

Gastronomic Tourism for Sustainable Growth in Jambi

Original Article

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Received: 04 December - 2024

Accepted: 07 January - 2025

Published online: 09 January - 2025

Abstract

This study investigates the interplay among gastronomic tourism development, business governance, and business performance in Jambi Province, focusing on leveraging Malay cultural identity to enhance the regional gastronomy sector. Employing a quantitative methodology with Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), data from 150 local gastronomy business respondents were analyzed. The findings reveal that gastronomic tourism development significantly improves business governance and performance. However, a complex negative relationship exists between rigid governance practices and business performance, indicating the need for flexible frameworks that accommodate the operational realities of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Gastronomic tourism fosters transparency, accountability, and stakeholder collaboration, driven by innovations and the preservation of Malay culinary heritage. This study highlights gastronomy as a vital cultural and economic asset, offering a model that integrates cultural preservation with governance improvements to achieve sustainable outcomes. Positioning Jambi Province as a leading gastronomic destination can catalyze economic growth and resilience. Recommendations include fostering adaptive governance models for SMEs and strengthening partnerships among policymakers, local communities, and businesses to harness the region's full gastronomic potential. These findings provide practical insights for enhancing competitiveness and sustainability in Indonesia's gastronomic tourism sector.

Keywords: Gastronomic Tourism, Business Governance, Business Performance, Sustainable Growth.

1. Introduction

Food is one of the most important and highly sought-after attractions in the tourism sector today (Pérez-Priego et al., 2023). Gastronomy, encompassing the art and science of food, has become an integral component of destination marketing strategies. It goes beyond culinary aspects to represent the cultural identity of a region, serving as a key attraction for tourists seeking unique culinary experiences (Basle, 2023). For instance, signature dishes such as seafood in coastal regions or culinary products rooted in cultural heritage in rural areas are critical factors influencing tourists' destination choices (Salerno et al., 2023).

Gastronomy studies are inherently interdisciplinary, reflecting history, culture, and environmental aspects in the art of food (Astari et al., 2023; García-Ramos & Díaz, 2020). Local gastronomy not only serves as a medium for cultural preservation but also contributes to sustainable tourism development. Previous studies have highlighted that sustainability in gastronomic ecotourism, such as in Southern Malang, can be achieved through collaborative



strategies involving various stakeholders, including local communities, private sectors, and governments. Furthermore, maritime-based gastronomic tourism offers a unique attraction to enhance destination competitiveness.

Globally, gastronomy as a form of experiential tourism has become a crucial criterion in tourists' holiday destination choices. Familiarity with the destination and interest in local culture significantly influence tourists' lifestyles and culinary activities, as evidenced by gastronomic destinations in Türkiye (Kement et al., 2024). Studies in Peru have also shown that satisfying culinary experiences not only enhance tourist loyalty but also strengthen their intention to recommend the destination to others (Esparza Huamanchumo et al., 2023)

On the other hand, promoting traditional gastronomy through innovative approaches, such as media co-creation, has proven effective in engaging younger generations to preserve local culture, as demonstrated in Thailand (Jongsuksomsakul, 2024). Such strategies not only support cultural sustainability but also create new community-based tourism attractions. Within the context of world heritage, gastronomy has also emerged as a critical element in attracting tourists to UNESCO sites, as illustrated by studies in Italy highlighting the significant role of gastronomy in creating meaningful tourism experiences (Garofalo et al., 2024).

Indonesia boasts immense potential in gastronomic tourism, spread across various regions, including Sate Padang from West Sumatra, Betawi cuisine from Jakarta, and a diverse array of traditional culinary offerings (Mareth & Turgarini, 2019; Pratiwi, 2020). In Jambi Province specifically, gastronomic potential includes unique dishes such as tempoyak, gulai tepek ikan, and traditional desserts like bolu delapan jam, alongside distinctive beverages such as jus pinang. These culinary traditions reflect the richness of Malay cultural heritage, which can be optimized as a tourism attraction.

