

A Study of Influencing Factors on Consumers' Repurchase and Social Sharing Intention: Mala Tang in Bangkok, Thailand

Mengling Zhang

International Chinese College, Rangsit University, Pathum Thani, Thailand
E-mail: wwwzmlxxn123@163.com

Abstract

This paper takes consumers of Mala Tang (a type of spicy hot pot) in Bangkok, Thailand, as the research object. Based on the S-O-R theory and expectation confirmation theory, it constructs a model of the influence of service quality, co-created experience, and cultural novelty on consumers' repurchase intention and social sharing intention. Consumer satisfaction is introduced as a mediating variable. A questionnaire survey was conducted to collect 306 valid samples, and SPSS and AMOS were used for empirical analysis. The results show that service quality, co-created experience, and cultural novelty all significantly and positively influence consumer satisfaction; consumer satisfaction has a significant positive driving effect on social sharing intention and repurchase intention; consumer satisfaction plays a partial mediating role among service quality, co-created experience, cultural novelty, and repurchase intention and social sharing intention, and the three factors synergistically influence consumers' behavioral intentions. This study fills a gap in overseas Mala Tang consumption research and provides empirical reference for Bangkok Mala Tang operators and the localization operation of Chinese catering overseas.

Keywords: *Bangkok, Mala Tang (Spicy Hot Pot), Repurchase Intention, Social Sharing Intention, Consumer Satisfaction*

1. Introduction

As trade ties between China and Thailand continue to deepen and Chinese restaurant brands enter the Southeast Asian market, Thailand has become one of the key regions for the expansion of Chinese cuisine abroad. Bangkok is home to a large number of international tourists, ethnic Chinese, and young locals. This multicultural environment provides fertile ground for the spread of foreign cuisines, and dining behaviors among Bangkok customers exhibit distinct characteristics. Local young customers maintain an open and exploratory attitude toward foreign culinary cultures. They obtain information about food through social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram and are eager to try new food categories. Furthermore, while this customer group seeks value for money, they also place importance on the dining experience, interactivity, and social value during meals.

"Mala Tang" is a street food originating from China. It is characterized by the ability to freely select ingredients and its affordable prices, making it highly popular among young people. Compared to traditional Chinese meals, the decision-making process for Mala Tang is quicker, and the dining experience is more interactive. The Thai-Chinese community and Chinese tourists form the core customer base for Mala Tang. They have a strong desire for authentic Chinese flavors, yet they also hope to find adapted versions that blend the tastes of home with local characteristics while living abroad. These characteristics collectively create a complex yet promising market environment for the growth of Mala Tang in Bangkok.

Most existing research has focused on relatively mature categories such as traditional Chinese cuisine or hot pot, while empirical analyses of the Mala Tang subcategory remain scarce. Particularly in overseas settings, no comprehensive conclusions have been reached regarding the underlying mechanisms of which factors influence customers' repurchase decisions. This study examines customers of mala tang in Bangkok, Thailand. Based on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) theory and the Theory of Expectation Confirmation, we construct a model to examine the effects of service quality, co-creation experiences, and cultural novelty on customers' repurchase intentions and Social Sharing Intention, with customer satisfaction serving as a mediating variable. The specific research addresses the following key questions:

RQ1: What effects do service quality, co-creation experiences, and cultural novelty have on customer satisfaction with spicy hot pot in Bangkok?

RQ2: What effects does customer satisfaction have on repurchase intention and social sharing intention, respectively?

RQ3: Does customer satisfaction mediate the relationship between service quality, co-creation experiences, and cultural novelty, and repurchase intention?

RQ4: Does customer satisfaction mediate the relationship between service quality, co-creation experiences, and cultural novelty, and social sharing intention?

2. Objectives

Based on the above research questions, the objectives of this study are as follows:

- 1) To understand the characteristics of the customer base and basic consumption patterns in Bangkok's "Mala Tang" market.
- 2) To develop a research model to examine whether customers are willing to make repeat purchases and recommend the product on social media, the influence of such recommendations on social media, and whether social sharing affects the intention to repurchase. Additionally, to clarify the interactions among these various influencing factors.
- 3) Through empirical research, identify the factors that encourage customers to become repeat customers and the factors that lead to dissatisfaction. Clarify the mechanisms and effects underlying these dissatisfaction factors.
- 4) Summarize the data findings and, based on the research conclusions, provide recommendations for store optimization and the localization of Chinese cuisine.

3. Literature Review

1) Main Effect Hypothesis

Service quality is the core competitive advantage in the restaurant industry. It is not a single, isolated factor, but rather a combination of interactive experiences, process efficiency, cultural empathy, and cultural adaptability. Unlike in domestic customer markets, service quality for overseas customers of Chinese cuisine involves additional challenges related to communication and specific needs.

