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**Michelin Starred Restaurants as drivers of gastronomic
tourism and the main experience dimensions – the
Portuguese case**

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Master in Hospitality and Tourism Management

Supervisor: Professor Dr^a Ana Brochado

Outubro, 2022



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Abstract

With the rise in popularity over the last years, the restaurant industry has become one of the most important sectors of tourism. Furthermore, the number of gastronomic destinations is increasing, with the Michelin starred restaurants being crucial for that. Therefore, this dissertation investigates the role played by Michelin starred restaurants as drivers of gastronomic tourism and identifies the main experience dimensions that might be contributing to this phenomenon. We applied a mixed content analysis method to further explore this phenomenon, considering the case of Portugal. The research used 564 customers reviews shared on TripAdvisor website, which referred to dining experiences at Portuguese Michelin starred restaurants. The main experience dimensions results include eleven themes: food service, restaurant, wine, experience, menu, chef, view, trip, dinner, culinary and red. The results show that the most relevant dimensions for customers when evaluating their experience are related to the quality and taste of the food. The results also confirm that Michelin starred restaurants are drivers of the development of gastronomic tourism in Portugal. These findings contribute to the literature of gastronomic tourism by enhancing the knowledge of the dimensions present in a Michelin starred restaurant experience and the role of these restaurants as drivers of gastronomic tourism. Regarding the managerial implications, these findings give valuable insights about the Michelin starred restaurant sector for both restaurant managers and governments.

Key words: Gastronomic Tourism; Michelin starred restaurants; Customer experience; Upscale restaurants; Web reviews

Sumário

Com o aumento da sua popularidade ao longo dos últimos anos, a restauração passou a ser um dos mais importantes setores do turismo. Além disso, o número de destinos gastronómicos tem vindo a aumentar, sendo os restaurantes com estrela Michelin um fator muito importante para tal. Tendo isto em conta, esta dissertação investiga o papel desempenhado pelos restaurantes com estrela Michelin como impulsionadores do turismo gastronómico e identifica as principais dimensões da experiência que poderão contribuir para este fenómeno. Foi usado um método de análise de conteúdo misto para explorar este fenómeno, considerando o caso de Portugal. Para esta pesquisa foram usados 564 comentários publicados no TripAdvisor, relativos a experiências em restaurantes com estrela Michelin Portugueses. Os resultados relativos às principais dimensões da experiência revelaram onze temas principais: serviço de alimentação, restaurante, vinho, experiência, menu, chefe de cozinha, vista, viagem, jantar, culinária e vermelho. Os resultados mostram que as dimensões mais relevantes para os clientes quando avaliam as suas experiências estão relacionadas com a qualidade e sabor da comida. Os resultados também mostram que os estes restaurantes são impulsionadores do desenvolvimento do turismo gastronómico em Portugal. Estas conclusões contribuem para a literatura sobre turismo gastronómico ao aumentarem o conhecimento sobre as dimensões presentes numa experiência num restaurante com estrela Michelin e o contributo destes restaurantes para o desenvolvimento do turismo gastronómico. Em relação aos contributos para a gestão, estes resultados fornecem informações importantes sobre o sector dos restaurantes com estrela Michelin, tanto para os gestores dos restaurantes como para os governos.

Palavras-Chave: Turismo gastronómico; Restaurantes com estrela Michelin; Experiência do cliente; Restaurantes de luxo; Comentários online

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Chapter 1: Introduction

There are several different reasons for tourists to choose a specific destination, but quality cuisine is now one of the most relevant factors consumers have into account when choosing a destination (Lai, Khoo-Lattimore & Wang, 2017). The connection between food and tourism has a long history which linked them as a political force. Gastronomy is more than just a fantastic tool to freshen and diversify tourism (Meneguel et al., 2019). For instance, gastronomic experiences are one of the most authentic ways to understand and discover new cultures (Araújo, M. J., 2021). Nowadays, restaurants are providers of destinations' cultural elements, sharing that position with the more traditional segments of the cultural sector (Meneguel et al, 2019). Additionally, food tourism is used by destinations to chase high-yielding tourists in order to generate economic propensity, rise employment levels and boost economic activity. In many countries food is the central aspect in the tourism strategy, consequently creating political and economic capital (Yeoman & McMahon-Beatte, 2016). For instance, Peru is a notable example of a country that has implemented this strategy, as the capital Lima has become one of the principal gastronomic destinations in the world, after a great investment was made in the showcase of local gastronomy to the rest of the world (Pérez Gálvez et al., 2017; Tonon, 2022). Moreover, one of the most important drivers of this achievement was the Michelin starred Chef Vergilio Martinez and his restaurant Central, which was considered the most influential restaurant in the world in the last decade. As stated by the chef, "In the beginning we didn't know that what people really want was to get to know Peru through what they eat at Central, and the products and technics that only exist there" (Tonon, 2022), concluding that food is far more than a basic need, representing many times a means for travelers to get to know their destination. Therefore, gastronomy is becoming a relevant factor in a destination's branding, identity and attractiveness (Pavlidis & Markantonatou, 2020, p.9).

Over the last years, the restaurant industry experienced a significant increase in popularity and nowadays it is one of the most prominent sectors of tourism (Delgado Cruz et al., 2016). In fact, the gastronomy tourism report developed by UNWTO (2017) states that gastronomy is responsible for more than 30% of total destinations' tourism revenue and that this value will tend to grow in the future. The report also points out that tourists spend more than a third of their total travel expenses in restaurants. Therefore, many destinations start looking at culinary tourists as their main target, considering they stay longer in destinations, increase the total revenue of local products and are important contributors to the development of a sustainable economy (UNWTO, 2017). Moreover, deep diving into the gastronomic panorama, the fine dining sector is one of those that attract more tourists to a destination (Batat 2020).

For those that love gastronomy and are seeking new experiences, the fine dining restaurants, identified by the Michelin Guide with their star-rating system, have become a meeting point (Vargas-Sanchez & López-Guzmán, 2020). Michelin starred restaurants are considered the peak of the dining experience, and, therefore, the Michelin guide is decisive to gastronomic tourists when planning a trip (Daries et al., 2018; Kiatkawsin & Han, 2019). In fact, many tourists travel to a destination with the only purpose of visiting a Michelin starred restaurant, emphasizing the importance of Michelin starred Chefs in the development of the gastronomic tourism in the country (Vargas-Sanchez & López-Guzmán, 2020), which is in line with the previously mentioned example of Peru. Nonetheless, apart from Peru, there are plenty of other touristic destinations that use celebrity chefs as destination ambassadors, such as Singapore, Japan and U.S.A (Giousmpasoglou et al., 2020).

Recently the number of gastronomic destinations is increasing (Pérez Gálvez et al. 2017). Therefore, for a country to stand out and maintain its competitiveness, the role of luxury gastronomy in the development of this sector should be studied in detail. In fact, according to Batat (2020) a deep dive into this topic will allow the professionals in the gastronomy and tourism sector to connect and share ideas, consequently improving the attractiveness of the destination, by highlighting its uniqueness. This will in turn generate more benefits to local actors and contribute to the development of rural and urban gastronomic tourism. Though it is known that luxury gastronomy has an important role in the promotion of a destination (Batat, 2020; Meneguel et al., 2019; Vargas-Sanchez & López-Guzmán, 2020), prior research does not provide quantitative approaches about the perspective of tourists on the role of Michelin starred restaurants in the destination attractiveness (Batat, 2020). Moreover, although Brochado (2018) performed a quantitative content analysis with the goal of identifying the main dimensions of the experience in three-star Michelin restaurants in customers reviews posted on social media websites in the post purchase phase, this study focused on restaurants from all over the world, lacking the specificity of a single country analysis. Thus, in this study we will use a quantitative content analysis method to further explore the potential of Michelin starred restaurants as drivers of gastronomic tourism in a single country and discover the main experience dimensions that might be contributing to it. For the purpose of this research, the case of Portugal will be considered. Portugal is highly dependent on tourism, which in 2019 was responsible for 11,8% of its total GDP (Petronilho, 2022). Therefore, we want to understand the extent to which experiencing a Michelin starred restaurant might be a decisive factor in the tourists' choice to travel to Portugal. On the other hand, the Portuguese gastronomy has been achieving notoriety over the last years (Lusa, 2022) and the number of Michelin starred restaurants in Portugal is increasing (Michelin, 2021), which might point out that there are more and more tourists visiting Portugal with the goal of having a meal at one of these restaurants.

Given the previously mentioned facts, this research aims to explore the potential of Michelin starred restaurants as drivers of gastronomic tourism and to identify the main experience dimensions that might be contributing to this phenomenon, by addressing two main questions: (a) what the main and most relevant dimensions of a Michelin starred restaurant experience are; and (b) what is the role of Michelin starred restaurants in the attractiveness of Portugal as a gastronomic destination. In order to answer to these questions, the following research objectives have been formulated: (a) to identify the main dimensions of the Portuguese Michelin starred restaurants' experience based on customers' experiences shared online; (b) to identify the dimensions that distinguish a perfect experience from a non-perfect experience; and (c) explore whether Michelin starred restaurants can be the main motivator for tourists to travel to Portugal based on narratives shared online. Towards these research objectives, in chapter two, we provide a succinct theoretical overview regarding the main concepts and theories related with our proposal. In chapter three, we present the methodological approach selected to answer our research objectives. Chapter four focuses on the obtained results, and in the fifth and final chapter we summarize our main findings and present a discussion of the results. Moreover, the academic and managerial implications of our findings, research limitations and recommendations for future research will be mentioned.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Gastronomic tourism

No other product is as important regarding human health and wellbeing as food, and that is why people give so much importance to it (Morgan, 2010). Even though food is an essential good, it is also an important part of social and cultural heritage (Pavlidis & Markantonatou, 2020), being in fact considered one of the most important elements in defining the culture of a country (Smith, 1995). Moreover, gastronomic experiences have the capacity of evoking emotions, thus having a positive impact on the affective component of a destination image (Silkes et al., 2013). For these reasons, local food and gastronomic experiences can act as a motivator for tourists to choose a particular destination (Pavlidis & Markantonatou, 2020). Studies made by Ab Karim, S., & Chi, C. G.-Q. (2010) and Silkes et al. (2013) also confirm that local cuisine is a very important factor for tourists when choosing a destination. Furthermore, Mora et al. (2021), found that the average expense of tourists is higher in destinations that focused their attention on gastronomic tourism, being this an important factor for the economic development of rural areas.

