

VALUE CO-CREATIVE GASTRONOMIC TOURISM AND SUSTAINABLE DESTINATION VALUE: EVIDENCE FROM A UNESCO CREATIVE CITY OF GASTRONOMY

RATCHADA TOOPHONG

Faculty of Tourism and Services, University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce, Thailand

Author's email: ratchada_too@utcc.ac.th

ABSTRACT

Gastronomic tourism has gained increasing attention as a pathway for sustainable destination development, particularly in cities recognized for their culinary heritage. However, empirical research has paid limited attention to how everyday interactions among local actors' shape sustainability outcomes and destination value in practice, especially in secondary cities in the Global South. This study examined how co-creative processes among diverse stakeholders contributed to sustainable gastronomic tourism in Phetchaburi, Thailand, the country's first UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 32 key informants representing local food producers, tourism entrepreneurs, community representatives, and public-sector actors, complemented by field observations and document analysis. The findings showed that sustainable gastronomic tourism emerged through three interrelated social processes: the integration and negotiation of culinary knowledge, the co-design and enactment of participatory food experiences, and shared forms of local governance. These processes shaped tourism experiences grounded in authenticity, interaction, and learning, while reinforcing cultural continuity, social cohesion, and locally embedded economic practices. Importantly, the study demonstrated that sustainability outcomes derived from co-created experiences accumulated into destination value, reflected in stronger place attachment, positive destination image, visitor loyalty, and local value retention. By foregrounding the lived experiences and agency of local actors, this research conceptualized co-creation gastronomy tourism as a socially embedded and governance-dependent process through which gastronomic tourism became meaningful and sustainable. The findings offered practical insights into creative gastronomy cities seeking to align heritage preservation with inclusive and context-sensitive tourism development.

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INTRODUCTION

Phetchaburi was designated Thailand's first UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy in December 2019, marking its inclusion in a global network that promotes culinary heritage as a driver of sustainable urban development (UNESCO, 2024). This recognition elevated the city's visibility and positioned its long-standing culinary traditions as a strategic asset for tourism and local economic development. However, several critical questions remain unresolved. It is unclear whether the designation has facilitated genuine stakeholder collaboration or primarily strengthened destination branding. Similarly, concerns persist regarding whether gastronomic tourism contributes to sustaining cultural knowledge and local livelihoods or instead accelerates the commodification of heritage.

These issues reflect broader debates in tourism research. Gastronomic tourism is increasingly understood as a means of experiential differentiation, authenticity, and sustainability, with food representing a core expression of place identity rather than a supplementary attraction (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2019; Ellis et al., 2018). At the same time, value creation has shifted from producer-centric models toward co-creation, emphasizing interaction, participation, and shared meaning-making among multiple actors (Campos et al., 2018; Vargo & Lusch, 2016). Despite these advances, empirical research reveals several limitations.

First, much of the co-creation literature remains encounter-centric, focusing on direct tourist-provider interactions while overlooking broader destination-level processes, including community participation and governance structures (Grissemann &

Stokburger-Sauer, 2012; Ribeiro et al., 2023). Second, existing studies are heavily concentrated in Western and highly commercialized contexts, with limited attention to secondary cities in Southeast Asia, where culinary knowledge is embedded in informal networks and cultural traditions (Figuerola-Domecq et al., 2020; Suwannarak & Peeraphatchara, 2025). Third, although sustainability is frequently emphasized, there is limited theoretical and empirical clarity regarding how co-creative processes generate cumulative cultural, social, and economic value (Carvalho et al., 2023; Rachão et al., 2020).

These gaps are particularly relevant in UNESCO Creative Cities of Gastronomy, where symbolic recognition is often not matched by effective governance mechanisms for stakeholder coordination and sustainable development (Forleo & Benedetto, 2020; UNESCO, 2024). This discrepancy can lead to challenges in implementing sustainable practices and ensuring that all stakeholders, including local communities and businesses, are effectively engaged in the development process. Phetchaburi provides a valuable case for addressing these issues due to its strong culinary heritage, community-based practices, and emerging tourism dynamics shaped by both collaboration and tension among stakeholders (Chanwong et al., 2024; Phramkaew et al., 2025).

Accordingly, this study asks, how do co-creative processes among stakeholders in gastronomic tourism contribute to sustainable destination value in a creative city context? By addressing this question, the study provides empirically grounded insights that clarify how co-creation operates in practice, extends existing theoretical perspectives, and offers policy-relevant implications for sustainable gastronomic tourism development.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To identify and examine the co-creative mechanisms through which diverse stakeholders collaboratively produce gastronomic tourism in Phetchaburi, Thailand's first UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy.
2. To analyze how participatory experience design and shared governance arrangements shape sustainability outcomes—specifically cultural continuity, social cohesion, and local economic retention—within gastronomic tourism development.
3. To explain how co-creative processes accumulate into sustainable destination value, with particular attention to place attachment, destination image, and locally embedded economic resilience.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review in this study synthesizes key theoretical and empirical perspectives to build a coherent foundation for examining co-creative gastronomic tourism. Specifically, it reviews (1) Co-creation within service ecosystems, emphasizing resource integration and participation boundaries; (2) Gastronomic tourism and sustainability, focusing on co-performance, authenticity, and multidimensional outcomes; and (3) Governance and creative city implementation, highlighting collaborative structures and institutional dynamics. This integrated review aims to clarify how stakeholder interactions, experiential practices, and governance mechanisms collectively shape sustainable destination value in a creative gastronomy context.

Theme 1: Co-creation in Tourism and Service Ecosystems: From Interaction to Resource Integration

Recent tourism scholarship increasingly conceptualizes value co-creation as an ecosystem phenomenon extending beyond dyadic tourist–firm encounters into multi-actor configurations where actors integrate resources, negotiate meanings, and coordinate practices across touchpoints (John & Supramaniam, 2024; Ribeiro et al., 2023). This shift reflects a broader movement away from firm-centric models of value delivery toward relational and systemic understandings of value formation.

Two dominant but contrasting perspectives shape this debate. Service-dominant logic (SDL) conceptualizes value as emergent from actor-to-actor resource integration within institutional arrangements that stabilize interaction over time (Vargo & Lusch, 2016). Within this framework, value is phenomenologically determined and co-created through reciprocal exchange. However, SDL has been criticized for its implicit normative assumption of symmetrical participation and mutual benefit, which may overlook structural inequalities embedded in institutional settings, such as power imbalances between different stakeholders that can affect the co-creation of value.

Critical service logic challenges this assumption by emphasizing asymmetries of control over platforms, scripts, and participation boundaries (Grönroos & Voima, 2013). From this perspective, co-creation is not inherently collaborative but contingent upon who defines interaction rules, allocates access, and captures value. Empirically, these perspectives imply divergent expectations: SDL predicts expanding inclusion and mutual value formation, whereas critical service logic anticipates negotiated participation and uneven value capture.

