

The Characteristics of Destination Restaurants

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Abstract: Destination restaurants are a specific type of culinary offering and category of tourist attraction. The capacity of destination restaurants to attract visitors has made them an important element of destination and place promotion strategies as well as, in some cases, a factor in placemaking activities. However, despite their significance few studies have sought to identify the key elements of what makes a destination restaurant. This study therefore explores the elements of destination restaurants that are communicated online to attract customers, as well as how they function in an integrated and strategic structure. A website content analysis framework is constructed with respect to general information, communication information, transaction information, and reference information to examine 17 elements of online content in 143 destination restaurants. The study found that destination restaurants emphasized their "culture" in terms of intangible elements such as restaurant philosophy, origin story, and chef biography, to distinguish themselves from other restaurants. The reference information proposed on other credible platforms, including user-generated reviews, awards, and celebrity chefs, can also support visitor decision making. Future research issues are noted.

Keywords: destination restaurant; food tourism; celebrity chef; restaurant marketing; place promotion; website analysis

1. Introduction

Given the importance of eating out in contemporary consumer culture, there is a growing awareness of the role of food and restaurants as a means of attracting visitors to specific destinations or locations (Erkmen, 2019; Sthapit et al., 2017). In turn, this has led to destination restaurants emerging as both a culinary offering and a category of tourist attraction. Some consumers are now travelling to specific locations solely to enjoy and experience the food culture (Mohamed et al., 2022). As a result, it is argued that restaurants can serve as a

primary motivator for both 'locals' and 'culinary tourists' to travel to a particular locality by providing a place where a community's food, culture, and landscape can be experienced (Tresidder, 2015).

Destination restaurants have previously been categorised by their ability to attract visitors from outside of their immediate local environment and, to varying degrees, by emphasising the influence of location in terms of ingredient sourcing, landscape, and culture (Mohamed et al., 2022; Sims, 2009). It has been argued that destination restaurants adopt an authentic design, underpinning destination characteristics and serving as the primary motivation for visiting a specific location (Mohamed et al., 2022). The factors that define local cuisine image are food uniqueness and cultural heritage, food quality and price, nutrition and health benefits of food, and affective image of food (Peštek et al., 2014). Therefore, it has been argued that destination restaurants often integrate the culture, history, and environment of the place with a wide range of local produce and techniques to create a distinct and innovative fine dining experience related directly to its surroundings (Mohamed et al., 2022). In the existing research on destination restaurants, the importance of sustainability, local food sourcing, and authenticity are often closely linked or even used inter-changeably (Mohamed et al., 2022; Riefler, 2020; Sims, 2009).

Destination restaurants are regarded as a pull factor to a destination or specific locations within cities or a wider region (Daries et al., 2021). Previous studies on destination restaurants have predominantly focused on how food, in general, is a key attraction for tourists (Cohen & Avieli, 2004), the importance of food consumption in tourism destina-tions (Sthapit et al., 2017; Tsai & Wang, 2017), and how food can enhance and sustain the identity of a place or location (Everett & Aitchison, 2010). Research has also looked at the role that food plays in more specific tourist attractions such as festivals and islands (Okumus et al., 2013; Silkes et al., 2013) and how food creates a memorable, unique, and special tourism experience for visitors (Kim & Eves, 2012; Peštek et al., 2014; Quan & Wang, 2004). Destination restaurants have been studied in relation to place attachment (Mohamed et al., 2022), service measurement (Kim et al., 2019; Motoyama& Usher, 2020), and their interaction with the locality in which they operate (Johansson, 2016; Tresidder, 2015). In popular media, destination restaurants have been featured in websites, e.g., The World's 50 Best Restaurants (Vialou-Clark, 2021); been associated with cookbooks, e.g., Noma (Redzepi, 2010), Mirazur (Colagreco et al., 2018), or Mexico from the Inside Out (Gora, 2019; Olvera, 2015); and have even given rise to a host of television shows such as Chefs Table, Ugly Delicious, and Remarkable Places to Eat (IMDb, n.d.), with consequent significance for place marketing strategies.

Despite the increased importance of destination restaurants as visitor attractions and for place marketing (Hall et al., 2003), the defining attributes of destination restaurants remain unclear. Therefore, to help identify the key elements of destination restaurants this paper discusses the factors destination restaurants use to attract customers and how these factors are communicated on

their websites. The paper first reviews the characteristics of destination restaurants, before discussing the method (website content analysis) and its application to a sample of internationally recognized restaurants. The results highlight the main elements of such restaurants and their distinguishing characteristics.

2. The Characteristics of Destination Restaurants

The existing literature on destination restaurants emphasises factors that influence consumer preference for eating out, which, given the staged nature of the consumption or visitor experience, can be classified into pre-visit attraction and post-visit impression. Pre-visit attraction can be objectively assessed, focusing on destination restaurant marketing that can be promoted via media, such as the tangible factors (e.g., location, awards, chefs, menus, photos) (Daries et al., 2021; Demirkol & Cifci, 2020; Leib et al., 2017) and the restaurant philosophy (Meneguel et al., 2019). The post-visit impression is more subjective, emphasising the service and customers' experiences at the restaurants (Hall & Sharples, 2003; Mohamed et al., 2022; Peštek et al., 2014), and subsequent evaluation and feedback, much of which can now be placed online. Different from normal restaurants, destination restaurants not only function to satisfy consumer's dining needs but also act as a destination to attract visitors from outside of their immediate location and are used for place marketing (Daries et al., 2021; Hall et al., 2003; Sparks et al., 2001). In a context where people increasingly rely on online information for decision making (Daries-Ramon et al., 2017), this study focuses on pre-visit attractiveness to identify the characteristics of destination restaurants based on online information.