The WFTA considers that the terms “food tourism”, “culinary tourism” and “gastronomy tourism”, are functionally equivalent (Pavlidis & Markantonatou, 2020). Nevertheless, a few differences must be acknowledged. According to the WFTA, food tourism is “the act of traveling for a taste of place in order to get a sense of place”. Additionally, Ellis et al. (2018) refers to “food tourism” as the physical experiences carried out with the objective to engage with local foods, while “culinary tourism” refers to the cultural information gained with those experiences. Lastly, “gastronomic tourism” is defined by Hall et al. (2003) as a travel experience in a region with distinct gastronomy, with the purpose of having food related activities that include visits to primary and secondary food producers, gastronomic events, food markets, culinary events and visits to specific restaurants. According to the authors, this does not mean that any trip to a restaurant is gastronomic tourism, contrariwise the will to experience a specific type of food produced in a particular region in the world, or to have a meal in a restaurant of a specific chef must be the major motivations to that travel. Following the same rationale, Smith and Xiao (2008) define “gastronomic tourism” as any trip where the traveler learns, appreciates, and consumes famous local gastronomy products during the travel experience. For the purpose of this research, we will hereinafter focus on the concept of gastronomic tourism.

Previous research has studied the relationship between gastronomy and tourism. In their study, Pérez Gálvez et al. (2017), surveyed more than five hundred foreign tourists who visited the city of Lima, with the goal of getting to know their opinion about gastronomy and its importance in their travels. The authors concluded that one of the principal objectives of tourists is to try local gastronomy,

being a great contributor to the destination's attractiveness. According to the same authors, in the current days, investing in gastronomic tourism is one of the most used and effective strategies to consolidate certain countries as great touristic destinations. Consequently, the development of gastronomic tourism will cause a rise in the number of guests, average stay durations, loyalty of the guests towards the destination and the recommendation levels. Furthermore, it will also create business opportunities for local people and develop the regional economies (Bertan, S. 2020). In another study, Mora et al. (2021) compared the gastronomic experiences of tourists in different destinations, to understand the relationship between gastronomic motivations, perceived value, and their impact on satisfaction and loyalty towards culinary destinations. The authors affirmed that nowadays more and more tourists are interested in exploring the culinary culture of the destinations they visit, and many travel with the exclusive purpose of exploring the culinary culture of their destination. In fact, several tourists travel to a different country just to have a meal in a specific restaurant. The authors concluded that quality local food improves the image and reputation of a touristic destination, and also causes tourists to have a better evaluation of their whole experience. In their study, Ab Karim, S., & Chi, C. G.-Q. (2010), explored the relationship between destinations' food image and travelers' intentions to visit the destinations. It was found that food is a determinant factor for visiting a country, when considering places with a rich gastronomic history. On the other hand, in places with poor gastronomic history, food is not responsible for attracting visitors. In this type of countries, it is important that all the players in the business put their efforts into delivering tourists memorable experiences, in order to attract more culinary attention to the destination (Ab Karim, S., & Chi, C. G.-Q., 2010).

In conclusion, amazing gastronomic experiences will generate travelers' satisfaction with the experience and consequently create loyalty towards the destination. This will ultimately increase the probabilities of revisiting and recommending to other people, consolidating the country as a gastronomic destination (Mora et al., 2021). And when we are talking about amazing gastronomic experiences, the first think that comes to the mind of a foodie is the Michelin guide.

2.2 Michelin starred restaurants

The Michelin Guide was created by the Michelin Tyre Company and was firstly introduced in 1900. The guide started out as being a technical resource for helping people to travel, which included simple instructions to small car repairs and a map with the location of gasoline stations and telegraph facilities (Johnson et al., 2005). From then onwards, the guide started to include a list of existing hotels and restaurants in Paris in accordance with specific categories. The guide began to award the high-quality

restaurants with a star in 1926, and five years later introduced the zero-, one-, two-, and three-star hierarchy (Michelin Guide, 2020).

The Michelin guide is the most famous gastronomy ranking system and is synonymous to high-quality cuisine. Especially in Europe it is extremely respected by chefs, restaurants, culinary experts, and food enthusiasts (Johnson et al., 2005). The guide is updated every year and the restaurants are evaluated by anonymous inspectors that follow the same criteria in all countries, having however into account some different characteristics between them (Michelin, 2020; Ottenbacher & Harrington, 2007). The restaurants are awarded with Michelin stars according to five criteria: the quality of products, flavors' combination and cooking techniques, the reflection of the Chef's personality in his cuisine, cost-benefit of the meal and the consistency between visits (Michelin, 2020). A restaurant awarded with one star is considered a very good restaurant in its category, and only the quality of the food and wine is evaluated. Two stars reflect excellent cooking that is worth a detour, and to be awarded with it restaurants must present originality and a reflection of the chef's personality in the dishes. The famous three stars are given to restaurants that feature exceptional cuisine that are worth a journey, and to achieve it, beyond the exceptional cuisine, the whole experience is expected to be excellent, with an elegant dining room and faultless service (Lane, 2010).

The Michelin guide is extremely important to the development of the high-quality restaurant sector, forcing restaurants to invest in well trained staff and high-end facilities, and maintain constant innovation and creativity to obtain multiple stars (Surlemont and Johnson, 2005). These stars provide an extremely effective promotion for awarded restaurants and increase the business significantly. Contrariwise, the loss of stars is responsible for a very significant loss in reputation and number of customers. Therefore, the stars are highly desired by chefs and restaurants and the Michelin Guide conditions are taken very seriously (Surlemont and Johnson, 2005; Lane, 2010).

Previous research has studied the relationship between Michelin starred restaurants and gastronomic tourism. In their study, Meneguel et al., (2019) made a profound study to The Cellar de Can Roca restaurant to understand the role that Michelin starred restaurants have in the stimulation and development of gastronomic tourism products. The authors came to the conclusion that Michelin starred restaurants positively impact the cultural, social and economic sectors of a destination, gaining therefore relevance in its gastronomic development. In fact, Batat (2020) conducted an ethnographic study in thirty-five French Michelin starred restaurants with the goal of discovering the role that these restaurants have as change makers and advocates of tourism activities and concluded that Michelin starred restaurants can be the major motivator for visiting a destination (being the destination itself) or can work as a complementary destination attraction as they enhance the uniqueness of the food

culture of the destination. In both cases, these restaurants use their prestige, creativity and luxury dimensions to promote and preserve the local food culture and culinary traditions of the destination. Furthermore, Michelin starred restaurants create jobs in rural areas, contribute to the local food business, and enhance the image of the regional cuisine. In line with this, Meneguel et al., (2019) stated that Michelin starred restaurants have an important contribution to the development of gastronomic tourism, as they foment economic development, create a positive brand image of the destination, and can also generate social-cultural appreciation of the local gastronomy. In his study, Batat (2020) discovered some activities that restaurants can implement to become crucial actors and advocates of touristic destinations. Michelin starred restaurants can contribute to the attractiveness of a destination by implementing four main practices: offering distinctive gastronomic experiences, promoting local products and gastronomy, promoting rural locations as gastronomic destinations, and improving the reputation of the destination. As gastronomic tourists search for unique and high sensorial dining experiences, these four forms of activities will enhance the immersion of tourists with the local gastronomic culture (Batat, 2020). However, regardless of the implementation of these practices, the number of stars owned by the restaurants alone have a great influence on the attraction of tourists. In their study, Castillo-Manzano et al., (2020) concluded that restaurants awarded with three stars are more appealing for tourists than the ones with one or two stars.

In conclusion, Michelin starred restaurants have a considerable impact on the creation of a destiny as a brand and on its economic development. However, the success of these establishments is highly dependent on its chefs, which are the centerpiece of the business. Therefore, Michelin starred chefs assume a really important position as active agents of the destination.

2.3 Chefs profile

A Michelin starred chef is not a typical chef who only works in his restaurant. In most cases, a Michelin starred chef is also a public character with a regular presence in the media. These chefs are also writers and entrepreneurs, and other chefs and food enthusiasts see them as role models (Giousmpasoglou et al., 2020). People have enormous trust in chefs' opinions and in their beliefs of what is positive or not about food (Giousmpasoglou et al., 2020), and this is why the business model of the Michelin starred restaurants should be centered in the chef's personality.

The current celebrity chef phenomenon was born from the great increase in popularity of food shows in television (Scholes, 2011). Nowadays, the media pays a lot of attention to the profile of the Michelin starred chefs (Giousmpasoglou et al., 2020), giving them the opportunity to advertise about their business and create a personal brand (Vargas-Sanchez & López-Guzmán, 2020). The popularity

obtained through social media and the prosperity of their business obtained plays a huge role in the success of chefs (Sanchez & López-Guzmán, 2020; Zopiatis & Melanthiou, 2019). Moreover, Michelin starred chefs need to constantly reinvent themselves, introducing its customers to new and innovative dishes and techniques, through constant experiences of new culinary methods and with a trial-and-error approach (Vargas-Sanchez & López-Guzmán, 2020; Harrison et al., 2016). The studies of Abecassis-Moedas, Sguera and Ettlé (2016) and Harrison et al. (2016) show the relation between innovation and originality in Michelin starred restaurants and claim that the chef should also be an entrepreneur. There are four motivations present in the profile of an entrepreneur who are also present in a chef. Those motivations are the freedom to be creative, renown, legitimacy, and the desire to grow the business (Presenza & Messeni Petruzzelli, 2019).

Previous research studied the relationship between Michelin starred chefs and gastronomic tourism. In his study, Batat (2020) stated that Michelin starred chefs are important inputs for the construction of an attractive destination brand. During the luxury dining experiences, Chefs showcase local products and emphasize their strong connection with local producers. They end up helping to create among tourists an extremely positive image of those products, that ultimately will increase the volume of sales of local producers in the foreign markets. The author also stated that to create a destination brand, apart from the luxury dining experience, Chefs have to create a storytelling experience where they embed the customers within the local food culture. In another study, Giousmpasoglou et al., (2020) identified the various roles played by celebrity Chefs. The authors stated that nowadays some touristic destinations use celebrity chefs as destination ambassadors. Additionally, the authors concluded that celebrity chefs have a serious impact on the promotion of ethical and sustainable practices regarding food sourcing and also can have a significant role in the change of social values regarding animal welfare. The authors also suggest that governments should cooperate with celebrity chefs and promote positive messages about sustainable cooking on social media, in order to use their great power of influence. Thus, we consider that the use social media and celebrity chefs to promote a gastronomic destination can also be an effective strategy to attract tourists. Nevertheless, not every chef has the same impact on the promotion of a gastronomic destination. The influence chefs have on this matter, through the Michelin starred restaurants own, depends on his personality and his relationship with the destination (Batat 2020). Batat (2020) also stated that “while chefs from the same local culture focus on emphasizing their strong connections with local producers and promote the local culture in their cuisine, chefs who do not belong to the local culture tend to focus more on the staging of the exclusive aspects of the luxury dining experience, the novelty of their recipes, and the food well-being.” In conclusion, Michelin starred chefs can be seen as social architects, as they create a network of relationships with locals, producers and other Chefs,

which consequently foments a massive exchange of ideas and development, enhancing the creativity and innovative processes, stimulating the gastronomic development of the country (Vargas-Sanchez & López-Guzmán, 2020).

