

Savoring Identity: The Role of Bulalo's Food Quality on Cultural Motivation Among Tourists in Tagaytay

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Abstract. *Bulalo*, a traditional Filipino beef shank soup, is a culinary icon and cultural emblem in Tagaytay City, contributing significantly to local identity and to the growth of food tourism. Despite its popularity, limited research has examined the relationship between the perceived quality of Bulalo and tourists' cultural motivations. This study addresses this gap by investigating how food quality attributes—taste, presentation, authenticity, and hygiene—influence cultural engagement among visitors. Using a quantitative comparative-correlational research design, structured questionnaires were administered to 385 tourists in Tagaytay. Descriptive statistics, Spearman Rho correlation, and linear regression were utilized to analyze the data. Findings revealed that taste and hygiene were the most highly rated attributes and demonstrated the strongest correlations with cultural motivation ($r = 0.51$ and $r = 0.52$, respectively). All food quality dimensions were significantly associated with tourists' cultural motivation ($p < 0.001$), affirming that perceived culinary quality enhances cultural interest and engagement. The study also found that the 18–24 age group had the highest motivation for food experiences. These results underscore the vital role of maintaining and promoting food quality standards—particularly in taste, authenticity, and hygiene—to strengthen cultural tourism in Tagaytay. The study concludes that improving the sensory and safety aspects of *Bulalo* can further deepen tourists' cultural connection and recommends that local food establishments prioritize these attributes to support sustainable culinary tourism initiatives.

Keywords: Bulalo; Cultural motivation; Food quality; Quantitative comparative-correlational research; Tagaytay City

1.0 Introduction

Food is not only a basic necessity but also a powerful medium for cultural expression and tourism development. Culinary tourism, particularly in destinations where traditional dishes carry cultural value, has become a significant motivation for travelers seeking authentic experiences. Recent studies confirm that food quality directly influences tourists' destination choices, satisfaction, and cultural engagement (Kovalenko, Dias, Pereira, & Simões, 2023; Zhu, Zhu, & Weng, 2024). For many visitors, the search for unique, culturally rooted culinary encounters has become a primary travel motivation, especially in countries where traditional cuisine is integral to identity and storytelling (Kalenjuk Pivarski et al., 2024).

Bulalo, a Filipino beef shank soup, exemplifies this link between cuisine and cultural identity. In Tagaytay City, Bulalo has become not only a culinary staple but also a symbol of place identity, reinforcing the city's reputation as a gastronomic hub. Traditional dishes like Bulalo highlights how local food culture transforms modest ingredients into culinary icons that attract tourists (Lopez, 2024). However, the increasing commercialization of food tourism introduces challenges to maintaining quality. Studies have shown that lapses in hygiene and sanitation negatively affect consumer trust and overall perceptions of food quality (Zhang, Xu, Lee, & Li, 2022; Malik, Abbasi, Sohail, Abbasi, & Ting, 2024). At the same time, consumer awareness and expectations about authenticity and food safety are becoming critical factors shaping tourists' culinary experiences (Sánchez-Sánchez, de Pablos-Herederó, & Montes-Botella, 2025).

Food-related experiences also play a key role in cultural motivation. Authentic cuisine creates memorable experiences that encourage tourists to immerse themselves more deeply in local culture and enhance destination image (Hurdawaty, Dahana, & Farradia, 2025). For instance, research highlights that authenticity and presentation in food experiences significantly strengthen revisit intentions and recommendations, while taste and hygiene remain foundational drivers of satisfaction and cultural engagement (Jonson & Masa, 2023; Tort, 2023). In the Philippine setting, culinary heritage has been identified as both an economic driver and a medium of cultural preservation, underscoring the importance of local dishes in sustaining cultural tourism (Lopez, 2024).

Despite the growing body of literature on food tourism, limited research has examined the combined influence of taste, authenticity, hygiene, and presentation on tourists' cultural motivation in the Philippines. This study addresses this gap by investigating Bulalo's food quality as a determinant of cultural motivation in Tagaytay. By employing a comparative correlational approach, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of how culinary attributes influence cultural tourism, aligning with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 12 on responsible consumption and production. Moreover, as highlighted in recent work, integrating socio-cultural factors into food tourism research offers insights for developing sustainable, culturally sensitive tourism strategies (Sánchez-Sánchez et al., 2025).