Previous studies have employed various models to examine websites of destinations or restaurants. The Information-Communication-Transaction-Relationship (ICTR) model was proposed to evaluate the effectiveness of functions of destination marketing systems with virtual space, virtual communication space, virtual transaction space, and virtual relationships space (Wang & Russo, 2006). More recently, this model was applied to describe a smart tourism website with four dimensions, including general information (provision of destination information). communication information (communication with consumers), relationships information (personalisation and relationship-building mechanisms), and transaction information (electronic transaction) (Zhang et al., 2018). For restaurants, the extended Model of Internet Commerce Adoption (eMICA) model was adapted with four measures on how to evaluate the performance of restaurants websites: 1) Information measures how easy it is for users to find the information they are seeking on the websites; 2) Interactivity measures the efficiency of information providers and in-formation users to interact and the presence of mechanisms that allow communication; 3) Online processing measures the efficiency to conduct secure online transactions and provide order status; 4) Functionality measures the efficiency to use the internet to its fullest potential and keep up with new technology (Daries-Ramon et al., 2017). In considering destination restaurants, this study extracts the common points between the two models:

- General information refers to the provision of destination restaurants information, including tangible (i.e., location, menu, price, visual content, accommodation) and intangible elements (i.e., origin story, chef biography, restaurant philosophy);
- Communication information refers to the ways to contact the restaurants and to follow up their updates (i.e., website accessibility, newsletter subscription, and social media);
- Transaction information refers to the functions to reserve and purchase the service or products on the restaurants' websites (i.e., online reservation, online store).

However, consumer decisions with respect to restaurant selection are influenced by various factors, and restaurants reviews from other customers and other credible institutions are very important elements (Lee et al., 2021; Vu et al., 2017). In the context of destination restaurant marketing, these two models are limited to the website itself, while potential diners may refer to a wider range of online information sources for decision making, such as celebrity chefs (Chen et al., 2017), and credibility and/or prestige awards such as Michelin distinctions and user-generated reviews on TripAdvisor (Castillo-Manzano et al., 2021; Ganzaroli et al., 2017). Therefore, this study will examine another dimension:

• Reference information refers to the information about a restaurant available outside of their official websites that assists potential customers' decision making.

By drawing on previous destination restaurant literature, this study forms a list of characteristics that would influence customers' decision making at the previsit stage to incorporate the elements in the four dimensions.

2.1. General information

2.1.1. Location

Location is an important issue in restaurant and consumer and visitor studies. As consumers frequently choose the option of "wandering around" as an information source for selecting restaurants, the proximity of the restaurants strongly influences the tourists' decision (Sparks et al., 2003). Both the accessibility and desirability of a restaurant's lo-cation can contribute to customer attraction and commercial viability (Smith, 1983). However, in the context of destination restaurants, the location might not be as important as other restaurants. Food tourism is defined as focusing on the tourists whose activities, behaviour, and, even, destination selections is influenced by an interest in food (Hall et al., 2003). From this perspective, if a restaurant is regarded as a destination of the place to attract food tourists, the location of the restaurant benefits the region in terms of gastronomic place branding (Gordin et al., 2016)

and may enhance customers' destination loyalty and destination patronage (Hernández-Rojas & Huete-Alcocer, 2021; Mohamed et al., 2022) as well as influence place-related behaviors and satisfaction (Theodori & Gene, 2000).

2.1.2. Menu

As a necessary part of restaurant activity, the menu is an essential advertisement in consumers' hands before dining in the restaurant (Yang et al., 2009). A menu also provides an early impression of a restaurant, as consumers rely on its representation to make consumption decisions (Antun & Gustafson, 2005). Thus, as a direct visual communication with customers (Ozdemir, 2012), the display of menu and menu design are important for the selection of dining establishments. The display of a menu in the window is the most influential restaurants element on customers' decision making (Sparks et al., 2003). Similarly, in an online context, demonstrating the menu online is important for restaurant operators especially to convey changes in menu specifications (Appleton et al., 2019; Din et al., 2012). Menu design is a process connected to graphic design, marketing strategy, cost management, co-branding with food tourism, and nutrition (Ozdemir & Caliskan, 2015), that provides information about the food service in terms of menu item position, description, place of origin, and characteristics (Ozdemir, 2012), and influences customers' dining decisions (Dayan & Bar-Hillel, 2011; Guéguen & Jacob, 2012; Liu et al., 2012). In general, it is argued that a well-presented menu can not only reflect the quality of the restaurants and the food it serves but also represent the image and reputation of both restaurant and destination (Fuentes-Luque, 2016; Nebioğlu, 2020).

2.1.3. Price

Price is the numerical information on the menu that tells consumers the financial value of each item and to evaluate restaurant quality and service (Shoemaker et al., 2005). Generally, the price of the menu item is driven by the cost and the desired level of profit from revenue. However, the price of dishes is also driven by consumer demand (Kelly et al., 1994). This is because the purchasing decision of consumers in fine dining restaurants is a combination of philosophical and marketing motivation, rather than price sensitivity. Thus, the price of fine dining restaurants is influenced by the perceived value of consumers, marketing value, and demand (Antun & Gustafson, 2005). Price fairness has been identified with positive impacts on customer satisfaction and positive behavioural intentions (Muskat et al., 2019).

2.1.4. Visual content

The visual content, including photographic and video, has been increasingly emphasised in destination marketing (Song et al., 2020). Previous studies have consistently confirmed that visual content influence consumer intentions more than text (Lian & Yu, 2017; Song et al., 2020). The visual materials shown on

social media and online by destination marketing organisations (DMOs) websites could potentially attract visitors and enhance destination image (Ye & Tussyadiah, 2011). Existing restaurant literature has focussed on three categories for visual content: food (Ozdemir & Caliskan, 2015; Sims, 2009), restaurant staff (Chen et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2015), and dining environment (Atwal et al., 2019; Zhu et al., 2019).

