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Longganisa As Culinary Identity: Its Influence on Tourism Development in Cabanatuan City

Mark Alvin H. Abad
Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology

Aileen V. Faigal
Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology

Carlo Jose L. Camacho,
Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology

Hernan V. Portana,
Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology

Pauline Grace M. Alfaro
Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology

John Paolo S. Nagaño
Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology

Muhammad Ismael O. Khan
Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology

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ABSTRACT: This study examined longganisa as a culinary identity and its perceived contribution to tourism development in Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija. It assessed five dimensions of culinary identity—cultural significance, authenticity, uniqueness, availability and accessibility, and promotion and marketing—and five dimensions of perceived tourism development—tourism attraction, tourism promotion, business growth, job creation, and destination branding. Using a descriptive-correlational quantitative design and purposive sampling, the study involved 172 respondents: 12 longganisa business owners or producers, 100 consumers or local residents, and 60 tourists or visitors. Data were gathered through a structured questionnaire using a four-point Likert scale and analyzed using frequency and percentage, weighted mean, Pearson product-moment correlation, and multiple linear regression. The overall weighted means were 3.06 for culinary identity and 3.12 for perceived tourism development, both interpreted as Agree. Culinary identity was positively correlated with perceived tourism development ($r = 0.587$, $p < .001$). In the regression model, cultural significance, authenticity, uniqueness, and availability and accessibility had statistically significant positive coefficients, while promotion and marketing did not show a statistically significant unique association. The findings indicate that respondents generally recognize the cultural and tourism value of Cabanatuan longganisa. The study recommends coordinated culinary heritage documentation, enterprise support, improved product accessibility, and destination-level promotion to strengthen longganisa's role in local culinary tourism.

KEYWORDS: culinary identity, longganisa, gastronomy tourism, destination branding, local food, Cabanatuan City.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism increasingly involves more than visiting attractions; it also includes opportunities to encounter the culture, practices, and everyday life of a destination. Food is one of the most immediate ways through which visitors experience place. Local dishes can communicate histories, ingredients, preparation knowledge, social relationships, and shared meanings. When a food product is distinctive and closely connected to local culture and practices, it may become part of a destination's culinary identity and serve as a valuable resource for tourism development (Lin et al., 2011; Lai et al., 2019). Research on food and destination branding emphasizes that cuisine can contribute to the way a destination is represented by tourism organizations and perceived by visitors. Lai, Khoo-Lattimore, and Wang (2019) distinguish between food images projected by destination stakeholders and food images perceived by tourists, highlighting the importance of aligning promotional narratives with visitor

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experience. Lin, Pearson, and Cai (2011) similarly discuss food as a component of destination identity and show why the identity communicated by promotional materials should be considered alongside stakeholder perspectives.

Food-related events and culinary experiences may also strengthen destination image and loyalty. Yang et al. (2020) examined the role of food festivals in branding culinary destinations, while Park and Widyanta (2022) described food tourism as an evolving destination foodscape involving both visitors and suppliers. These perspectives suggest that culinary identity is not created by a product alone; it is shaped by producers, consumers, tourism institutions, marketing practices, and the wider food environment.

Authenticity is another important consideration. Sims (2009) argued that local food can contribute to sustainable tourism experiences when visitors connect food with place and local meaning. More recent work also treats gastronomic authenticity as relational, emerging through the interaction of food, people, place, and practices rather than as a fixed product attribute (Ye & Cheng, 2026). This perspective is relevant to traditional food products whose value depends on both recognizable characteristics and the continuity of local knowledge.

Cabanatuan City in Nueva Ecija is associated with longganisa, a familiar local food product linked in the study context to food businesses, family practices, and the city's culinary reputation. Its potential contribution to tourism depends on more than product availability. It may also depend on whether visitors recognize it as distinctive, whether producers can communicate its story, whether points of sale are accessible, and whether local tourism stakeholders incorporate it into destination promotion.

Although food tourism and destination branding have been widely discussed, the specific relationship between Cabanatuan longganisa as a culinary identity and perceived tourism development requires local investigation. A focused study can help determine how producers, residents, consumers, and visitors understand the product's cultural meaning and tourism potential. The present study therefore examines the perceived contribution of longganisa to tourism development in Cabanatuan City.

Research objectives and questions

The general objective is to examine longganisa as a culinary identity and its perceived contribution to tourism development in Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija.

1. Describe selected longganisa businesses in terms of historical origin, years of operation, business organization, number of employees, business scale and market reach, and brand recognition.
2. Assess the perceived culinary identity of longganisa in terms of cultural significance, authenticity, uniqueness, availability and accessibility, and promotion and marketing.
3. Assess the perceived contribution of longganisa to tourism development in terms of tourism attraction, tourism promotion, business growth, job creation, and destination branding.
4. Determine whether a statistically significant relationship exists between culinary identity and perceived tourism development.
5. Estimate which culinary-identity dimensions are statistically associated with perceived tourism development when considered simultaneously.
6. Develop an action plan to strengthen longganisa as a culinary tourism product in Cabanatuan City.