Despite the growing recognition of ecosystem thinking, gastronomic tourism contexts have yet to explore this theoretical tension. Much of the existing literature continues to foreground frontstage encounters—such as dining experiences or guided food tours—while paying limited attention to backstage coordination, cultural authority, and governance structures that shape who can participate and under what conditions (Melis et al., 2022). This gap is particularly salient in non-Western and secondary-city contexts, where culinary heritage is embedded in kinship networks, informal economies, and moral obligations rather than formalized institutional scripts. In such settings, participation boundaries are not merely operational but culturally negotiated, reflecting the intricate relationships and social dynamics that define community interactions and food practices.

Consequently, co-creation in gastronomic tourism cannot be assumed to represent symmetrical collaboration. Instead, it must be examined as a socially situated process shaped by institutional arrangements, cultural legitimacy, and governance dynamics. Addressing this gap requires empirical investigation into how resource integration, participation boundaries, and authority structures interact over time within destination ecosystems.

Theme 2: Gastronomic/Food Tourism and Sustainability: Co-performance, Authenticity, and Sustainability

Gastronomic tourism research has increasingly shifted from viewing food as a discrete tourism product toward understanding it as a cultural practice and experiential system embedded in local ways of life. Rather than emphasizing consumption alone, contemporary scholarship highlights learning, participation, and interaction as central mechanisms through which gastronomic experiences generate meaning and value (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2019; Ellis et al., 2018). This shift is also evident in studies of co-creative tourism experiences, which argue that memorable food-related experiences are produced through active engagement between hosts and visitors, rather than through standardized service delivery (Carvalho et al., 2023).

Co-performance and Experiential Value Creation

The gastronomic tourism experiences are forms of co-performance, in which tourists and local actors jointly enact activities such as cooking, harvesting, storytelling, and tasting. Empirical studies in food and wine tourism demonstrate that participatory formats enhance perceived authenticity, emotional attachment, and experiential depth because visitors are positioned not as passive consumers but as temporary participants in local food practices (Campos et al., 2018; Carvalho et al., 2023). This perspective aligns with co-creation theory, which conceptualizes value as emerging through interaction and shared meaning-making rather than being embedded in predefined offerings (Vargo & Lusch, 2016).

However, the literature also indicates that participation alone does not guarantee meaningful co-creation. Rachão et al. (2020) caution that many food tourism activities adopt “participation-lite” formats that appear interactive but remain tightly scripted and controlled by providers. In such cases, co-performance risks becoming a symbolic gesture rather than a genuine redistribution of agency between hosts and tourists, leading to a lack of authentic engagement and diminishing the overall experience for participants.

Sustainability as Promise Versus Sustainability as Paradox

Numerous studies argue that food-based tourism can contribute to sustainability by strengthening local supply chains, preserving culinary heritage, and retaining economic value within communities—particularly when destination narratives foreground provenance, seasonality, and local identity (Ellis et al., 2018; Hall et al., 2004). From this perspective, gastronomic tourism is often promoted as a vehicle for inclusive and place-based development.

While food tourism is frequently framed as inherently sustainable due to its connection to local supply chains and cultural heritage, such claims risk romanticizing local participation without scrutinizing the governance structures that regulate value distribution. Participation alone does not guarantee equitable benefit-sharing, nor does experiential authenticity necessarily translate into long-term cultural protection. In many contexts, food practices are selectively curated, aestheticized, or simplified to align with visitor expectations, raising questions about who defines authenticity and who captures the resulting value, particularly in relation to the cultural heritage of the communities involved and the potential exploitation of their traditions.

In secondary-city and culturally embedded destinations, sustainability depends not merely on experiential authenticity but on the institutional capacity to mediate scale, protect cultural labor, and prevent extractive commercialization. Without mechanisms that safeguard community authority and regulate market expansion, gastronomic tourism may intensify symbolic recognition while simultaneously eroding the social relations and ethical norms that sustain culinary heritage, leading to a loss of traditional practices and community identity.

On the other hand, critical scholarship warns that gastronomic tourism can accelerate commodification processes, whereby local food practices are simplified, aestheticized, or detached from their original social contexts to meet tourist expectations. In these instances, authenticity transforms into an “experience script,” and sustainability claims may devolve into marketing rhetoric instead of genuine governance commitments (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2019). This tension is particularly visible in research examining the intersection of food image, UNESCO Creative City branding, and sustainability goals. Yılmaz et al. (2020) show that while food image can enhance destination branding and international recognition, it may simultaneously instrumentalize culinary heritage unless supported by institutional mechanisms that protect local control and value capture.

Thai scholarship reinforces the importance of contextual and governance-sensitive approaches to gastronomic tourism sustainability. Recent studies published in ThaiJO and other Thai academic journals have shown that food and gastronomy tourism in Thailand can generate multidimensional sustainability outcomes—economic, sociocultural, and environmental—yet these works typically emphasize outcomes over the processes through which such outcomes are produced. For example, research exploring sustainable food tourism impacts in Thailand highlights how experiences and community assets contribute to destination sustainability in terms of local economic benefits and cultural continuity but does not explicate the mechanisms by which stakeholder collaboration and co-creation generate these results. (Phramkaew et al., 2025)

Work that investigates gastronomy tourism across Thai communities also underscores the role of local wisdom, community collaboration, and integrated strategies for sustainability. Nopsuwan (2025) found that sustainable community-level food tourism in several provinces—including Phetchaburi—is supported by policy engagement, preservation of local food identity, and network development among stakeholders, pointing to the process of engagement rather than merely the outcomes of tourism activities. However, while these studies recognize collaboration among stakeholders, they fall short of framing these interactions as part of a co-creative governance mechanism that links experience design, participation boundaries, and institutional orchestration with tangible sustainability outcomes, such as improved local economies, enhanced community engagement, and better environmental practices.

Thai research focusing specifically on Phetchaburi further demonstrates structural constraints in managing food-related cultural tourism. Chanwong, Lert-ampai and Thianthong (2024) document that multi-sector collaboration—across governmental and non-governmental actors, including tourism authorities and local entrepreneurs—is necessary to advance gastronomic tourism in Phetchaburi, yet challenges remain in coordinating policy, cultural heritage, and tourism promotion to achieve comprehensive sustainability goals. Complementary evidence from studies on participatory food tourism practice in Thailand emphasizes how tourists seek authentic local culinary experiences that involve learning and co-participation with communities but does not fully unpack the underlying stakeholder processes that enable sustained collaboration, such as the roles of local governments, community organizations, and private sector partners in fostering these experiences (Suwannarak & Peeraphatchara, 2025).

