
AP[®] Research Academic Paper

Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary

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- Scoring Guideline**
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AP® Research Academic Paper 2020 Scoring Guidelines

The Response...				
Score of 1 Report on Existing Knowledge	Score of 2 Report on Existing Knowledge with Simplistic Use of a Research Method	Score of 3 Ineffectual Argument for a New Understanding	Score of 4 Well-Supported, Articulate Argument Conveying a New Understanding	Score of 5 Rich Analysis of a New Understanding Addressing a Gap in the Research Base
Presents an overly broad topic of inquiry.	Presents a topic of inquiry with narrowing scope or focus, that is NOT carried through either in the method or in the overall line of reasoning.	Carries the focus or scope of a topic of inquiry through the method AND overall line of reasoning, even though the focus or scope might still be narrowing.	Focuses a topic of inquiry with clear and narrow parameters, which are addressed through the method and the conclusion.	Focuses a topic of inquiry with clear and narrow parameters, which are addressed through the method and the conclusion.
Situates a topic of inquiry within a single perspective derived from scholarly works OR through a variety of perspectives derived from mostly non-scholarly works.	Situates a topic of inquiry within a single perspective derived from scholarly works OR through a variety of perspectives derived from mostly non-scholarly works.	Situates a topic of inquiry within relevant scholarly works of varying perspectives, although connections to some works may be unclear.	Explicitly connects a topic of inquiry to relevant scholarly works of varying perspectives AND logically explains how the topic of inquiry addresses a gap.	Explicitly connects a topic of inquiry to relevant scholarly works of varying perspectives AND logically explains how the topic of inquiry addresses a gap.
Describes a search and report process.	Describes a nonreplicable research method OR provides an oversimplified description of a method, with questionable alignment to the purpose of the inquiry.	Describes a reasonably replicable research method, with questionable alignment to the purpose of the inquiry.	Logically defends the alignment of a detailed, replicable research method to the purpose of the inquiry.	Logically defends the alignment of a detailed, replicable research method to the purpose of the inquiry.
Summarizes or reports existing knowledge in the field of understanding pertaining to the topic of inquiry.	Summarizes or reports existing knowledge in the field of understanding pertaining to the topic of inquiry.	Conveys a new understanding or conclusion, with an underdeveloped line of reasoning OR insufficient evidence.	Supports a new understanding or conclusion through a logically organized line of reasoning AND sufficient evidence. The limitations and/or implications, if present, of the new understanding or conclusion are oversimplified.	Justifies a new understanding or conclusion through a logical progression of inquiry choices, sufficient evidence, explanation of the limitations of the conclusion, and an explanation of the implications to the community of practice.
Generally communicates the student’s ideas, although errors in grammar, discipline-specific style, and organization distract or confuse the reader.	Generally communicates the student’s ideas, although errors in grammar, discipline-specific style, and organization distract or confuse the reader.	Competently communicates the student’s ideas, although there may be some errors in grammar, discipline-specific style, and organization.	Competently communicates the student’s ideas, although there may be some errors in grammar, discipline-specific style, and organization.	Enhances the communication of the student’s ideas through organization, use of design elements, conventions of grammar, style, mechanics, and word precision, with few to no errors.
Cites AND/OR attributes sources (in bibliography/ works cited and/or in-text), with multiple errors and/or an inconsistent use of a discipline-specific style.	Cites AND/OR attributes sources (in bibliography/ works cited and/or in-text), with multiple errors and/or an inconsistent use of a discipline-specific style.	Cites AND attributes sources, using a discipline-specific style (in both bibliography/works cited AND in-text), with few errors or inconsistencies.	Cites AND attributes sources, with a consistent use of an appropriate discipline-specific style (in both bibliography/works cited AND in-text), with few to no errors.	Cites AND attributes sources, with a consistent use of an appropriate discipline-specific style (in both bibliography/works cited AND in-text), with few to no errors.

