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Defining food authenticity: An efficient promotion for ethnic restaurants

Abstract

Authenticity is not only a cornerstone of contemporary marketing, but also crucial in the development of brand identity, differentiation and positioning. To date, research has focussed on perceptions of authenticity in consumers' patronage of businesses, brands, places and experiences. However, this research takes a "producer" perspective by examining the meaning and construction of authenticity by commercial enterprises, through a qualitative, interpretive examination of restaurants serving mainly Greek food in both the UK and Greece. Restaurateurs (n=11 in the UK and 8 in Greece) were theoretically sampled. Data from in-depth interviews was analysed according to constructivist grounded theory conventions. The results indicated that the core concept linking the restaurateurs was "hospitality". This was variously achieved by hiring staff of the same ethnicity with the restaurant's theme, developing a menu, sourcing ingredients and creating an ambiance that reflected the authenticity bias of the restaurateur, which was either indexically or existentially oriented. The strategic implications are discussed.

Keywords

Authenticity, identity, food, ethnic, restaurants, promotion.

Introduction

The term authenticity derives from the ancient Greek word “αυθεντικός” meaning something trustworthy and original, not an imitation or imaginary (Cappannelli, 2004). From a marketing perspective, the quest for authenticity is “*one of the cornerstones of contemporary marketing*” (Brown *et al.*, 2003, p. 21). It is a fundamental element of reinforcing a brand’s identity (Beverland, 2005; Alexander, 2009; Lu *et al.*, 2015) and thus authenticity is an important consideration in product differentiation and positioning strategies (Ebster and Guist, 2005; Wood and Lego Muñoz, 2007; Lu *et al.*, 2015). To date, much of the empirical work on authenticity has analysed consumer’s perspectives of products, places and experiences. However, there is a limited understanding of the meaning of authenticity from the perspective of “producers” who conceive of and create authentic artifacts and spaces for their customers. Therefore, this paper aims to address this gap by examining the meanings of authenticity amongst restaurateurs serving mainly Greek food, located in both the UK and Greece, using a qualitative interpretive approach based upon data generated through in-depth interviews. The paper first begins by analysing the literature relating to authenticity in relation to food.

Literature Review

Theoretical Perspectives on Authenticity

Although definitions of authenticity are elusive (Grayson and Martinec, 2004; Beverland, 2005; Bruhn *et al.*, 2012; Mkono, 2013), there is greater clarity in characterisations of the typologies of authenticity which are: “objective” authenticity, “constructivist” authenticity and “existential” authenticity; all three of which have relevance to food.

Objective authenticity concerns objects which may be examined by an expert who determines their true and honest nature (Leite and Graburn, 2009). This type of authenticity exists only if there can be tangible, absolute and objective evaluative criteria (Grayson and

Martinec, 2004; Ebster and Guist, 2005; Leigh *et al.*, 2006; Mkono, 2013; Lu *et al.*, 2015). An example of this is the “Quality Schemes for Agricultural Products and Foodstuffs” (EU Reg 1151/2012) policy which supports foodstuffs with identifiable characteristics, in particular those linked to their geographical origin by virtue of their gastronomic heritage supported by traditional production or processing methods. This legislation is underpinned by a growing range of analytical methods which provide scientific substantiation of e.g. country of origin authenticity. Food packaging labels associated with this legislation are mostly associated with the place of origin (DeSoucey, 2010), specifically protected designation of origin (PDO), protected geographical indication (PGI), or traditional specialty guaranteed (TSG).

Social constructivist approach to authenticity (Indexical) occurs when actors judge authenticity according to their own experiences (Belhassen *et al.*, 2008). This implies that authenticity is a social projection with “*various versions of authenticities regarding the same object*” (Wang, 1999, p. 352). Indexical authenticity can be negotiated, interpreted and agreed by actors (Hughes, 1995) as its meaning is pluralistic (Zhu, 2012), and influenced by social discourse (Belhassen *et al.*, 2008), and *a priori* expectations and stereotypes (Wang, 1999). Constructivism therefore posits authenticity as a subjectively social construction (Ebster and Guist, 2005; Leigh *et al.*, 2006; Wood and Lego Muñoz, 2007), unfixed and variable (Reisinger and Steiner, 2006). As a construction which emerges from personal experiences: “... it can be a projection of one’s dreams, fantasies, stereotypes, and expectations...” (Leigh *et al.*, 2006, p. 483) and therefore it is a personal truth (Postrel, 2003).

