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WHAT MAKES AN EXCEPTIONAL CUISINE THAT WORTH A SPECIAL JOURNEY?

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Abstract

The food tourism supply chain includes as consumption activities 'Fine dining' and as classification schemes the 'Michelin star system'. Despite the growing interest in luxury dining, there are only a few studies published about the high-end of the restaurant industry. The main objective of study two was to identify the main dimensions of the Michelin Stared Restaurant experiences as revealed by customers' narratives shared in social media websites in the post-purchase phase of their experience. Moreover, this dissertation aims at studying whether the dimensions of the experience vary according to market segments (client type, gender and age) an according to value ratings. Mixed content analysis methods, combining Leximancer with narrative analysis, were used to identify the main themes in restaurant reviews. Moreover, the main themes were graphically displayed in a concept map. The results were based into two samples, from Portuguese two-star restaurants, and from three star restaurants worldwide. The analysis revealed that 12 main themes describe the fine dining experience, as follows: 'restaurant', 'food service', 'menu', 'chef', 'wine', 'meal', 'dining', 'staff', 'feel', 'worth', 'dessert' and 'delicious'. The result also revealed that fine dining customers are not a homogeneous group and that demographics proved to be effective market segmentation variables. Moreover, high and low levels of value ratings are linked with different themes of the experience. From a theoretical point of view this dissertation is expected to add to the literature of food tourism by providing a better understanding of the dimensions of the dining and provides evidence of the relevance of market segmentation variables. Managerial implications were also drawn.

Key-words: Food tourism; Michelin Stared restaurants; Fine Dining; Experience; Web reviews; Content analysis.

JEL: Z310, Z330.

Resumo

A cadeia de valor do turismo gastronómico inclui atividades de consumo, como as refeições de luxo, e o sistema de classificação como o Sistema de Estrelas Michelin. Apesar do crescente interesse no segmento de restauração de luxo, poucos estudos foram publicados sobre este segmento na indústria de restauração. O principal objetivo deste estudo é identificar as principais dimensões associadas à experiência num restaurante com Estrelas Michelin, com base das narrativas partilhadas em plataformas de redes sociais na fase pós-consumo do processo de compra. Adicionalmente, esta dissertação tem como objetivo estudar se as dimensões da experiencia variam de acordo com o segmento de mercado (tipo de cliente, sexo e idade) e de acordo com as avaliações do valor da experiência. Para identificar os principais temas nos comentários *online* são usados métodos de análise de conteúdo misto, que combinam o *Leximancer* com uma análise narrativa. Adicionalmente, os principais temas são apresentados graficamente num mapa conceptual. Os resultados derivam de duas amostras, de restaurantes Michelin com duas estrelas localizados em Portugal e de restaurantes Michelin com três estrelas localizados em diversos países. A análise revelou a existência de 12 temas que descrevem a experiência de refeição de luxo, nomeadamente: restaurante, serviço de refeição, menu, *chef*, vinho, refeição, jantar, *staff*, sentir, valer a pena, sobremesa e delicioso. Os resultados também revelaram que os consumidores de restaurantes de luxo não são um grupo homogéneo e que as variáveis demográficas são variáveis efetivas de segmentação de mercado. Para além disso, *ratings* elevados e baixos estão associados a diferentes temas da experiência. Numa perspetiva teórica, espera-se que esta dissertação forneça uma melhor compreensão das dimensões da experiencia das refeições de luxo e forneça evidencia da relevância de variáveis de segmentação. São também apresentadas implicações para a gestão.

Key-words: Turismo gastronómico; Restaurantes estrelas michelin; Refeição de luxo; Experiência; Comentários online; Análise qualitativa.

JEL: Z310, Z330.

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1   Introduction

The terms 'food tourism', 'culinary tourism' or 'gastronomy tourism' are often used interchangeably. They have been conceptualised in the literature in various ways, mostly through consumer-focused definitions (Ignatov and Smith, 2006). Gastronomy is the enjoyment of good food and beverages (Gillespie, 2001), often denoting a wealthy or aesthetically superior lifestyle and placing emphasis on epicurean consumption (Ignatov and Smith, 2006). Culinary activities include special styles of food preparation and consumption, as well as the social context in which food is acquired and prepared to be shared (Ignatov and Smith, 2006), with an emphasis on encountering and consuming other places and cultures (Long, 2004).

An analysis of definitions of food tourism in different types of literature (e.g. Chen and Huang, 2016; Everett and Slocum, 2013; Hall and Sharples, 2003; Ignatov and Smith, 2006; Lee, 2014; Long, 2004; Robinson and Getz, 2016; Smith and Xiao, 2008; Tikkanen, 2007; Wang et al., 2007) reveals that this tourism subsector includes purchasing, consuming, appreciating and/or learning about local culinary resources (i.e. products or specialities) as a significant motivation or activity. Hall and Sharples (2003) argue that a distinction needs to be made between tourists who make food consumption a part of their travel experiences and those who might change their activities, behaviours and even their destination selections because of their interest in food.

According to the United Nations' World Tourism Organisation (UNTWO) (2012), gastronomy tourism 'applies to tourists and visitors who plan their trips partially or totally in order to taste the cuisine of … place[s] or to carry out activities related to gastronomy'. The supply side of food tourism includes a variety of resources, such as facilities, activities, events and organisations that support food-related experiences (Ignatov and Smith, 2006).

Food tourists' motivations to travel to destinations are thus generally considered to be influenced significantly by a desire to savour local food, and this aspect is embedded in most formal definitions (Lee, 2014). Nonetheless, academic researchers continue to debate whether the importance travellers place on food is essential to classifying them as food

tourists. For example, Ignatov and Smith (2006) and Smith and Xiao (2008) state that food tourism encompasses trips specifically motivated by culinary interests, as well as travel in which culinary experiences occur but are not the primary motivation for trips. The cited authors posit that the latter can be said to engage in food tourism as long as they are self-aware and they take a conscious interest in experiencing destinations through their food.

In contrast, Hall and Sharples (2003) argue that a distinction needs to be made between tourists who make food consumption a part of their travel experiences and those who might change their activities, behaviours and even their destinations because of their interest in food. Overall, most conceptual frameworks apply the category of food tourism to tourists and visitors who plan their trips partially or totally in order to taste the local cuisine or to carry out gastronomy-related activities (Al Karim and Chi, 2010; UNWTO, 2012).

Although food tourism is still a small niche market, it attracts a quite select type of tourist with a high volume of expenditure on extremely high-quality products. This niche has great potential for expansion as food is becoming an increasingly important motivation for tourism. The sector includes events, facilities, activities and organisations related to the food industry (Ignatov and Smith, 2006). Thus, the food tourism supply chain includes 'fine dining' restaurants (i.e. consumption activities) and the *Michelin Guide* star system (i.e. classification schemes).

The Michelin star system classifies the upper segment of restaurants worldwide based on food quality ranging from one to three stars (Johnson et al., 2005). A one-star restaurant denotes 'a good\ place to stop on your journey'. A two-star restaurant is 'worth a detour'. A three-star label means this is 'worth a special journey'. Luxury restaurants have been analysed from different perspectives by previous research, such as the effects of Michelin stars (Johnson et al., 2005), marketing strategy (e.g. Miranda et al, 2015), food innovation (e.g. Ottenbacher and Harrington, 2007), chef identity (e.g. Palmer et al., 2010), culinary team composition (Tommaso et al., 2017) and consumer loyalty (e.g. Peng and Chen, 2015).

Recent research in this field has also focused on social media issues. Consumers write about restaurant experiences for a variety of online review sites (Rousseau, 2012). User-generated

restaurant reviews thus represent an interesting intersection of participatory culture and 'foodie' discourse (Vásquez and Chik, 2015). Studies have analysed food photography in the social media (Liu et al., 2013), the website characteristics of restaurants included in the *Michelin Guide* (Miranda et al., 2015) and online complaints (e.g. Vásquez and Chik, 2015). However, in so far as is the present research could determine, no previous study has analysed Web reviews about Michelin-starred restaurants from the perspective of service quality and consumer experiences.

The current research is based on the argument that Web reviews of luxury dining experiences offer a valuable source of information regarding the key dimensions of guests' narratives. The main objective was thus to identify the factors contributing to overall experiences of haute cuisine, based on Web reviews written in the post-experience phase.

The structure of this dissertation is as follows. The first chapter (i.e. 'Introduction') describes the theoretical background drawn from the literature on food tourism and the niche market of Michelin restaurants. This chapter also presents the research gaps and objectives for the dissertation and for each study. Chapters two through four present the three studies of this dissertation, respectively, following a research paper structure with the standard sections: abstract, introduction, literature review, methodology, results and conclusion. The dissertation ends with conclusions, theoretical contributions and suggested avenues for future research.

1.1 Theoretical Background

1.1.1 Food tourism

With the growing importance and popularity of food tourism, academic interest in this tourism niche has increased exponentially over the past decade (Ab Karim and Chi, 2010; Chen and Huang, 2016; Hall et al., 2003; Hjalager and Richards, 2002; Kim et al., 2011; Kivela and Crotts, 2006; Long, 2003; Robinson and Getz, 2016; Smith and Xiao, 2008). The literature on the supply side of food tourism includes the connections between food and culture (e.g. du Rand and Health, 2006; du Rand et al., 2003; Hall and Macionis, 1998; Lee and Arcoia, 2011; Quan and Wang, 2004; Tikkanen, 2007), agriculture (e.g. Belisle, 1983;

Frochot, 2003), economies (e.g. Boyne et al., 2003; Correia et al., 2008; Hjalager and Richards, 2002), destination image and branding (e.g. Horng and Tsai, 2012; Okumus et al., 2013) and development and marketing (e.g. Boniface, 2003; Lee and Arcodia, 2011). Research on the demand side has focused on food tourism as tourists' experiences (e.g. Kivela and Crotts, 2006; Quan and Wang, 2004) and on food tourists themselves (e.g. Kivela and Crotts, 2009).

Many studies have shown that food is an important motivational factor when tourists choose to travel to destinations (Ab Karim and Chi, 2010; Boniface, 2003; Frochot, 2003; Hall, 2003; Hall et al., 2003; Henderson, 2004; Hjalager and Corigliano, 2000; Kim et al., 2010; Kivela and Crotts, 2005; McKercher et al., 2008; Quan and Wang, 2004). Food has also been confirmed to be an important factor in tourists' experiences of destinations (Henderson, 2009; Homg et al., 2012), which means food can be used to promote destinations' uniqueness (Kivela and Crotts, 2006; Okumus et al., 2013). In addition, local and regional food has great potential as a contributor to destination competitiveness, both from a tourism development and destination marketing perspective (du Rand and Health, 2006; Hjalager and Richards, 2002; Ignatov and Smith, 2006; Okumus et al., 2007).

Food tourism can lead to regional development – strengthening local production through backward linkages in tourism supply-chain partnerships (Frochot, 2003; Renko et al., 2010; Telfer and Wall, 1996) – and to more sustainable tourism (Everett and Aitchison, 2008; Sims, 2009). This has led many governments to create marketing campaigns that seek to attract food tourists (Hirst et al. 2012; Ignatov and Smith 2006; Sánchez-Cañizares and López-Guzmán, 2012).

1.1.2 Food tourism supply chain

The supply side of food tourism includes various types of resources, such as events, facilities, activities and organisations, that support food tourism (Ignatov and Smith, 2006). Food tourism involves a vast range of opportunities and initiatives, often offering many options to regions and companies that are considering developing food tourism products. Knowledge and networks are, therefore, fundamental to choosing the most appropriate resources (Hall

and Sharples, 2008), as well as sustaining and growing food-related businesses. Table 1 presents the main elements of the food tourism supply chain. The present dissertation focused on the intersection of the consumption activity of restaurant dining and the organisation of restaurant classification through the *Michelin Guide* star system.

Table 1. **Food Tourism Supply Chain**

Facilities	Activities	Events	Organisations
Buildings/structures	*Consumption*	*Consumer shows*	*Restaurant classification/certification systems (e.g. Michelin and Taste of Nova Scotia)*
Food processing facilities Wineries Breweries Farmers' markets Food stores Food-related museums Restaurants	Restaurant dining Picnics utilising locally-grown produce Purchases of retail food and beverages Pick-your own operations	Food and wine shows Cooking equipment and kitchen shows Product launches	Food/wine classification systems (e.g. VQA) Associations (e.g. Cuisine Canada, Slow Food)
Land use	*Tours*	*Festivals*	
Farms Orchards Vineyards Urban restaurant districts	Wine regions Agricultural regions City food districts	Food festivals Wine festivals Harvest festivals	
Routes	*Education/observation*		
Wine routes Food routes Gourmet trails	Cooking schools Wine tasting/education Winery tours Observations of chef competitions Food, beverage magazines and books		

Source: Adapted from: Ignatov and Smith (2006: 240)

1.1.3 Michelin-starred restaurants

The luxury segment of the restaurant industry has grown rapidly over the last two decades (Han and Hyun, 2017). The success of fine dining restaurants relies on authenticity, unique identity, creativity, food quality and consistency (Gehrels and Kristanto, 2007; Johnson et al., 2005). The Michelin star system was created to recognise the quality and consistency of

world-class restaurants' food (Bóka and Kovács, 2015; Johnson et al., 2005; Surlemont and Johnson, 2005). The *Michelin Guide* or *Red Guide* is considered a reliable and reputable source of information about haute cuisine (Johnson et al., 2005; Surlemont and Johnson, 2005). Thus, this guide has made Michelin-starred restaurants an important driver of consumer choices.

Luxury restaurants have increasingly attracted the attention of researchers (Johnson et al., 2005; Palmer et al., 2010; Tommaso et al., 2017). A trend observed in the restaurant industry is more information is available about food, especially restaurant reviews. Food bloggers use participatory forms of digital media to write their reviews, thereby changing various conventions associated with restaurant reviewing (Rousseau, 2012). Online restaurant review sites also offer consumers opportunities to share their dining experiences with those who have parallel interests (Vásquez and Chik, 2015). Restaurant Web reviews have thus enhanced foodie discourse among consumers (Vásquez and Chik, 2015). Social media issues such as this have attracted researchers' attention, producing studies that have analysed food photography shared online (Liu et al., 2013), restaurant websites' characteristics (Miranda et al., 2015) and online complaints (Vásquez and Chik, 2015).

1.1.4   Role of Web reviews in service quality studies

Zhang and Cole (2016) argue that Web reviews are a valuable source of information for researchers seeking to study consumer experiences in the hospitality and tourism industry. The cited authors state, 'E[-]WOM [electronic word of mouth] has thus been recognised as a natural setting for the study of travellers' lived experiences' (Zhang and Cole, 2016: 16). In particular, more researchers have begun to examine Web reviews to identify service attributes that influence customer satisfaction (Pearce and Wu, 2016; Zhang and Cole, 2016).

Consumers can easily share their views and experiences on websites and review platforms supported by Web 2.0 technological developments (Au et al., 2014). As a result, customers currently tend to rely on online feedback when making their choices (Au et al., 2014). Web reviews provide accessible, reliable, credible and readily available information for both consumers and researchers (Lu and Stepchenkova, 2012).

The use of Web reviews as a data source in studies of consumer experiences has increased in several areas of hospitality and tourism research. These have included, among others, shopping tourism (Wu et al., 2014), senior narratives (Kazeminia et al., 2015), medical tourism (Rodrigues et al., 2017), romantic-themed attractions (Pearce and Wu, 2016), lodging for guests with mobility challenges (Zhang and Cole, 2016) and ecotourism (Lu and Stepchenkova, 2012).

Thus, Web reviews have received increased interest in the literature as a means to identifying the main dimensions of consumers' overall experiences in hospitality and tourism. Researchers have acknowledged the important role of social media platforms in food information disclosure, in particular. However, previous studies have not examined consumer experiences of Michelin-starred restaurants shared online.

1.2 Research Objectives

The main objective of study one, entitled 'Food tourism: a systematic literature review', was to identify the main insights offered in the existing literature regarding food tourism. The primary objective of study two, with the title 'Michelin restaurants: exceptional cuisine worth a detour', was to identify the main dimensions of two-star Michelin restaurant experiences as revealed by customers' narratives shared on social media websites in the post-purchase phase. Study three, entitled 'Michelin restaurants: excellent cuisine worth a special journey', had three objectives. These were:

(1) To identify the main dimensions of customers' experiences of restaurants awarded three-stars by Michelin, as revealed by narratives posted on social media websites in the post-purchase phase
(2) To identify the main narratives linked with high and low value for money ratings
(3) To test whether the dimensions of experiences vary according to market segments (e.g. client type and gender)

1.3 Research Method

1.3.1 Study one

Data collection for study one included reviewing relevant studies published in English in scientific journals available in the B-on database. The data search covered 20 years of published studies. The search keywords were 'food' *or* 'gastronomy' *or* 'culinary' *and* 'tourism'. A review dataset was created to store the data for further analysis.

The first study employed a hybrid design comprising three steps (see Jin and Wang [2016]): (1) a systematic quantitative review, (2) narrative analysis and (3) semantic network analysis. The review offered a descriptive assessment of the state of the art of research on food tourism, providing descriptive statistics on the distribution of papers by author, year, research design, target population and the most frequent keywords. Narrative analysis was used to identify the main topical areas, discover emerging themes and suggest knowledge gaps and avenues for future research. Finally, semantic network analysis offered a visual representation of key links between research topics.

1.3.2 Study two

Study two targeted the most highly awarded, Michelin-starred restaurants in Portugal in 2016. The selected restaurants are located in three Portuguese cities: Lisbon, Albufeira and Almancil. The data were manually collected and stored on an Excel spreadsheet with the following column headings: Restaurant, Review Title, Review and Rating (1–5). The latter included the categories of Terrible (1), Poor (2), Average (3), Very Good (4) and Excellent (5). The sample included 600 reviews.

Content analysis has gained popularity as an effective method to interpret the fast-growing corpus of Web reviews. Content analysis was used to process the Web reviews collected by applying a two-step approach (Pearce and Wu, 2016) – a quantitative phase (i.e. lexical) followed by qualitative (i.e. narrative) analysis. The quantitative step was performed using Leximancer software, which generated a concept map with a visual display of the main dimensions of consumer experiences in restaurants given two Michelin stars. The qualitative

step identified customer narratives that supported the main dimensions identified in the quantitative analysis.

1.3.3 Study three

This study targeted 16 three-star Michelin restaurants worldwide. The data source for this study was online user-generated reviews shared on TripAdvisor. The data were collected on an Excel spreadsheet with the following columns: Restaurant, Review Title, Review, Client Type (i.e. singles, families or friends), Nationality, Age, Gender and Quantitative Rating (1–5).

The third study also employed a two-step content analysis approach. This mixed-method approach combined structured quantitative methods with unstructured qualitative methods in order to capture different broader components of textual eWOM (Zhang and Cole, 2016). As in study two, a concept map with the main narrative themes was produced using Leximancer software. The qualitative (i.e. narrative) step identified which source files (i.e. Web reviews) contained particular topics (Tkaczynski et al., 2015). This step added greater depth of meaning to each theme obtained in the first step. In order to achieve study three's objectives, conceptual comparisons highlighting divergence between groups – defined by tags – in the data were also made. These groups included classifications by clients' gender, age and type, as well as value for money ratings.

1.4 Research Summary

Table 2 provides an overview of the objectives and research designs of the three studies.

Table 2.   **Overview of Objectives and Research Designs**

	Study One (Chapter 2)	**Study Two (Chapter 3)**	**Study Three (Chapter 4)**
Title	Identifying the Main Themes in the Food Tourism Literature	Excellent Cuisine Worth a Detour: Dimensions of Luxury Dining Experiences	Exceptional cuisine that worth a special journey: Themes in web reviews
Main research objective	To identify the insights offered by the existing literature regarding food tourism	To identify the factors contributing to overall satisfaction with haute cuisine in the post-experience phase, based on online user-generated content	(1) To identify the factors contributing to overall satisfaction with restaurants awarded three stars by Michelin, based on online user-generated content written in the post-experience phase (2) To confirm whether dimensions of customers' overall experiences vary according to clients' type, gender and value for money ratings
Research Context	Food tourism academic papers	Portuguese Michelin two-star restaurants	Three Michelin-star restaurants worldwide
Research design	Hybrid systematic literature review (i.e. narrative, systematic and semantic network analysis)	Mixed content analysis (i.e. narrative and quantitative analyses, including Leximancer) of Web reviews shared online	Mixed content analysis (i.e. narrative and quantitative analyses, including Leximancer) of Web reviews shared online, as well as segmentation analysis by clients' type and ratings

Source: Author

2   Identifying the Main Themes in the Food Tourism Literature

Abstract

Purpose: Many tourists make food consumption part of their travel experiences or select their destinations because of an interest in food. Food tourism has therefore attracted much attention from both academics and practitioners. The present study sought to identify the main insights the existing literature offers into food tourism.

Design/methodology/approach: This study employed a hybrid method that combined a systematic quantitative literature review and narrative and semantic network analyses. The research included an exploration of the themes and methods of 183 papers.

Findings: Content analyses revealed that the main themes in the literature on food tourism address topics such as food and tourism experiences, rural and sustainable tourism, culinary marketing, local food, destination food image, travel satisfaction, restaurants, festivals, hospitality and food safety.

Originality/value: The results offer useful insights into food tourism gained by employing a hybrid method to review the relevant literature.

Keywords: food tourism; systematic literature review; semantic analysis

Article classification: Research paper

2.1 Introduction

Food and tourism have an extremely close relationship (Henderson, 2009; Horng and Tsai, 2012) since food is an integral part of destinations' cultures and people (du Rand and Health, 2006; du Rand and Heath, 2006; Quan and Wang, 2004). The selection and preparation of food ingredients, the manner of consumption and its social context are part of each society's heritage. Food is thus a cultural artefact that provides a medium for the expression of local culture and connects tourists with destinations' unique aspects (Ottenbacher and Harrington, 2013). In addition, food involves cultural acts (Okumus et al., 2013) that allow tourists to become quickly involved in local cultures through authentic experiences such as eating typical dishes or drinking local wines (Chen and Huang, 2016).

Food is also a tourist attraction in its own right (Henderson, 2009), which has grown into a niche tourism market (Okumus et al., 2013). Food is becoming one of the most important attractions (Horng and Tsai, 2012; Kim and Eves, 2012) and, unlike other travel activities and offers, is available all year round, any time of day and in any weather. Thus, food can be considered a tourism product (Henderson, 2009; Okumus et al., 2013).

Moreover, food is a tourism experience that is an indispensable part of travel experiences (Sánchez-Cañizares and López-Guzmán, 2012). As a central driver of memorable experiences, food positively influences tourists' experiences (du Rand and Health, 2006; Mason and Paggiaro, 2012) and generates tourist satisfaction (Okumus et al., 2013).

Food tourism research has increased significantly in the last decade. Lee and Scott (2015) reviewed the literature on food tourism, targeting 48 journals that address marketing food as a tourist attraction. According to the cited authors, '[i]t is important to expand the study of food tourism and how food can be a special interest product rather than just a ubiquitous activity that most tourists need in any destination' (Lee and Scott, 2015: 109).