Academic Paper

Overview

This performance task was intended to assess students' ability to conduct scholarly and responsible research and articulate an evidence-based argument that clearly communicates the conclusion, solution, or answer to their stated research question. More specifically, this performance task was intended to assess students' ability to:

- Generate a focused research question that is situated within or connected to a larger scholarly context or community;
- Explore relationships between and among multiple works representing multiple perspectives within the scholarly literature related to the topic of inquiry;
- Articulate what approach, method, or process they have chosen to use to address their research question, why they have chosen that approach to answering their question, and how they employed it;
- Develop and present their own argument, conclusion, or new understanding while acknowledging its limitations and discussing implications;
- Support their conclusion through the compilation, use, and synthesis of relevant and significant evidence generated by their research;
- Use organizational and design elements to effectively convey the paper's message;
- Consistently and accurately cite, attribute, and integrate the knowledge and work of others, while distinguishing between their voice and that of others; and
- Generate a paper in which word choice and syntax enhance communication by adhering to established conventions of grammar, usage, and mechanics.

“Not Asian Enough”: Authenticity and Chinese Cuisine

Introduction

In the world of gastronomy, the idea of authenticity is seen as an important factor in determining the quality, taste, and credibility of ethnic cuisine (Liu et al. 1035). With the continual adaptation and Americanization of foreign cuisine in America, there has been much discussion surrounding whether American ethnic food is true to its origins. However, the concept of authenticity is often rooted in personal bias and racial expectations (Hirose and Pih 10). When individuals attempt to become self-proclaimed judges of authenticity, their criteria for what makes ethnic food authentic varies greatly from person to person. These blurred boundaries of authenticity become even more distorted when examining the wide diversity of regional cuisines found in Chinese food.

Additionally with the advent of the digital age and the introduction of the Internet, online forums have become platforms that facilitate dialogue surrounding ethnic cuisine and authenticity (Zukin et al. 460). One such notable example is the popular social networking site *Yelp*, where consumers are able to share detailed accounts of their encounter with foreign cuisine. Within online restaurant reviews, customers reveal the language they use to describe authenticity and the way in which definitions of authenticity are discursively constructed. Through a retrospective discourse analysis of online *Yelp* reviews for Chinese restaurants, this study aims to identify what factors Americans believe are necessary for Chinese cuisine in America to be labeled as authentic. By exploring how the definition of authenticity is formed, a deeper understanding of social construction, consumer behavior, and modern cosmopolitan tastes can be achieved.

Literature Review

Factors that influence perceptions of gastronomical authenticity

In this literature review, a few major works examine the concept of ethnic cuisine authenticity within the context of online restaurant reviews. Akihiko Hirose and Kay Kei-ho Pih

develop the main conceptual framework for the literature on this topic with their scholarly article “Racialized Authenticity of Ethnic Food”. In their study, the authors investigate the subject of authenticity from the perspective of Japanese and Chinese restaurant reviews from the site *Sam*, examining the language and connotations present within the comments. Through a critical discourse analysis, Hirose and Pih identify key themes that contribute to common cultural definitions of gastronomic authenticity such as “history, ingredients, menus, clientele, ownership, practitioners, locale, décor, price, and simplicity” (Hirose and Pih 8). The authors postulate that claims to authenticity in East Asian gastronomic experiences revolve around the usage of a “racialized Orientalist narrative” (Hirose and Pih 1), advancing this notion of racialization when discussing ethnic cuisine.

Hyewon Youn and Jong-Hyeong Kim find a similar set of authenticity themes in their work “Effects of ingredients, names and stories about food origins on perceived authenticity and purchase intentions”. Youn and Kim discuss the effects of unfamiliar food-related attributes on customer authenticity beliefs, asking participants to answer questions regarding their familiarity with certain Chinese dishes. From their data, the authors come to the conclusion that unfamiliar ingredients, unique food names, and exotic stories about food origins can increase consumer perceptions of authenticity and desires to purchase the dish (Youn and Kim 16). These findings of Youn and Kim affirm the work of Hirose and Pih, confirming that perceptions of ethnic authenticity draw heavily from elements of the restaurant dining experience.

Other studies examine how this perceived gastronomic authenticity affects consumer purchasing behavior. In the article “Effects of ethnic authenticity”, SooCheong Jang et al. measure the impact of various dining factors studied by Hirose, Pih, Youn, and Kim on customer emotions and behavioral intention. Through the deployment of a demographically targeted web-based survey, Jang et al. found that “food quality, atmospherics, and the authenticity of Korean food and dining environments were significant factors that induced customers’ positive emotions at Korean restaurants” (Jang et al. 1000). The authors point out however that authentic environmental factors led to positive emotions alone, while authentic aspects of the food induced both positive emotions and a higher perceived value. Jang et al. thus call attention to the lack of research on the influential magnitude of each individual authenticity factor.