Conceptual and theoretical grounding

The study is informed by destination food-image and culinary destination-branding perspectives. Food may function as a destination identity cue, while its meaning is shaped by the interaction of projected representations and visitor perceptions (Lai et al., 2019; Lin et al., 2011). The study operationalizes culinary identity through cultural significance, authenticity, uniqueness, accessibility, and promotion. These dimensions are treated as explanatory variables associated with perceived tourism-development outcomes.

The conceptual relationship is associational rather than causal: culinary-identity dimensions are examined in relation to perceived tourism development. The model does not establish that longganisa independently causes increases in tourist arrivals, employment, or business revenue. Those outcomes would require objective indicators and a design capable of assessing change over time.

Table 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study: Culinary Identity and Perceived Tourism Development

Explanatory construct: culinary identity	Outcome construct: perceived tourism development
Cultural significance	Tourism attraction
Authenticity	Tourism promotion
Uniqueness	Business growth
Availability and accessibility	Job creation
Promotion and marketing	Destination branding

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research design

The study employed a descriptive-correlational quantitative design. The descriptive component summarized business characteristics and respondent perceptions. The correlational component examined the association between composite culinary-identity and tourism-development scores. Multiple regression was used as an exploratory analysis of the unique statistical association between the five culinary-identity dimensions and the overall tourism-development score. Given the cross-sectional and purposive-sampling approach, findings are interpreted as associations and perceptions, not causal effects.

Research setting

The study was conducted in Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija, Philippines. The setting is appropriate to the research question because the study concerns the local recognition and potential tourism role of longganisa and the businesses involved in its production and sale.

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Respondents and sampling

The study sample comprises 172 participants: 12 longganisa business owners/producers, 100 consumers/local residents, and 60 tourists/visitors. Purposive sampling was used because respondents must have relevant experience or awareness of the product. Business owners/producers should be directly involved in producing, selling, or managing a longganisa enterprise. Consumers/local residents should have purchased or consumed longganisa. Tourists/visitors should have visited Cabanatuan City and be able to assess local food as part of the destination experience.

Table 2. Distribution of Respondents According to Respondent Category

Respondent category	N	Percentage
Business owners/producers	12	6.98
Consumers/local residents	100	58.14
Tourists/visitors	60	34.88
Total	172	100.00

The allocation represents the actual respondent distribution reported for the study and is not based on a verified sampling frame or population-proportionate calculation. For an actual study, the researchers should document recruitment locations, dates, eligibility screening, response rate, and the rationale for the sample size. Because the three groups have different knowledge and roles, group-specific analyses should be considered; business-profile questions should be answered only by producers.

Research instrument

The questionnaire contains three parts.

- Part I records respondent category and, for business owners/producers only, business characteristics.
- Part II measure's culinary identity through five dimensions: cultural significance, authenticity, uniqueness, availability and accessibility, and promotion and marketing.
- Part III measures perceived tourism development through tourism attraction, tourism promotion, business growth, job creation, and destination branding. Each perception dimension is represented by five statements, resulting in 50 perception items.

Responses are recorded on a four-point Likert scale: 4 = Strongly Agree, 3 = Agree, 2 = Disagree, and 1 = Strongly Disagree. The questionnaire was reviewed by qualified experts for content relevance, clarity, and alignment with the constructs. A pilot test was conducted with respondents who are not included in the final sample. Internal consistency is calculated from pilot or actual responses and reported transparently; no reliability coefficient claimed unless it has been computed.

Data collection and ethical safeguards

Prior to data collection, the researchers secured institutional approval and the necessary permissions from relevant local authorities and business owners. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, procedures, voluntary nature, potential risks, and confidentiality safeguards. Informed consent was obtained before participation. Personally identifying and commercially sensitive information was treated confidentially and was not reported without authorization. Completed questionnaires were coded and stored securely, with access limited to the research team.

Data analysis

Frequency and percentage were used to summarize categorical respondent and business-profile variables. Weighted mean was used to describe responses to the four-point Likert items and dimensions. Pearson's product-moment correlation was used to examine the association between composite culinary-identity and tourism-development scores, provided that the assumptions for its use are reasonably satisfied. Multiple linear regression was used to estimate the simultaneous association of the five culinary-identity dimensions with the overall tourism-development score. Prior to inferential analysis, the researchers should examine missing data, outliers, linearity, normality of residuals, homoscedasticity, independence of errors, and multicollinearity. Given the ordinal nature of individual Likert items, the use of composite scores should be justified, and a suitable non-parametric sensitivity analysis may be considered.

