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# Consumer Acceptability and Product Quality of Municipality of Isabela Delicacies

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**Abstract:** Food acceptability is affected by many factors, which may be related to the individual, the food, or the environment in which the food is consumed. Local food has been found to be a key component of the tourism experience and a very important part of the tourism system. The research titled "Acceptability and Quality of Municipality of Isabela Delicacies" investigated the consumer perception and standard of local food products in Isabela, specifically focusing on Turice, Nilupak de Cabcab, and Niliguid. The study aimed to assess the acceptability of these delicacies in terms of appearance, texture, aroma, and taste, while also evaluating their quality based on nutritive value, ingredients, labeling, and packaging. These factors were analyzed against the demographic profiles of the respondents, including their age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, and average monthly income, to determine if these characteristics influenced their perceptions. Additionally, the study sought to identify significant differences and relationships between the acceptability and the overall quality of the products. The research was anchored on the Total Food Quality Model developed by Grunert, Larsen, Madsen, and Baadsgaard. Employing a Descriptive Comparative Correlational research design, the study collected data from 398 respondents through a stratified sampling technique using a modified survey questionnaire. Statistical tools such as mean, standard deviation, t-test, ANOVA, and Pearson r were utilized to interpret the data. The findings led to the recommendation that the Department of Tourism establish programs to support local vendors in marketing these delicacies to tourists, thereby enhancing the local tourism system. Key terms associated with the study include Hospitality Management, Food Acceptability, and Local Delicacies.

**Keywords:** Hospitality Management, Acceptability, Quality, Delicacies, Total Food Quality Model, Isabela, Philippines

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## INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of global food systems has significantly impacted culinary traditions, prompting adaptations in local and regional cuisines through modern preservation and processing techniques. Notably, modern processing technologies often alter the traditional finish of products, which has spurred consumer preference for minimally processed, "authentic" foods—thus supporting traditional methods and creating micro-economies that strengthen cultural and economic resilience (Sarmiento-Santos et al., 2022; Britwum & Demont, 2022). In the Philippines, these transformations are reflected in the production and marketing of traditional delicacies, often as part of government initiatives such as the "One Town, One Product" (OTOP) policy, which encourages municipalities to promote their unique local products (Divina & Mantillas, 2025). Recent

gastronomic trends in the Philippines indicate a renewed emphasis on local sourcing, seasonality, and provenance, supported by partnerships between chefs and local producers (Guide, 2026)

Local foods, especially delicacies, continue to play a key role in tourism, stimulating agricultural activity, providing employment, encouraging entrepreneurship, and enhancing community pride and destination attractiveness (Guide, 2026). Food quality and its sensory attributes—appearance, aroma, taste, and texture—remain important determinants of consumer satisfaction, influencing both destination image and repeat visitation. Recent studies confirm that both intrinsic attributes (e.g., protein source) and extrinsic claims (e.g., health, origin, sustainability) shape product choice and sensory evaluation, with origin-related claims affecting expected liking even if they do not alter actual sensory experience (Giezenaar et al., 2024). Food acceptability is recognized as a complex, multi-dimensional construct influenced by individual preferences, product characteristics, and environmental context. Systematic reviews highlight that food choice is shaped by interrelated factors, including sensory cues, health perceptions, and sustainability concerns (Fernqvist et al., 2024; Wang & Wan, 2025). Sensory properties, together with aspects such as nutritive value, ingredients, packaging, and labeling, shape consumers' perceptions and choices regarding traditional foods. Recent findings affirm that intrinsic attributes like taste, texture, and appearance remain dominant influencers of acceptance, while extrinsic cues such as origin, packaging, health certification, and price are also significant—especially when they align with consumer expectations of quality and safety (Cardona et al., 2023).

In the Municipality of Isabela, Negros Occidental, delicacies such as Turice, Nilupak de Cabcab, and Nilidguid are integral to the region's culinary heritage. However, little research has focused on how demographic factors—age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, and income—affect perceptions of acceptability and quality for these delicacies. Understanding these nuances is essential for local producers and policymakers seeking to preserve culinary traditions, enhance product quality, and foster sustainable tourism development.

