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The Influence of Perceived Authenticity and Local Food Image on Purchase Intention toward Local Culinary Products in Ambon City, Indonesia

Jacsy Tubalawony[1], Pathrisye Richendi Limba[2], Silfiena Siahainenia[3]
[1-3] Pattimura University

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the influence of perceived authenticity and local food image on purchase intention toward local culinary products in Ambon City, Indonesia. Local culinary products represent the cultural identity and gastronomic heritage of Maluku, yet consumers' purchase intentions may depend on how they perceive the authenticity and overall image of these products. This study employed a quantitative approach involving 120 respondents selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using a questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale and analyzed using SPSS, including validity and reliability tests, classical assumption tests, correlation analysis, and multiple linear regression. The correlation results indicate that perceived authenticity is positively associated with purchase intention ((r = 0.413), (p < 0.001)), while local food image demonstrates a stronger positive association with purchase intention ((r = 0.506), (p < 0.001)). Perceived authenticity and local food image are also positively correlated ((r = 0.296), (p = 0.001)). Furthermore, the regression model is statistically significant overall ((F = 29.074), (p < 0.001)) and explains 33.2% of the variation in purchase intention ((R^2 = 0.332)). These findings highlight the relevance of authenticity and local food image in understanding consumer purchase intentions. The study provides insights for local culinary businesses in Ambon to strengthen product authenticity, communicate cultural identity, and develop a favorable image of regional cuisine.

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Corresponding Author:

Name: Jacsy Tubalawony
Institution: Pattimura University Ir. M. Putuhena Street, Poka University, Teluk Ambon District, Ambon City, Maluku Province
Email: jacsy.tubalawony@lecturer.unpatti.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

Food is more than a basic human necessity; it also represents cultural identity, regional heritage, and the unique characteristics of a destination. In the food and beverage industry, local culinary products can serve as an important attraction for consumers because they offer distinctive flavors, traditional ingredients, and experiences associated with a particular region. Local cuisine can also contribute to destination image by allowing consumers to experience the cultural

characteristics of a place through food. Previous research has demonstrated that the perceived value of local food consumption is associated with consumers' attitudes, food destination image, and behavioral intentions (Choe & Kim, 2018). Similarly, research on destination food image has highlighted the relevance of culinary image dimensions in shaping food preferences and consumption (Promsivapallop & Kannaovakun, 2019). Consequently, understanding the factors that encourage consumers to purchase local culinary products is important for strengthening the competitiveness of local food businesses and supporting the development of culinary tourism.

In Indonesia, local culinary products have considerable potential to support regional economic development and preserve cultural heritage. This potential is particularly relevant in Ambon City, the capital of Maluku Province, where culinary traditions reflect the region's cultural diversity and its close relationship with coastal resources and locally available ingredients. Ambon is known for traditional foods and culinary products made from ingredients such as sago, fish, coconut, and nutmeg. Examples include papeda, traditionally served with fish-based dishes, as well as bagea, sagu tumbu, nutmeg-based sweets, and various products made from walnuts. These products are not merely sources of food but also represent distinctive elements of Maluku's culinary identity. The relationship between local cuisine, cultural identity, and destination image has been discussed in gastronomic tourism research, which emphasizes the role of local food in shaping the identity and image of a destination (Eren, 2018; Peštek & Činjarević, 2014). Furthermore, the value associated with local food consumption may contribute to the development of a destination's food image (Gupta et al., 2023). Within this context, local culinary products may provide opportunities for Ambon's food businesses and micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) to preserve regional culinary heritage while strengthening their market competitiveness.

Despite this potential, the existence of distinctive local culinary products does not automatically guarantee consumers' willingness to purchase them. Consumers may evaluate local food based on its taste, quality, price, appearance, perceived originality, and the image associated with the product or its place of origin. Previous studies have examined how brand perceptions and other product-related evaluations are associated with purchase intention (Shah et al., 2012), while research on online purchasing has also highlighted the relevance of understanding the relationship between purchase intention and actual purchase behavior (Morwitz, 2014; Peña-García et al., 2020). In an increasingly competitive food and beverage market, local culinary businesses must therefore communicate not only the functional benefits of their products but also the cultural meaning and distinctive characteristics that differentiate them from competing alternatives. This challenge makes consumer perception an important consideration in understanding purchase intention. Two potentially relevant factors are perceived authenticity and local food image, which may shape how consumers evaluate local culinary products and determine whether they intend to purchase them.