In a 2024 study, Martínez-Ruiz, M. and Jiménez-Zarco, A.I. found that national cultural differences moderate the relationship between service quality and satisfaction in multinational fast-food chains. Research on Asian restaurants in the European market indicates that efficient ordering systems, clear pickup procedures, and flexible payment options are key factors in shaping customers' positive perceptions of service quality, which directly translate into a satisfying experience. In an international market environment, service consistency and stability are key determinants of customer satisfaction. Karunaratne (2025) noted that food quality, customer service, and dining atmosphere are the most critical factors influencing customers' restaurant experiences. Additionally, factors such as service speed, pricing levels, food variety, the extent of technology adoption, accessibility, and the availability of Finnish-language service were frequently cited by customers as important considerations. Service quality is a fundamental prerequisite for customer satisfaction in the food service industry, with its influence spanning the entire process from pre-dining reservation experiences to post-dining feedback. Research has also found that the strength of service quality's impact on satisfaction varies across different dining formats (fast food, casual dining, and fine dining) (Phan & Nguyen, 2022). These include multidimensional service quality, emotional interaction, cultural transmission, operational reliability, and content tailored to local culture. Together, these elements form a fundamental framework of overseas customers' needs and collectively drive their overall satisfaction. As a typical representative of the chain restaurant industry, the "Mala Tang" brand faces significant variations in operational standards across different outlets, which can substantially impact customers' perceived experience and directly influence the shaping of the brand image. Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Service quality has a significant positive impact on customer satisfaction

Co-creation experiences involve customers making independent decisions — such as selecting ingredients, choosing soup bases, and adjusting spice levels and flavors — to customize their meals. This consumption model offers a high degree of engagement and flexibility. From a psychological perspective, the co-creation process is essentially a DIY creative process. This sense of participation significantly influences customers' emotional experiences and evaluations, thereby affecting their overall satisfaction.

Meeprom et al. (2023) found that customers' active participation in co-creation behaviors — such as selection and pairing — significantly enhances experience evaluations and satisfaction levels. In a study examining the long-term impact of self-service technology in the fast-food industry on customer co-creation experiences and satisfaction, Park and Cho (2025) found that the ease of use and sense of control provided by self-service

technology significantly enhanced customers' co-creation experiences. Furthermore, these co-creation experiences had a sustained positive impact on satisfaction, with this effect being particularly pronounced among younger customers. Focusing on customers' "co-creation experiences" in self-service restaurants, it was found that co-creation experiences have a significant positive impact on customer satisfaction, and that satisfaction fully mediates the relationship between co-creation experiences and repurchase intention (Lee & Kim, 2025). The study emphasizes that when customers perceive greater autonomy in selection and personalized combinations, their satisfaction and return rates increase significantly. Taking hot pot restaurants as an example, co-creation experiences influence brand loyalty through a chain of mediation involving customer satisfaction and emotional attachment. Customer participation behaviors, such as selecting ingredients and seasoning combinations, significantly enhance satisfaction, which in turn strengthens emotional attachment and repurchase intention (Zhao & Liu, 2024). Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Co-creation experiences have a significant positive impact on customer satisfaction.

Cultural novelty refers to the sense of novelty customers experience when encountering unfamiliar cultures. A study of Chinese tourists traveling in Southeast Asia to examine how cultural novelty experienced while dining at Chinese restaurants in foreign countries affects their satisfaction and Social Sharing Intention. The study found that cultural novelty not only directly and positively influences satisfaction but also indirectly affects sharing intention through satisfaction. (Wong & Lin, 2025). The study specifically noted that the restaurant's Chinese-style decor, self-service model, and distinctive seasonings are key touchpoints that generate a sense of novelty. In the context of ethnic restaurants, the study examined the effects of cultural novelty and perceived authenticity on repurchase intention. The results indicate that cultural novelty positively influences perceived authenticity, which in turn indirectly affects repurchase intention through customer satisfaction (Chen & Huang, 2024). Additionally, cultural openness positively moderates the relationship between cultural novelty and satisfaction.

Based on the SOR theoretical model, A systematic analysis of innovation models for cultural and creative products from four perspectives: functional attributes, visual design, service experience, and cultural connotations. (Yang, 2024). The study found that, within this four-dimensional indicator system, the link between innovation in cultural connotations and customer willingness to purchase is the most pronounced, and this link is achieved through the intermediary process of recognizing the value of innovation. This study reveals the foundational role of cultural innovation in customer decision-making. Building on this, it uses Mihoyo as a case study to explore the impact of cultural innovation on customer purchase intent. The analysis indicates that cultural innovation encompasses four main aspects: product design, brand image building, marketing strategy optimization, and customer experience enhancement. These four aspects can significantly strengthen customers' perceived innovation capabilities, thereby prompting them to make purchases, with perceived innovation capabilities playing a fully mediating role. These research findings enrich the theoretical framework in this field and provide empirical support for understanding how cultural innovation translates into customer demand. The study also found that customers' novel experiences with foreign cultures can stimulate emotional resonance and a desire for exploration, thereby enhancing overall experience quality and satisfaction. This uniqueness satisfies customers' curiosity and has a positive impact on their intention to return and their willingness to recommend the establishment. When customers visit a themed restaurant and encounter distinctive elements, their sense of novelty is activated, thereby enhancing their memories of the dining experience and leading to more positive evaluations. Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Cultural novelty has a significant positive impact on customer satisfaction.

In the context of dining, social sharing refers to the behavior of customers sharing their dining experiences through social media platforms (such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and Xiaohongshu). This includes posting photos of food, writing reviews, visiting restaurants recommended by influencers, and taking photos. This behavior serves as an extension of the dining experience and is an important way for customers to participate in brand promotion and marketing.