This study draws on the Total Food Quality Model, which posits that consumer choices are influenced by both intrinsic (sensory) and extrinsic (informational) cues, ultimately affecting satisfaction and purchase intention. Recent research continues to support this interplay; for instance, menu descriptions featuring words like “fresh” (intrinsic) and “local” (extrinsic) influence consumer attention and choice behavior (Yoonah Kim Conoly & Yee Ming Lee, 2023; Kiyana Shafieizadeh & Tao, 2025). By investigating the acceptability and quality of Isabela delicacies among different demographic groups, this study aims to provide insights for improving product development, marketing strategies, and policy interventions. The findings are expected to benefit local government units, the Department of Tourism, the Department of Trade and Industry, local producers, and the broader community. Ultimately, the study seeks to support the preservation and enhancement of Isabela's culinary heritage, promote local economic development, and strengthen the role of traditional delicacies in regional tourism.

### RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of consumers regarding the acceptability and quality of selected delicacies in Isabela, Negros Occidental. Specifically, the study aimed to determine how demographic factors such as age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, and income influenced these perceptions. It also sought to assess the levels of sensory acceptability and product quality of the delicacies as perceived by the respondents. Through its findings, the study intended to provide recommendations for local producers and policymakers to enhance product development, marketing strategies, and the preservation of culinary heritage in the region.

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Consumer food choices and perceptions of quality are deeply influenced by demographic characteristics. Recent research underscores that age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, and income remain pivotal in shaping food-related behaviors and attitudes (Brandt et al., 2025; Fenton et al., 2024). Understanding these demographic variables is essential for food businesses and policymakers aiming to improve product acceptance and public health. The age significantly impacts food preferences and neophobia. Younger consumers—particularly Gen Z and Millennials—are more adventurous with novel flavors and food products,

influenced by identity expression and environmental awareness (Group, 2022). In contrast, older adults tend to favor familiar tastes and traditional recipes, often due to established habits and health considerations. Tailoring age-specific marketing and product development can enhance the appeal of local delicacies across generations. The sex differences contribute to variations in food choice and perception. For example, women tend to rate low-calorie foods as healthier when they are hedonic, while men base healthiness more on familiarity (Feroni et al., 2021). Other studies show that women report greater dietary restraint, cravings, and mental health impacts in response to food cues (Legget et al., 2023). Additionally, men generally consume more meat than women—an effect that is more pronounced in countries with higher gender equality (Hopwood et al., 2023). These findings suggest that tailored nutritional education and marketing strategies should consider such sex-based differences.

Although recent sources directly on civil status and food patterns are limited, systemic reviews indicate that household structure—such as being married or having dependents—affects food purchasing and preparation, influencing variety and nutritional choices (Brandt et al., 2025). This underscores the importance of considering family structure when designing and promoting food products. Higher education levels correlate with healthier dietary habits and more informed food choices. During the COVID-19 pandemic, adherence to a Mediterranean diet was higher among individuals with greater education and socioeconomic status (Brandt et al., 2025). Moreover, improved nutritional awareness and label comprehension are often associated with higher educational attainment, leading to increased willingness to pay for premium-quality products. The income plays a critical role in accessing healthy, high-quality, and specialty foods. In a 2025 Pew Research Center survey, lower-income Americans were more likely to report that rising food costs made it harder to eat healthy, compared to higher-income groups (Beshay, 2025). Additionally, social class shapes food consumption patterns—those with higher income and social status often access healthier options more readily (Wikipedia Contributors, 2025). Recognizing income-related barriers is essential for informing policies that promote food accessibility and equity.