Previous studies have also emphasized the importance of enhancing gastronomic destination competencies, including quality, creativity, and sustainability, to increase competitiveness in global markets (Basle, 2023). On a local level, research conducted in Belitung shows that traditional dishes like gangan ikan not only attract tourists but also promote tourism sustainability through authentic culinary experiences (Jufrida et al., 2019).

Thus, this study aims to develop a Model for Optimizing Regional Gastronomic Potential in the Creative Industry as a Support for Tourism, specifically in Jambi Province, which holds significant potential yet remains under-researched. This research is expected to provide valuable contributions to understanding the role of gastronomy in strengthening tourism appeal, enhancing tourist loyalty, and supporting sustainable tourism both locally and globally.

2. Literature Review

The development of gastronomic tourism has become a central focus in the modern tourism industry, particularly due to its ability to offer unique and memorable experiences to tourists. Gastronomy is not merely about food but also serves as a medium that reflects the cultural identity, history, and distinctive characteristics of a destination (Garofalo et al., 2023). Within the context of experiential tourism, gastronomic tourism plays a crucial role in fostering an emotional connection between tourists and destinations through cultural and culinary interactions (Salerno et al., 2023).

However, the effective development of gastronomic tourism requires strong business governance. Business governance serves as the foundation to ensure that all aspects of management are conducted professionally, fairly, and transparently. Governance principles

such as responsibility, fairness, and transparency have been proven to enhance operational efficiency and satisfaction among stakeholders, including tourists and local communities (Basle, 2024). In the gastronomy industry, robust governance also plays a pivotal role in building a sustainable business ecosystem (Jongsuksomsakul, 2023).

Business performance is a direct outcome of well-planned gastronomic tourism development and effective business governance. Previous studies have indicated that innovation in food presentation, promotion of local cultural identity, and sound business management can drive economic growth in tourism destinations (Esparza Huamanchumo et al., 2021). In this context, indicators such as profit growth serve as key measures of success in gastronomic businesses, as also observed in this study.

This research aims to develop a Model for Optimizing Regional Gastronomic Potential in the Creative Industry as a Support for Tourism in Jambi Province. The model connects three main aspects: gastronomic tourism development, business governance, and business performance. In this study, the distinctive Malay cultural identity serves as the central element in the development of gastronomic tourism, while effective business governance is essential to ensure sustainability and inclusivity within the gastronomic ecosystem. The findings are expected to demonstrate that gastronomic tourism development, supported by sound business governance, can significantly enhance business performance, including driving local economic growth.

2.1. Empirical Review and Hypothesis Development

This study is grounded in empirical findings that highlight the relationships between gastronomic tourism development, business governance, and business performance. Gastronomy has long been recognized as a strategic element in tourism, not only as a major attraction but also as a tool to promote cultural identity and stimulate local economic growth (Garofalo et al., 2023). This empirical review seeks to understand how effective gastronomic tourism development influences business governance and, ultimately, enhances business performance.

2.1.1. Gastronomic Tourism Development and Business Governance

Previous research indicates that the development of gastronomic tourism involving local culture, creativity, and innovation has a positive impact on the quality of business governance. Jongsuksomsakul (2023) found that promoting traditional gastronomy through community-based approaches creates a more structured and inclusive governance framework. Similarly, Salerno et al. (2023) emphasized that integrating local cultural values into gastronomic tourism development strengthens governance systems, particularly in terms of transparency and accountability. Based on these findings, the first hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H₁: Gastronomic tourism development has a positive and significant effect on business governance.

2.1.2. Business Governance and Business Performance

Effective governance plays a crucial role in improving business performance. Basle (2024) highlights that governance principles emphasizing fairness, responsibility, and transparency support operational sustainability and economic growth in the gastronomy sector. A study by Esparza Huamanchumo et al. (2021) demonstrated that good governance not only enhances internal efficiency but also strengthens customer trust and tourist loyalty. Based on this, the second hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H₂: Business governance has a significant effect on business performance.