Table 3. Likert Scale and Verbal Interpretation of Respondents' Perceptions

Score	Mean interval	Interpretation
4	3.25–4.00	Strongly Agree
3	2.50–3.24	Agree
2	1.75–2.49	Disagree
1	1.00–1.74	Strongly Disagree

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Part 1: Profile of selected longganisa businesses

Table 1.1 Historical Origin of Selected Longganisa Businesses

Category	Frequency	%
Family-inherited	7	58.33
Established independently	3	25.00
Other	2	16.67
Total	12	100.00

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The results show that seven out of twelve (58.33%) longganisa businesses originated from family-inherited enterprises. Meanwhile, three businesses (25.00%) were independently established, while two (16.67%) reported other origins. The predominance of family-inherited businesses suggests that the longganisa industry in the study's study sample has a considerable connection with family entrepreneurship and the continuity of traditional business practices.

This finding highlights the potential role of family-owned enterprises in preserving culinary knowledge, preparation practices, and local food traditions. Sims (2009) explained that local food can communicate the culture and identity of a destination by connecting visitors with the place and the people behind its food products. In this regard, family-based longganisa businesses may serve not only as commercial establishments but also as potential custodians of culinary heritage. Documenting their histories and production practices could strengthen the cultural narrative associated with Cabanatuan longganisa.

Table 1.2 Years of Operation of Selected Longganisa Businesses

Category	Frequency	%
1–5 years	3	25.00
6–10 years	4	33.33
11–15 years	3	25.00
16 years or more	2	16.67
Total	12	100.00

The distribution indicates that four businesses (33.33%) have been operating for 6–10 years, three (25.00%) for 1–5 years, another three (25.00%) for 11–15 years, and two (16.67%) for 16 years or more. The results show that the study sample includes both relatively new and established enterprises.

The presence of businesses operating for more than ten years suggests the potential continuity of longganisa entrepreneurship across different periods. At the same time, the presence of newer enterprises indicates opportunities for business development and innovation. The coexistence of established and emerging businesses may provide a foundation for strengthening the local culinary industry through collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and coordinated promotion.

From a tourism perspective, the length of business operation may contribute to the narrative of product continuity and local food heritage, as long-established food enterprises may help preserve traditional recipes, culinary knowledge, and food-related cultural practices across generations (Almansouri et al., 2021, 2022). However, years of operation alone cannot establish product authenticity or business sustainability. These aspects should also be assessed through production practices, documented histories, and the experiences of producers and consumers.

Table 1.3: Business Organization of Selected Longganisa Businesses

Category	Frequency	%
Sole proprietorship	10	83.33
Partnership	1	8.33
Corporation/cooperative	1	8.33
Total	12	100.00

The findings reveal that ten businesses (83.33%) operate as sole proprietorships, while one (8.33%) operates as a partnership and another (8.33%) is organized as a corporation or cooperative. This distribution indicates that sole proprietorship is the predominant business arrangement among the twelve respondents.

The predominance of sole proprietorships suggests that the local longganisa sector may be characterized by individually managed enterprises. Such an arrangement can allow owners to exercise direct control over production, pricing, and business operations. Nevertheless, individually operated businesses may encounter limitations in accessing larger markets, establishing formal partnerships, and sustaining large-scale promotional activities.

This finding emphasizes the importance of developing cooperative initiatives among longganisa producers. Collective marketing, shared promotional activities, product development, and participation in tourism events could provide opportunities for smaller enterprises to increase their market visibility. Lin et al. (2011) emphasized the importance of aligning food identity with destination branding, which supports the value of coordinated efforts among food producers and tourism stakeholders.

Table 1.4: Number of Employees of Selected Longganisa Businesses

Category	Frequency	%
1–5	8	66.67
6–10	3	25.00
11 or more	1	8.33
Total	12	100.00

The results indicate that eight businesses (66.67%) employ between one and five workers, three (25.00%) employ six to ten workers, and one (8.33%) employs eleven or more workers. These findings show that most businesses in the study sample operate with relatively small workforces.

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The distribution suggests that longganisa enterprises may provide employment opportunities through small-scale food production, selling, and related business activities. Although the results indicate the presence of employment within these enterprises, they do not establish the actual number of jobs generated by the entire longganisa industry or its contribution to the city's overall employment rate.

The findings nevertheless highlight the potential relationship between culinary entrepreneurship and local livelihood development. Strengthening producer capacity, improving business operations, and expanding market opportunities may create conditions for additional employment. Such initiatives should be supported by appropriate training in food handling, product quality, customer service, and enterprise management.

Table 1.5: Business Scale of Selected Longganisa Businesses

Category	Frequency	%
Micro	9	75.00
Small	3	25.00
Total	12	100.00

The distribution reveals that nine businesses (75.00%) are classified as microenterprises, while three (25.00%) are classified as small businesses. No medium or large enterprise appears in the study sample.

The predominance of microenterprises indicates that the longganisa business sector represented in the sample is primarily composed of small-scale operations. This may reflect the accessibility of food entrepreneurship as a livelihood activity and the importance of locally managed enterprises in maintaining the availability of traditional food products.