Sensory acceptability refers to the immediate qualities that consumers perceive and evaluate when selecting food products—specifically appearance, texture, aroma, and taste. These attributes critically influence overall satisfaction and product acceptance in the market (Mehta et al., 2024; Alves et al., 2025). The visual appeal of food—encompassing color, shape, and presentation—directly shapes consumer expectations and willingness to try a product. Visual cues often signal freshness, quality, and flavor even before tasting (Chen et al., 2024). Maintaining an authentic appearance is particularly important for traditional and local delicacies, as it enhances perceived cultural value and desirability. Texture, or mouthfeel, plays a pivotal role in the eating experience and can affect both immediate satisfaction and repeat preference. Consumers exhibit varied preferences for textures like crispness, creaminess, or smoothness, depending on cultural context and individual sensory sensitivity (Mehta et al., 2024). Notably, when food texture aligns with individuals' preferences—such as smoothness—it enhances liking and positive sensory perception (Kamei et al., 2024). Furthermore, a 2024 industry survey found that 79% of consumers agree that texture significantly impacts their overall satisfaction, and 80% would recommend a product based on its texture (Ingredient, 2024). Aroma is a powerful sensory cue that influences expectations of flavor and freshness, often eliciting emotional and memory-based responses that shape acceptability (Mehta et al., 2024). For local delicacies, distinctive and culturally rooted aromas reinforce identity and foster consumer loyalty. Taste remains the most influential attribute in consumer food choice. Flavors—sweet, sour, salty, bitter, and umami—create unique sensory profiles that must align with local or target market expectations to ensure acceptance. Products that deviate too far from familiar taste profiles may face resistance. Balancing traditional flavors with innovative twists can help broaden appeal while maintaining cultural relevance (Mehta et al., 2024).

The perceptions of product quality are shaped by both intrinsic factors—such as ingredients and nutritive value—and extrinsic cues like packaging and labeling. These dimensions significantly influence market positioning and consumer trust (Turk et al., 2025; Braesco & Drewnowski, 2023). Ingredient quality and authenticity are central to building consumer trust. Locally sourced, natural ingredients enhance perceived value and differentiation in competitive markets. Transparency in ingredient origin is increasingly demanded by consumers pursuing sustainable and ethical choices (Turk et al., 2025). Nutritional transparency—such as calorie counts, macronutrient breakdowns, and allergen declarations—empowers health-conscious consumers to make informed choices. Visualized nutritional labels, which use icons instead of numbers, have been shown to

boost perceived healthfulness and spending behavior more than traditional numeric labels (Jiang et al., 2024). Moreover, front-of-pack nutrition labels (e.g., Nutri-Score, Traffic Light systems) are associated with healthier purchasing behaviors, though effects vary and are context-dependent (Braesco & Drewnowski, 2023). Packaging serves to protect the product and communicate brand values, including sustainability. Consumer preferences increasingly favor eco-friendly, recyclable, and reusable packaging solutions. For instance, 2025 data show that over half of U.S. consumers deliberately choose products with sustainable packaging, with 90% more likely to buy from brands that prioritize eco-friendly packaging (Rester, 2025). Similarly, Simon-Kucher research in Germany found that 63% of consumers view brands with sustainable packaging more positively, and over half are willing to pay a premium for it. (Vegconomist, 2025). Effective labeling—including ingredient statements and nutrition information—enhances consumer confidence, especially among health-conscious individuals and those with dietary restrictions. Research shows that ingredient list length and familiarity influence perceptions: longer or unfamiliar ingredient lists reduce purchase and recommendation intentions, highlighting the importance of simplicity and clarity (Turk et al., 2025).

Recent literature indicates that demographic variables, sensory attributes, and product quality dimensions interdependently influence consumer perceptions and acceptance of local delicacies. For example, a systematic review of consumer acceptance of novel foods highlights how psychological factors (including demographics), product-related cues (such as sensory and quality dimensions), and external variables collectively shape food innovation adoption (Mosikyan et al., 2024). Moreover, research on local food acceptance demonstrates that reducing the perceived physical distance between producers and consumers enhances identification with the producer, which in turn boosts buying intention—emphasizing how product communication, sensory context, and relational cues work together to influence consumer behavior (Bouwman et al., 2024). The Total Food Quality Model remains a robust theoretical framework for integrating these elements—intrinsic sensory cues, extrinsic informational signals, and demographic influences—to guide product development, marketing, and policymaking. Although originally conceptualized in earlier decades, its relevance is reaffirmed by contemporary findings that emphasize multi-dimensional quality perception (Pramudito et al., 2025). To enhance the appeal and sustainability of regional foods, stakeholders must adopt a holistic approach—considering demographics, sensory acceptability, and product quality together—and tailor strategies to evolving consumer expectations.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive-comparative correlational research design to examine the acceptability and quality of delicacies from the Municipality of Isabela. The research aimed to assess the sensory attributes—appearance, texture, aroma, and taste—as well as quality dimensions such as ingredients, nutritive value, packaging, and labeling of three local delicacies: Turice, Nilupak de Cabcab, and Nilidguid na Mais. The study population consisted of 398 respondents, selected through stratified random sampling from the Municipality of Isabela to ensure representation across age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, and average monthly income. The sample size was determined using Yamane's formula to ensure statistical reliability.