In their 2024 study, Li and Wu examined the willingness to share experiences on social media in the context of culinary tourism and found that customer dining satisfaction is the strongest antecedent driving social media sharing. Furthermore, extroversion and narcissistic personality traits were found to strengthen the positive relationship between satisfaction and the willingness to share. This study directly validated the core hypothesis that "customer satisfaction positively influences the intention to share on social media" and noted that sharing behavior is particularly active in foreign dining contexts. Using overseas Korean restaurants as the research

subject, the study found that customers' perception of the "cultural novelty" of Korean cuisine significantly and positively influenced their overall dining satisfaction, and this satisfaction further drove positive word-of-mouth and the intention to share on social media. Suh and Lee (2024). The greater the cultural distance, the stronger the effect of novelty. This finding supports the path of cultural novelty → satisfaction → social sharing. In his classic study in EWOM, Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) proposed that customers who are satisfied after consumption are more willing to share their experiences on online platforms and social channels, and through these shared experiences, they find others who share similar feelings to engage in discussion. This serves as a crucial prerequisite for the generation of positive word-of-mouth. In a study of pet-friendly restaurants, Li et al. (2025) found that "the atmosphere of interaction between pets and humans, along with the animals' gentle and friendly demeanor, can significantly enhance customers' overall goodwill and satisfaction, while also positively motivating customers to actively share their experiences and check-ins on social media." From this, it can be seen that the key elements of an experience that stimulate customer sharing behavior can also serve as important criteria for evaluating the quality of a store's service. Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Customer satisfaction has a significant positive impact on social sharing

Repurchase intention, also known as the repurchase rate, refers to the probability that a customer will return to a store when satisfied; this can also be referred to as the word-of-mouth effect. This effect is positively correlated with brand loyalty. Zeithaml (1996) proposed that customers' willingness to make a second purchase is primarily reflected in whether they will actually repurchase the product and recommend it to others. Kim and Song (2025) applied Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT) to the food delivery platform context, confirming that the degree of expectation confirmation (i.e., the consistency between actual experience and expectations) significantly and positively influences satisfaction, and that satisfaction, in turn, significantly and positively influences repurchase intention. Rajput and Gahfoor (2020) found in a study of the food service industry that the quality of service determines whether customers return. Friendly service not only satisfies customers but also significantly increases their willingness to return to the establishment. It should be noted that the core logic of ECT encompasses the complete pathway of 'expectation → confirmation → satisfaction → behavioral intention'. This study focuses on the latter half of the ECT framework—specifically, the relationship between satisfaction and behavioral intention—while treating the three antecedent variables (service quality, co-creation experience, and cultural novelty) as factors that influence consumers' perceived confirmation and subsequent satisfaction. This approach is consistent with prior research that has extended ECT by incorporating additional antecedent variables to better explain specific consumption contexts.

The study also found that customer satisfaction plays a full mediating role between brand equity and repurchase intention—brand equity cannot be effectively converted into repurchase behavior without satisfaction. Wibowo and Pujiati (2025) argues that brand image can significantly enhance customer favorability, and the more satisfied customers are, the more willing they are to return. A study of local restaurants in the Philippines found that satisfaction among dine-in customers was significantly higher than among buffet and banquet customers. High satisfaction leads to high repurchase intention, with staff competence, friendliness, and a clean environment being the key drivers of satisfaction (Karunaratne, 2025). Based on the above theoretical foundation, it can be concluded that in the local market, the higher the customer satisfaction with a store, the greater the likelihood of repeat visits. This fully demonstrates that satisfaction is a key factor influencing customer repurchase behavior.

H5: Customer satisfaction has a significant positive impact on repurchase intention.

2) Hypotheses on Mediating Effects

Gómez and Martín (2025) validated a full mediating model in a casual fast-food restaurant setting, demonstrating that food quality influences repurchase intention through customer satisfaction. The study found that food freshness, taste consistency, and variety were the strongest predictors of satisfaction, with satisfaction explaining up to 58% of the variance in repurchase intention. Additionally, the study found that customer price sensitivity mediates the strength of the satisfaction-to-repurchase intention relationship.

In the consumption context of spicy hot pot in Bangkok, external factors such as service quality, interactive co-creation experiences, and the degree of cultural innovation influence customers' psychological perceptions by acting upon the process of forming and confirming customer expectations, thereby prompting them to make purchasing decisions and engage in social sharing. Within this research framework, satisfaction serves as a cognitive mediating variable, acting as a bridge between service quality, co-creation of value, and cultural distinctiveness, thereby influencing customer behavior. These exogenous variables influence repeat purchase

intentions and brand recommendation behavior by affecting the expectation-confirmation model, and satisfaction also serves as an indicator reflecting the aforementioned multi-stimulus effects.

Based on the above analysis, this study proposes the following mediation hypotheses:

- H6a: Customer satisfaction mediates the positive effect of service quality on repurchase intention.
- H6b: Customer satisfaction mediates the positive effect of co-creation experience on repurchase intention.
- H6c: Customer satisfaction mediates the positive effect of cultural novelty on repurchase intention.
- H6d: Customer satisfaction mediates the positive effect of service quality on social sharing.
- H6e: Customer satisfaction mediates the positive effect of co-creation experience on social sharing.
- H6f: Customer satisfaction mediates the positive effect of cultural novelty on social sharing.