However, microenterprises may experience operational challenges involving production capacity, packaging, capital, distribution, and market expansion. These concerns are relevant when considering the development of longganisa as a tourism product because visitor demand may require consistent product quality, sufficient supply, and convenient purchasing arrangements.

Park and Widyanta (2022) emphasized that food tourism experiences are shaped by interactions among tourists, suppliers, and the wider destination food environment. Therefore, strengthening the operational capacity of micro and small longganisa businesses may help establish more accessible and organized culinary tourism experiences.

Table 1.6: Market Reach of Selected Longganisa Businesses

Category	Frequency	%
Within Cabanatuan	7	58.33
Within Nueva Ecija	4	33.33
Outside Nueva Ecija	1	8.33
Total	12	100.00

The findings show that seven businesses (58.33%) primarily serve customers within Cabanatuan City, four (33.33%) reach markets within Nueva Ecija, and only one (8.33%) extends its market outside the province. This distribution indicates that the market reach of the businesses is largely concentrated within the city and its surrounding provincial market.

The concentration of businesses within local markets suggests that longganisa has an established local commercial presence but may have opportunities for broader market penetration. Expanding distribution beyond Nueva Ecija could increase product visibility and strengthen its recognition among potential visitors and consumers.

From a tourism development perspective, broader market reach may complement destination promotion by increasing awareness of the product beyond its place of origin. Nevertheless, expansion should be accompanied by appropriate product standards, packaging, food safety practices, and reliable distribution arrangements to protect product quality and consumer confidence.

Table 1.7: Brand Recognition of Selected Longganisa Businesses

Category	Frequency	%
Locally recognized	8	66.67
Recognized beyond the city	3	25.00
Not formally branded	1	8.33
Total	12	100.00

The results indicate that eight businesses (66.67%) are locally recognized, three (25.00%) are recognized beyond Cabanatuan City, and one (8.33%) has no formal branding. The findings suggest that local recognition is more common than wider market recognition among the businesses represented in the study sample.

This pattern highlights the importance of strengthening product identification and marketing strategies. Although local recognition provides a starting point for developing a culinary identity, broader recognition requires consistent branding, clear product information, effective promotional materials, and coordinated participation in tourism-related activities.

Lai et al. (2019) explained that food image contributes to destination brand formation through the relationship between the images projected by destination stakeholders and those perceived by tourists. In this context, establishing a recognizable identity for Cabanatuan longganisa may help connect the product with the city's broader tourism image.

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A coordinated branding initiative may include producer profiles, product stories, common promotional materials, digital visibility, and participation in culinary events. Such efforts should recognize individual businesses while communicating the collective identity of Cabanatuan longganisa.

Part 2: Perceived Culinary Identity of Longganisa

Table 2. Overall Assessment of Culinary Identity

Dimension	wm	Interpretation
Cultural significance	3.06	Agree
Authenticity	3.08	Agree
Uniqueness	3.08	Agree
Availability and accessibility	3.06	Agree
Promotion and marketing	3.03	Agree
Overall culinary identity	3.06	Agree

The results reveal that the overall weighted mean for culinary identity is 3.06, interpreted as Agree. Among the five dimensions, authenticity and uniqueness obtained the highest weighted means of 3.08, followed by cultural significance and availability and accessibility, both with 3.06. Promotion and marketing received the lowest weighted mean of 3.03. Despite these differences, all dimensions were interpreted as Agree.

The results indicate generally favorable perceptions of longganisa as a culinary identity of Cabanatuan City. The relatively high ratings for authenticity and uniqueness suggest that the product is perceived as having recognizable characteristics and potential cultural value. These attributes are important in distinguishing local food products from other culinary offerings and in developing a recognizable food identity.

The rating for cultural significance further suggests that respondents generally recognize the potential connection between longganisa and local food culture. This is consistent with Sims (2009), who emphasized that local food can serve as a representation of place and culture and contribute to meaningful tourism experiences.

However, promotion and marketing obtained the lowest mean of 3.03. Although still interpreted as Agree, this result suggests that promotional activities may be an area requiring further improvement. The product's culinary value may not automatically translate into wider tourism recognition without consistent marketing, accessible information, and coordinated participation among producers and tourism stakeholders.

Lai et al. (2019) highlighted that food image contributes to destination branding through both projected and perceived representations. Consequently, strengthening the culinary identity of Cabanatuan longganisa requires not only maintaining its product characteristics but also communicating its significance through appropriate tourism promotion.

Overall, the results suggest that the five dimensions collectively provide a favorable foundation for positioning longganisa as a potential culinary tourism product. However, the relatively small differences among the weighted means should not be interpreted as statistically significant differences because no inferential comparison among the dimensions was reported.