Collectively, Thai scholarship points to both the potential of food tourism to contribute to sustainable development and the limitation of existing research in theorizing the mechanisms of stakeholder collaboration and co-creation in practice. These

findings emphasize the necessity of empirical frameworks that specify how participation boundaries, authenticity claims, and sustainability priorities are negotiated among actors within the destination, rather than solely cataloging sustainability impacts. This study adopts that lens and situates Phetchaburi's experience within a co-creation and governance framework that links tourism practice with sustainable destination value.

Theme 3: Governance and Creative City Implementation: From Labeling to Collaborative Infrastructure

Creative city initiatives, particularly within the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN), provide an institutional context that can either enable or constrain co-creative tourism development. While creative city designation is often celebrated for its branding potential, implementation research emphasizes that such status should be understood as a governance commitment rather than a symbolic label (UNESCO, 2024). Monitoring and reporting mechanisms, action plans, and partnership requirements are designed to translate designation into sustained policy practice and cross-sector collaboration.

Creative City as Branding Device Versus Governance Framework

The literature reflects a persistent tension between two interpretations of the creative city. One perspective treats creative city status primarily as a place-branding instrument that enhances visibility, reputation, and tourist appeal. From this view, gastronomy functions as a cultural asset leveraged for destination marketing. An alternative perspective conceptualizes the creative city as a governance framework that obliges cities to foster inclusive participation, support local cultural producers, and integrate creativity into long-term development strategies.

Research on cities of gastronomy underscores this distinction. Forleo and Benedetto (2020) argue that creative city designation in gastronomy must be operationalized through food-system governance that connects urban branding with rural production, cultural preservation, and territorial development. Without such integration, creative city status risks remaining performative rather than transformative, leading to missed opportunities for sustainable economic growth and community engagement in both urban and rural areas.

Collaborative Governance and Sustainability Outcomes

Governance scholarship increasingly identifies collaborative governance as a critical condition for achieving sustainability outcomes in tourism. Ansell and Gash (2008) emphasize that facilitative leadership, shared understanding, and institutionalized collaboration are necessary to sustain cross-sector engagement—a finding echoed in tourism research highlighting the importance of stakeholder participation, trust-building, and structured forums for effective governance (Anantaningrum et al., 2025). Recent systematic reviews and integrative analyses affirm that co-creation processes and governance arrangements are profoundly interconnected, with value co-creation functioning as both a facilitator and a result of sustainable tourism development (Ribeiro et al., 2023). However, these reviews also note persistent ambiguity regarding the distribution of authority, conflict resolution mechanisms, and institutional design, especially in destinations characterized by diverse or competing stakeholder interests. Challenges such as inclusivity gaps, governance rigidity, and power imbalances remain central concerns for advancing collaborative models in practice (Kraff & Jernsand, 2025).

Within gastronomic tourism, governance plays a decisive role in determining whether co-creation supports cultural continuity and local value retention or accelerates commodification and exclusion.

Closing the Gap: Closing the Gaps: A Synthesis Leading to a Conceptual Framework and Interview Methodology

Combining the three main themes in literature gives us a clear but not full picture of co-creative gastronomic tourism. Existing research converges on the view that co-creation is best conceptualized as an ecosystem-level process in which multiple actors integrate resources and co-produce value (Theme 1), that this process becomes experientially meaningful through participatory enactment and co-performance in tourism settings (Theme 2), and that its long-term sustainability depends on governance arrangements and institutional capacity, particularly within creative city initiatives (Theme 3) (Carvalho et al., 2023; Melis et al., 2022; Richards, 2021; Vargo & Lusch, 2016; Zhu & Yasami, 2021).

Despite this conceptual convergence, the literature remains fragmented in explaining how these elements connect in practice. Studies on co-creation in tourism frequently identify actors and outcomes but provide limited empirical insight into the processual pathways through which resource integration, experience co-design, and governance interact over time. Likewise, gastronomic tourism research frequently records sustainability outcomes—such as cultural preservation or local economic advantages—without elucidating the mechanisms that convert participation into enduring destination value (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2019; Ellis et al., 2018). Research on creative cities further compounds this gap by emphasizing policy intentions and branding effects while under-examining how collaborative commitments are enacted through everyday governance practices, particularly in non-Western and secondary-city contexts (Forleo & Benedetto, 2020; UNESCO, 2024).

This gap is especially salient in Southeast Asian contexts, where culinary heritage, community legitimacy, and informal networks constitute central resources for gastronomic tourism development. Emerging studies acknowledge stakeholder collaboration, but they rarely trace the negotiation of participation boundaries, authenticity claims, and sustainability priorities among actors within a destination ecosystem. As a result, co-creation is often treated as an assumed condition rather than an empirically observable process shaped by power relations, institutional arrangements, and cultural context.

Theoretical Contributions and Conceptual Advancement

Although prior research has advanced understanding of value co-creation in tourism and hospitality, key conceptual tensions remain unresolved. Service-dominant logic (SDL) conceptualizes co-creation as a collaborative process of resource integration among actors operating within institutional arrangements (Vargo & Lusch, 2008, 2016). While influential, this perspective has been criticized for implicitly assuming symmetrical participation and shared value capture, thereby under-specifying how power asymmetries, boundary control, and governance structures shape participation (Grönroos & Voima, 2013). Governance-oriented scholarship further emphasizes that co-creation is neither inherently inclusive nor automatically sustainable but contingent upon institutional design, facilitative leadership, and negotiated authority (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Melis et al., 2022). However, these strands remain insufficiently integrated into a processual explanation of how co-creation produces sustained destination value, particularly in culturally embedded contexts.

Against this backdrop, this study advances three theoretical contributions.

First, it challenges the encounter-centric and symmetry-assuming interpretation of co-creation prevalent in tourism research. Much empirical work focuses on frontstage tourist–provider interactions (Campos et al., 2018; Grisseman & Stokburger-Sauer, 2012), implicitly reproducing SDL’s assumption that value emerges through reciprocal exchange (Vargo & Lusch, 2016). By contrast, this study demonstrates that co-creation in gastronomic tourism begins backstage, through negotiation of cultural knowledge, boundary-setting practices, and interactor coordination prior to tourist engagement. Participation is thus conditional and governance-dependent rather than automatically inclusive.

Second, the study refines co-creation as a sequenced and governance-contingent process within destination-level service ecosystems. While ecosystem approaches recognize multi-actor resource integration (Ribeiro et al., 2023), they often lack temporal specification. This research proposes a processual model comprising three interrelated mechanisms: collaborative knowledge integration, participatory experience enactment, and shared governance stabilization. By distinguishing initiating, experiential, and institutional phases, the study extends ecosystem theory toward empirically traceable mechanisms.

Third, the study embeds sustainability within the causal architecture of co-creation rather than treating it as an external objective. Gastronomic tourism literature often associates sustainability with authenticity or local sourcing (Ellis et al., 2018; Hall et al., 2004), yet rarely explains how participatory processes generate cumulative cultural, social, and economic value. By conceptualizing sustainable destination value as an endogenous outcome of repeated relational interactions and governance coordination, the study situates sustainability as structurally interdependent with stakeholder configuration (Busser & Shulga, 2018; Ranjan & Read, 2016).

