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Driving Gastronomic Tourism: A Structural Model of Revisit Intentions for Michelin-Starred Restaurants in Thailand

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ABSTRACT

Michelin-starred restaurants are key assets of Thailand's tourism economy, attracting high-value tourists and shaping the Kingdom's culinary brand. However, the factors driving diner loyalty in this rarefied market segment, which are critical to its long-term economic viability, remain poorly understood. Drawing on data from 560 repeat diners of Thai Michelin-starred restaurants and analyzed using LISREL 9.10, the research constructs an integrated structural equation model (SEM) to examine the effects of integrated digital marketing communication (IDMC), product innovation (PI), and customer satisfaction (CS), on revisit intention (RI). The model demonstrated excellent fit to the data, explaining 70% of the variance in RI. IDMC exerts the strongest total effect ($\beta = 0.78$), followed by PI ($\beta = 0.59$) and CS ($\beta = 0.42$). Findings confirm that CS fulfills a mediating role between the two antecedent constructs and loyalty. Underscoring the importance of both internal and customer-facing areas of capability, the results provide restaurateurs and policymakers with a strategic framework within which to leverage the synergies among best-in-class communication, innovation, and experience delivery as enablers of resilient and luxury gastronomic tourism futures.

Keywords: Gastronomy tourism; Michelin-starred restaurants; Product innovation; Repeat visitation; Revisit intention; Thailand

INTRODUCTION

Currently, the global image of Thailand is inseparable from its culinary tradition, and Gastronomy tourism is acknowledged as the primary motivational factor in the visits to the Kingdom (Muangasame & Park, 2019). Additionally, restaurants with Michelin Stars are considered a global symbol of excellence, attracting more discerning tourists and generating substantial revenues, thereby positioning the country at the forefront of global gastronomy (Castillo-Manzano et al., 2021). It also has significant economic viability and the ability to leave a positive impact on the surrounding society and local communities (Kattiyapornpong et al., 2022). However, in the long term, success is particularly dependent on the ability to win loyal customers who decide to return (Liberato et al., 2020).

However, despite the importance and relevance, a lack of primary knowledge exists. Specifically, although the attraction and functionality of Michelin stars have been systematically and conceptually documented (Braun & Bockelmann, 2016), identifying the exact combination of factors that predict a customer's decision to revisit Michelin-starred outlets in Thailand remains poorly understood in an empirical, structural sense. Previous investigations on luxury restaurants have placed a selective emphasis on unique factors, such as service quality or

food presentation (Kwon et al., 2022; Şahin et al., 2021), without modeling their interactive composition and effect, which involves contemporary digital engagement, perpetual culinary innovation, and integrative satisfaction.

Thailand's leading reputation as a food destination is no accident. Fronting many pioneers in culinary diplomacy, the country first initiated the 'Global Thai' campaign to market itself as the 'Kitchen of the World' in 2002 (Kim et al., 2025). This strategic foundation was later built upon with the launch of the Michelin Guide in 2017, facilitated by a partnership with the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) (Rattanaparinyanon et al., 2024). These schemes were established with the explicit purpose of enhancing the country's standing and profile in the global tourism market by benchmarking the dining scene against world-renowned competitors. With Phuket's nomination to UNESCO's Creative City of Gastronomy list in 2015, Thailand, a culinary destination with a culturally rich heritage, was further recognized (Sangkaew et al., 2025).

Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by introducing and testing a holistic model that suggests integrated digital marketing communication (IDMC) (Mocanu & Szkal, 2023), product innovation (PI) (Ding et al., 2022), and customer satisfaction (CS) (Rajput & Gahfoor, 2020) as significant precursors to revisit intention (RI). By situating this inquiry within the specific context of Thailand's Michelin-starred dining landscape (Barrera-Barrera, 2023), this research aims to go beyond traditional business analysis. It attempts to demonstrate that the pursuit of customer loyalty in the luxury segment is inherently linked to the endeavor of cultivating a more resilient, responsible, and culturally meaningful tourism ecosystem for the country.

Research Questions

Three main questions guide this study:

RQ1: What are the direct effects of IDMC, PI, and CS on customers' revisit intentions toward Michelin-starred restaurants in Thailand?