This study draws upon the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) theory proposed by Mehrabian and Russell in 1974, Oliver's (1980) Expectation Confirmation Theory, and existing research on repeat purchasing behavior in the food and beverage industry, the localization of multinational brands, and cultural integration to analyze the key factors influencing customer repeat purchase intentions within the Thai Mala Tang market environment and to construct a theoretical model. Among these, Wang, Y. and Zhao, L. (2024), building upon the SOR theory and using themed restaurants as a case study, pointed out that the three dimensions of service quality—responsiveness, empathy, and tangibility—have a significant indirect impact on customers' impulse to share. In this context, customer satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between service quality and social sharing. These findings directly support the hypothesis in this study that service quality → satisfaction → social sharing, validating the applicability of the SOR framework in the food and beverage context.

This study includes three independent variables: service quality, co-creation experience, and cultural novelty; The dependent variables are repurchase intention and social sharing intention. customer satisfaction is treated as a mediating variable. The research framework is illustrated in Figure 1.

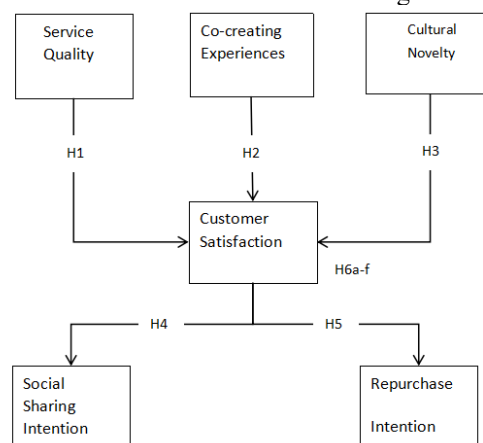


Figure 1 Research Framework

4. Materials and Methods

4.1 Research Methodology

Quantitative Analysis: Empirical research was conducted using SPSS 26.0. Based on the hypotheses proposed in this study, appropriate data analysis methods were selected to carry out the research. First, invalid questionnaires were excluded, and reliability and validity analyses were performed. The reliability analysis primarily examined whether the questionnaire responses were inconsistent and assessed the scientific validity of the questionnaire design. Next, exploratory factor analysis was performed to examine the reasonableness of the item dimensions and the latent factor structure, using empirical analysis to test the validity of the theoretical grouping hypotheses. The KMO coefficient and Bartlett's sphericity test were used to determine the suitability of the data for factor analysis. Principal component analysis was then employed to extract factors. Items with low loadings (e.g., below 0.5) or those exhibiting cross-dimensional characteristics were revised and selected to enhance the scale's reliability and validity. This is followed by confirmatory factor analysis. This step primarily examines the fit between the hypothesized factor structure and the observed data, analyzes the consistency of items under the same concept, and evaluates the items' effectiveness in distinguishing between different respondent groups. Finally, structural equation modeling (SEM) is performed to test Hypotheses H1 – H5 (direct effects of independent variables, satisfaction, and dependent variables). The Bootstrap method or hierarchical

regression analysis is used to test the significance of interaction terms. If interactions are significant, the direction and strength of the mediating effects are further analyzed. Finally, mediation analysis is conducted to verify whether the mediating variables (Hypotheses H6a – H6f) exert a mediating effect.

4.2 Research Instruments

In this study, the SOR model provides a clear analytical framework. Specifically, the Stimulus (S) component corresponds to the three independent variables in this study: service quality, co-creation experience, and cultural novelty. The Organism (O) component corresponds to the mediating variable — customer satisfaction—which represents the internal psychological state and overall evaluation generated by customers after receiving external stimuli. The Response (R) component corresponds to two dependent variables: repurchase intention and social sharing intention. Through this framework, we can clearly trace the complete psychological pathway from specific external experiences to changes in internal psychological processes, and ultimately to behavioral intentions.

This study primarily collected the required research data through the distribution of questionnaires, which were designed based on the research model and relevant literature. Building upon established scales, the questionnaire was localized to the Thai hot pot consumption context to ensure content validity and reliability. The questionnaire employs a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree).

4.3 Research Participants and Data Collection

The participants selected for this study were individuals in the Bangkok area of Thailand who had experience consuming “Mala Tang,” including local Thai customers, Chinese customers residing in Thailand, and foreign customers. In the following questions, the term “restaurant” does not refer to any specific Mala Tang restaurant; it simply refers to the Mala Tang restaurants where the respondents had previously dined.

The survey was primarily distributed to individuals who have consumed Mala Tang in Thailand via online platforms. After data collection and organization, a total of 306 valid responses were obtained through statistical analysis. Women accounted for 65.03% of the sample, men accounted for 21.90%, and the remaining 13.07% preferred not to disclose their gender. The age distribution was as follows: 18-25 years old (48.03%), 26-30 years old (30.07%), 31-40 years old (21.90%), and over 40 years old (0%). The primary educational level was a bachelor’s degree (38.89%). However, the sample exhibits certain demographic imbalances: approximately 78% of respondents were aged 18 – 30, and no respondents were older than 40. Data were collected via online convenience sampling through social media platforms and online communities targeting individuals with prior Mala Tang consumption experience in the Bangkok metropolitan area. Respondents were screened based on self-reported Mala Tang dining experience in Thailand. These sampling limitations should be acknowledged when interpreting the generalizability of the findings.