2.1.3. Gastronomic Tourism Development and Business Performance

Well-planned gastronomic tourism development has a direct impact on local economic growth and tourism sustainability. Garofalo et al. (2023) found that culinary experiences rooted in local culture enhance tourist satisfaction and strengthen destination branding. Additionally, Kement et al. (2024) in Türkiye highlighted that innovative gastronomic tourism development can drive profit growth and improve business competitiveness. Based on these findings, the third hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H₃: Gastronomic tourism development has a positive and significant effect on business performance.

3. Methods

This study employs a quantitative approach using a research design based on Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). This approach was chosen for its ability to analyze complex relationships between latent variables with a relatively small sample size. The research focuses on the relationships among gastronomic tourism development, business governance, and business performance in Jambi Province.

The population of this study comprises culinary business actors in Jambi Province, including owners and managers engaged in the gastronomy sector. The sample was selected using the purposive sampling method, with criteria that respondents must have been operating their culinary businesses for at least two years and must be based in Jambi Province. A total of 150 respondents were included in the sample, deemed sufficient for PLS-SEM analysis based on methodological literature.

Data collection was conducted through closed-ended questionnaires designed according to the research variables. The questionnaires employed a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) to measure the dimensions of gastronomic tourism development, business governance, and business performance. Secondary data were also collected from official reports, relevant literature, and government documents to support the analysis.

Data analysis was carried out using SmartPLS 3 software, involving two main stages. The first stage included descriptive analysis to describe the characteristics of respondents and data distribution. The second stage involved evaluating the measurement model to assess validity and reliability, including convergent validity with loading factor values above 0.7 and discriminant validity using the Fornell-Larcker criterion. The structural model was then evaluated to examine relationships between latent variables using the bootstrapping technique, which provided statistical significance estimates for the tested relationships.

This study emphasizes the development of gastronomic tourism based on local culture, fair and transparent business governance, and business performance that reflects economic sustainability in Jambi Province. The analysis results are expected to contribute to the development of the gastronomy sector as part of Indonesia's creative industries.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Result

This study employs a quantitative approach to analyze the relationships among the key variables using SmartPLS 3 software. The findings are presented in stages, starting with the evaluation of the initial research model, followed by refinements to ensure the model meets

the required validity and reliability criteria. The following sections detail the results of the analysis:

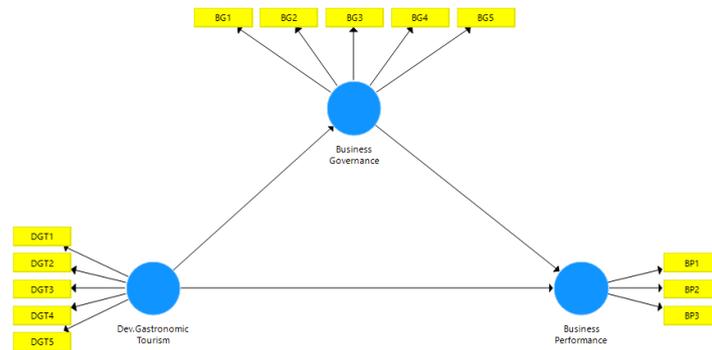


Figure 1. Initial Model Research

In the initial stage, the research model was developed with three primary variables: gastronomic tourism development (DGT), business governance (BG), and business performance (BP). Each variable was carefully defined and measured using specific indicators to capture its essential dimensions.

The variable gastronomic tourism development explores key elements that drive culinary tourism, including the historical significance of local gastronomy (*food history*), the representation of Malay heritage in culinary practices (*Malay cultural identity*), and the influence of environmental and geographical conditions on gastronomic offerings. Additionally, the model incorporates the role of gastronomy in local daily life (*people's lifestyle*) and the creativity involved in food presentation and serving methods (*art and methods of serving food*).

For business governance, the model examines the principles that support effective management and ethical practices. This includes the transparency of business operations, accountability of stakeholders, and the ethical responsibility to operate sustainably. The model also considers objectivity in decision-making and fairness in governance practices, reflecting the importance of a balanced and just approach to management.