2.1.5. Accommodation

The culinary experience at the selected destination may be complimented by the provision of accommodation, including that provided in conjunction with restaurants. Rural and farm tourism destinations are more likely to provide restaurant and accommodation packages (Engeset & Heggem, 2015; Kizos & Iosifides, 2007). Another common case is hotel restaurants. Luxury restaurants within the hotel can improve the hotel's competitiveness to attract visitors, becoming an important source of the hotel' revenues (Han & Hyun, 2017). Hotel restaurants are located at the intersection of tourism and gastronomy and also have potential to create and promote gastronomic place brands (Gordin et al., 2016).

2.1.6. Origin story

Storytelling has become an increasingly valuable marketing technique for customer attraction and retention (Pulizzi, 2012), especially in relation to building the meanings of a place in a tourism context (Chen et al., 2021). By engaging prospective customers with narrative, symbolic, and archetypal devices, storytelling allows marketers to inform customers while engaging them on an emotional level (Gains, 2013). When it comes to destination restaurants, establishing stories around a restaurant that link it to a place can contribute to aesthetic, hedonic and symbolic aspects of consumption (Mossberg & Eide, 2017). Restaurant origin stories may include the concepts behind the restaurant, it's history, development, and relationship with the local community. In terms of gastronomic place branding, the origin story of destination restaurant might also involve local culture, history, and environment, in which customers are more likely to have gustatory experience that directly links the restaurants to local environment (Tresidder, 2015). Storytelling can be employed both for an individual restaurant and at a broader scale to promote a specific cluster of restaurants or regional specialty (Lee et al., 2015). In recent years, for example, stories of local cuisines have been promoted by various travel TV programs, magazines and books and may be strongly recommended in numerous articles and comments posted by bloggers or on social media. Such stories may motivate tourists to experience local delicacies and stimulate their interest in local foods or even their identification with the location, in terms of place attachment (Tsai, 2016).

2.1.7. Chef biography

Chefs have a great influence on determining the quality of dining experience (Hall et al., 2003). For the supply chain, previous studies have examined producer-to-chef relationships in acquiring local ingredients as part of producing a culinary tourism experience, and chefs play important role in promoting local food (Murphy & Smith, 2009; Roy & Ballantine, 2020). For restaurant operations, successful head chefs can support and lead teamwork of food preparation (Wellton et al., 2017). For customers, the chef's image, referring to customers' overall perceptions of a chef's interpersonal skills, technical skills, and creativity, can influence customers' dining emotions and loyalty to restaurants (Peng et al., 2017). Considering the important role of chef in destination restaurants marketing (Chen et al., 2017), restaurants advertisements with chef endorsers, as compared to those without chef endorsers, could enhance consumers' attitudes towards the advertisement, the brand, and purchase intentions (Luoh & Lo, 2012).

2.1.8. Restaurant philosophy

Destination restaurants can provide tourists with a philosophy that move far beyond the notion of food as fuel (Tresidder, 2015). Restaurant philosophy could be represented through the restaurants' products and services (Meneguel et al., 2019), recipe and personality of chefs (Le et al., 2020), interior design (Şenel, 2021), website format (Tresidder, 2015), marketing practice (Yüksel & Yüksel, 2016), and supply chain management (Wang et al., 2013). Restaurant philosophy is "the direct result of macro- and micro-social and cultural economic movement and trends, and include or exclude guests according to the amount of financial and cultural resources they possess" (Tresidder, 2015, p.348). From this perspective, the display of restaurant philosophy is essential for destination restaurants, which could not only distinguish themselves from other restaurants but also promote regional characteristics. This study reviews several aspects of philosophy that current restaurants are keen to promote, including sustainability, locality, authenticity, and cuisine creativity.

Sustainability

Much research has emphasised the importance of environment-friendly practices in food industry, especially restaurants (Hall & Gössling, 2013; Jang et al., 2017; Kiatkawsin & Sutherland, 2020). Scholars and institutions have developed various guidelines for sustainable restaurants. For example, scholars have provided guidelines for a sustainable restaurant in terms of sustainable foods, supply chains, menu marketing, packaging, the efficiency of kitchens, and minimising waste (Gössling & Hall, 2022). The Green Restaurant Association provides sustainability standards for restaurants with eight environmental categories (i.e., water efficiency, waste reduction and recycling, sustainable durable goods and building materials, sustainable food, energy, reusables and environmentally preferable disposables, chemical and pollution reduction,

transparency and education) (n.d.). The Michelin Guide has launched the Michelin Green Star to encourage restaurants' sustainable practices, considering things such as the provenance of the ingredients, the use of seasonal produce, the restaurant's environmental footprint, food waste systems, general waste disposal and re-cycling, resource management, and the communication between the team and the guests about the restaurant's sustainable approach (2021). With these standards, restaurants can thus promote their sustainability by displaying the certificate and the Green Star. Sustainability could also be practised on restaurants' products directly, such as menu label, which attracts customers who have health and environmental consciousness and lifestyles (Lo et al., 2017). Considering customers' response, restaurant sustainable practices can enhance customer loyalty (Kim & Hall, 2020), attitude on waste reduction and behaviours of environmentally friendly eating (M.J. Kim et al., 2020), satisfaction and customer citizenship behaviour (Hwang & Lee, 2019), and patronage (Hu et al., 2010).

Locality

Destination restaurant that promotes locality could be regarded as 'terroir restaurant', which differentiate themselves outside the traditional approaches to hospitality and cuisine by privileging the central relationship between food, culture, history and geographies that surround the restaurant in order to generate customer experiences (Tresidder, 2015, p.345). The local restaurant philosophy emphasises locally sourced foodstuffs and reflects the slow food movement (Laudan, 2015). Such terroir restaurants could support the local community, regarding food tourism as a tool for local development (Tresidder, 2015). From the restaurant's perspective, locally supplied restaurants are important to the development of sustainable culinary systems within tourism and hospitality, particularly in rural areas (Hall & Gössling, 2013), involving local restaurants, farmers, farmers' market vendors, and wholesale distributors (Roy & Ballantine, 2020; Roy et al., 2017).