5. Results and Discussion

This study employed multiple methods to ensure that the research results possess high reliability and validity. The scale consists of six dimensions, with independent variables including service quality, co-creation experience, and cultural novelty; the primary mediating variable is customer satisfaction; and the dependent variables are repurchase intention and social sharing intention. The scale comprises 24 specific items.

The Cronbach’s α coefficients for all six dimensions exceed 0.8. See Table 1 for details. The scale demonstrates good internal consistency, as well as strong construct validity and measurement validity, effectively capturing the concepts under investigation and the relationships among the various dimensions.

Table 1 Summary of Reliability Analysis

Variable	Cronbach’s α	Number of items
Quality of Service	0.823	4
Co-creating Experiences	0.856	4
Cultural Novelty	0.856	4
Customer Satisfaction	0.853	4
Social Sharing Intention	0.847	4
Repurchase Intention	0.863	4

To assess the suitability of factor analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) statistic and Bartlett's sphericity test were conducted; the results are summarized in Table 2. The overall KMO value for the scale was 0.904 (>0.7), and the approximate chi-square value for Bartlett's sphericity test was 3634.612, with degrees of freedom (df) = 276 and a p-value of <0.001 . The results of both tests collectively support the use of exploratory factor analysis, providing a solid statistical foundation for subsequent factor extraction and model construction.

Table 2 Summary of KMO and Bartlett's test

KMO	0.904
approximate chi-square	3634.612
Bartlett's test of sphericity	Degrees of freedom
	276
	significance
	0.000

To further examine the construct validity of the scale, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted on the six latent variables. The model fit results are presented in Table 3. As shown by the data, $\chi^2/df = 1.205$, which meets the ideal standard of being less than 3; RMSEA = 0.026 and SRMR = 0.040, both of which are below the critical values, indicating that the overall model error is small; the relative fit indices CFI = 0.986 and NFI = 0.924 both exceeded the cutoff threshold of 0.9. All fit indices met the standards generally accepted in academic research, indicating that the measurement model in this study fits well, the relationships between the observed variables and their corresponding latent variables are reasonable, the scale possesses good construct validity, and the results of subsequent empirical analyses are reliable.

Table 3 Summary of Confirmatory Factor Analysis Model Results

Common Metrics	χ^2/df	RMSEA	CFI	NFI	SRMR
Criteria	<3	<0.10	>0.9	>0.9	<0.1
value	1.205	0.026	0.986	0.924	0.04

Based on the model fit meeting the criteria, we proceeded to examine the scale's construct validity. The results are shown in Table 4: The composite reliability (CR) values for each latent variable were all above 0.7, indicating good internal consistency of the scale; the observed variables converged stably on their corresponding latent variables, demonstrating excellent composite reliability. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were all above 0.5, indicating ideal convergent validity overall. The combined use of CR and AVE as dual indicators confirms that the questionnaire scale possesses good convergent validity. The internal cohesion within each dimension is high, and the items effectively reflect the connotations of their corresponding latent variables. The measurement results are stable and reliable, and all indicators meet the requirements for academic research. This step further validates the high quality of the scale, the rationality of the model structure, and its ability to accurately distinguish between different dimensions of perception.

Table 4 Summary of AVE and CR Results for the Model

Factor	AVE	CR
Quality of Service	0.538	0.823
Co-creating Experiences	0.602	0.858
Cultural Novelty	0.594	0.854
Customer Satisfaction	0.598	0.856
Social Sharing Intention	0.582	0.847
Repurchase Intention	0.612	0.863

This study employed a comparison of the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) with the correlation coefficients of the variables to test the scale's discriminant validity; the results are shown in Table 5. The square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each latent variable was greater than the correlation coefficient between that variable and other dimensions, and the correlation coefficients between variables were all statistically significant at the 0.01 level. This indicates that the six latent variables have clear conceptual boundaries, there is no significant overlap between dimensions, and the scale demonstrates ideal discriminant validity. Based on the combined results of reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity, it can be concluded that the questionnaire used in this study is of high overall quality and is suitable for structural equation modeling analysis.

Table 5 Summary of Variable Correlation Matrices and Discriminant Validity

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Service Quality	0.733					
Co-creating Experiences	0.378**	0.776				
Cultural Novelty	0.350**	0.320**	0.771			
Customer Satisfaction	0.351**	0.386**	0.359**	0.773		
Social Sharing Intention	0.335**	0.359**	0.387**	0.452**	0.763	
Repurchase Intention	0.462**	0.387**	0.394**	0.420**	0.476**	0.783

Significantly correlated at the 0.05 level (two-tailed); ** Significantly correlated at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

Since all data in this study were obtained through self-reports from respondents at the same time point, common method bias may be present. To address this, we employed Harman's one-factor test and conducted an unrotated factor analysis on all 24 measurement items. The results showed that the first principal factor explained 33.966% of the variance, which is below the critical threshold of 40%. This indicates that there is no severe common method bias in this study and that the data quality is reliable. Structural equation modeling analysis may therefore proceed.

