

Leisure and Recreation: Exploring Visitors Social Experiences at the Welcome to Batam Street Food Market

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Abstract

This research examines the meaning of leisure as recreation from the experience of street food in the Welcome to Batam (WTB) area as an alternative form of recreation for urban communities. In essence, many people still do not understand the meaning of leisure and recreation. This study used a qualitative survey approach, involving 30 respondents, consisting of general visitors and key informants. Data was collected through a semi-structured questionnaire and analyzed thematically, as well as through sentiment analysis of online reviews. The results show that culinary activities at WTBs are beginning to be understood not only as consumptive activities, but also as a form of recreation that is accessible, affordable and full of social interaction, especially for young people. Key factors that encourage repeat visits include friendly prices, a relaxed atmosphere and positive previous experiences. However, negative reviews from visitors indicate problems such as low levels of safety, declining merchant activity, and declining neighborhood appeal. Therefore, a management strategy that includes infrastructure improvements, support to businesses, and community-based promotions is needed for WTB to develop into a sustainable and inclusive micro recreation destination.

Keywords: Leisure, Recreation, Visitor, Culinary, Market

Introduction

Street food tourism is one of the activities to fill leisure time as a form of recreation (Reynaldi et al., 2024). On the other hand, street food helps Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in developing their culinary businesses. However, many people still do not

understand the meaning of leisure time and recreation, often associating it solely with paid tourism activities. In reality, leisure time and recreation involve engaging in enjoyable activities. Recreational activities to fill leisure time do not necessarily have to be paid tourism activities; there are also free options such as having a meal together in a garden or participating in sports at TARKA, while paid activities include going to restaurants, street food dining, and others (Afriza et al., 2017; Wardiyanta et al., 2019; Kholid & Syamsiyah, 2020; Gunawan & Liauw, 2022). The research question is how street food visitors perceive leisure activities as recreation. The objective of this study is to understand street food visitor's experiences as leisure activities and recreation. The issues to be investigated are as follows: How do visitors perceive street food as a form of leisure activity? What factors influence repeat visits to street food as a form of recreation? How do visitors experience visiting WTB as a form of recreation? Does street food at Welcome to Batam meet the public's expectations as a form of recreation?

From previous studies, the first research results by Ratnaningtyas et al., (2024) indicate that Danau Kampung Bintaro is heavily visited by visitors on weekends. The strategic location impacts small vendors by helping them meet visitors' needs. This assists small vendors in increasing their income. Street food vendors at Karanganyar Square utilize commodity facilities for their own benefit (Noviana et al., 2024). The third study explains that by joining forces, street food vendors gain benefits such as promotion, accessories, and management strategies that can influence tourist appeal. On the other hand, this evaluates aspects of tourism development with potential to enhance sustainability and cultural value at the Betawi Cultural Village of Setu Babakan (A'yun et al., 2024). The fourth study found that experiential marketing and customer satisfaction in street food positively influence the intention to repurchase (Febrini et al., 2019) and align with (Kharolina & Transistari, 2022).

From these studies, it can be concluded that the first study focuses on the impact of strategic location on visitor needs, the second on commodity facilities affecting street vendors' profits, the third on promotions, accessories, and strategies influencing tourist attraction, and the fourth on satisfaction and experiential marketing influencing repurchase intent. The research to be conducted will focus on visitors' perceptions of street food as recreation, factors influencing repeat visits, experiences of visiting street food vendors, and their impact on visitors' understanding.

Literature Review

Street Food Culinary in Indonesia

Street food Market, often referred to as "*jajanan*" in Indonesia, has a diverse cultural and historical background in each region. Street vendors or *Pedagang Kaki Lima* often prepare ingredients and make semi-finished foods at home, while the processing and serving of street food in crowded places such as city squares are prepared by the local government (Khoirullah & Astuti, 2023). The types of street food include Appetizers (Tahu Gejrot, Batagor, Siamay, etc.), Soups (Seblak Kuah, Bakso, Rawon, etc.), Main Courses (Mi Ayam, Sate, Pempek, etc.), and Desserts (Martabak Manis, Kue Pancong, Es Doger, etc.) or based on the time they were created, such as traditional (Klepon, Rujak Beubeuk, etc.) and modern (Es Kepal, Sate Taichan, Corndog, and foreign-adapted foods).