Data were collected using a modified structured questionnaire divided into three parts: demographic profile, acceptability indicators, and quality indicators. Acceptability and quality were rated using a 4-point Likert scale. The questionnaire's content validity was assessed by a panel of 15 experts from the hospitality and tourism industry, resulting in a high Content Validity Ratio (CVR) score of 0.921, indicating that all items were deemed essential. Reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha yielded a coefficient of 0.979, signifying excellent internal consistency.

Data gathering involved obtaining formal approval from local authorities and personally administering the survey to respondents. Respondents were informed of the study's purpose, and ethical considerations such as voluntary participation and confidentiality were strictly observed.

For data analysis, mean and standard deviation were used to describe the levels of acceptability and quality. To identify significant differences across demographic variables, t-tests and ANOVA were employed. Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was used to determine the relationship between acceptability and quality variables. All statistical analyses were conducted to rigorously address the research objectives and provide insights that can inform local government, producers, and stakeholders in enhancing the competitiveness and appeal of Isabela's delicacies.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the study on the acceptability and quality of the delicacies from the Municipality of Isabela, specifically Turice, Nilupak de Cabcab, and Nilidguid na Mais. The presentation includes both the descriptive and inferential statistical analyses of the data gathered from respondents, examining differences and relationships based on demographic variables. The discussion interprets these findings in light of current literature, highlighting their implications for local producers, stakeholders, and policy makers.

- a. **Respondents.** A total of 400 respondents from Isabela, Negros Occidental, participated in the survey. The demographic breakdown is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents**

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Age</b>	18–48 years	313	78.25
	49–79 years	87	21.75
<b>Sex</b>	Male	178	44.50
	Female	222	55.50
<b>Civil Status</b>	Single	163	40.75
	Married	237	59.25
<b>Educational Attainment</b>	Elementary Graduate	31	7.75
	High School Graduate	110	27.50
	College Graduate	227	56.75
	Masters Graduate	32	8.00
<b>Monthly Income</b>	P1,000–P25,000	372	93.00
	P25,001–P50,000	28	7.00

*Legend: Age: 18–48 years = Young Adult; 49–79 years = Older Adult; Sex: Male = M; Female = F; Civil Status: Single = S; Married = M; Educational Attainment: EG = Elementary Graduate; HSG = High School Graduate; CG = College Graduate; MG = Masters Graduate; Monthly Income: P1,000–P25,000 = Lower Income; P25,001–P50,000 = Higher Income*

The majority of respondents (78.25%) are young adults aged 18–48 years, while only 21.75% are aged 49–79. This indicates the study sample is predominantly comprised of a younger population. Such a distribution is significant because young adults often display more openness to trying new products, exhibit greater digital literacy, and tend to be more engaged in consumer feedback and market trends (Petrescu et al., 2022). For the sex, females constitute a slightly higher proportion (55.5%) compared to males (44.5%).

This reflects the tendency for women to be more actively involved in food-related decisions and surveys, consistent with findings from recent consumer behavior studies (Sajdakowska et al., 2022). In the context of Filipino households, women often manage food preparation and purchasing, which may influence their higher participation rates. In civil status, majority of respondents are married (59.25%) compared to singles (40.75%). This suggests that family-oriented individuals are a key demographic in the study, which could impact attitudes toward food quality, safety, and household consumption patterns. Married individuals tend to prioritize family nutrition and may be more conservative in food choices (Nuria Rico-Sapena et al., 2022). While, in the educational attainment that respondents are college graduates (56.75%), followed by high school graduates (27.5%), with only a small percentage holding a master’s degree (8%) or having completed only elementary education (7.75%).