Collectively, these contributions reposition co-creative gastronomic tourism as a governance-embedded and temporally structured phenomenon, refining service ecosystem theory and extending co-creation scholarship in underrepresented Southeast Asian contexts (Richards, 2021; Zhu & Yasami, 2021).

Reasoned Proposition

Building on this synthesis, the present study advances a reasoned proposition that positions co-creation not as a singular interaction but as a sequenced and interdependent process underpinning sustainable destination value in creative gastronomy destinations:

1. Resource integration among heterogeneous stakeholders, including communities, entrepreneurs, tourists, and public institutions, constitutes the initiating mechanism of co-creation by aligning cultural knowledge, operational capabilities, and institutional support within the destination ecosystem.
2. Participatory experience design and co-performance function as the experiential pathway through which co-creation becomes visible and meaningful, enabling tourists and hosts to jointly enact gastronomic practices and thereby generate perceived experiential and sustainability value.
3. Shared governance under creative city implementation serves as the stabilizing condition that sustains co-creation over time, shaping how collaborative practices are coordinated, legitimized, and translated into cultural, social, and economic sustainability outcomes.

This proposition provides the analytical bridge between theory and empirical inquiry. It directly informs the conceptual framework (Figure 1), which links *Co-creation* → *Gastronomic Tourism* → *Sustainability* → *Destination Value* within a multi-actor ecosystem, and the interview protocol, which is designed to elicit evidence on (a) resource integration processes, (b) participation boundaries and co-performance practices, and (c) governance mechanisms that enable or constrain sustainability-oriented value creation in a creative gastronomy destination.

By articulating co-creation as a processual and governance-embedded phenomenon, this study addresses a critical gap in the literature and offers a context-sensitive contribution to tourism, service ecosystem, and creative city research.

Research Framework

Based on the synthesis of the reviewed literature, this study proposes a conceptual framework (Figure 1) that explains the relationship between co-creation, gastronomic tourism, sustainability, and destination value. Figure 1 illustrates co-creation as a central mechanism through which multiple stakeholders collaboratively develop and enact gastronomic tourism practices. These practices subsequently contribute to sustainability outcomes across cultural, social, and economic dimensions, ultimately shaping sustainable destination value.

The framework further emphasizes the role of a multi-actor ecosystem, in which local communities, tourism entrepreneurs, tourists, and public sector actors interact dynamically throughout the value creation process. Rather than viewing value as a linear output, the framework conceptualizes destination value as an emergent outcome of ongoing stakeholder interaction and shared meaning-making within the gastronomic tourism context.

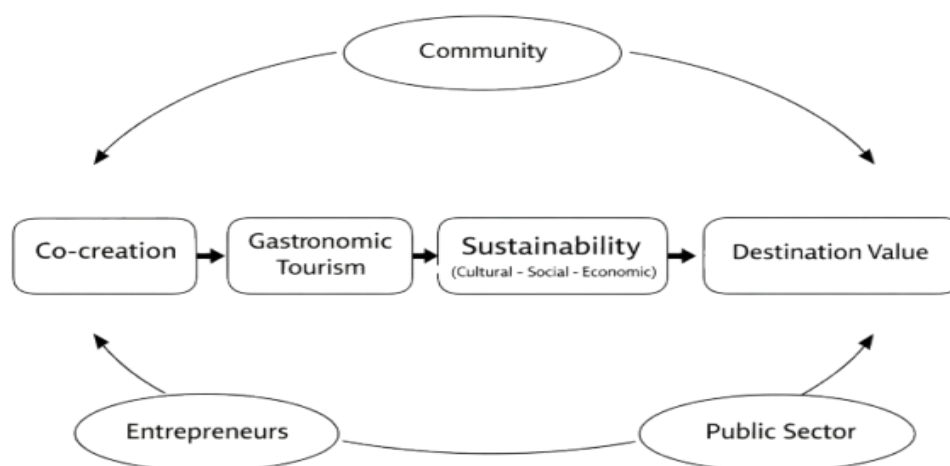


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Co-Creative Gastronomic Tourism and Sustainable Destination Value

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- RQ1. What co-creative processes do stakeholders employ in producing gastronomic tourism within Phetchaburi as a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy?
- RQ2. How do participatory experience design and shared governance arrangements shape cultural, social, and economic sustainability outcomes in gastronomic tourism development?
- RQ3. How do co-creative processes accumulate into sustainable destination value, as reflected in place attachment, destination image, and locally embedded economic resilience?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative case study design to investigate how co-creative processes in gastronomic tourism contribute to sustainable destination value. A qualitative approach is appropriate as the research seeks to understand meanings, interactions, and processes embedded in a specific socio-cultural context rather than to test predetermined hypotheses (Creswell, 2013). The case study strategy enables an in-depth and context-sensitive examination of co-creation as a relational and processual phenomenon embedded within a real-life setting (Yin, 2018). In contrast to variable-based approaches, this design allows the researcher to capture the complexity of stakeholder interactions, cultural practices, and institutional arrangements that shape gastronomic tourism development.

Phetchaburi, Thailand was purposively selected as a single instrumental case due to its designation as the country's first UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy. This designation provides a theoretically relevant context in which issues of co-creation, cultural heritage, and sustainable tourism intersect. The case is particularly suitable for theory development because it represents a secondary-city context characterized by strong local culinary traditions, community-based production systems, and emerging governance structures linked to international recognition.

Participants and Data Sources

Data was collected from 32 key informants representing five stakeholder groups: local restaurateurs and food producers ($n = 10$), accommodation and hospitality operators ($n = 6$), chef-led experiential tourism and creative entrepreneurs ($n = 7$), community artisans and cultural practitioners ($n = 5$), and public-sector and policy actors involved in creative city implementation ($n = 4$).

Participants were selected through purposive key-informant sampling, aiming to identify individuals who were actively involved in the development, promotion, or governance of gastronomic tourism in the destination. This strategy allowed the study to capture information-rich perspectives from actors occupying different roles within the destination ecosystem. To further identify interconnected stakeholders and capture relational networks within the gastronomic tourism community, snowball sampling was subsequently employed.

Rather than relying solely on numerical saturation, the study followed the principle of information power, which suggests that sample adequacy depends on the relevance, richness, and specificity of the information provided by participants (Malterud et al., 2016). The selected participants possessed substantial experience and direct involvement in gastronomic tourism activities, enabling the research to obtain in-depth insights into co-creation processes and sustainability practices.

In addition to interview data, the study drew on multiple complementary data sources to enhance analytical rigor and triangulation. These included field observations conducted during gastronomic tourism activities and community events, as well as documentary materials such as tourism development plans, policy reports, and UNESCO-related documents relevant to Phetchaburi's creative city implementation.