To answer this call for further research, the literature on this topic first needs to be reviewed by following procedures that compare research scope, themes and methods. The present study sought, therefore, to conduct a holistic, comprehensive review of journal articles published between 2004 and 2017, to determine the status of research on food tourism. In particular, this review addressed the following question: What insights into food tourism does the existing literature offer?

The structure of this paper is as follows. The next section presents the methodology used to perform the systematic literature review. The results section is organised under three subheadings: results of the systematic quantitative review, results of the narrative analysis and results of the semantic network analysis. The final section offers conclusions, limitations and avenues for future research.

2.2 Methodology

A search was conducted to find all articles that include the words 'food' and 'tourism' or 'gastronomy' in their title or keywords. The search brought up a total of 183 articles published in English in 75 journals (see Table 3).

Research in this area has increased significantly. From the first to the last period of analysis, the number of relevant articles doubled. The *Journal of Culinary Science and Technology* published the most articles on this topic between 2004 and 2017, followed by *Tourism Management*, the *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism* and the *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*.

Table 3.   **Number of Articles by Journal and Period**

Journal	2004–2009	2010–2017	Total
Journal of Culinary Science and Technology	8	10	18
Tourism Management	2	11	13
Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism	1	8	9
Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing	4	4	8
Journal of Heritage Tourism		7	7
Journal of Sustainable Tourism	2	5	7
Journal of Vacation Marketing	3	4	7
Current Issues in Tourism	3	3	6
International Journal of Hospitality Management	2	3	5
Tourism Geographies	2	3	5
Tourist Studies	1	4	5
Annals of Tourism Research	1	3	4
International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	2	2	4
Tourism Recreation Research	1	3	4
International Journal of Tourism Research	1	2	3
Journal of Food Products Marketing	1	2	3
Journal of Foodservice Business Research	1	2	3
Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research	–	3	3
Other journals	19	50	69
Total	54	129	183

Source: Own Elaboration

The analyses comprised three steps, as suggested by Jin and Wang (2016). First, a quantitative review facilitated a descriptive assessment of the state of the art of food tourism research, providing descriptive statistics on the range of papers by author, year, research design, target population and most frequent keywords. Second, a semantic network analysis produced a visual representation of key links between research topics. Last, narrative analysis was used to examine the main topics.

Leximancer software was used to perform the semantic network analysis. This programme automatically extracts semantic networks from qualitative data, allowing researchers to analyse texts' themes and keywords. In this study, Leximancer was employed to identify (1) the connections among topics, (2) shifts in research interests over time and (3) differences in research foci.

Leximancer further provides an inductive identification of themes with minimal manual intervention by researchers (Tkaczynski et al., 2015). In addition, the analyses' results are reliable due to their stability (i.e. intercoder reliability) and reproducibility (i.e. high consistency in the way data are coded) (Jin and Wang, 2016).

This lexical software has been successfully employed in literature reviews (e.g. Crofts and Bisman, 2010; Jin and Wang, 2016; Sotiriadou et al., 2014) and has recently been applied in tourism and hospitality research (e.g. Brochado et al., 2017; Jin and Wang, 2016; Lupu et al., 2017; Pearce and Wu, 2016; Rodrigues et al., 2017; Tkaczynski et al., 2015; Wu et al., 2014). Leximancer maps conceptual information from large text collections (Smith and Humphreys, 2006) by clustering concepts according to the relationships between them (Rodrigues et al., 2017).

This software thus offers both conceptual and relational analyses, measuring not only the presence of defined concepts in texts but also how they are interrelated. In addition to identifying a list of concepts contained in each text, this programme generates conceptual maps based on co-occurrences of concepts in keyword lists (Crofts and Bisman, 2010). Concepts that appear frequently together in the same passages settle near one another on the maps, and they are clustered into higher-level 'themes' when the maps are generated. These themes facilitate further interpretation by representing groups of concepts, shown on the map as coloured circles (Lupu et al., 2017).

2.3 Results and Discussion

2.3.1   Descriptive Analysis

2.3.1.1   Number of publications by journals, authors and institutions

Table 4 presents the number of articles per journal cross-referenced to two periods: 2004–2009 and 2010–2017. The University of Surrey comes in at the top of the university ranking, followed by Clemson University and National Taiwan University. Considering the authors of all the papers reviewed, a total of 179 institutions have conducted research in this area.

Table 4.   **Leading Institutions with the Most Publications from 2004 to 2017**

University	No. of Papers
University of Surrey, UK	13
Clemson University, South Carolina	12
National Taiwan Normal University, Taiwan	10
Heilbronn University, Germany	7
Brock University, Canada	6
Istanbul University, Istanbul, Turkey	6
Texas Tech University, US	6
Tainan University of Technology, Taiwan	5
The University of Mississippi	5
The University of Queensland, Australia	5
University of Arkansas, US	5
University Putra Malaysia, Malaysia	5

Notes: No. = number; UK = United Kingdom; US = United States

Source: Own Elaboration

Jeou-Shyan Horng stands out as the most productive researcher in this field from 2004 to 2017 (see Table 5). The 10 most productive researchers are currently affiliated with universities located in the US, Europe and Asia.

Table 5. **Most Productive Researchers and Number of Publications from 2004 to 2017**

Authors	No. of Publications
Jeou-Shyan Horng	6
Ben K. Goh	5
Young H. Kim	5
Anita Eves	4
Athena H.N. Mak	4
Chen-Tsang Tsai	4
Michael C. Ottenbacher	4
Robert J. Harrington	4
Sally Everett	4
Yeong Gug Kim	4

Source: Own Elaboration

2.3.1.2   Keywords

The most frequent keywords in abstracts are 'food tourism', 'culinary tourism', 'food', 'tourism', 'gastronomy', 'local food', 'identity', 'marketing' and 'rural tourism'. A word cloud was produced (see Figure 1), in which the size of the words is proportional to the frequency with which they appear in the texts.

Figure 1. Word Cloud with Most Frequent Keywords

Source: Own Elaboration

2.3.1.3   Methods applied

Regarding papers that both focus on a single country and offer cross-country analyses (i.e. 14), studies of 54 different countries located on different continents are discussed in the articles under analysis. In the papers covering single countries, the most researched countries are the US, the UK, Taiwan, Italy and Australia.

Table 6.   **Countries Explored in Studies Reviewed**

Country	No. of Papers
US	22
UK	12
Taiwan	10
Italy	8
Australia	7
Canada	6
Norway	5
Spain	5
France	4
Denmark	3
Finland	3
New Zealand	3
South Africa	3

Source: Own Elaboration

Half of the studies reviewed used either interviews or surveys. Around 24% of the papers describe conceptual research. Mixed methods combining surveys, interviews, focus groups and/or observation were used by 8% of the studies. The average number of participants in research using interviews was 20 (standard deviation [SD] = 20). The average respondents in studies based on surveys was 341 (SD = 183).

Table 7.   **Research Methods in Publications Reviewed**

Method	No. of Papers
Case study	11
Conceptual paper	43
Literature review	2
Survey	68
Interviews	24
Secondary data	8
Content analysis	12
Mixed methods	15

Source: Own Elaboration

2.3.2   Semantic Analysis

Content analyses revealed the existence of 12 themes that could be organised into 11 primary themes. These are 'food (experiences)' (hits: 568), '(rural and sustainable) tourism' (430), 'culinary (marketing)' (247), 'local (food)' (192), 'destination (image)' (120), 'travel (satisfaction)' (55), 'methods' ('interviews' – 47; 'surveys' – 35), 'restaurants' (44), 'festivals' (35), 'hospitality' (27) and 'food safety' (25).

The theme of food (experiences) includes the concepts 'food' (506, 100%), 'tourists' (212, 42%), 'cultural (patterns)' (66, 13%) and 'experience' (126, 25%). The (rural and sustainable) tourism theme is linked with the concepts 'tourism' (411, 81%), 'development' (120, 24%), 'sustainable (tourism)' (36, 7%), 'rural (tourism)' (43, 8%) and 'industry' (42, 8%). The theme of culinary (marketing) comprises the concepts 'culinary (offers)' (128, 25%), 'marketing' (99, 20%) and 'products' (78, 15%).

The local (food) theme encompasses the concepts 'local (cuisine)' (192, 38%) and 'heritage' (29, 6%). The theme of destination (image) covers the concepts 'destination' (120, 24%), 'identity' (29, 6%) and 'quality' (36, 7%). The travel (satisfaction) theme includes the concepts 'travel' (55, 11%) and 'satisfaction' (33, 7%). Two themes are linked with methods

– surveys and interviews – that together include the concepts 'consumption' (47, 9%), 'interviews' (30, 6%), 'data' (33, 7%) and 'survey' (35, 7%). The last four themes include only one concept each, which are 'restaurants' (44, 9%), 'festivals' (34, 7%), 'hospitality' (27, 5%) and 'safety' (25, 5%), respectively.

Figure 2. Food Tourism Concept Map
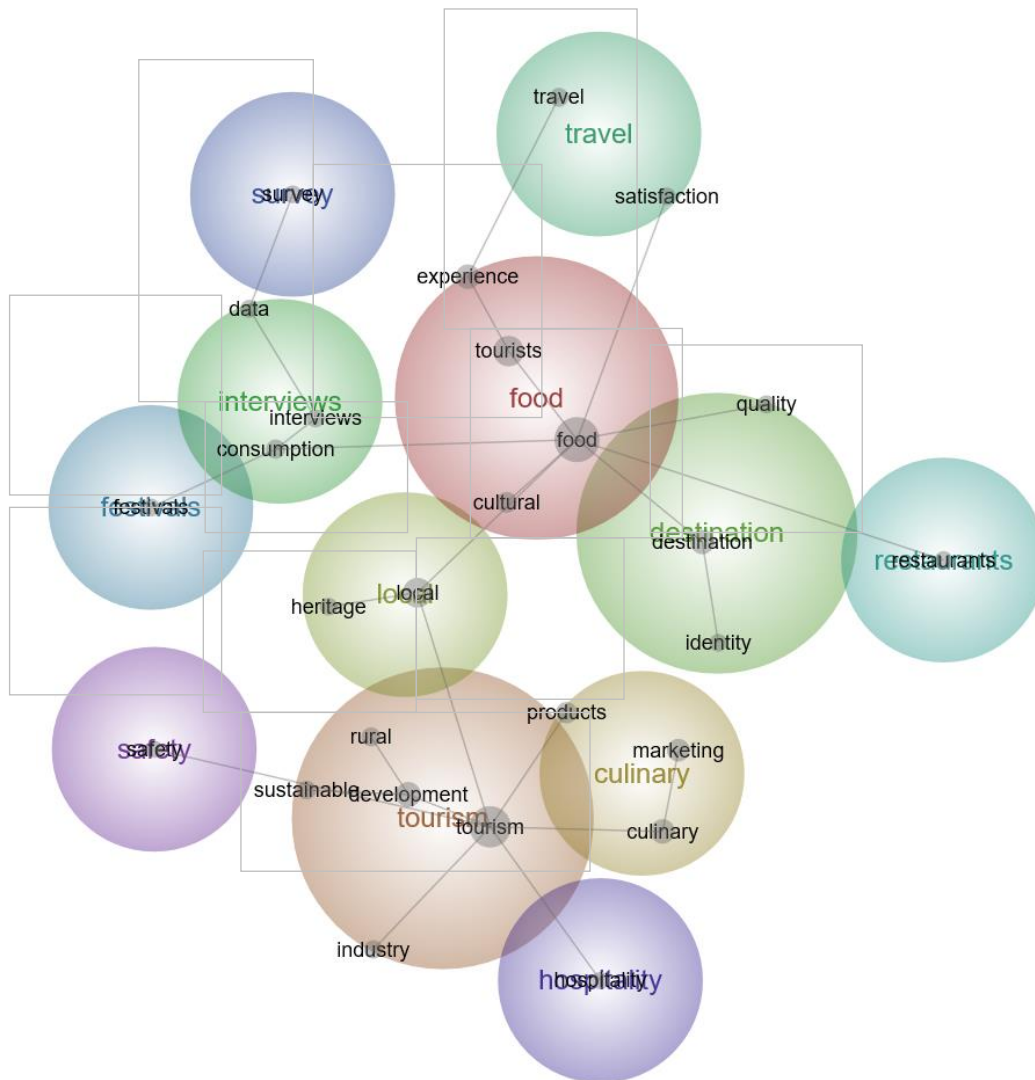
Source: Own Elaboration

2.3.3 Primary Topics Discussed

This subsection discusses the main topics identified through semantic analysis. Although these topics are presented separately below, semantic and narrative analyses revealed that these topics are intercorrelated.

2.3.3.1 *Food tourism experiences*

Quan and Wang (2004) developed a conceptual model of tourists' experiences and examined food experiences in detail. The cited study revealed that, for tourists, food consumption in tourism can be considered peak experiences or a way to enhance their overall tourism experiences, depending on the context. Chang et al. (2011), in turn, studied the travel dining experiences of Chinese outbound tourists in Australia. Based on participant observation and focus groups, the cited authors identified six main dimensions of those experiences: tourists' food culture, dining occasions, food variety, destination perceptions, service encounters and tour guides' performance.

Björk et al. (2016) studied tourists' food-related experiences in destinations' restaurants. Based on a survey, the cited authors concluded that the experiences comprise three dimensions: the food served, restaurants' environments and food-related behaviours. Even when tourists' choice of destinations is not influenced by specific food offers, tourists are always exposed to food experiences. Anderson et al. (2016) chose to target food lovers and study their preferences for travel experiences based on photo-elicitation. The cited study revealed that the most popular experiences among foodies were described as 'enjoy[ing] regional cuisine in a local restaurant'. The photos suggested romantic, authentic and informal experiences. The most seasoned food tourists look for experiences such as food festivals and opportunities to meet and/or learn from chefs.

Mason and Paggiaro (2012) investigated tourism experiences offered by the Friuli DOC Italian festival. Based on a survey, the cited authors concluded that tourists' positive

behavioural intentions are influenced by their perceptions of comfort, food and wine quality and entertainment. Silkes et al. (2013) also studied food experiences in festivals. The latter cited authors performed a content analysis of wine and food festival brochures (i.e. words and images), which revealed four dimensions: food as sustenance, specific food and drink, beer and wine and experiential interactions. In addition, subdimensions were ranked according to their cultural significance. Silkes et al.'s (2013) findings further highlight that food experiences evoke emotions.

2.3.3.2 Rural and sustainable tourism

Haven-Tang and Jones's (2005) study focused on a rural destination, while Green and Dougherty (2009) and Dougherty and Green (2011) elected to investigate agritourism. Green and Dougherty (2009) included restaurant owners and/or managers, retailers and farmers, while Dougherty and Green (2011) incorporated farmers, restaurateurs and tourists into their research. Farmer (2012) also studied agritourism, and Okumus et al. (2013) examined small islands' local cuisine. Forné (2015), in turn, investigated rural tourism and, more particularly, cheese tourism. Mynttinen et al. (2015) also examined rural tourism, while Björk and Kauppinen-Räisänen (2016) explored local food markets. Alderighi et al. (2016) focused on mountain destinations, and Boesen et al. (2017) studied local entrepreneurial food networks.

In addition, Sims (2009) studied the local food and tourism industries of two national parks located in the UK – the Lake District and Exmoor. The cited author argues that local food and drink products can improve the economic and environmental sustainability of both tourism businesses and rural host communities. Sims's (2010) paper describes a case study of tourism in the Lake District and Exmoor, exploring the relationship between local food and sustainable rural tourism in the UK. The results suggest that local food can have an important role to play in sustainable tourism as a result of its ability to satisfy a complex range of demands from actors throughout the food chain.

Renko et al.'s (2010) research addressed two dynamic segments of the Croatian economy: agriculture and food production and tourism. The cited authors examined whether food is an effective tool for enhancing rural tourism development. Anderson and Law (2012), in turn, chose to study two food trails based on regional Australia cuisine and concluded that, although food trails may not be a panacea for rural tourism development, they have much to offer regions.

Spilková and Fialová (2013) further examined the case of culinary tourism packages and regional branding systems in rural tourism in peripheral areas of the Czech Republic. The cited authors found a wide and highly promising spectrum of opportunities for cooperation and the creation of fertile links between local branded products and rural and culinary tourism. Hjalager and Johansen (2013) elected to investigate the feasibility of combining environmental protection and agricultural revitalisation strategies, which include food tourism, in two Danish national parks: Mols Bjerge and Skjern Aadal. Bessière (2013) investigated the process of heritage construction or 'heritagisation' through food as an important issue for rural tourism promotion, in a study of three rural regions in France.

Finally, Forné (2015) investigated food tourism as representing authentic experiences for tourists in rural tourism, specifically through a case study of the Vall de Boí in Spain. The cited study's results highlight the seasonally marked foodscapes of this region and cheese tourism as an emerging tourism niche. According to Forné (2015), the promotion or enhancement of food heritage is perceived as a process of rural tourism development, so close links between local food, lands and communities are required.

2.3.3.3 Culinary marketing

Lee and Scott (2015) reviewed the literature on marketing food as a tourist attraction. From the demand side, studies of food marketing have considered different ways to define market segments of tourists. The cited authors maintain that a better understanding of tourists' decision-making behaviours related to food offers insights that enhance destination

promotion and management. From the supply side, destination managers and government organisations have been observed to design food-related activities in order to improve tourists' experiences and derive positive post-purchase behaviours (i.e. loyalty).

Culinary marketing is linked in the literature with destination marketing (Che and Huang, 2016; Lin et al., 2011; Young et al., 2009), local food marketing (Marchini et al., 2016 ; Silkes et al., 2013; Smith et al., 2010) and event marketing (Alonso and Liu, 2012; Fathimath and Milne, 2011; Kim and Eves, 2012). Previous studies of digital marketing have targeted online destination information related to food tourism, introduced by government and tourism agencies (Boyne et al., 2008; Horng and Tsai, 2010), as well as websites of restaurants included in the *Michelin Guide* (Miranda et al., 2015). Research on the demand side has analysed social media content (Liu et al., 2013) (i.e. food photography) and travel blogs (Banyai, 2012).

More specifically, Boyne et al. (2008) examined Web-based destination information related to food tourism initiatives in the UK. The cited authors described two examples of this in the UK, namely, the Isle of Arran Taste Trail and the Taste of the West. Boyne et al.'s (2003) findings also include that the Emilia Romagna Turismo website is an instance of good practices in terms of providing online food tourism-related information for consumers.

In addition, Horng and Tsai (2010) analysed governments' tourism websites created by the Hong Kong Tourism Board, the Japan National Tourist Organisation, the Korea Tourism Organisation, the Singapore Tourism Board, the Taiwan Tourism Bureau and the Tourism Authority of Thailand. The cited authors gathered data from the English version of these websites, as well as documents, news clips and other videos attached to the websites, in order to identify the strategies used to introduce and promote these East Asian tourist destinations' cuisine and food culture.

Miranda et al. (2015) further examined the websites of 138 Spanish restaurants included in the *Michelin Guide*, evaluating their websites' visibility, navigability, loading speed and content using a Web assessment index that had been validated in other sectors. Liu et al. (2013) analysed food photography on the social media platform, Flickr (see

www.flickr.com), and its dominant image-sharing communities by collecting members' responses to an online survey. Banyai (2012), in turn, analysed the content of travel blogs related to trips to Stratford, Canada, and identified culinary issues mentioned by tourists.

2.3.3.4 Local food heritage

Local food has been studied from the perspective of consumer behaviours (Björk et al., 2016; Kim & Iwashita, 2016), entrepreneurship (Boisen et al., 2016), rural tourism (Frisvoll et al., 2016), sustainable tourism (Baldacchino et al., 2015), agritourism (Farmer, 2012), local markets (Silkes, 2012) and destination image (Alderighi et al., 2016). Moreover, local food can be considered part of cultural heritage and thus linked with the authenticity of tourism experiences (Avieli, 2013; Beltrán et al., 2016; Sims, 2009). As consumers are increasingly demanding products considered local and traditional, tourism and agriculture have been linked to enhance tourists' experiences. Local food networks thus contribute to sustainable regional development.

Based on interviews with both tourists and local producers from UK regions, Sims (2009) concluded that local food is conceptualised as 'authentic' and a symbol of destinations' heritage and culture. Avieli's (2013) article discusses the role of local specialties offered by tourist-oriented restaurants in enhancing culinary heritage experiences of the United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's (UNESCO) world heritage site, Hoi An, in Vietnam. Finally, Beltrán et al. (2016) concluded that tourists visiting Córdoba, also a UNESCO world heritage site, are motivated to experience its cultural heritage, including culinary habits.

2.3.3.5 Destination food image

Food can be considered a specific product that reflects the unique aspects of destinations' identity (Frochot, 2003; Lin et al., 2011), hence acting as an effective promotional and

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marketing tool (Harrington and Ottenbacher, 2010; Horng et al., 2012; Smith and Costello, 2008) for destinations seeking to strengthen their positioning strategy (Everett and Aitchison, 2008; Horng and Tsai, 2010; Lin et al., 2011). Some researchers have argued that a unique, memorable 'food identity' can contribute to the sustainable competitiveness of destinations (du Rand and Heath, 2006) and even be essential to their success as tourism destinations (Hashimoto and Telfer, 2006). Many destinations have thus developed food as a core tourism product and used it and food-related facilities (i.e. restaurants, local food shops, food and beverage outlets, wineries and farms) to attract visitors, thereby strengthening their tourism marketing (Lin et al., 2011).

Food can give tourists meaningful experiences (Long, 2010), becoming a part of these visitors' destination images and possibly influencing tourists' behaviours and overall satisfaction with destinations. Overall, place-specific food can function as part of destination brand identity and become a powerful means of building it up further (Lin et al., 2011). Cultural practices such as food preparation and consumption are part of regional identity (Hashimoto and Telfer, 2006), and linking food attributes to given places can also enhance tourists' perceptions of the 'regionality' of food. In this case, food products become identified by their regions, which thus become the brand.

Based on a study focused on France, Frochot (2003) concluded that this country's food image can be analysed as a unique physical attribute (e.g. French food and cooking reputation and specificities of markets, cheeses and wine producing areas). This image can also be seen as a common psychological and/or emotional or holistic attribute (e.g. the French's '*l'art de vivre*,' informal cafés, ways of eating, real interactions with people and lifestyle statements). The cultural dimension of food is mainly used as an identity marker for France's regions.

In contrast, Hashimoto and Telfer (2006) state that Canadian cuisine cannot be easily defined, since Canada's culinary traditions have been influenced by a long history of immigration, together with regional product availability. Chefs have combined cultural traditions and local products, creating new dishes and styles of cooking. Chuang (2009), in turn, reports that food's capacity to act as a symbol has been widely recognised and valued in post-colonial

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Taiwan. The trend towards ethnic cuisine restoration is unique in this country because particular food consumption patterns reflect the reconstruction of national identity, in a significant reaction to previous colonial experiences and the globalisation of food cultures. Compared to other cultural activities, such as the fashion industry, architecture and art, food now plays a quite prominent role in the representation of Taiwanese national identity.