Hongbo Liu et al. further explore the subject of ethnic cuisine authenticity in relation to cultural familiarity and motivation in “The role of authenticity in mainstream ethnic restaurants”. In a case study of an independent, family-owned Italian restaurant, the authors present a clear evaluation of the relationships between perceived authenticity, value, quality, and behavior intentions that are analyzed in the work of Jang et al.. Their study reveals that “perceived overall authenticity positively influences diners’ perceived value, which in turn predicts diners’ behavioral intentions” (Hongbo Liu et al. 1047), a result that is consistent with Jang et al.’s study. However, in contrast to the findings of Jang et al., the authors instead assert that “environment authenticity is a stronger predictor than food authenticity, and food authenticity is insignificant in explaining overall authenticity perceptions” (Hongbo Liu et al. 1047). This discrepancy may be a result of cultural or status differences between the two types of restaurants analyzed.

Together, these studies present a strong argument for the intricate connection between the ideas of ethnic cuisine authenticity and race. The works of Youn and Kim, and Hirose and Pih display scholarly agreement on the various factors that influence perceptions of authenticity, while Jang et al. and Hongbo et al. both note the positive effects of authenticity. Additionally, the findings of these preceding works will be used to construct an extensive codebook for this present study. This current study will analyze authenticity factors suggested in previous studies, while potentially introducing new themes not mentioned before.

Cultural effects of ethnic cuisine authenticity

While the studies mentioned above examine the immediate effects of gastronomical authenticity, it is important to investigate the subject of authenticity from a macroscopic perspective as well. A large body of literature discusses the balancing act involved in marketing the authentic, its cultural implications, and the motivation for consuming the exotic.

Shun Lu and Gary Alan Fine first explain this balancing phenomenon in their article “The Presentation of Ethnic Authenticity”, in which the authors focus on the presentation of Chinese food in the context of a continual process of adaptation. Lu and Fine describe this assimilation and cultural modification of ethnic food as a “harmonization and compromise between

seemingly contradictory requirements: being authentic and being Americanized” (Lu and Fine 547). The authors argue that ethnic restaurants maintain a delicate balance between authenticity and familiarity as a strategic marketing tool, where clients are led to “believe that they have had an "exotic encounter," while keeping the experience within the boundaries of cultural expectations” (Lu and Fine 536). Lu and Fine thus introduce the idea of authenticity as a negotiable and fluid trait of ethnic cuisine.

Laurier Turgeon and Madeleine Pastinelli further elaborate on the role of ethnic restaurants in providing a comfortable yet unique experience to consumers, focusing on the cultural contacts in postcolonial Quebec City. In their journal article “Eat the World”, the authors explain that ethnic restaurants facilitate intercultural exchange and encounter, “in which the foreign is made familiar and the global miniaturized” (Turgeon and Pastinelli 247). Moreover, Turgeon and Pastinelli claim this cultural difference “has been commodified and consumed in more condensed and localized forms than ever before” (Turgeon and Pastinelli 263), where the consumption of ethnic food as a means to explore foreign cultures has been marketed as a tangible good.

In an attempt to rationalize this postcolonial restaurant trend, Nicolas P. Maffei sheds light on the connection between the idea of negotiated authenticity introduced by Lu and Fine and what he terms “cultural imperialism” (Maffei 211). In his retrospective observational study “Surveying the Borders”, Maffei analyzes the marketing of ethnic cultures through Mexican-American food packaging. The author presents evidence of ethnic consumption as a form of modern-day colonialism, suggesting that consumers engage “in a kind of ‘consumer colonialism’ when taking in exotic cultural products... without a substantial personal change. The colonizer’s empire expands while the threatening strangeness of the other is neutralized” (Maffei 219). Through drawing a parallel between ethnic authenticity and cultural imperialism, Maffei expresses the view that consuming ethnic cuisine has more hostile and selfish implications.