Street food Market business is categorized into several types: 1) micro businesses with a minimum asset of 50 million rupiah and sales of 300 million rupiah. 2) small businesses with assets of 50 million to 500 million rupiah and sales of 300 million to 2.5 billion rupiah, and 3) medium-sized businesses with assets of 500 million to 10 billion rupiah and sales of 2.5 billion to 50 billion rupiah (Saputra et al., 2022) in (Afifah & Triyanto, 2023). According to Permadi, (2007), based on the historical origin of the term *Pedagang Kaki Lima* (in Indonesia mean five feet seller) the Dutch during the colonial era had sidewalks that were five feet wide for an adult, or approximately one and a half meters, leading to the creation of the term “*pedagang kaki lima*” and the diversification of street food types (Gunawan & Liauw, 2022).

Leisure and Recreation

Every human being has free time (Leisure) to explore their interests and talents and to have fun (recreation). Leisure time is the time that everyone has to do enjoyable activities that are not commercialized. According to Kurniawan et al., (2025), leisure is available to individuals after fulfilling basic obligations such as work, study, or family responsibilities and is used for activities that are freely chosen, enjoyable, and personally meaningful. The availability of facilities and infrastructure for recreation, such as public facilities needed by the community to fill their free time with recreation (Haryanto, 2017). It is not only about time but also about individuals that feel free to choose their activities (Sabri, 2020).

The increasing complexity of modern life has led to higher psychological stress, making leisure activities an essential need, resulting in the emergence of paid recreational activities such as Sport Tourism, Wellness Tourism, Marine Tourism, and others (Juliana & Sitorus, 2022; Muharis et al., 2024; Aginsha & Sulistyani, 2025). Recreation is a specific activity undertaken to fill leisure time, with the aim of restoring physical, mental, and social well-being (Lestari & Yuliasrid, 2021). Therefore, it can be concluded that leisure time is needed for every individual and group to improve their performance and personal development through recreational activities. The leisure, recreation, and tourism scheme (see Figure 1) originates from the division of productive time (work time) and leisure time. When someone wants to spend their leisure time doing something enjoyable, recreational activities occur, which are then developed through business travel (Haryanto, 2023).

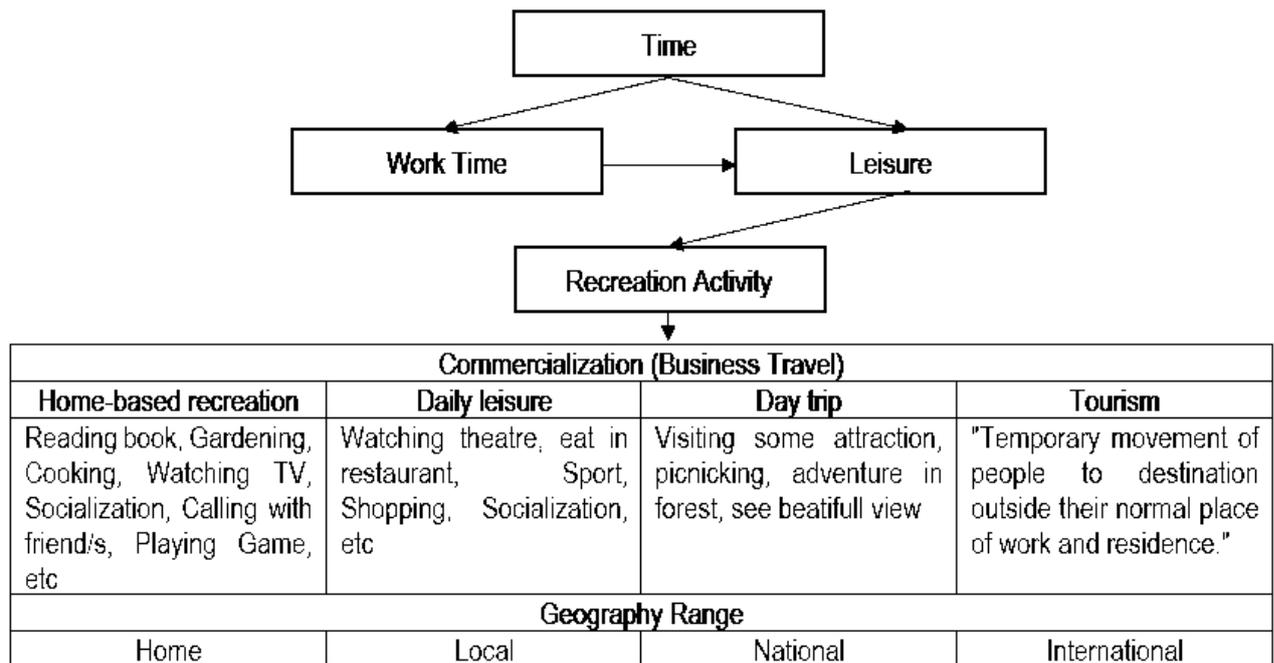


Figure 1. Leisure, Recreation and Tourism Scheme

Source: (Hariyanto, 2023)