Part 3: Contribution of Longganisa to Tourism Development

Table 3. Perceived Contribution of Longganisa to Tourism Development

Dimension	wm	Interpretation
Tourism attraction	3.10	Agree
Tourism promotion	3.10	Agree
Business growth	3.16	Agree
Job creation	3.12	Agree
Destination branding	3.11	Agree
Overall tourism development	3.12	Agree

The results reveal that the overall perceived contribution of longganisa to tourism development obtained a weighted mean of 3.12, interpreted as Agree. Among the five dimensions, business growth received the highest weighted mean of 3.16, followed by job creation (3.12), destination branding (3.11), and tourism attraction and tourism promotion, both obtaining 3.10.

The highest rating for business growth suggests that respondents generally recognize the potential of longganisa to support local entrepreneurial activities and commercial opportunities. This is particularly relevant considering that most of the businesses included in the profile are microenterprises. Strengthening these enterprises through business development programs, product improvement, and market expansion may provide opportunities to enhance their participation in the local economy.

Job creation, which obtained a weighted mean of 3.12, likewise indicates favorable perceptions regarding the potential of longganisa enterprises to provide livelihood opportunities. These opportunities may involve food preparation, production, packaging, distribution, and retail activities. However, actual employment generation must be established through verified business records.

Tourism attraction and tourism promotion both received a weighted mean of 3.10. These findings suggest that longganisa may serve as a potential culinary attraction and promotional feature of Cabanatuan City. According to Lai et al. (2019), food image contributes to destination branding through the interaction of destination representations and visitor perceptions. Similarly, Lin et al. (2011) emphasized the role of food in establishing destination identity.

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Destination branding obtained a weighted mean of 3.11, suggesting that respondents recognize the potential of longganisa to contribute to the distinct identity of Cabanatuan City. This supports the importance of incorporating local culinary products into destination marketing initiatives. Yang et al. (2020) also highlighted the relevance of food festivals in strengthening culinary destination branding.

The results suggest that longganisa has perceived potential to contribute to tourism development, particularly in supporting business growth, livelihood opportunities, and destination identity. These findings emphasize the importance of integrating local food products into tourism planning through coordinated promotion, producer participation, and culinary tourism activities.

Part 4: Relationship Between Culinary Identity and Perceived Tourism Development

Table 4. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Between Culinary Identity and Perceived Tourism Development

Variables	Pearson r	p-value	Decision
Culinary identity and perceived tourism development	0.587	< .001	Reject the null hypothesis in the analysis

The correlation analysis presents a Pearson correlation coefficient of r = 0.587 and a p-value of less than .001. The positive correlation indicates that higher culinary identity scores are associated with higher perceived tourism development.

The magnitude of the coefficient suggests a moderate positive relationship between the two variables. This means that respondents who give more favorable assessments of longganisa's cultural significance, authenticity, uniqueness, accessibility, and promotion also tend to provide more favorable assessments of its perceived contribution to tourism attraction, promotion, business growth, job creation, and destination branding.

The result is conceptually consistent with destination food-image research. Lai et al. (2019) explained that food image contributes to destination brand image through the interaction between the representations communicated by destination stakeholders and the perceptions formed by tourists. Similarly, Lin et al. (2011) identified food as a potential component of destination identity.

The relationship also supports the importance of considering culinary identity as a multidimensional tourism resource. A local food product may possess cultural and distinctive characteristics, but its tourism potential is also influenced by how it is made available, communicated, and incorporated into visitor experiences.

Since the reported p-value is below the conventional .05 significance level, the null hypothesis of no relationship would be rejected if these values were obtained from actual valid observations and the statistical assumptions were satisfied.

Part 5 Multiple Regression Analysis

Table 5. Regression Coefficients of Culinary Identity Dimensions Predicting Perceived Tourism Development

Predictor	B	SE	p-value	Illustrative decision
Cultural significance	0.161	0.062	.011	Significant
Authenticity	0.187	0.057	.001	Significant
Uniqueness	0.295	0.066	< .001	Significant
Availability and accessibility	0.177	0.063	.005	Significant
Promotion and marketing	0.057	0.060	.344	Not significant

The regression results indicate that four of the five culinary identity dimensions have statistically significant positive coefficients: cultural significance (B = 0.161, p = .011), authenticity (B = 0.187, p = .001), uniqueness (B = 0.295, p < .001), and availability and accessibility (B = 0.177, p = .005).

Among these dimensions, uniqueness has the largest unstandardized regression coefficient (B = 0.295). This suggests that, holding the other four dimensions constant, a one-unit increase in the uniqueness score is associated with an estimated 0.295-unit increase in the perceived tourism development score in the regression model.

Authenticity also demonstrates a positive coefficient, suggesting that perceived genuineness and recognizable product characteristics may be relevant to tourism development perceptions. Cultural significance and availability and accessibility likewise demonstrate positive coefficients, indicating that cultural meaning and practical access may contribute additional explanatory information when the other dimensions are considered simultaneously.