Tourist awareness of local food and their desire for local food has grown substantially (De Chabert-Rios & Deale, 2016) and can be attributed to consumer beliefs that local foods are fresher, healthier, and more sustainable for the environment (DeWeerdt, 2009; Hall & Gössling, 2013). Restaurants displaying that they use locally sourced and produced foods and ingredients significantly impact tourists' attitudes and behaviours (Lang & Lemmerer, 2019; Sims, 2009; Smith & Hall, 2003). For food tourists, the value of originality, novelty and locality, as well as authenticity and uniqueness in local food have significant impacts on their travel satisfaction (Björk & Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2016). Foraged local foodstuffs and marketing the restaurant's brand with the concept of locality can also elevate the notion of dining to a higher level of production, experience, and theatre (Tresidder, 2015, p.345).

Authenticity

Compared with locality emphasising locally sourced foodstuffs in the process of food preparation, authenticity focuses on dining experiences perceived by customers through images of "real" food, country traditions and natural products (Hall & Sharples, 2003; Sims, 2009). From this perspective, terroir restaurant embedded locality could also provide their customers with an authentic dining experience. However, authenticity is more likely to be promoted by the restaurants that focus on "staging" experiences to visitors (Sims, 2009). For example, the Singapore Tourism Board promotes New Asia cuisine as an authentic tourist attraction of the city, listing the array of traditional ethnic cuisines, including Chinese, Indian, Peranakan and Arab (Scarpato & Daniele, 2003). Different degrees of authenticity can affective the importance of restaurant service quality on the restaurant image (Ryu et al., 2012). Moreover, authenticity is socially constructed (Trilling, 1972) and whether a restaurant is authentic or not varies across customers and changes across culture and time (Grazian, 2005; Kovács et al., 2014). Significantly for destination restaurants, given their positioning, authenticity leads to consumer perceptions of higher brand value (Riefler, 2020) and generates higher consumer value ratings of restaurants (Kovács et al., 2014).

Cuisine creativity

Many restaurants, especially upscale restaurants, provide highly creative cuisine (Horng& Hu, 2008). Cuisine creativity refers to "more than just its taste, but also its aesthetic presentation and uniqueness" (Leong et al., 2020, p.1). Creativity is a prerequisite to maintaining a position in haute cuisine, especially in Michelin-starred restaurants, where it may be represented in the menu, new dishes, new ideas, and gastronomic advances (Bouty & Gomez, 2013). For example, the emergence of modernist and molecular cuisine in terms of chefs such as Heston Blumenthal or Ferran Adrià and their restaurants (Capdevila et al., 2018).

2.2. Communication information

As customers' service consumption has shifted heavily to the online environment, restaurants are required to develop digital marketing strategies to compete effectively in the market (Rahman et al., 2020). There are many benefits of digital marketing in restaurant industry, including customer engagement (B. Kim et al., 2020), electronic Word-of-Mouth (Liu et al., 2018), satisfaction and trust (Gelashvili et al., 2021), and destination visit intention (Shi & Lee, 2021). Dabas et al. (2021) examined the adoption of digital marketing tools in 64 restaurants in the UK and India, including website, email, and social media. From their findings, for website marketing, restaurants had developed their websites with an online reservation system, links to social media, excellent photography, and brand communication in a storytelling context, with many of them using search engine optimisation with brand-related keywords. For email

marketing, customers can receive email newsletters after subscription, whose contents include information of special events, updates, positive reviews by food critics and food bloggers. For social media marketing, the restaurants created official accounts or chef's accounts on popular social media platforms (i.e., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, Snapchat) and tracked analytics with numbers of followers, likes, visits, and CTS (click to see conversion rate) to measure ROIs and the effects of campaigns.

2.3. Transaction information

2.3.1. Online reservation

Customers prefer to be able to make reservations for dining to shorten waiting time and to guarantee a table, especially fine dining restaurants (Kimes, 2009; Kimes & Wirtz, 2007). Many restaurants provide online reservation systems on their website. Compared with traditional telephone reservation, online reservation has advantages for restaurants: (1) reduced processing costs, (2) increased volume and revenue, (3) improved service quality (Kimes, 2009; Schaarschmidt & Höber, 2017). For customers, online reservation systems allow them to book tables at any time and from anywhere to increase service convenience and improve reliability as customers to the restaurant because of the information they provide (Kimes, 2009). All these benefits can increase the satisfaction of dining experience (Erkmen, 2019).

2.3.2. Online store

As restaurants provide food and services, which are one-off, relatively intangible, and cannot necessarily be taken away (Johns & Kivela, 2001), many restaurants provide online stores on their website to sell their merchandises that could be delivered, maintained, and shared with others. By acting as branded products' retailers, such initiatives may further enhance the brand image of restaurants (Strizhakova et al., 2008). These branded products could also maintain the interactions between restaurants and their customers after, or even without, dining in the restaurants. Restaurants/retailers who have a higher degree of customer participation, innovation, and brand orientation are also likely to have a stronger own-brand product advantage, attracting loyal customers and increasing profits (Huang et al., 2009).

2.4. Reference information

2.4.1. Celebrity chef

With the boom in food media, popular interest in chefs has been a surge over the past two decades (Giousmpasoglou et al., 2020). Straddling the full spectrum of media offerings, the celebrity chef needs to "publish a book (to be bought), have a website (to be accessed), star in a TV show (to be watched), and preside over a kitchen (to be patronized), beyond cooking" (pp.59) (Hansen, 2015). A celebrity chef is a ubiquitous marketing tool in the foodservice industry,

asserting influence on consumer food habits and choices (Giousmpasoglou et al., 2020), restaurant's brand (Henderson, 2011), customers' willingness to pay and likelihood to repurchase (Chen et al., 2017), and further benefiting culinary destination marketing (Demirkol & Cifci, 2020).