In research on culinary tourism in France, Italy and Thailand, Ab Karim and Chi (2010) found significant positive relationships between food image and visit intentions. The cited authors also confirmed that travellers' purchase decisions are significantly influenced by different types of information sources. Lin et al. (2011) further concluded that the role of food in relation to destinations includes providing a core, extended identity. However, the identity of Taiwan's food is inconsistent, to some extent, in terms of the type of food that best attracts international tourists. The latter cited authors identified seven dimensions of food used to specify the aspects of food that adequately reflect destination characteristics and, therefore, properly convey these places to their intended markets.

Along the same lines, Horng et al. (2012) advocate four elements of brand equity (i.e. brand loyalty, brand image, perceived quality and brand awareness) in terms of culinary travel intentions in Taiwan. The cited study's results indicate that a direct positive relationship exists between brand equity and travel intentions in culinary tourism. Moreover, Horng et al. (2012) confirmed the role of destination familiarity, which positively moderates the effect of brand loyalty and perceived quality on travel intentions.

In addition, Chi et al. (2013) tested a theoretical model of the relationships between tourists' perceived food image, food satisfaction, culinary quality and behavioural intentions regarding visits to Malaysia. Chi et al. (2013) concluded that food is an essential contributor to destination tourism due to food's influence on tourists' perceived image of and satisfaction with culinary quality, consequently affecting tourists' selection of travel destinations.

2.3.3.6 Travel satisfaction

Most studies (e.g. Dimitrovski, 2016; Kim et al., 2011a, 2011b; Young et al., 2009) have performed data analyses using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). Young et al. (2009), for example, compared the differences (e.g. characteristics and behaviours) between first-timers and repeaters at a food event in the Southwest region of the US, using a questionnaire and analysing the data with SPSS 15.0 for Windows. Smith et al. (2010), in turn, constructed a causal model of culinary tourist behaviour based on a theoretical framework of push and pull motivations. The latter authors conducted a survey of visitors to the annual barbecue cooking contest, WCBCC, in the US city of Memphis and used multiple regression analysis to process the data.

Kim et al. (2011a) applied a modified version of the theory of reasoned action to understand the effects of food tourists' behaviours regarding their perceived value and satisfaction, as these relate to intentions to revisit. A survey was conducted among visitors to a food event in the US's Southwest, and data analyses were conducted with SPSS 17.0 and AMOS 4.0. Structural equation modelling (SEM) was utilised to test the hypotheses. Kim et al. (2011a) further investigated whether any significant differences existed in these visitors' satisfaction and intentions to revisit with reference to their expenditures.

In addition, Mason and Paggiaro (2012) analysed how important festivalscapes are in determining emotions, satisfaction and future behaviours of participants at food and wine events. The cited study applied SEM with latent variables to the survey responses of visitors to Italy's Friuli DOC festival. Horng et al. (2012) examined the roles of different dimensions of brand equity, including brand image, perceived quality and brand loyalty, in the travel intentions of culinary tourists. In line with Baron and Kenny's (as cited in Horng et al., 2012) suggestions, the Sobel test was used to evaluate support for research hypotheses, based on survey data gathered on a sample of 407 international tourists from 10 regions of Italy.

Dimitrovski (2016) further investigated the relationship of non-food-related attributes to satisfaction with urban gastronomic festivals, as well as whether food quality as a moderating variable changes the intensity of this relationship. A survey was conducted with a

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convenience sample of 184 respondents. Data analyses were completed with SPSS version 20.0 and AMOS version 18.0. The research model fit was tested through confirmative factor analysis, while regression analysis was employed to determine the impact of main and interaction effects.

2.3.3.7 Methods

Although the studies under analysis used different types of methodologies, surveys and interviews were the most frequent methods – in half of the studies. The research conducted with surveys has mainly targeted tourists (Beltrán et al., 2016), but other types of respondents have also been included. These have varied from local farmers (Silker, 2012) and producers of certified products (Spilková and Fialová, 2013) to managers (Obonyo et al., 2013), chefs (Hu et al., 2016), food lovers (Robinson and Getz, 2016), local residents and gastronomic event participants (Dimitrovski, 2016). Interviews have mainly been used to study the supply-side of food tourism, including chefs (Murphy and Smith, 2009); restaurateurs (Everett and Aitchison, 2008); businesses; government agencies (Horng and Tsai, 2012); local food actors (Bessière, 2013); cafe, pub and restaurant owners; and local food and drink producers (Sims, 2010).

2.3.3.8 Restaurants

Cohen and Avieli (2004) studied the complex impediments facing Western tourists when dealing with local cuisines in East and Southeast Asian destinations. When eating at ethnic restaurants, tourists are concerned about hygiene and health considerations, and guests face challenges such as communication gaps. In addition, Smith and Xiao (2008) examined the supply chains for three sources of culinary tourism products – farmers' markets, festivals and restaurants – in Ontario, Canada. Murphy and Smith (2009), in turn, focused on the perceptions, motivations and experiences of executive chefs at Canada's Relais and Châteaux – who buy and promote local ingredients on their menus – from the perspective of supply chain management.

Albrecht (2011) examined domestic culinary tourism practices at a seemingly banal suburban chain restaurant featuring ethnic cuisine – Olive Garden. Presenza and Del Chiappa (2013) further investigated to what extent restaurant managers in two Italian regions (i.e. Molise and Sardinia) are leveraging their business by using local and typical food as a tourism resource. The cited authors also looked at what are the main constraints that, in these managers' view, do not allow them to exploit more fully local and/or typical food products as a positive means of attracting tourists, as well as to make the most of opportunities to network with other local stakeholders.

Tresidder (2015) explored the idea that a new form of restaurant that uses foraged foods – 'terroir restaurants' – should be defined and recognised as fulfilling a significant role in contemporary tourism. The cited author conducted a case study of this new gastronomic movement using Noma, a restaurant in Denmark, as an example of terroir restaurants. Finally, Miranda et al. (2015) evaluated the quality of Spanish restaurant firms' websites to shed some light on how companies are adapting to today's tourists and to determine whether a relationship exists between website quality and the firms' performance or prestige.

2.3.3.9   Festivals

Food and/or wine festivals are a specific form of and an important component in the overall construct of food tourism (Mason and Paggiaro, 2009), functioning as key attractions for food tourists. These festivals are often one of the most visible aspects of this tourism sector (Getz, 2010; Smith and Xiao, 2008), which researchers have suggested is among the fastest-growing areas. Festivals are events and social phenomena that function as cultural resources for an area wishing to attract visitors (Delbosc, 2008; Getz, 2008; Wan and Chan, 2013).

Getz (2010) defines festivals as public events celebrating specific themes with many activities in specific regions or areas. Festivals are a way of celebrating culture, highlighting a cultural asset or marking a season or time of year. These events offer unique experiences of places, allowing visitor to come into contact with facets of destinations different from their

own culture. Festival visitors seek cultural enrichment, education, novelty and socialisation, as well as community celebrations and enjoyment.

Food festivals use primary and/or secondary food produce as their central themes, and these events are usually held annually, offering visitors a variety of experiences. The availability of specialty food provides the festivals with a theme and appeals to visitors and local people alike by integrating authentic experiences in pleasant environments (Getz, 2010). Several studies have sought to identify motivations for attending food and/or wine festivals (e.g. Tsiara, 2014; Mason and Paggiaro, 2009; Silkes, 2012).

Festivals are an excellent opportunity to enhance awareness of local products and build customer loyalty. Food festivals identify and highlight the uniqueness of local culinary culture, and thus they are inherently branded with the destinations in question (Smith and Xiao, 2008), functioning as a way to promote them (Silkes et al., 2013). Mason and Paggiaro (2009), in general, examined motivations and, more precisely, the causal relationships among push and pull motivations to visit food festivals. The cited research sought to determine to what extent these motivating factors contribute to overall perceptions of food and wine events dedicated to asparagus, taking place in the Friuli Venezia Giulia region of Italy.

Chang and Yuan (2011) also identified motivational dimensions among visitors, this time those attending a regional food festival in Texas in the US. Silkes (2012) further explored the motivations and push and pull factors of visitors to farmers' markets and confirmed the potential of culinary tourists to contribute to the economic sustainability of local markets. In addition, Silkes et al. (2013) explored the current use of gastronomic cues in texts and images in festival marketing brochures issued by destination management organisations, local governments, specific festivals or independent travel companies in another US state – Indiana.

Liang et al. (2013) based their study on expenditure theory, exploring how spending on food and beverages and other items such as accommodations and transportation influences intentions to revisit and make positive recommendation. The cited authors additionally examined whether tourists with different lifestyles use different sources of information and

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evaluation criteria or vary in their travel expenses, with a focus on visitors to the 2009 Penghu Ocean Fireworks Festival in Taiwan. Hollows et al. (2014) examined the Nottingham Food and Drink Festival in the UK, demonstrating how this event sought to rebrand the city centre as a more hospitable place.

Tsiara (2014), in turn, studied participants' motives and their perceived level of satisfaction with the Tomato Festival in Greece. Yoo et al. (2015) explored the effect of existing health and wellness values on individuals' motivation to visit Australia's Goomeri Pumpkin Festival. Finally, Marchini et al. (2016) examined the complex factors that determine the success of a food event: the Open Oil Mills in the Umbria region of Italy.

2.3.3.10 Hospitality

The theme of hospitality is linked in the literature mainly with hospitality education and training (Santich, 2004), hospitality in service encounters (Beltrán et al., 2016) and the hospitality industry (Ottenbacher et al., 2016). Santich (2004) maintains that this industry plays an important role in offering cultural experiences, including enjoyable and pleasurable eating and drinking events, and in enhancing these experiences through gastronomic education and training of providers. Beltrán et al. (2016) studied the link between gastronomy and tourism and concluded that satisfied consumers value different components of local gastronomy, such as the quality of dishes, the services offered, hospitality and traditional cuisine.

In addition, Ottenbacher et al. (2016) conducted research to identify the role of culinary attributes and hospitality services' attributes as tourism drivers. The cited authors found a set of attributes that include destination characteristics (i.e. nature and landscape), cultural gastronomic attributes (i.e. traditional dishes and wines of regions) and staff friendliness and competence in hotels, restaurants and wineries.

2.3.3.11 Food safety

Food safety issues have received increasing attention worldwide, mainly due to challenges emerging from the globalisation of food supply chains. In order to protect consumers from food fraud, several organisations have introduced standardisation and certification procedures. Food safety needs to be a concern of all food operators (Kumar, 2012).

Kumar (2012) studied catering staff in hotels, motels and resorts. TAl Kaabi et al. (2015) examined eight specific subsectors of the hospitality and tourism industry in which food safety is important: hotels, contract caterers, labour camps, schools, hospitals, local and international restaurant chains, independent restaurants and traditional kitchens.

2.4   Conclusion and Future Research

Increasing numbers of tourists worldwide are attracted to local produce and gastronomy as a central part of their tourism experiences. Since food is deeply connected to its place of origin, many destinations are focusing their product development and marketing on unique features of their gastronomy, appealing to tourists who take part in new cultural consumption trends and seek authentic experiences of places they visit through food. Food tourism has thus become an important sector of tourism and received increasing attention from researchers. The present study sought to answer the following research question: What insights into food tourism does the existing literature offer?

Content analyses of 183 papers published between 2004 and 2017 revealed that the main themes in the literature on food tourism address a variety of topics: food and tourism experiences, rural and sustainable tourism, culinary marketing, local food, destination food image, travel satisfaction, restaurants, festivals, hospitality and food safety. These themes are linked with facilities (e.g. restaurants and rural tourism), activities (e.g. food experiences), events (e.g. festivals) and organisations (e.g. safety standards) in the food tourism supply chain (Ignatov and Smith, 2006). In addition, culinary marketing is considered a strategic

issue in ensuring destination competitiveness. The reviewed studies addressed both the demand side (e.g. Beltrán et al., 2016) and the supply side in food tourism (e.g. Bessière, 2013).

Based on the existing literature, each theme identified suggests two avenues for future research. Food tourism experiences can be studied through sensory experiences linked with different food-related activities (e.g. gastronomic festivals and agritourism). In addition, researchers need to identify different market segments in the food tourism market according to tourists' motivations (e.g. based on a push and pull framework).

Rural and sustainable tourism requires further studies of strategies that different destinations might follow – according to their stage in the tourism development process – to develop food tourism in order to enhance their cultural and economic sustainability. Researchers can also study local residents' perspectives on food tourism and its implications for their communities' wellbeing.

Culinary marketing needs benchmarking studies of marketing strategies contributing to successful destination branding, as well as research on how digital marketing and social media are impacting food tourism marketing. Studies of local food issues should focus, first, on understanding the role of certification in local food development and, second, on the supply chains of local products. Researchers investigating destination food image could examine destinations' model brand equity and identify the characteristic traits of different destinations' cuisine.

The topic of travel satisfaction would benefit from studies of tourists' satisfaction with the upscale segment of food tourism (e.g. Michelin-starred restaurants and events with famous chefs). Research is also needed in this area on the dimensions of food tourists' satisfaction with trips, based on social media content. Studies of restaurants could first target the fine dining segment (e.g. Michelin-starred restaurants) and, second, construct efficiency models for the restaurant industry to identify potential economies of scope (e.g. hotel and restaurant businesses).

Regarding festivals, researchers should identify the key success factors of gastronomic events, as well as estimating the economic impact of gastronomic festivals. Hospitality needs further studies of the efficiency of different agents in the food tourism supply chain (i.e. data envelopment analysis). Additional research is also needed to understand the most important agents of the tourism industry in terms of food tourists' trips.

Studies seeking to improve the methods used in food tourism research could try increasing the use of experimentation to identify the main dimensions of food experiences, as well as participant observation and ethnographic methods to understand consumer behaviours. Food safety requires on-going studies of the perceived role of certification organisations in enhancing tourists' experiences of food safety, as well as ways safety issues are perceived by families that travel with different generations.

Finally, this study presented some limitations. First, the set of articles included in this study was constrained by the databases used in the systematic review process. Second, only food tourism was addressed by the present review, so future studies could also include wine tourism.

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3   Excellent Cuisine Worth a Detour: Dimensions of Luxury Dining Experiences

Abstract

Luxury restaurants are expected to offer outstanding culinary talent and expertise; be authentic, creative and consistent; and provide exciting quality food. Currently, culinary art discourses include a social dimension in which social networking sites are used to share gastronomic experiences and check recommendations. User-generated reviews are thus an intersection of participatory culture and 'foodie' discourses. This study's main objective was to examine this phenomenon by analysing Web reviews to identify the expressive dimensions that describe guests' experiences. Mixed-method content analysis was selected for this research, using qualitative text interpretation to supplement quantitative word counts and factor analyses. Content analysis of reviews of the top three Michelin-starred restaurants (i.e. two stars) in Portugal identified concepts used to assess haute cuisine experiences from the client's perspective. The results include a concept map encompassing the following dimensions: 'food', 'restaurant', 'experience', 'menu', 'wine', 'special (dinner)', 'view', 'beautiful (food)', 'friendly (staff)', 'chef', 'visit' and 'dessert'.

Keywords: culinary arts, Web-generated content, content analysis, Michelin-starred restaurants

3.1 Introduction

Restaurants provide experiences, and, because they operate in highly competitive business environments, a distinctive dining experience is often a critical factor for increasingly demanding customers (Johnson, Surlemont, Nicod, and Revaz, 2005). High quality restaurants need to have outstanding culinary talent and expertise (Johnson et al., 2005); be authentic, creative and consistent; and offer exciting quality food to create a unique identity recognisable to customers and differentiated from the competition (Gehrels & Kristanto, 2007). According to Pizam (2010, p. 343), what drives guests' 'willingness to pay high prices for hospitality "products" is the quality of the experience'.

The *Michelin Guide*, recently relabelled the *Red Guide*, is a gastronomy guide (Gehrels & Kristanto, 2007; Johnson et al., 2005; Surlemont & Johnson, 2005) categorising mainly upper segment restaurants since 1933. Michelin uses a star system ranging from one to three stars (Michelin, 2007) according to the quality of the food. This system's 'mystique' culture and clandestine nature are both its key features and essential elements, contributing to preserving creativity and individuality within the restaurant sector and avoiding standardisation (Johnson et al., 2005; Surlemont & Johnson, 2005). No guidelines or written criteria have been published regarding the quality required for the various levels in the Michelin star rating system (Johnson et al., 2005; Surlemont & Johnson, 2005). A selective, rigorously trained team of inspectors anonymously make unannounced visits and rate restaurants (Johnson et al., 2005).

The team's emphasis on consistency of quality and – to some extent – tradition has attracted some criticism but contributes to making the Michelin guide a reliable source of information (Johnson et al., 2005; Surlemont & Johnson, 2005). It is widely accepted as the definitive reference book for gourmands and followers of haute cuisine in Europe, and its influence within the industry and with the dining-out public is unquestionable. Given this system's undisputed reputation, being awarded a Michelin star is viewed as duly deserved recognition of culinary achievement and excellence (Surlemont & Johnson, 2005). Thus, the *Red Guide* potentially has great influence on restaurant choices and a major impact on restaurants' seat

occupancy (Cotter & Snyder, 1998; Snyder & Cotter, 1998), turnover and profitability (Surlemont & Johnson, 2005). In this context, online, user-generated restaurant reviews represent an interesting intersection of 'participatory culture' (Jenkins, 2006) and 'foodie' discourse.

The luxury segment of the restaurant industry has grown rapidly over the last two decades (Han & Hyun, 2017). Previous studies have analysed luxury restaurants from different perspectives. These have included the Michelin star system's characteristics and effects (e.g. Bóka & Kovács, 2015; Johnson et al., 2005; Surlemont & Johnson, 2005), marketing mechanisms (e.g. Gehrels & Kristanto, 2007; Miranda, Rubio & Chamorro, 2015) and innovation processes in developing new food creations (e.g. Ottenbacher & Harrington, 2007). Other research has focused on culinary team composition (Tommaso, Petruzzelli & Vito, 2017), social and cultural processes underpinning the formation of chefs' identities (e.g. Palmer, Cooper & Burns, 2010), diners' consumption behaviours and the factors that contribute to guests' loyalty (e.g. Peng & Chen, 2015) and online complaints (e.g. Vásquez & Chik, 2015).

In the twenty-first century, engaging in discourses about food involves not only talking about food but also food blogging, posting food-related multimedia texts on social media and participating in online discussions. These discourses also include writing about restaurant experiences for a variety of online review sites (Rousseau, 2012).

Engaging in culinary discourses, therefore, includes a social dimension in which social networking sites are used to share gastronomic experiences. These sites provide 'affinity spaces' (Gee, 2005) for people who want to reach an audience likely to have similar interests. Online restaurant review sites also provide the means for individuals to display their culinary capital as they demonstrate expertise in matters such as authenticity, taste and quality and discuss the perceived value of their dining experiences with those who share parallel interests (Vásquez & Chik, 2015). Naccarato and LeBesco (2012) conceptualise culinary capital as engagement in 'food related practices that reflect a certain set of values that are privileged over others'.

A trend towards democratisation can be observed in the circulation of information about food, especially for restaurant reviews. Food bloggers have made use of the full potential of participatory forms of digital media, writing their own reviews and changing various conventions associated with restaurant reviewing (Rousseau, 2012). User-generated restaurant reviews can also be considered a manifestation of this cultural shift from a few-to-many food writers, turning restaurant reviewing into a widespread phenomenon. This has meant a shift from an exclusive cultural activity restricted to an elite to a cultural practice that has now fully entered the vernacular realm and that can be done by anyone. User-generated restaurant reviews thus represent an interesting intersection of participatory culture and foodie discourse (Vásquez & Chik, 2015).

In addition, an increasing tendency over the last two decades has been noted towards democratisation in certain culinary practices. More individuals representing a wider range of social classes have gained information about – as well as access to – a broader spectrum of dining options than ever before. In recent decades, dining in higher-end restaurants has become less exclusive and more affordable than it ever was before – whether done regularly, intermittently or exceptionally (Lane, 2014).

Online food discourses about luxury restaurants also show this trend towards democratisation. Online review sites allow a greater diversity of voices, perspectives and opinions about high-end dining compared with elite forms of restaurant reviewing. However, review sites can simultaneously reproduce existing social hierarchies, as only individuals in possession of sufficient economic capital can afford to dine at – and, consequently, post reviews on – high-end restaurants.

The present study is based on the argument that Web reviews of luxury dining experiences offer a valuable source of information regarding the determinants of luxury restaurants that are worth a special visit. The main objective was thus to identify the factors contributing to overall satisfaction with haute cuisine in the post-experience phase, based on online user-generated content.

This paper is structured as follows. The next section discusses the relevant literature on service quality in restaurants and content analysis of Web reviews in service quality studies. The third section describes the methodology, including the research context, data collection and data analysis procedure. The fourth section presents the results of quantitative (i.e. concept map) and qualitative (i.e. narrative) analyses of the Web reviews. The final section contains conclusions, limitations and avenues for future research.

3.2 Literature Review

This section discusses three main topics relevant to the present research. These are (1) service quality measurement in a restaurant setting, (2) the role of user-generated content in service quality studies and (3) content analysis of Web reviews.

3.2.1 Service Quality Management in a Restaurant Setting

As is the case of most service-oriented businesses, customers' experience of quality is recognised as vital to restaurants (Marinkovic et al., 2014; McCollough, 2000; Oh, 2000). Research on perceived quality in restaurant settings has identified and studied the different attributes of restaurant quality that affect customer satisfaction and/or future behavioural intentions (Bojanic & Rosen, 1994; Bujisic et al., 2014; Chow et al., 2007; Gupta et al., 2007; Ha & Jang, 2010, 2012; Iglesias & Guillén, 2004; Johns & Pine, 2002; Kivela et al., 2000).

Berry et al. (2002) and Reuland et al. (1985) suggest that the three most commonly agreed-upon attributes of restaurant quality are food, service and environment (DiPietro et al., 2011; Dutta et al., 2013; Ryu & Han, 2010). Studies have shown that all three are vital components that directly influence guests' perception of the quality of restaurants and, therefore, customers' overall satisfaction with restaurant experiences and their post-dining behavioural intentions (Loureiro & Kastenholz, 2011; Loureiro, Miranda & Breazeale, 2014; Ryu & Han, 2010).

Over time, researchers have added other components that create clients' overall impression of services rendered, such as physical setting (Kotler, 1973), hygiene, value for money

(Cousins et al., 2002), convenience, price and value (Kim, Ng & Kim, 2009). Some of the most widely accepted restaurant quality attributes have been included in well-established theoretical frameworks (Bujisic et al., 2014), such as SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al., 1988) and DINESERV (Kim et al., 2009; Stevens, Knutson & Patton, 1995).