Customer Experience

To increase visitor loyalty, we need to make an impression on every purchasing experience (well customer experience). According to Saputri et al., (2022) customer experience is “when a customer gets a sensation or knowledge resulting from several levels of interaction with various elements created by the service provider”. Customer experience has five (5) factors: 1) Reasoning, the human senses' instinctive memory of a product or service; 2) Emotion, the psychological factors encompassing ideas, feelings, and reputation arising from the relationship with the customer; 3)Thought, the ability to think creatively in understanding products and services; 4)Action, focusing on the physical aspects of creating the customer experience; 5)Interaction, fostering social identity and group dynamics (Latifah & Roosdhani, 2024). Customer experience in enjoying street food is not only about taste but also reflects the need for social interaction, quick accessibility, and connection to local cultural values (Soliman et al., 2024).

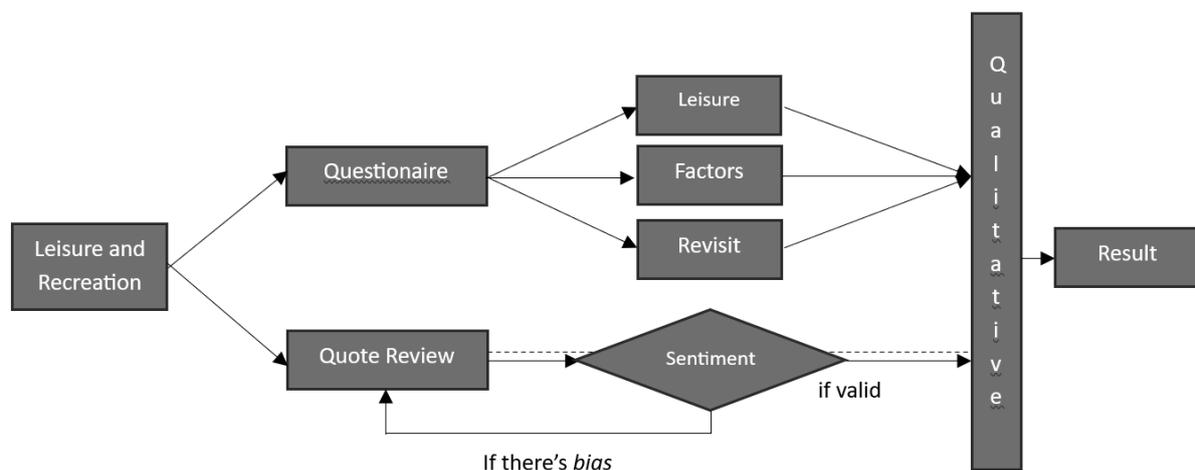
Research Methodology

A qualitative method with a survey approach was applied in this study to analyze a problem in depth. This approach has two functions: to provide an overview of the problem and to analyze a problem (Maidiana, 2021). The population in this study is estimated to be 100 people, taken from sold parking tickets (Information from the WTB parking ticket manager). According to Sugiyono, (2024), if the population is less than 100 people, then the sample size should be 10-30%. This study analyzes visitors' experiences in visiting street food stalls in the Welcome to Batam area as a form of recreation and entertainment. Respondents must have visited the culinary area at least once and be willing to participate as respondents.

Data collection was conducted using a semi-structured questionnaire or a combination of closed and open-ended questions (Putri, 2022), with responses adopting a 4-point Likert scale: one (1) Disagree, two (2) Neutral, three (3) Agree, (Rokeman, 2024) and (4)

“Other” for open-ended questions if respondents wished to provide further opinions (Syahrizal & Jailani, 2023). The results of the answers use percentages interpreted as follows: 0%–25% is considered a small portion, 26%–49% is considered a minority, 50% is considered half, 51%–75% is considered a majority, 75%–99% is considered a large portion, and 100% is considered the entirety (Suprihatin & Mahardini, 2023).

The initial questionnaire was distributed online to gather respondents using the *Google Forms* platform. Subsequently, sentiment analysis of reviews will be conducted to determine the sentiments of street food visitors through the *Google Reviews* platform. The data obtained was analyzed using thematic analysis and sentiment analysis techniques. Coding was performed manually in NVIVO 12 software by separating each respondent's answer into a single file in order to compile a concept map visualization output for each research question. Finally, the results were described as a synthesis of meaning, the essence of the experience, and a conclusion of the findings (clearer flow see Figure 2).