From the constructivist approach there emerged indexical authenticity (Grayson and Martinec, 2004). Indexical authenticity is defined as an original product which can be compared with the origin. That product cannot be copied and remains stable through the years (Grayson and Martinec, 2004). For instance, the authenticity of an ethnic restaurant’s menu relies on its originality and stability over the years. It cannot be copied, nor transformed, it is

associated with the “*real thing*” (Grayson and Martinec, 2004, p. 297), and is the “*truth*” (Grayson and Martinec, 2004, p. 310). The indexical authenticity of a restaurant’s food is “*about the real vs. the fake*” (Levy, 2006, p. 124).

Social constructed authenticity is communicated within a social network of members who will act as a regime (Bonne and Verbeke, 2007). Apart from the restaurateurs who produce authentic concepts for their restaurants, food authenticity is also perceived by consumers as a strong emotional bond with quality, heritage, tradition and commitment to the brand (Assiouras *et al.*, 2015). This emotional bond is the main factor from which positive word of mouth springs among consumers (Pimentel and Reynolds, 2004).

Postmodern authenticity (Existential). Existential authenticity is an activity-based approach and is poorly explored in the literature (Wang, 1999; Leigh *et al.*, 2006; Rickly-Boyd, 2013). Existential authenticity goes beyond “object-oriented” perspectives as it relies on personal experiences and perceptions (Rickly-Boyd, 2013). Additionally, existential authenticity takes into consideration the modern need of humans for hedonistic fun and eclecticism of lived experiences while there is also a need for them to share their experiences with others (Leigh *et al.*, 2006; Steiner and Reisinger, 2006; Kim and Jamal, 2007; Mkono, 2013). This is a subjective perception during their quest for fun and pleasure through consumption, which is named: pseudo-events (Mkono, 2013).

As a result, actors perceive authenticity as an interaction between the world and their identity (Steiner and Reisinger, 2006). People who are unfamiliar with the culture tend to believe in this type of authenticity (Lu *et al.*, 2015). When it comes to ethnic restaurants specifically, people tend to believe not only in what they taste but also in what they see; ethnic costumes and the roles of the cooks and waiters may define an ethnic restaurant as authentic or not (Peterson, 2005; Mkono, 2013). Existential authenticity is an enjoyable illusion (Ebster and Guist, 2005), based on non-objective criteria and on what actors see, eat and their emotional

experiences (Lu *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, authenticity for a restaurant is much broader than the food aspects, it is the total experience (Mkono, 2013).

The above three types of authenticity are depicted in Figure 1 (Leigh *et al.*, 2006, p. 491):

Figure 1



Source: (Leigh *et al.*, 2006, p. 491)

Ethnically themed restaurants are the second most influential representative of a foreign culture after the mass media (Wood and Lego Muñoz, 2007). Research suggests that consumers who are familiar with a country’s culture tend to appreciate authentic restaurants more than the plainly “themed” restaurants (Ebster and Guist, 2005). These consumers also expect the owner’s ethnicity to be of the same origin as the restaurant’s menu (Ebster and Guist, 2005) and, as a result, the menu and the cooking style of an ethnic restaurant would be perceived by the consumers as the country’s ambassadors and representatives of its culture (Wood and Lego Muñoz, 2007; Lego Muñoz and Wood, 2009; Jang *et al.*, 2012; Tsai and Lu, 2012).

The questions arise as to both how and to what extent restaurateurs perceive of and construct an “authentic” eating experience for their customers. These questions are explored amongst a sample of Greek ethnic restaurateurs.

Methodology

To explore restaurateurs' perceptions and constructions of an "authentic" Greek restaurant experience, a qualitative research approach typified by in-depth, open questioning techniques was undertaken (Kvale, 1996). Given the potential importance of the restaurant setting to supply elicitation cues, in-depth interviews were held face to face within the dining environment. The semi-structured interview guide contained two question areas: 1) perceptual questions relating to participant-defined constituents of an authentic Greek restaurant; and 2) processural questions to understand how authenticity is manifested within the restaurant service offering. Two Greek ethnic restaurant menus were also presented to participants to prompt elaboration and clarification of authenticity concepts and facilitate comparison of data within and between the interviews. Sampling of participants followed a theoretical approach (Glaser, 1992). All UK participants were owners of "Greek" restaurants and varied according to their generation status (first to third generation Greeks) and restaurant exclusivity according to average meal price. To access maximum variation in perceptions of authenticity, participants were also sampled in Greece on the basis of patronage by local customers and tourists, menu price points, location and social media recommendations. Theoretical saturation was achieved with n=19 interviews (11 and 8 interviews in the UK and Greece respectively). Interviews were conducted by the first author and were audio-recorded and transcribed. Data analysis followed a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2010) involving open coding and code categorisation within individual transcripts, and comparative analysis of codes and categories across participants. NVivo 10 was used facilitate data storage, coding, categorization, memo-writing and data retrieval (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013) in an iterative process (Charmaz, 2011).