2.0 Methodology

This chapter includes the methods and procedures for interpreting or solving different problems. This provides research design, data source, data gathered, ethical considerations, and the statistical treatment.

2.1 Research Design

The researchers will employ a comparative correlational method to explore the purpose of this study and investigate how the food quality of Bulalo, a traditional Filipino dish, influences visitors' cultural motivation in Tagaytay. This method is appropriate as it allows for an in-depth analysis of tourists' perceptions and experiences regarding Bulalo's food quality and its role in shaping their cultural engagement (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Data collection will be conducted through surveys and other relevant research instruments, ensuring that insights are gathered directly from tourists visiting Tagaytay (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019). The study aims to provide valuable information on how the sensory attributes, authenticity, and overall quality of Bulalo contribute to cultural motivation (Fields, 2002). Furthermore, the findings will contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of culinary tourism in reinforcing cultural identity and enhancing visitors' experiences in Tagaytay. By analyzing these relationships, this research seeks to offer insights that can help local businesses, restaurant owners, and tourism stakeholders improve food quality standards and promote Tagaytay as a premier destination for cultural and gastronomic tourism (Long, 2004; Okumus, Kock, Scantlebury, & Okumus, 2013).

2.2 Participants and Sampling Technique

This study involves one group of respondents: tourists visiting Tagaytay and trying its signature dish—*Bulalo*. The researchers will conduct a simple random sampling to identify the appropriate sample population and determine the factors influencing *Bulalo*'s food quality and cultural motivations among tourists. The study will adopt simple random sampling, a commonly used method in quantitative research, selecting individuals who meet the study's requirements as respondents (Noor et al., 2022). A sample size of 385 respondents will be selected to provide data for the variables of this study. The age brackets used in this study are (18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64), based on the standard classifications of the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) in the 2020 survey on tourism demographic data for Tourism Establishments in the Philippines. The effectiveness of this

sampling technique will help the researchers formulate results and clarify whether the quality of *Bulalo* affects the tourists' cultural motivation to visit Tagaytay. Description of the population, actual sample size, and sampling technique (random, purposive, etc.). Explain the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

2.3 Research Instrument

An adapted and modified questionnaire was used in this study to answer the objectives of Baby, J., & Joseph, A. G. (2023), which focuses on tourists' perceptions and motivations related to local food. The primary data for this research were collected through a survey questionnaire, divided into two sections. Part I will focus on the demographic profile of respondents, including age, sex, and income level. Part II consists of 12 statements that assess the respondents' perceptions of *Bulalo's* food quality, explicitly focusing on taste, presentation, authenticity, and hygiene/safety. Part III consists of 5 statements that measure respondents' motivation to consume *Bulalo* in Tagaytay, the influence of *Bulalo* quality on their cultural motivation, and their intent to revisit Tagaytay. Lastly, the study seeks to examine if there is a significant relationship between the perceived quality of *Bulalo* and respondents' cultural motivation. The researchers used a 4-point Likert scale to measure the aspects of Food Quality of *Bulalo* and Cultural Motivation.

2.4 Data Gathering Procedure

This study explored the role of *Bulalo* in Tagaytay's food tourism and its perceived impact on both residents and visiting tourists. To gather relevant data, a structured survey questionnaire was used to collect quantifiable information on respondents' demographic profiles, frequency of *Bulalo* consumption, level of satisfaction, and perceptions of its contribution to the tourism experience in Tagaytay. Survey respondents were approached in person and invited to participate voluntarily. Before their involvement, they were informed about the study's purpose, assured of the confidentiality of their responses, and asked to provide informed consent in accordance with ethical research standards. The data collection process was carried out in several stages: preparation, administration, retrieval, interpretation, and analysis. Initially, the researchers prepared the necessary documents and sought formal approval to conduct the study. Letters of permission were sent to selected establishments in Tagaytay to facilitate the distribution of questionnaires. The survey instruments were administered to the identified respondents upon receiving the required approvals. All data obtained were treated with strict confidentiality, and personal information was safeguarded throughout the research process. Participation was voluntary, and respondents could withdraw at any time. After retrieving completed questionnaires, the data were systematically organized, securely stored, and analyzed to determine the extent to which the quality of *Bulalo* influences visitors' cultural motivations and tourism experiences in Tagaytay.