2.4.2. Awards

Awards are used to recognise restaurants that present excellent food and service and can range from internationally recognized awards, the Red Michelin Guide, to local awards established by food provedores or magazines (Edelheim et al., 2011). Awards are important for a restaurant's reputation and "being called an award-winning restaurant serves to set a benchmark of excellence in the competitive set the restaurant is situated in" (Edelheim et al., 2011, p.143). With credible awards, such as Michelin stars and 50 Best Restaurants, the awarded restaurants are more likely to attract customers in terms of willingness to pay price premiums (Kiatkawsin & Han, 2019), receive positive customers' comments and ratings (Ma & Hsiao, 2019), and attitude and purchase intention (Chiang & Guo, 2021). Moreover, the quality and quantity of award-winning restaurants can have significant impacts on culinary destination branding especially if there are a number located in the same area (Castillo-Manzano et al., 2021).

2.4.3. User-generated reviews on Trip Advisor

Reviews are important for the reputation and word-of-mouth of a restaurant (Lei & Law, 2015). Consumers read online reviews before making purchase decisions and share their post-consumption opinions (Anaya-Sánchez et al., 2019). The reviews could be categorised into three main types: professional, semi-professional, and user-generated (Parikh et al., 2016), with customers increasingly turn to user-generated reviews to organise their travel (Filieri et al., 2018). Many popular tourism online platforms, such as TripAdvisor, allow tourists to share us-er-generated reviews (Prayag et al., 2018). Such reviews have significant impacts on both hospitality service providers and customers. They have been identified as influencing service providers' performance and financial risks (Pan & Ha, 2021), perceptions and emotional responses (Prayag et al., 2018), and understandings of dining preferences and satisfaction for strategic planning purposes (Park et al., 2020; Vu et al., 2017). User-generated reviews from existing customers also affect pre-dining expectations (Kim & Tanford, 2019), attitudes (Zhang & Hanks, 2018), revisit intentions (Yan et al., 2015), and the perceptions of restaurants (Motoyama & Usher, 2020).

3. Methodology

3.1. Website Contents Analysis (WCA)

This study conducted a WCA to identify the characteristics of destination restaurants. This method is appropriate for compiling a complete list of attributes for evaluation and for studying the online content of destination restaurants, as

this sector has a substantial online presence (Daries et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2018). Previous studies proposed several models for WCA, including ICTR and eMICA, noted above. However, these models are only used for identifying features in a single website, while restaurant visitors, for example, are more likely to search for restaurant information across several websites and online platforms to increase information reliability (Anaya-Sánchez et al., 2019). Therefore, the current study combines the dimensions of general information, communication information, and transaction information from previous models, and provides a new dimension of reference information to generalise the information provided by credible institutions, online platforms, and previous customers instead of the restaurant itself.

3.2. Sample

The websites of 143 destination restaurants were reviewed using content analysis. These restaurants were selected based on rankings from five websites with lists featuring the terms' 'world's best restaurants' and 'best destination restaurants' from booking.com (Booking.com, n.d.), Dandelion Chandelier (Tangen, 2019), Food Wine (Rodell et al., 2020), and the World's 50 Best Restaurants 2021 (Vialou-Clark, 2021). Factors were determined based on literature review and defined before analysis, whereby multiple researchers collected and cross-checked website data for inclusion. Of the restaurants listed on the websites, at the time of analysis (late 2021) nine restaurants were permanently closed, with the online contents of 134 restaurants' therefore being analysed in this study.

3.3. Website contents

The websites contents of each restaurant have been analysed to determine what characteristics destination restaurants put forward to attract customers and how these factors are communicated online. The criteria for determining whether a restaurant is representative of each element is defined and coded as noted in Table 1.

Category	Criteria	Definition	Coding
General information	Location	Is locational information provided? Where is the restaurant located? This was recorded based on the address provided online	City, Country
	Menu	Is a menu provided on the website that outlines what dishes will be served?	Yes / No
	Prices	Does the website state price for individual dishes/set menus?	Yes / No
	Visual content	Does the website provide photos or videos about the restaurants?	Yes / No
	Accommodation	Does the website state any	Yes /

Table 1.Criteria definition and coding.

		information that the restaurant is positioned within a hotel or offers accommodation to guests?	No
	Origin story	Does the website include an origin	Yes /
		story or history about the restaurant?	No
	Chef biography	Does the website include a section	Yes /
		or separate page detailing the information about the head chef, such as awards, work experience, personality, story?	No
	Restaurant	For <i>sustainability</i> , does the website	Yes /
	philosophy	present the words related to sustainability, such as sustainable, sustainability, or environment friendly? For locality, does the website present the words related to locality, such as local, regional, seasonal, terroir? For authenticity, does the website present the words related to authenticity, such as authentic, traditional, classical? For cuisine creativity, does the website present words related to cuisine creativity, such as creative, innovative, inventive, imaginative?	No No
Communications	Website	Is the website accessible? Some	Yes /
information	accessibility	restaurants do not have websites.	No
	Social media	Does the website provide any links to the restaurant or chef's social media accounts?	Yes / No
	Newsletter	Does the website collect user's Email	Yes /
	subscription	address for the newsletter subscription	No
Transaction	Online	Can customers book tables directly on	Yes /
information	reservation	the website?	No
	Online store	Does the website contain an online store to sell restaurant-branded products or act as a food and wine retail outlet?	Yes / No
Reference information	Celebrity chef	Is the chef's name searchable on IMDb (a global online database of information related to films, television series, home videos, videogames, and streaming content online)? Does the chef have any cookbook selling on Amazon Books or the restaurant's website?	Yes / No
	Awards	Does the website list, state, or display awards that have been won?	Yes / No
	User-generated reviews	Is the restaurant listed and reviewed on the popular tourism rating website, Trip Advisor?	Yes / No