Preliminary ethical approval was received from the authors' academic institution prior to commencing fieldwork.

Findings

The core concept uniting constructions of authenticity within the Greek restaurant environment was the desire of restaurateurs to convey and deliver their interpretation of “hospitality”. The delivery of such an experience was grounded in the employment of Greek personnel and a “negotiated” Greek menu which are now discussed.

Staff

The provision of authentic Greek hospitality was emphasized by the recruitment of staff with a Greek heritage. Although it was perceived that both non-Greek and Greek customers expected to be served by Greek staff, this was underpinned by assumption that only Greeks tacitly understood the meanings of Greek hospitality. For example, it was believed that only chefs of the same ethnicity as the restaurant’s identity would know how to cook authentically.

“- Do you believe that a chef could be of a foreign nationality and work in a Greek restaurant?

- (Laughter) As an assistant, yes. At least for me. Because he wouldn’t have the experience I have and he wouldn’t know what I know” (Female, restaurant owner, Greece)

“... The person who cooks and makes the recipes must certainly be Greek. Some ideas come through his DNA, if he knows to cook they just come out and accrue, a foreigner will create it differently...” (Male, restaurant owner, Greece)

Similarly waiters whose ethnicity is the same as the restaurant are believed to make more authentic suggestions and to support the restaurant’s menu and reinforce the iconic cues of the ethnicity of the restaurant.

“... Of course, Greek staff, Greek speaking staff help a lot in building that, and obviously building a reputation with the customers as well... A lot of Greek customers come in here, they feel more as if they are at home when there is Greek speaking staff

and I think that is actually a massive part of what we have here and what we have to continue... ” (Male, restaurant owner, UK)

Menu construction

The menu for most of the ethnic restaurant owners attempted to retain “traditional” foods. However, alterations to menus were made to accommodate customers requirements and expectations. For example, for restaurateurs with a predominantly tourist customer base, made alterations to recipes that would be described as more “Mediterranean” than “Greek”.

“... Well, 90% are tourists. There are also locals, but unfortunately the area is characterized as touristy, so the others don't easily come. This is bad for me... The menu was done... Whatever we were asked for, we tried to include it adding our style too, but always trying to meet peoples' needs...” (Male, restaurant owner, Greece)

“... Believe it or not, we don't have that many Greeks that come into our restaurant. We have about 15%... the "old school Greeks" that are used to Cypriot tavernas, which came the first few months we opened and haven't returned, which quite frankly is in a way good for us, because it's not the kind of customer we wanted... And the second type of customers that we have are very wealthy people, they are bankers, traders, marketing, lot of fashion industry, a very trendy crowd... So, the main thing that we wanted to do is step away slightly from the traditional "taverna" style, the style that is really common in the U.K. Keep very true to the Greek taste but, twisting the dishes into a more modern, more high-end cuisine... So, the whole concept of my restaurant is to... (and this is my life mission) is to change the perception that people have of Greek food...” (Male, restaurant owner, U.K.)

“...I slightly alter certain things so... to fit the market emm... People are very health conscious so... my restaurant is let's say 95% Greek. The reason it's not 100% Greek is... Over time, I have had to adapt dishes or had to adapt bits and pieces which are

not necessarily Greek... If a customer requires... Not requires but asks, for example... Tabbouleh... Which is actually an Arabic salad, we make it, we make kilos of it but, is not Greek but, people like it so we put it on the menu. We have hummus, which is not Greek, we have falafels... I try to stick to Greek, specifically and it starts to evolve into a kind of Mediterranean as well because of requests. Trying to keep customers happy...” (Male, restaurant owner, U.K.)