Perceived authenticity refers to the extent to which consumers believe that a culinary product genuinely represents its traditional origins, cultural heritage, preparation methods, and distinctive characteristics. In the context of Ambon, perceived authenticity may be reflected in consumers' perceptions that a local dish uses recognizable regional ingredients, retains traditional preparation practices, preserves its characteristic taste, and represents the culinary identity of Maluku. Research on traditional branded restaurants has demonstrated that perceived authenticity is associated with perceived quality, perceived value, and behavioral intentions (Chen et al., 2020). In addition, Kim et al. (2020) examined the relationship between authenticity cues and purchase intention, highlighting the roles of emotions and restaurant image in this relationship. Research on

brand authenticity has also shown that perceived authenticity can influence consumers' perceptions of products (Cinelli & LeBoeuf, 2020). These findings suggest that authenticity may be an important factor in explaining consumer responses to traditional culinary offerings. However, its influence should be examined empirically within the specific cultural and market conditions of Ambon rather than assumed to be universally identical across destinations.

In addition to perceived authenticity, local food image may play an important role in shaping consumers' purchase intention. Local food image refers to consumers' overall perceptions and associations regarding the quality, uniqueness, attractiveness, reputation, and cultural significance of culinary products originating from a particular region. In Ambon, such perceptions may be associated with the distinctive flavors of Maluku cuisine, the use of local ingredients, traditional culinary practices, and the relationship between food and the region's cultural identity. A favorable local food image may make culinary products more attractive, strengthen positive expectations, and encourage consumers to consider purchasing them. Previous research has identified food destination image as a relevant factor in explaining consumers' attitudes and behavioral intentions toward local cuisine (Choe & Kim, 2018). Promsivapallop and Kannaovakun (2019) further examined destination food image dimensions and their effects on food preferences and consumption. Similarly, Gupta et al. (2023) explored the relationship between local food consumption value and destination food image. At the product level, Hutabarat and Tua (2021) investigated the relationship between local food brand image and consumer purchase decisions. Collectively, these studies provide a basis for examining how consumers' perceptions of local food may relate to their purchase intentions. Nevertheless, the specific dimensions of local food image that matter most to consumers in Ambon require further investigation.

Although previous studies have examined authenticity, restaurant image, food destination image, and behavioral intentions in culinary and tourism contexts, further research is needed to understand how perceived authenticity and local food image jointly relate to purchase intention toward local culinary products in Ambon City. Research conducted in other destinations cannot automatically explain consumer behavior in Ambon because local food traditions, ingredient availability, cultural associations, and consumer experiences may differ across regions. Moreover, authenticity and local food image represent conceptually distinct considerations: authenticity concerns whether a product is perceived as genuine and faithful to its culinary origins, whereas local food image concerns the broader set of associations consumers hold about regional cuisine. Existing research has investigated authenticity in traditional restaurant settings and its relationship with behavioral intentions (Chen et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2020), while other studies have focused on food destination image and consumers' responses to local cuisine (Choe & Kim, 2018; Promsivapallop & Kannaovakun, 2019). Examining both variables within a single research framework may therefore provide a more comprehensive understanding of consumers' intentions to purchase local culinary products. The contribution of this study lies in testing these relationships within the context of Ambon, while recognizing that the actual novelty of the research must be established through a systematic review of existing literature.

Based on this background, this study aims to examine the influence of perceived authenticity and local food image on purchase intention toward local culinary products in Ambon City, Indonesia. Specifically, the study investigates whether consumers' perceptions of the authenticity of local culinary products and their overall image of local food are associated with their intention to purchase these products. Purchase intention is an important construct in consumer

research because it represents consumers' stated likelihood or willingness to purchase a product, although intention does not always translate into actual purchasing behavior (Morrison, 1979; Morwitz, 2014). The findings are expected to contribute to the literature on consumer behavior and local food marketing by providing context-specific evidence from an Indonesian regional culinary market. Practically, the results may assist local culinary entrepreneurs and MSMEs in developing marketing strategies that emphasize product authenticity, distinctive regional characteristics, and a favorable image of Maluku cuisine. In the broader context, this research may also support efforts to strengthen local culinary identity and improve the competitiveness of Ambon's food and beverage sector.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Perceived Authenticity

Perceived authenticity refers to consumers' subjective evaluation of whether a product is genuine, original, and consistent with the cultural traditions or characteristics it claims to represent. In the food and beverage industry, authenticity is particularly relevant because food products can communicate cultural identity, historical traditions, and regional characteristics through their ingredients, preparation methods, presentation, and consumption experiences. Unlike objective product characteristics, perceived authenticity reflects consumers' interpretations and beliefs about the genuineness of a culinary product (Cinelli & LeBoeuf, 2020). Therefore, a product does not necessarily have to follow every traditional practice to be perceived as authentic; rather, consumers' perceptions depend on the extent to which the product is considered consistent with their expectations of its cultural origins (Chen et al., 2020; Waitt, 2000).