2.5 Data Analysis Procedure

The collected quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize respondent profiles and perceptions, and inferential statistics to test the relationship between food quality attributes and cultural motivation. Specifically, the study employed Spearman's Rho to assess the correlation between variables and linear regression to determine the predictive relationship. The survey instrument underwent validation and reliability testing to ensure accuracy and consistency. Validity was established through expert content evaluation, while reliability was confirmed using pilot testing and statistical reliability measures. These steps ensured the results' trustworthiness and the instrument's appropriateness for measuring tourists' perceptions of *Bulalo's* food quality and its influence on cultural motivation.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

To ensure ethical compliance, the researchers provided participants with clear information about the study's purpose, procedures, and their right to withdraw without penalty. Informed consent was obtained through a simple, voluntary process. All data were treated with strict confidentiality and anonymized in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (RA 10173). Necessary approvals were secured from local establishments before data collection. Participants' personal information was protected throughout the study, and the findings will be reported honestly, in accordance with the World Health Organization's ethical guidelines and the Declaration of Helsinki.

3.0 Results and Discussion

This chapter presents the study's findings, including the analysis and interpretation of survey data. It discusses the demographic profile of the respondents, their perceptions of *Bulalo* in terms of food quality—such as taste, presentation, authenticity, and hygiene and safety—and how these perceptions reflect their level of cultural

motivation, with implications for local tourism. Statistical tools were employed to interpret the results and provide meaningful insights into the connection between food experience and cultural engagement, particularly in the context of Tagaytay as a culinary and cultural destination.

3.1 Demographic Data

Table 1 reveals a notable age skew, with the largest group (46%) falling in the 18–24 years old category, followed by 26% in the 25–34 range. Smaller proportions in the 35–44 (14%) and the 45–54 and 55–64 (7% each) categories indicate a sharp decline in participation as age increases. This distribution suggests that the study predominantly reflects the perspectives of younger individuals, making the findings most relevant to understanding tourism and food motivation trends within this demographic. Recent research has shown that younger tourists are more likely to engage in culinary tourism because they actively seek novel and authentic experiences, including local food exploration, as part of cultural immersion (Kovalenko, Dias, Pereira, & Simões, 2023; Zhu, Zhu, & Weng, 2024). However, the limited representation of older age groups introduces a potential bias, as older tourists often demonstrate different patterns of food consumption, with stronger emphasis on safety, comfort, and familiarity (Zhang, Xu, Lee, & Li, 2022). Consequently, while the current data is highly applicable to younger audiences, further research is needed to ensure a more balanced representation across age groups, thereby capturing diverse motivations and expectations in culinary tourism (Kalenjuk Pivarski et al., 2024).

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents in Terms of Age (n= 394)

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18 to 24 Years Old	182	46%
25 to 34 Years Old	101	26%
35 to 44 Years Old	56	14%
45 to 54 Years Old	28	7%
55 to 64 Years Old	27	7%

Table 2 shows a relatively balanced sex distribution, with 52% of respondents identifying as female (n = 203) and 48% as male (n = 191). This close distribution indicates that both male and female perspectives are well represented in the study. The near-equal split suggests that gender is unlikely to significantly influence the study's findings, allowing for a more generalized view of the responses across both sexes. However, depending on the study's subject, the researchers may still need to consider gender-specific trends or differences to provide a more nuanced interpretation of the results. Recent work has shown that male and female tourists may differ subtly in how they evaluate authenticity, novelty, and satisfaction in food-related tourism (Rahman, Islam, & Omar, 2021; Lyu & Law, 2020).

Table 2. Demographic Profile of the Respondents in Terms of Sex (n= 394)

Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Female	203	52%
Male	191	48%

Table 3 reveals a varied range of income levels within the sample. The most significant proportion, 29%, earns between ₱20,001 and ₱30,000, followed closely by 28% earning below ₱10,000. A smaller group, 21%, falls within the ₱10,000 – ₱20,000 range, while 12% earn ₱20,001 – ₱30,000 (note the repetition in the income ranges here). Lastly, 10% of respondents earn ₱30,001 and above. This distribution suggests that the majority of respondents belong to the lower to middle-income brackets, with relatively few in the higher-income category. This income skew may influence the interpretation of the study's findings, as it reflects the perspectives of individuals primarily from modest income levels, potentially limiting the generalizability of the results to wealthier populations. Similar findings were reported by Hernández-Rojas, Folgado-Fernández, and Palos-Sánchez (2021), who found that tourists' income levels influence spending power and choice of culinary experiences, with wealthier visitors gravitating toward prestige dining while middle-income groups emphasize affordability and cultural authenticity.