2.4 Customer experience in restaurants

Customer experience is defined by Gentile et al. (2007), as the reaction generated by a set of interactions between the customer and a product, service and organization. Nowadays, gastronomic tourists consider food a way to socialize and are becoming more demanding and with a higher purchasing power than other tourists (UNWTO, 2017). Thus, customer experience must be seriously taken in account by restaurants, as the more satisfied customers are with the service and products presented, the more likely is to them to return to the restaurant, increasing this way the business profits (Gupta et al., 2007).

In their study, Walter et al. (2010) sought to find the drivers of customers service experiences in restaurants. The authors concluded that the customers' experience is affected by more than one driver, and that it is possible to exist an interaction between the drivers during the process. The most frequent drivers, which have a direct impact on customer's experience formation, are social interaction, main service, and the physical environment. On the opposite side, the less frequent drivers identified were the restaurant's brand, price, payment process, atmosphere, and occasion. In another study, Taar (2014) aimed to discover the factors that influence the customer satisfaction on gastronomic experiences. According to the authors the most relevant dimensions for customers in a gastronomic experience are the aspect of the food, situational factors like the location and environment of the restaurant, and individual factors like the customers' own sensations. Nevertheless, in the authors' opinions, "taste" is the word that better describes a gastronomic experience. Desmet and Schifferstein (2008) also claimed that there are more elements presented in a gastronomic experience other than taste, like the possibility of observing the chefs preparing the food and the recollection of the event by the customer (Vargas-Sanchez & López-Guzmán, 2020).

We can observe a great diversity in tourists' behaviors and a development in decision making motivations in the last years. The pursuit for unique experiences, environmental aspects, flexibility and innovation of services, and the quest for quality products are the main motivations for gastronomic tourists currently (Carballo et al., 2016). Thus, restaurant managers must have these into account in order to provide a better experience to their customers. Especially the Michelin starred restaurants, where the customers are much more demanding.

2.4.1 Customer experience in Upscale restaurants

Dining at high-end restaurants can build up one's prestige status, given the fact that these are generally perceived as fine quality, exclusive, innovative, and expensive restaurants (Bhaduri & Stanforth, 2016; Kiatkawsin & Han, 2019).

The DINESCAPE scale developed by Ryu and Jang (2008), is used to measure the customers' perceptions about the physical aesthetics and human atmosphere specifically in upscale restaurants. The DINESCAPE has six different dimensions: restaurant aesthetics, lighting, atmosphere, layout, table settings, and service staff. In their study, Ryu and Han (2011) used this model to evaluate how the physical environment of the restaurant affects customer experience evaluation. The authors concluded that restaurant aesthetics, lighting, atmosphere, layout and the service staff have a significant influence on customer perceived experience, although differing between first timers and repeat customers. While restaurant aesthetics, lighting and service staff are significant for both type of customers perceived experience, layout and table setting are only significant for repeat customers. Ryu and Han (2011) also concluded that customers' perceived experience has a direct impact on customers' satisfaction and, ultimately, on customers' loyalty.

Eating local gastronomy is considered as a pleasurable and exciting experience by tourists (Kivela and Crotts, 2006), and Upscale ethnic restaurants are fine dining restaurants that focus on serving local food delicacies in an environment inspired by the local culture of the region (What Is Ethnic Restaurants | IGI Global, n.d.). In their study, Clemes et al. (2013) aimed to discover the factors that influence customers to choose to dine specifically at these restaurants. The incorporation of ethnic features in the physical environment, but also in the service and ambience of the restaurant is a great way to showcase the cultural identity of the region and give to customers the sensation of getting transported to an exotic land (Clemes et al., 2013). The same authors concluded that the most relevant factors for customers to choose to dine at upscale ethnic restaurants are the quality and taste of the dishes, the use of fresh and local ingredients and the presentation of the dishes. Nevertheless, customers also value having a large variety of choices on the menu, which must include healthy and vegetarian food options, and having a large wine list that includes the best, the most expensive and oldest wines of the country (Clemes et al., 2013).

Satisfied customers, when evaluating their experience, must feel that they have received a good value for money experience (Clemes et al., 2013). Recent studies find that price is a determinant factor regarding the perceived prestige of the dining experience (Kiatkawsin & Han, 2019). However, for upscale restaurant customers, it is not only the price of the meal that determines the value attributed to the experience. These customers also perceive value for money from other factors like specialty

meals, the quality of the service and atmosphere of the restaurant (Haemoun, 2000). Therefore, restaurant managers must be aware and keep track of the factors of the dining experience that are the most relevant for their clients, often expressed in the form of online reviews.

2.4.2 Customer experience based on web reviews

Web-based opinion platforms have been gaining notoriety over the last years, enabling online product and service reviews to be a market phenomenon, which is nowadays a fundamental factor in consumers purchase decisions (Zhang et al., 2010). This happens especially in the hospitality industry because the services and products, such as restaurant service, are only available in the moment of consumption (Abubakar & Ilkan, 2016). Thus, restaurant online reviews are crucial for potential customers, as it is allowing them to be aware of the experiences and sensations felt by past customers in the establishments of their interest, reducing their perceived risk (Park et al., 2021). As the sharing of their experiences online is an increasingly recurring habit of consumers, there is a range of empirical studies that uses customers' online reviews in different contexts (refer to Table 2.1.).

In their study, Zhang et al. (2010) tried to evaluate if consumer-generated restaurant reviews and restaurant reviews of professional editors influence consumers differently. The authors found that reviews created by customers shared in websites, and the volume of those reviews, have a significant impact on the growth of popularity of a restaurant. On the opposite side, reviews from professional editors negatively influence costumers' intention to visit the restaurant webpage. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that a large amount of good consumer reviews is more effective to attract new customers than positive editor reviews. Zhang et al. (2010) also found that taste of the food and service are the most important factors for attracting online consumers. Park et al. (2021) studied the relationship between online reviews of restaurants and customers' purchase intention. The authors concluded that the level of ratings and price significantly affect the purchase intentions of customers. Normally, customers have higher purchase intentions for restaurants that have a combination of high ratings in online reviews and low prices. Park et al. (2021) also found that reviews that contain pictures are more effective in conveying trust to customers, as food pictures serve as visual information in order to make the reviews more credible. Thus, online reviews that combine high ratings with pictures have the highest trust perceptions. In another study, Brochado (2018) wanted to identify the main dimensions of the experience in three stars Michelin restaurants by analyzing the customer reviews posted on social media websites on the post-purchase phase. The 12 main themes identified were: restaurant, menu, chef, wine, meal, dining experience, staff, feeling, worth, dessert and delicious food.

The author also concluded that these dimensions vary accordingly to the demographic segments of customers.

Restaurants' online reviews can be of two types: quantitative, the most common type, in which customers evaluate their experience by rating the restaurant from 1 to 5 stars for example; and qualitative, the text review comments, in which customers justify the reasons of the rating they attributed to the restaurant (Gan et al., 2016). For the extent of this work, we will give our attention to online restaurant reviews that combine these two types of data but will focus mostly on text reviews given that we can collect more insights about the overall customer opinion of Michelin starred restaurants.

Table 2.1 - Studies who resort to online reviews

Reference	Research Context	Research Design	Research Aim
Zhang et al. (2010)	Restaurants located at the Dong Cheng area of Beijing	Compare the impact that restaurant reviews from professional editors and online customer reviews and ratings, have in the online popularity of restaurants.	evaluate whether reviews written by professional editors and consumer-generated reviews have different influences on the behavior of online users
Gan et al. (2016)	335,022 consumer review from restaurants and bars around the city of Phoenix	Text mining and sentimental analysis of selected reviews	Identify the online restaurant review's structure and investigate the influence that reviews attributes and sentiments have on restaurant star ratings
Brochado (2018)	Clients of three-stars Michelin restaurants	Analysis of customer reviews shared online which referred to experiences at three Michelins star restaurants	Study the effectiveness of gastronomy as an element of attraction in a tourist destination
Brochado et al. (2019)	Douro wineries customers	Analysis of visitor reviews shared online which referred to experiences of the five regional wine brands that run wine hotels.	identify the main themes of sensory experiences at Douro wineries
Park et al. (2021)	People who had used online reviews for buying products within the most recent three months.	factorial experimental design using the variables rating, price and presence of a picture	investigate the association between online reviews and purchase intention and the effects of trust and food image on purchase intention

2.5 Conceptual model and research propositions

Previous studies conducted in the Michelin starred restaurant research literature have revealed that gastronomy can have an impact on tourists' destination selection (Batat, 2020; Mora et al., 2021). Regarding the travel motivations, Pérez Gálvez et al. (2017) concluded that local gastronomy is one great contributor to the destination attractiveness and that trying it is one of tourist main objectives. On the same line, Mora et al. (2021) affirmed that nowadays there are people that travel to a country with the goal of exploring the culinary culture of the destination. In many cases, people travel to a country just to eat in a specific restaurant, as it is the case of Michelin starred restaurants. According to Batat (2020), these types of restaurants can be the main motivator for a trip or can work as a complementary destination attraction. The above findings in the literature resulted in the following research proposition:

Proposition 1: For some tourists, eating at a Michelin starred restaurant is the main motivator to visit a country

The customer experience is an important concept in the restaurant literature (Gupta et al., 2007). According to the same authors, satisfied customers are more likely to come back to the restaurant. Thus, restaurants must monitor closely consumers' preferences. As stated by Taar (2014), the most important dimensions for customers in a gastronomic experience are: food presentation, location and environment of the restaurant, and the customer's own sensations. Although, the author considers that "taste" is the word that better describes a gastronomic experience. Regarding the upscale restaurant sector, in which we include the Michelin starred restaurants, Clemes et al., (2013) concluded that the most important factors for customers when choosing a restaurant are the quality and taste of the dishes, the use of fresh and local ingredients and the presentation of the dishes. Therefore, the present study includes the following research proposition:

Proposition 2: The most important factor for customers when eating at a Michelin starred restaurant is food quality

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Research Design

For the purpose of this study, we chose an exploratory approach with a cross-sectional design, by collecting secondary data. We conducted an exploratory research in order to gain new insights about this topic. Moreover, other studies about the tourism industry used this type of approach (Brochado, 2018; Brochado et al., 2019). The data collected and analyzed in this research is qualitative and was gathered using an indirect method. As in the studies of Brochado (2018) and Brochado et al., (2019) this data consists of customers' reviews shared online. In his work, Brochado (2018) selected reviews from the restaurants without any specific criteria. Therefore, in order to include a geographic dimension in our work, we only collected reviews which refer to the country, city, region or the Chef. Additionally, we only selected reviews related to dining experiences after the restaurants were awarded with Michelin stars. To analyze the data, a word association approach was chosen because by analyzing a considerable number of customer reviews regarding their Michelin starred restaurant experiences, we can find out the main dimension of the experience shared by customers. Moreover, the reviews alone reveal valuable insights about the customers' likings and experiences that will allow us to deep-dive into the phenomenon of luxury gastronomic tourism.