Source: Author, 2025

Figure 2. Conceptual Framework

Results and Discussions

Background of Welcome to Batam Street Food Market

Batam offers a variety of tourist destinations for travel activities or simply leisure. One of the places commonly used for leisure activities, such as street food, is Welcome to Batam (WTB). This place is called Welcome to Batam because there is a large landmark with the same letters, as if welcoming visitors (see Figure 3). This location is the center of street food in Batam City (Mayanggi, 2023). According to BP Batam, (2022), the prominent signage is not only intended as an icon for Batam City but also to enhance the confidence of foreign investors. The coordinates for WTB are (1.1226177093639562, 104.05360772380942), with a clearer visual representation shown on the blue pin in Figure 4.

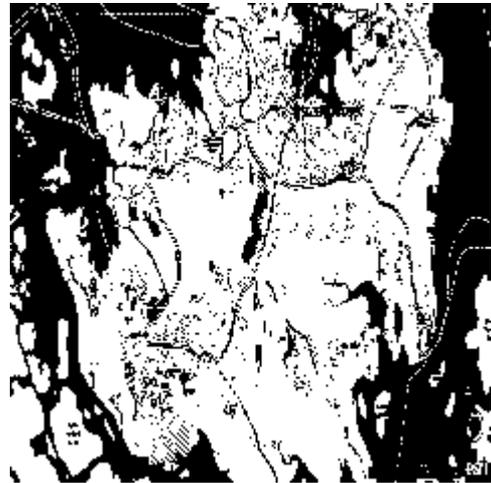
Street food Market at WTB is diverse in form, flavor, and color. According to Agustina (2024), some of the foods available at WTB include Lok Lok, Batam-style Kerak Telur, Seblak, fried snacks, and others. Lok Lok is a type of food skewered like satay and is popular in Malaysia, made from meat, seafood, and vegetables. Lok Lok is grilled to enhance the flavor and served with sauce. In the other side of Indonesia, this dish is often referred to as

“*angkring-an*” food because it is commonly found in street food stalls with a relaxed atmosphere; “*angkring*” in Javanese means to sit comfortably or freely. Additionally, there is Kerak Telur, which differs from the Betawi-style Kerak Telor and resembles takoyaki (Japanese street food).



Source: (Ubaidillah, 2024)

Figure 3. Welcome to Batam Monument



Source: Author, 2025

Figure 4. Maps Batam City

Background of the Respondents

The respondents in this study consisted of various age groups, genders, and frequencies of visits to the Welcome to Batam (WTB) street food area. In addition, the respondents were divided into two categories of validity, 27 general respondents and 3 key informants. Based on age, the majority were aged 18–25 (70%), indicating that young adults are the most active group in enjoying street food as a recreational activity. Young people tend to be interested in diverse and unique culinary offerings (Oktaviana, 2023), such as those found at WTB.

In terms of gender, the majority of respondents were female (76.7%). This composition indicates that women are more dominant in engaging in culinary-based recreational activities. Women tend to have a greater interest in emotional experiences and ambiance in the context of tourism, including culinary tourism (Alif, 2025).

In terms of visit frequency, half of the total respondents stated they had visited WTB between two and four times (50%), while 43.3% had visited more than five times, and 6.7% had visited only once. This data confirms that the repeat visit rate to WTB is relatively high, indicating the area's sustained appeal. The high visitation intensity also reinforces the perception that WTB is not merely a consumption space but has evolved into a recreational and social public space.

With such demographic composition, the research findings reflect the perspective of the productive age group actively exploring culinary experiences as an alternative form of recreation. This serves as an important foundation for developing promotional strategies and managing the WTB area, particularly in reaching the younger demographic who tend to seek flexible, social, and experience-based recreational activities.

Customer Perspective about Street Food Market as Leisure Time

The data analysis shows positive results (see Figure 5). Regarding the statement “I consider snacking at WTB as an enjoyable activity,” the majority of respondents agreed (53.3%), while the rest were neutral (46.7%). This indicates that snacking at WTB is not only viewed as a consumptive activity but also as an activity that brings pleasure and light relaxation. The experience of enjoying leisure at street-side stalls is not only functional but also social and cultural, making it recreational in value for urban communities (Syahrani, 2019).

Regarding the second statement, “Visiting WTB is how I spend my free time,” half of the respondents were neutral (50%), a minority agreed (40%), a small portion disagreed (6.7%), and one respondent (Initials CY) opined “true but somewhat uncertain” (3.3%). This data indicates that although it is not yet the primary choice, street food market at WTB is beginning to be perceived as a form of light recreation, especially due to its accessibility and low cost. Additionally, there was one opinion indicating that although respondent 28 enjoys the atmosphere at WTB, they do not specifically go there to enjoy their free time. Urban residents tend to seek informal micro-recreational activities that still provide social experiences and new sensations, which are commonly found in open-air culinary activities (Destanto, 2022).