In the context of local culinary products, authenticity can be associated with the use of traditional ingredients, preservation of characteristic flavors, traditional cooking techniques, and the representation of local cultural heritage. These characteristics may create a sense of originality and differentiation from standardized food products. Choe and Kim (2018) found that local food consumption value is associated with consumers' attitudes, food destination image, and behavioral intentions. Similarly, Chen et al. (2020) examined the relationship between perceived authenticity in traditional branded restaurants and consumers' perceived quality, perceived value, and behavioral intentions. Kim et al. (2020) also investigated how authenticity cues relate to purchase intention through emotional responses and restaurant image. These findings suggest that authenticity may serve as an important psychological consideration in consumers' evaluations of traditional culinary offerings.

In Ambon City, perceived authenticity can be examined through consumers' perceptions of traditional Maluku culinary products, including papeda, bagea, sagu tumbu, and various nutmeg-based products. These foods represent different aspects of the region's culinary heritage and use ingredients associated with local food traditions. For example, consumers may perceive a traditional food product as authentic when its ingredients, distinctive taste, preparation methods, and cultural associations are consistent with their understanding of Maluku cuisine. For packaged culinary products, authenticity may also be communicated through traditional recipes, credible

product information, and the preservation of characteristic regional flavors. This conceptualization is consistent with research examining the relationship between authenticity and cultural heritage in tourism and consumption contexts (Peštek & Činjarević, 2014; Waitt, 2000). However, these characteristics should be treated as proposed dimensions for measurement and validated with consumers in the local context.

From a consumer behavior perspective, perceived authenticity may strengthen purchase intention because consumers who regard a product as genuine may expect a more distinctive and meaningful consumption experience. Research on traditional branded restaurants has linked perceived authenticity with behavioral intentions (Chen et al., 2020), while Kim et al. (2020) examined the role of emotional responses and restaurant image in the relationship between authenticity cues and purchase intention. Furthermore, Chen et al. (2022) explored tourists' purchase intentions regarding food-related souvenirs, providing a relevant context for examining consumer interest in food products associated with a destination. Authenticity may also help local culinary businesses differentiate their products from competing alternatives by emphasizing their cultural origins rather than relying exclusively on price or convenience. Nevertheless, the relationship between perceived authenticity and purchase intention should be tested empirically because consumers may also consider affordability, accessibility, taste preferences, and perceived product quality when making purchasing decisions.

Based on this discussion, perceived authenticity is conceptualized in this study as the extent to which consumers believe that local culinary products in Ambon genuinely represent the traditional characteristics, ingredients, flavors, preparation practices, and cultural identity associated with Maluku cuisine.

2.2 Local Food Image

Local food image refers to consumers' overall perceptions and associations regarding the attractiveness, uniqueness, quality, reputation, and cultural significance of food products originating from a particular region. It represents the mental impression consumers develop through direct consumption experiences, recommendations, promotional activities, social interactions, and information obtained from digital media. A favorable local food image can make regional cuisine more attractive to consumers by creating positive expectations regarding the quality, distinctiveness, and experience associated with consuming local food. Previous research has highlighted the importance of food image in shaping consumers' perceptions of regional cuisine and their responses to local food offerings (Peštek & Činjarević, 2014; Promsivapallop & Kannaovakun, 2019).

The concept of local food image is related to the broader literature on destination image and consumer perceptions of regional products. Choe and Kim (2018) examined the relationships between local food consumption value, attitudes toward local food, food destination image, and behavioral intentions. Their findings indicated that attitudes toward local food positively influenced food destination image and that food destination image was positively associated with behavioral intentions. Similarly, Promsivapallop and Kannaovakun (2019) investigated destination food image

dimensions and their relationships with food preferences and consumption. Gupta et al. (2023) further examined the relationship between local food consumption value and destination food image. These studies support the relevance of image-related perceptions in explaining consumer responses to local culinary offerings. However, food destination image and local food image should not automatically be treated as identical constructs. Food destination image generally concerns perceptions of a destination as a place for food experiences, whereas local food image, as proposed in this study, focuses more specifically on consumers' perceptions of the culinary products associated with that region.

In Ambon City, local food image can be associated with the distinctiveness of Maluku cuisine, the use of regional ingredients, traditional culinary knowledge, and the cultural identity communicated through local dishes and food products. Products made from sago, fish, coconut, nutmeg, and walnuts may contribute to the way consumers perceive the region's culinary offerings. For instance, consumers may develop a favorable image of Ambon's local food when they associate it with distinctive flavors, recognizable regional ingredients, attractive presentation, perceived quality, and cultural uniqueness. These associations are consistent with the broader understanding of gastronomic identity and the role of local cuisine in shaping perceptions of a region (Eren, 2018; Peštek & Činjarević, 2014). Such perceptions may also be strengthened through culinary experiences, local food festivals, recommendations from other consumers, and marketing communication by local food businesses.