RQ2: Does Customer Satisfaction mediate the relationship between (a) IDMC and RI, and (b) PI and RI?

RQ3: How can the final model explain gastronomic tourism practices within Thailand's luxury dining sector?

By answering these questions, the study will provide a deeper understanding of how marketing communication, innovation, and satisfaction interact to influence loyalty in high-end restaurants. The results will be beneficial for restaurant owners, marketers, and policymakers seeking to promote Thailand's culinary reputation. Overall, the study suggests that business success can grow when customer satisfaction and responsible practices are aligned.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Gastronomic Tourism

Gastronomic tourism, according to Sio et al. (2024), has evolved from being a complementary tourist practice to its current position as a core travel motivation, a key driver of destination competitiveness, and a hub of cultural production and exchange. At its essence, SGT is seen as the pursuit of unique and memorable food and drink experiences, both at home and while traveling (Kaur et al., 2025). However, the more recent conversation extends this understanding beyond consumption to gastronomic tourism, which links eating experiences to the values of environmental stewardship, retrospection, and equity (Liberato et al., 2020). Gastronomic tourism recognizes food not simply as a commodity, but as an integral part of place, ecology, and community (Ding et al., 2022; Smith & Xiao, 2008). In social terms, it entails the preservation of heritage, the support of local foodways and producers, and the pursuit of fair labor practices (Ranta & Ichijo, 2022). In economic terms, it means building local community and business resilience through the retention of secure income streams, particularly repeat visitation and high-value tourism (Castillo-Manzano et al., 2021). Luxury gastronomy, particularly Michelin-starred fine dining, occupies a highly contentious yet highly influential position in this nexus. Understanding the genesis of their success, particularly in terms of customer loyalty and repeat visitation, is crucial to planning a more sustainable future for high-end tourism.

The Michelin Phenomenon and the Premium Experience

The Michelin Guide is recognized as a prestigious international dining indicator, holding significant influence over restaurants' reputations, destination popularity, and tourists' choices (Lin, 2025). The Michelin star is a symbol of exceptional culinary excellence. Its impacts on the popularity of a restaurant, price flexibility, and attraction are undeniable (Lau et al., 2025). Restaurants are awarded one to three additional stars based on five criteria. These include the quality of the ingredients, the flavour and skills in cooking, the chef's personality in the cuisine, the harmony of the band's flavours, and the consistency between visits (Dönmez et al., 2025). Dining in such a place is more than just consumption, with each experience evolving into an elegant, multisensory event that unites art, stories, and impeccable service (Barrera-Barrera, 2023; Şahin et al., 2021).

Recent research has successfully deconstructed diner perceptions and specifically identified various diner-perceived criteria—e.g., creativity, service quality, authenticity—based on online reviews (Barrera-Barrera, 2023). Furthermore, recent research has explored the relations between Michelin-star dining and more general wellness and culturally related outcomes in tourism.

Antecedents of Revisit Intention (RI)

In consumer behavior research, RI serves as a key measure of loyalty and is essential for ensuring service sustainability. Moreover, for luxury gastronomy establishments, such as Michelin-starred dining, the formation of RI involves a multifaceted interaction of cognitive, affective, and conative elements (Batat, 2021; Talukdar, 2022). The following discussion synthesizes three primary domains of antecedents pertinent to this context.

Integrated Digital Marketing Communication (IDMC)

Current research emphasizes the significance of social networks and marketing as crucial factors in diners' restaurant and menu selection (Vukolic et al., 2025). In a Michelin-starred restaurant, digital marketing is no longer seen as an option for storytelling and reputation management, but rather as a means of direct engagement (Dixit, 2025; Singh & Lunyal, 2025). IDMC also requires the use of digital advertising, social media (Liang et al., 2025), public relations, and direct marketing to create a coherent and compelling brand narrative (Mocanu & Szkal, 2023). Therefore, effective digital communication can enhance a brand's image (France et al., 2025), foster community engagement, and manage expectations both before and after a visit (Luekveerawattana, 2025). Studies also show that digital engagement has a positive influence on tourists' brand attitudes and visit intentions (Zhang et al., 2025).