Research Instruments

The primary research instrument employed in this study was a semi-structured interview guide designed to elicit in-depth insights into co-creation processes, gastronomic tourism experiences, sustainability outcomes, and destination value within the context of a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy. A semi-structured format was selected to ensure both analytical consistency and flexibility, enabling participants to articulate their experiences and perspectives while maintaining alignment with the study's conceptual framework (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Vaivio, 2012).

The interview guide was developed through a systematic review of literature on value co-creation, gastronomic tourism, sustainability, and destination development. Based on this theoretical foundation, the instrument was organized into four thematic domains: (1) co-creation processes, focusing on stakeholder participation, knowledge integration, and governance arrangements; (2) gastronomic tourism experiences, addressing authenticity, interaction, and participatory engagement; (3) sustainability outcomes, including cultural, social, and economic dimensions; and (4) destination value, encompassing place attachment, destination image, and long-term value perceptions.

The instrument was reviewed by three experts in tourism and sustainability research to ensure content validity and conceptual clarity, and minor refinements were made to improve coherence and precision.

In addition to the interview guide, a structured observation protocol was developed to guide field observations. This protocol focused on key dimensions relevant to the study, including stakeholder participation, host–guest interaction, enactment of culinary practices, and spatial organization of tourism activities.

Document analysis was also employed as a complementary instrument. Relevant materials, including UNESCO-related documents and local tourism policy reports, were identified to provide contextual and institutional perspectives that support the interpretation of stakeholder narratives.

Data Collection Procedure

Data was collected between July 2025 and January 2026 using multiple qualitative methods to ensure depth and triangulation. The primary method consisted of semi-structured interviews (60–90 minutes), guided by a framework covering co-creation processes, gastronomic experiences, sustainability outcomes, and destination value. Interviews were conducted flexibly, audio-recorded with consent, and transcribed verbatim.

To complement interview data, field observations were undertaken during tourism activities and community events, focusing on participation practices, interaction patterns, and spatial dynamics. Observational notes captured both descriptive and

interpretive insights. Relevant documents, including policy reports and UNESCO-related materials, were also analyzed to provide contextual and institutional perspectives.

Triangulation across data sources enhanced credibility and analytical robustness (Denzin, 2012), while systematic data management ensured transparency and traceability.

To ensure a comprehensive understanding of co-creative gastronomic tourism, data was collected from multiple stakeholder groups involved in the destination’s gastronomy ecosystem. The profile of research participants is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Profile of research participants

Stakeholder Group	Role in Gastronomic Tourism	Data Source
Local food producers	Culinary heritage and production of local cuisine	Interview & Observation
Gastronomic entrepreneurs	Experienced design and service delivery	Interview & Observation
Community leaders	Cultural mediation and local coordination	Interview & Observation
Tourism practitioners	Program development and visitor engagement	Interview & Observation
Public sector representatives	Policy support and destination governance	Interview & Documents

The research was conducted through a phased qualitative process, aligning data collection and analysis with the study objectives. The research phases and corresponding methods are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: Research phases and data collection methods

Research Phase	Data Source	Method	Analytical Purpose
Phase 1: Knowledge integration	Local stakeholders	Interviews, field notes	Identify shared meanings and resources
Phase 2: Experience co-design	Tourism activities	Observation, interviews	Examine participatory practices
Phase 3: Shared governance	Institutions & communities	Interviews, documents	Analyze sustainability mechanisms

Thematic analysis of the qualitative data resulted in three interrelated themes that reflect the mechanisms of co-creation in gastronomic tourism. Table 3 summarizes these emergent themes.

Table 3: Emergent themes from thematic analysis

Theme	Core Meaning	Empirical Focus
Collaborative knowledge integration	Integration of local and professional knowledge	Culinary heritage, tacit knowledge
Participatory experience design	Active involvement of stakeholders and tourists	Co-performance, interaction
Shared governance	Collective decision-making and coordination	Trust, informal networks, sustainability outcomes

To synthesize the empirical findings, Table 4 illustrates how co-creation mechanisms are linked to sustainability dimensions and destination value outcomes.

Table 4: Linking co-creation mechanisms to sustainability and destination value

Co-creation Mechanism	Sustainability Dimension	Destination Value Outcome
Knowledge integration	Cultural sustainability	Authentic destination identity
Participatory design	Social sustainability	Meaningful tourist experiences
Shared governance	Economic sustainability	Local value retention and resilience

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to established ethical standards for research involving human participants. The research protocol was reviewed and approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce (Approval No. UTCCEC/Exemp044/2025, March 26, 2025).

All participants were informed about the purpose of the research and their voluntary participation prior to the interviews. Information consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing personal

information during transcription, analysis, and reporting. All data will be securely stored for five years and permanently deleted using encrypted destruction methods after study completion, ensuring full participant confidentiality.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using reflexive thematic analysis as conceptualized by Braun and Clarke (2006), consistent with the study's interpretive orientation and focus on meaning-making processes. The analysis followed an iterative and recursive approach, involving continuous movement between coding, theme development, and interpretation.

The process began with systematic familiarization with the dataset to develop an in-depth understanding of it. This was followed by inductive coding, in which meaningful data segments were identified and assigned descriptive labels capturing both semantic and latent meanings. Coding focused on patterns related to stakeholder interactions, co-creation practices, and governance dynamics. The coding structure and theme development process are illustrated in Appendix 1 (Table A1).

Codes were subsequently organized into candidate themes through constant comparison, enabling the identification of patterns and relationships across the dataset. Themes were then reviewed and refined to ensure internal coherence and conceptual distinctiveness. Only themes with sufficient analytical depth and evidential support were retained.

In the final stage, themes were defined and interpreted in relation to the study's conceptual framework, linking co-creation processes with sustainability outcomes and destination value. Throughout the analysis, reflexivity was maintained to ensure transparency in interpretive decisions, and analytical rigor was supported through systematic coding and theme development.

RESULTS

This section presents the empirical findings derived from semi-structured interviews, field observations, and document analysis conducted as part of the co-creation gastronomy tourism study. The analysis follows an iterative thematic process and is organized to reflect how co-creation gastronomy tourism unfolds in practice across different moments and spaces of gastronomic tourism development in Phetchaburi. The findings indicate that co-creation gastronomy tourism should not be viewed as a singular activity or event; instead, it is a continuous social process integrated into daily life, influenced by the interactions among community members, tourism entrepreneurs, and public-sector participants. Below, we present three interrelated phases to illustrate how co-creation gastronomy tourism operates across backstage preparation, frontstage experience enactment, and ongoing governance coordination.