When compared to other forms of recreation, the statement “Going to WTB provides entertainment equivalent to other forms of recreation” received a neutral response from the majority of respondents (63.3%), followed by those who agreed (33.3%) and those who disagreed (3.3%). This indicates that visitors' perceptions of WTB as a form of entertainment have not yet fully developed. However, the presence of street vendors in open spaces can support the recreational function of the city (Raharjo & Santoso, 2025).

The next statement, “I feel satisfied after visiting WTB,” received a positive response from half of the respondents (50%), with the rest neutral (46.7%) and one person disagreeing (3.3%). This indicates that the experience of being in a street food area like WTB leaves a positive impression, not only because of the food but also due to the atmosphere, social bustle, and sense of community. Public spaces revitalized by small and medium-sized street food businesses (SMEs) not only provide economic support but also enrich the social experience of the community, ultimately contributing to satisfaction and the desire to revisit (Rohmani & Mardiansjah, 2022).

The final statement, “I consider going to WTB as a form of alternative recreation,” received an evenly split response, with 50% agreeing and 50% neutral. This serves as evidence that the WTB area is generally accepted by the public as an alternative form of recreation, especially amid the space and time constraints faced by urban residents. Informal dining spaces in urban areas are not only understood as places for consumption but also as social spaces and alternative forms of entertainment for people seeking quick and simple recreation without the need to travel far or spend a lot of money (Rohmani & Mardiansjah, 2022).

The conclusion of this study is that the public's perception of street food activities in WTB as a form of recreation is quite positive. In line with this, one visitor (initials NN) commented, “This place is very crowded, the menu is varied, and the prices are affordable... It's really enjoyable here.” Another visitor (initials MA) stated, “It's enjoyable to relax and eat

here, there are many delicious snacks, the place is bustling, and the nighttime atmosphere is lively.” Finally, a customer review (initials AS) stated, “There are many types of exciting snacks and community entertainment here.” This area is beginning to be seen not only as a dining spot but also as a space for experiences, interactions, and light recreation accessible to various groups. This potential is important for city managers and the tourism sector to further develop so that WTB can emerge as an integrated and sustainable micro-recreational destination.

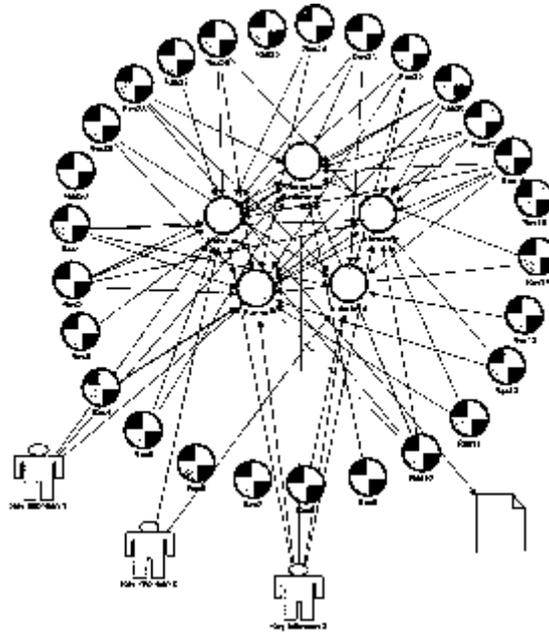


Figure 5. Concept Map of Visitor Perception

Factors that Influence Revisit Intention in WTB

Figure 6 illustrates the first statement, “I will visit WTB again because the food is delicious.” The majority of respondents were neutral (53.3%), and a small portion agreed (46.6%). This indicates that food quality cannot be used as an indicator of visitors’ willingness to return to WTB; events are another reason that drives visitors to come. The inconsistency in these responses, according to Wijaya & Soelaiman, (2023), is that “consumers’ interest in returning will increase if the taste of the food served meets consumers’ expectations.”

In addition, the statement “Affordable prices encourage me to return to WTB” was agreed upon by the majority of respondents (56.7%), while the minority remained neutral (43.3%). This data demonstrates that economic factors play a significant role in the decision to revisit, particularly in street food tourism known for its affordable prices. This aligns with findings that the main appeal of the informal sector, such as small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in street food, lies in their ability to offer affordable yet satisfying consumption alternatives, particularly for urban middle-to-lower-class communities (Oktapiani & Herawati, 2024).

