all customers. Its effect is stronger when customers perceive the price as fair. This finding connects foodservice branding with pricing strategy and shows that emotional and experiential value must be supported by perceived economic fairness.

Practical implications

For foodservice operators in Makassar, Indonesia, the first implication is that authenticity should be managed as a visible brand asset. Traditional restaurants and culinary SMEs should communicate the origin of recipes, local ingredients, preparation methods, and cultural stories behind each signature dish. For example, a Coto Makassar outlet can explain the role of spices, broth preparation, family recipes, and Bugis Makassar culinary heritage through menu descriptions, wall displays, short videos, or table cards. This helps customers understand that they are not only buying food, but also experiencing Makassar's local culinary identity.

Second, foodservice operators must make hygiene visible. Customers cannot always observe the full preparation process, so visible cues become important. Managers should ensure clean preparation areas, neat uniforms or aprons, covered ingredients, clean utensils, hand washing facilities, and visible waste management. Street food vendors and food stalls in Makassar can use transparent food covers, organized display counters, and simple hygiene certificates to reduce perceived risk. These improvements are especially important because customers may admire authentic Makassar food but avoid repeat visits if cleanliness is doubtful.

Third, food quality must be standardized without reducing local character. Culinary SMEs should prepare written recipes, portion standards, ingredient quality rules, and cooking time guidelines. This is important for traditional Makassar dishes because customers expect the taste to remain stable across visits. A local restaurant may still preserve traditional preparation while using quality control procedures for freshness, spice balance, serving temperature, and portion size. Consistency allows customers to convert a positive one time experience into loyalty.

Fourth, social media visibility should be managed strategically rather than casually. Makassar foodservice brands should not only post food photos. They should present short videos of preparation, customer testimonials, behind the scenes stories, hygiene practices, and the cultural meaning of dishes. Google Maps and online reviews also need active management. Operators should update opening hours, respond politely to complaints, encourage satisfied customers to leave reviews, and use customer generated content as social proof. This is particularly useful for small vendors with limited advertising budgets.

Fifth, managers should design experiences that create emotional attachment. Emotional attachment can be strengthened through friendly service, consistent greetings, local music, recognizable packaging, signature menu names, and storytelling about the owner or community. Culinary SMEs can create memory cues, such as special family recipes, nostalgic serving styles, or festival based menus. In the Makassar context, these emotional cues can help customers associate a brand with local pride, family memories, and meaningful culinary experiences.

Sixth, loyalty programs should be simple and suitable for local foodservice contexts. Traditional restaurants can use digital stamp cards, repeat purchase discounts, birthday offers, or special menu access for returning customers. Street food vendors can use WhatsApp broadcast lists, pre order systems, or small rewards for repeat customers. Culinary SMEs can create bundle offers for loyal customers and encourage referrals through small incentives. These mechanisms help transform emotional attachment into repeated choice.

Seventh, perceived price fairness must be actively managed. Operators should avoid sudden price increases without explanation. When prices increase because of ingredient costs, portion upgrades, or quality improvement, this should be communicated clearly. Menu boards should show prices transparently, and portion sizes should match customer expectations. Bundled menus, student portions, family packages, and value meals

can help different customer segments perceive the price as fair. This is especially important because the moderation finding shows that even a positive experience may not build loyalty if customers feel the price is unfair.

For policymakers, the findings suggest that Makassar foodservice competitiveness requires more than culinary promotion. Local governments and tourism offices should support hygiene training, food safety certification, digital marketing workshops, and branding assistance for culinary SMEs. Public policy should help vendors improve operational trust while preserving culinary identity. Culinary festivals, food maps, certified local food zones, and digital directories can also help small businesses become more visible and credible. In this way, Makassar's culinary development can support both cultural preservation and local economic growth.

Overall, the study shows that Makassar foodservice businesses should not rely on authenticity alone. Authenticity attracts attention, but loyalty and brand choice require a combination of cultural credibility, hygiene assurance, product quality, digital visibility, emotional experience, and fair pricing. This integrated approach is essential for helping local culinary brands compete in increasingly crowded foodservice markets.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how food authenticity, perceived hygiene, food quality, and social media visibility shape foodservice brand choice intention among customers of local foodservice businesses in Makassar, Indonesia. Grounded in the Stimulus Organism Response framework, the findings show that authenticity alone is not sufficient to secure customer choice. Instead, customers evaluate a combination of cultural, operational, and digital cues before developing brand experience, emotional attachment, loyalty, and future choice intention.

The results show that food quality was the strongest predictor of foodservice brand experience, followed by food authenticity, perceived hygiene, and social media visibility. Foodservice brand experience strengthened emotional attachment, and emotional attachment increased brand loyalty. However, emotional attachment did not directly influence brand choice intention, indicating that emotional connection becomes behaviorally meaningful mainly when it is converted into loyalty. Brand loyalty was the strongest predictor of foodservice brand choice intention, while perceived price fairness strengthened the relationship between brand experience and loyalty.

The study contributes to foodservice business research by positioning authenticity as part of a broader brand experience rather than as a standalone driver of customer choice. Practically, the findings suggest that Makassar foodservice operators should preserve local culinary identity while improving food quality, hygiene visibility, digital communication, emotional customer experience, loyalty mechanisms, and fair pricing.

This study is limited by its cross-sectional design. Future research could use longitudinal data, compare different foodservice formats, or include additional variables such as service quality, perceived risk, convenience, sustainability practices, and customer trust. Overall, the study concludes that authentic food may attract customers, but sustained brand choice requires quality, hygiene, visibility, emotional meaning, loyalty, and fair value.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

Declaration of generative AI use

Generative AI was used only to support language refinement, proofreading, and manuscript organization. It was not used to generate data, conduct analysis, or replace the authors' scholarly interpretation. The authors reviewed and approved all content.



Data Availability

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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