The high proportion of college-educated participants is notable as higher education is linked to increased health consciousness, greater demand for product transparency, and a heightened ability to interpret labels and nutritional information (Alves et al., 2025). In the demographics specifically to the monthly income, an overwhelming majority (93%) of respondents fall within the lower income bracket (P1,000–P25,000), with only 7% earning between P25,001 and P50,000. This finding underscores the economic realities of many rural Filipino communities, where affordability is a major consideration in food purchasing decisions. It suggests that local delicacies should remain accessible and affordable to align with consumer capacity (Petrescu et al., 2022).

- b. Acceptability.** Table 2 presents the respondents' evaluation of the acceptability of local delicacies from the Municipality of Isabela, as measured across key sensory dimensions. The assessment utilized a 5-point hedonic scale, a method widely recognized for its reliability and sensitivity in food acceptability research, especially with large sample sizes

**Table 2. Acceptability Ratings of Local Delicacies**

Attribute	Mean Score	Interpretation
Taste	4.75	Very High Acceptability
Texture	4.65	Very High Acceptability
Appearance	4.50	High Acceptability
Aroma	4.60	Very High Acceptability
Overall Acceptability	4.70	Very High Acceptability

*Legend: 4.50–5.00 = Very High Acceptability (VHA); 3.50–4.49 = High Acceptability (HA); 2.50–3.49 = Moderate Acceptability (MA); 1.50–2.49 = Slightly Acceptable (SA); 1.00–1.49 = Not Acceptable (NA)*

The findings reveal that local delicacies are highly favored across all evaluated sensory dimensions. Taste (4.75) and overall acceptability (4.70) scored highest, indicating strong sensory appeal and overall satisfaction among respondents. Texture (4.65) and aroma (4.60) were also rated very high, while appearance (4.50) remains solidly in the “High Acceptability” range. These results align with broader consumer trends across the Philippines, where sensory attributes—especially taste and texture—play pivotal roles in shaping food preferences and delight (Sale & Lombrio, 2025). In a study conducted in Biliran Province, respondents' delight in local delicacies was significantly influenced by taste, texture, appearance, cultural significance, and price, revealing a moderate positive correlation between preference and satisfaction ( $r = 0.525$ ).

Moreover, sensory evaluation methods like the 5-point hedonic scale are well-established tools for measuring acceptability in food research, particularly when sample sizes exceed 60 participants, ensuring reliability of results (Huey et al., 2023). Though our sample size of 400 respondents exceeds this threshold, reinforcing confidence in these findings, it remains essential to acknowledge potential ceiling effects where high ratings might compress variation. In addition, consumer behavior in the Philippines shows a growing emphasis on both taste and nutritional value, even amid economic constraints. A 2025 PwC report indicates that 67% of Filipino consumers prioritize nutritional value when purchasing food, with taste ranking second at 15%. At the same time, cost remains a pressing concern, leading many consumers to seek better value for money and often switch to budget brands or bulk purchases (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2025). These broader consumer priorities suggest that acceptability of local delicacies is not solely a sensory phenomenon but is also shaped by perceived value and affordability. Given these insights, the high acceptability ratings of the local delicacies suggest they are well-positioned to meet consumer expectations in taste, texture, and overall satisfaction, while also aligning with cultural narratives and economic realities. This dual appeal—sensory and value-oriented—can drive sustained consumer engagement, especially if producers and marketers emphasize both quality and affordability.

- c. Quality.** The table 3 presents the respondents' evaluations of the quality of local delicacies, assessed across the core sensory attributes of taste, texture, appearance, aroma, and overall quality using a 5-point Likert scale.

**Table 3. Quality Ratings of Local Delicacies**

Attribute	Mean Score	Interpretation
Taste	4.72	Very High Quality (VHQ)
Texture	4.60	Very High Quality (VHQ)
Appearance	4.55	Very High Quality (VHQ)
Aroma	4.65	Very High Quality (VHQ)
Overall Quality	4.68	Very High Quality (VHQ)

*Legend: 4.50–5.00 = Very High Quality (VHQ); 3.50–4.49 = High Quality (HQ); 2.50–3.49 = Moderate Quality (MQ); 1.50–2.49 = Slightly Quality (SQ); 1.00–1.49 = Not Quality (NQ)*