Regarding the statement “The comfortable atmosphere makes me want to come back again,” most respondents chose neutral (60%), and the rest agreed (40%). This means that the atmosphere can make someone want to revisit WTB, even though it is not the main factor. This aligns with previous research stating that a comfortable atmosphere plays an important

role in the intention to revisit, but there are indicators that can alter the role of atmosphere, such as interior design (Gabriella & Facrurezza, 2024).

Regarding the statement, “Recommendations from close friends to visit WTB make me want to come back again,” the majority were neutral (56.7%), the rest agreed (40%), and disagreed (1%). This indicates that social influence in the form of word of mouth has an impact, but it is not the dominant factor in the decision to revisit WTB. Visitors are more influenced by personal experiences and direct factors. This aligns with previous research stating that recommending a destination encourages someone to revisit (Aruan, 2023).

The final statement, “Previous positive experiences encourage me to return to WTB,” received a neutral response from the majority of respondents (56.7%), with the remainder agreeing (40%) and disagreeing (3.3%). These findings indicate that past experiences are indeed one of the foundations for loyalty, but some things to consider are adding other facilities that can increase visitors' intentions to return (Wusko & Khoviyah, 2024).

Overall, these results indicate that the main factors driving repeat visits to WTB are delicious food and affordable prices.

These findings align with customer feedback (initials DA): “The ice cream is delicious and the prices are pocket-friendly.” Additionally, customer (initials WU) noted, “It’s more comfortable to stroll around and visit here because there are many street food stalls with prices that are still worth it.” These two factors effectively shape a simple yet strong recreational perception. Meanwhile, factors such as atmosphere, previous experiences, and social recommendations tend to be secondary supporting factors but do not fully determine the decision to revisit. Therefore, in developing a street food-based culinary tourism strategy, attention should be given to improving taste quality while maintaining affordability as the foundational capital for visitor retention.

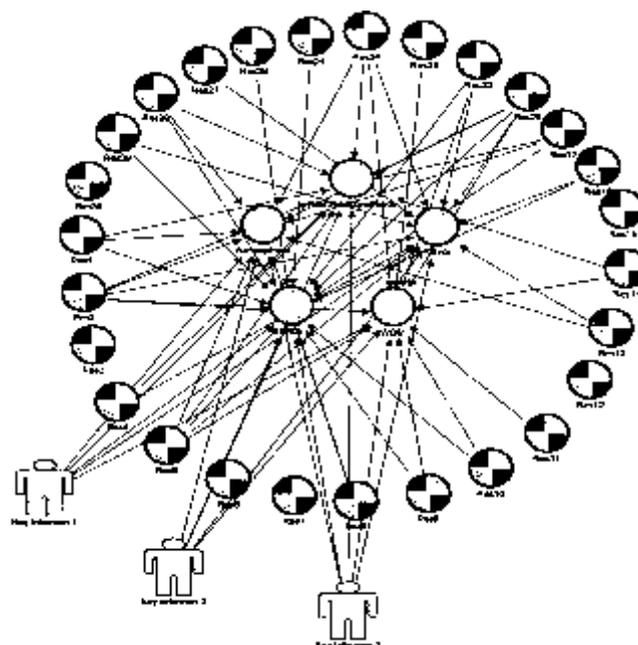


Figure 6. Concept Map of Revisit Intention Factors

Customer Experience Visiting WTB as a Recreation Activity

The results of the first statement, “I feel that visiting WTB is part of recreational activities,” were agreed upon by the majority of respondents (63.3%), while the minority chose neutral (36.7%). This finding suggests that street food activities at WTB are beginning to be understood as a form of recreation, as they provide social interaction. The social experiences that occur in open-air food spaces add value that often goes beyond mere eating, instead shaping perceptions of such activities as recreational outlets (Sutaguna et al., 2025).

The second statement, “I understand that recreation does not always have to be at a tourist spot, but can also be at a culinary spot,” received approval from the majority of respondents (76.7%), while a small minority remained neutral (23.3%). This indicates an expansion in society’s perception of the concept of recreation, which is no longer limited to formal tourist locations such as amusement parks or beaches, but can also be found in enjoyable daily activities like local culinary tourism. Urban residents are now beginning to view public spaces and informal activities like street food as alternative forms of recreation that are more flexible, affordable, and relevant to current needs (Afifah, 2025).

The third statement, “Street food market gives me a new experience in enjoying my free time,” also received positive responses from the majority of respondents (73.3%), with a minority remaining neutral (26.7%). This indicates that culinary experiences at WTB can provide a new dimension to leisure time, from the atmosphere, local food, to a more relaxed social environment. The study mentions that activities in public spaces involving SMEs and social interaction provide visitors with a unique experience and foster an emotional connection with the place (Siregar et al., 2024).