From a marketing perspective, local food image can function as a source of product differentiation. When consumers hold positive associations with local culinary products, they may perceive these products as more appealing and worth trying. A favorable image may also reduce uncertainty by shaping expectations before consumers purchase a product, particularly when they have limited prior experience with the food. Research on destination food image has examined the relationships between consumers' perceptions of regional cuisine, food preferences, and consumption (Promsivapallop & Kannaovakun, 2019). In addition, Choe and Kim (2018) identified relationships among local food consumption value, food destination image, and behavioral intentions. At the product level, Hutabarat and Tua (2021) investigated local food brand image in relation to consumer purchase decisions. Collectively, these studies provide a theoretical basis for examining whether consumers' perceptions of local food are associated with their intention to purchase regional culinary products.

For the present study, local food image is conceptualized as consumers' overall perception of the attractiveness, uniqueness, quality, reputation, and cultural value of local culinary products associated with Ambon City and Maluku Province. This conceptualization focuses on the image of the food itself rather than the image of Ambon as a tourism destination. Maintaining this distinction is important to ensure that the measurement items correspond to the intended construct and do not overlap excessively with perceived authenticity. Accordingly, this study examines local food image as a consumer-level perception of regional culinary products and investigates its relationship with purchase intention.

2.3 Purchase Intention

Purchase intention refers to an individual's conscious willingness, plan, or perceived likelihood of purchasing a particular product in the future. In marketing research, purchase intention is commonly used to understand consumers' potential responses to products, brands, and promotional activities. Morrison (1979) discussed the relationship between purchase intentions and purchase behavior, while Morwitz (2014) reviewed the role of purchase intentions in understanding and predicting consumer behavior. Although purchase intention does not necessarily result in actual purchasing behavior, it provides an indication of consumers' readiness to consider a product and may help explain differences in their behavioral responses to competing alternatives (Morwitz, 2014). Research by Peña-García et al. (2020) also examined the relationship between purchase intention and purchase behavior across different cultural contexts.

In the food and beverage industry, purchase intention can be influenced by several factors, including perceived quality, taste expectations, price, product availability, cultural familiarity, and consumers' overall evaluations of a product. For local culinary products, purchase intention may also be associated with consumers' interest in experiencing regional cuisine, their perceptions of cultural distinctiveness, and their expectations regarding the value of the consumption experience. Choe and Kim (2018) demonstrated that local food consumption value was associated with consumers' attitudes, food destination image, and behavioral intentions in a culinary tourism context. Similarly, Chen et al. (2022) examined tourists' purchase intentions regarding food-related souvenirs, providing a relevant perspective on consumers' willingness to purchase food products associated with a particular destination. These studies suggest that consumers' evaluations of local food and their perceptions of its associated value may be relevant to understanding their behavioral intentions.

In Ambon City, purchase intention can be reflected in consumers' willingness to purchase local culinary products for personal consumption, to choose local food over comparable alternatives, and to consider purchasing these products in the future. Such intentions may arise among local residents who regularly consume traditional foods, visitors interested in experiencing Maluku cuisine, or consumers purchasing local products as gifts. The relevance of local cuisine to regional identity and food-related experiences has been discussed in research on local food image and gastronomic identity (Eren, 2018; Peštek & Činjarević, 2014). Nevertheless, these consumer groups may have different motivations, so the population and sampling criteria should be clearly defined before the questionnaire is developed.

Within this study, purchase intention represents the outcome variable that may be influenced by perceived authenticity and local food image. Consumers who perceive local culinary products as authentic may be more willing to purchase them because authenticity can contribute to perceptions of product value and positive behavioral intentions (Chen et al., 2020). Furthermore, Kim et al. (2020) examined the relationship between authenticity cues and purchase intention, highlighting the roles of emotional responses and restaurant image. Likewise, consumers who have a favorable image of local food may be more likely to consider purchasing it because positive associations with regional cuisine can be related to food preferences and consumption intentions

(Choe & Kim, 2018; Promsivapallop & Kannaovakun, 2019). Nevertheless, these relationships should be evaluated using empirical data rather than assumed to be significant in advance.