Product Innovation (PI)

In gastronomy, innovation is the main lever for success (Galarraga & Martinez de Albeniz, 2025), and PI in prestigious cuisine comes from novelty in dish creation, innovative ways to incorporate ingredients in dishes, types of presentations or plating, integrating elements that provide the highest levels of quality and food safety (Ding et al., 2022; Mengual-Recuerda et al., 2021), as well as the involvement of the diner, their perception, and the image of the destination (Kuhn et al., 2025). The sophisticated food tourist considers ongoing innovation to be one of the significant incentives to travel, as it provides them with originality and uniqueness (Chang et al., 2025). Alongside the value it confers to the customer, it also creates perceived value and hedonic satisfaction, which are known to be important precursors to repurchase and parents' recommendation intentions in the field of experiences (Leong et al., 2020).

Customer Satisfaction (CS)

Satisfaction is the key mediator between the service experience and loyalty outcomes. In the case of the Michelin dining experience, satisfaction is comprised of three key constructs. These are superior in terms of quality and food goodness, offering a sense of value for the high price paid, and providing extraordinary service and a personal touch (Şahin et al., 2021). Once diners are satisfied, they tend to return, spread positive word-of-mouth (Foroudi et al., 2021), and thereby contribute to the long-term sustainability of the restaurant business (Rajput & Gahfoor, 2020). Beyond the hospitality context (Foroudi et al., 2021), the relationship between satisfaction and revisit attitude is well established.

Further empirical studies in the context of Michelin-starred restaurants in Thailand provide an enhanced framework for understanding key decision-making influences. Having examined 11,887 online reviews, Kim et al. (2025) identified four main experiential clusters that shape customers' evaluations. These influencing factors ranged from food quality and environment to service level and monetary cost, as well as excessive dining time. In Taiwan, Chen and Lin (2024) surveyed 439 diners from eight Michelin-starred restaurants and found that price does not affect the satisfaction level of either the service or the physical environment.

Synthesizing the Gaps: Toward a Sustainable Loyalty Model

Although individual key factors of digital marketing, innovation, and satisfaction have been widely analyzed in various hospitality and tourism contexts, significant research gaps remain in these topics when focusing on gastronomic tourism in the luxury sector.

Contextual gap: There is a lack of empirical research predicting customers' revisit intentions in the Michelin-starred restaurant sector in Thailand, with most Michelin-related studies having been conducted in a European or American context. However, Thailand boasts a unique cultural and culinary context, as well as a reputation as one of the world's leading tourist destinations (Bhanityanakorn et al., 2024; Subphonkulanan, 2024). Therefore, this context is particularly valuable for research.

The majority of these studies examined these antecedents separately. There is still a missing theoretical integration of an overall model that can simultaneously test the direct effects of IDMC, PI, and CS on a diner's RI in this particular context. Understanding their relative direct and indirect effects (e.g., whether innovation drives

satisfaction, which in turn drives loyalty) will also be noteworthy, as it would help restaurants prioritize their strategies.

METHODS

Research Design and Population

This study employed a cross-sectional quantitative research design to develop and examine an SEM of relationships between IDMC, PI, CS, and RI. The population consisted of diners from Thai Michelin-starred restaurants who had eaten at these restaurants on at least two occasions, thus ensuring that informants had sound experiential knowledge to form meaningful and relatively stable revisit intentions. This focus aligns with the study's goal of promoting customer loyalty in the luxury gastronomic restaurant sector in Thailand, which represents a significant component of high-value, experience-based tourism essential for the country's long-term development.

Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

Given the highly targeted but geographically dispersed population, a multi-stage non-probability sampling approach, incorporating quota and purposive sampling methods, was employed.

Stage 1 – Setting Quotas

The first stage involved setting quotas based on the 2024 Michelin Guide Thailand, which identified a total of 36 Michelin-starred restaurants. Some of these restaurants have also received the Michelin Green Star, an award introduced in 2020 that recognizes leading restaurants in the industry for their food sustainability (Huang et al., 2025), while setting a benchmark for the entire industry (Chiang et al., 2021). The criteria upon which restaurants are recognized for this distinction include their approach to ingredient sourcing, minimizing food and material waste, as well as their social and environmental contributions.

Thus, its composition in 2024 was as follows: one-star, 28 restaurants (77.8%); two-star, seven restaurants (19.4%); three-star, one restaurant (2.8%). Hence, the sample being proportioned to that composition, the following numbers of responses were obtained: one-star restaurants (including Green Star), 436; two-star restaurants, 109; and three-star restaurants, 15.