Table 3. Demographic Profile of the Respondents in Terms of Income Level (n= 394)

Income Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Below 10,000	111	28%
10,000 – 20,000	81	21%
20,001 – 30,000	48	12%
20,001 – 30,000	113	29%
30,001 and above	41	10%

3.2 Respondents' Perceptions of *Bulalo's* Food Quality

Table 4 indicates a high level of satisfaction across all evaluated dimensions: Taste, Presentation, Authenticity, and Hygiene and Safety. The mean scores for each dimension ranged from 3.37 to 3.56, suggesting respondents were very pleased with the dish. In terms of taste, participants found the flavors well-balanced and the seasoning satisfying. The presentation was also positively evaluated, with respondents noting that *Bulalo* was visually appealing and that its ingredient arrangement made it more appetizing. Regarding authenticity, the dish was perceived as an accurate representation of Filipino culinary traditions, which the respondents highly valued. Additionally, the dish's hygiene and safety were well received, with participants expressing confidence in its cleanliness and overall safety. This is consistent with research showing that taste and hygiene strongly shape tourists' satisfaction and perceived authenticity in culinary tourism (Narangajavana Kaosiri, Sangkakorn, & Chen, 2021; Choe & Kim, 2022).

Table 4. Respondents' Perceptions of *Bulalo's* Food Quality in Terms of Taste, Presentation, Authenticity, and Hygiene and Safety

Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Taste	3.56	0.53	Very Satisfied
<i>Bulalo</i> has a well-balanced taste that I find appealing.	3.56	0.59	Very Satisfied
The flavors in <i>Bulalo</i> are enjoyable and satisfying.	3.56	0.62	Very Satisfied
The seasoning and spices used in <i>Bulalo</i> enhance its overall quality.	3.56	0.63	Very Satisfied
Presentation	3.44	0.56	Very Satisfied
<i>Bulalo</i> is visually appealing and well-presented.	3.53	0.59	Very Satisfied
The arrangement and color of ingredients in <i>Bulalo</i> make them appetizing.	3.47	0.65	Very Satisfied
The way <i>Bulalo</i> is served meets my expectations of good food presentation.	3.47	0.63	Very Satisfied
Authenticity	3.37	0.61	Very Satisfied
<i>Bulalo</i> reflects the country's cultural identity and traditions.	3.46	0.63	Very Satisfied
The <i>Bulalo</i> I tried felt authentic to Filipino culinary heritage.	3.48	0.63	Very Satisfied
I value the authenticity of <i>Bulalo</i> when deciding whether to try it.	3.49	0.60	Very Satisfied
Hygiene and Safety	3.47	0.55	Very Satisfied
<i>Bulalo</i> is prepared in a clean, hygienic manner.	3.43	0.66	Very Satisfied
I feel confident about the safety and quality of <i>Bulalo</i> .	3.51	0.61	Very Satisfied
I have not experienced any health concerns after eating <i>Bulalo</i> .	3.46	0.67	Very Satisfied
Food Quality of <i>Bulalo</i>	3.46	0.53	Very Satisfied

Note: 3.25-4.00- Very Satisfied; 2.50-3.24- Satisfied; 1.75-2.49- Dissatisfied; 1.00-1.74- Very Dissatisfied

3.3 Level of Cultural Motivation

Table 5 shows a very high degree of engagement with Filipino culture and traditions, particularly through their *Bulalo* experience. The mean scores for all dimensions ranged from 3.52 to 3.63, indicating strong cultural motivation. Respondents were highly interested in learning more about Filipino culture after tasting *Bulalo* (M = 3.58, SD = 0.55). They reported a stronger connection to the local community through their food experience (M = 3.52, SD = 0.60). Many respondents also viewed *Bulalo* as a significant representation of Tagaytay's cultural identity (M = 3.63, SD = 0.54). They believed authentic food like *Bulalo* plays a role in preserving cultural heritage (M = 3.61, SD = 0.57). Furthermore, respondents indicated they were more likely to recommend Tagaytay to others based on their cultural and food experience (M = 3.63, SD = 0.55). Overall, the respondents demonstrated very high cultural motivation, with food experiences significantly influencing their perceptions of local culture. Similar findings were highlighted by Pérez-Gálvez, Granda, and López-Guzmán (2021), who found that culinary heritage contributes to tourists' cultural immersion and enhances destination identity.