The findings are organized into three interrelated co-creative mechanisms that directly address the research questions. First, the analysis identifies how co-creation emerges through backstage knowledge integration among stakeholders (RQ1). Second, it examines how participatory experience design and co-performance shape sustainability outcomes, including cultural continuity, social cohesion, and local economic retention (RQ2). Third, it explains how these co-creative processes accumulate over time into sustainable destination value, reflected in place attachment, destination image, and locally embedded economic resilience (RQ3).

Mechanism 1: Backstage Knowledge Integration

Through all interviews, participants consistently emphasized that gastronomic tourism in Phetchaburi does not begin with tourists' arrival but long before, through everyday practices within the community. Community members described how food knowledge is sustained through routine activities such as preparing meals for family, religious events, and local gatherings. These practices were repeatedly identified as the foundation upon which tourism-related activities later emerged.

Members of the Luk Wa volunteer network explained that their work initially focused on transmitting local wisdom, particularly traditional crafts and desserts, to younger generations. Workshops and informal learning activities were organized not for tourism purposes, but to ensure continuity of local knowledge. As one community participant noted, the group

consisted of young volunteers who came together to pass on traditional skills and desserts to the next generation through hands-on activities and shared practice (community actor).

These backstage activities gradually became connected to tourism as interest from visitors increased. However, participants stressed that this transition was not automatic. The community repeatedly discussed decisions regarding the sharing of culinary knowledge with outsiders. Community members voiced their worries about overexposure, fatigue, and the risk of losing meaning if food practices became mere demonstrations. One participant emphasized that collaboration, particularly with researchers or external partners, was acceptable only when it contributed to the community's long-term benefit and continuity, rather than being treated as a short-term project (community actor).

Tourism entrepreneurs described their engagement with these backstage processes as a gradual learning journey. Entrepreneurs highlighted the importance of spending time observing how food practices were embedded in daily routines, seasonal cycles, and social relationships before attempting to design tourism experiences. Rather than introducing predefined tourism formats, they adapted their ideas to align with what communities were already doing. This approach allowed existing practices to organically generate experience concepts instead of imposing them from outside, which created a sense of ownership and relevance among community members.

Public-sector actors similarly emphasized that co-creation gastronomy tourism at this stage required restraint rather than intervention. Officials described their role as creating space for dialogue and providing legitimacy, particularly in relation to the UNESCO Creative City designation, while allowing communities to retain authority over cultural content. These backstage interactions functioned as a process of boundary-setting, where stakeholders collectively determined what aspects of local gastronomy could be shared, adapted, or kept within private or ritual contexts. This process contributes to cultural sustainability by maintaining intergenerational knowledge transmission while also reinforcing social cohesion through collective participation and shared responsibility among community members.

Mechanism 2: Participatory Co-performance

Frontstage co-creation became visible when gastronomic practices were translated into tourism experiences. However, empirical evidence shows that these experiences were deliberately designed to remain close to everyday life rather than becoming staged performances. Community-based dining, cooking activities, and walking tours were structured to allow participation only when it aligned with local routines and capacities.

Organizers described how visitors were sometimes able to observe or take part in dessert-making or food preparation, but at other times encountered empty kitchens or closed spaces because production was not taking place. One organizer explained that visitors were brought to see "*what is really happening*," rather than a fixed display, emphasizing that timing and everyday rhythms determined access (community actor).

This selective participation highlights a clear backstage–frontstage distinction. While tourists were welcomed into certain aspects of food practices, access was negotiated rather than guaranteed. Participation was framed as an opportunity for mutual learning rather than consumption. Tourists were expected to adapt to local conditions, while hosts retained control over how and when engagement occurred.

From the perspective of entrepreneurs, this approach requires managing visitor expectations. Experiences were intentionally kept small-scale, flexible, and conversational. Rather than focusing on efficiency or volume, stakeholders prioritized interaction, storytelling, and the creation of shared moments. Authenticity was described not as a performance but as something that emerged through respectful engagement and presence within everyday settings.

For community members, frontstage participation was meaningful precisely because it did not disrupt daily life. By fitting tourism encounters around existing practices, communities avoided exhaustion and maintained a sense of ownership over their food traditions. Participation thus functioned as a relational process, reinforcing mutual respect between hosts and visitors.

Mechanism 3: Shared Governance and the Emergence of Sustainable Destination Value

The findings indicate that co-creation in gastronomic tourism is sustained through governance processes that extend across both backstage coordination and frontstage experience enactment. Rather than relying primarily on formal regulatory structures, governance in Phetchaburi operates through relational coordination, trust-based interactions, and facilitative roles enacted by public-sector actors. These governance practices do not merely support co-creation; they actively shape how sustainability outcomes emerge and how value is accumulated over time.

Empirical evidence shows that governance is enacted as an ongoing and adaptive process. Public-sector actors consistently described their role as facilitators who create spaces for dialogue, coordinate stakeholders, and provide institutional legitimacy—particularly through the UNESCO Creative City designation—while preserving community authority over cultural knowledge. Decision-making processes are iterative and context sensitive. For instance, before initiating tourism activities or expanding existing programs, officials consult community members to assess readiness, willingness, and potential impacts. This approach allows governance to function as a mechanism for aligning tourism development with cultural priorities, rather than imposing standardized models.

Within this governance context, sustainability emerges not as an immediate outcome but as a cumulative and lived process. Community participants described how repeated interactions around gastronomic activities—such as shared cooking practices, local events, and small-scale tourism engagements—gradually strengthen social relationships, reinforce collective identity, and sustain intergenerational knowledge transmission. Environmental awareness is also embedded in these practices, including efforts related to waste management and the maintenance of communal spaces. Importantly, these outcomes are not the result of isolated interventions but are produced through continuity, repetition, and shared responsibility among stakeholders.

Building on these cumulative sustainability processes, co-creation further translates into sustainable destination value. The findings show that repeated and meaningful interactions between visitors and hosts foster strong place attachment, as tourists engage with everyday practices rather than staged performances. At the same time, the authenticity derived from these lived experiences contributes to a positive and distinctive destination image. Economically, stakeholders emphasized that maintaining small-scale and community-based participation enables stable income generation while preventing overexpansion and preserving local control over resources.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that governance operates as a stabilizing and enabling mechanism within the co-creation process. By facilitating coordination, preserving participation boundaries, and supporting community agency, governance allows sustainability outcomes to emerge and accumulate into long-term destination value. Co-creation, therefore, is not a one-time interaction but a temporally unfolding process in which governance-mediated relationships transform everyday practices into enduring cultural, social, and economic values.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Drawing on interview data, field observations, and analysis of tourism development plans, policy reports, and UNESCO-related documents, this study extends understanding of co-creative gastronomic tourism by demonstrating that co-creation gastronomic tourism operates as a structured, multi-phase process embedded in everyday practices and governance arrangements. The findings identify three interrelated mechanisms—collaborative knowledge integration, participatory co-performance, and shared governance—which collectively explain how co-creation gastronomic tourism unfolds within a destination ecosystem. These mechanisms directly address RQ1 by showing that co-creation gastronomic tourism is not universally accessible but is negotiated, conditional, and socially embedded.