To answer the research questions presented in the previous sections, a mix content analysis approach was used, containing a quantitative and a qualitative step (Brochado, 2018; Brochado et al., 2019). For the first research question the quantitative part of the research relied on the Leximancer software (Brochado, 2018; Brochado et al., 2019). We chose this software because it is a text mining program designed to help researchers analyze texts, as it provides us a representation of the main concepts presented in the text and the ways in which these concepts are interrelated (Getting Started With, 2022). In this research question, the qualitative part consists of individually analyzing the reviews in order to interpret, understand and take conclusions from the concept maps produced by Leximancer. Regarding the second research question, the quantitative part consists of analyzing the variables "recommendation of the restaurant" and "intention to comeback", using pivot tables. Regarding the qualitative part, the reviews were analyzed individually in order to strengthen and better understand the previous results.

3.2 Research context

This study will target Michelin starred restaurants located in Portugal. According to the 2022 selection of the "Michelin Guide Portugal and Spain", there are currently thirty-three starred restaurants in

Portugal, of which seven have two stars and twenty-six have one star (Restaurantes MICHELIN - o Guia MICHELIN, 2022). These restaurants are scattered across the country, however more condensed in three regions, more specifically Lisboa with thirteen restaurants, Porto with five restaurants and Algarve with eight restaurants. Madeira has two restaurants and Guimarães, Viseu, Bragança, Amarante and Reguengos de Monsaraz have one restaurant each. Although most of the restaurants are located in big cities or near the coast, there are also starred restaurants in more rural areas, the case of restaurants Largo do Paço in Amarante, Mesa de Lemos in Passos de Silgueiros, G Pousada in Bragança and Esporão in Reguengos de Monsaraz. Except for the restaurants Midori, serving Japanese food, and Gusto, serving Italian food, all the others focus on Portuguese gastronomy and use local products (Restaurantes MICHELIN - o Guia MICHELIN, 2022).

3.3 Data collection

The target population of this study are foreign customers of Portuguese Michelin starred restaurants. The research implicated the analysis of Web reviews shared on the Tripadvisor website, which is the biggest and most popular online travel community in the world (Lu & Stepchenkova, 2012). We collected reviews from eighteen different restaurants spread across the country. We selected restaurants located in urban centers, rural areas, beach destinations and also in the Portuguese islands. We also chose restaurants both with one and two stars and that had different gastronomic concepts. In this way we could obtain more valuable information as we have insights from all the different types of the fine dining restaurants segments presented in Portugal. The eighteen restaurants selected were Il Gallo d'Oro, William, The Yeatman, Casa de Chá da Boa Nova, Pedro Lemos, Antiquvm, Vila Joya, Ocean, Gusto, Belcanto, LAB, Loco, Alma, Eleven, Feitoria, Fortaleza do Guincho, Mesa de Lemos and G Pousada. Of these restaurants two are located in the Madeira Island, four in Porto, three in Algarve, seven in the Lisbon region, and two in the interior of the country in more rural areas.

The data were collected and stored on an Excel spreadsheet, in which we included the following variables: review title, review, date, overall satisfaction rating, rating of food, rating of service, recommendation of the restaurant, intention to comeback and nationality (see annex A). The rating included the categories of 1 ('Terrible'), 2 ('Poor'), 3 ('Average'), 4 ('Very good') and 5 ('Excellent'). The variables "recommendation of the restaurant" and "intention to comeback" included the categories "No" (if the customer does not recommend the restaurant or shows no intention to comeback in the review), "Not defined" (if the customer does not make any reference to the recommendation or intention to comeback in the review) and "Yes" (if the customer recommend the restaurant or shows intention to comeback in the review). Similarly to previous studies using this type of data (Brochado,

2018; Brochado et al., 2019), only reviews in English were considered to simplify the analysis. The reviews selected resulted in a final database of 564 reviews.

3.4 Data treatment

After the data was collected and organized in the excel sheet, we started analyzing the sample profile using pivot tables. The variables analyzed were the customers nationality, the restaurant visited and the average ratings of food, service, and average satisfaction. We also performed a word frequency analysis on the review's titles.

Regarding the first research question we performed text concept analysis using the Leximancer software. The objective of concept learning is to find clusters of words that are constantly together around texts, being these clusters the concepts. Then the software conducts a content analysis to organize the concepts into themes, giving the information of how many times they appeared together in the text. After this, in order to create a concept map, we used Leximancer calculate the frequency of co-occurrence between concepts. The concepts that are near each other in the concept map appear regularly together in the texts (Brochado et al., 2019). Therefore, in order to answer the first research question, the final output is a concept map of the most important dimensions for tourists when dining in Portuguese Michelin starred restaurants. As is previous studies (Brochado et al., 2019; Brochado, 2018), every theme was linked with phrases removed from the reviews that contain main concepts of each theme.

Next, to answer the second research objective, we generated a new concept map, which displays the most relevant concepts for each overall satisfaction rating value. This map allowed the identifications of the concepts that are more relevant in the perfect experiences, which we considered as the reviews with overall satisfaction ratings of 5. We could also identify the concepts that are more important in the distinction between a perfect experience and a non-perfect experience, which we considered as the reviews with an overall satisfaction rating beneath 5.

Concerning the third research objective, we used pivot tables to statistically analyze the variables of "recommendation of the restaurant" and "intention to comeback" with the goal of obtaining the percentage of tourists that will recommend the restaurant and that want to revisit the restaurant. After obtaining those values, we individually analyzed the reviews in order to take conclusions and strengthen those results.

Chapter 4: Results

4.1 Sample profile

We performed a word frequency analysis in the review titles that revealed that the most frequently used words are “experience”, “food” and “best” (see figure 4.1). It is important to mention that these are the exact same words found by Brochado (2018) in the similar analysis made in his study.

Figure 4.1 - Word frequency map



Regarding the nationality of the reviewers, fifty-two different countries were included in the sample. However, the majority of reviewers were from Europe (48%) and North America (30,1%) (see table 4.1). The United Kingdom (UK) was the most representative country of the sample (with 162 reviewers) and consequently of Europe. The United States were the second most representative country on the sample (with 153 reviewers) and number one among the North America. These two countries alone correspond to more than half of the total reviewers (55,9%). For South America the most representative country was Puerto Rico, for Asia was Singapore, for Oceania was Australia, for Africa was South Africa, and a total of 69 reviewers do not say which was their nationality. Regarding the restaurants the restaurants to which the reviews relate to, Alma is the one with the most reviews

(92 reviews) corresponding to 16,3% of the sample. Belcanto is the second restaurant with most reviews (79) for 14% and Il Gallo d'Oro appears in third place with 9,8% of the reviews (55) (see table 4.2). Finally, the average values of experience evaluation ratings were very high. The average rating of food, service and overall experience was 4,91, 4,86 and 4,88 respectively (see table 4.3).

Table 4.1 - Sample profile by continent

Country	Count	Percentage
Oceania	12	2,1%
Europe	271	48,0%
Latin America	12	2,1%
North America	170	30,1%
Asia	26	4,6%
Africa	4	0,7%
Not defined	69	12,2%

Table 4.2 - Sample profile by restaurant

Restaurant	Count	Percentage
Alma	92	16,3%
Antiqvum	30	5,3%
Belcanto	79	14%
Casa de Chá da Boa Nova	27	4,8%
Eleven	27	4,8%
Feitoria	40	7,1%
Fortaleza do Guincho	18	3,2%
G Pousada	4	0,7%
Gusto	15	2,7%
Il Gallo d'Oro	55	9,8%
Lab	8	0,14%
Loco	29	5,1%
Mesa de Lemos	3	0,5%
Ocean	15	2,7%
Pedro Lemos	42	7,4%
The Yeatman	44	7,8%
Vila Joya	14	2,5%
William	22	3,9%

Table 4.3 - Average ratings

Average of Rating of food	Average of Rating of Service	Average of Overall Satisfaction Rating
4,91	4,86	4,88

4.2.1 Food service

The food service theme includes the concepts “food” (count: 420, probability of appearing in the reviews: 82%), “service” (311, 61%), “staff” (187, 37%), “beautiful” (139, 27%), “excellent” (129, 25%), “amazing” (151, 29%), “wonderful” (121, 24%), “attentive” (103, 20%) and “professional” (46, 9%). This first theme is related to the role of the service in the general experience. One of the focal points of visitor’s experiences in Michelin starred restaurants are the staff and the service it provides. In their descriptions of the dining experience, visitors shared their satisfaction with the sympathy, professionalism and attentiveness of the staff culminating in an overall excellent service. The review extracts displaying this theme, and the next ones below, are followed by the restaurant, recommendation of the restaurant, intention to comeback and nationality whenever this information was available.

A customer shared, “The staff [was] very attentive but not stuffy, and the service excellent. The food was wonderful.” (Antiqvum, Yes, Not defined, Australia). Another customer wrote, “The staff [was] absolutely professional, attentive and friendly. A really well put together team.” (Alma, Yes, Not defined, Switzerland). A further customer wrote “A modern/contemporary setting with excellent attentive staff, the Sommelier Emilia was brilliant - very enthusiastic and knew her stuff.” (Loco, Yes, Not defined, UK).