Accordingly, purchase intention is conceptualized in this study as consumers' stated willingness, intention, and perceived likelihood of purchasing local culinary products associated with Ambon City. The construct focuses on intended future behavior rather than actual purchases, satisfaction after consumption, or the intention to recommend products to other people. This distinction is consistent with the consumer behavior literature, which treats purchase intention and actual purchase behavior as related but distinct concepts (Morrison, 1979; Morwitz, 2014).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a quantitative approach to examine the influence of perceived authenticity and local food image on purchase intention toward local culinary products in Ambon City, Indonesia. The study involves 120 respondents selected through purposive sampling, with the criteria that respondents are at least 17 years old and have purchased or consumed local culinary products. Data will be collected through a questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale and analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics will be used to describe the respondents' characteristics and responses. Instrument quality will be assessed through validity testing, with corrected item–total correlations above 0.30 generally considered acceptable, and reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha, with values of at least 0.70 indicating acceptable internal consistency.

The data will be analyzed using multiple linear regression to examine the effects of perceived authenticity (X1) and local food image (X2) on purchase intention (Y). Classical assumption tests will include residual normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity. Multicollinearity is generally considered acceptable when tolerance exceeds 0.10 and VIF is below 10. Hypotheses will be tested using the t-test to assess the individual effects of each independent variable and the F-test to evaluate their joint effect on purchase intention. The coefficient of determination (R^2) will be used to measure the proportion of variance in purchase intention explained by the independent variables. A significance level of 0.05 will be applied, with p-values below 0.05 indicating statistically significant results.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Validity Test

Table 1. Validity Test

Indicator	Pearson Correlation	Sig.	Keterangan
PA.1	0,664	0,000	Accept
PA.2	0,790	0,000	Accept
PA.3	0,709	0,000	Accept
PA.4	0,721	0,000	Accept
LFI.1	0,755	0,000	Accept
LFI.2	0,748	0,000	Accept
LFI.3	0,727	0,000	Accept
LFI.4	0,788	0,000	Accept

LFI.5	0,794	0,000	Accept
PI.1	0,745	0,000	Accept
PI.2	0,792	0,000	Accept
PI.3	0,742	0,000	Accept
PI.4	0,778	0,000	Accept

Source: The Data is Processed (2026)

4.2 Reability Test

Table 2. Reability Test

Variabel	Cronbach's Alpha	Item	Information
PA	0,693	4	Reliable
LFI	0,820	5	Reliable
PI	0,762	4	Reliable

Source: The Data is Processed (2026

The Cronbach's alpha value for Perceived Authenticity (0.693) is slightly below the commonly recommended threshold of 0.70. Although it may be considered marginally acceptable in some exploratory contexts, it should not automatically be classified as fully reliable. Meanwhile, Local Food Image has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.820, indicating good internal consistency, while Purchase Intention has a value of 0.762, indicating acceptable reliability. Overall, the results suggest that the measurement items for Local Food Image and Purchase Intention demonstrate acceptable reliability, whereas the Perceived Authenticity scale may require further examination.

4.3 Normality Test

In the Histogram of Regression Standardized Residuals, the distribution of residuals appears to approximate a normal curve. The data are concentrated around the center and do not exhibit any pronounced skewness. This visual finding is further examined using the Normal P–P Plot. Most points lie close to the diagonal line running from the bottom left to the top right. Although a few points deviate slightly from the line, there is no apparent systematic pattern of deviation. Based on this visual examination, the model residuals can be considered to satisfy the normality assumption, allowing the regression analysis to proceed