Regarding the statement “Visiting WTB makes me feel more relaxed and happy,” the majority of responses were neutral (60%), a minority agreed (36.7%), and one key informant opined (3.3%) “In my opinion, going with friends to enjoy street food in the WTB area makes us happy because we’re with friends and can chat while enjoying street food, which is different if there are no friends.” This means that while some visitors experience relaxation and joy while at WTB, the depth of this emotional experience varies. Interestingly, the personal opinions stated in the survey indicate that the presence of friends while enjoying food at WTB significantly influences levels of happiness and comfort, highlighting that social aspects are a crucial component in creating an optimal customer experience. This reinforces previous research findings emphasizing that comfort in public spaces stems not only from physical facilities but also from the social dynamics within them (Sugiyono & Dwianto, 2021).

Finally, the statement “This experience broadened my perspective on forms of recreation” was agreed upon by the majority of respondents (60%), with the remaining minority neutral (40%). Visits to WTB have provided educational and reflective value regarding the meaning of recreation, as visitors are no longer confined to conventional forms of recreation but are open to new experiences that may not have been previously considered. This perspective leads to a shift in societal thinking about recreation, from destination-based to experience-based (Fatmah et al., 2024).

The conclusion regarding customer experiences when visiting WTB as a form of recreation is positive and meaningful. Most respondents stated that visiting WTB provided

new experiences, broadened their understanding of recreation, and created a relaxed atmosphere and enjoyable social interaction. Factors such as taste, atmosphere, and social engagement play an important role in shaping this perception of recreation. Supported by customer statements (initials FA) "The place is fun, with lots of games for kids to play, or even adults, the food depends on what you choose," and (initials AS) "There are many kinds of cute snacks and community entertainment here." Therefore, future management of WTB can strengthen this recreational function by focusing on atmosphere, social interaction, and enriching visitors' experiences in a holistic manner.

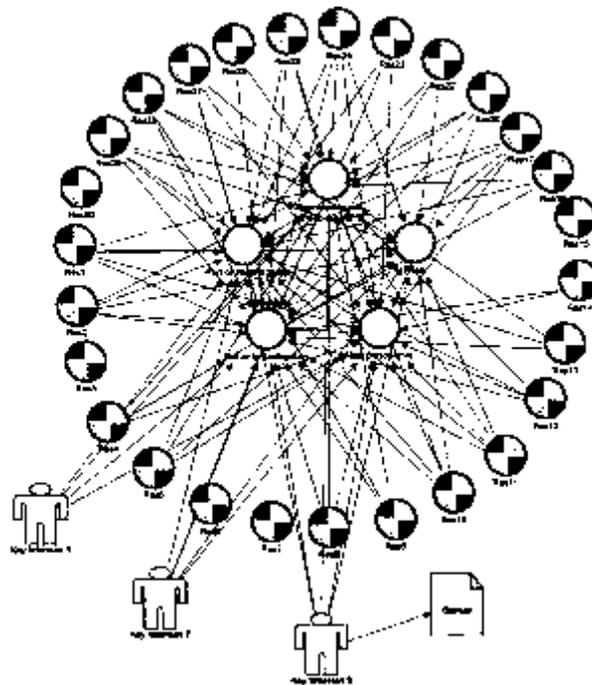


Figure 7. Concept Map of Customer Experience

Evaluation of Welcome to Batam from Sentiment Analysis

The author collected reviews of WTB Street Food Market from the past year because they were considered relevant (see Figure 8). In this method, reviews were categorized into three types (positive, negative, and neutral). A total of 41 reviews were analyzed through Google Reviews. The results showed 25 positive reviews, 13 negative reviews, and 3 neutral reviews. This directly indicates that satisfied visitors did not dominate the majority over the past year. Additionally, the increasing number of negative reviews over time indicates that improvements are needed in certain aspects.

One aspect that needs to be evaluated is security. Some visitors feel that security at WTB is still lacking, as evidenced by the following review: "This place isn't very good. When using the parking facilities, my helmet was stolen, but the security guard refused to take responsibility" or the review "There are many instances of extortion (in Indonesia called *pungli*) at this place." The above reviews indicate that the Batam City Government needs to take action to regulate and improve security within the WTB area. Additionally, the lack of appeal due to many vendors closing down has also been highlighted by visitors, as mentioned in the review: "This place has lost its appeal, both in terms of the hill views and the snacks available there. Unlike previous years, many vendors have also stopped selling there (closed)." These reviews reflect an overall decline in quality, both in terms of atmosphere,

food options, and the sustainability of business activities. This indication is important for WTB managers as part of suggestions for improving management strategies.