Based on the confirmation that the measurement tool is reliable and the data show no significant bias, a comprehensive structural equation model was constructed according to the theoretical framework. The overall model fit results are shown in Table 6. The χ^2/df ratio is 1.542, with RMSEA and SRMR both within reasonable ranges, and CFI and NFI both greater than 0.9. This indicates that the theoretical model in this study has a high degree of fit with the actual survey data, and the model framework is scientifically sound and reasonable.

Table 6 Summary of Overall Model Fit Results

Common Metrics	χ^2/df	RMSEA	CFI	NFI	SRMR
Criteria	<3	<0.10	>0.9	>0.9	<0.10
value	1.542	0.042	0.962	0.900	0.081

Testing of Main Effects

Since all model fit indices meet academic standards, this indicates that the theoretical framework constructed in this study aligns well with the actual survey data. This study utilized AMOS 24.0 software to construct a structural equation model (SEM). Given that the overall model fit met the required standards, path coefficients between variables were further estimated to conduct empirical tests of the research hypotheses H1 – H5 proposed earlier. Detailed results are shown in Table 7.

In structural equation modeling, the general criteria for determining path significance are: Z-value > 1.96 and $p < 0.05$, indicating that the path is statistically significant; a positive standardized regression coefficient β indicates a positive relationship between variables. Based on the data in the table above, the following analysis of each hypothesis is provided:

Regarding the path from service quality to customer satisfaction ($\beta = 0.229$, $Z = 3.201 > 1.96$, $p < 0.001$), this indicates that the path is highly significant. Higher service quality leads to higher customer satisfaction. This proves that service quality has a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction, and Hypothesis H1 is supported;

Regarding the path from co-creation experience to customer satisfaction ($\beta = 0.283$, $Z = 4.121 > 1.96$, $p < 0.001$), the statistical results are highly significant. This indicates that the better the co-creation experience during the consumption process, the higher the customer satisfaction, and Hypothesis H2 is supported;

Regarding the path from cultural novelty to customer satisfaction ($\beta = 0.285$, $Z = 4.184 > 1.96$, $p < 0.001$), the path is significant. This indicates that cultural novelty can effectively enhance customer satisfaction and has the strongest influence among the three antecedent variables, Hypothesis H3 is supported;

Regarding the path from customer satisfaction to Social Sharing Intention ($\beta = 0.596$, $Z = 8.523 > 1.96$, $p < 0.001$), the results are extremely significant. This indicates that the higher the customer satisfaction, the stronger the customer's willingness to actively engage in social sharing, Hypothesis H4 is supported;

Regarding the path from customer satisfaction to repurchase intention ($\beta = 0.564$, $Z = 8.170 > 1.96$, $p < 0.001$), the results are highly significant. This proves that high satisfaction significantly enhances customers' repurchase Intention, Hypothesis H5 is supported;

Table 7 Regression of Structural Model Path Estimates

Hypothesized Path	β	S.E.	z	p
Service Quality $\rightarrow$ Customer Satisfaction	0.229	0.076	3.201	<0.001
Co-creating Experiences $\rightarrow$ Customer Satisfaction	0.283	0.065	4.121	<0.001
Cultural Novelty $\rightarrow$ Customer Satisfaction	0.285	0.074	4.184	<0.001
Customer Satisfaction $\rightarrow$ social sharing Intention	0.596	0.078	8.523	<0.001
Customer Satisfaction $\rightarrow$ repurchase Intention	0.564	0.075	8.17	<0.001

Mediating Effect Tests

The mediating effects of customer satisfaction were examined using the Bootstrap method (5,000 resamples, 95% confidence intervals) via AMOS 24.0. A mediating effect is statistically significant if the 95% confidence interval (CI) does not contain zero. Specifically, partial mediation is confirmed when both the direct effect ($X \rightarrow Y$) and the indirect effect ($X \rightarrow M \rightarrow Y$) are significant; full mediation is confirmed when only the indirect effect is significant and the direct effect is not. The results are reported in Table 8.

Based on the results of the Bootstrap mediation analysis, Hypotheses H6a–H6f are analyzed individually as follows:

H6a: The indirect effect of service quality on repurchase intention through customer satisfaction is 0.129 ($\beta = 0.229 \times 0.564$), with a 95% confidence interval of [0.068, 0.203]. Since the interval does not include 0, the mediation effect is significant. At the same time, the direct effect of service quality on repurchase intention is also significant. According to the criteria for judging mediation effects, when both the indirect and direct effects are significant, it indicates that customer satisfaction plays a partial mediating role between service quality and repurchase intention. Service quality can not only directly enhance customers' repurchase intention but also indirectly promote repeat consumption behavior by improving customer satisfaction. Therefore, Hypothesis H6a is supported.

H6b: The indirect effect of co-creation experience on repurchase intention through customer satisfaction is 0.160 ($\beta = 0.283 \times 0.564$), with a 95% confidence interval of [0.092, 0.245]. Since the interval does not include 0, the mediating effect is significant; its direct effect is also statistically significant. These results indicate that the co-creation experience influences repurchase intention through two pathways: first, by directly stimulating customers' desire to repurchase; and second, by enhancing consumption pleasure and satisfaction, thereby further reinforcing repurchase intention, with customer satisfaction exhibiting partial mediating characteristics in this context. Therefore, Hypothesis H6b is supported.