Restaurant owners felt obligated to respect the traditional recipes and the customers of the same ethnicity on the other hand, as they aimed to please all of their customers (tourists, non-locals, foreigners, etc.) and try innovative ways of doing so:

“... We have two menus, the creative and the traditional... The “traditional” menu was chosen by tradition!.. And the evolution of the Cretan cuisine for so many years. The “creative” one was chosen by the chefs’ team that we have in collaboration with the manager, me... So, the Cretan is our stricter judge, their comments we take very seriously. On a second level, we judge the Greek customers and thirdly the tourists whose comments we may consider, but they are less important as they do not know the culinary tradition or their tastes are completely different from our food habits... I think the issue is that everyone is comparing towards his mother. I don’t know how that sounds... We are a family oriented race. Luckily or unfortunately” (Male, restaurant owner, Greece)

“We have books downstairs, it was printed in 1960 from Kavala and it's got some amazing recipes. We kind of use that as an inspiration let's say... To give you an example of what we do: Something very traditional is pastitsio in Greece. So, we said OK we want the pastitsio but, let's do it in a way... So, we took out each individual ingredient that comes in the pastitsio... We want something more Greek, more authentic. So, we found chilopites (instead of pasta), very Greek, made with milk, we

did that... Minced meat... You can find it everywhere, let's do something different so, we took a beef cheek that we cook for eighteen hours (18) at sixty six (66) degrees. And then you just touch it with the spoon and it falls apart... Our customers are locals... During the week I would say it's 80% locals and on the weekends, which is our busiest time, there is a lot of people that come because they have heard about us, they come from West London, East London, North London, just because they have heard about it.” (Male, restaurant owner, U.K.)

Traditional recipes

Amongst restaurateurs the recipes defined as traditional and authentic were those that could be recalled from their childhood memories. Dishes cooked by the parents or grandparents of the restaurateurs were perceived as particularly authentic.

“... I learn a lot of these things from tradition, my father, my aunties, my grandmother, etc. etc. And... The family comes from Sifnos and... certain dishes are quite specific to Sifnos even... they are quite specific to other islands as well. Emm... So, I would say... like the mousaka I make is how my grandmother used to make it, she was from Athens, I haven't added anything in the recipe. Maybe... I use less oil but, emm... nothing too dramatic. So... yeah it's... I would say close to authentic Greek food...” (Male, restaurant owner, U.K.)

Ingredients

“Ingredients” were typically cited as important contributors to the authenticity of the Greek restaurant experience. For many restaurateurs, key Greek ingredients representing the flavour principles of the cuisine such as oregano and thyme or with olives and olive oil had to be present within the menu and ideally sourced from Greece. The integrity of the ingredients also extended to wine and beer beverage offerings.

“...Capers must always be from Andros and not from Turkey. Can you understand? We must not cheat, it always has to be original... Greeks have to be honest and we weren't...” (Male, restaurant owner, Greece)

“We included the traditional... And of course, depending on the season of Crete always, right? The ingredients are very important...” (Female, restaurant owner, Greece)

“...Because the menu is what describes a restaurant, the availability of Greek beers and Greek wine. Which is not available in every other restaurant in the UK...” (Male, restaurant owner, U.K.)

“... I only work with Greek wines. I mainly work with bulk wine, but since there are some people who want bottled wine I also have 2-3 varieties, always Greek... Because we have thousands of wines in Greece of a great quality and the restaurant's quality has no need of foreign wines...” (Male, restaurant owner, Greece)

“... We were trying to find a way of promoting the wine we were producing from our vineyards in Nemea... So, we started as a café-bistro wine bar...” (Male, restaurant owner, Greece)

“... We have been working very hard to change the perception of people about food and wine, which is very important because the reputation of Greek wine is terrible... And so far it is working, so far people are responding very well to the food we are making... So, absolutely EVERYTHING is Greek. (Male, restaurant owner, U.K.)

The integrity of ingredients was also related to their perceived quality. In the UK, for second and third generation Greek restaurateurs, freshness and flavour of ingredients superceded a Greek country of origin:

“Greek lamb, for example, some of the best lamb in the world is right here, comes from Wales, comes from... just on our doorstep, so why would we buy things like that?” (Male, restaurant owner, U.K: 3rd generation Greek)

Restaurant Decoration /Atmosphere

In addition to their ethnic food, restaurateurs seek to promote their ethnic identity through the decoration of their restaurant. The colours of blue and white are traditionally chosen for Greek restaurants in the UK because they mimic the colour of the sea and dwellings on the Greek islands. As the Aegean is preferred by tourists for their holiday the selection of blue and white is intended to positively frame nostalgic holiday memories.