Service quality in the restaurant industry is nevertheless difficult to evaluate because assessments are made not only based on service outcomes but also on service delivery processes. To understand all characteristics of restaurant service quality, an appropriate measurement instrument is required (Markovic, Raspor & Šegaric, 2010). Stevens et al. (1995) developed the DINESERV scale to measure perceived service quality in restaurants (Liu & Jang, 2009). This instrument is considered to be a reliable, relatively simple tool for determining how consumers view a restaurant's quality (Kim et al., 2009). DINESERV consists of a 29-item questionnaire that measures the five areas of service quality specific to restaurant contexts, which are evaluated on a seven-point scale, as follows:

(1) Tangibles – a restaurant's physical design, appearance of staff and cleanliness

(2) Reliability – the food's freshness and temperature, accurate billing and reception of ordered food

(3) Responsiveness – staff assistance with the menu or wine list or appropriate and prompt response to customers' needs and requests

(4) Assurance – trustworthiness of the staff's recommendations, confidence that the food is free from contamination and ability to express any concerns without fear

(5) Empathy – personalised attention to customers by anticipating special dietary requirements or by being sympathetic about customers' problems

The goal of the DINESERV scale is to give restaurant operators and owners a tool to get a reading on how customers view their restaurant's quality, to identify problematic areas and to take the necessary actions so that gaps can be filled or services adjusted to meet customers'

needs and wants (Hansen, 2014; Kim et al., 2009). DINESERV also provides restaurateurs with a quantified measure of what customers expect in restaurants, which is important because unfulfilled expectations create dissatisfied customers, who may leave in silence or spread negative word-of-mouth (WOM). Satisfied and returning customers who patronise restaurants regularly represent a fixed source of income and tell others about their positive experiences (Barber, Goodman & Goh, 2011).

DINESERV has been validated (Kim et al., 2009), and it covers a wide variety of restaurant types (e.g. sit down and fast food). In addition, this scale is a performance-based measure that assesses perceived service outcomes. More recently, Hanks, Linea and Kim (2017) used the dimensions of DINESERV to study the impact of restaurant type and human and built density on perceptions of interpersonal service quality. Namin (2017) concluded that service quality, food quality and price-value ratio have an impact on guests' satisfaction specifically with fast food restaurants. Reliability proved to be the most important dimension and tangibles the least important.

Overall quality in a restaurant setting encompasses both tangible components, such as physical facilities and food, and intangible elements, such as employee services and experiences (Han & Hyun, 2017). However, the present study was based on the argument that, in a luxury setting, different approaches need to be applied to assess the perceived quality of services that avoid disturbing customers.

Guests of Michelin-starred restaurants rarely criticise service while dining, but they complain – after dining experiences – on review sites. Most diners consider high prices justified by the excellent quality of meals, but reviewers frequently discuss and often question this aspect. Online review sites may generally be dismissed as not having a significant influence in terms of tastemaking. However, websites with user-generated reviews of Michelin-starred restaurants provide an audience for individuals who wish to claim culinary capital and share their gastronomic experiences with others (Naccarato & Lebesco, 2012; Rousseau, 2012).

By exercising their right to evaluate Michelin-starred restaurants publicly, online reviewers, even if not perceived as tastemakers, are clearly still arbiters of taste. By participating in the

larger discussion about Michelin standards, they stand alongside culinary elites and professional food reviewers. In this way, new media genres such as online reviews reproduce existing forms of culinary capital while, at the same time, challenging well-established hierarchies in food culture.

3.2.2 Role of Customer-Generated Web Content in Service Quality Studies

WOM is often the most important means by which consumers can learn about products or services' attributes (Pan, MacLaurin & Crotts, 2007). This refers to informal communication between consumers regarding the characteristics, ownership and usage of services or products (Westbrook, 1987).

Internet technologies and, in particular, Web 2.0 have revolutionised the distribution and influence of WOM (Goldenberg, Libai & Muller, 2001; Stokes & Lomax, 2002) and expanded or changed the nature of WOM communication, which has evolved to include digitised forms. According to Au, Buhalis and Law (2014, p. 255), Web 2.0 is 'also known as the "interactive [W]eb", [as] it refers to the second generation of [W]eb-based communities and hosted services available on the worldwide [W]eb that allows people to generate content, collaborate, and share information online'. Customers can now easily broadcast opinions and leave feedback online for everyone to see (Au et al., 2014; Zhang, Ye, Song & Liu, 2015), and these online public channels are being used increasingly to post comments, experiences and advice regarding products or services (Ekiz, Khoo-Lattimore & Memarzadeh, 2012). Content generated by Web 2.0 users – also called user-generated content (Au et al., 2014) – and, more specifically, online customer reviews and ratings has been termed 'electronic WOM' (eWOM) (Zhang & Cole, 2016; Zhang et al., 2015).

Consumer decision-making processes are strongly influenced by WOM from other consumers (Goldenberg et al., 2001). As WOM is mainly based on personal experiences, other consumers find this third-party perspective more convincing, credible, trustworthy and unbiased than marketing information from commercial sources or through mass media (Au et al., 2014). Thus, customers tend to rely on online feedback, particularly when making their choices in service industries such as the hospitality and tourism industry, which is

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traditionally more dependent on perceived image and reputation (Au et al., 2014; Ekiz et al., 2012; Loureiro & Kastenholz, 2011; Vasquez, 2011).

In this industry, freely accessible eWOM provides a budget- and time-efficient and, ultimately, cost-effective channel for collecting consumer feedback. Industry-wide trends can, in this way, be identified through costumers' voices (Jeong & Jeon, 2008), as can the demands and expectations of the market (Carson, 2008; Litvin, Goldsmith & Pan, 2008; Pan et al., 2007; Wenger, 2008; Zhang & Cole, 2016; Zhang & Mao, 2012). In addition, eWOM is a valuable source of information for organisations' management about what affects brand perceptions and customer relations (Lu & Stepchenkova, 2012; Papathanassis & Knolle, 2011). This can help companies identify their brand image, understand the attributes generating customer purchase decisions and recognise the qualities needed to enhance customer loyalty (Drennan et al., 2015; Zhang & Mao, 2012).

Zhang and Cole (2016, p. 16) argue that knowledge acquired from eWOM should guide 'businesses' future practices of service promotion and delivery'. Thus, online platforms have 'great potential to become the leading marketing tools and branding enhancers in the near future' (Zhang & Mao, 2012, p. 118).

Traditional methods of doing marketing research on consumer experiences and perceived service quality, such as surveys and guest comment cards, have limitations, namely, poor response rates and information that cannot be explored further by researchers. In contrast, online eWOM in user-generated content is a particularly appropriate source of accessible, reliable, credible and readily available information for both consumers and researchers (Lu & Stepchenkova, 2012). Its use as a source of data on consumer experiences has thus grown in several areas of tourism research (Lu & Stepchenkova, 2012; Zhang & Cole, 2016).

Besides conveying individuals' actual experiences and providing direct information on user-perceived quality (Zhang & Cole, 2016), online tourist-generated content, in particular, is considered to be a valuable data source by tourism researchers. Hookway (2008) states, 'it provides immediately available information that is also "uncontaminated" by researchers

during data creation and collection.' Zhang and Cole (2016, p. 16) report that 'eWOM has thus been recognised as a natural setting for the study of travellers' lived experiences'.

Researchers have previously analysed Web travel reviews to identify service attributes that are determinants of customer satisfaction and to improve service design (Zhang & Cole, 2016) and management accordingly. For instance, Ekiz et al. (2012) investigated online complaints about luxury hotels. Zhang and Mao (2012) studied customers' Web reviews on major United States (US) hotel brands, and Lu and Stepchenkova (2012) analysed ecotourists' experiences. Au et al. (2014) also examined online complaints about hotels, while Zhang et al. (2015) analysed tourists' cruise satisfaction and Zhang and Cole (2016) analysed travel reviews about lodging services written by individuals with mobility challenges. However, a survey of the existing literature did not reveal any studies about service quality in haute cuisine settings based on Web-generated contents.

3.2.3 Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches to Customer-Generated Content

Content analysis has gained increasing popularity as an effective method for interpreting the fast-growing body of Web communications (Banyai, 2012; Romano, Donovan, Chen & Nunamaker, 2003). This method allows researchers to gather general information regarding the subject under study. Both qualitative and quantitative analyses can be used to analyse text data.

Quantitative content analysis involves techniques used to analyse the characteristics of messages, examine human interactions, investigate word usage by means of computers (Banyai & Glover, 2012) and, according to Neuendorf (2002, p. 1), 'so much more'. In word occurrence frequency analysis, keywords with top occurrence frequencies are associated into clusters by their cooccurrence, as well as being subjected to factor analysis and frequency counts (Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2006). This word-count and measurement approach extracts concepts of interest from textual data in a relatively unobtrusive and objective way. Quantitative methods are useful when analysing large amounts of textual data, which can be quickly processed by computer software and used to make general conclusions (Banyai & Glover, 2012; Zhang & Cole, 2016).

Qualitative content analysis involves techniques used to observe, deconstruct and interpret texts based on existing theories. Researchers can then interpret the data by coding and grouping quotations, words or images into categories or themes that feature the major issues that studies need to address (Banyai & Glover, 2012; Zhang & Cole, 2016). Individualised details and subjective feelings are further interpreted by researchers through the more subjective technique of thematic analysis, which primarily relies on researchers' judgment (Krippendorff, 2004; Smith, 2010). This approach also addresses the data's interpretive nature and its contextual variations (Banyai & Havitz, 2013; Zhang & Cole, 2016). However, these techniques are criticised for requiring too much effort, consuming large amounts of time in large-scale data analyses and introducing more subjective bias into data interpretation (Banyai & Glover, 2012; Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2008).

In summary, content analysis can be empirical or subjective while involving the counting of words or phrases, measuring observable text characteristics (Smith, 2010) or making sense of what is written (Banyai & Glover, 2012). Krippendorff (2004) argues that both types of content analysis are indispensable in research. A mixed-method content analysis approach combines structured quantitative methods with unstructured qualitative methods to capture different and broader components in texts (Banyai & Havitz, 2013; Baloglu & Mangaloglu, 2001; Choi, Chan & Wu, 1999). Quantitative methods can be used to find out general information or make systematic comparisons between different samples. Alternatively, qualitative methods can be used to extract latent meanings from data, thereby highlighting subjective reality and meanings. The value of applying both qualitative and quantitative methods lies in using different data collection procedures to gather both latent and manifest meaning in data (Banyai & Glover, 2012).

Given the complexity of content analysis and the enormous quantity of text-embedded eWOM available, a combination of quantitative and qualitative content analyses was selected as an effective research method in the present study. In service research, many keywords in service settings portray different service attributes that are dependent on the context, which makes identifying service attributes from textual data too complex through quantitative content analysis alone (Zhang & Cole, 2016). Thus, after quantitative factor analysis

summarises significant service attributes, the meaningful cooccurrence of keywords needs to be confirmed further by qualitative in-text interpretation of the most frequent keywords that comprise each service attribute.

This kind of research also requires an interpretation of both generic service attributes and concrete service details as summarised by the identified attributes. Generic attributes facilitate a structured understanding of customer service needs and further statistical analysis to clarify the relationships between attribute performance and customer satisfaction. Concrete details on each service attribute, in turn, can provide businesses with practical guidance by identifying specific services to be emphasised (Zhang & Cole, 2016). Therefore, after a quantitative analysis of the Web textual data to extract generic attributes, the present study used a qualitative approach to interpret the specific service details for each service attribute.

3.3   Methodology

3.3.1   Research Context: Portugal – Two-Star Michelin Restaurants

The study targeted the most highly awarded Michelin-starred restaurants in Portugal in 2016. The selected restaurants are located in three Portuguese cities: Belcanto in Lisbon, Vila Joya in Albufeira and Ocean in Almancil.

3.3.2   Research Method

Data source. The data were collected from user-generated reviews shared on TripAdvisor's website. All guests of these selected restaurants are encouraged to write comments and rate their experiences after their visits. Reviewers create a title, write a review and assign a rating between 1 and 5.

These comments represent a large part of TripAdvisor's content and keep the system running. The website's credibility is higher than that of other online communities because users are strongly advised to create a complete profile as either a host or client. Thus, only verified

members with a complete profile have a good chance of being accepted by readers as a guest reviewer. All these aspects make the TripAdvisor website a rich source of research data.

Data collection. Visitors' reviews about their experiences in three- or two-star Michelin restaurants were gathered from TripAdvisor. Besides collecting the review titles and contents and the ratings, reviewers' country of origin was also identified whenever possible. Each review was coded as a case in an Excel document. In all, the 600 reviews collected included only the most recent ones written in English for each city – with a total of 61,539 words. Around 92.5% of guests gave the three restaurants a 4 or 5 out of 5.

Table 8. **Consumer' Ratings (N = 600)**

Rating	1	2	1 + 2	3		4	5	4 + 5	Total
Belcanto	1	4	2.5%	9	4.5%	22	164	93.0%	200
Ocean	5	3	4.0%	11	5.5%	18	163	90.5%	200
Vila Joya	2	3	2.5%	7	3.5%	19	169	94.0%	200
Total	8	10	3.0%	27	4.5%	59	496	92.5%	600

Source: Own Elaboration

The majority of the guest reviewers are from European countries (69.7%), primarily from the UK (33%) and Portugal (14.3%). Guests from the US and Canada represent 11.7% of the sample.

Table 9.   **Geographical Distribution of Reviewers**

Countries		N	%
Europe		418	69.7%
	UK	198	33.0%
	Portugal	86	14.3%
	France	19	3.2%
	Spain	18	3.0%
	Germany	14	2.3%
	Denmark	13	2.2%
	Netherland	10	1.7%
	Other	60	10.0%
US & Canada		70	11.7%
Asia		10	1.7%
Australia & New Zealand		9	1.5%
Latin America		8	1.3%
Africa		2	0.3%
Missing		83	13.8%

Note. N = 600. UK = United Kingdom.

Source: Own Elaboration

Data analysis. Leximancer 4.0 software was used to analyse reviews of the three restaurants selected. Leximancer is a relatively new tool for transforming lexical cooccurrence information from natural language into semantic patterns. The software's procedure is consistent with a naturalistic and grounded theory approach, and this tool helps avoid researcher bias since the categories emerge from the cooccurrence of terms, unlike externally imposed classifications (e.g. Kozak, 2001; Kozinets, 2010).

Leximancer seeks to assist researchers by analysing texts 'from words to meaning to insight' (Leximancer, 2013). This type of analysis has been applied most recently in hospitality and tourism research (Brochado, Troilo & Shah, 2017; Lupu, Brochado & Stoleiu, 2017; Rodrigues, Brochado, Troilo & Mohsin, 2017). The software performs two stages of cooccurrence information extraction – semantic and relational – using a machine learning algorithm to facilitate the determination of main topics within texts. This programme also highlights how topics relate to each other and indicates which source files or individual authors and/or speakers' communications contain particular topics (Angus, Rintel & Wiles, 2013).

In addition, Leximancer generates concept maps and statistical output to help analysts efficiently gain insights into, and an understanding of, natural language (e.g. reviews, interviews and focus group discussions). The software accomplishes this through the process of (1) conducting semantic information retrieval of key themes and concepts, (2) viewing bodies of data in a graphical format (i.e. concept maps) and (3) navigating through the concepts while mining the text for deeper contextual associations (Cretchley et al., 2010).

3.4   Results

The concept map generated for the present study revealed 12 themes and 36 concepts (i.e. theme size = 30%). The themes are as follows: 'food', 'restaurant', 'experience', 'menu', 'wine', 'special (dinner)', 'view', 'beautiful (food)', 'friendly (staff)', 'chef', 'visit' and 'dessert'.

Figure 3. Concept Map (Michelin two stared restaurants)
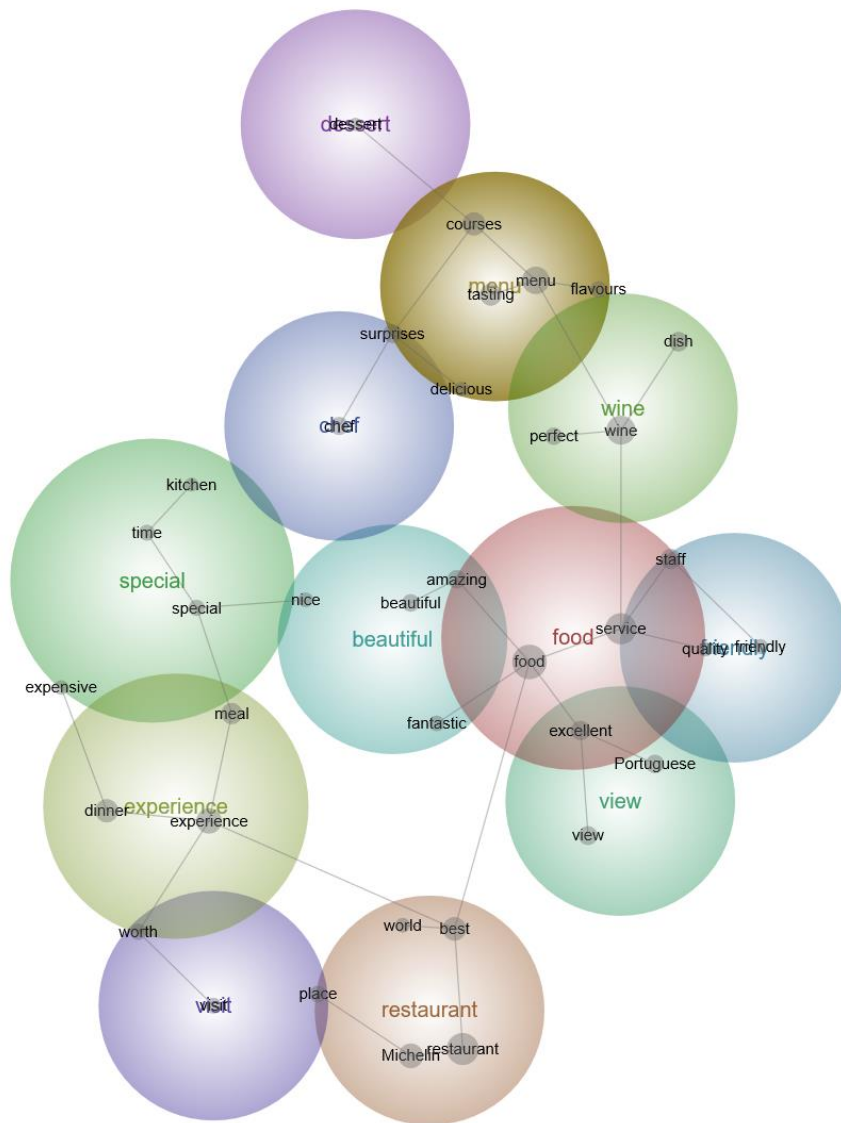
Source: Own Elaboration

The theme of food includes the concepts 'food', 'service', 'excellent (food)' and 'amazing (food)'. A typical review reads, '[t]he food itself was amazing and the service was . . . [of a] very [high]. . . professional standard'. Another guest wrote more simply, '[t]he food is

amazing.' A further customer said the restaurant offers 'great food and service'. An additional review states, '[this is] one of the best restaurants I have eaten in[;] [with such] great original food, excellent wine and great service, [it] could be pushing for 3 stars.'

The theme of restaurant encompasses the concepts 'restaurant', 'Michelin', 'best (restaurant)', 'place' and 'world'. A guest shared, '[this is the] best restaurant in the world. [It already has] 2 . . . Michelin [stars] . . . and I truly hope it gets the 3rd one next year.' A second guest stated, '[this restaurant has] a well[-]deserved reputation [and a] well-deserved ranking . . . [among the] 50 best restaurants of the world!'

The theme of experience comprises the concepts 'experience', 'dinner', 'meal' and 'worth (a visit)'. One guest shared, '[w]e were very satisfied and [it was] well worth the drive from our resort which is about an hour away. [This restaurant is w]ell worth a visit, if you want [a] top-quality dining (or lunch) experience.'

The theme of menu combines the concepts 'menu', 'courses', 'tasting (menu)', 'surprises', 'flavours' and 'delicious (food)'. For instance, a guest said:

We opted for the tasting menu at 105 per head and left after a relaxing four-hour lunch with full bellies and smiles on our faces after a fantastic culinary experience which offered much more than the four[-]course menu suggested. We were treated to surprise after surprise by the chefs, each one more delicious than the last.

Another guest wrote, 'I got the tasting menu and every course was an amazing surprise, not only for the presentation, but also for the flavours and the way ingredients were utilised.' A further client reported, '[t]he lunch tasting menu, with added surprises, lived up [to] the Michelin 2-star ranking, [as there was a] meticulous creative presentation of textures, tastes, flavors, ingredients and combinations which we wouldn't ever contemplate in our home kitchen.'

The theme of wine covers the concepts 'wine', 'dish' and 'perfect(ion)'. A guest shared, '[t]he wine selections were perfect and really complimented the flavours of each dish.'

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Another review reads, '[w]e also ordered the wine menu which adds a little extra to each dish as the wine complimented the food perfectly.' An additional customer wrote, '[t]he [s]ommelier was also excellent and explained in detail the wine pairing which included all Portuguese wines.'

The special (dinner) theme comprises the concepts 'special (occasion)', 'time', 'expensive (restaurant)' and 'kitchen'. A guest reported, '[we had a] special dinner tonight. . . . [It's been] a long time . . . [since] the kitchen of a chef . . . [has delight]ed us as much.' A final review reads, '[this restaurant is] great for a special occasion.'

Another theme is the view, which included the concepts 'view' and 'Portugal'. A reviewer wrote:

I am writing this review only to document my wonderful memory . . . for future reference. A ladies['] luncheon on a beautiful day in sunny PORTUGAL [sic] started with an outdoor view overlooking the grounds of this lovely resort.

Another guest stated, '[i]t is located in a beautiful setting on PORTUGAL's [sic] south coast; sitting at the tables on the terrace affords a delightful view over the sea.'

The theme of beautiful (food) encompasses the concepts 'beautiful (food)', 'fantastic (food)' and 'amazing (food)'. A review shared by a guest states, 'it was absolutely outstanding. [E]verything was perfect, beautiful and [almost] too nice to eat. [It was] fantastic . . . [and] beautifully presented food.'

The theme of friendly (staff) encompassed the concepts 'friendly (service)', 'quality (food)' and 'staff'. A guest wrote about 'the staff who are well trained and extremely friendly'. Another recalled '[v]ery friendly service and good quality food'. An additional review reads, '[the restaurant offers p]rofessional service, [which is] friendly and uncomplicated, without the snobbery that we sometimes see in restaurants of this level.'

The theme of chef includes only the concept 'chef'. The reviews often mention the name of the chef. One guest highlighted that 'the chef was there to greet me'. Another client shared,

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'WOW [sic]! We ate at the chef's table and wow!' A further guest said, '[the restaurant has a g]reat chef.'