Finally, business performance is assessed through its financial and operational outcomes. Indicators include profit growth as a measure of financial success, market share as an indicator of competitiveness within the industry, and asset growth to reflect the expansion and sustainability of business operations over time. These indicators collectively form a robust framework to analyze the intricate relationships among gastronomic tourism development, governance practices, and business performance in this study.

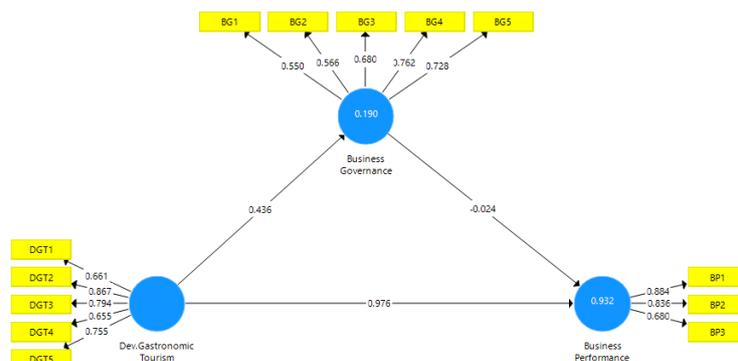


Figure 2. Calculation of the Initial Model Research

According to Ghozali (2006), convergent validity of a research model can be assessed by examining the correlation between item/indicator scores and their respective construct scores. Indicators are considered reliable if their correlation values exceed 0.70. Based on the evaluation results, several indicators in the initial model were found to have loading factors below the threshold of 0.7. These include food history (DGT1) and people’s lifestyle (DGT4) under the gastronomic tourism development variable, transparency (BG1), accountability (BG2), and responsibility (BG3) under the business governance variable, and asset growth (BP3) under the business performance variable.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the model, these indicators were excluded. The revised research model, excluding indicators with loading factors below 0.7, is shown in the figure below. The updated model was subsequently reevaluated to confirm the robustness of the remaining constructs.

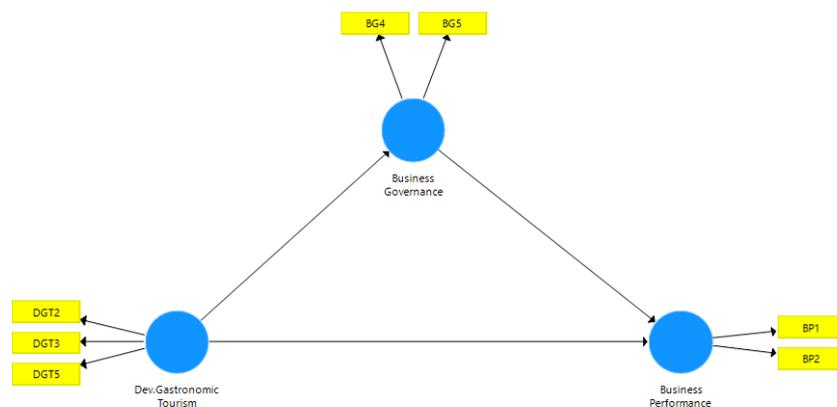


Figure 3. Second Model Research

The research model was recalculated after the removal of indicators with low loading factors. This recalculation aimed to validate the revised model and ensure that all remaining constructs met the required criteria for reliability and validity. The results of this recalculation are presented in the following figure.