4.2.2 Restaurant

The restaurant theme includes the concepts “restaurant” (512, 100%), “star” (277, 54%), “Michelin” (196, 38%), “best” (167, 33%), “Portugal” (127, 25%), “place” (114, 22%) and “Porto” (108, 21%). This is the most relatable theme with the experience of eating in a Michelin starred restaurant. Generally, customers are very excited with the experience of eating at a Michelin starred restaurants and, in many cases, it becomes one of most memorable moments to their trip to Portugal. One customer shared “Spring for dinner at this amazing Michelin two starred restaurant. (...) Taste and presentation are incredible. A highlight of our time In Lisbon.” (Belcanto, Not defined, Not defined, US). Another customer shared:

“We're convinced this is the best Michelin star restaurant in Portugal! (We ate at 4 different ones on our trip, and this was our favorite!) The ambiance, view, food and service was incredible!! (...)” (Il Gallo d’Oro, Not defined, Yes, US)

Nevertheless, customers create enormous expectations when dining at this type of restaurants and sometimes the experience falls short. One disappointed customer shared “find the restaurant a

bit cold - modern not so warm - service according the 2 stars but expected more on the food side - will try again when my wallet allows." (Ocean, Not defined, Yes, Belgium).

4.2.3 Wine

The wine theme includes the concepts "wine" (438, 86%), "dishes" (240, 47%), "pairing" (169, 33%), "perfect" (134, 26%), "presented" (119, 23%), "served" (75, 15%), "delicious" (89, 17%), "sommelier" (81, 16%), "flavors" (61, 12%), "amuse" (40, 8%), "sea" (40, 8%) and "everything" (38, 7%). This theme is related to the variety of wines available in the restaurant and their quality. Customers gave a great importance to the pairing of wines with the food and have interest in experiment new wines that they had never have heard of before, specifically the ones original from the country they are visiting. A relevant review reads:

"(...) I would strongly recommend going for the recommended flight of wines as they are incredibly well selected and chosen, showing a variety of Portuguese wines that I simply hadn't come across before. (...)" (Ocean, Yes, Not defined, UK).

Another customer reported: "This restaurant is a special place to eat and drink the most incredible food paired with the most incredible Portuguese wine (...)" (Gusto, Yes, Not defined, UK). A further customer said:

"We were hesitant to have the wine pairings because of some previous experiences at other places, but the sommelier was so accommodating and willing to let us try each wine before pouring the full glass that we decided to go for it. All of the wines were excellent, and, even though we are not fans of sweet wines, the port and muscatel served toward the end of the meal were delicious and complimented the dishes very well." (Il Gallo d'Oro, Yes, Not defined, US).

4.2.4 Experience

The experience theme includes the concepts "experience" (398, 78%), "dining" (165, 32%), "recommend" (158, 31%), "table" (110, 21%), "special" (103, 20%), "lunch" (77, 15%), "highly" (62, 12%) and "fine" (41, 8%). This theme is relatable to the experience of eating at a fine dining restaurant. Customers described and evaluated their experience of eating in this luxury restaurants and a significantly number of reviewers recommended this type of experiences to celebrate special occasions. One customer declared:

“We wanted something special in Lisbon since we were there for our anniversary and my birthday and we really got it. I highly recommend this excellent experience for anyone that wants to splurge on holiday!” (Belcanto, Yes, Not defined, US).

Another customer reported:

“This was the best dining experience we had during our stay in Lisbon. (...) My husband and I went for lunch and each had a five course [menu](...). Before our courses started, we had several “snacks” and amuse bouches. The presentation was great and we were stuffed by the time we go to dessert. We would definitely come back and recommend to anyone who enjoys fine dining (without it being stuffy).” (Alma, Yes, Yes, US)

A further customer reported:

“(...) Located in the romantic neighborhood of Chiado, a sophisticated decor, with only ten tables, providing us with a highly delightful and unique experience. Innovative and creative, the cuisine is a great testimony to Portuguese gastronomy. (...)” (Belcanto, Yes, Yes, US).

The dinner theme includes the concepts “dinner” (151, 29%) and “worth” (94, 18%). The culinary theme includes the concept “culinary” (38, 7%). We decided to analyze these two themes alongside with the experience theme because they are also relatable to the customers experience of eating at a fine dining restaurant. One visitor wrote: “(...) It was the most expensive dinner out either one of us has experienced, but it was worth it! (...)” (Il Gallo d’Oro, Yes, Not defined, USA). Another customer shared: “ One of the most outstanding dining experiences I have had. From the surprises that started the meal to the petit fours that ended the meal it was one culinary delight after another. (...)” (Belcanto, Not defined, Not defined, USA).

4.2.5 Menu

The menu theme includes the concepts “menu” (383, 75%), “tasting” (294, 57%), “course” (295, 58%), “Portuguese” (129, 25%), “dessert” (84, 16%), “different” (58, 11%), “main” (53, 10%) and “fish” (41, 8%). This theme focuses on the dishes offered by the restaurants. In the reviews, customers recalled the menus they choose and their favorite dishes. Customers like to have different options to choose from and love to be surprised with unknown dishes during the tasting menus. Customers also like to discover the most famous dishes and best ingredients of the country, with a personal touch from the chef, during the experience. A customer said:

“(...) To start there were some small "amuse bouches" though they were each a lot more than a mouthful and served separately they were like tasting menu courses. Then with two starters, bread, two (or was

it three) mains and two desserts, it all came to at least ten different courses, each explained and beautifully presented. (...)" (Alma, Not defined, Not defined, UK)

Another reviewer shared:

"(...) We decided to go for the a la carte menu as the tasting menus did not include a couple of dishes we were eager to try. So we each ordered a first course, a main course and in the end we were full so we shared the dessert. They also offered some snacks in between courses. Everything was delicious! (...)" (Alma, Yes, Yes, Sweden)

A further reviewer declared:

"(...) Went for the classic tasting menu and found that it was a wonderful and fascinating gastronomic journey through Portugal and the childhood of Jose Avillez. Many memorable dishes, but the star for me was the 'suckling pig revisited' - absolutely delicious pork slice with crackling, an orange purée and charred lettuce which is a high class take on a classic Portuguese dish. (...)" (Belcanto, Yes, Not defined, UK)

The red theme includes the concept "red" (32, 6%). We decided to analyze the red theme along with the menu theme, as the red theme is strongly linked with the colors present on the dishes, mainly on the desserts. One customer shared: "(...) Pre dessert was basil ice cream and red fruits. The ice cream was very delicate(...)" (Pedro Lemos, Not defined, Not defined, Puerto Rico)

4.2.6 Chef

The chef theme includes the concepts "meal" (244, 48%), "time" (155, 30%), "enjoyed" (132, 26%), "chef" (130, 25%), "lovely" (129, 25%), "nice" (63, 12%), "kitchen" (54, 11%), "take" (53, 10%) and "felt" (44, 9%). This theme is related to the importance of the Michelin starred Chef's presence in the customers experience. Customers give great importance to the presence of these famous Chef's during their experience. They also value Chef's that take some time out of the kitchen and walk around the tables talking to the customers.

A relevant review reads: "(...) Got to meet chef and take pics of the kitchen. Lifetime list. (...)" (Belcanto, Not defined, Not defined, US). Another guest said: "(...) The only disappointment for me personally was that the chef was not there - I would love to have seen him as I am a big fan. Maybe next time! (...)" (Alma, Yes, Yes, Sweden). A happy customer shared: " (...) The food and staff were fantastic and it was a pleasure to meet chef Benoit who came out and chatted with all of the tables. (...)" (Il Gallo d'Oro, Not defined, Not defined, UK)

4.2.7 View

The view theme includes the concepts' "view" (127, 25%), "friendly" (114, 22%), "evening" (121, 24%), "fantastic" (55, 11%), "top" (65, 13%), "world" (46, 9%) and "whole" (37, 7%). This theme is related to the location of the restaurants. Location happens to be very important for customers. They value restaurants located near the sea or with great views of the city or countryside.

A customer shared: "This fantastic restaurant is perched on a cliff top with a stunning view over Funchal. We were looking forward to a romantic meal a deux and were not disappointed. (...)" (William, Not defined, Not defined, UK). Another customer wrote: "This is one of the most beautiful environments I have eaten in. A really lovely restaurant with a panoramic view of the Atlantic. (...)" (Casa de Chá da Boa Nova, Not defined, Not defined, UK). A further customer reported: "(...) This restaurant was definitely the highlight of Portugal visit. Amazing food, great service and atmosphere. The view from the courtyard was breathtaking. (...)" (Antiqvum, Yes, Not defined, Canada).

4.2.8 Trip

The trip theme includes the concepts "Lisbon" (229, 45%), "visit" (150, 29%), "trip" (79, 15%), "night" (73, 14%) and "reservation" (78, 15%). This theme focuses on the importance of the Michelin starred restaurant experience in a tourist trip. Eating in a Michelin starred restaurants are one of the most memorable moments tourists' vacations in Portugal, often being the highlight of the trip. In most cases customers made the reservation on the restaurants months before their trip to Portugal.

A customer commented: "Months before our trip to Lisbon we made a reservation to visit Loco, with very high expectations. (...)" (Loco, Not defined, Not defined, Spain). Another reviewer shared: "I am so happy that we decided to end our last night in Portugal by making a reservation at Feitoria. (...)" (Feitoria, Not defined, Not defined, Sweden). A further customer reported:

"This was my very favourite meal anywhere and that is saying a lot! (...) The imagination, creativity, freshness and flair was world class and the tastes were delicious, without exception. I cannot recommend this experience highly enough. A real highlight of our trip! Keep up the great work."

4.3 Results for the dimensions that distinguish a perfect experience for a non-perfect experience

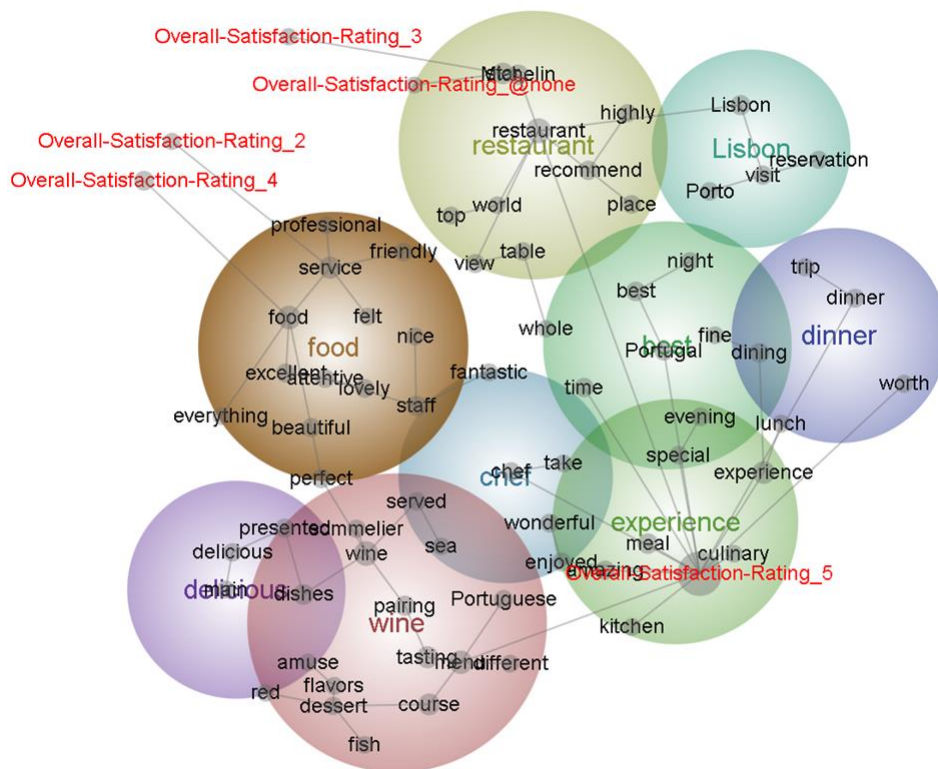
In order to investigate the dimensions that play a role in the differentiation between a perfect experience (overall experience rating of 5) and a non-perfect experience (overall experience rating below 5), a new concept map was generated (see figure 4.2). The sample contains a total of 508

reviews evaluated as a perfect experience, 55 reviews evaluated as non-perfect experience and 1 review in which the customer didn't evaluate its experience (see table 4.4).