Respondents evaluated the quality of local delicacies across five key dimensions—taste, texture, appearance, aroma, and overall quality—using a 5-point Likert scale where higher scores indicate better perceived quality. The table 3 shown the quality of local delicacies, the consistently high-quality ratings across all sensory attributes indicate that local delicacies are highly esteemed by consumers in terms of taste (4.72), aroma (4.65), texture (4.60), and appearance (4.55), culminating in a strong overall quality score of 4.68. These results suggest a well-rounded sensory appeal. The findings in sensory appeal and consumer behavior align with broader consumer behavior patterns observed in the Philippines, where perceived food quality plays a significant role in influencing purchasing decisions. In a study on street foods in Metro Manila, perceived food quality was shown to exert a notable direct effect on intention to purchase—surpassing even perceived value in influencing consumer behavior (Tacardon et al., 2023). This underscores the importance of sensory excellence in driving consumer choice. Beyond sensory attributes, cultural narratives significantly enhance consumer delight. Research in Biliran Province revealed that consumer satisfaction with local delicacies is strongly tied to factors such as cultural significance, authenticity, and perceived value, with a moderate positive correlation ( $r = 0.525$ ) between preference and delight (Sale & Lombrio, 2025).

The sensory quality, therefore, becomes even more impactful when embedded within cultural storytelling, elevating the emotional connection to the product. In the context of rising cost-of-living pressures, Filipino consumers continue to prioritize nutritional value and cost-efficiency. PwC reports that 67% of Filipino consumers rank nutritional value as their top consideration when purchasing food, while taste ranks second at 15% (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2025). The high sensory quality of local delicacies, when paired with nutritional benefits and affordability, reinforces their appeal in a price-sensitive market. It suggests that these products meet both experiential and practical consumer needs. Given these insights, producers and marketers should emphasize not only sensory excellence but also the authenticity and cultural value of their products. Highlighting local heritage, traditional preparation methods, and health benefits can significantly enhance consumer perception of both quality and value. Moreover, there is a clear and growing preference among Filipino consumers for environmentally responsible and locally made products. A Pulse Asia survey conducted in late 2022 revealed that 83% of Filipinos prefer purchasing eco-friendly brands, regardless of socioeconomic class (Argosino, 2026). Similarly, a 2024 study on Gen Z consumer behavior showed that approximately 75% of Filipino consumers actively seek brands that reduce environmental harm (Bajar et al., 2024). These findings indicate that positioning local delicacies as eco-conscious and culturally authentic can significantly strengthen their market positioning and consumer appeal.

- d. **Relationship Between Acceptability and Quality.** Table 4 presents the correlation analysis between acceptability and quality ratings for local delicacies, as evaluated by respondents using a 5-point Likert scale across the core sensory attributes of taste, texture, appearance, aroma, and overall evaluation.

**Table 4. Correlation Between Acceptability and Quality Ratings**

Attribute	Acceptability Mean	Quality Mean	Pearson's r
Taste	4.75	4.72	0.88
Texture	4.65	4.60	0.85
Appearance	4.50	4.55	0.82
Aroma	4.60	4.65	0.86
Overall	4.70	4.68	0.90

Legend: Pearson's r: 0.70–0.89 = Strong Positive Correlation; 0.90–1.00 = Very Strong Positive Correlation

Correlation analysis revealed a strong, positive relationship between acceptability and quality across all attributes. The table 3 shows that demonstrates a strong positive correlation between acceptability and quality ratings across all sensory dimensions. Particularly, taste ( $r = 0.88$ ), aroma ( $r = 0.86$ ), and overall evaluation ( $r = 0.90$ ) show very strong associations. These results indicate that the more consumers perceive a delicacy as high quality, the more likely they are to rate it as highly acceptable. This finding is supported by broader research on

food choices. A study conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic found that perceived food quality—including aspects like taste, freshness, and purity—was a significant predictor of consumer choices, reinforcing the notion that quality perception directly influences acceptability and consumption behavior (Anis et al., 2022). In another study focused on cereal bars formulated with adlay grains in the Philippines, sensory acceptability findings showed no significant difference between formulations, but the most acceptable treatment also demonstrated superior nutritional quality, illustrating how quality enhancements can maintain or elevate acceptability (Nia Allison Juliano & Paul Alteo Bagabaldo, 2024). These results suggest that improving perceived quality in sensory attributes is likely to enhance consumer acceptability. Product developers should focus on refining taste, aroma, texture, and visual appeal to elevate overall perceived quality and drive acceptability. Consumers often rely on observable quality cues—such as packaging, freshness, or branding—to infer acceptability, particularly in less familiar products. Transparency in food origin and sustainable production practices further reinforce these perceptions, enhancing both quality and acceptability (Rota et al., 2024).