H6c: The indirect effect of cultural novelty on repurchase intention through customer satisfaction is 0.161 ($\beta = 0.285 \times 0.564$), with a 95% confidence interval of [0.095, 0.248]. Since the interval does not include zero, the mediating effect is significant; the corresponding direct effect is also statistically significant. This indicates that cultural novelty not only directly influences customers' repeat purchase decisions but also forms an indirect transmission pathway through customer satisfaction, with customer satisfaction acting as a partial mediator in this context. Therefore, Hypothesis H6c is supported.

H6d: The indirect effect of service quality on social sharing intention through customer satisfaction is 0.136 ($\beta = 0.229 \times 0.596$), with a 95% confidence interval of [0.072, 0.215]. Since the interval does not include 0, the mediation effect is significant. Meanwhile, the direct effect of service quality on social sharing intention is also significant, indicating that customer satisfaction plays a partial mediating role between service quality and social sharing intention. High-quality service not only directly motivates customers to share their dining experiences but also enhances sharing intention by improving satisfaction. Therefore, Hypothesis H6d is supported.

H6e: The indirect effect of co-creation experience on social sharing intention through customer satisfaction is 0.169 ($\beta = 0.283 \times 0.596$), with a 95% confidence interval of [0.098, 0.258]. Since the interval does not include 0, the mediating effect is significant; its direct effect is also statistically significant. These findings suggest that the interactive and personalized co-creation experience can directly drive social sharing intention, and also indirectly promote sharing behavior by enhancing customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction exhibits partial mediating characteristics in this pathway. Therefore, Hypothesis H6e is supported.

H6f: The indirect effect of cultural novelty on social sharing intention through customer satisfaction is 0.170 ($\beta = 0.285 \times 0.596$), with a 95% confidence interval of [0.101, 0.261]. Since the interval does not include zero, the mediating effect is significant; the corresponding direct effect is also statistically significant. This indicates that cultural novelty not only directly stimulates customers' willingness to share unique dining experiences but also forms an indirect transmission pathway through customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction acts as a partial

mediator in this context. Therefore, Hypothesis H6f is supported. Combining the data for all six mediation pathways, both the indirect and direct effects are statistically significant, proving that customer satisfaction exhibits a partial mediating effect overall between the three antecedent variables (service quality, co-creation experience, cultural novelty) and the two outcome variables (repurchase intention and social sharing intention). Among the mediation pathways, the indirect effects of cultural novelty and co-creation experience are relatively stronger, indicating that experiential and cultural factors exert their influence on behavioral intentions more prominently through the satisfaction mechanism.

Table 8 Summary of Mediating Effects Analysis

Effect Type	Effect size	Boot standard error	95%confidence interval
Service Quality→Repurchase Intention (Total Effect)	0.404	0.042	[0.214,0.378]
Direct effect	0.275	0.043	[0.191,0.359]
Indirect effects(through customer satisfaction)	0.129	0.034	[0.068, 0.203]
Co-creation Experience→Repurchase Intention (Total Effect)	0.278	0.041	[0.064,0.224]
Direct Effect	0.118	0.042	[0.036,0.200]
Indirect effects(through customer satisfaction)	0.160	0.039	[0.092, 0.245]
Cultural Novelty→Repurchase intention (Total Effect)	0.299	0.043	[0.074,0.242]
Direct effect	0.138	0.044	[0.052,0.224]
Indirect effects (through customer satisfaction)	0.161	0.039	[0.095, 0.248]
Service Quality→Social Sharing Intention (Total Effect)	0.321	0.047	[0.226, 0.416]
Direct effect	0.185	0.048	[0.09, 0.28]
Indirect effects(through customer satisfaction)	0.136	0.036	[0.072, 0.215]
Co-creation Experience→Social Sharing Intention (Total Effect)	0.347	0.047	[0.252, 0.442]
Direct effect	0.178	0.048	[0.083, 0.273]
Indirect effects(through customer satisfaction)	0.169	0.041	[0.098, 0.258]
Cultural Novelty→Social Sharing Intention (Total Effect)	0.375	0.047	[0.28, 0.47]
Direct effect	0.205	0.048	[0.11, 0.3]
Indirect effects(through customer satisfaction)	0.170	0.041	[0.101, 0.261]

Customer satisfaction acts as a mediator between service quality, co-creation experiences, cultural novelty, and repurchase intention and social sharing. Therefore, all of the previous research hypotheses—H6a, H6b, H6c, H6d, H6e, and H6f—are supported. At the same time, the results also indicate that service quality, co-creation experiences, and cultural novelty can directly influence customer behavior. Higher service quality increases the likelihood of repeat purchases, while a stronger sense of cultural novelty leads to higher repurchase intentions and a greater Social Sharing Intention. The more innovative the co-creation experience, the higher the customer satisfaction, and the more likely customers are to provide positive reviews.