Table 4.4 - Evaluation profile

Evaluation	Count	Percentage
Perfect	508	90,0%
Non-perfect	55	9,8%
Not defined	1	0,2%

Figure 4.2 - Concept map of the overall satisfaction ratings



The results of the analysis show that customers that had perfect experiences more often share reviews around the themes of “dinner”, “best”, “chef”, “wine” but mainly around the “experience” (see figure 4.3). The most common concepts are “visit” (142, 95%), “Porto” (101, 94%), “wonderful”

(114, 94%), “attentive” (97, 94%) and “amazing” (141, 93%). Customer that evaluates their experience as perfect have three fundamental elements in consideration. The first element is the quality of the food, in which customers evaluate the taste, presentation, creativity and even the smell of the dishes. The second one is the service. Customers like attentive and friendly employees and love to be surprised during the service with dishes that doesn’t appear on the menu. The third and final factor is the ambience of the room. The atmosphere and location of the restaurant are very important to enhancing the other two factors. Customer really like restaurants with nice views over the city or to the ocean.

One customer shared:

“This was my very favourite meal anywhere and that is saying a lot! The location is right on the ocean with an incredible architectural building shaped around the rocks. The room is lovely, light and airy with a good vibe. The service is exceptional and all of the team appear to really CARE about this place, their food and customers. The Chef Rui Paula is charming and personable and makes a real effort to welcome all guests. (...) The imagination, creativity, freshness and flair was world class and the tastes were delicious, without exception. I cannot recommend this experience highly enough. A real highlight of our trip! Keep up the great work.” (Casa de Cha da Boa nova, Yes, Not defined, Australia)

Another customer shared:

“(…) They have really raised the bar for food-art. Service is extraordinary, greatly coordinated, with a smile and passion- they still make you feel like home- without the stiff attitude that sometimes is present in a two star michelin restaurant. Huge wine selection, and if you decide not to go for the winepackage; the waiter did an excellent job finding pairings that suited our budget. Food is just really out of this world; from taste to presentation and smell. Just extraordinary. Incredible view and atmosphere! This was a once in a lifetime experience, except the fact that we will solely fly back to Algarve to eat here again! If you are around; you can not miss this experience!” (Ocean, Yes, Yes, Norway)

A further customer shared:

“Had a wonderful evening experiencing the Classic Tasting Menu of this José Avillez restaurant. The staff are very personable and they make the entire experience enjoyable. All courses are explained and timed to allow you to enjoy each course at a leisurely pace. Plenty of surprises throughout the meal which helps to keep you interested and engaged on this digestive ‘journey’ of the ‘best bits’ of Belcanto’s history. (...) Well worth it for a special evening (...)” (Belcanto, Yes, Not defined, UK)

In addition to these three main factors, wine is also very important to deliver perfect experiences. Quality wine list and well thought wine pairings give the final touch in the creation of a perfect experience for those customers that are wine enthusiasts.

small flaw in one of these factors means that customers did not have the highly desired perfect experience. Nonetheless, the quality of the food appears to be the most important factor in the differentiation between a non-perfect and a perfect experience.

An unhappy customer shared:

“The ambience and the staff are great. But I think the food and wine selection are not two Michelin star worthy, also at one star I would doubt. In general the food is very neutral, some off cause prefer this but it leaves me with no wow experiences. There is not a single dish, where I would ask for a second serving. (...)” (Belcanto, Not defined, Not defined, Luxemburg)

Another customer reported:

“The place itself is an architectural gem with a beautiful sea view, and our table service was excellent - we were even greeted warmly by chef Rui Paula himself. I had the smaller 4-course menu, and the food was gorgeously presented, but it really didn't surprise or astound my palate. Had higher expectations for an expensive Michelin starred restaurant. Maybe go for a drink and take in the sunset view.” (Casa de Cha da Boa Nova, Yes, Not defined, Brazil)

However, there are also unsatisfied customers in consequence of errors of service and customers that didn't like the restaurant ambience.

A dissatisfied customer wrote:

“First and foremost, the food was great, perfectly cooked, artistically plated, inventive but yet excelling in continuity of the great culinary traditions of the past (...) In our case, (...), the service wasn't worthy not just of a Michelin establishment but would be considered poor in a chain restaurant. Starting from the hosting. (...) The server never inquired whether we wanted more bread. Yet, the empty butter and olive oil containers were left on the table throughout the entire duration of our dinner. The sommelier was the worst though. (...)” (Eleven, Not defined, Not defined, USA)

Another disappointed customer shared:

“(...) The food was good (and portions generous enough that I couldn't finish!) (...) I just couldn't believe how totally lacking in atmosphere this place was. Ultimately, we felt that we were being rushed out of the place at the end, so we just worked through our remaining courses as quickly as we could and headed on to another location for the evening.” (Pedro Lemos, Not defined, Not defined, USA)

“This restaurant was definitely the highlight of [our] Portugal visit. Amazing food, great service and atmosphere. The view from the courtyard was breathtaking. This is a destination restaurant for special occasions. Highly recommend. “ (Antiqvvm, Yes, Not defined, Canada).

Another reviewer stated:

“Service was excellent, and each bite of food was incredible! I have done a lot of tasting menus and sometimes get wary of the price and "tasting" bites that are often prettier than tasty. Belcanto makes it all worth it! Each course, one after the other, was amazing. Could not decide my favorite. Definitely get a reservation and it will be the highlight of your time in Lisbon.” (Belcanto, Yes, Not defined, US).

A further reviewer shared:

“ANTIQVVM by Chef Vitor Matos is an amazing restaurant. (...) We went there and we had an amazing experience! (...) Food wise it was simple superb! We've choose the daily menu and every course was delicious! From the starter to dessert it was a culinary trip through several traditional Portuguese flavors with unexpected settings. A place to visit and very worthy to a trip just to experience it!” (Antiqvvm, Yes, Not defined, China)

There was even a customer who gave his opinion about Portugal as a gastronomic destination: “Overall, Just a wonderful experience and an example of how Lisbon and Portugal are becoming gastronomical destinations. “ (Alma, Not defined, Not defined, US).

As for the second variable, the intention to comeback, a total of 106 reviewers stated that they want to come back to the restaurant where they ate. This corresponds to 18,8% of the sample (see table 4.6). This is a group of people that have the intention to comeback to Portugal, with the main goal of having another Michelin starred experience. For most tourists, dining at Michelin starred restaurants was not the main focus of their trip. However, in many cases, the experience was so good that tourist want to come back to Portugal just to repeat that experience.

A relevant review reads:

“Recommended by a friend (who is a food genius) as "the best meal I have ever had" (...) Words cannot describe what was for us - the standout of all time! Michelin starred Alma restaurant lives up to every aspect of the award - the quality of the staff and service, the food, the wine, the ambience and even the account at the end. (...) We savored every moment - and I think we ... will travel to Portugal again just to relive the experience. Our friend was right - the best meal we have ever had!” (Alma, Yes, Yes, Not defined).

Another customer wrote:

“We can not say enough good things about Belcanto. We have eaten all over the world and this is one of the finest most exquisite meals we have ever had. (...) If you have only one meal to have make it here and make it the Chef’s tasting. We will come back to Portugal just to eat at Belcanto again.” (Belcanto, Yes, Yes, US)

A further customer stated.

“I had one night stay in Porto from New York back to Zurich and I have dedicated to book this well known kitchen to treat myself for a long busy month of traveling[.] The entire experience was great starting from Very accommodate restaurant staffs to the quality and amazing taste of dishes. (...) It’s extremely excellent and I definitely will come back again.” (The Yeatman, Not defined, Yes, Italy).

Table 4.5 - Count of recommendation of the restaurant

Recommends the restaurant?	No	Not defined	Yes
Count	2	318	244
Percentage	0,4%	56,4%	43,3%

Table 4.6 - Count of showing intention to comeback

Shows intention to comeback?	No	Not defined	Yes
Count	2	456	106
Percentage	0,4%	80,9%	18,8%

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1. Main findings and discussion

This study aimed to explore the main experience dimensions present in Michelin starred restaurant experiences and the role played by these restaurants in the development of gastronomic tourism in Portugal. The first objective of this study was to identify the main dimensions of the Portuguese Michelin starred restaurants' experiences, based on the reviews shared online. The analysis identified eleven themes: food service, restaurant, wine, experience, menu, chef, view, trip, dinner, culinary and red. These results are in line with the literature review, which conceptualizes that a gastronomic experience contains more elements besides the taste of the food (Desmet and Schifferstein, 2008) and that the customers' experience formation is affected by multiple factors (Walter et al., 2010). It is important to notice that these results are very similar to the themes identified by Brochado (2018) in his study. In fact, the themes food service, restaurant, wine, menu, and chef appear in the two studies results.

Regarding the food service theme, customers wrote about the service provided by the restaurant staff. As reported in previous studies, service is a very important factor in the customer experience formation (Ryu and Han, 2011; Walter et al., 2010). Especially in upscale restaurants, the quality of the service is crucial in customers evaluation of the experience (Haemoon, 2000). In the reviews, customers highlighted the importance of employees' interaction with them and their knowledge about the products they serve. Therefore, it is extremely important for restaurants to invest in well trained staff (Surlmont and Johnson, 2005). The restaurant theme has also been highlighted by previous studies. Dining at Michelin starred restaurants can build up one's prestige status, because these restaurants are normally perceived as high quality, exclusive, innovative and expensive (Bhaduri & Stanforth, 2016; Kiatkawsin & Han, 2019). Given their prestige, these types of restaurants can be the major motivator for visiting a country or can work as a complementary destination attraction (Batat, 2020).