Stage 2 – Diner Recruitment

Stage 2 entailed diner recruitment. Within each quota stratum, purposive recruitment was conducted on-site and in the surrounding areas of Michelin-starred restaurants in Bangkok, as well as in other key tourist locations. To be eligible, respondents had to indicate that they had visited at least one Michelin-starred restaurant in Thailand at least once prior to the visit they were making at the time. Data collection continued until the target for the strata quota had been fulfilled.

Sample Size Justification

Following SEM conventions, a sample of 10–20 cases per estimated parameter is recommended (Legate et al., 2024). With 14 observed variables, the minimum required size was 280. To enhance estimation stability and power, the researchers doubled this number, yielding 560 valid responses (1-star = 436, 2-star = 109, 3-star = 15). The small 3-star subgroup was retained to reflect real market structure rather than for separate inferential analysis. Consequently, the findings are most generalizable to one- and two-star Michelin restaurants in major Thai tourism cities. All respondents participated voluntarily, provided informed consent, and completed anonymous questionnaires. The study followed university ethical guidelines for human research.

Research Instrument and Measures

The data collection instrument was a six-part structured questionnaire. All perceptual constructs were evaluated using a five-point Likert scale (1: Strongly Disagree to 5: Strongly Agree). To prepare the English version, the original Thai questionnaire was translated using the DeepSeek V-3 AI model. This draft underwent a comprehensive review by a native English-speaking academic editor to verify conceptual equivalence, linguistic accuracy, and contextual appropriateness.

The questionnaire's content validity was assessed by a panel of five experts in marketing and hospitality, with IOC scores ranging from 0.60 to 1.00. A pilot test involving 30 respondents was conducted to confirm the clarity, comprehension, and reliability of the scale. The results showed high internal consistency for all constructs, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients exceeding 0.80.

The sections of the final instrument were as follows:

- Part 1: Demographic Information: This section recorded participants' gender, age, income, educational background, and occupation.
- Part 2: Integrated Marketing Digital Communication (IDMC): Adapted from Mocanu and Szkal (2023) and Kurniawan and Suhermin (2023), these five items measured digital advertising, public relations, sales promotion, personal selling, and direct marketing.
- Part 3: Product Innovation (PI): Three items from Bakatsis and Verma (2025) gauged perceptions of new products, product presentation, and food safety standards.
- Part 4: Customer Satisfaction (CS): Using three items adapted from Ahmed et al. (2023), Kim et al. (2025), and Şahin et al. (2021), this part evaluated satisfaction with food taste (CS1), value for money (CS2), and restaurant service (CS3).
- Part 5: Revisit Intention (RI): Three items from Sunarta et al. (2025) measured willingness to repurchase (RI1), willingness to recommend (RI4), and actual repurchase intention (RI3).

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS 29 and LISREL 9.10 in three stages:
Descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, summarize sample characteristics.

- **Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA):** To test the measurement model's convergent and discriminant validity (factor loadings > 0.60; CR > 0.70; AVE > 0.50).
- **Structural Equation Modeling (SEM):** The hypothesized relationships were tested using a path-analytic procedure with latent variables within the framework of SEM. The analysis was performed using the Maximum Likelihood (ML) estimation method. The use of ML estimation is appropriate given our large sample size (n = 560), and its good properties remain even in the face of moderate violations of multivariate normality (Kline, 2023). To protect against potential biases, bootstrapping (1000 samples) was also performed to ensure the stability of the parameter estimates.

Model fit was evaluated on a combination of absolute and incremental fit indices, and the results suggested an excellent fit of the hypothesized model to the data: $\chi^2/df = 0.31$, RMSEA = 0.00, SRMR = 0.00, CFI = 0.99, and TLI = 0.99. The nonsignificant chi-square statistic ($p = 0.98$) provided further support for a good model fit. All the fit indices were at or beyond their respective conservative cut-offs for good fit (McNeish, 2025; Kline, 2023), indicating that the model provides a reasonable representation of the relations among the studied constructs.