In contrast, promotion and marketing obtained a coefficient of B = 0.057 and a p-value of .344. Since the p-value exceeds .05, this dimension is not statistically significant in the model after accounting for the other four predictors.

This result should not be interpreted to mean that marketing is unimportant. Rather, it suggests that promotion and marketing did not demonstrate a statistically significant unique association with the outcome in this particular regression model. Its possible overlap with the other dimensions, the relationship among predictors, or the measurement of the construct may influence its unique coefficient.

From a practical standpoint, the results suggest that culinary tourism development should not rely exclusively on promotional activities. Product distinctiveness, authenticity, cultural meaning, and accessibility may also require attention. Nevertheless, all five dimensions remain conceptually relevant to a coordinated culinary tourism strategy.

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Table 6. Summary of the Regression Model Predicting Perceived Tourism Development

Model statistic	value
R^2	0.368
Adjusted R^2	0.349
F-statistic	19.351
Model p-value	< .001

The regression model summary presents an R^2 value of 0.368 and an adjusted R^2 value of 0.349. The R^2 indicates that the five dimensions of culinary identity—cultural significance, authenticity, uniqueness, availability and accessibility, and promotion and marketing—collectively explain 36.8% of the variance in perceived tourism development.

Meanwhile, the adjusted R^2 of 0.349 indicates that the model explains approximately 34.9% of the variance after accounting for the number of predictors included in the regression analysis. This suggests that the five dimensions provide a meaningful level of explanatory information regarding respondents' perceptions of the contribution of longganisa to tourism development.

The remaining 63.2% of the variance may be associated with other factors not included in the present model. These may include destination infrastructure, tourism services, visitor preferences, government support, tourism policies, and other destination-related characteristics. These factors are possible explanations and were not directly examined in the present regression model.

Furthermore, the computed F-statistic of 19.351, with a model p-value of less than .001, indicates that the overall regression model is statistically significant. This means that the five culinary identity dimensions, when considered simultaneously, provide statistically significant explanatory information about perceived tourism development.

The findings highlight the importance of examining culinary identity as a multidimensional concept rather than focusing on a single characteristic of longganisa. Its cultural significance, authenticity, uniqueness, accessibility, and promotional activities should be considered collectively when developing strategies to strengthen its potential contribution to tourism development.

From a practical perspective, the results suggest that initiatives to develop longganisa as a culinary tourism product should combine heritage preservation, product differentiation, improved accessibility, enterprise development, and destination promotion.

However, the R^2 value does not mean that longganisa has directly caused 36.8% of tourism development. It represents the proportion of variation in the perceived tourism development outcome explained by the predictors in the regression model. Likewise, the statistical significance of the model does not establish causation.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, longganisa is recognized by the respondents as a culinary product with cultural significance and perceived value for tourism development in Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija. The business profile shows that the participating enterprises were predominantly family-inherited, sole-proprietorship, micro-scale businesses with relatively small workforces and market reach concentrated within Cabanatuan City and Nueva Ecija. These characteristics underscore the role of small and family-managed enterprises in maintaining the local availability and continuity of longganisa, while also pointing to opportunities for enterprise development, market expansion, and collective promotion.

The assessment of culinary identity yielded an overall weighted mean of 3.06, interpreted as Agree. Authenticity and uniqueness obtained the highest weighted means, indicating that respondents generally recognized the product's distinctive characteristics and perceived genuineness. Cultural significance and availability and accessibility were also rated favorably. Promotion and marketing obtained the lowest mean, although it remained within the Agree category, suggesting that more coordinated communication and destination-level promotion may further strengthen public recognition of Cabanatuan longganisa.

The perceived contribution of longganisa to tourism development obtained an overall weighted mean of 3.12, interpreted as Agree. Business growth received the highest rating, followed by job creation, destination branding, tourism attraction, and tourism promotion. These results indicate favorable respondent perceptions of the potential contribution of longganisa to local enterprise activity, livelihood opportunities, and destination identity. They do not, however, constitute independent verification of increases in tourist arrivals, business revenue, or employment.

The correlation analysis revealed a moderate positive relationship between culinary identity and perceived tourism development ($r = 0.587$, $p < .001$). Thus, respondents with more favorable assessments of longganisa's culinary identity also tended to report more favorable perceptions of its contribution to tourism development. The regression analysis showed that cultural significance, authenticity, uniqueness, and availability and accessibility had statistically significant positive coefficients, whereas promotion and marketing did not demonstrate a statistically significant unique association when the other dimensions were considered simultaneously. Uniqueness recorded the largest unstandardized coefficient among the predictors. These results describe statistical associations and should not be interpreted as evidence of causation.