Wine is a very important theme in the fine dining experience shared online by customers. In the reviews, customers shared their interest in discovering new wines produced in the country they visited. This is in line with the findings of Clemes et al., (2013), which stated that Michelin starred restaurants must have a large wine list that includes the best, the most expensive and oldest wines of the country, as drinking is a very important part of the fine dining experience. The experience theme, in which we included the dinner and worth themes, is related to experience of eating in a fine dining restaurant. As reported in previous studies, when evaluating their experience, customers must feel that they have received a good value for money experience (Clemes et al., 2013). Besides the price of the meal, fine

dining restaurant customers also perceive value for money from other factors like special dishes, service quality and restaurant atmosphere (Haemoon, 2000).

When considering the menu theme, the results are in line with the literature review. In Michelin starred restaurants, customers like having a large variety of dishes to choose from on the menu. On this list it is mandatory to have healthy and vegetarian food options (Clemes et al., 2013). It is also important to incorporate local culture features during the service, especially local ingredients, in order to showcase to customers, the cultural identity of the region (Clemes et al., 2013). The red theme, that we joined with the menu theme, refers to the colors that stand out on the dishes, mainly on the desserts. The results are in accordance with previous studies' findings (Clemes et al., 2013; Taar, 2014), in which was found that one of the most relevant factors when choosing a fine dining restaurant is the presentation of the dishes.

The chef is also a very important theme. As we found on the literature review, Michelin starred chefs are different from the typical chef that only works on his restaurant. In most cases, these chefs are also public characters regularly appearing in the media and many of them are seen as role models for people and especially other chefs. Thus, these celebrity chefs' opinions and beliefs have a huge impact on people food consumption habits (Giousmpasoglou et al., 2020). The reviews confirm the findings of Vargas-Sanchez & López-Guzmán (2020), which reported that for many customers one important element of the dining experience is the possibility of observing the chefs preparing the food and recollection of those moments. Therefore, and in accordance with the findings of Presenza & Messeni Petruzzelli (2019), the Michelin starred restaurants business model should be centered in the chef's personality.

Concerning the view theme, restaurants' location turned out to be a very important element for customers when evaluating their experience. These results are in accordance with previous studies, as Walter et al. (2010) concluded that one of the most important elements on the customer's experience formation was the physical environment of the restaurant, in which we can include the localization. More specifically, Taar (2014) concluded that the location of a restaurant is one of the most important dimensions for customers satisfaction with the gastronomic experience. Therefore, as we can see in the reviews, restaurants which are located near the sea or with great views of the city or countryside, are more popular among gastronomic tourists.

Regarding the trip theme, Michelin starred restaurants turned out to be an important part of the tourists' trips to Portugal. As previous studies have reported, one of tourist's main objectives when visiting a country is to explore its culinary culture (Pérez Gálvez et al., 2017). For some tourist's this could be the main goal of the trip (Mora et al., 2021). Moreover, Michelin starred restaurants are

considered the peak of the dining experience, and the best place to discover the delicacies of a country's gastronomic culture. Thus, the Michelin guide is decisive for gastronomic tourists when planning a trip (Daries et al., 2017; Kiatkawsin & Han, 2019), existing in fact for tourists that travel to a country with the only goal of eating at a Michelin starred restaurant (Vargas-Sanchez & López-Guzmán, 2020).

The second objective of this study was to identify the dimension that distinguishes a perfect experience from a non-perfect experience. With the analysis of the reviews, we concluded that customers that evaluate their experience as perfect have three fundamental elements in consideration: the quality of the food, service, and ambience of the restaurant. These results are in line with previous studies that explore the most relevant elements of customers' gastronomic experiences (Haemoon, 2000); Clemes et al., 2013; Walter et al., 2010; Tarr, 2014; Ryu and Han, 2011). Moreover, reviewers emphasized that they appreciate being surprised during the service with special dishes out of the menu. This is in accordance with the findings of Haemoon (2000), which reported that specialty meals are one of the factors customers consider in their value for money experience evaluation. Reviewers also highlighted the location of the restaurant as another important element for enhancing the quality of the experience. In line with that, Taar (2014) concluded that the location of the restaurant is one of the most relevant dimensions for customers' satisfaction within a gastronomic experience. Apart from the three main elements, reviewers also pointed out that quality wine lists and pairings are a very important element in the creation of a perfect experience, which is in accordance with the findings of Clemes et al. (2013).

When dining at a Michelin starred restaurant every single aspect of the experience is expected to be spot on, which is why a small flaw in the quality of food and wine, service or restaurant ambience is enough not to achieve the desired perfect experience. Although there were unsatisfied reviewers in consequence of errors of service and unpleasant restaurant ambience, the quality of the food proved to be the most important factor in the differentiation between a non-perfect and a perfect experience. These results are in accordance with previous studies. In their study, Clemes et al. (2013) concluded that the most important factors for customers when eating at a fine dining restaurant are the quality and taste of the dishes, the presentation, and the use of fresh and local ingredients. Furthermore, according to Taar (2014), even though there are other relevant dimensions for customers in a gastronomic experience, the taste of the dishes is the most relevant dimension in a gastronomic experience. Therefore, answering the first research question, the results show that the main dimensions of a Michelin starred experience are: food service, restaurant, wine, experience, menu, chef, view, trip, dinner, culinary and red. Michelin starred restaurant experiences are multidimensional, thus, it is essential for restaurants to be able to take all these elements into account

when delivering the customer experience. Nonetheless, the dimensions related to the quality and taste of the dishes turns out to be more relevant for the customers experience than the others.

This research's third objective was to explore whether Michelin starred restaurants can be the main motivator for tourists to travel to Portugal based on narratives shared online. Regarding the first variable analyzed, the recommendation of the restaurant, 43,3% of the reviewers shared their intention of recommending the restaurant to other people as they really enjoyed the experience. The reviews show that on many occasions the Michelin starred restaurant dining experience was the highlight of the trip to Portugal. Their experience was so fantastic that these customers recommend other food enthusiast to travel to Portugal and visit that same restaurant. These results are in line with the findings of Mora et al. (2021), in which the authors concluded that travelers' gastronomic experiences satisfaction generate loyalty within the destination that consequently will lead to revisiting and recommendation to other people. Regarding the second variable analyzed, the intention to comeback, 18,8% shared their intention to come back to Portugal with the only purpose of having another Michelin starred experience in the country. The reviews show that normally, eating at a Michelin starred restaurant was not the tourist's main objective of the trip. Nevertheless, in a considerable number of cases these tourists had incredible experiences that make them want to revisit Portugal with the main goal of repeating that experience. These results are in line with the literature review, as nowadays there are people that travel to a country with the only goal of having an experience in a Michelin starred restaurant (Batat, 2020; Vargas-Sanchez & López-Guzmán, 2020; Mora et al., 2021). Therefore, answering the second research question, the results confirm that Michelin starred restaurants are drivers of the development of gastronomic tourism in Portugal.

Regarding the research propositions, the analysis of the second research question revealed that a considerable number of tourists want to come back to Portugal with the only goal of dining at a Michelin starred restaurant, confirming our first research proposition, which assumed that for some tourists eating at a Michelin starred restaurant is the main motivator to visit a country. On the other hand, the analysis of the first research question, revealed that inside the most relevant dimensions of the Michelin starred experience, the taste and quality of the food stand out as the most important one. Thus, this result confirms our second research proposition, which assumed that that the most important factor for customers when eating at a Michelin starred restaurant is the food quality.

5.2. Theoretical Contribution

This research, in comparison to previous studies, gives a broader perspective on the dimensions of the Michelin starred experience, not just focusing on the dimensions present on the restaurant experience,

as it happens in the study of Brochado (2018). We took a step forward and explored the most relevant dimension, the ones that differentiate a perfect experience from a non-perfect experience. In relation to the role played by Michelin starred restaurants as drivers of gastronomic tourism, previous studies proved the important role of these type of restaurants in the promotion of a touristic destination (Batat, 2020; Meneguel et al., 2019; Vargas-Sanchez & López-Guzmán, 2020). Although, as researchers have previously focused mainly on data collected on surveys, interviews, observation and documentary research about the managerial perspective, we innovated by making a mix content analysis about the perspective of tourists on this topic using the online reviews. Furthermore, this is a study that focuses on a single country, in this case Portugal, that had not been done yet in previous studies that used online reviews. This analysis adds value to the existing literature because the Michelin starred restaurants can have different impacts in the development of gastronomic tourism in different countries.

Therefore, this study contributes to the literature on Michelin starred restaurants and its relationship with gastronomic tourism by offering the results of mix content analysis on the reviews shared online by tourists that visited these restaurants in Portugal. The findings present the main and most relevant dimensions of the Michelin starred experience and the role of these restaurants in the development of gastronomic tourism in a country. In addition to that, the use of online reviews enables the creation of a sample with reviewers from all parts of the world, reducing this way the response bias.

5.3 Managerial Implication

These findings highlight the necessity to enhance the gastronomic destinations management by creating distinctive experiences where Michelin starred restaurants showcase local products and gastronomic culture, which is in line with the findings of previous studies (Batat, 2020; Pérez Gálvez et al., 2017; Clemes et al., 2013).

Regarding the experience dimensions, this study gives Michelin starred restaurants managers, owners, and chefs a relevant perspective of the customers experiences shared online, which can help them improving the several components of their business in accordance with customers preferences. This research suggests that the quality and tastes of the dishes are the most important factor that customers have in consideration when evaluation their Michelin starred restaurant experience. Although, these are multidimensional experiences where every single aspect of the experience must be seriously taken into account. Thus, Michelin starred chefs need to develop flavorful and beautiful

dishes that blow customers away, using the best local ingredients. The food and wine menus must contain a lot of different options to choose from. It is also very important to surprise customers with special dishes during the service, or even with the chefs visits to the tables. Additionally, restaurant managers should undertake an exhaustive search for the best employees. They should be well trained in order to provide customers with an exquisite experience. Finally, the restaurants must be beautifully adorned creating a wonderful atmosphere for customers. The restaurants should also be located in prime locations, enhancing the exclusivity of the experience.