Data Collection and Ethical Considerations

Data were gathered during May and June 2025 utilizing a dual-method design. This approach integrated structured in-person interviews with online questionnaires to expand reach and mitigate selection bias (Mechuchep & Damnet, 2025). Potential respondents were screened against eligibility requirements and offered informed consent before any involvement.

Written consent was obtained from the Faculty of Hospitality Industry at Kasetsart University for the face-to-face interviews. Online participants provided digital consent through a Google Forms prompt ("Yes, I agree to participate"). Individuals who did not provide consent were excluded from the study.

All participants received a full explanation of the research aims, guarantees of anonymity, and a reminder of their voluntary right to withdraw. No personally identifiable data was recorded. The Kasetsart University Research Ethics Committee (KUREC) granted an ethical exemption for the study (KUREC-KPS68/116, dated August 13, 2025). However, the procedures adhered to the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki (2013) and followed the relevant behavioral and social science research guidelines issued by Thailand's NRCT (Techagaisiyavanit et al., 2025).

METHODS

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1's conceptual framework proposes that three latent constructs, including integrated digital marketing communication (IDMC), product innovation (PI), and customer satisfaction (CS), have a direct and positive influence on diner revisit intention (RI) in Thai Michelin–starred restaurants. The framework was developed based on an integrative literature review and verified by three academic experts in consumer behavior and green marketing to ensure that the constructs aligned with theory and fit within the contextual setting.

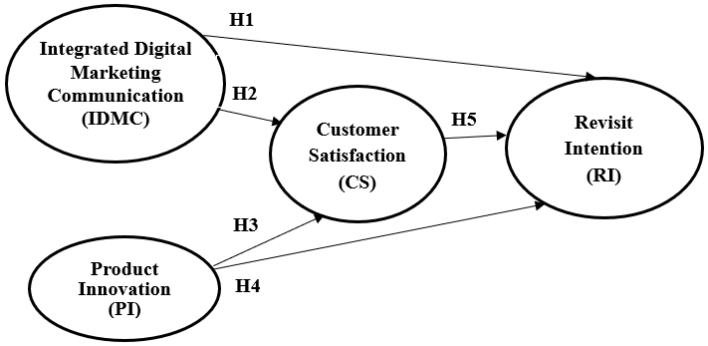

Figure 1. Revision Intention's Conceptual Model.
Source: *The Authors.*

RESULTS

Sample Characteristics

A total of 560 valid responses were analyzed. The demographic profile (Table 1) reflects Thailand's luxury dining market, where respondents were predominantly female (44.3%) and between 21 and 40 years old (52.5%). Most held at least a bachelor's degree (53.2%) and reported monthly incomes exceeding 35,000 THB (35.7%), consistent with the target segment of high-spending gastronomic tourists.

The majority (77.8%) had dined at one-star or Green Star Michelin establishments, followed by two-star (19.4%) and three-star (2.8%) restaurants. This proportional structure mirrors the national distribution of Michelin awards in the *2024 Michelin Guide: Bangkok, Phuket, and Phang-Nga*, ensuring representativeness.

Table 1. General characteristics of the sample (n = 560).

Characteristics	n	%
Gender		
Male	188	33.57
Female	248	44.28
Other	124	22.15
Total	560	100.00
Age		
1) 20 or under	32	5.71
2) 21-30 years	165	29.46
3) 31-40 years	129	23.03
4) 41-50 years	98	17.50
5) 51-60 years	74	13.22
6) Over 60 years	62	11.08
Total	560	100.00
Occupation		
1) Student (Higher Education or above)	74	13.21
2) Government Officer / State Enterprise Employee	76	13.57
3) Business Owner / Entrepreneur / Freelancer	94	16.78
4) Private Company / Foreign Organization	95	16.96
5) Self-Employed Professional (e.g., Consultant, Designer)	94	16.79
6) Merchant / Family Business	65	11.61
7) Retired / No Regular Income / Between Jobs	62	11.08
Total	560	100.00
Monthly Income (THB) (Including all sources of income)		
1) Less than 15,001 THB	56	10.00
2) 15,001 - 20,000 THB	75	13.39
3) 20,001 - 25,000 THB	92	16.42
4) 25,001 - 30,000 THB	44	7.85
5) 30,001 - 35,000 THB	93	16.60
6) More than 35,000 THB	200	35.74
Total	560	100.00
Education		
1) Below Bachelor's Degree	89	15.89
2) Bachelor's Degree	298	53.21