Drawing on the ideas of Maffei, Dylan Gottlieb delves deeper into the incentives behind encountering the exotic through ethnic food in his study “Dirty, Authentic...Delicious”. In the article, he largely replicates Hirose and Pih’s study and explores the motivation behind “naming

the authentic” (Gottlieb 39). Through an analysis of Yelp reviews for Philadelphia’s Mexican restaurants, he proposes that the search for authenticity has an important social function for consumers—to exhibit cosmopolitan tastes, claim cultural literacy, and display their mastery of a diverse food scene (Gottlieb 39). Gottlieb’s explanation confirms the claims of Maffei, indicating that the act of ingesting foreign cuisine is backed by the superficial incentive of self-validation and appearing culturally informed.

Collectively, the works of Lu and Fine, Turgeon and Pastinelli, Maffei, and Gottlieb form the basis of existing literature on the wider cultural effects of ethnic authenticity. These works demonstrate scholarly consensus on the cultural impacts of gastronomical authenticity and provide insight into how the social definition of authenticity is discursively constructed.

Significance and impact of online reviews

Finally, an examination of the influence online reviews hold is necessary to understand the language and experiences of reviewers when discussing authenticity.

In the article “The omnivore’s neighborhood?”, Sharon Zukin et al. examine the impact of online reviews on restaurant image and value. Through a rigorous content analysis of Yelp reviews for restaurants in various New York neighborhoods, Zukin et al. draw attention to the racially-embedded language reviewers use when describing the different neighborhoods and its contribution to “taste-driven processes of gentrification and racial change” (Zukin et al. 459). By looking for key terms that point to assumptions about the surrounding neighborhood, the authors recognize the large role online reviews play in discussing race, authenticity, and image.

Michael Anderson and Jeremy Magruder further emphasize the influence of internet restaurant reviews in their study “Learning from the crowd”. Through a regression discontinuity analysis of Yelp reviews and records of reservation availability, the authors discover that positive reviews equated with lower percentages of reservation availability and higher amounts of traffic to the restaurant (Anderson and Magruder 957). Anderson and Magruder thus assert the importance of restaurant reviews in informing consumers about product quality and the large influence reviewers have when sharing detailed accounts of their encounters with the exotic.

While all these mentioned works analyze the close relationship between defining authenticity and the racialization of these encounters, no study focuses solely on examining the authenticity of Chinese cuisine through the lens of Yelp. Additionally, existing literature on this topic lacks comprehensive research on the varying influential magnitude of each authenticity factor, failing to identify which factors are more important in creating perceptions of authenticity. This current gap in literature allows for further research into ethnic restaurants in locations that are cultural hubs. Through conducting a discourse analysis on Yelp reviews of Chinese restaurants in locations with densely-concentrated Asian populations, this study may further shed light on the processes of determining gastronomic authenticity and provide a deeper insight into modern cosmopolitan trends.

Method

Data source

In order to explore the various criteria that Americans believe constitute authenticity, I conducted a retrospective discourse analysis of the language Yelp reviewers used to discuss “authenticity”. Online restaurant reviews have had an undeniably large impact on the food and dining industry, with user ratings establishing the reputation and popularity of restaurants (Anderson and Magruder 983). The data for this present study have been collected from the popular site *Yelp*, which hosts reviews of various services provided by local businesses. *Yelp* is one of the most popular review sites on the market, garnering more than 36 million unique visitors to their mobile app every month and generating over 200 million cumulative reviews as of the fourth quarter of 2019 (“Fast Facts”). Being one of the most popular review sites, *Yelp* has the power to influence purchase decisions and consumer behavior, and offers users the ability to define the authenticity and quality of a restaurant.

Research on computer-mediated communication often faces issues relating to the reliability and validity of the data that stem from the anonymity of a virtual environment (Stewart and Williams 405). While there is no way to ensure the validity and legitimacy of these reviews, *Yelp* provides strict guidelines for reviewing restaurants. From the headings of

restaurant searches to small pop-ups on review pages, *Yelp* continually assures the viewer that businesses, while able to pay for advertisements, are unable to pay for the manipulation of their ratings and reviews (“Advertiser FAQ”). Additionally, to counter the usage of exaggerated, extreme, or fabricated reviews that may not accurately represent the reviewer’s experience, *Yelp* employs an automated recommendation software that removes any non-recommended reviews seeming fake, biased, or like an unhelpful rant (“Why would a review not be recommended?”). This study examines the recommended reviews displayed after filtering out the non-recommended reviews, operating under the assumption that these reviews present the true opinions of diners.