Another theme – and concept – is that of visit. A reviewer wrote, 'BELCANTO's [sic] Michelin stars are well deserved! BELCANTO [sic] is a must for foodies visiting LISBON [sic].' Another guest said, '[the meal was e]xcellent from start to finish. We booked lunch at VILA JOYA [sic] on our latest visit to the ALGARVE [sic], and it was everything, and more, that we thought it would be.'

The final theme of dessert also has one concept with the same name. A guest shared, '[the] dessert was over the top.' Another reviewer wrote, 'the [most] famous [dessert is the] tangerina. [I]f you love mousse, sorbet and everything delightfully tangerine – this is your dessert [of] choice.' A further customer said, 'we also appreciated the complimentary dessert to celebrate our anniversary. [T]hanks for a wonderful night.' Still another reported, 'the mandarin dessert will live on in my taste buds for a long time.'

3.5   Conclusion

The objective of this research was to identify the main dimensions of consumer experiences of Michelin-starred restaurant revealed by Web reviews. As luxury consumers might be disturbed by surveys during their dining experience, content analysis of online reviews provides valuable results for both empirical studies of and managers in this sector of the hospitality and tourism industry.

The present results confirm the value of online reviews in haute cuisine as a means of sharing culinary capital with an audience with similar interests (Naccarato & LeBesco, 2012; Vásquez & Chik, 2015). Content analyses of these Web reviews produced a broad overview of the main dimensions of an exceptional haute cuisine experience based on user-generated content. The main dimensions identified are food, restaurant, experience, menu, wine, special (dinner), view, beautiful (food), friendly (staff), chef, visit and dessert. These results underline that luxury dining experiences need to be evaluated using a multi-attribute approach (Chen, Raab & Chen, 2017).

Guests emphasised primarily the themes of restaurant and visit. For most clients, Michelin-starred restaurants are worth a visit. Guests appear to feel that the restaurants' Michelin star status is the main reason for a visit and part of the assessment of their experiences. This result is in accordance with previous research (Vásquez & Chik, 2005) that has stressed the importance of prestige linked with dining in this category of restaurants.

Moreover, the themes of experience and special (dinner) highlight the role of a visit to high-end restaurants as an exceptional occasion. Previous research (Vásquez & Chik, 2015) has highlighted the diversity of motivations when visiting Michelin-starred restaurants. Some individuals use a Michelin star experience to celebrate a special occasion, while wealthier customers are especially loyal to this luxury segment of the restaurant industry.

With regard to human resources, guests value not only the staff but also the chef. The chef is the team leader, and his or her team is responsible for the innovation process and knowledge transfer (Tommaso et al., 2017). Chefs of upscale restaurants are considered celebrities (Chen et al., 2017). The present findings suggest that quality assessment scales such as DINESERV could include an additional dimension of chef-related services (e.g. creativity) when evaluating upscale restaurants. Customers greatly value not only having staff assistance with the menu and wine list but also engaging with the creators of the menu.

Overall, in fine dining restaurants, the staff are expected to be highly educated about food and beverages and well trained to address all consumer needs (Hanks et al., 2017). High quality staff has been previously confirmed to be an importance component in enhancing overall satisfaction with luxury restaurants (Han & Hyun, 2017).

The theme of food is also a central topic. Related words are dessert, menu, wine and beautiful (food). Guests value the ingredients, the menu and its components (e.g. desserts), wine-food pairings and the aesthetics of dishes (i.e. beautiful food). According to the literature on food quality, food can be evaluated based on a set of attributes that include not only taste but also presentation (Chen et al., 2017).

The theme of view highlights the role of the ambience in luxury restaurant visits. The physical surroundings are made up of sounds, lighting, scents and colours that influence consumers' perceptions and behaviours (Chen et al., 2017).

From a managerial point of view, the present findings suggest new methodological approaches to dealing with Web review content and demonstrate the usefulness of this data for the restaurants under analysis. Despite having useful theoretical and managerial implications, this study has some limitations. Online reviewing is a global phenomenon, but this study focused only on two-star restaurants located in a single country. This study could thus be extended to consider restaurants on different Michelin star levels around the world.

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4   Excellent cuisine worth a special journey: themes in Web reviews

Abstract

Purpose: Fine dining is a growing segment of the restaurant sector that offers multidimensional experiences. The main purpose of this study was to identify the primary dimensions of Michelin three-star restaurant experiences as revealed by narratives posted on social media websites by customers in the post-purchase phase. The research also included testing whether the dimensions vary according to segmentation variables.

Design/methodology/approach: Content analyses of Web reviews written by clients of Michelin three-star restaurants produced a battery of concepts used to assess dining experiences from the guests' perspective. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed. The results were analysed by gender, age, client type and value for money ratings.

Findings: The quantitative content analysis identified 12 themes describing dining experiences: restaurant, menu, chef, wine, meal, dining experience, staff, feeling, worth, dessert and delicious food. The dimensions mentioned the most in narratives vary according to demographic segments.

Originality/value: This paper offers insights based on Web user-generated content, contributing to a better understanding of overall experiences in Michelin three-star restaurants around the world. The results provide more explicit knowledge about market segmentation opportunities for this luxury offer.

Keywords: fine dining; gastronomic tourism; dining experience; Web reviews; content analysis

Article classification: Research paper

4.1   Introduction

Travelling encompasses a variety of experiences including dining events (Blichfeldt et al., 2010). Tourists can purchase a range of luxury food-related products and services when on vacation, such as fine dining (Park and Reisinger, 2009). Fine restaurant food can be one of the most important components of travel experiences, answering visitors' need for unique offers (Hyun and Park, 2016). For individuals interested in gastronomy, fine dining is a critical element of holidays (Blichfeldt et al., 2010). Fine dining is thus recognised as one of the most attractive segments of the hospitality industry (Gehrels and Kristanto, 2006).

The number and popularity of fine dining restaurants have increased in recent decades (Ma et al., 2014). As the media dedicate much time to cooking topics, restaurants, and travel dining experiences, consumers have become more aware of this category of restaurants (Gehrels and Kristanto, 2006). Moreover, the concept of fine dining has changed over the last decades, becoming a global concept with world famous brands (Harrington et al., 2011). Experts have also forecasted an increase in demand in this segment, based on trends in the luxury market in general (Jin et al., 2015), such as the fashion (Loureiro and Araújo, 2014) and car markets (Loureiro and Kaufmann, 2016). Fine dining is, therefore, a growing segment of the restaurant sector and, as such, this niche market has attracted increasing attention from researchers (Akgün et al., 2017).

Fine dining restaurants – also known as haute cuisine or upscale or luxury restaurants – are at the high-end of the restaurant sector (Surlemont and Johnson, 2005). Fine dining enhances restaurants' image and sets trends and quality standards, thereby serving as a benchmark for the restaurant sector. Overall, fine dining restaurants offer unique, superior and well-prepared and presented atmospherics, services, food and beverages (Akgün et al., 2017).

In fine dining decisions, information searches play an important role in the selection of restaurants. Bei et al. (2003) report that the Internet offers an important source of information about restaurant services' attributes and ratings. Consumers perform online information

searches to help them select new restaurants for fine dining experiences. Online sources complement more traditional suppliers of information (e.g. consumers, sellers and neutral actors). Gehrels and Kristanto (2006), more specifically, highlight the role of word of mouth as a promotional tool of Michelin-starred restaurants. Word of mouth can be initiated by restaurants through an independent process starting with the offer of excellent dining experiences.

Luxury restaurants have been studied from various perspectives. These have included the impact of brand prestige (Jin et al., 2016), brand credibility (Ji and Jun, 2016), the role of staff communication styles on behavioural outcomes (Kim et al., 2011), service failures (Namkung and Jang, 2010) and attitudes towards complaints (Klalilzadeh et al., 2017). Other research has been done on fine dining restaurant selection (Harrington et al., 2011), service quality perceptions by different stakeholders (Oubre and Brown, 2009), customer emotions (Akgün et al., 2017), dining experiences (Harrington et al., 2011) and creativity and innovation (Stierand and Dörfler, 2011).

Fine dining is a multidimensional experience (Andersson and Mossberg, 2004). These restaurant experiences can be conceptualised as a bundle of tangible and intangible products and services (Harrington et al., 2011). However, fine dining customers are not a homogeneous group, so they should be segmented according to their demographic profiles (Kim et al., 2014). According to Ma et al. (2014), however, gender-related differences in fine dining experiences have received little attention in the literature. Previous studies have also underlined the need to identify restaurant attributes linked with both positive and negative experiences (Klalilzadeh et al., 2017).

In addition, the literature has focused on specific Michelin-starred restaurants (Johnson et al., 2005). For restaurant owners, achieving a Michelin star aligns 'very importantly with recognition and appreciation' (Gehrels and Kristanto, 2006: 31). This is recognised as of utmost importance both personally for restaurant owners and chefs and for business revenue and sustainability. Previous studies have included the influence of this award on restaurant choice (Johnson et al., 2005) and these establishments' business and finance (Johnson et al., 2005), revealing that Michelin stars are a 'signalling device' for customers (Surlemont and

Johnson, 2005). The marketing actions (Gehrels and Kristanto, 2006) and characteristics of Michelin-starred restaurants' websites (Miranda et al., 2015) have also drawn the attention of researchers.

Michelin-starred restaurants awarded three stars were the focus of the present study. The main objectives were:

(1) To identify the main dimensions of Michelin three-star restaurant experiences as revealed by narratives posted on social media websites by customers in the post-purchase phase
(2) To test whether the dimensions of these experiences vary according to market segments (i.e. client type, gender and age)
(3) To identify the main narratives linked with high and low value for money ratings

The structure of this paper is as follows. The literature review presents previous conceptualisations of fine dining, describes the Michelin rating system and discusses theoretical research on dining experiences and opportunities for market segmentation. The methodology section offers a description of the research context, data collection and data analysis methods. The results section presents the quantitative and qualitative analyses of the overall sample and different market segments – according to gender, age, client type and value for money ratings. The final section contains conclusions and theoretical and managerial implications, as well as this study's limitations and suggested avenues for future research.

4.2 Literature Review

4.2.1 Fine Dining

Fine dining restaurants can be defined as 'restaurants offering full table service with an upscale food and beverage menu' (Ma et al., 2014: 514). These restaurants present a sophisticated décor and atmosphere, employ well trained staff and offer a high level of service. Fine dining restaurants are a specialised type of restaurant operation for a limited

number of patrons with considerable financial resources (Kim et al., 2011). These facilities are usually located in urban cities and areas with heavy traffic (Antun and Gustafson, 2005).

Fine dining restaurants are at the high-end of the hospitality industry, so they play an important role in defining trends, quality standards and images in the restaurant sector. Although dining in general can be considered an experience good, fine dining can also be seen as an artistic endeavour in which innovation and creativity are of the utmost importance (Surlemont and Johnson, 2005).

4.2.2   Brand Prestige of Fine Dining Restaurants

Brand prestige can be defined as the result of using relatively high status as a product positioning strategy for specific brands (Steemkamp et al., 2003). Luxury status is a symbol of prestige, and fine dining is a luxury product (Jin et al., 2016). Consumers of fine dining – also known as luxury dining – pay premium prices for unique experiences that include a variety of dishes and beverages, a luxurious atmosphere and personalised service (Jin et al., 2016).

Hwang and Hyun (2012) concluded that brand prestige is the result of both sensory and intellectual stimuli associated with restaurant experiences in consumers' memory. Brand prestige signals high quality, minimises perceptions of consumer risk and has a positive impact on customer satisfaction, trust and loyalty (Jin et al., 2016). Brand prestige also increases perceived price fairness, decreases the need for information sources and enhances diners' perceived well-being (Hwang and Hyun, 2012)

4.2.3   Michelin-Starred Restaurants

The Michelin star system is the most respected ranking system in the fine dining restaurant subsector. Achieving a Michelin star award is an indicator of success among restaurant owners and chefs (Antun and Gustafson, 2005). The Michelin Tyre company introduced the *Michelin Guide* in 1900, offering useful information (e.g. location of car repair facilities and

petrol stations) to help people travel in Europe (Gehrels and Kristanto, 2006). By the 1930's the *Michelin Guide* had been redesigned as a tourist guide, and, subsequently, it was converted into a gastronomic guide.

The *Michelin Guide* – recently re-labelled the *Guide Rouge* or the *Red Guide* – has gained a great deal of authority and credibility among different stakeholders: restaurateurs, chefs, culinary experts, fine dining consumers and the general public (Surlemont and Johnson, 2005). The restaurant sector has no written accreditation standards to preserve creativity and uniqueness, so the Michelin star system is part of a hidden culture full of mystique (Surlemont and Johnson, 2005). Fine dining restaurants are ranked with one, two or three stars. Rigorously selected and trained inspectors determine which restaurants get to be in the guide, which emphases restaurants' consistency of quality and traditions, as well as chefs' creativity, rigour and artistic and technical skills (Johnson et al., 2005). The time restaurants need to earn a Michelin star is difficult to forecast, ranging from 1 (i.e. 'birth of a child') to 44 years (i.e. 'long yearning for reward') (Gehrels and Kristanto, 2006).

Chefs view the Michelin star award as the supreme form of professional recognition. For restaurant owners, achieving a Michelin star means recognition for and appreciation of their efforts. Chefs of Michelin-starred restaurants have identified the following key factors in the success of their operations: culinary craftsmanship, excellence, investment and internal and external sources of financing. From the consumers' perspective, the Michelin star system offers trustworthy, reliable signals; reduces information asymmetries; and thus has a strong impact on restaurant choices (Surlemont and Johnson, 2005).

4.2.4   Fine Dining Consumers' Profile and Behaviour

The typical consumer of fine dining restaurant experiences is educated, well-travelled, older, in a high-income bracket and familiar with culturally diverse cuisines (Antun and Gustafson, 2005). Harrington et al. (2011), however, concluded that the clients of fine dining restaurants have become younger. Fine dining customers seek to satisfy their need for uniqueness, which

has an impact on their view of utilitarian and hedonic value, as well as their behavioural intentions (Hyun and Park, 2016). A fine dining experience characteristically takes longer compared with other restaurant experiences.

In order to identify the non-food attributes that influence consumers' selection of and preference for fine dining restaurants, Njite et al. (2008) developed a multi-attribute model focused on customer relations, employee competence, convenience, atmosphere and price. According to Harrington et al. (2011), fine dining restaurant selections can be linked to a variety of attributes, such as promotions, price to value ratios, quality expectations, settings, dietary issues, variety and/or innovative characteristics.

Customer value plays an important role in researchers' understanding of consumer behaviour. According to a psychological perspective on customer value, this concept is associated with the gap between what consumers 'get' (i.e. benefits) and 'give' (i.e. sacrifices or costs). Customer value considers customers' perception of the difference between what they want and what they expect to receive (Ha and Jang, 2012). In a fine dining context, the most important values are excellence and/or quality value (i.e. evaluation of services), emotional value (i.e. feelings or affective states), epistemic value (i.e. satisfaction of curiosity), virtue value (i.e. welfare of others) and social value (i.e. relationships with others).

4.2.5   Service Experiences in Fine Dining

Eating in a fine dining restaurant is 'experience oriented' by nature (Bei et al., 2003). In addition, fine dining is a multidimensional experience (Andersson and Mossberg, 2004) comprising food service, fine cuisine, the restaurant's interior, good company and other customers. Some of these factors are out of the control of restaurant managers. The primary consumption experience in a restaurant setting is enjoying a meal (Ha and Jang, 2012), but, beyond just food, fine dining restaurants offer pleasurable eating and socialising experiences (Jin et al., 2015).

Fine dining is a high contact service – as is true for restaurant dining in general – in which consumer experiences are not only influenced by service staff but also by other customers at the restaurant (McQuilken et al., 2017). Therefore, reservation systems and capacity management need to be controlled to avoid making customers wait for their reserved table and getting complaints. Good service design and positive staff responses can also help in cases of service failure.

Michelin-starred chefs recognise that continuous innovation is a key factor in their success (Johnson et al., 2005). Jin et al. (2015) concluded that price fairness, environmental quality and the perceived creativity of food are significant predictors of clients' image of restaurants as innovative. This, in turn, has a positive influence on brand credibility and brand preference. Restaurant service quality includes both technical attributes (i.e. food quality and atmospherics factors) and functional attributes (i.e. employee service) (Jin et al., 2015). Ma et al. (2014) suggest that food, quality, environment and service attributes are important factors in excellent restaurant dining experiences. Thus, a rich fine dining experience encompasses a variety of elements such as education, entertainment, escapism, aesthetics and unpredictability and/or novelty (Blichfeldt et al., 2010).

Kim et al. (2006) argue that relationship quality is defined not only by tangible components, such as physical environments (i.e. buildings' exterior, parking areas, atmosphere, interior design, lighting, dining area layout and convenient operating hours) and food quality but also by intangible components. These include staff-customer interactions, communication, relationship benefits and price fairness. Kim et al.'s (2011) study revealed that when restaurant staff are task-, interaction- and consumer-oriented, this has a positive impact on client loyalty.

Oubre and Brown (2009) sought to identify whether the importance of different service quality attributes vary for three types of fine dining restaurant stakeholders – managers, waitstaff and customers – using a triadic (i.e. TRIQUEST) model. The cited study's results reveal that managers evaluate service quality dimensions higher than both customers and waitstaff do. The latter rank service quality attributes lower than customers do.

In addition, Namkung and Jang (2010) emphasise the importance of studying service failures in the context of fine dining restaurant operations and the ways that consumers react to failures in four stages. These are reception (i.e. greeting and seating), orders (i.e. order taking and delivery), meal consumption and checkout (i.e. paying and exiting). The cited authors concluded that failures in the consumption stage have the strongest negative impact on consumer satisfaction, followed by failures in the checkout stage. The latter failures have the strongest negative influence on guests' willingness to recommend a restaurant. Finally, Khalizadeh et al. (2017) classified unsatisfied clients of fine dining restaurants according to their attitudes towards complaining.

4.2.6   Market Segmentation in Fine Dining

Ma et al.'s (2014) study revealed the existence of gender differences in the perception of dining experiences in general. Female customers exhibit higher satisfaction ratings than males do, and food quality has a stronger impact on satisfaction for females than for males. Kim et al. (2010), in turn, studied the preferences for fine dining restaurants of consumers 50 or more years old. The most important attributes for this segment are consistency of service quality, friendliness of employees, servers' knowledge about the menu, consistency of service quality and a comfortable setting and atmosphere. Hu et al. (2008) further focused on senior consumers' perceptions of fine dining restaurants. The items that received higher scores are the 'staff convey that they are comfortable and confident', 'dining area is attractive and comfortable' and 'food is attractive'.

Novak et al. (2010) also identified differences in perceptions of fine dining restaurant servicescapes (i.e. noise levels and music) according to gender and age. Harrington et al. (2011) concluded that gender, age and dining frequency influence the importance of different attributes in fine dining restaurant selections. Female customers rate the attributes of price to value ratio, quality and dietary issues higher than males do. Older participants place less importance on price to value ratio attributes than younger clients do. Younger clients give more importance to promotions, quality, setting and dietary issues than older clients do.

Finally, Harrington et al. (2017) studied restaurant attributes that affect positive and negative experiences in fine dining for Generation Y clients. Negative experiences are mainly linked with price, quality of service, speed of service and friendliness of staff. The attributes linked with positive experiences are quality of food and/or drink, quality of service, restaurant atmosphere and friendliness of staff.

4.3   Methodology

4.3.1   Research Context

The present analyses targeted 19 restaurants awarded three Michelin stars in 2017, in countries scattered around the world. These were Alain Ducasse at The Dorchester, Alain Ducasse au Plaza Athéné, Alinea, DiverXO, Enoteca Pinchiorri, Épicure, Geranium, Gordon Ramsay, Guy Savoy, La Pergola, L'Ambroisie, L'Arpège, L'Astrance, Le Cinq, Le Pré Catelan, Maaemo, Paul Bocuse, Pierre Gagnaire and The Table Kevin Fehling.

4.3.2   Data Collection

Data were gathered manually and stored on an Excel spreadsheet. Only reviews written in English were considered. The following information was included on the spreadsheet: review title, review, review date, overall satisfaction rating, rating of service and value for money rating. In addition, some variables described the respondents' profiles: age, gender, nationality, client type, badges and mode of travel. The consumer profile variables were not available for all the reviews. An analysis of word frequency in the review titles revealed that the most frequently used words are 'experience', 'best' and 'food' (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Review Title Word Frequency

The reviewers were around 61% male. Regarding age groups, 41.3% of the respondents were between 35 and 49 years old, 28% between 50 and 64 and 20.9% between 25 and 34. The majority of the Michelin-starred restaurant clients who shared a review online had dining experiences as a couple (66.3%). Around 16.3% went to the restaurant with their family and 14% with friends. Ninety-six different nationalities were included in the sample. However, most reviewers were from Europe (47%) and North America (35.4%). The most representative country for Europe was the United Kingdom (UK); for North America, the United States (US); for Oceania, Australia; for Asia, China; for Africa, South Africa; and for South America, Brazil.

Table 10. **Sample Demographic Profile**

Variable	Category	Count	%
Gender	Female	1,013	39.3%
	Male	1,567	60.7%
Age	18–24	31	2.1%
	25–34	306	20.9%
	35–49	606	41.3%
	50–64	410	28.0%
	65+	113	7.7%
Client type	Business	21	2.1%
	Couple	678	66.3%
	Family	167	16.3%
	Friends	143	14.0%
	Solo	13	1.3%
Origin	Africa	36	1.1%
	Asia	280	8.5%
	Central America	19	0.6%
	Eurasia	21	0.6%
	Europe	1,555	47.0%
	North America	1,169	35.4%
	Oceania	179	5.4%
	South America	47	1.4%

As expected, the average satisfaction rating was very high (4.6). Service received the highest average rating (4.7), followed by food (4.6) and value for money (4.1). However, some unsatisfied clients meant that the minimum score for all three variables was 1. The percentage of respondents who rated the food, service and value for money as 5 was 71.8%, 84.5% and 48.3%, respectively. The Spearman's correlation between the overall rating and food was 0.87 and for service, 0.723, and value for money, 0.784.

Table 11. **Satisfaction Ratings**

	Mean	**Median**	**Standard Deviation**	**Mode**	**Max.**	**Min.**	**Rating (1+2)**	**Rating (3)**	**Rating (4+5)**
Overall rating	4.6	5	0.8	5	5	1	4.3%	5.5%	90.2%
Food	4.6	5	0.8	5	5	1	3.6%	9.9%	90.1%
Service	4.7	5	0.7	5	5	1	3.2%	3.8%	93.1%
Value	4.1	4	1.1	5	5	1	10.3%	12.4%	77.3%

Notes: Max. = maximum; Min. = Minimum.

In the traveller profiles of the Michelin-starred restaurant guests, the most frequent words used are 'travel', 'luxury' and 'foodie'. Figure 5 presents the results as a word cloud.