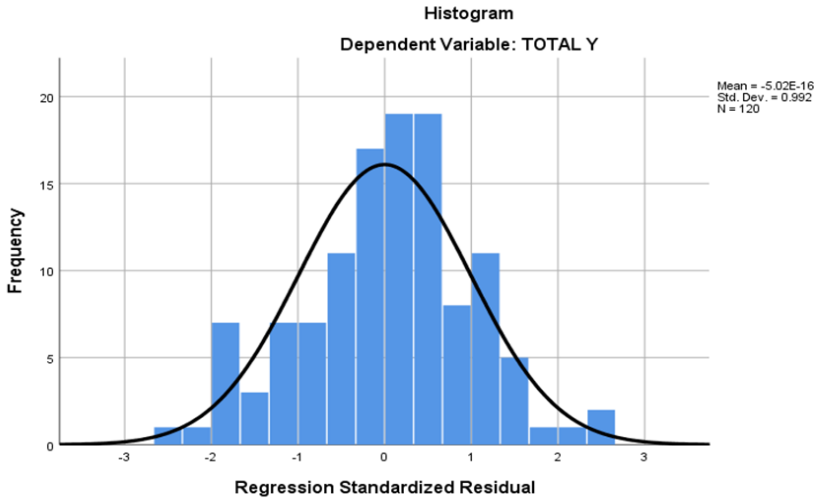


Figure 1. Histogram

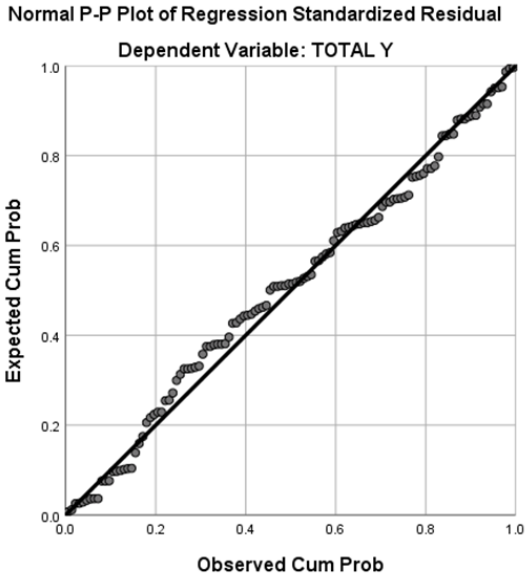


Figure 2. Normal P-Plot

4.4 Multicollinearity Test

The multicollinearity test was performed to determine whether the independent variables, Perceived Authenticity and Local Food Image, were excessively correlated with each other in the regression model.

Table 3. Multicollinearity Test

Variable	Tolerance	VIF	Information
PA	0,912	1,096	No multicollinearity concern
LFI	0,912	1,096	No multicollinearity concern

Source: The Data is Processed (2026)

The results show that both independent variables have tolerance values of 0.912, which exceed the minimum threshold of 0.10. Their VIF values are 1.096, substantially below the commonly used threshold of 10 and the more conservative threshold of 5. These results indicate that multicollinearity is not a concern in the regression model. Consequently, Perceived Authenticity and Local Food Image can be included simultaneously as independent variables for further regression analysis.

4.5 Heteroscedasticity Test

The heteroscedasticity assessment was conducted by requesting a scatterplot of standardized residuals against standardized predicted values. This procedure is used to evaluate whether the variance of the regression errors remains approximately constant across different predicted values. Ideally, the residuals should be randomly distributed around zero without a clear systematic pattern, such as a funnel shape or a widening and narrowing spread. However, the provided output does not contain a sufficiently readable scatterplot or a separate statistical test, such as the Glejser test, to confirm the result. Therefore, it is not possible to conclude definitively that the model is free from heteroscedasticity based on the available information. The residual scatterplot should be examined, or an additional heteroscedasticity test should be performed, before making a final conclusion.

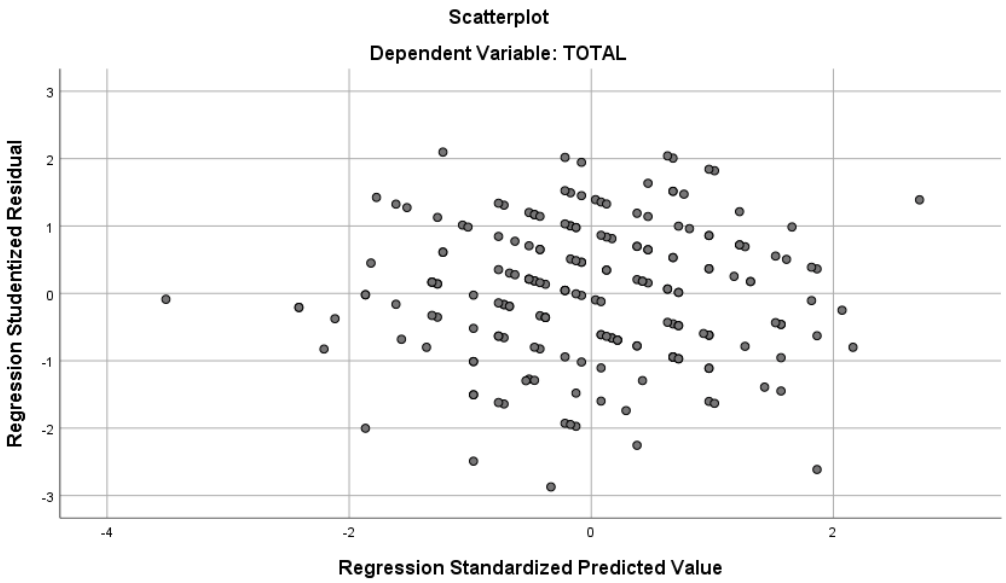


Figure 3. Scatterplot

4.7 Correlation Coefficient (R) and Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Table 4. Correlation Coefficient (R) and Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.576[a]	.332	.321	2.015

a. Predictors: (Constant), TOTAL X2, total x1
b. Dependent Variable: TOTAL Y

The multiple correlation coefficient (R) of 0.576 indicates a moderate positive relationship between the combined independent variables, Perceived Authenticity and Local Food Image, and Purchase Intention. This value describes the relationship between the observed dependent-variable scores and the values predicted by the regression model.

The coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.332, indicating that Perceived Authenticity and Local Food Image jointly explain 33.2% of the observed variation in Purchase Intention among the respondents. The remaining 66.8% of the variation is associated with factors outside the model and unexplained variation. These factors may include price perceptions, food quality, product availability, personal preferences, and other influences that were not included in the regression analysis. The adjusted R^2 value of 0.321 indicates that the model explains approximately 32.1% of the variation after adjusting for the number of predictors and the sample size. Overall, the model provides a measurable, although incomplete, explanation of purchase intention toward local culinary products in Ambon City.

4.8 Hypothesis Testing

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	236.203	2	118.102	29.074	.000[b]
	Residual	475.263	117	4.062		
	Total	711.467	119			

a. Dependent Variable: TOTAL Y
b. Predictors: (Constant), TOTAL X2, total x1

The ANOVA table reports an F-statistic of 29.074 with a significance value of 0.000 in SPSS. This should be reported as $p < 0.001$ rather than $p = 0.000$. Because the p-value is below the 0.05 significance level, the null hypothesis that both independent-variable coefficients are simultaneously zero is rejected. This indicates that Perceived Authenticity and Local Food Image, considered together, have a statistically significant relationship with Purchase Intention.

However, the provided SPSS output does not display the individual regression coefficients, t-statistics, or p-values for X1 and X2. Therefore, the individual hypotheses cannot yet be accepted or rejected separately. A significant F-test does not establish that both independent variables are individually significant; the coefficients table is required to determine their separate effects and directions.

4.9 Discussion

4.9.1 The Relationship between Perceived Authenticity and Purchase Intention

The correlation analysis indicates a positive relationship between Perceived Authenticity and Purchase Intention, with a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.413$ and a significance value of $p < 0.001$. This finding suggests that consumers who perceive local culinary products in Ambon as authentic tend to demonstrate higher purchase intention. Perceived authenticity may relate to consumers' perceptions that local food reflects the cultural identity, traditional preparation methods, distinctive ingredients, and culinary heritage of the region. This interpretation is consistent with Chen et al. (2020), who examined the relationship between perceived authenticity in traditional branded restaurants and consumers' behavioral intentions. Similarly, Kim et al. (2020) investigated how authenticity cues relate to purchase intention through emotional responses and restaurant image.

In the context of local culinary products in Ambon City, authenticity can help consumers recognize the distinctive characteristics of local food and differentiate it from other culinary offerings. When consumers believe that a product genuinely represents local traditions and culinary identity, they may develop a more favorable perception of the product and become more interested in purchasing it. This explanation is consistent with Cinelli and LeBoeuf (2020), who examined how perceived brand authenticity influences consumers' product perceptions. Furthermore, Chen et al. (2022) explored tourists' purchase intentions regarding food-related souvenirs, providing a relevant perspective on purchase intentions toward food products associated with a particular destination. Therefore, the correlation result provides evidence of a positive association between Perceived Authenticity and Purchase Intention. However, because the available result is a correlation, it does not independently establish a causal effect or confirm the unique contribution of Perceived Authenticity when Local Food Image is included in the regression model

4.9.2 The Relationship between Local Food Image and Purchase Intention

The correlation analysis reveals a positive relationship between Local Food Image and Purchase Intention, with a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.506$ and a significance value of $p < 0.001$. Compared with Perceived Authenticity, Local Food Image demonstrates a stronger bivariate correlation with Purchase Intention in this dataset. This finding suggests that consumers who have

a more favorable image of local culinary products tend to express stronger intentions to purchase them. This result is consistent with Choe and Kim (2018), who examined how the consumption value of local food relates to food destination image and behavioral intention. Similarly, Promsivapallop and Kannaovakun (2019) explored the dimensions of destination food image and their relationships with food preference and consumption, highlighting the relevance of food image in understanding consumer responses.

Local Food Image refers to the overall perceptions and associations consumers develop toward local culinary products. These perceptions may include the uniqueness of local cuisine, its reputation, cultural value, and the distinctive experiences associated with consuming local food. In Ambon City, local culinary products may represent not only food choices but also the cultural identity and culinary heritage of the region. A favorable image may therefore strengthen consumers' interest in trying, choosing, and purchasing local culinary products. This interpretation is supported by Peštek and Činjarević (2014), who investigated tourists' perceptions of local cuisine in relation to food culture, and Eren (2018), who discussed gastronomic identity and destination image from a local food perspective. Furthermore, Gupta et al. (2023) examined the relationship between local food consumption value and destination food image, providing additional context for understanding how consumers perceive local culinary offerings.