3) Above Bachelor's Degree (Master's/Ph.D.)	173	30.90
Total	560	100.00
Michelin Star Rating of the Restaurant You Have Visited		
1) 1 Star	436	77.78
2) 2 Stars	109	19.44
3) 3 Stars	15	2.78
Total	560	100.00

Note. *During the survey, the Thai baht to USD conversion rate was approximately 1 USD ≈ 36 ฿.*
Source: *The authors.*

Descriptive Statistics and Measurement Model Assessment

Descriptive statistics (Table 2) indicated generally favorable evaluations of all latent constructs. Mean scores for IDMC, PI, CS, and RI ranged between 4.07 and 4.18 on a five-point scale (where 5 = Strongly Agree (Most Important) and 1 = Strongly Disagree (Least Important), suggesting strong positive perceptions across all domains.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) validated the adequacy of the measurement model (Table 3). All standardized factor loadings exceeded 0.60 and were statistically significant ($p < 0.01$), confirming convergent validity. The constructs demonstrated excellent internal consistency, with composite reliability (CR) values ranging from 0.85 to 0.90 and average variance extracted (AVE) values exceeding 0.50, which satisfies the guidelines of Legate et al. (2024) and Kline (2023). Overall, these findings confirm that the measurement model is both reliable and valid (Barros et al., 2025; Isher & Gangwar, 2025).

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Latent and Observed Variables.

Latent and Observed Variables	**Code**	**Mean**	**SD**
Integrated Digital Marketing Communication	IDMC	4.08	0.60
Digital Advertising	IDMC1	4.13	0.66
Personal Selling via Digital Media	IDMC2	4.04	0.68
Digital Sales Promotion	IDMC3	4.09	0.61
Digital Public Relations & Publicity	IDMC4	4.06	0.67
Digital Direct Marketing	IDMC5	4.08	0.62
Product Innovation	PI	4.07	0.62
New Products	PI1	4.04	0.67
Product Presentation	PI2	4.16	0.65
Product Safety	PI3	4.02	0.70
Customer Satisfaction	CS	4.18	0.65
Food Taste	CS1	4.18	0.70
Value for Money	CS2	4.17	0.68
Restaurant Service	CS3	4.19	0.67
Revisit Intention	RI	4.14	0.58
Willingness to Repurchase	RI1	4.06	0.68
Willingness to Recommend	RI2	4.15	0.61
Actual Repurchase Intention	RI3	4.20	0.65

Note. *All mean values were evaluated as 'high'.*
Source: The authors.

Table 3. Results of the CFA.

Latent Variables	**OV**	**Component Weight**			
		λ	**SE**	**t-Value**	**R^2**
IDMC	IDMC1	0.68**	<-->	<-->	0.52
	IDMC2	0.66**	0.06	20.44	0.49
	IDMC3	0.72**	0.06	24.21	0.69
	IDMC4	0.70**	0.05	23.51	0.63
	IDMC5	0.74**	0.05	24.66	0.69
PI	PI1	0.77**	<-->	<-->	0.71
	PI2	0.75**	0.06	24.98	0.70
	PI3	0.79**	0.06	26.63	0.74
CS	CS1	0.71**	<-->	<-->	0.67
	CS2	0.75**	0.05	24.92	0.69
	CS3	0.80**	0.05	26.74	0.75
RI	RI1	0.75**	0.06	25.20	0.70
	RI2	0.72**	0.06	24.95	0.68

	RI3	0.78**	0.06	25.26	0.72

Note: *** p < 0.01, OV = observed variable, λ indicates standardized component weights. <--> indicates mandatory parameters; therefore, SE and t values are not reported. CR = Composite Reliability, AVE = Average Variance Extracted.*
Source: *The authors.*

Discriminant Validity and Correlation Analysis

Discriminant validity was examined through inter-construct correlations and the Fornell–Larcker criterion. As shown in Table 4, all correlations were positive, moderate to strong (r = 0.53–0.72, p < 0.01), and below the square roots of the AVEs for their respective constructs, confirming satisfactory discriminant validity. These significant relationships provide preliminary empirical support for the hypothesized structural paths among IDMC, PI, CS, and RI.