Given the growing popularity of gastronomic tourism, this research sought to demonstrate the strong impact that Michelin starred restaurants have in the development of gastronomic tourism in a destination. These results emphasize the great importance that Michelin starred restaurants have in attracting tourists to a destination and developing a positive brand image of the country, consolidating it as a gastronomic destination. This positive impact that Michelin starred restaurants have in the gastronomic tourism development has already been found in other studies (Batat, 2020; Meneguel et al., 2019). In addition to that, 30% of total destinations' tourism revenue from gastronomy, with this value tending to grow in the future (UNWTO, 2017). Therefore, considering the previously mentioned facts, governments benefit from the opening and prospering of Michelin starred restaurants in the country. This could be done by tourism ministries by helping businesses promoting themselves abroad, such as for instance supporting their presence in international tourism fairs or developing gastronomic fairs in the own country. Other thing that governments could do is to use Michelin starred chefs as destination ambassadors.

5.4. Limitations and future research recommendations

Although the present study has discovered the main and most relevant dimensions of the Michelin starred restaurants experience and confirmed the positive impact that these restaurants have in the development of gastronomic tourism, the findings of this research must be seen in light of some limitations.

First, most of the reviews used in the sample are from customers that evaluate their experience as perfect. Future research must collect more negative reviews in order to fully explore the dimensions that differentiate perfect experiences from non-perfect experiences. Moreover, future studies could perform this analysis in other countries with the goal of comparing the data collected from different regions of the world. It would also be insightful to analyze if the dimensions of the Michelin starred restaurant experience vary according to the customers' profile.

Regarding the methodology used, this research gave us important insights about this topic, however it does not allow us to derive significant statistical conclusions. Therefore, in the future, researchers should build on these insights and perform quantitative studies based on data collected with surveys in order to statistically validate these research conclusions. Furthermore, instead of only selecting people who have eaten in Michelin starred restaurants, it would also be interesting to survey people who never experience these types of restaurants.

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Appendix:

Annex A – Excel spreadsheet to store the data

Review Title	Restaurant	Review	Date	Overall Satisfaction Rating	Rating of Service	Rating of food	Recommend the restaurant	Shows intention to comeback?	Nationality
Absolutely superb and extra special service	Il Gallo d'Oro	Stayed at Leis Suites at The Cliff Bay and dined at Il Gallo D'Oro with some friends who live nearby in Funchal. This was a fantastic experience. The food was exceptional and delicious. Every course explained and flavours described in detail. The service was also excellent. We also had the wine pairing which complemented the dishes perfectly. As we were a party of 8 we had to have the fixed menu made up of either 7 or 10 courses, we chose 10 and we're pleased we had because we didn't want the experience to end. More importantly (for me personally) I'm allergic to seafood and was a little nervous that my choices would be limited. However, I needn't have worried because the chef made all my courses from the land or farm so dined on almost a completely separate menu. The attention to detail and care of me with my allergy was exemplary. I can't compliment these people enough, or recommend this restaurant highly enough. All I can say is give it a try because you will not be disappointed.	27/03/2022	5			Yes	Not defined	UK
There is one question left	Il Gallo d'Oro	I've stayed at the cliff bay hotel and had the opportunity to have dinner at Il Gallo d'Oro. We went for the 10 course („moments“ as they call it) menu an inspired menu with wine pairing, every „moment“ was an explosion of taste, wonderfully arranged on mostly custom made plates, the wine pairing was extraordinary selected to each „moment“ (mostly portuguese), the service was very professional, but got more and more funny, as we got more and more funny with every glass of wine we had, so which question is left? wine enjoyed food at some of the top chefs in the world, so why is il gallo d'oro only 2 stars? thank you benoit sinton and mostly your staff for this experience!	21/02/2022	5			Not defined	Not defined	Switzerland
Truly sublime, an outstanding experience	Il Gallo d'Oro	We returned to The Cliff Bay Hotel in January 2022 and were delighted to hear that Il Gallo d'Oro was open. I've visited in 2020 when it was being renovated. The menu seems overwhelming at first, but the team are on hand to explain it, and guide your selection. We opted for the Madiran-inspired tasting menu. It was inspired, inventive, and excellent. Amazing flavours, but also beautiful presentation. The team helped us select an excellent champagne to accompany our journey which was also outstanding. If you're keen to explore an upscale interpretation of Madiran cuisine, this is worth the detour, as their 2 stars would suggest.	17/01/2022	5	5	5	Yes	Not defined	UK
Okay, not great	Il Gallo d'Oro	Having read the review we visited Il Gallo d'Oro with mixed expectations. What we read turned out to be quite accurate. The staff is wonderful, very friendly but found it hard to deal with us not being lovers of Madiran wines. To sweet to our taste. The dishes are beautiful pieces of art and it must be said the chef is a master of colour and texture. They had deep knives and were very delicious. The rest of the food was rather flat in taste. The French chef clearly tries to respect Portuguese ingredients and culinary tradition. Makes sense in Madiran a setting but sometimes the original is superior to the copy. Especially the cheese platter was downright disappointing missing substance and most of all taste. Regrettably that also applied to the wines. Although good company to the dish no sensations there and surprisingly aged ports were not available. Ports need age to come beyond only sweetness. All in all the whole experience was ok with very rare moments of pure happiness that the deliciousness of the dishes should bring in a two star restaurant and that was a bit disappointing.	09/01/2022	3			No	No	Netherlands
Loved the Terrorir experience!!!!	Il Gallo d'Oro	Had seen great reviews of this restaurant. Went to definitely worthy of its Michelin stars. One of the best meals I ever had. We opted for the Terrorir menu. We wanted to try the local ingredients. My F&V was the black scabbard fish (2 presentations). My wife's was the fish soup. The carousel with desserts at the end was way cool. Sommelier also made a great wine selection. Highly recommend this restaurant. Make your reservation early!! Truly a memorable experience last night, our last in Madiran. We elected to go for the a la carte options after having the tasting menu at William last week. They were extremely flexible and accommodating to all our food preferences and dietary requirements. Literally creating a starter dish for my wife from the chef's imagination (as what she wanted wasn't on the menu in any way, shape or form). All our dishes were beautifully presented and just as good to eat. Their wine cellar is also extensive and interesting. After discussion with their sommelier we went with his selection based on our food selection. Top marks. If you can, GO!!!	21/08/2021	5	5	5	Yes	Not defined	USA
Just GO!!!!!!	Il Gallo d'Oro	Il Gallo d'Oro is a very special restaurant which has been recently refurbished to provide an elegant and pleasant dining room. Menus are prepared by Benoit Sinton who has presided over this restaurant for several years. His menus feature top class products, many of them sourced locally. Presentation is imaginative and inspired and each dish is served on different and unusual plates, some of them crafted specially for the restaurant. This is a place to celebrate special occasions and to take plenty of time to relax while savouring several courses of fish, game, meats, cheeses and desserts. Sauces are carefully made and full of flavour and all staff are keen to make sure that guests are enjoying what is a very special culinary experience. Just one constructive comment for added enjoyment in the future... a larger choice of dishes for clients dining there once a week. During a four week stay would be preferable to having the same or very similar dishes, each time. That observation apart, Il Gallo d'Oro is an outstanding place to dine. My husband and I were lucky to have enjoyed three amazing meals at Il Gallo d'Oro during our stay at Cliff Bay. The food was simply amazing, the attention to detail and presentation was outstanding. Special mention to Restaurant Manager for his courtesy and attentive manner to all guests, nothing short of 5*. Restaurant staff for their delivery and detailed description of each course, simply outstanding. The ambience and outlook through the magnificently new windows overlooking the Atlantic make this a truly memorable and special occasion. Restaurant very busy essential to book. Not many of us have the opportunity to dine in such fine surroundings and be the recipient of simply stunning food. Thanks to Chef Benoit Sinton and his superb team, we were hopeful of seeing him during service, but he was clearly dedicated to making such memorable tasting moments to his guests. We cannot wait to return.	20/10/2021	5			Yes	Not defined	UK
Luxury 2 Star Michelin Dining.	Il Gallo d'Oro	Il Gallo d'Oro is a very special restaurant which has been recently refurbished to provide an elegant and pleasant dining room. Menus are prepared by Benoit Sinton who has presided over this restaurant for several years. His menus feature top class products, many of them sourced locally. Presentation is imaginative and inspired and each dish is served on different and unusual plates, some of them crafted specially for the restaurant. This is a place to celebrate special occasions and to take plenty of time to relax while savouring several courses of fish, game, meats, cheeses and desserts. Sauces are carefully made and full of flavour and all staff are keen to make sure that guests are enjoying what is a very special culinary experience. Just one constructive comment for added enjoyment in the future... a larger choice of dishes for clients dining there once a week. During a four week stay would be preferable to having the same or very similar dishes, each time. That observation apart, Il Gallo d'Oro is an outstanding place to dine. My husband and I were lucky to have enjoyed three amazing meals at Il Gallo d'Oro during our stay at Cliff Bay. The food was simply amazing, the attention to detail and presentation was outstanding. Special mention to Restaurant Manager for his courtesy and attentive manner to all guests, nothing short of 5*. Restaurant staff for their delivery and detailed description of each course, simply outstanding. The ambience and outlook through the magnificently new windows overlooking the Atlantic make this a truly memorable and special occasion. Restaurant very busy essential to book. Not many of us have the opportunity to dine in such fine surroundings and be the recipient of simply stunning food. Thanks to Chef Benoit Sinton and his superb team, we were hopeful of seeing him during service, but he was clearly dedicated to making such memorable tasting moments to his guests. We cannot wait to return.	09/10/2021	5			Yes	Not defined	UK
Amazing meal at Il Gallo D'Oro	Il Gallo d'Oro	My husband and I were lucky to have enjoyed three amazing meals at Il Gallo d'Oro during our stay at Cliff Bay. The food was simply amazing, the attention to detail and presentation was outstanding. Special mention to Restaurant Manager for his courtesy and attentive manner to all guests, nothing short of 5*. Restaurant staff for their delivery and detailed description of each course, simply outstanding. The ambience and outlook through the magnificently new windows overlooking the Atlantic make this a truly memorable and special occasion. Restaurant very busy essential to book. Not many of us have the opportunity to dine in such fine surroundings and be the recipient of simply stunning food. Thanks to Chef Benoit Sinton and his superb team, we were hopeful of seeing him during service, but he was clearly dedicated to making such memorable tasting moments to his guests. We cannot wait to return.	16/09/2021	5			Not defined	Yes	UK
Stunning food, dietary	Il Gallo d'Oro	Enjoyed a romantic evening here choosing the 7 course menu plus wine flight. The food and staff were fantastic and it was a pleasure to meet chef Benoit who came out and dined with all of the tables. His taste of Madiran was a delight. Our only slight critique was the wine flight could have							