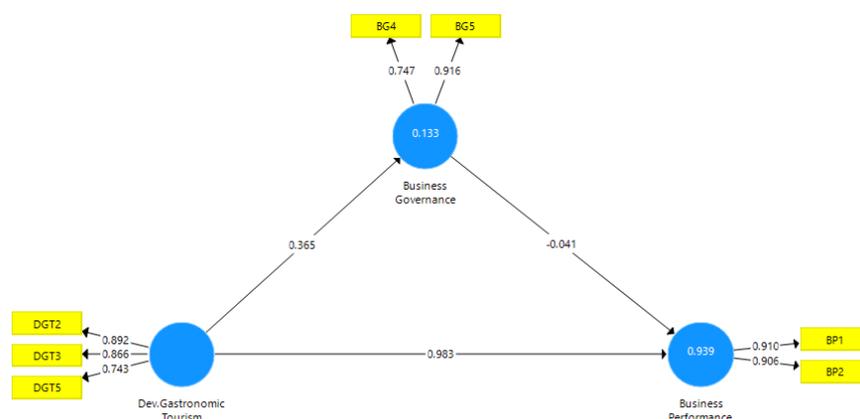


Figure 4. Calculation of Second Model Research

As shown in Figure 4 all indicators across the variables demonstrated loading factors above 0.7, confirming their reliability in reflecting the constructs within the research model. This indicates that the refined model effectively captures the relationships among the variables

under study. Following this validation, the results of the bootstrapping analysis for the revised model are presented below.

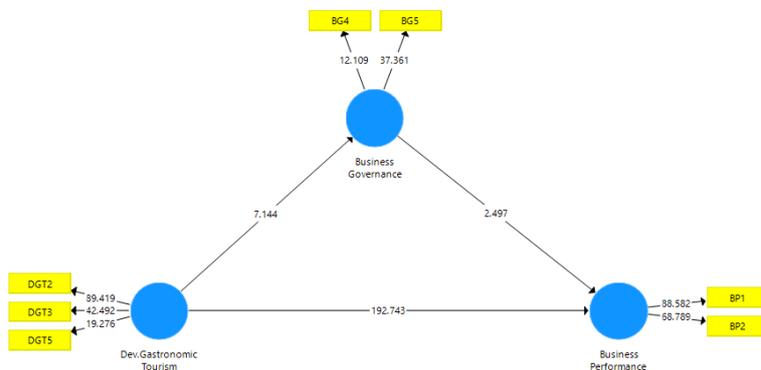


Figure 5. Boostrapping Result

The results of the analysis are further detailed through the path coefficient table, which illustrates the relationships among the variables in the refined model. This table provides insights into the significance and strength of the interactions between the constructs, serving as the foundation for interpreting the research findings. The table is presented as follows:

Table 1. Path Coefficient

| | Original Sample (O) | Sample Mean (M) | Standard Deviation (STDEV) | T Statistics (O/STDEV) | P Values |
|---|---------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|----------|
| Business Governance -> Business Performance | -0,041 | -0,040 | 0,016 | 2,497 | 0,013 |
| Dev.Gastronomic Tourism -> Business Governance | 0,365 | 0,366 | 0,051 | 7,144 | 0,000 |
| Dev.Gastronomic Tourism -> Business Performance | 0,983 | 0,983 | 0,005 | 192,743 | 0,000 |

Source: PLS output

Based on Table 3, the following statistical conclusions can be drawn:

a) Business Governance and Business Performance

The analysis indicates that business governance has a negative and significant effect on business performance. This relationship is evidenced by an original sample value of -0.041, a t-statistic of 2.497 (greater than 1.96), and a p-value of 0.012 (less than 0.05). These findings suggest that lower levels of business governance are associated with higher business performance, highlighting the potential complexities in governance practices within the gastronomic sector.

b) Gastronomic Tourism Development and Business Governance

Gastronomic tourism development positively and significantly influences business governance, with an original sample value of 0.365, a t-statistic of 7.144 (greater than 1.96), and a p-value of 0.000 (less than 0.05). This result demonstrates that effective efforts in developing gastronomic tourism, such as promoting local cultural identity and innovation, contribute to improved business governance.

c) Gastronomic Tourism Development and Business Performance

The analysis reveals a strong positive and significant relationship between gastronomic tourism development and business performance. This is supported by an original sample value

of 0.983, a t-statistic of 192.743 (greater than 1.96), and a p-value of 0.000 (less than 0.05). These findings indicate that well-planned gastronomic tourism initiatives significantly enhance business performance, particularly in terms of economic growth and sustainability in the gastronomic sector.