Figure 5. Traveler Profile Word Frequency

4.3.3 Data Analysis

A mixed content analysis approach was used to process the Web reviews shared by clients of Michelin three-star restaurants worldwide. This mixed method combined a quantitative

(i.e. counting) step with a qualitative (i.e. meaning) step. The quantitative step relied on Leximancer software (i.e. Lexi-Portal Version 4.5), which uses Bayesian statistics and machine learning algorithms to help researchers to analyse, interpret and visualise in graphs the content of text documents (Rodrigues et al., 2017). An important advantage of Leximacer is that it offers unsupervised semantic analysis with minimal manual intervention from the researcher (Wu et al., 2014). Leximancer provides not only conceptual analysis (i.e. defined concepts' presence in texts) but also relational analysis (i.e. interrelationships between concepts).

The main components detected by Leximancer are words, concepts and themes. The analysis thus started with the automatic identification of the most frequent words in the Web reviews. These words operated as concept seeds, acting as the starting point for the concept identification process. A concept is defined as a cluster of words that appear together throughout a text. These word clusters are weighted based on their frequency of occurrence in sentences that contain the concepts compared with the frequency of their occurrence elsewhere (Rodrigues et al., 2017).

Next, Leximancer calculated the frequency of co-occurrence between concepts. The concepts were then grouped into higher-level themes. Finally, Leximancer produced a visual representation of the final concepts and themes as a concept map, which facilitates interpretations of the data. The concept map includes coloured circles representing themes (Wu et al., 2014). The concepts placed near one another on the map appear frequently together – often in the same segments of text (Lupu et al., 2017). Leximancer also provided conceptual comparisons between groups in the data – defined by tags – highlighting divergence between the most cited concepts. The present study's concept maps included the following tags: gender, age, client type and value for money rating.

4.4 Results

4.4.1 Overall Results

In order to answer the present study's research questions, a concept map was generated that exhibits the most common themes and concepts derived from the Web reviews in the sample, as well as the frequency of these units' occurrence and co-occurrence. This map shows concepts – represented by nodes – grouped into themes – represented by larger shaded circles. The analyses identified 12 themes. These are, by order of importance, 'restaurant' (7,394 hits), 'food service' (6,650 hits), 'menu' (5,309 hits), 'chef' (4,006 hits), 'wine' (3,758 hits), 'meal' (3,234 hits), 'dining (experience)' (2,804 hits), 'staff' (2,802 hits), 'feel(ing)' (2,053 hits), 'worth' (1,239 hits), 'dessert' (1,235 hits) and 'delicious (food)' (575 hits) (see Figure 6).
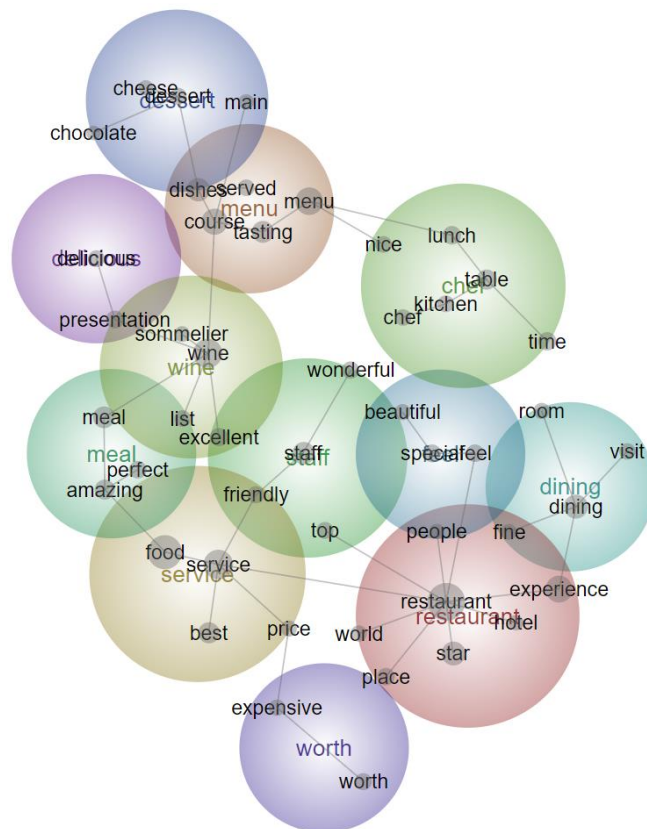

Figure 6. Concept Map of Review Themes

4.4.1.1   Restaurant

The restaurant theme includes the concepts 'restaurant' (count: 4,442, relevance: 100%), 'experience' (2,733, 62%), 'star' (1,749, 39%), 'place' (772, 17%), 'world' (450, 10%) and 'hotel' (311, 07%). This is the most prominent theme linked with experiences of eating at a Michelin-starred restaurant. After each review excerpt below, the restaurant reviewed and the customer's nationality, gender and age – whenever these data are available – are noted in parentheses.

A visitor shared, '[I had] … stayed at the hotel previously but couldn't get into the restaurant for dinner so it was great to be able to finally experience that amazing place. This restaurant deserves its 3rd star' (Le Cinq, New Zealand, female, 50–64). Another customer wrote:

> [E]xquisite does not even begin to describe this excellent restaurant and hotel ambiance that takes you to another place in time when kings and queens ruled Paris [–] simply superb in every aspect. You owe this to yourself before you depart this world to go there and dine in an elegant, charming and tranquil atmosphere. (Le Cinq, US)

A third customer reported, '[h]aving visited a wide range of Michelin starred restaurants around the world, I'd be hard pressed to name one where I had a better overall experience than at [this] establishment. … It is, quite simply, exceptional at every level' (Alain Ducasse at The Dorchester, UK).

4.4.1.2   Food service

The food service theme encompasses the following concepts: 'food' (3,771, 85%), 'service' (2,717, 61%), 'the best' (1,442, 32%) and 'price' (487, 11%). This second theme is included in narratives that highlight the role of food and service, which are characterised as being the best, despite the high prices.

According to one customer, 'dining here could be expensive as a [M]ichelin 3-star restaurant in Paris[. H]owever if you go there for lunch, you would still enjoy the best food, the best service, the best ambience at an affordable price' (Épicure). Another visitor wrote:

> [W]e have eat[en] at most of [this chef's] restaurants [and] this was by miles the best. It comes with hefty price tag but worth the money, [as the] food and service reflect the 3 [M]ichelin stars this restaurant has got. If you want to be treated like a king for the night this was [sic] an unreal place and you won't be disappointed. (Gordon Ramsay, male)

4.4.1.3 Menu

The menu theme includes the concepts 'menu' (2,269, 51%), 'course' (2,091, 47%), 'dishes' (1,751, 39%), 'tasting (menu)' (1,246, 28%) and '(dishes) served' (494, 11%). Customers recalled the menu that was served and each particularly tasty course.

A guest shared, '[e]ach dish is like a work of art. The dishes are small and served individually over the [course of the] evening. We had the 16 course tasting [menu] with the suggested wine pairing' (Alinea, US, female). Another visitor reported:

> After the main course they served us a small bowl of black rice with sauté seafood and that was to [sic] me the best dish of the meal! [It was v]ery savoury with some light spices[. W]e were not hungry anymore, but enjoyed it. (Alain Ducasse au Plaza Athéné, Cuba, male, 50–64)

Another customer wrote:

> The menu is unique in that every course one orders is an arrangement of several dishes on a theme. We ordered the poultry and hare ('La Plume' et 'Le Lievre') from the wild game tasting menu, and each course included four or five playful variations. (Pierre Gagnaire, US, male, 50–64)

4.4.1.4   Chef

The chef theme includes the concepts 'table' (1,178, 27%), 'lunch' (919, 21%), 'time' (912, 21%), 'kitchen' (561, 13%), 'nice (person)' (570, 13%) and 'chef' (520, 12%). Customers value that the chef spends some time going around to guests' tables and suggests a tour of the kitchen.

A client wrote, 'we were given a tour of the kitchen and met the executive chef, followed by trying some freshly baked Madeleines in the kitchen with the chef' (Alain Ducasse at The Dorchester, UK). Another guest commented:

> I arranged a surprise … [of] the chefs table at Pierre Gagnaire and could not have any more complementary words other than [that] this is the best booking I have ever made! The welcome was warm, the service attentive, the atmosphere was great, the food was incredible. ... [T]o top the surprise gift off, Pierre Gagnaire made a fuss … [over] every single … [guest] who sat in his restaurant! (Pierre Gagnaire, UK)

Another guest shared:

> [The chef] is such a nice guy[! He] made time to talk to us in a full restaurant and … offered to take us for a tour of the kitchen at the end of our meal[,] which for me was a dream come true [–] to see [a chef] in action who took time to have a chat with me even though [the chef] was busy[. M]y vocabulary just can't do this place justice. (Gordon Ramsay, male)

4.4.1.5   Wine

The wine theme encompasses the concepts 'wine' (2,582, 58%), 'excellent (combination)' (755, 17%), 'presentation' (736, 17%), 'list' (484, 11%) and 'sommelier' (315, 7%). This theme is linked with the presentation of excellent wine lists by restaurants' sommeliers.

A typical review states, '[t]he wine list is extensive and presented by a knowledgeable sommelier' (Alain Ducasse au Plaza Athéné, South Africa, male, 25–34). Another visitor reported, '[t]he wine list is amazing and deserves attention and luckily is accompanied by a great sommelier' (Alain Ducasse au Plaza Athéné, US, male, 25–34). Another customer shared, '[t]he sommelier picked … a perfect bottle of white, a glass of red and finished with an excellent dessert wine (enjoyed so much I had a second)' (La Pergola, UK, male).

4.4.1.6   Meal

The meal theme has the concepts of 'meal' (1,574, 35%), 'amazing (food)' (1,187, 27%) and 'perfect (presentation)' (724, 16%). Customers characterise their meal as amazing and perfect. One visitor reported, 'absolutely everything was perfect. The entire meal, wines and service were outstanding' (Alain Ducasse at The Dorchester, UK, female, 35–49). Another customer stated, '[e]very aspect of the meal and presentation was perfect (Alain Ducasse au Plaza Athéné, US, male, 65+). A third reviewer wrote:

> The meal was excellent [with] amazing presentation [and] flavours and a service that was attentive without being intrusive [f]rom the start to the leisurely finish (3hrs [sic] later)[. W]e left feeling a little smug we had made a perfect choice this year. (Alain Ducasse at The Dorchester, UK, male, 35–49)

4.4.1.7   Dining (experience)

The dining experience theme includes the concepts of '(luxury) dining' (1,908, 43%), 'visit' (569, 13%), 'room' (433, 10%) and 'fine (dining)' (356, 08%). Customers shared their opinion of these restaurants, which are characterised as luxury dining.

A typical review reads, *'if you … love fine dining[,] visit … [this place] and it may well become your new favourite too'* (Épicure, UK). Another visitor wrote, 'obviously, to anyone

who loves fine dining, this is a "must do". … I would say that it's … a must … to observe the high standard of fine dining [there]' (Paul Bocuse, US, female). Another customer shared, '[w]e visit this fine dining restaurant … every [time we] visit … and are astonished by the dishes on every occasion. [This is s]imply extraordinary' (Alain Ducasse at The Dorchester, UK, female, 35–49).

4.4.1.8   Staff

The staff theme has the concepts 'staff' (1,476, 33%), 'wonderful (service)' (662, 15%), 'friendly (front of house staff)' (571, 13%) and 'top (professionals)' (548, 12%). This theme is linked with the restaurants' staff, who receive positive evaluations. A customer shared, '[a]ll [the] staff were absolutely top of their game – so knowledgeable, not "showy", and most importantly relaxed and friendly' (Gordon Ramsay, UK, female, 35–49). A typical review reads, '[t]he staff were friendly and attentive[,] recommending what food and wine they thought would be best for us' (Alain Ducasse at The Dorchester, UK, female, 18–24). Another reviewer stated:

> All the staff are totally professional but extremely approachable and not at all intrusive[. O]ur waiter Thomas took time to explain their philosophy[:] that they wanted to provide a more relaxed version of the top level service expected in a 3 star French restaurant[. H]e and the other staff we encountered certainly achieved that[,] even taking us to meet [the] chef … in the kitchen following our meal[, which was] a lovely touch. (Alain Ducasse at The Dorchester, male)

Another customer commented:

> *Every member of the front of house staff is happy and proud to be a part of the team[, which] … , just like the kitchen staff, has been put together and nurtured and melded into the finely tuned and expert equipe that makes the restaurant a success. (Alain Ducasse at The Dorchester, UK, male, 65+)*

4.4.1.9 Feel(ing)

The feeling theme includes the concepts 'special' (788, 18%), 'feel(ing)' (716, 16%), 'beautiful (venue)' (436, 10%) and 'people' (271, 6%). This theme shows that guests feel special when visiting Michelin-starred restaurants. A customer shared, '[t]he venue is beautiful and in a fairly special setting[. W]e were seated in an outdoor partition which felt a bit like dining in someone's private courtyard' (Enoteca Pinchiorri, China, male). Another client wrote, '[the s]taff really know how to make you feel special and they really know what they are doing!' *(Le Cinq, Sweden, female, 25–34). Another guest reported, '[f]rom the moment we walked in[,] we were made to feel special' (Alain Ducasse at The Dorchester, UK, male, 35–49).*

4.4.1.10 Worth

The worth theme includes the concepts of 'worth' (798, 18%) and 'expensive (menu)' (576, 13%). This theme relates to the customers' perception of value for money in Michelin-starred restaurants. A client wrote, 'I cannot recommend this enough[. I]t was superb, and although expensive[, it] was worth every penny' (Alain Ducasse at The Dorchester, UK, female, 35–49). Another customer shared, '[w]e felt like we were royalty. [It was e]xpensive but well worth the whole evening!' (Le Cinq, US, female). Another review reads, '[t]his is not a casual restaurant. It's been on the Fifty Best Restaurants in the World list for many years, and it has three Michelin stars. It's also expensive[, b]ut it is worth every euro you spend' (L'Astrance, US).

4.4.1.11 Dessert

The dessert theme includes the concepts of 'dessert' (636, 14%), 'main (dish)' (328, 07%), 'cheese' (287, 06%) and 'chocolate' (187, 04%). This theme describes the desserts served at these restaurants. A customer wrote, '[t]he truffle cheese was divine and the chocolate/raspberry dessert used both bold flavours well' (Alain Ducasse at The Dorchester,

UK, male). Another guest stated, '[I l]oved the desserts – a fig with strawberry/hibiscus flavoring[, which] was outstanding and unexpected[,] as was the milk chocolate with milk foam ([also] outstanding)' (Épicure, US, male, 35–49). Another customer shared:

The white peach dessert was unlike anything I've ever had[. It is] cold and seems like it would be ice cream, but [it] has a texture that is so light and simply melts/vanishes in your mouth. [It leaves a] clean taste on your palate and tastes like the perfect summer peach. The Nyangbo Chocolate (liquid melting cocoa inside) was also delicious and an amazing play on harder chocolate on the outside, and melting chocolate on the inside. Yes, there was a cheese plate, as well as macarons and mint flavored marshmallows which were simply delightful. The last highlight was [a] strawberry dessert which had a gelatine like texture on the outside and an amazing strawberry liquid on the inside (topped with a gold flake). (Épicure, US, male, 25–34)

4.4.1.12 Delicious (food)

The Leximancer analysis further identified the theme and concept of 'delicious (food)' (575, 13%), which relates to the food's flavours. A customer wrote, '[t]he lobster is tender and delicious and the ravioli is fresh but impressively thin. The fresh vegetables are a cut above the rest!' (L'Arpège, France, female, 25–34). Another customer stated, '[t]he result is extraordinary. Our meals, including desserts, as expected was [sic] really delicious and creative' (Alain Ducasse au Plaza Athéné, France, male, 50–64). Another guest shared, '[t]he pumpkin soup with speck-infused foam was so delicious I could have had it by the gallon. The veggie ravioli was surprisingly delicious, especially the broth. The [C]elerisotto was insanely good and very creative' (L'Arpège, France, female, 25–34).

4.4.2   Analysis by Gender

The concept map with tags by gender reveals that the meal and dessert themes are more closely linked with female guests and the wine and menu themes with male clients (see Figure 7).
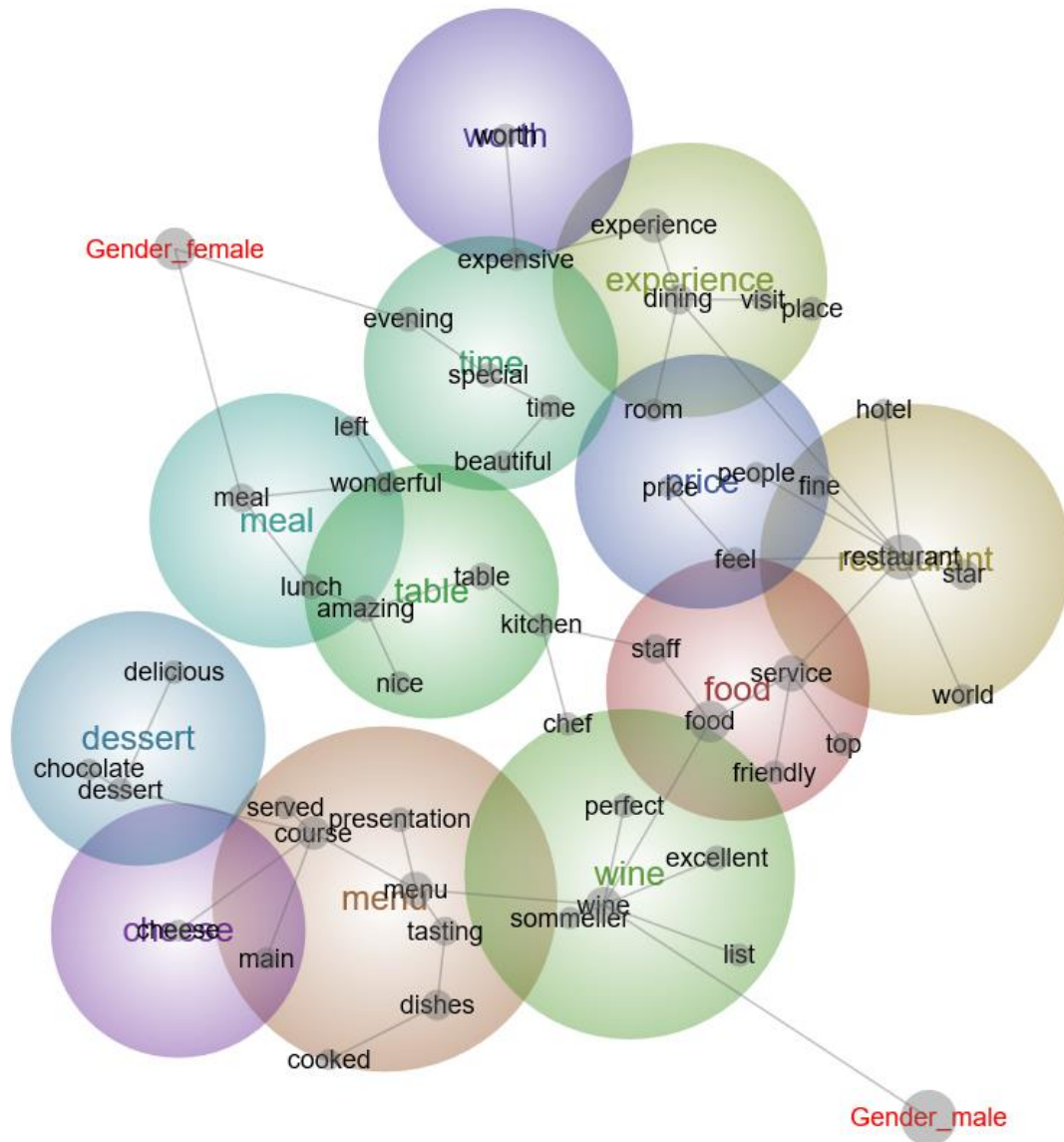

Figure 7.   Concept Map by Gender

Males are more likely to be linked with the wine theme, namely, the concepts of wine (1,186, 46%), list (243, 50%), sommelier (134, 43%) and excellent (combination) (371, 49%). For example, a male guest shared, 'the combination of wines was excellent[. W]hat else … [can be said] about the 1997 [M]illésimé [C]hampagne[:] one loves it or one hates it[. T]he sommeliers seem to be a fan of oxidative wines' (L'Astrance, Belgium, male). Another guest wrote, '[the s]ommelier asked me what I wanted, [and] he understood my … preference[s], just pour[ing] the wine. This was probably one of the best glass[es] of wine I had throughout my trip in Europe this time' (Le Pré Catelan, US, male).

Another reviewer commented, '[t]he pairing of wines to dishes was sublime and educative. Putting yourself in the hands of a skilled sommelier is not always an option, so when it's possible to do so, I like to take the opportunity' (Alain Ducasse at The Dorchester, UK, male). Another guest reported that:

> The sommelier was a professional who [had] learned his trade in Haute Savoie. He was young, friendly and very knowledgeable. He recommended a wonderful Margaux and an excellent white wine from Alsace. They both were perfectly in tune with our meals. (Le Cinq, France, male)

Males are also highly likely to be linked with the menu theme and the concepts of menu (1,034, 46%), tasting (menu) (562, 45%), dishes (849, 48%) and course (926, 44%). A male guest shared, '[t]he menu is unique in that every course one orders is an arrangement of several dishes on a theme' (Pierre Gagnaire, US, male, 50–64). Another reviewer observed, '[w]e had the tasting menu and it was fantastic[. E]ven the bread was probably the best [I] have ever eaten' (Alain Ducasse at The Dorchester, male, UK, 18–24). Another excerpt that describes this theme relates:

> As one would expect, the food was nothing less than exceptional[. W]e opted for the à la carte tasting menu. All dishes were perfectly sized given the context of the 7-course menu, with the best ingredients used and very interesting flavour

combinations[. T]he lobster and veal were stand-out dishes for me. (Alain Ducasse at The Dorchester, UK)

Another guest wrote, '[t]he tasting menu was full of great, innovative dishes – French inspired, contemporary cuisine' (Alain Ducasse at The Dorchester, US, male).

4.4.2.2   Female

Female clients are more likely to be linked with the dessert theme and with the concepts of dessert (291, 34%), chocolate (59, 32%) and cheese (84, 29%). A woman guest wrote, '[the b]est part was dessert!!! [I've n]ever had anything like that. Flavours you'd think [would] not go together … tasted soooo good' (Alain Ducasse au Plaza Athéné, female, 25–34). Another guest shared, '[t]he desserts were flawless. Not only did they look brilliant, but they tasted brilliant. [They were s]o intricate and clever' (Le Pré Catelan, Australia, female, 35–49).