Importantly, the findings challenge policy-oriented perspectives that conceptualize sustainability as a predefined outcome. The following discussion is organized around the three co-creation mechanisms, demonstrating how knowledge integration, participatory co-performance, and governance processes cumulatively produce sustainability and destination value.

Mechanism 1: Collaborative Knowledge Integration

The first mechanism extends service-dominant logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2016) by demonstrating that resource integration is not merely a functional process but is conditioned by cultural legitimacy, moral obligation, and boundary negotiation. Empirical evidence from interviews and observations indicates that culinary knowledge—recipes, preparation practices, and seasonal routines—is embedded in everyday life and intergenerational transmission.

These findings further challenge assumptions of open and symmetrical participation in co-creation gastronomic tourism by showing that decisions about sharing gastronomic knowledge are selectively negotiated. Concerns regarding overexposure and loss of meaning highlight that co-creation gastronomic tourism involves boundary-setting processes in which stakeholders determine what is shareable, adaptable, or protected.

This insight extends gastronomic tourism literature (Ellis et al., 2018) by demonstrating that authenticity is not produced through representation alone but is sustained through ongoing social negotiation prior to tourist engagement.

Mechanism 2: Participatory Co-performance

The second mechanism aligns with prior research on participatory tourism experiences (Griseemann & Stokburger-Sauer, 2012) by confirming that active participation enhances experiential value. However, the findings extend this literature by demonstrating that participation is structurally constrained rather than universally accessible.

Observational evidence indicates that visitor participation is contingent upon local routines, production cycles, and community readiness. Interview data further show that experiences are intentionally designed to remain small-scale, flexible, and interaction-oriented.

These findings also align with critiques of “participation-lite” tourism (Rachão et al., 2020), while simultaneously extending them by showing that negotiated participation preserves cultural integrity and avoids the transformation of everyday practices into staged performances. As a result, co-performance generates value through relational engagement, contributing to cultural continuity and social cohesion (RQ2).

Mechanism 3: Shared Governance and the Emergence of Sustainable Destination Value

The third mechanism aligns with collaborative governance theory (Ansell & Gash, 2008) by emphasizing the importance of facilitative leadership, shared understanding, and iterative coordination. However, the findings extend this perspective by demonstrating that governance effectiveness depends on informal, trust-based relationships and everyday coordination rather than formal institutional arrangements alone.

Importantly, the findings challenge symbolic interpretations of creative city initiatives. While UNESCO designation provides legitimacy, document analysis indicates that its effectiveness depends on how governance is enacted in practice. Co-creation is stabilized through relational coordination, flexibility, and recognition of community agency rather than top-down control.

Destination Value Formation

Addressing RQ3, the findings extend co-creation theory (Busser & Shulga, 2018; Ranjan & Read, 2016) by demonstrating that destination value emerges through relational accumulation over time. Interview data indicate that repeated interactions contribute to return visitation, positive word-of-mouth, and sustained engagement.

These processes foster place attachment and strengthen destination image, while observational evidence shows that small-scale, community-based activities support locally embedded economic resilience, such as local festivals or farmers' markets that engage residents and visitors alike. These findings challenge exchange-based models of value creation by demonstrating that destination value is not an immediate outcome but an emergent, process-based result of sustained social interaction.

Theoretical Contribution: A Processual Model of Co-creative Gastronomic Tourism

Conceptually, this study contributes a processual model linking co-creation to sustainable destination value through three interrelated phases: knowledge integration, participatory experience design, and shared governance. Unlike firm-centric models of co-creation, the findings underscore a destination-level mechanism in which co-creation aligns experiential value with cultural continuity and local economic inclusiveness.

As illustrated in Figure 2, this model conceptualizes co-creation gastronomy tourism as a dynamic and cumulative process rather than a linear or instantaneous sequence. The figure illustrates the continuous interconnection of these three phases, unfolding over time through iterative interactions among stakeholders. Knowledge integration in backstage settings informs participatory experience design, which in turn is sustained and stabilized through shared governance arrangements that involve all relevant stakeholders actively collaborating and making decisions together. These recursive relationships highlight how co-creation gastronomy tourism evolves through ongoing negotiation, adaptation, and relational coordination.

This contribution extends existing discussions on co-creation measurement and nomological networks by emphasizing that value co-creation in tourism is structurally shaped by stakeholder networks and governance arrangements (Busser & Shulga, 2018; Ranjan & Read, 2016). Furthermore, framing outcomes through a sustainability lens highlights that destination value is multidimensional—cultural, social, and economic—consistent with triple-bottom-line thinking (Elkington, 1997) yet grounded empirically in everyday practices rather than abstract indicators.

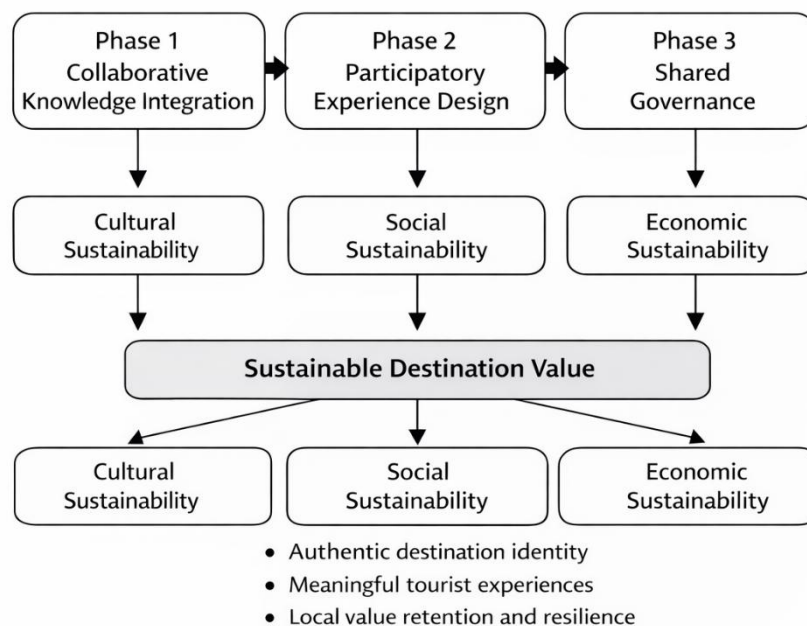


Figure 2: Model Conceptualizes Co-creation Gastronomy Tourism as a Dynamic and Cumulative Process

Practical Implications

The findings offer actionable implications for policymakers, destination managers, and local communities.

At the policy level, governments should adopt facilitative governance approaches that support stakeholder collaboration rather than impose standardized tourism models, as this can lead to more tailored and effective tourism strategies that reflect local needs and conditions. Creating platforms for dialogue and knowledge exchange can enhance coordination and sustainability, ultimately leading to more tailored tourism strategies that reflect the unique needs and values of local communities.