4.2. Discussion

4.2.1. The Effect of Gastronomic Tourism Development on Business Governance

The findings reveal that gastronomic tourism development has a significant positive effect on business governance, highlighting its role in fostering transparency, accountability, and collaboration among stakeholders. In the context of Jambi Province, gastronomic tourism rooted in Malay cultural identity, exemplified by traditional dishes such as tempoyak, gulai tepek ikan, and bolu delapan jam, provides a strong foundation for enhancing governance practices. These efforts align with the preservation of cultural identity and innovation in food presentation, driving structured and sustainable governance systems.

These results are consistent with prior research, such as Jongsuksomsakul (2023), who emphasized that integrating cultural elements into gastronomic tourism enhances governance quality. Similarly, Salerno et al. (2023) found that culinary tourism rooted in local culture fosters accountability and inclusivity, both of which are essential for effective governance. These findings underscore the potential of Malay gastronomy as a cultural asset to drive governance reforms, ensuring a balance between cultural preservation and operational efficiency.

Furthermore, the incorporation of innovation, such as storytelling in food presentation, enhances governance by requiring transparent processes and fostering trust among stakeholders. Research by Esparza Huamanchumo et al. (2021) supports this, highlighting that good governance in the gastronomic sector builds customer trust and strengthens business sustainability. This approach can be replicated in Jambi Province, where culinary tourism holds significant untapped potential to boost local economic growth while enhancing governance systems.

Globally, Garofalo et al. (2023) and Kement et al. (2024) demonstrated similar impacts of gastronomic tourism on governance in Italy and Türkiye, respectively, where cultural integration played a key role in improving transparency and stakeholder collaboration. These parallels suggest that Jambi Province can adopt similar strategies, leveraging its unique culinary heritage to establish robust governance frameworks aligned with international standards.

By promoting Malay cultural identity through gastronomic tourism, Jambi Province can foster governance practices that are both inclusive and sustainable, setting a precedent for other regions to follow. This relationship between gastronomy and governance creates a mutually reinforcing dynamic, strengthening both cultural preservation and economic development.

4.2.2. The Effect of Business Governance on Business Performance

While business governance is commonly recognized as a key driver of business performance, the findings of this study indicate that the relationship is more nuanced. Effective governance requires a balance between fairness, transparency, and accountability, and the practical realities of daily business operations. In the local gastronomic sector of Jambi Province, this balance is often challenged by structural and resource limitations, which can hinder the direct impact of governance on business performance.

The findings suggest that formal governance structures, while essential for building trust and operational transparency, may impose additional burdens on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) if they are overly rigid or resource-intensive. For instance, local gastronomic businesses may struggle to comply with governance requirements due to limited financial or human resources, potentially affecting their ability to focus on operational efficiency and innovation.

This aligns with the study by Basle (2024), which highlighted that strong governance principles support operational efficiency and stakeholder satisfaction. However, the findings of this study reveal that in contexts like Jambi, governance frameworks need to adopt a more flexible and inclusive approach to accommodate the unique needs of local businesses. By tailoring governance practices to the capabilities of SMEs, stakeholders can ensure that these systems not only function effectively but also generate tangible benefits for business actors.

Furthermore, research by Esparza Huamanchumo et al. (2021) demonstrated that governance fosters trust and loyalty among customers, indirectly enhancing performance outcomes. However, this requires governance systems to be practical and adaptable, particularly in resource-constrained environments. For example, local businesses in Jambi could benefit from simplified governance models that focus on key principles such as accountability and ethical practices, without imposing excessive bureaucratic demands.

Globally, studies like Salerno et al. (2023) emphasize that governance in the gastronomy sector must integrate cultural and operational flexibility to support long-term sustainability. In the context of Jambi, applying such an approach would enable gastronomic businesses to enhance their performance while maintaining the integrity of local cultural practices.

By adopting governance systems that are contextually relevant and resource-sensitive, Jambi Province can bridge the gap between formal governance requirements and practical business needs. This approach ensures that governance not only contributes to compliance but also enhances operational efficiency, innovation, and overall business performance, particularly for SMEs in the gastronomic sector.