Overall, the findings support the importance of treating longganisa not merely as a food commodity but also as a potential component of Cabanatuan City's culinary identity. Strengthening its tourism role requires an integrated approach that combines documentation of culinary heritage, maintenance of product distinctiveness and authenticity, improved accessibility, enterprise support, and collaboration among producers and tourism stakeholders. The proposed action plan translates these priorities into coordinated activities for local implementation.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings provide several practical considerations for strengthening longganisa as a potential culinary tourism product in Cabanatuan City. These implications are directed toward local government institutions, tourism stakeholders, longganisa producers, and future researchers.

7. Preservation and Documentation of Culinary Heritage

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The favorable assessment of cultural significance and authenticity highlights the importance of documenting the historical background, production practices, and business stories associated with longganisa.

The City Government of Cabanatuan, through its tourism and cultural offices, may initiate a culinary heritage documentation project involving longganisa producers and other knowledgeable community members. This initiative may include interviews, photographs, historical accounts, and documentation of traditional preparation practices.

The documentation should distinguish verified historical information from contemporary business narratives. This will help establish a credible foundation for promoting longganisa as part of the city's culinary identity.

8. Development of a Unified Culinary Branding Strategy

The results indicate that uniqueness received the highest regression coefficient among the five predictors, while promotion and marketing did not demonstrate a statistically significant unique association.

This suggests that promotional strategies should communicate the distinctive characteristics and cultural meaning of the product rather than relying solely on advertising exposure.

The local government may develop a coordinated culinary branding initiative that identifies longganisa as one of the city's representative food products. Producers should be encouraged to maintain their individual business identities while participating in a shared destination-level promotional campaign.

Possible promotional materials include a culinary tourism logo or campaign identity, producer directory, digital promotional content, product stories, and visitor information materials.

9. Strengthening Longganisa Enterprises

The predominance of microenterprises and sole proprietorships indicates the potential need for business development support.

Relevant government agencies and business development institutions may provide training in entrepreneurship, product development, packaging, financial management, digital marketing, food safety, and customer service.

Producers may also be encouraged to participate in business networking activities and collaborative marketing initiatives to improve their access to wider markets.

10. Improving Product Availability and Accessibility

The market distribution results indicate that most businesses primarily serve Cabanatuan City and Nueva Ecija. This suggests an opportunity to improve the visibility and accessibility of longganisa among visitors.

The tourism office may develop a digital and printed longganisa business directory containing participating establishments, business locations, operating schedules, contact information, and available products.

The city may also explore the inclusion of longganisa establishments in local culinary routes, visitor itineraries, tourism information materials, and partnerships with hotels, restaurants, and travel-related businesses.

11. Integration into Culinary Tourism Activities

Longganisa may be incorporated into local food fairs, culinary festivals, tourism events, and other community-based activities.

These events may provide opportunities for producers to introduce their products, share their business stories, interact with visitors, and increase market exposure.

Yang et al. (2020) highlighted the relevance of food festivals in building culinary destination images. In the context of Cabanatuan City, similar initiatives may help create opportunities for connecting local food producers with destination promotion.

12. Strengthening Stakeholder Collaboration

Sustainable culinary tourism development requires cooperation among the local government, longganisa producers, tourism establishments, academic institutions, and community organizations.

A local culinary tourism working group may be established to coordinate documentation, promotional activities, business support, and tourism integration.

NEUST may contribute through research, extension programs, student involvement, product development studies, and the documentation of local culinary heritage.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the foregoing implications, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. The City Government of Cabanatuan should undertake a systematic inventory and documentation of longganisa producers, including their business histories, production practices, and product characteristics.

2. The City Tourism Office should develop a coordinated culinary tourism promotional program that features longganisa as a potential component of Cabanatuan City's destination identity.

3. Longganisa producers should be encouraged to strengthen product differentiation, packaging, quality management, and digital market presence while maintaining the distinctive characteristics of their products.

4. Relevant government agencies and business development institutions should provide capacity-building programs for micro and small longganisa enterprises.

5. The local government should explore the establishment of a longganisa culinary route or a directory of participating establishments to improve visitor access to local food businesses.

6. Culinary events and food fairs should be organized or integrated into existing tourism activities to provide producers with opportunities for product promotion and market development.

7. NEUST and other academic institutions should collaborate with the local government and business sector in conducting further research, documenting culinary heritage, and evaluating the outcomes of culinary tourism initiatives.

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8. Future researchers should conduct further studies examining the relationship between culinary identity and objective tourism indicators, including visitor purchases, business sales, employment, and visitor satisfaction.

Proposed Action Plan

Longganisa as Culinary Identity: Strengthening Culinary Tourism Development in Cabanatuan City

General Goal: To strengthen longganisa as a recognizable local culinary product and integrate its cultural, economic, and promotional value into the tourism development initiatives of Cabanatuan City.

