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Guidelines for Developing Trang Province to be Served as the
Center of Southern Gastronomy Tourism through the Concept of
Creativity

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Abstract*

Purpose – This study aims to develop and validate a conceptual model of gastronomy tourism destination loyalty by examining the notion of local cuisine authenticity, tourist experience, and destination image from the perspectives of Thai and domestic tourists. Specifically, this study intends to 1) examine the potential of local food authentication, tourist experience, and destination image; 2) investigate the level of destination loyalty of gastronomic tourists; 3) to explore relationships between local food authenticity, tourist experience, destination image, and destination loyalty by proposing and testing a conceptual model; and 4) to propose guidelines for the development of the potential of local food authentication, tourist experience, and destination image in Trang province, Thailand so that it can serve as a center of Southern gastronomy tourism through the concept of creativity.

Design/methodology/approach – Mixed methods including semi-structured interviews and questionnaires were conducted with Thai tourists visiting Trang province, Thailand. Thai tourists and stakeholders were used to gather quantitative and qualitative data in this study. The two-step approach suggested by Anderson and Gerbing (1988) and flow model developed by Miles and Huberman (1994) were used to analyze data and test the factorial validity of constructs, the goodness of the proposed model as well as the hypotheses.

Findings – Findings indicate that local food authentication has significant relations affecting both tourist experience and destination image, which in turn affect destination loyalty. Local food authentication is significant regarding destination loyalty; however, tourist experience is not directly affect destination image.

Originality/value – Gastronomy tourism is recognized as being one of the most important topics in the tourism industry. However, there has been little discussion on gastronomy tourism destination loyalty. Moreover, no studies integrated the concept of local food authentication, tourist experience, and destination image in explaining the model of gastronomy tourism destination loyalty. Therefore, this study reveals empirical results and proposes guidelines in developing local food in the city of gastronomy, Trang province in Thailand to be served as the center of southern gastronomy tourism through the concept of creativity.