Table 4. Correlation Coefficients among Latent Variables.

Latent variables	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	IDMC	PI	CS	RI
IDMC	4.08	0.60	-1.32	-3.24	**1**			
PI	4.07	0.62	-1.56	-4.16	0.70**	1		
CS	4.18	0.65	-1.55	-4.66	0.53**	0.72**	**1**	
RI	4.14	0.58	-1.95	-2.33	0.68**	0.56**	0.59**	**1**

Note: *** p < 0.01, Diagonal elements (in bold) are the square roots of the AVE. Off-diagonal elements are the correlations between constructs. Discriminant validity is established as the square root of AVE for each construct is greater than its correlation with other constructs.*

Structural Model Assessment and Hypothesis Testing

The hypothesized SEM was estimated using the Maximum Likelihood (ML) method. The final model exhibited excellent fit to the empirical data: $\chi^2/df = 1.85$, RMSEA = 0.04, SRMR = 0.03, CFI = 0.98, NFI = 0.97, and GFI = 0.95. All indices meet or surpass conservative thresholds for good model fit (McNeish, 2025; Kline, 2023). The model explained 56% of the variance in CS ($R^2 = 0.56$) and 70% of the variance in RI ($R^2 = 0.70$), demonstrating strong predictive power. Path coefficients (Table 5) indicate that all hypothesized relationships were statistically significant (p < 0.01). IDMC had significant direct effects on both CS (β = 0.62) and RI (β = 0.55). PI significantly influenced CS (β = 0.52) and RI (β = 0.38). CS (CS) had a positive effect on RI (β = 0.42). In addition, both IDMC and PI exhibited significant indirect effects on RI through CS (β = 0.23 and 0.21, respectively).

Table 5. Direct (DE), Indirect (IE), and Total Effects (TE) of Predictors on RI.

			Causal Variable		
Dependent Variable	**R^2**	**Effect**	**CS**	**PI**	**IDMC**
CS	0.56	DE	-	0.52**	0.62**
		IE	-	-	-
		TE	-	0.52**	0.62**
RI	0.70	DE	0.42**	0.38**	0.55**
		IE	-	0.21**	0.23**
		TE	0.42**	0.59**	0.78**

Note: *** p < 0.01. According to the research hypothesis, the symbol <-> means no parameter line.*
Source: *The authors.*

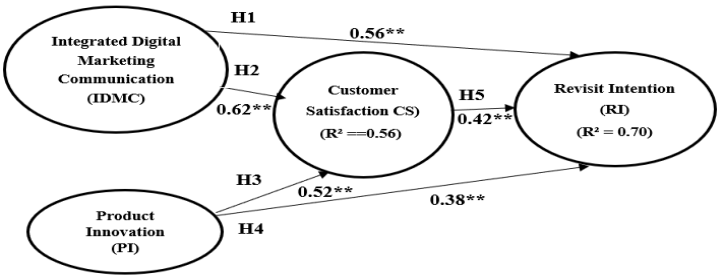

Figure 2. Final Model.

Note: *** Sig. < 0.01, Chi-Square = 68.74, df = 94, p = 0.78, $\chi^2/df = 0.73$, RMSEA = 0.00, RMR = 0.00, CFI = 0.99, GFI = 0.99, AGFI = 0.99.*
Source: *The authors.*

Hypothesis Testing and Interpretation

All five hypotheses were supported (Table 6). The results confirm that IDMC and PI exert both direct and mediated influences on RI, primarily through their positive impact on CS.

Table 6. Final Hypotheses Testing Results.

Hypothesis	Paths	Std. β	t-values	Results
H1	IDMC → RI	0.56	10.87**	Supported
H2	IDMC → CS	0.62	12.42**	Supported
H3	PI → CS	0.52	10.52**	Supported
H4	PI → RI	0.38	5.14**	Supported
H5	CS → RI	0.42	9.85**	Supported

***Note**: **Sig.<.01*
***Source:** The Authors.*

These results can be meaningfully interpreted through the lens of the Triple Bottom Line (economic, social, and environmental sustainability) (Nogueira et al., 2023):

Economic: Effective digital engagement strengthens customer relationships, enhancing revenue stability and reducing reacquisition costs (Rahayu, 2024).