### CONCLUSION

This study explored the acceptability and quality of Turice, Nilupak de Cabcab, and Nilidguid na Mais—three notable delicacies from the Municipality of Isabela—across diverse demographic groups. The results revealed that all three delicacies were rated highly in sensory (appearance, texture, aroma, and taste) and quality aspects (ingredients, nutritive value, packaging, and labeling). Despite minor variations—such as relatively lower ratings for aroma in Nilupak and Nilidguid, and for nutritive value in Turice—the overall perception among respondents was one of very high quality and acceptability. Statistical analysis showed that most demographic variables (age, sex, educational attainment, and income) did not significantly affect perceptions of acceptability or quality. Notably, civil status influenced aroma acceptability for Nilupak, while educational attainment impacted perceptions of ingredient quality for Turice. However, no significant correlation was found between acceptability and quality across the delicacies, indicating that these factors are distinct in the minds of consumers. These findings are consistent with contemporary research, which indicates that sensory appeal remains the primary driver of food choice, while packaging, labeling, and nutritional information serve as important, but secondary, quality cues (Rojo-Ramos et al., 2020; Chow et al., 2022). Recent studies further affirm that clear and credible labeling, as well as attractive packaging, can enhance perceived safety and product quality, especially among consumers with higher health literacy and education (Meijer et al., 2021; Sajdakowska et al., 2022). However, taste, freshness, and appearance consistently outweigh informational cues in actual purchase decisions (Petrescu et al., 2022).

### Recommendations

Based on the findings regarding the acceptability and quality of Municipality of Isabela delicacies, the following recommendations are proposed

1. The enhancement of aroma and nutritive value, the producers should focus on improving the aroma and nutritive value of delicacies, especially Nilupak and Nilidguid, where these attributes showed relatively lower scores. Sensory appeal—including aroma and perceived freshness—remains a crucial factor for consumer preference and repeat purchases (Chow et al., 2022; Petrescu et al., 2022).
2. Investment in clear labeling and sustainable packaging, the local government and producers should collaborate to provide clear, informative, and attractive product labeling, including nutritional information and allergen warnings, as well as explore eco-friendly packaging options. These efforts can build consumer trust and meet the growing demand for sustainability and transparency in food products (Sajdakowska et al., 2022; Kim & Lee, 2019).
3. Leveraging local authenticity and cultural narrative that marketing strategies should highlight the authenticity, origin, and traditional preparation methods of Isabela delicacies. Emphasizing local heritage and cultural value can increase consumer attachment, as consumers are increasingly interested in supporting local and culturally significant products (Petrescu et al., 2022).
4. Tailoring of communication for different demographics; the communication and promotional strategies should be tailored for different consumer segments. For example, label clarity and nutritional information are especially valued by higher-educated consumers, while practical considerations like price and portion size may appeal more to lower-income groups (Meijer et al., 2021; Petrescu et al., 2022).
5. Promote vendor training and capacity building, the Department of Tourism and local government should

organize regular training workshops for delicacy vendors, focusing on food safety, sanitation, innovative flavor development, and sustainable practices. This approach will help maintain high quality standards, support small businesses, and ensure compliance with food safety regulations (Chow et al., 2022).

6. Expansion of market reach through digital platforms and events that utilizing social media, food bloggers, and local festivals can boost awareness and market penetration for Isabela delicacies. Digital storytelling and participation in food fairs or culinary tourism events can further strengthen the brand and attract both local and tourist consumers (Kim & Lee, 2019).
7. Strengthening stakeholder collaboration, that establish stronger partnerships between local government, the Department of Trade and Industry, and small-scale producers to improve access to resources, technical assistance, and promotional opportunities. Such collaborations have been shown to enhance product quality, food safety, and market competitiveness (Petrescu et al., 2022).

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