Table 5. *Level of Cultural Motivation Among Respondents in Relation to Perceived Food Quality of Bulalo in Tagaytay, Cavite*

Dimensions	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Tasting <i>Bulalo</i> made me more interested in learning about Filipino culture and traditions.	3.58	0.55	Very High
I felt a stronger connection to the local community through my food experience.	3.52	0.60	Very High
I consider <i>Bulalo</i> a significant representation of Tagaytay's cultural identity.	3.63	0.54	Very High
I believe authentic dishes like Bulalo help preserve cultural heritage.	3.61	0.57	Very High
I am more likely to recommend Tagaytay to others based on my cultural and food experience.	3.63	0.55	Very High
Cultural Motivation	3.59	0.45	Very High

Note: 3.25-4.00- Very High; 2.50-3.24- High; 1.75-2.49- Low; 1.00-1.74- Very Low

3.4 Relationship Between Perceived Food Quality and the Cultural Motivation

Table 6 presents the relationship between the perceived food quality of Bulalo and respondents' cultural motivations, as measured by Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) and p -values. All variable pairs show a statistically significant relationship (p -values < 0.001), indicating strong associations. The correlation between Taste and Cultural Motivation is moderate to strong ($r = .51$), suggesting that respondents who enjoyed the taste of Bulalo were more likely to feel culturally motivated. A similarly moderate correlation between Presentation and Cultural Motivation ($r = 0.38$) indicates a significant, but slightly weaker, connection. The correlation between Authenticity and cultural motivation is weaker ($r = .24$), although still statistically significant, suggesting that the perception of authenticity is linked to cultural motivation, albeit somewhat. Hygiene and safety, as well as cultural motivation, show the strongest relationship ($r = .52$), highlighting that respondents who felt confident in the hygiene and safety of Bulalo also expressed a higher level of cultural motivation. Finally, the overall Food Quality of Bulalo and cultural motivation demonstrate the strongest correlation ($r = .53$), suggesting that a general perception of food quality is strongly related to respondents' cultural motivation. These findings align with recent evidence indicating that food quality dimensions—particularly hygiene and taste—are significant predictors of cultural motivation and loyalty in gastronomy-based tourism (Ab Karim & Chi, 2020; Lee, Kim, & Kim, 2021).

Table 6. *Relationship Between the Perceived Food Quality of Bulalo and the Cultural Motivation of Respondents*

Variable Pair	Pearson's r	p -value	Sig. @ 0.05	Status of Hypothesis
Taste and Cultural Motivation	0.51	$< .001$	Significant	Rejected H0
Presentation and Cultural Motivation	0.38	$< .001$	Significant	Rejected H0
Authenticity and Cultural Motivation	0.24	$< .001$	Significant	Rejected H0
Hygiene and Safety and Cultural Motivation	0.52	$< .001$	Significant	Rejected H0
Food Quality of <i>Bulalo</i> and Cultural Motivation	0.53	$< .001$	Significant	Rejected H0

4.0 Conclusion

This study provides valuable insights into the role of food quality in enhancing cultural motivation among tourists, focusing on Bulalo in Tagaytay. Beyond confirming a significant relationship between perceived food quality and cultural engagement, the study underscores the broader relevance of culinary experiences in shaping meaningful tourism. By highlighting the importance of taste, authenticity, hygiene, and presentation, the findings provide practical guidance for local food establishments, tourism planners, and policymakers to improve service standards and elevate cultural immersion through cuisine.

For practice, food businesses are encouraged to prioritize both quality and cultural storytelling to enrich the dining experience and deepen visitor connections. Regarding policy, the results support the development of food safety regulations, culinary heritage preservation, and tourism strategies that celebrate local gastronomy. In education, this study may serve as a foundation for curriculum development in hospitality and tourism programs, emphasizing the interplay between food quality and cultural tourism. Future research may explore similar dynamics in other regions or investigate the long-term impact of food-centered tourism on local economies and identities. Ultimately, promoting traditional dishes like *Bulalo* not only supports sustainable tourism but also strengthens cultural pride and community resilience.

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7.0 Conflict of Interests

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9.0 References

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