4. Findings

4.1. Descriptive statistics

The characteristics of 134 destination restaurants within the four dimensions used in this study are shown in Table 2. The findings indicate that the criteria of 'Communication information' has the highest average score (70%), followed by 'Reference information' (65%), 'General in-formation' (64%), and 'transaction information' (59%). However, there is considerable variation within these categories. All destination restaurants' location information is searchable online and reviewed on TripAdvisor, and most provide information by operating an official website (96%). However, few restaurants offer accommodation (16%) and news subscriptions (28%) on their websites. As for restaurant philosophy, 102 restaurants in total indicate their philosophy on their websites (76%). Over half of them promote authenticity (58%) and locality (56%), but fewer restaurants mention cuisine creativity (42%) and sustainability (34%).

Table 2. The characteristics of destination restaurants.

Category	Criteria	n	%	Average %
General information	Location	134	100%	64%
	Menu	77	57%	
	Prices	107	80%	
	Visual content	118	88%	
	Accommodation	21	16%	
	Origin story	54	40%	
	Chef biography	70	52%	
	Restaurant philosophy	102	76%	
Restaurant philosophy	Sustainability	35	34%	-
	Locality	57	56%	
	Authenticity	58	58%	
	Cuisine creativity	43	42%	
Communication	Website accessibility	129	96%	70%
information	Newsletter subscription	37	28%	
	Social media	113	85%	
Transaction	Online reservation	106	79%	59%
information	Online store	53	40%	
Reference information	Celebrity chef (IMDb) 77 57% 65%		65%	
	Celebrity chef (Cookbook)	59	44%	
	Awards	79	59%	
	TripAdvisor	134	100%	

4.2. Further analysis

The study conducted further analysis using the Pearson r correlation to examine the relationships among categories or characteristics. The summary of relationships between categories, together with means and standard deviations (SD), are provided in Table 3. The results show positive and strong correlations. Communication information and transaction information has the strongest correlation (r = .452, p < .01), while the correlation between communication information and reference information is weakest (r = .228, p < .01).

	Mean	SD	GI	CI	TI	RI
GI	5.10	1.694	1			
CI	2.09	0.677	.327**	1		
TI	1.19	0.706	.255**	.452**	1	
RI	2.60	1.111	.416**	.228**	.411**	1

Table 3. Correlations among categories (n = 134).

GI: General information, CI: Communication information, TI: Transaction information, RI: Reference information; **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The summary of relationships between characteristics, together with means and standard deviations (SD), is provided in Table 4. All restaurants provide location information and TripAdvisor reviews. The menu is positively correlated with price, visual content, website accessibility, newsletter subscription, and awards; price is positively correlated with visual content, chef biography, website accessibility, social media, online reservation, online store, celebrity chef (IMDb), and awards. Visual content with origin story, chef biography, restaurant philosophy, website accessibility, online reservation, and awards. Origin story is positively correlated with chef biography, restaurant philosophy, celebrity chef (cookbook), and awards. Chef biography with restaurant philosophy, website accessibility, online reservation, celebrity chef (IMDb), celebrity chef (cookbook), and awards. Restaurant philosophy is positively correlated with website accessibility, online reservation, celebrity chef (IMDb), and awards. Website accessibility with online reservation, celebrity chef (IMDb), celebrity chef (cookbook), and awards. Newsletter subscription is positively correlated with online reservation and online store. Online reservation with online store, celebrity chef (IMDb), celebrity chef (cookbook), and awards. Online store and celebrity chef (IMDb) is positively correlated with celebrity chef (cookbook) and awards. Celebrity chef (cookbook) is positively correlated with awards. The correlation between origin story and chef biography is the strongest (r = .603, p < .01). Awards are positively correlated with the most identified elements, 11 out of 15.

Table 4. Correlations among characteristics (n = 134).

	Mean	SD	F0	ME	PR	ΛC	AC	so	CB	RF	WA	SN	SM	OR	OT	M	CB	AW	TA
10	_	0	_																
ME	0.57	0.496	e.	_															
PR	0.80	0.403	e .	.283**	-														
VC	0.88	0.325	۳.	.288**	.217*	_													
AC	0.16	0.365	е.	003	.063	.159	-												
SO	0.40	0.492	e .	001	.109	.256**	019	_											
CB	0.52	0.501	e .	.114	*061.	.339**	.042	.603**	_										
RF	92.0	0.428	es.	.120	.155	.388**	.145	.282**	.411**	_									
WA	96.0	0.190	а.	.229**	.392**	.535**	.085	.162	.206*	.351**	_								
NS	0.28	0.449	e .	.194*	144	.124	600.	.071	680.	046	.122	_							
$\mathbf{S}\mathbf{W}$	0.85	0.358	e .	.106	.207*	.040	800.	880.	.061	.158	.139	.165	_						
OR	0.80	0.404	es.	.024	.270**	.175*	.013	.151	*\$61.	.252**	.349**	.272**	.168	_					
0T	0.40	0.491	es.	.017	.216*	.110	.113	.020	.101	084	620.	.354**	.125	.220*	-				
M	0.57	0.496	е.	.023	.170*	.102	.039	.153	.235**	.226**	.229**	.025	.148	.213*	.140	_			
CB	0.44	0.498	e .	119	.146	.048	.155	.221*	.216*	.038	.175*	.158	008	.300**	.297**	.398**	_		
AW	0.59	0.494	e .	.172*	.299**	.254**	.109	.345**	.447**	.315**	.236**	.074	191.	.306**	.179*	.325**	.282**	_	
$\mathbf{T}\mathbf{A}$	-	0	е.	в.	ª.	е.	e.	es .	æ.	е.	е.	e.	es.	е.	в.	▫.	es.	в.	_
																		I	١