Social: Customer satisfaction fosters trust and promotes positive word-of-mouth (Aldulaimi et al., 2025), thereby reinforcing the social value of the dining experience.

Environmental: Product innovation aligns with eco-friendly practices, such as sustainable sourcing and waste reduction, thereby promoting environmentally responsible gastronomy (Blešić et al., 2025).

The combination of these pathways demonstrates that economic success and sustainability can reinforce each other in the Michelin-star restaurant ecosystem.

DISCUSSION

This study developed and tested a structural model to examine the antecedents of revisit intention within Thailand's Michelin-starred restaurant sector. The findings confirm the significant, positive roles of IDMC, PI, and CS. More importantly, when interpreted through the lens of sustainable gastronomic tourism, these relationships reveal a strategic blueprint for fostering economic resilience, social value, and environmental stewardship within the high-end culinary segment—a critical driver of destination competitiveness (Liberato et al., 2020).

Synthesizing Important Outcomes

The Role of Digital Marketing as an Engagement and Stability Channel

In today's fast-paced digital world, IDMC exerts the largest total effect on "RI" (β = 0.78), as reported by the study. This also has little to do with the effectiveness of advertising. Digital communication is an indispensable channel for transparent storytelling and stakeholder communication. This way, Michelin-starred restaurants can communicate their commitment—whether to sourcing locally, their zero-waste philosophy, or support for cultural preservation—and align their brand with the ideals of the conscious consumer. This also "establishes trust and builds connections. In terms of economic benefits, there is the "direct and cost-effective approach to building customer relationships and thereby counteract the long tail." In terms of economic benefits, there is also a direct and cost-effective channel for building customer relationships, thereby lessening the environmental and economic cost of attracting new tourists and improving the economic resilience of those businesses (Zhang & Kim, 2021). The presence of a significant path from IDMC to CS (H1) also means that effective communication helps to control expectations and build greater value, which is critical to supporting a paid business model.

Innovation in Products as the Driver of Environmental and Competitive Sustainability

The proven impact of PI on both CS (H3) and RI (H4) underlines the fact that innovation goes beyond mere creativity and becomes a holistic source of sustainability within value creation itself. In relation to Michelin-reputed restaurants, innovation extends beyond pure culinary affairs to include sustainable approaches to food, such as local sourcing to combat food waste, innovative methods for preparing selected vegetables to minimize waste, and plant-based menus that result in overall lower carbon emissions (Ding et al., 2022). This paper proposes that "green innovation" constitutes a strong source of customer satisfaction, considering that it appeals to the rising number of gastronomic tourists who find satisfaction with ethical consumption (Correia et al., 2020). Consequently, PI becomes a fundamental source of overall sustainability within the environment and a definitive measure of sustainable innovation advantage, attracting returning tourists who seek new experiences that resonate with their personal principles.

The Social Glue for RI: Customer Satisfaction

The evidence between CS and RI is relatively robust due to its mediating nature, as represented by CS as an antecedent (H5). Since it is being viewed in terms of the social and sustainability dimensions of the triple bottom

line, it certainly has potential in enhancing dining experiences through optimal service delivery, social and cultural correctness, and value-for-money perception. In turn, it creates an influential and pivotal force of consumer satisfaction and emotional connection, which is imperative for building its reputation in the local culinary scene. Satisfied customers, therefore, are inherent and unofficial marketing stakeholders who not only patronize an individual restaurant but also the entire Thai food culture, as it is more reliable and persuasive compared to advertising, and it also enhances the social dimensions of tourism.

CONCLUSIONS

The evidence presented in this article clearly demonstrates that culinary excellence in a Michelin-starred restaurant and sustainable development are not mutually exclusive, but rather complementary to one another. Repeat business, a crucial component in measuring the sustainability of a restaurant, can be generated through digital communication, fostering a strong sense of community, innovative product design within ecological limits, and providing customers with a memorable experience that upholds social and cultural values. For Thailand and destination cities, this case is undoubtedly one for celebrating a strong connection between the future of luxury dining and sustainability. Luxury dining businesses can, through this realization, transition from temples of gastronomy to pillars vital to a sustainable tourism system.

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