A female guest reported, '[t]he desserts were excellent and the petit fours amazing[. T]he mint macaron tasted like freshly picked mint in summer and the chocolates and passion fruit caramels [were] divine' (Alain Ducasse at The Dorchester, UK, female, 50–64). Another review reads:

> For dessert we both opted for the peaches & [sic] almond with myrtle ice cream and they were the best peaches I have ever tasted! As it was a special birthday for me[,] the lovely and charming maitre d' (I think he is called Jean Claude) surprised me with an extra little mini dessert of praline ice cream encased in chocolate with a birthday candle[,] which was a lovely touch. … All [the desserts] were delicious and I felt very special. (Gordon Ramsay, UK, female, 25–34)

Female clients also were more likely to talk about the meal, including the concepts of meal (492, 31%) and wonderful (meal) (189, 29%). A female client wrote:

It was beyond wonderful and [it] is one of those meals that you remember for a very long time. I came here for St. Valentine's and it was the best choice ever. It's the best restaurant that I have ever been [to. T]he food was amazing, [and] the ambiance as well. (Alain Ducasse at The Dorchester, UK, female, 35–49)

Another female consumer shared:

This was a really lovely evening overall, and we are glad to have enjoyed this wonderful meal. The food was very good, and the service and environment is [sic] really extraordinary. The staff are excellent and make you feel at home. (Le Cinq, Canada, female, 35–49)

Another reviewer finished with, '[t]hank you for a lifetime memory! Truly a wonderful meal!' (Gordon Ramsay, US, female, 35–49).

4.4.3   Analysis by Age Group

The analysis by age revealed that the 18–24 age group is more likely to talk about the worth theme. The 25–34-year-old customers write about the restaurant theme. Those who are 35–49 years old focus on the meal theme. Consumers in the 50–64-years-old group report on the meal and wine themes, while the 65+ age group are most interested in the wine theme (see Figure 8).
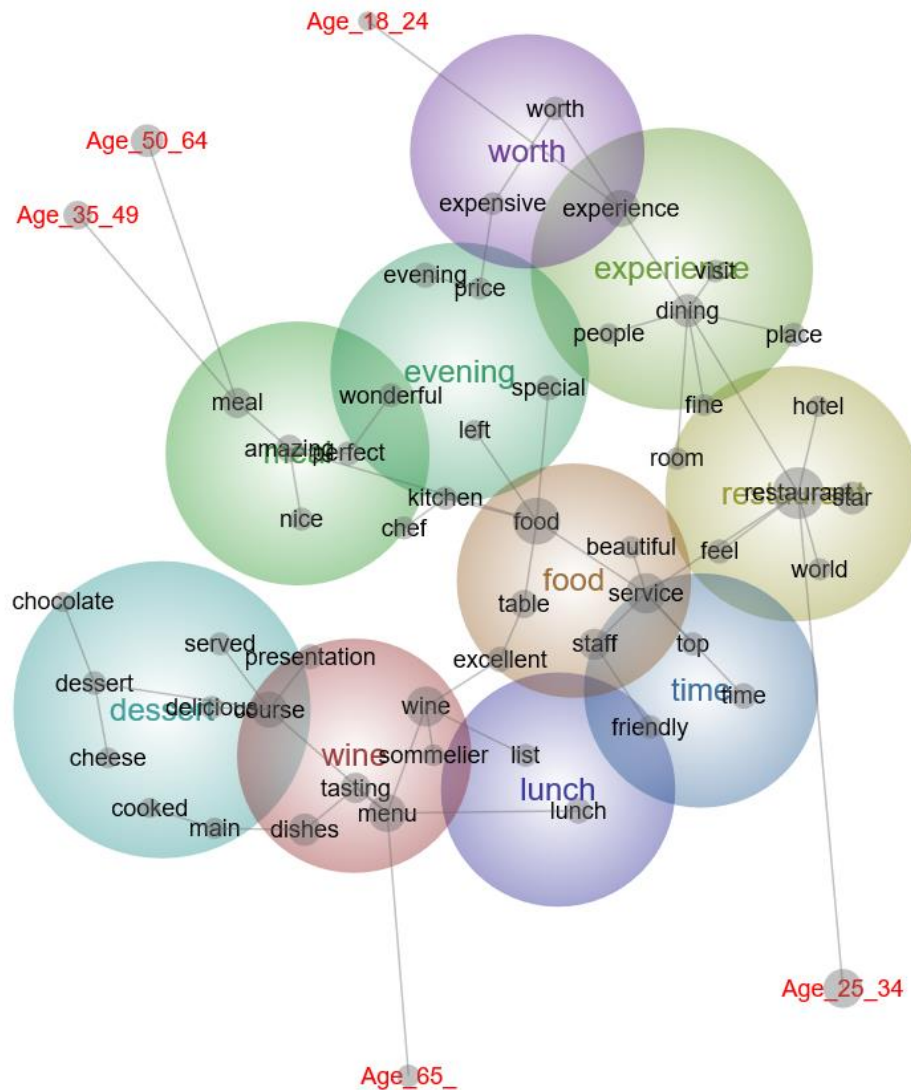
Figure 8. Concept Map by Age Group

4.4.3.1   Age group of 18–24-year-old guests

Customers from the 18–24 years of age group, as previously mentioned, are more likely to write about the worth theme, which includes the concepts of worth (24, 10%) and expensive

(menu) (20, 8%). Guests from this group talk about the value for money of their experiences (i.e. benefits vs. prices). One review states, '[t]his truly was an amazing experience for my partner and I [sic]. … We really felt like royal[ty] and it was a good feeling. [As for c]ost[, it was] pricey ... but worth it!' (Gordon Ramsey, UK, male, 18–24). Another reviewer shared:

> This is not food, this is Art! [I d]on't even know where to start. Yes[,] it is expensive but of course it is[. I]t is a 3 star [M]ichelin restaurant … and fully deserve[s the stars]! The service was like a dance. … We left very happy [– feeling] very[,] very full after lots of wonderful food and hoping to go there again one day! (Alain Ducasse at The Dorchester, UK, male, 18–24)

A reviewer wrote, '[o]verall it was a great experience and definitely worth the visit if you can afford the hefty price tag ($275/per person)' (Alinea, US, female, 18–24).

4.4.3.2   Age group of 25–34-year-old consumers

The guests in the 25–34 years of age group are more likely to share about the restaurant theme and the concepts of restaurant (382, 14%), star (165, 11%), feel(ing) (86, 11%) and world (58, 10%). A customer wrote:

> The restaurant itself is gorgeous. [L]ocated in the beautiful [B]ristol [H]otel, the dining room is open, bright, and pristine. [W]e had a lovely table by a window looking out on the hotel courtyard. … [I]f you have the means to experience EPICURE [sic] while you are in PARIS [sic], it is a culinary experience you won't forget. (Epicure, US, male, 25–34)

Another guest reported:

> Geranium in Copenhagen is by far the best dining experience I've had in my life! From [the moment] we entered the restaurant[,] everything was nothing less than absolute perfection. Every dish (we had 22) was outstanding and out of this world. A

foodgasm [sic] in every single bite and the matching wines and drinks were outstanding as well. (Geranium, Denmark, female, 25–34)

An additional guest observed, '[i]t goes beyond simply having an excellent meal at a 3-star restaurant[. T]he food was inventive in ways that is very rare [and] that moves global cuisine and food thinking forward' (L'Arpège, US, female, 25–34).

4.4.3.3   Age group of 35–49-year-old clients

The clients from the 35–49 years of age group are associated with the meal theme and the concepts of meal (246, 16%), amazing (food) (208, 18%), perfect (presentation) (106, 15%), nice (person) (101, 18%) kitchen (93, 13%) and chef (64, 12%). One guest wrote:

> The dishes that Pascal Barbot come[s] up with are creative, appealing to the eyes and orgasmic [on] the taste buds! … Our dishes were artistic, even technical if that's even possible with food. Most of all they were provocative. Each dish was prepared perfectly with the intent to stimulate my senses: visual delight, aromas that piqued my curiosity, and satisfying tastes and textures. I couldn't see what was going on in the kitchen but Pascal Barbot and the L'Astrance [are amazing]. (L'Astrance, US, male, 35–49)

A guest shared:

> This place will blow your mind away[. T]his is not your typical meal at a 5 [sic] star restaurant. This place is an experience like NO [sic] other[. T]here are so many things that make this place amazing[,] it's hard [know where] to start. (Alinea, US, male, 35–49)

Another guest commented:

> To say that I had a meal at this restaurant would not be fair. I had an experience, and what an experience. … Everything was great, [so I] can't … [think of] anything wrong or bad about the place. [The f]ood was amazing [and the] service perfect[. I]

loved every moment. I would love to visit you again on my next trip to London. (Alain Ducasse at The Dorchester, UK, male, 35–49)

4.4.3.4 Age group of 49–64-year-old guests

Clients from the 49–64 years of age group are more likely to write about the wine theme, including the concepts of wine (363, 14%), sommelier (45, 14%), tasting (menu) (135, 11%), menu (272, 12%), dishes (175, 10%) and course (294, 14%). A guest shared:

Everything was perfect, from the welcoming [sic], to the service, the wine list, the sommelier and of course the food. Pierre Gagnaire was definitely the best experience of our 2-week gastronomic trip to France and Italy. It makes little sense to single out any specific dish, since all were perfect. We strongly advise … [you select] the full menu. (Pierre Gagnaire, Paraguay, male, 49–64)

Another guest in this group reported, '[w]e had the 6 course lunch menu with matching wines. It was superb. … If you want a proper Parisienne food experience[,] this is it' (Le Cinq, Australia, female, 50–64). A third reviewer wrote:

Having heard so many good things about this restaurant[,] we decided to splurge and order the [c]hef's table. … The wines chosen to accompany each course were perfect. … [J]ust when you think it can't get any better[,] dessert appears and so does a personalized menu outlining all the food and wine … [you have] just enjoyed. [This restaurant has the w]ow factor a plenty. (Enoteca Pinchiorri, Canada, female, 50–64)

4.4.3.5 Age group of consumers 65+ years old

Clients from the 65+ years or older age group are more likely to talk about the wine theme, including the concepts of wine (110, 10%), sommelier (31, 9%%), tasting (menu) (39, 9%),

menu (64, 8%), dish (61, 8%) and course (88, 8%). Some review excerpts are provided below. One guest's post reads:

> [It is j]ust fabulous! … The seasonal tasting menu is a perfect example of how to achieve the right balance of dishes, never exaggerating individual elements to the detriment of others [–] likewise the accompanying wine flight. (Alain Ducasse at The Dorchester, UK, male, 65+)

Another happy guest wrote:

> What an evening/night! It was a firework of wonderful dishes and great wines! [We h]ad their 9 course degustation menu plus the delicious amuse[-]bouches coupled with 10 excellent wines. It was … 5 hours [of] constant bombardment of our senses. The sommelier really knew how to match each dish with top wines. [This was o]ne of our best evenings ever. (La Pergola, Thailand, male, 65+)

A similarly pleased consumer shared, '[the menu offered v]ery different food reflecting Ducasse's new philosophy, three amuse[-]bouchée and four courses of superb food with sensational flavours and the most magnificent wines. [This was] truly one of the most memorable nights of my life' (Alain Ducasse au Plaza Athéné, UK, male, 65+).

4.4.4   Analysis by Client Type

The analysis by client type showed that the categories of solo and business guests needed to be removed from the analysis because of their low representation in the sample (i.e. less than 30 reviews). The results reveal that couples are more likely to write about the meal, chef and dessert, while families describe the food and service and friends share thoughts about the food (see Figure 9).
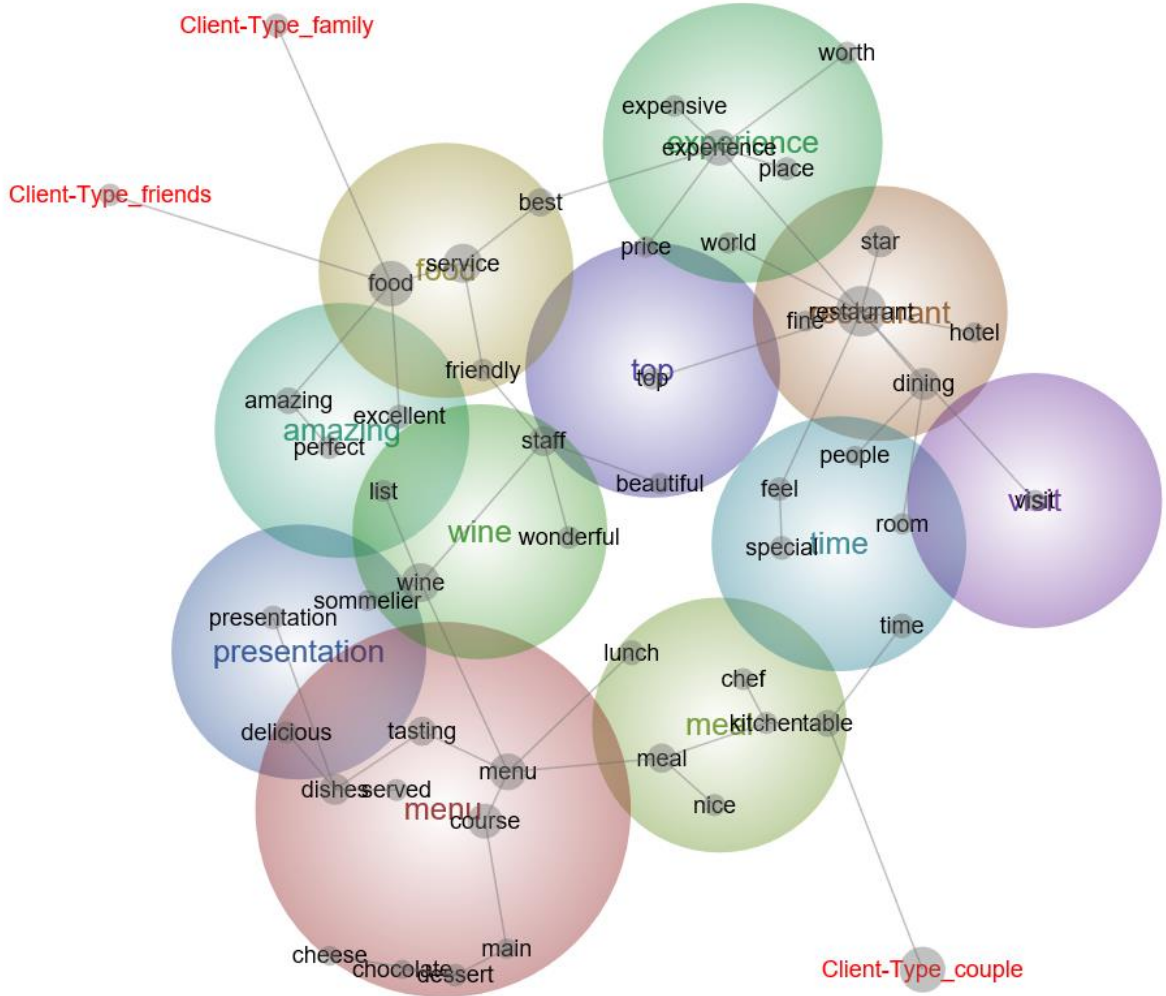
Figure 9. Concept Map by Client Type

4.4.4.1 Couples

Those eating out as couples are more likely to write about the meal and chef themes, including the concepts of chef (118, 29%), meal (444, 28%), table (308, 26%), nice (person) (146, 26%), lunch (231, 25%) and kitchen (119, 21%). One such guest shared, '[h]e and the other staff we encountered certainly achieved that[,] even taking us to meet [C]hef Jocelyn

Herland in the kitchen following our meal[, which was] a lovely touch' (Alain Ducasse at The Dorchester, male). According to another reviewer, 'Guy Savoy himself came to [our] table to introduce himself. [This is a]lways a nice touch and I always like to know THE CHEF [sic] is in kitchen. [We had a] wonderful meal with everything totally professional' (Guy Savoy, Australia, male, 65+). Another review reads:

> Guy Savoy came and introduced himself to us at the table prior to the meal which was a highlight as he has been cooking on both occasions when we've visited – not bad for someone running a global empire of restaurants and related projects. (Guy Savoy, US, male, 35–49)

The third main theme linked to couples' narratives is the dessert, associated with the concepts of dessert (192, 30%), chocolate (57, 30%), main (dish) (109, 33%) and cheese (75, 26%). A guest reported:

> For dessert[,] we shared a tarte tatin (available only for 2) – a type of dessert my husband really likes. The pastry was ridiculously flaky and the filling was scrumptious (sweet but not too sweet). The Tahitian vanilla ice cream that came with the tarte complemented it perfectly. A complimentary small 'chocolate birthday cake' was more to my taste in terms of desserts I like. I had no difficulty eating more than my fair share of it. I will not give away the big surprise in the mignardises. It was a dramatic ending to the meal. (Gordon Ramsay, US, female)

Another guest commented:

> For dessert we had perfectly ripe white peaches in a raspberry sauce that … [would have been] the perfect ending to such a lovely meal. Actually[,] a dessert cart with macaroons, caramels, chocolates and other delights followed. Even the butter was memorable. (Épicure, US, female, 65+)

A third reviewer wrote:

Naturally, the dessert courses were great. One of the best was a compressed piece of watermelon infused with strawberry juice[, which was r]eally delicious! A fun dessert was the spun sugar balloon which was presented with an edible green apple 'string'. If you ate the balloon like the waiters suggested, you were treated to the helium that was inside of the balloon which certainly led to some fun in the dining room at each of the tables. The last dessert was really incredible, though, as the chef comes to the table and[,] after the staff puts out a latex tablecloth on the table, he prepares the dessert right on the table. With a graham cracker crust, butterscotch, meringue and more, he created a piece of artwork on the table. It was delicious! (Alinea, US, male).

4.4.4.2   Family

Guests who dine out with their families are more likely to write reviews about the food and service themes, including the concepts of food (180, 5%), service (127, 5%) and the best (66, 5%). A reviewer reported:

It was a wonderful experience. [The s]ervice was exemplary [as] the staff was not only polite and professional but also warm and friendly. From start to finish the food was delicious and creative. We had high expectations and were not disappointed! (Le Pré Catelan, UK, female)

Another customer shared, '[w]e all sat there grinning stupidly about what a truly magical afternoon we had had – beyond wonderful. The combination of second-to-none service, beautiful surroundings and delicious food totally deserves … 3 stars[. We] can't WAIT [sic] to return' (Alain Ducasse at The Dorchester, UK, female, 35–49). According to one reviewer, '[e]verything was perfect!!! The food [was] delicious, the room delightful, wine recommendations perfect and the service gracious and impeccable' Épicure' (Canada, male, 65+).

4.4.4.3 Friends

Clients who go to fine dining restaurants with friends are more likely to talk about the food theme with the concepts of meal (69, 7%), amazing (food) (57, 5%) perfect (presentation) (24, 3%) and excellent (combination) (36, 5%). A guest wrote:

> The meal was excellent, [with] amazing presentation [and] flavours and a service that was attentive without being intrusive [f]rom the start to the leisurely finish (3hrs later)[. W]e left feeling a little smug we had made a perfect choice this year. (Alain Ducasse at The Dorchester, UK, male, 35–49)

Another guest stated, '[t]he attention we received was perfection, and our meal was amazing. There were 4 in our party and we all tried something different – each was delicious and unique' (Guy Savoy, US, female, 35–49). A further reviewer commented, '[This was e]xtremely amazing food. … OMG [Oh my God,] I enjoyed every minute of this place. [I h]ad [a] great time with my friends. The service is excellent [so] you can't ask for more!!' (Gordon Ramsay, UK).

4.4.5 Analysis by Value for Money Rating

In order to perform the analysis focused on value for money ratings, the reviewers were clustered into two groups: those who rated the value as 1 or 2 and those who rated the value as 4 or 5. Figure 10 presents the cognitive map with value for money tags.
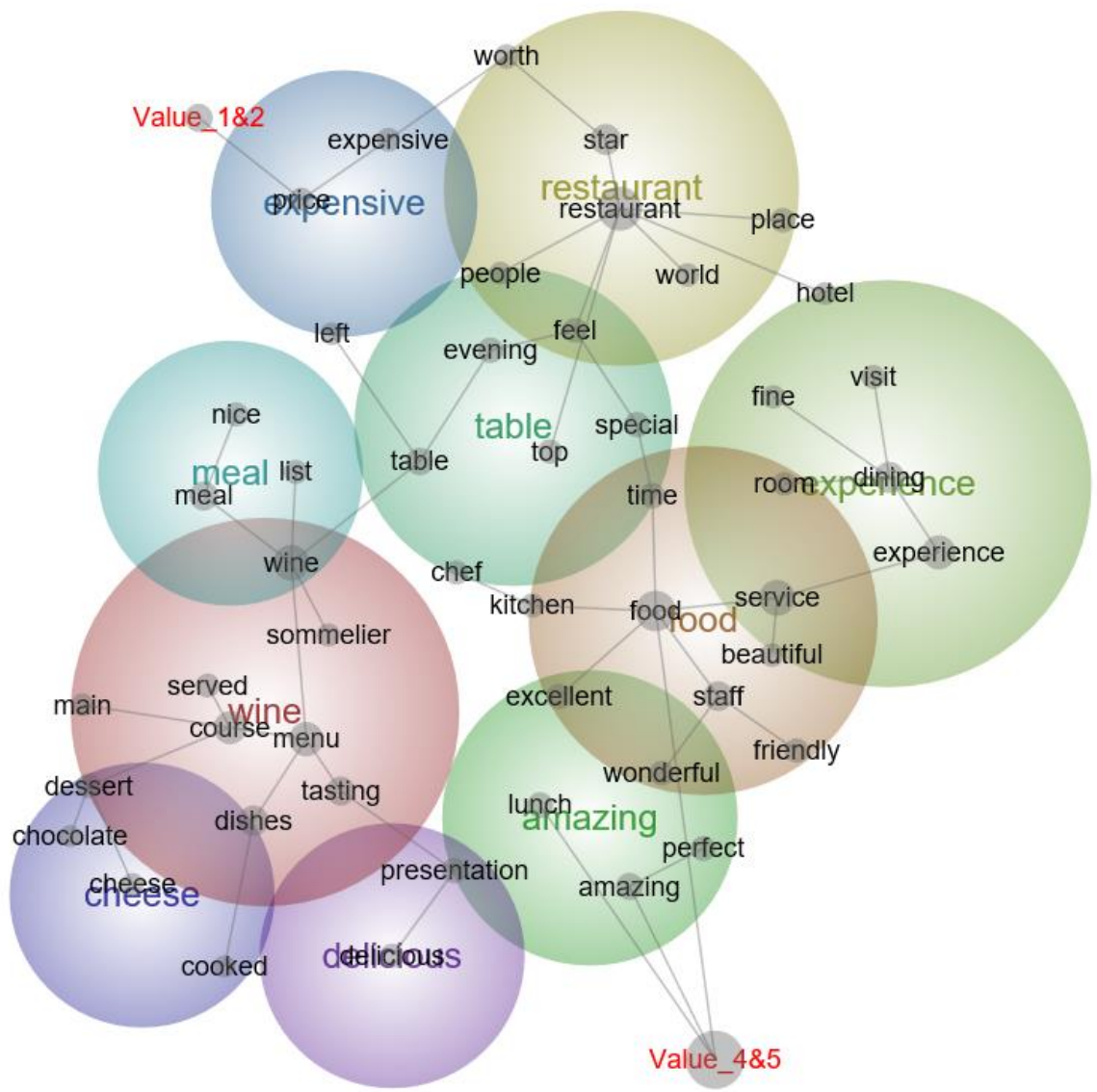
Figure 10. Concept Map by Value for Money