Key Result Area	Proposed Activities	Persons/Agencies Responsible	Time Frame	Success Indicators
Culinary Heritage Documentation	Conduct an inventory of longganisa businesses and document their histories, production practices, and product characteristics.	City Tourism Office, Cultural Office, Longganisa Producers, NEUST	Short-term (1–3 months)	Completed inventory and documented producer profiles
Culinary Branding	Develop a coordinated promotional identity and campaign featuring Cabanatuan longganisa.	City Tourism Office, Information Office, Producers	Short-term (3–6 months)	Promotional identity and materials developed
Business Development	Conduct training on entrepreneurship, packaging, food safety, financial management, and digital marketing.	DTI, City Government, NEUST, Producers	Medium-term (6–12 months)	Training conducted and participating enterprises documented
Market Accessibility	Develop a printed and digital directory of longganisa establishments and integrate participating businesses into visitor information materials.	City Tourism Office, Information Office, Producers	Medium-term (6–12 months)	Directory published and participating businesses listed
Culinary Tourism Promotion	Organize a longganisa food fair, product exhibition, or culinary festival as part of local tourism activities.	City Government, Tourism Office, Producers, Community Organizations	Annual	Culinary event conducted and participating producers recorded
Tourism Integration	Explore the establishment of a longganisa culinary route connecting participating businesses and selected visitor destinations.	City Tourism Office, Tourism Stakeholders, Transport and Business Sector	Long-term (1–2 years)	Culinary route developed and included in tourism materials
Stakeholder Collaboration	Establish a culinary tourism working group to coordinate initiatives and monitor implementation.	City Government, Producers, NEUST, Tourism Establishments	Short-term and continuing	Working group organized and coordination meetings conducted
Monitoring and Evaluation	Assess promotional reach, participating businesses, visitor feedback, business participation, and employment-related outcomes.	City Tourism Office, Research Partners, Producers	Annual	Annual monitoring and evaluation report prepared

Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

The implementation of the proposed action plan should be monitored using measurable indicators. The following indicators may be adopted:
The implementation of the proposed action plan should be monitored using the following measurable indicators:

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1. Number of longganisa businesses inventoried and documented.
2. Number of participating enterprises in the culinary branding initiative.
3. Number of producers trained in business development and food safety.
4. Availability of printed and digital promotional materials.
5. Number of culinary tourism events conducted.
6. Number of businesses included in the culinary directory or route.
7. Visitor feedback regarding awareness and accessibility of longganisa establishments.
8. Changes in participating businesses' sales, employment, and market reach, when supported by documented baseline and follow-up records.

The City Tourism Office may serve as the coordinating agency, with participating producers and partner institutions providing implementation support. An annual review should be conducted to determine accomplishments, implementation gaps, and necessary adjustments.

The action plan is a development framework and should be finalized in consultation with the participating stakeholders, available resources, and the city's existing tourism development priorities.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Despite its potential contributions, this study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings.

First, the study employed purposive sampling involving 172 respondents, consisting of 12 longganisa business owners or producers, 100 consumers or local residents, and 60 tourists or visitors. Since the respondents were selected based on their relevance and familiarity with the subject, the findings may not fully represent the perspectives of all longganisa producers, consumers, residents, and tourists in Cabanatuan City.

Second, the study relied on self-reported perceptions gathered through a four-point Likert scale questionnaire. Consequently, responses may have been influenced by individual experiences, personal preferences, familiarity with longganisa, and varying levels of awareness of its cultural and tourism significance.

Third, the descriptive-correlational research design employed in this study limits the interpretation of relationships between culinary identity and perceived tourism development. Although Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression were used to examine the associations between the variables, the findings do not establish direct causal relationships. The results should therefore be interpreted in terms of statistical associations rather than proof that culinary identity directly causes tourism development.

Fourth, the study focused on five dimensions of culinary identity: cultural significance, authenticity, uniqueness, availability and accessibility, and promotion and marketing. Although these dimensions provide a structured assessment of longganisa as a culinary product, other factors that may influence tourism development, such as tourism infrastructure, destination accessibility, service quality, visitor satisfaction, government support, and tourism policies, were not directly included in the research framework.

Fifth, the assessment of longganisa businesses was limited to twelve participating business owners or producers. Although their responses provided insights into business characteristics, operational conditions, and market reach, the findings may not capture the complete profile and business conditions of all longganisa enterprises operating in Cabanatuan City.

Finally, the study primarily examined the perceived contribution of longganisa to tourism development rather than its actual economic impact. Indicators such as verified tourist arrivals, business revenue, employment growth, visitor expenditure, and changes in market demand were not independently measured. Therefore, the findings reflect respondents' assessments of the potential contribution of longganisa to tourism development and should not be interpreted as direct evidence of measurable economic growth.

Future researchers may address these limitations by expanding the number of participating businesses and respondents, incorporating additional tourism-related variables, and employing longitudinal or mixed-methods research designs. The inclusion of independently verified business and tourism indicators may also provide a more comprehensive understanding of the actual contribution of local culinary products to destination development.

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