Based on the above research and after extensive review of relevant literature, the proposed hypotheses were empirically tested. All hypotheses were supported and proven to hold true:

Table 9 Summary of research hypothesis results

Hypothesis	Hypothesis Content	Test Result
H1	Service quality has a significant positive impact on customer satisfaction	Supported
H2	Co-creation experiences have a significant positive impact on customer satisfaction	Supported
H3	Cultural novelty has a significant positive impact on customer satisfaction	Supported

Hypothesis	Hypothesis Content	Test Result
H4	Customer satisfaction has a significant positive impact on social sharing Intention.	Supported
H5	Customer satisfaction has a significant positive impact on repurchase intention.	Supported
H6a	Customer satisfaction mediates the positive effect of service quality on repurchase intention.	Supported
H6b	Customer satisfaction mediates the positive effect of co-creation experience on repurchase intention.	Supported
H6c	Customer satisfaction mediates the positive effect of cultural novelty on repurchase intention.	Supported
H6d	Customer satisfaction mediates the positive effect of service quality on social sharing.	Supported
H6e	Customer satisfaction mediates the positive effect of co-creation experience on social sharing.	Supported
H6f	Customer satisfaction mediates the positive effect of cultural novelty on social sharing.	Supported

6. Conclusion

This study focused on customers in Bangkok who have experienced spicy hot pot, and established an overall research framework by integrating the SOR theory and the Theory of Expectation and Confirmation. A total of 306 valid samples were collected through online questionnaire distribution. First, reliability and validity tests as well as basic statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS software; subsequently, a structural equation model was built using AMOS to calculate the influence coefficients of each path. From a holistic perspective, the study analyzed how three factors—service quality, co-creation experience, and cultural novelty—influence repeat purchases and voluntary social sharing. Finally, empirical testing confirmed that all research hypotheses proposed in this paper were supported.

1)Service quality, co-creation experience, and cultural novelty significantly influence customer satisfaction.

In a cross-cultural dining environment, service quality serves as the foundational condition for a satisfying experience; The self-selection of ingredients and customization of flavors in Mala Tang provide customers with a sense of participation and control; the novelty derived from Chinese culinary culture, unique preparation methods, and store cultural elements satisfies customers' desire to explore foreign culinary cultures. In terms of influence strength, cultural novelty and co-creation experience have a slightly greater impact on satisfaction than service quality, indicating that in the cross-cultural market of Bangkok, customers are more sensitive to distinctive experiences and cultural differences.

2)Customer satisfaction significantly and positively drives the Social Sharing Intention and the intention to repurchase.

Whether customers' experience with mala tang meets their expectations and results in satisfaction directly determines subsequent behavior. When satisfaction is high, customers not only develop an intention to repurchase but are also more willing to recommend the experience to others and share it on social media. This conclusion confirms the applicability of Expectation-Confirmation Theory in cross-cultural food service research.

3)Customer satisfaction plays a partial mediating role between service quality, co-creation experiences, cultural novelty, and both repurchase and social sharing intentions.

These three factors can directly influence behavioral intentions or exert a positive effect indirectly by enhancing satisfaction. In the pathway influencing repurchase intention, the mediating effect of co-creation experience accounted for the highest proportion, indicating that the ability to customize their own meals motivates customers more, and a positive experience is more likely to translate into a willingness to continue purchasing. In

the pathway influencing the Social Sharing Intention, the mediating effect of cultural novelty is the strongest, followed by co-creation experience and service quality, suggesting that the satisfaction derived from high-quality service and unique experiences is more effective in promoting word-of-mouth dissemination.

7. Limitations and future research directions

This study has certain limitations, and the following improvements could be made in future research:

1) Limited sample coverage

Although the sample included local Thai customers, Chinese residents in Thailand, and foreign customers, it was primarily concentrated in central commercial districts and areas surrounding universities in Bangkok, with limited coverage of Mala Tang customers in suburban areas and neighboring cities. Additionally, the sample consisted of approximately 78% of respondents were aged 18 – 30, while customers over 40 years old were not represented in the sample. Future research could expand the sampling scope to explore behavioral differences among customers of different age groups.

2) The selection of variables failed to incorporate more localized contextual factors.

As a city of multicultural fusion, Bangkok's local factors—such as religious beliefs, consumption habits, and income levels—may influence Mala Tang consumption behavior. Furthermore, market factors such as brand awareness and competitive differentiation were not taken into account. Future research could integrate Thailand's local sociocultural and market environments by incorporating more contextual variables to enhance the model's explanatory power.

3) The variables used are relatively common; more innovative variables could be explored.

Examples include ethnic dietary habits, Thai festival marketing, recognition of local food culture, conformity-driven consumption within social circles, visits by Southeast Asian influencers, and the consumption intentions of eco-conscious and vegetarian customers.

4) All sample data in this study were derived from customer self-reports.

While this method is direct and effective, it carries the potential risk of common-method bias. Since all variables were measured within the same sample group, the relationships between variables may be overestimated to some extent. Furthermore, customers may be influenced by social desirability when completing questionnaires, leading them to provide more positive responses, or their judgments of past consumption experiences may be inaccurate due to recall bias. Future research could explore the incorporation of multi-source data, such as combining objective metrics—including consumption records from food delivery platforms, authentic social media posts, and store repurchase data—with questionnaire data for cross-validation, thereby enhancing the robustness of research conclusions. Another point to note is that while this study's theoretical model introduced three independent variables—service quality, co-creation experience, and cultural novelty—and validated the partial mediating role of customer satisfaction, the model's explanatory power still has room for improvement.

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