4.2.3. The Effect of Gastronomic Tourism Development on Business Performance

The findings confirm that gastronomic tourism development has a significant positive impact on business performance, emphasizing its role in driving local economic growth. Gastronomy based on local cultural identity provides a unique value proposition for destinations, attracting tourists and enhancing the overall competitiveness of the region. This is consistent with research by Garofalo et al. (2023), which found that culinary experiences rooted in local culture significantly enhance tourist satisfaction and strengthen destination branding.

In the context of Jambi Province, traditional foods such as tempoyak and gulai tepek ikan represent invaluable cultural assets that can serve as key attractions for gastronomic tourism. These distinctive dishes not only highlight the region's rich Malay heritage but also provide a competitive edge in differentiating Jambi as a unique destination. By leveraging these culinary features, local businesses can enhance the appeal of their destinations, ultimately contributing to profit growth, increased market share, and improved customer retention.

Gastronomic tourism focused on local culture also facilitates the creation of authentic experiences, which are increasingly valued by modern tourists. These experiences deepen the emotional connection between visitors and the destination, fostering customer loyalty and improving the region's reputation as a sustainable and culturally rich tourist destination. Research by Esparza Huamanchumo et al. (2021) supports this, highlighting that satisfying

gastronomic experiences encourage repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth recommendations, further strengthening business performance.

Furthermore, the integration of innovation, such as storytelling in food presentation and the incorporation of cultural narratives, enhances the overall tourist experience while adding value to traditional culinary offerings. This aligns with findings by Kement et al. (2024) in Türkiye, where innovative gastronomic tourism has driven profit growth and improved competitiveness. Jambi Province has the potential to replicate this success by emphasizing its unique cultural identity through culinary tourism.

By combining cultural authenticity and innovative practices, gastronomic tourism development can act as a transformative driver for business performance in Jambi Province. This mutually beneficial relationship highlights the importance of integrating cultural preservation with economic goals, ensuring sustainable growth for local businesses and the tourism sector as a whole.

5. Conclusions

This study examines the relationships among gastronomic tourism development, business governance, and business performance, emphasizing the role of gastronomy as a component of the creative industry supporting tourism in Jambi Province. The findings confirm the main hypotheses, demonstrating that gastronomic tourism development significantly enhances both business governance and business performance. However, the study reveals a complex relationship between business governance and business performance, as indicated by the observed negative relationship, which suggests structural challenges and the need for adaptive governance frameworks.

The primary contribution of this research lies in its integration of locally-based gastronomic tourism development into the broader framework of business governance and performance. By emphasizing Malay cultural identity as a cornerstone of gastronomic tourism, this study highlights the importance of a culture-based approach in creating authentic and engaging tourism experiences. This perspective not only positions gastronomy as a tool for cultural preservation but also demonstrates its role as an economic development strategy that supports sustainability at the local level.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the geographical focus on Jambi Province may not fully capture the dynamics of other regions with differing cultural and economic characteristics. Second, while the quantitative approach used is analytically robust, it may overlook the social and emotional dimensions of the relationships among variables, which are better explored through qualitative methods. Third, challenges in implementing governance in the local gastronomy sector reflect deeper structural issues that need further exploration.

This research opens opportunities for future studies. Expanding the geographical scope and employing mixed-method approaches could provide more comprehensive insights into the dynamics of gastronomic tourism development in diverse contexts. Additionally, exploring the complex interplay between business governance and performance across various cultural and economic settings would offer valuable contributions to the literature in this field.

The findings have significant policy implications. Local governments and industry stakeholders must collaborate to promote cultural identity through gastronomic tourism. Developing collaborative strategies that engage local communities, support human resource training, improve funding access, and foster product innovation can strengthen business governance and enhance competitiveness. By aligning cultural preservation with economic

objectives, this study provides practical guidance for developing gastronomy-based tourism as a tool for sustainable economic development.

5.1. Acknowledgments

The author thanks Jambi University and the Research and Intellectual Capital Institute (LP2M), which funded this research

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