At the destination management level, the findings highlight the importance of designing participatory and small-scale experiences that prioritize interaction, authenticity, and learning. Such approaches can enhance visitor engagement while maintaining cultural integrity.

At the community level, strengthening local capacity and supporting community leadership are essential for managing participation boundaries and sustaining intergenerational knowledge transmission. Empowering local actors ensures that tourism development aligns with community values and long-term sustainability goals, which can include preserving cultural heritage, promoting local businesses, and enhancing environmental conservation efforts.

Policy and Practical Implications

From a policy perspective, the findings suggest a shift from prescriptive tourism planning toward enabling architecture for collaboration. Public agencies ought to concentrate on developing environments and platforms that promote continuous knowledge sharing, negotiation, and collaborative problem-solving among stakeholders (Ansell & Gash, 2008). Capacity-building initiatives should prioritize community actors and small producers to strengthen their agency and negotiation power, thereby supporting local value capture and reducing the risk of cultural commodification, which can occur when local cultures are exploited for commercial gain without benefiting the community.

For destination managers and practitioners, the findings highlight the value of participatory experience design as a means of differentiation and sustainability. Designing gastronomic experiences that emphasize interaction, learning, and co-performance can enhance destination value while mitigating the risks associated with mass tourism and cultural commodification. Supporting informal networks and community leadership is equally critical for maintaining authenticity and long-term resilience, as these elements foster local engagement and ensure that the cultural narratives are preserved and shared in a genuine manner. While this research doesn't present an entirely new theoretical framework, it provides evidence-based insights that improve and provide context to existing conceptions of collaborative creation and service ecosystems.

CONCLUSION

This study examines how co-creative gastronomic tourism processes among diverse stakeholders contribute to sustainable destination value in Phetchaburi, Thailand's first UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy. Moving beyond encounter-centric perspectives, the research conceptualizes co-creation gastronomic tourism as a destination-level, processual, and governance-dependent phenomenon. Using a qualitative case study approach, the study draws on in-depth interviews, field observations, and analysis of tourism development plans, policy reports, and UNESCO-related documents to explain how gastronomic tourism is collaboratively produced and sustained in practice.

The findings show that co-creation gastronomic tourism unfolds through three interrelated mechanisms: collaborative knowledge integration, participatory co-performance, and shared governance.

First, collaborative knowledge integration occurs in backstage settings, where local actors sustain and negotiate culinary knowledge through everyday practices. Recipes, techniques, and seasonal routines are embedded in family life, religious events, and community interactions. Decisions about sharing this knowledge with tourists are actively negotiated, reflecting concerns about cultural preservation, overexposure, and long-term community benefit. Co-creation gastronomic tourism therefore begins prior to tourist encounters and is shaped by cultural legitimacy and boundary-setting processes, which involve discussions among community members about what aspects of their culture can be shared and how to maintain authenticity while engaging with tourists.

Second, participatory co-performance represents the frontstage expression of co-creation. Gastronomic tourism experiences enable visitor participation through cooking, storytelling, and shared meals. Participation is not standardized but depends on local rhythms and capacities, which can vary significantly based on cultural traditions, seasonal availability of ingredients, and the specific interests of the visitors involved. Experiences are intentionally small-scale, flexible, and aligned with everyday life, ensuring that tourism reinforces rather than disrupts community practices while fostering meaningful interaction and mutual learning.

Third, shared governance sustains co-creation gastronomic tourism over time. Governance in Phetchaburi relies on informal coordination, trust-based relationships, and facilitative roles of public-sector actors. Rather than top-down control, governance emphasizes dialogue, flexibility, and community agency. While UNESCO designation provides legitimacy, its effectiveness depends on how governance is enacted through everyday coordination and collaboration.

The findings further show that sustainable destination value emerges cumulatively from these processes. Knowledge transmission maintains cultural continuity, collective participation fosters social cohesion, and small-scale activities that retain value locally ensure economic resilience. These outcomes develop through repeated interactions and relational coordination. Participatory experiences foster place attachment among visitors, while authenticity reinforces destination image and loyalty. Economic benefits remain embedded in local practices and manageable visitor flows.

Overall, destination value is not produced instantly but emerges through sustained interaction and negotiation. Co-creation gastronomic tourism thus operates as a cumulative mechanism linking everyday practices, participatory experiences, and governance arrangements to long-term sustainability outcomes.

Limitations and Future Research

This study offers in-depth insights into co-creative gastronomic tourism, but its focus on a single case study limits its scope. Future research could adopt comparative approaches to examine how co-creation gastronomic tourism mechanisms operate across different destinations or cultural contexts. Longitudinal studies would also be valuable in understanding how co-creation gastronomic tourism processes evolve, particularly in response to policy changes and market dynamics.

Additionally, quantitative or mixed-method approaches could be employed to test the generalizability of the proposed model and further examine the relationships between co-creation mechanisms, sustainability outcomes, and destination value.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI USE

The author also acknowledges the use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools to support language refinement, clarity, and academic writing quality during the manuscript preparation process. The AI tools were used solely for linguistic editing and stylistic improvement; all conceptualization, data collection, analysis, interpretation, and scholarly judgments remain the sole responsibility of the author.

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THE AUTHOR

Ratchada Toopthong holds a Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Educational Administration from Kasetsart University, Thailand, and a Master of International Tourism and Hospitality (M.A.) from Southern Cross University, Australia. She is currently affiliated with the University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce, Bangkok, Thailand. Her research interests include gastronomic tourism, tourism and hospitality management, sustainable tourism development, value co-creation, and innovation services management.

Email: ratchada_too@utcc.ac.th

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Coding and Theme Development

The table below illustrates how empirical data were traced through the analytical process from initial coding to final themes reported in the Results section.

Table A1: Audit Trail from Data to Themes

Data excerpt (illustrative)	Initial codes	Sub-theme	Final theme / Results section
Community members described passing down traditional dessert-making skills through workshops and everyday practice.	Knowledge transmission, everyday practice, intergenerational learning	Culinary knowledge sharing	Phase 1: Co-creation as an everyday, backstage social process
Discussions within the community about which food practices could be shared with visitors	Boundary negotiation, cultural protection	Participation boundaries	Phase 1: Backstage knowledge negotiation
Tourists joining cooking activities only when aligned with daily routines	Selective participation, everyday rhythm	Context-sensitive experience design	Phase 2: Frontstage co-performance
Public-sector actors emphasizing facilitation rather than direct implementation	Facilitative governance, community agency	Shared governance	Phase 3: Governance as ongoing coordination
Stakeholders describing gradual benefits such as community pride and local income stability	Accumulated outcomes, continuity	Sustainability as a lived outcome	Phase 4: Sustainability as a cumulative outcome