4.4.5.1   Ratings of one and two

Customers who evaluate their experiences with a 1 or 2 are more likely to write about the concepts of price (71, 15%) and expensive (menu) (63, 11%). Other frequently mentioned concepts are restaurant (544, 12%) and star (273, 16%). One review reads:

> Having been to many [M]ichelin star restaurants, this is the most disappointed one [I] have ever been [to because] the food is so average [and] classic and [because of the] up[-]tight environment. [T]he price is just outrages [sic] and doesn't match what you get. [I] will not recomand [sic] [this to] anyone. ... [I]t … just [has] a famous name, that's it. … [This was an u]nbelievably disappointing experience. (Enoteca Pinchiorri, Italy, female)

Another guest shared:

> Alain Ducasse at the Dorchester is a 3 star restaurant, one of only four in the country [–] 'a restaurant worth a special journey, indicating exceptional cuisine where diners eat extremely well, often superbly'[,] according to Michelin. It is hard to comprehend the cognitive dissonance of the Michelin inspectors[.] Alain Ducasse has built a formidable reputation but I am not sure that he or Michelin would ever be able to defend or advocate such indiscriminate use of ingredients, sparing application of skill and ultimate indifference towards the diners. Well, if they were to [do so], they know where to come. (Alain Ducasse at The Dorchester, UK)

An additional reviewer wrote:

> We had dinner at this restaurant tonight. This restaurant is a tourist scam. In a word[,] it's horrifically expensive for very average food. I …[can]not believe it has a Michelin star, let alone 3! I'll be writing to Michelin to check [if] they know this place is a restaurant and not a place for new tyres. … [G]iven the severity of how I feel[, I] thought [I] should warn others away. [S]eriously[, you should] avoid it. (L'Ambroisie, France)

4.4.5.2 *Ratings of four and five*

Customers who evaluated their experiences with a rating of 4 or 5 are more likely to share narratives with the concepts of presentation (378, 51%), delicious (food) (321, 56%), meal (818, 52%), perfect (presentation) (405, 56%), amazing (food) (583, 49%), chef (269, 47%) and staff (730, 40%). A reviewer reported:

> [T]his restaurant lived up to its reputation and[,] from the moment of arrival[,] we were treated as one expects from a top restaurant. It was my 65th and[,] even at the end of the meal[, the] chef sent out a special treat for me. [C]hef and all the team[,] thank you for a remarkable … day to remember. [The] quality, exemplary care and … fine attention to detail[,] along [with] the flawless presentation of … the meals[,] made one's palate come alive. [A]gain[,] thank you[,] team[,] for making my day. (Gordon Ramsey, UK, male, 65+)

Another reviewer shared, '[t]he food [is] perfect. [The s]taff [are p]erfect. [The a]tmosphere [is p]erfect. … It's expensive but I'd say worth every penny ... and a couple more' (L'Arpège, male, 25–34). Another comment stated:

> The service [was] superb! It was efficient and everyone was extremely kind. [It was s]imply perfect! The food [was], [w]ow … [, a]n adventure! Every course is different. It could be a delicious molecular cuisine example or just a root. Something fresh and flowery or something strong and exotic. A balloon or a tree trunk. It was definitely an adventure! Everything was delicious … [and a]n explosion of flavours, colors and textures. We also enjoyed the wine pairing! … It was a worthwhile culinary experience. I definitely recommend it! (Alinea, Mexico, female)

4.5 Conclusion

Increasing numbers of tourists around the world are attracted to fine dining as a central part of their tourism experiences. Fine dining is thus a local phenomenon of universal scope that has grown considerably in recent years and has become one of the most dynamic and creative segments of hospitality and tourism. Excellent food is an aspect of utmost importance to the quality of holiday experiences, so these restaurants can be seen as a tourism product. Fine dining has been defined as authentic experiences of a sophisticated lifestyle in pleasant environments associated with the 'good life' and tourists' economic well-being.

This study sought to identify the main dimensions of customers' overall experiences in Michelin three-star restaurants based on narratives shared in online reviews. This final section discusses the results, highlights the theoretical contributions and managerial implications, and describes the limitations, as well as suggesting avenues for future research.

4.5.1 Discussion

The first objective of this study was to ascertain the primary dimensions of Michelin three-star restaurant experiences revealed in narratives posted by customers on social media websites in the post-purchase phase. The analyses identified 12 themes: restaurant, food service, menu, chef, wine, meal, dining experience, staff, feeling, worth, dessert and delicious food. The results are in accordance with the theoretical background drawn from the literature, which conceptualises fine dining as a multidimensional experience (Andersson and Mossberg, 2012). As in previous studies, both tangible and intangible components of this experience were recovered through the present research's content analysis of Web reviews (Kim et al., 2006; Njite et al., 2008).

Regarding the restaurant theme, guests wrote about their experiences in renowned Michelin three-star restaurants. As previous studies have reported, fine dining restaurants are perceived

as having brand prestige (Hwang and Hyun, 2012). The Michelin star system operates as a signalling device and influences consumer choices (Surlemont and Johnson, 2005). The food service theme has also been highlighted by previous studies. Excellent food differentiates fine dining restaurants from other restaurant segments (Ma et al., 2014). Food is one of the most important dimensions of fine dining experiences (Andersson and Mossberg, 2004; Kim et al., 2006). However, in Michelin three-star restaurants, intangible dimensions such as service influence the food's perceived quality (Jin et al., 2015; Njite et al., 2008).

A menu is the list of dishes and beverages offered by restaurants, along with the prices. Fine dining restaurants have successfully developed their menu selections. Antun and Gustafson (2005: 52) suggest that '[t]he menu reflects the formality, style, price range and overall image of the food service operation'. The menu is thus one of the major components of these restaurants' operations. Indeed, it reflects the image of the restaurants, materialising their style, pricing policy and level of formality. A theme closely related with the menu is desserts, which are highlighted in various reviews.

The chef is also an important theme. Michelin-starred restaurants are led by celebrity chefs whose core competencies are finely honed artistic kitchen skills (Kohnson et al., 2005). Michelin star chefs are expected to deliver consistently high quality and to be creative. Wine and wine service are also an important theme in fine dining experiences reviewed online. Stierand and Dörfler (2012) interviewed top chefs and similarly identified wine as an important component of creating harmony in haute cuisine offers.

Perfect, amazing meals are described extremely frequently in clients' reviews. This result is in accordance with previous studies highlighting the need for uniqueness expressed by consumers who seek out fine dining experiences (Hyun and Park, 2016). Patrons of fine dining restaurants look not only for high quality food and superior service but also distinctive dining experiences. The dining theme is closely related to the concept of visits to fine dining restaurants. These restaurants offer a sophisticated décor and atmosphere, well-trained staff and a high level of service. They are usually located in urban cities and areas of heavy traffic (Antun and Gustafson, 2005).

As in previous studies (Antun and Gustafson, 2005; Njite et al., 2005), the staff are also an important theme in Web reviews. Njite et al. (2005) maintain that non-food attributes are important to consumers' selections of fine dining restaurants. Customer relations with the staff are of utmost importance in a fine dining context since, given the nature of these culinary experiences, consumers have to be interacting constantly with the staff. The reviewers highlighted the importance of interactions with employees and their competence in information exchange processes.

The restaurant staff play an important role as marketers in promoting the menu (Antun and Gustafson, 2005). As staff service plays an important role in fine dining experiences, they need to be trained properly, have a good attitude, possess customer service skills, be knowledgeable about food and wine and offer professional advice to restaurant customers (Ma et al., 2014). Staff characteristics have also been included in previous service quality scales (e.g. empathy, assurance and responsiveness) (Oubre and Brown, 2009). Moreover, employees' customer orientation and communication are important drivers of relationship quality (Kim et al., 2006).

The feeling theme highlights the emotional component of fine dining experiences. Consumers expect to feel special during these unique luxury dining experiences. The role of emotions in fine dining was studied by Akgün et al. (2017), who used an experimental design to examine luxury food and beverage consumption. The worth theme, in turn, is mainly linked to overall experiences and the price paid versus the value received. This dimension also appears in the results of previous studies of fine dining. According to Jin et al. (2015), restaurant operators should provide food to diners at prices considered reasonable because they are consistent with the reference prices that clients know from previous dining experiences at similar fine dining restaurants. Kim et al.'s (2006) study also identified price fairness as an important predictor of relationship quality, and, more recently, Jin et al. (2015) concluded that prices have an impact on the perceived image of restaurant innovativeness.

The delicious food theme encompasses the concepts of delicious dishes and perfect presentation, which are linked with narratives about sensory experiences of fine dining, including both taste and sight. Food presentation and other sensory aspects are known to

influence the brand prestige levels of fine dining restaurants (Hwang and Hyun, 2012). In addition, this dimension matches the concept of the aesthetic dimension of memorable consumer experiences (Blichfeldt et al., 2010). The importance of food presentation is also in accordance with the tangibles dimension of fine dining service provision (Oubre and Brown, 2009).

The second objective of the present study was to test whether the dimensions of fine dining experiences identified in online reviews vary according to market segments (i.e. client type, gender and age). An analysis by client groups revealed that age, gender and client type are important market segmentation variables. Female consumers' narratives are more likely to be linked with the themes of meal and dessert, whereas male reviews are more likely to be associated with the themes of wine and menu.

With regard to age groups, clients who are 18–24 years old are more likely to write reviews about value for money issues. Guests from the 25–34-year-old group focus on the restaurant theme. Customers who are 35–49 years old are more likely to discuss the menu. Clients from the age group of 50–64 year olds are more likely to share narratives about the meal and wine, while guests who are 65 or more years old describe wine pairing issues.

Although gender and age differences have been studied previously (Ma et al., 2014; Novak et al., 2010), the present study's results offer a better understanding of the narratives shared by these groups. Moreover, the results offer new insights by highlighting the central role of wine in senior and male consumers' experiences and of specific menu components for female clients.

The third objective of this study was to identify the main narratives linked with high and low value for money ratings. Ratings of 1 and 2 are linked with the concepts of Michelin-starred restaurant and expensive menu. Ratings of 4 and 5 are connected to unique sensory experiences (i.e. perfect presentation and delicious food) and a combination of themes that describe the experiences as wonderful, amazing and perfect.

4.5.2 Theoretical Contribution

This paper contributes to the literature by focusing on the high-end segment of the fine dining sector – Michelin three-star restaurants – and by offering the results of content analyses of narratives shared in online reviews by these restaurants' customers. The findings present a comprehensive picture of fine dining experiences, combining food and beverage themes, tangible and intangible components and emotional outcomes of these experiences.

In addition, the present use of Web reviews confirmed these have several advantages for researchers, including the ability to collect samples from reviewers worldwide and to minimise response bias. The findings also provide evidence of the relevance of analyses based on market segmentation variables such as age, gender and client type. In answer to the calls made in previous studies (Klalilzadeh et al., 2017), the present study further identified the fine dining dimensions linked with the highest and lowest value for money ratings.

4.5.3 Managerial Implications

Researchers have confirmed that word of mouth is an important consumer behaviour outcome and marketing tool for Michelin-starred restaurants (Bei et al., 2003; Gehrels and Kristanto, 2006). Although consumers are, in general, extremely satisfied with their experiences, some dissatisfaction and low value for money ratings were associated with the reviews collected. As the Michelin star system is well known for its authoritative evaluations and solid reputation, negative ratings can tarnish the image of chefs, restaurants and the Michelin star system. Therefore, Web reviews merit the attention of not only fine dining restaurants but also the editors of the *Michelin Red Guide*, in order to ensure outstanding quality and counteract service failures.

The present results offer Michelin-starred chefs and restaurant managers and owners a fuller picture of the overall experiences shared by customers online. The menu, chef's signature

dish, wine, dessert, overall meal, food service, presentation of dishes, relationships with the staff and positive emotions describe Michelin three-star experiences from the customers' perspective. Fine dining restaurants thus need to develop food designs and flavour combinations that appeal to customers' senses. Creativity, innovation and surprises are necessary to make clients feel special. Restaurant managers should also concentrate on hiring employees who are well-trained and who have a positive work attitude, as well as offering the training the staff need to meet customers' needs. As the chef is an important component of fine dining experiences, chefs who visit guests at their tables will contribute significantly to making their experiences unique.

The results also offer important insights with regard to market segmentation. Consumers are not homogeneous, so they share different narratives about their experiences. Given the market segmentation results, heterogeneity in the most frequently mentioned themes and importance of marketing in fine dining (Miranda et al., 2015), chefs and their teams need to encourage all staff to receive training in marketing issues. This will improve their restaurants' positioning. Regarding the customers' ratings of their experiences' value for money, low ratings are linked to negative perceptions of price fairness. This can be a challenge for Michelin-starred restaurant managers, as their clients come from all over the world and they might have different experiences and price references.

4.5.4   Limitations and Avenues for Future Research

Although the results of this study offer a better understating of the dimensions of Michelin three-star experiences, the research also had some limitations that must be highlighted. First, as most reviews were positive, the narratives used to describe each theme are positive. Because of the negative impact of services failures on fine dining restaurants' future, future studies could gather a large sample of negative reviews and analyse more in depth failures associated with low value for money ratings for each dimension of fine dining experiences.

Second, although the main themes were derived from a large sample and discussed according to previously developed theory, content validity remains an issue. Future studies need to validate the dimensions identified here by using different methodological options (e.g. interviews and surveys). In addition, as some of the themes relate to the senses (e.g. sight – perfect presentation; taste – delicious food), another area that merits future research is the dimensions of sensory dining experiences.

This study considered the client types provided by previous research on travellers: solo, business, family, friends and couples. Future studies could also analyse the contents of Web reviews to identify different special occasions (e.g. Valentine's Day, birthdays and family celebrations) and patronage profiles (e.g. first-time clients vs. repeat purchases). These can be used to check for related variations in the primary dimensions of consumers' fine dining experiences.

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5   Conclusion

Food tourism has received an increasing attention by researchers, managers and government agencies (Chen and Huang, 2016). Food tourism comprises trips that are driven by culinary interests and travel in which culinary experiences are an important component of the travel experience although not being the primary motivation for it (Okumus et al., 2013). The supply side of food tourism (Ignatov and Smith, 2006) comprises a variety of resources, such as facilities, activities, events and organizations.

The first paper of this dissertation 'Identifying the Main Themes in the Food Tourism Literature' aimed at studying the main insights offered by existing literature regarding food tourism. Based on a mixed method approach combining quantitative analysis, semantic analysis and narrative analysis (Jun and Wang, 2016), 183 published journals were content analysed. This study employed an hybrid systematic literature review, combining narrative, systematic and semantic network analysis. The first study sought to answer the following research question: what insights into food tourism does the existing literature offer? The results revealed that the main themes in the literature on food tourism address topics such as food and tourism experiences, rural and sustainable tourism, culinary marketing, local food, destination food image, travel satisfaction, restaurants, festivals, hospitality and food safety. Considering the food tourism supply chain (Ignatov and Smith, 2006), these themes could be further grouped facilities (e.g., restaurants and rural tourism), activities (e.g., food experiences), events (e.g., festivals) and organizations (e.g., safety standards).

Under the themes of food and tourism experiences, restaurants and culinary marketing, the first study identify as avenue for future research the study of the overall experience in the luxury segment of the restaurant industry – Michelin starred restaurants based on web reviews. In fact, the first study revealed that travel satisfaction literature should target the upscale segment of food tourism, that includes the Michelin-starred restaurants and celebrity Chefs.

The food tourism supply chain includes as consumption activities 'Fine dining' and as classification schemes the 'Michelin star system' (Johnson et al., 2005). The luxury segment

of the restaurant industry is a niche market, which attracts tourists and consumers with high volume of expenditures that demand for high quality products (Johnson et al., 2005; Palmer et al., 2010; Tommaso et al., 2017). As a trend observed in the restaurant industry is the increasing information shared by consumers in web reviews about their experiences enhancing foodie disclosure (Rousseau, 2012; Vásquez and Chik, 2015). Therefore, web reviews might be considered a trustable source of information for researchers and used to identify the main dimensions of the travel experience (Zhang and Cole, 2016; Lupu et al., 2017; Rodrigues et al., 2017).

Accordingly, the main objective of study two was to identify the main dimensions of two-star Michelin Restaurant experiences as revealed by customers' narratives shared in social media websites in the post-purchase phase of their experience. The second study sought to answer the following research question: what are the main themes contributing to the overall satisfaction in haute cuisine? This study targeted 2 two-star Michelin restaurants located in Portugal. Mixed content analysis, combining narrative and quantitative analysis were employed to study the narrative shared online by the guests (N=600). The results include a concept map encompassing the following dimensions: 'food', 'restaurant', 'experience', 'menu', 'wine', 'special (dinner)', 'view', 'beautiful (food)', 'friendly (staff)', 'chef', 'visit' and 'dessert'. The results reinforce that fine dining experiences need to be evaluated using a multi-attribute approach (Chen and al, 2017).

Although online reviewing is a global phenomenon, the first study focused only on two-star restaurants located in a single country, Portugal. Therefore, study 3 developed a large sample, comprising 19 three-star restaurants worldwide. Moreover, recent studies (Kim et al., 2014; Ma et al., 2014) concluded that fine dining consumers are not a homogeneous group and should be segmented according to their demographic profile and highlighted the need to identify attributed linked with positive and negative experiences (Klalizadeh et al., 2017). Therefore, the study three aimed at studying three objectives: (i) to identify the main dimensions of 3 star Michelin Restaurants' experience revealed by narratives in social media websites by customers in their post purchase phase of their experience as thus validating the

results from study two; (ii) To test whether the dimensions of the experience vary according to market segments (client type, gender and age).

Accordingly, study three sought to answer three research questions: *(i)* What are the main themes contributing to the overall experience in haute cuisine? *(ii)* What are the main reasons guests giving for low (1&2) and high (4&5)? *(iii)* Do the dimensions of the Michelin 3-starred restaurant experience vary according to gender, age group and traveller type?

A content analysis of the reviews shared online by 3 starred Michelin guests allowed to obtain a battery of concepts that describe the upscale dining experience. The analysis employed both qualitative and quantitative methods. The output includes an overall concept map and a concept by gender, age group, traveller type and value rating.

The quantitative content analysis identified 12 themes to describe the dining experience, as follows: 'restaurant', 'food service', 'menu', 'chef', 'wine', 'meal', 'dining', 'staff', 'feel', 'worth', 'dessert' and 'delicious'. The obtained dimensions in study two and three provide evidence of the content validity of the obtained dimensions. The most cited dimensions in the narratives vary according to the demographic (age and gender) and traveller segment (client type). Female clients talk more likely about the themes meal and dessert and male counterparts are more likely to talk about the themes wine and menu. Clients from the group 18-24 share more often narratives related with value issues, clients from the group 25-34 share reviews about the theme restaurant, clients from the group 35-49 are liked with descriptions of the menu, clients from the age group 50-64 are more likely to share narratives about the meal and the wine and clients with 65 or more years old describe the wine pairing issues.

As regards the value, ratings of 1 or 2 are mainly associated with the concepts of Michelin star restaurant and expensive price, whereas ratings of 4 and 5 describe a unique sensorial experience (concepts presentation and delicious) and a combination of themes that make the experience being described with the concepts wonderful, amazing and perfect.

5.1   Theoretical contribution

The first theoretical contribution of this study was to provide an overview of past research on food tourism. The descriptive analysis identified the top journals and publications by year and by author. The narrative and the semantic analysis provide an overview of the main themes and methodological approaches used in academic paper targeting food tourism. For each main theoretical theme, research gaps were identified. More specifically the analysis concluded that there is room to study the dining experience in the upscale segment of the industry. Fine dining might be viewed as a local phenomenon of universal scope. This dynamic and creative segment of the hospitality and tourism industry has attracted an increasing attention by consumers and is linked with tourists' economic well-being. Therefore, the experience in Michelin star restaurants was further covered in this dissertation.

Therefore, from a theoretical point of view this dissertation is expected to add to the literature of food tourism by providing a better understanding of the dimensions of the dining experience in the high-end segment of the restaurant industry, the two and three Michelin restaurants. The results are expected to offer a comprehensive description of the overall luxury dining experience. The overall dining experience combine food and beverage themes, tangible and intangible aspects and emotional outcomes of the experience. The obtained results provide further evidence that fine dining should be viewed as a multidimensional experience (Andersson and Mossberg, 2012). Furthermore, both tangible and intangible components of the fine dining experience were recovered through the present research's content analysis of Web reviews shared online by restaurant' clients in the post-purchase phase of their experience (Kim et al., 2006; Njite et al., 2008).

Moreover, this paper provides evidence of the relevance of market segmentation variables such as age, gender and client type. Answering the call of previous studies (Klalilzadeh et al., 2017) this paper identified the dimensions liked with the highest and lowest value ratings. Therefore, the results of this study are expected to contribute to a better understanding of market segmentation in the fine dinning industry.

5.2 Managerial Implications

From a managerial point of view, the present findings suggest new methodological approaches and data sources for restaurant managers understand the experience offered by their business operations. Word of mouth is an important consumer behavior in the post purchase phase of their experience and its importance is increasingly recognized in the fine dining industry (Gehrels and Kristanto, 2007; Bei et al., 2003). Considering that luxury consumers should not be disturbed by surveys during their dining experience, content analysis of web reviews offers an alternative and valuable source of information. Although Michelin star clients are satisfied with their experience, there are a few negative reviews and low value ratings. Restaurant managers should continuous monitoring the reasons behind these reviews and implement service failure recovering strategies.

The results of this study might also offer important managerial implications for the Michelin star rating system. As Michelin star system is well known by its authority and reputation, the existence of negative ratings in web reviews can burden the chef image, the restaurant and also the rating system. Therefore not only restaurants should pay attention to the web reviews, but also the managers of the Michelin Red Guide.

The results also offer a better understanding of effective market segmentation variables that might be used by chefs and restaurant managers to offer a consistent outstanding experience for all customer groups.

5.3 Limitations and Avenues for Future Research

Despite the results of this dissertation are expected to provide a better understating of the main themes of the dining experience shared online, the role of market segmentation variables and the narratives linked with different value ratings, some limitations were recognized. First, the narratives were based mainly on positive evaluations. Second, although study two and study three provide evidence of the content validity of the obtained dimensions, other methodological approaches might be used (e.g., interviews with stakeholders).

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Areas that merits future research is the study of the negative impact of services failures, a content analysis of negative reviews and the study of the sensorial dimensions of the experience in Michelin star restaurants.

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7 Appendix