LO: Location, ME: Menu, PR: Prices, VC: Visual content, AC: Accommodation, OS: Origin story, CB: Chef biography, RP: Restaurant philosophy, SU: Sustainability, LC: Locality, AU: Authenticity, CC: Cuisine creativity, WA: Website accessibility, NS: Newsletter subscription, SM: Social media, OR: Online reservation, OT: Online store, IM: Celebrity chef (IMDb), CB: Celebrity chef (cookbook), AW: Awards, TA: TripAdvisor; a. Cannot be computed because at least one of the variables is constant; **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The summary of relationships among restaurant philosophy, together with means and standard deviations (SD), are provided in Table 5. From the results, sustainability and locality are positively correlated (r = .313, p < .01). Also, the relationship between locality and authenticity is positive and significant (r = .271, p < .01). The results thus indicate that destination restaurants usually promote the philosophy of locality with sustainability and authenticity.

	Mean	SD	Sustainability	Locality	Authenticity	Creativity
Sustainability	0.26	0.441	1			
Locality Authenticity	0.43	0.496	.313**	1		
	0.44	0.498	.157	.271**	1	
Creativity	0.32	0.469	008	.023	.034	1

Table 5. Restaurant philosophy (n = 134).

5. Discussion

The analysis of the online presence of the destination restaurants emphasises their more tangible elements. Restaurant locations are searchable online and, usually, linked to Google Map, which is convenient for customers to plan their itinerary. Visual content is presented on 88% of the restaurant websites, with images or videos showcasing the place where the food is prepared and distributed, pictures of the restaurant's staff and head chef, and the food offered. The visual contents not only indicate the physical environment and place relations of restaurants but also provide implied cues as to the positioning and ethos (Demangeot& Broderick, 2016; Liberato et al., 2018).

Price (80%) is a significant factor for restaurants as they provide crucial information for the consumer to justify their chosen dining experience. From the results, price has significant and positive correlations with some chef-related elements, such as chef biography, celebrity chef (IMDb), and awards. These fine dining restaurants are positioned within the market as leading destination restaurants, with high prices to match the quality of food served (Kim et al., 2014; Mohamed et al., 2022), as such price indications may serve to reinforce their positioning. However, perhaps surprisingly, menus (57%) are featured much less than price on the analysed websites. Menus provide consumers with the first impression of a restaurant with ingredients, cooking method, and the nature of the dish that ultimately guides consumer consumption (Mackison et al., 2009; Ozdemir, 2012). It is possible that not disclosing menu detail can also be regarded as an alternative marketing strategy to spark further interest with consumers (Parsa & Njite, 2004) and suggest freshness and daily determination of what is served. Another explanation of undisclosed menus might be the mechanism of reservation. As many fine dining restaurants require reservations more than six months in advance, it is not possible to predict what seasonal ingredients could be used in cooking, especially in terroir restaurants. From the correlation analysis, the identified restaurants are more likely to provide

^{**.} Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

information of price, menu, and visual contents on their websites, which also indicates the direct visual communication via menu design with customers (Ozdemir, 2012). Offering accommodation (16%) has the lowest percentage score with most analysed restaurants located in large cities so that the customers' accommodation might not be a concern.

With respect to \ general information, 102 websites (76%) indicate a restaurant philosophy, while 58% of websites promote the authenticity of the restaurant. The latter could be classified into two groups. Interestingly, some promote the cuisine of regions other than where the restaurant is located. For example, Belon, located in Hong Kong, China, is "a neo-Parisian restaurant rooted in French culinary techniques" and presenting "exquisitely-executed classically-minded cuisine" (Belon, n.d.). For others 'authentic' restaurants reflect s local cuisine or a contemporary interpretation of the local cuisine by applying traditional cooking methods or local ingredients. For instance, Masque in Mumbai, India, claims that they "re-imagine a new wave of modern Indian cuisine" by "revisiting traditional cooking and ingredients with purpose, and discovering ways in which these can build cross-cultural bridges" (Masque, n.d.). Such restaurants also usually promote locality, which is noted on 56% of destination restaurants' websites. From the correlation analysis, locality is usually demonstrated with authenticity and sustainability. Many restaurants reviewed in this study highlight locality by creating a menu that uses local seasonal produce (it might refer to sustainability), decorating the dining environment in local style (it might refer to authenticity), and mentioning that they belong within the roots of local community. By doing this, these terroir restaurants provide cuisine integrated with local environment, tradition, heritage, and culture (Mohamed et al., 2022). In contrast, 42% of restaurants are more focused on producing innovative or unique modern cuisine, indicating cuisine creativity. Some chefs create cuisine by searching and recombining some elements (Messeni Petruzzelli & Savino, 2016). Maido's chef, Mitsuharu Tsumura, creates Nikkei cuisine by combining Peruvian cuisine with Japanese techniques (Maido, n.d.). Providing a novel dining experience is another direction to demonstrate cuisine creativity.

Somewhat surprisingly given its role in contemporary gastronomy (Gössling & Hall, 2022), sustainability is only mentioned by 34% of restaurants as part of their philosophy. One obvious way to demonstrate sustainability is by presenting related awards, such as a Michelin Green Star on their websites. Among the studied restaurants, Amass provide the most detailed sustainability practices in terms of no food waste, compost, biofuel, recycling, water, single-use plastics, carbon footprint and life cycle assessment, organics and animal welfare, low impact fishing, community outreach, and sustainability acknowledgement (Amass, n.d.). Restaurant philosophy is correlated with other culture-related elements in identified destination restaurants' websites, including intangible elements of chef biography (52%) and origin story (40%). The two elements are strongly related, emphasising the importance of storytelling, such biographical

and historical contexts can promote restaurant's brand identity and further engage customers' attention (Gains, 2013).