These findings highlight the importance of developing a favorable image of Ambon's local culinary products. Businesses may strengthen this image by communicating the cultural stories behind their products, maintaining consistent product quality, presenting local cuisine attractively, and promoting its distinctive characteristics. The relevance of image to consumer decisions is also reflected in Hutabarat and Tua (2021), who examined the relationship between local food brand image and consumer purchase decisions. Nevertheless, the present correlation result demonstrates an association rather than causation. Although Local Food Image has a stronger bivariate correlation with Purchase Intention than Perceived Authenticity in this dataset, its individual effect when Perceived Authenticity is included in the regression model must be assessed using the regression coefficients, particularly the coefficient, t-value, and significance level for Local Food Image.

4.9.3 The Relationship between Perceived Authenticity and Local Food Image

The correlation analysis indicates a positive relationship between Perceived Authenticity and Local Food Image, with a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.296$ and a significance value of $p = 0.001$. This suggests that consumers who perceive local culinary products as authentic also tend to have a more favorable image of those products, although the relationship is weaker than the correlations between each independent variable and Purchase Intention. This finding is consistent with Chen et al. (2020), who examined the relationship between perceived authenticity in traditional branded restaurants and consumers' perceptions of quality, value, and behavioral intentions. Similarly, Kim et al. (2020) explored how authenticity cues relate to purchase intention through emotional responses and restaurant image, highlighting the relevance of authenticity in shaping consumers' evaluations of culinary experiences.

One possible explanation is that perceptions of authenticity contribute to the way consumers evaluate local culinary products. When local food is perceived as reflecting genuine regional traditions, ingredients, and preparation practices, consumers may associate it with cultural uniqueness and a distinctive culinary identity. These associations can contribute to a favorable overall image of local food. This interpretation aligns with Choe and Kim (2018), who examined the

relationship between local food consumption value, food destination image, and behavioral intention. Furthermore, Peštek and Činjarević (2014) discussed tourists' perceptions of local cuisine in the context of Bosnian food culture, while Eren (2018) explored gastronomic identity and image from a local food perspective. Together, these studies provide a theoretical basis for understanding how the perceived authenticity of culinary products may be associated with consumers' overall image of local cuisine.

For culinary businesses in Ambon City, maintaining the distinctive characteristics of traditional cuisine while presenting products in ways that appeal to contemporary consumers may help reinforce both Perceived Authenticity and Local Food Image. Businesses can communicate the cultural origins of their dishes, preserve traditional preparation methods where appropriate, and highlight ingredients and characteristics that distinguish Ambonese cuisine from other culinary offerings. However, the correlation between Perceived Authenticity and Local Food Image establishes an association rather than causation. Further analysis, including regression analysis, would be needed to examine the unique statistical contribution of Perceived Authenticity to Purchase Intention when Local Food Image is included in the model. The present correlation result alone does not establish the direction of influence between Perceived Authenticity and Local Food Image.

5. CONCLUSION

Perceived authenticity and local food image are both positively and significantly associated with purchase intention toward local culinary products in Ambon City. Local food image shows the stronger relationship ($r = 0.506$, $p < 0.001$) compared with perceived authenticity ($r = 0.413$, $p < 0.001$). Consumers' overall impression of the quality, uniqueness, reputation, and cultural value of Ambonese food therefore plays a larger part in their willingness to buy than their judgment of whether a product is genuine. The two variables are also positively correlated ($r = 0.296$, $p = 0.001$), which means products seen as faithful to Maluku culinary traditions also tend to be viewed more favorably overall. When entered together, perceived authenticity and local food image form a significant regression model ($F = 29.074$, $p < 0.001$) that explains 33.2% of the variation in purchase intention. The remaining 66.8% is attributable to factors outside the model, such as price, product quality, availability, and personal taste preferences.

These results give local culinary businesses and MSMEs in Ambon a clear direction: keep traditional ingredients and recipes, tell consumers about the cultural origins of products such as papeda, bagea, sagu tumbu, and nutmeg-based foods, and maintain consistent quality and attractive presentation to build a stronger image of Maluku cuisine. The findings should still be read with caution. The perceived authenticity scale had a Cronbach's alpha slightly below 0.70, and the sample of 120 respondents did not separate residents, tourists, and gift buyers, who may have different purchase motives. Future studies are encouraged to refine the authenticity measurement, use larger and more clearly segmented samples, and add variables such as price perception, food quality, and product availability to explain purchase intention more fully.

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