- Some of the restaurants have live music as well and then, we also have the decoration, some Greek plates on the walls and also some Greek advertisements on the walls, ION (=traditional Greek chocolate)...” (Male, restaurant owner, U.K.)

- Do you think there is any relation between the restaurant’s image and your social one?(Interviewer)

- They surely do. If I was an Arabian for instance the Pharaoh would be here.” (Male, restaurant owner, U.K.)

“Identity could be through different things. It could be through the decoration of the restaurant, it could be through the staff, but, most importantly, it is through the food...” (Male, restaurant owner, U.K.)

Music

As a component of the dining experience, background music was used to enhance and reinforce the cultural identity of the restaurant.

“... We have chosen to play Cretan music for restaurants, so as to avoid the total silence. Or not to hear the noise from the talking. The music choice of that particular type of Cretan music is to be matched with the restaurant’s identity, which is Cretan...”

European or foreign music doesn't match to the restaurant's profile that we wish to present..." (Male, restaurant owner, Greece)

However, music is also a factor of nostalgia both for the customers and the restaurateurs as it connects the dining experience with holiday memories or with the home country.

"... We have the music... Well, you know, most of our customers have already been in Greece, but for some who have not, yeah we promote Greece. We promote the country and the culture. For example, "Zorbas" is playing now, so... (laughter)" (Male, restaurant owner, U.K.)

Many restaurateurs stressed that the ethnic music is played also for them in order to feel closer to home:

"... The Greek music, we play it first of all for us..." (Male, restaurant owner, U.K.)

Traditional entertainment (smashing plates, traditional dancing)

Some of the Greek restaurants offered traditional live music and dance especially on Fridays and Saturdays in order to please Greek customers and attract non-Greeks. Entertainment attractions include the smashing of plates or the sirtaki dance.

"... I would say we are probably only half a restaurant, the other half is a night spot... People come from all around London and beyond, all around the UK and Europe, because we are well-known for what we do, in terms of live music, live music venue until 3:30 in the morning, bouzoukia you know... Upstairs, on the first floor where we sit now on Friday and Saturday nights we have a promotional evening called Hellenic nights, which is a massive do where Greeks all around the UK come and party... Only part of what we do is food and certainly a lot of massive drink and party..." (Male, restaurant owner, U.K.)

Traditional cooking techniques

Similarly to ingredient authenticity and integrity, the use of traditional cooking techniques was contested. Some restaurant owners supported traditional cooking procedures traditional to provide authentic dishes for their customers.

“...So, in order to prepare something from scratch like a sauce, an individual sauce for a dish, you need staff, you need time... So, I think the big chain companies have it prepacked and already done for them... That is a bit touristy, you can call that touristy. But, we have kleftiko here. We put it on this morning and it is gonna be ready at 7 in the evening...” (Male, restaurant owner, U.K.)

“...The inspiration is from my great grandmother and my taste memory. I don't believe in big deviations, I don't like modifications. I wish to follow; I wish to approach the original and not to modify it all from the beginning...” (Male, restaurant owner, Greece)

“...The authenticity to a Cretan dish concerning the tradition is based firstly on the ingredients... Moreover, the way of cooking. We, for instance use 3-4 ways of cooking which are the main ways of cooking in Crete...”(Male, restaurant owner, Greece)

However, other restaurateurs who may be described as more market oriented adopted food preparation methods suited to their target market demands (rather than their own definition of authenticity):

“... I keep very true to the Greek taste, but twisting the dishes into a more modern, more high-end cuisine...” (Male, restaurant owner, U.K.)

“I slightly alter certain things so... to fit the market... People are very health conscious so I ... I do for example the "papoutsaki", I don't actually fry the aubergine, I actually steam it...” (Male, restaurant owner, U.K.)

Some of the UK located restaurants have adapted their recipes not only to local tastes but also for commercial considerations:

- *“ What was the procedure of deciding your menu?*
- *Our Chef’s experience. Whatever exists at a good cost, supply and demand.”* (Male, restaurant owner, Greece)

“... We try to use local producers. First of all, cost wise because it is too expensive to import everything from Greece...” (Male, restaurant owner, U.K.)