As for accessibility, 96% of restaurants' websites are accessible and 85% of them have social media official accounts. In the five restaurants without official websites, three operate on other social media platforms instead of websites. The Facebook page of Sorn, Thailand, is designed to provide restaurant news and information, make a reservation, and message the restaurant directly (Sorn, n.d.). Users can also translate the content to any language that they are familiar with. This is also one of the advantages of social media, as the identified websites provide limited language choice and not all text can be copied and pasted to web translation software. Potential and existing customers can receive the latest restaurants' news not only by following social media but also by subscribing to email newsletters (Hartemo, 2016), although only 28% of identified websites provide email subscription.

For transaction information related to purchasing behaviour, 79% of websites enable online reservation. This characteristic is correlated with website accessibility and newsletter subscription, as booking the table via the official website and email might be two major methods of online reservation. Among the 29 restaurants that do not have this service, eight require customers to contact them directly to make a booking via phone/email/instant messaging (like WhatsApp) and provide related information, such as contact details, confirmation of credit card and price, requirements of customers. Forty per cent of restaurants operate online stores to sell their branded products on the websites. For example, Disfrutar has a shop on its website, namely "CXC Store", selling own-brand products, such as gift vouchers worth a meal in the restaurants, books/cookbooks, wines and drinks, tableware and accessories, canned and prepared foods, clothes, and equipment (Disfrutar, n.d.). Such restaurant's branded merchandise can create awareness, increase familiarity, and help build customer loyalty, including with those people who can never actually eat there (Denizci Guillet & Tasci, 2009).

Reviews from other customers and credible sources are important for the decision-making of potential customers (Zhang & Hanks, 2018). In this study, all restaurants can be reviewed on TripAdvisor, indicating that tourists' decision making could be supported by user-generated reviews. Fifty-nine per cent of websites also present the awards that the restaurants and/or the chefs have received, such as Michelin Stars, the 50 Best Restaurants, and James Beard Awards (Best Chef). Apart from customers' reviews, these awards are reinforced restaurant positioning. Moreover, correlated with most of identified elements, award is the most important characteristic of destination restaurants in this study. Celebrity chefs are identified by programmes on IMDb (57%) and the cookbooks sold on Amazon Book (40%). The elements of awards and celebrity chefs (IMDb & cookbook) are strongly correlated. They distinguish the destination restaurants from normal restaurants and has not been high-lighted in previous research. However, such information, creates substantial awareness of the profile of the

restaurant and the experience, and may enhance customer willingness to pay price premiums (Kiatkawsin & Han, 2019).

6. Conclusion

Tourism destination planning and marketing are fundamentally place making actions to shape the image and imageability of a place and further to stimulate visitors' sense of place (Chen et al., 2021). To date, compared with the same chain restaurants appearing in every tourism place, diminishing localness, and increasing place lessness (Lew, 2017), destination restaurants are an important part of the strategic marketing and development of tourism destinations. Because of their high profile they are a significant element in place marketing and promotion while, from a culinary perspective, they are regarded as being creative providers of distinctive food experiences (Mohamed et al., 2022). However, despite growing recognition of their importance research on them is limited, and often narrowly focused. This study identified a population of internationally recognized destination restaurants and conducted a website content analysis using 17 elements to better analyse their characteristics.

This study found that, in line with some previous studies, destination restaurants provide various reference information online with respect to their "culture", including restaurant philosophy, origin story, and chef biography, to distinguish themselves. The findings reflect that destination restaurants communicate more than just the utilitarian aspects, e.g., quality and price, but also experiential and social values such as, ambience, authenticity, and local food culture (Chang et al., 2011; Erkmen, 2019; Mohamed et al., 2022). However, we suggest that pricing is used to reflect positioning as well. Indeed, a holistic interpretation of websites would suggest that philosophy and positioning go hand-in-hand in terms of online communication and promotion. Compared to local culture or regional culture marketed in traditional tourism destinations, the culture of destination restaurants are small and subtle enhancements to existing local food culture.

The findings of this study also provide some new insights compared with those from previous studies. Locality and authenticity are of importance to some of the restaurants in terms of web communication but arguably not to the extent to what has been previously suggested and, as such, is not a defining characteristic of a destination restaurant. In contrast to previous research, our findings show that only some destination restaurants emphasise these factors whilst others appear more focused on the overall experience for customers in the restaurant without reference to the broader area or local produce. Within the perspective of placemaking, many destinations, as well as their normal restaurants, promote themselves with supposedly place-bound qualities to inform authenticity or locality (Hultman & Hall, 2012), while this study highlights that destination restaurants are customer-oriented, prioritizing customer's experience instead of "staging" themselves by authenticating local food and expressing local

culture. Satisfying customer's needs and demonstrating the restaurant's culture therefore distinguish destination restaurants from normal restaurants.

However, this situation does not necessarily negatively affect the role a destination restaurant in place promotion given the overall significance of restaurants for attracting visitors, although it may possibly affect more specialized product promotion connected to place. Nevertheless, a very significant element of destination restaurants which has not been systematically examined before is the role of celebrity chefs in terms of specific association of the head chef and/or restaurant with books and television. This link was identified in over half of all the destination restaurants studied and, although the extent of the influence cannot be ascertained from content analysis alone, it is clear that the interrelationships between destination restaurant status and promotion via other media are strong. This suggests that in contemporary commodified food cultures the relationship between celebrity chef status and celebrity or destination restaurant status is very strong. Future research will no doubt further examine this connection together with the important role that destination restaurants have in place promotion and marketing and, at a consumer scale, the consumption of experiences and the experience of consumption.

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