The Batam City Government is advised to immediately revitalize the street food center area that has lost its appeal, both in terms of scenery and culinary activities. Improvements in infrastructure, cleanliness, and area reorganization are essential to enhance visitor comfort. Support for vendors in the form of training, promotions, and business incentives should be provided to reignite their enthusiasm for selling. The government could also organize regular events such as culinary festivals and involve local communities to create a more vibrant atmosphere. These steps are expected to revive the area as a premier culinary tourism destination in Batam.

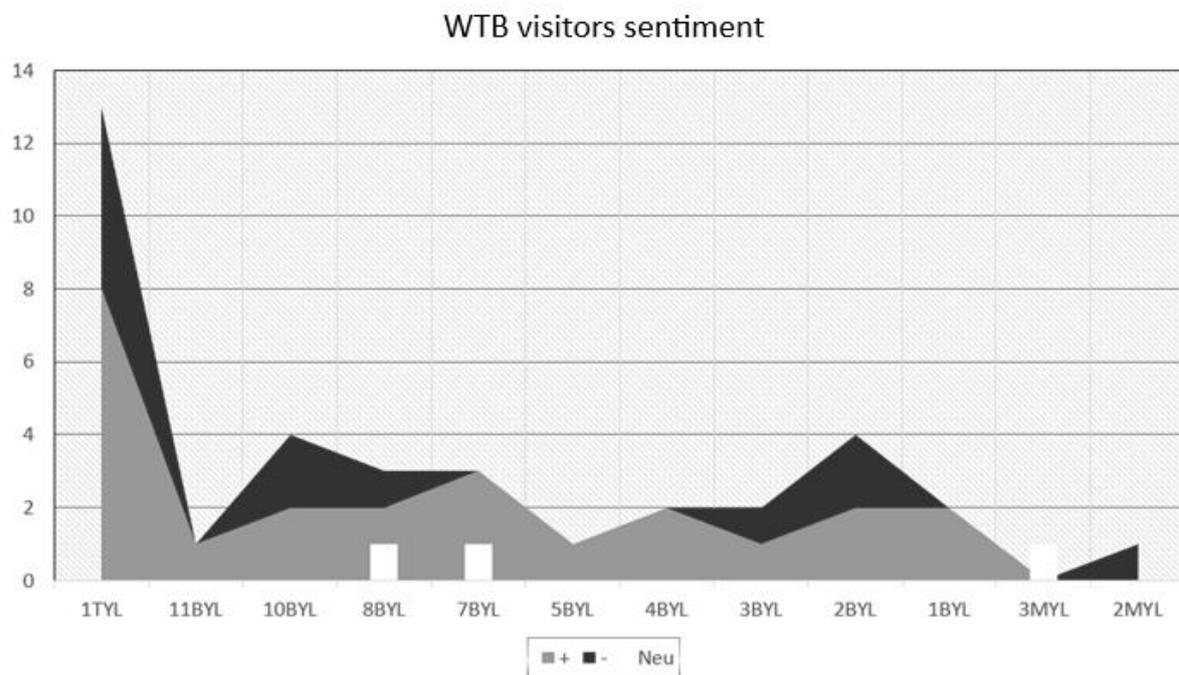


Figure 8. Sentiment Columnnt Chart of Recent Reviews
Note: TYL (year ago), BYL (month ago), MYL (week ago)

Conclusions

Culinary activities in the WTB area have a strong recreational value from the perspective of visitors. This positive perception is supported by the delicious taste of the food and the pocket-friendly prices, which are the main drivers of repeat visits. In addition, the social experience and relaxed atmosphere offered also strengthen its role as an alternative form of recreation for urban communities, especially the younger generation. Positive visitor experiences show that recreation does not have to be in the form of conventional tourism, but meaningful daily activities such as culinary tourism.

However, sentiment analysis shows the need for improvements to the aspects of security, comfort, and sustainability of trader activities. This evaluation is important input for local governments and area managers to improve the quality of facilities, support for MSMEs, and community-based promotion strategies so that WTB can develop into a sustainable and inclusive culinary recreation destination.

This study has several limitations. *First*, the number of respondents was limited to only 30 people, with the majority being young adult women. As a result, the findings tend to reflect this specific demographic and may not represent other segments such as families or professionals who also visit the Welcome to Batam (WTB) area. *Second*, there was a noticeable tendency among respondents to choose neutral responses to some statements. This may be because some respondents were unsure about the concept of recreation itself, leading to hesitation in expressing stronger opinions. This reduces the clarity of the data and limits the interpretation of visitor perceptions. Further research is recommended to use a larger and more diverse sample and adopt quantitative methods to explore in greater depth the relationships between variables such as cleanliness, satisfaction, loyalty, and recreational perceptions.

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