Hummus

Sample menus including hummus were used as a prompt within the interviewees and resulted in animated discussions which, provided insights into both indexical authenticity and the delivery of a perceived authentic experience for customers:

“... Hummus should not exist. It isn’t Greek. Let’s start from there (laughter)...”
(Male, restaurant owner, Greece)

“... So, we have a few dishes that slightly refer to Turkey or to the Ottoman Empire. Firstly, they are dishes that you can find in Greece, unlike "hummus" which you can't find in Greece... So, we would never ever have "halloumi" or "hummus". Never, ever... We have like loukoumades, which is a Turkish dish, but it is one of the most dominant desserts in Greece...” (Male, restaurant owner, U.K.)

“... I saw there was a gap... Most of the Greek restaurant in the UK emm... they weren't so much Greek. Because they had recipes from Turkey, Middle East, disappointed me... Working even as a chef disappointed me... I couldn't do recipes of my own, I had to follow the owner's menu. It wasn't traditional because I don't think falafel or tabbouleh or hummus have anything to do with Greece...” (Male, restaurant owner, U.K.)

“...This? Hummus, tzatziki, taramasalata. No, it’s touristy, nonsense...” (Male, restaurant owner, Greece)

Within the data differences emerged between restaurateurs who constructed a restaurant experience that was predominantly based upon indexical cues and those who prioritise the requirements of consumers and in doing so support a more existential notion of authenticity. Table 2 summarises the personal characteristics of these two typologies of restaurateur. For example, existentially authentic restaurants are managed by restaurateurs whose Greek heritage and familiarity with Greek culture is distal and/or whose customers are mainly tourists. They generally take a market oriented approach to their restaurant offering by adapting to customers’ tastes and deviating from solely Greek ‘traditional’ dishes. Indexically authentic restaurants have closer associations with Greece culture and place a greater emphasis on the authenticity e.g. via sourcing, of the food offering.

Discussion

Significant literature exists about the consumer perceptions of a restaurant’s authenticity (Ebster and Guist, 2005; Jensen and Hansen, 2007; Wood and Lego Muñoz, 2007; Ryu *et al.*, 2008; Lego Muñoz and Wood, 2009; Tsai and Lu, 2012; Zeng *et al.*, 2012). However, this research investigated the perceptions of authenticity of “producers” or the restaurateurs. The common theme amongst all the restaurateurs was their desire to provide Greek hospitality to their customers. This was created through both indexical cues, such as the ethnicity of the staff, ingredients of the ethnic restaurant’s origin, recipes appropriated from childhood, and iconic cues such as music, décor and core dishes. In some cases, ingredient integrity (based on freshness and flavor criteria) superceded those of Greek origin. These factors of menu, decoration, atmospherics, the use of traditional recipes, the food quality, the music, the costumes or even the ethnicity of the employees, echo those reported as taken into consideration by the consumers when choosing ethnic restaurants (Ebster and Guist, 2005;

Jensen and Hansen, 2007; Wood and Lego Muñoz, 2007; Ryu *et al.*, 2008; Lego Muñoz and Wood, 2009; Tsai and Lu, 2012; Zeng *et al.*, 2012).

The research also revealed indexical or existential authenticity biases which emerged from the identities of the participants.

Conclusion

This paper has offered a conceptualisation of the term authenticity from a producer perspective. Culturally aware restaurateurs tend to judge food authenticity according to indexical measure. However, restaurateurs less tied to the culture, with a market orientation and/or predominantly serving target consumers with a naïve palate for Greek food, implicitly follow the existential authenticity cues. Therefore, the identity of the restaurateurs is likely to be a significant influencing factor in their for conceiving the authenticity as indexical or existential (Table 2).

Through the lens of the restaurateurs' identity, specific factors define a restaurant's authenticity such as: the recipes from previous generations, the ingredients from the country of origin, the restaurant's decoration, the ethnicity of the staff. Thus, specific questions could be posed in order to grasp a person's predilection for Indexical or Existential authenticity (table 1). Such information could be used for introspection and reflection and to subsequently inform the strategic direction of a restaurant's offering.

Limitations

This study collected qualitative data mainly from Greek ethnic restaurants. In the future, a comparison with ethnic restaurants of different ethnicities could be beneficial as this may result in a more globalised definition of food authenticity. Moreover, a comparison with consumers' perceptions could be beneficial and that is possible by conducting in-depth interviews with customers of ethnic restaurants.

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Figure and tables

Figure 1: The three types of authenticity in the existing literature.

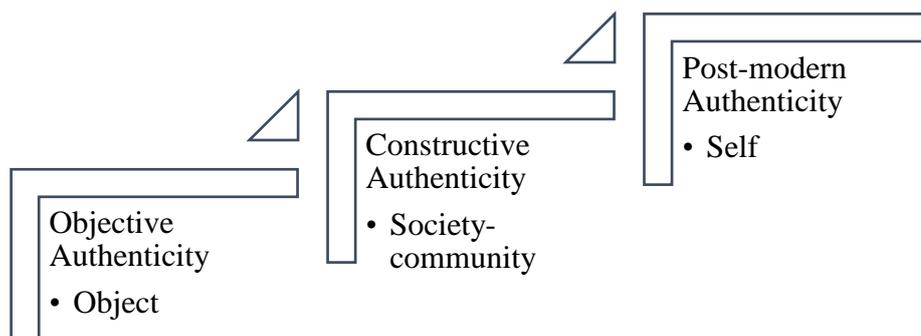


Table 1: The authenticity model.

	Indexical authenticity	Existential authenticity
Description of the restaurant	Related to a specific origin (Greek, Cretan, etc.)	Tailored to a novice consumers palate (touristy, Mediterranean, etc.)
Source of the recipes	From a specific origin (from memory, from relatives, from traditional cookbooks)	Not from a specific origin (Internet, standard recipes)
Origin of the ingredients	PDO products, imported products from the origin	Ingredients from a different origin, not PDO
Type of customers	Locals, loyal customers	Tourists, non-regulars
Reason for dining in the restaurant	To taste authentic food, to feel closer to home, to be reminded of holiday memories	For an elicit/different/new experience or to share the experience afterwards
The owner's/manager's role	Businessman but also an ambassador of the cuisine/country	Businessman
Other restaurants as "role models"	A restaurant from the origin, a traditional restaurant	Not any or a touristy/more globalised restaurant or a posh restaurant

Table 2: Authenticity via the identity lens.

Identity of restaurateurs who perceive authenticity as Indexical:			
Gender	Ethnicity	Bio	Authenticity comments

Female	Greek	She lives in Greece. As a child she spent some years in Crete, where she was raised by her grandfather.	By having Greek and especially Cretan identity, she compares the authenticity with the origin (Crete).
Female	Greek	She has lived in the U.K. for 10 years. She was born in Greece and came to the U.K. for studies at the age of 22.	By having Greek identity, she compares the authenticity with the origin.
Male	Greek	He has lived in the U.K. for 25 years. He was born in Greece and came to the UK for work at the age of 32.	He insisted on not having the interview in English as his English is not that good. The Greek identity remains strong for him.
Male	Greek	He lives in Greece. His origin is from Crete, where he spent all of his summers as a child.	By having Greek and especially Cretan identity, he compares the authenticity with the origin (Crete).
Male	Greek	He has lived in the U.K. for 20 years. He came to the U.K. from Greece when he was 18 to study and then he started the restaurant	By having Greek identity, he compares the authenticity with the origin.

		with his father.	
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Identity of restaurateurs who perceive authenticity as Existential:

Gender	Ethnicity	Bio	Authenticity comments
Male	British-Cypriot	He has lived in the U.K. since he was born. He is the 3rd generation of a Greek Cypriot family.	He perceives the authenticity not only in what he and his customers taste, but in what they see as well. He also has his own perception about authenticity in an eclectic way.
Male	British-French	He has lived in the U.K. since he was born.	He defines authenticity as a quest for fun and pleasure during the consumption.
Male	Greek	He lives in Greece.	He perceives authenticity as a pseudo-event, he prefers to write on the menu “traditional kebab” instead of “kebab” and focuses more on how it is expressed rather than the originality of the dish. Most of his customers are tourists.

Male	Greek	He lives in Greece. His origin is from the rural area of Greece.	He perceives the authenticity to emerge from the experiences of his customers, therefore, there is a clear interaction between the world and his customers' identity. Most of his customers are tourists.
Male	English	He lives in the U.K. He is a 2nd generation Greek.	He has only visited Greece as a tourist twice. His menu does not rely on tradition and originality, he chose recipes from the Internet.
Male	English	He lives in the U.K.	He is offering a menu according to his consumers' demand. He also transformed the original dishes to vegetarian (contrary to the Indexical authenticity, which remains stable over the years).