For the purposes of this study, an American is defined as any individual currently residing in or is a citizen of the United States. While it can be hard to definitively say that a given review is posted by an American, it can be reasonably assumed that international reviews account for a very small, if not non-existent portion of the total reviews on *Yelp*. According to multiple sources, *Yelp* has not had much success in international growth and has reportedly given up on its mission of global expansion in order to focus on solidifying a presence in America. While *Yelp* has a presence in 31 countries outside the U.S., it generated only 2.2% of its revenue from abroad in 2015 (Lauchlan), allowing us to assume that the majority of *Yelp* users are American.

Sampling method

The restaurants chosen for analysis were from the following three locations: New York City, New York (NY), Los Angeles, California (LA), and San Francisco, California (SF). These locations were selected for their large Asian American populations as of the most recent available 2018 data from the U.S. Census Bureau (“Public Use Microdata Sample”). Additionally, these cities are widely seen as Chinese cultural hubs with a highly-active and well-regarded Chinese culinary scene.

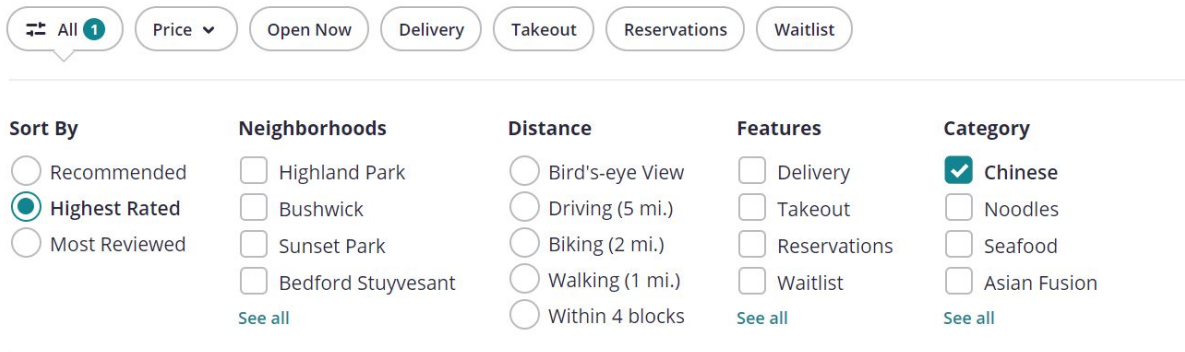


Figure 1. “Yelp filters.” *Yelp*, www.yelp.com/. Accessed 5 March 2020. Author’s screenshot.

Using the filters provided on *Yelp*, stratified sampling was employed to select restaurants from each location. Each stratum or location consisted of the top 5 highest rated restaurants, resulting in a data set of 15 different Chinese restaurants. These rankings were provided by *Yelp* and were accessed using the filters available on the website, as depicted in Figure 1. The recommended restaurants filter was not used, as the filter results were based on personal user information and search query (“How does Yelp determine its search results?”). The most reviewed restaurants filter was not used, since the restaurants featured tended to be trendy or “Asian Fusion” restaurants that may not represent the cultural roots of the community well. The Chinese category filter was selected to isolate the Chinese restaurants for analysis. Other Chinese-related category filters such as Dim Sum, Cantonese, and Szechuan were excluded for simplification purposes.

For each selected restaurant, reviews that featured or mentioned the word “authentic” were isolated using the review search bar. Of these reviews, the ones that did not point to any authenticity themes or factors were not used as data. Finally, the time frame of which the reviews were considered for analysis was 2015 to 2019. Reviews posted before January 1st, 2015 or after December 31st, 2019 were excluded from the data set to produce a definite time frame for analysis.

Coding

To identify the key factors and themes that reviewers believe signal authenticity, I used a coding scheme to analyze the language and words surrounding mentions of the term “authentic”.

The authenticity categories examined fell under two main themes suggested by SooCheong Jang et al.: environment authenticity and food authenticity. The themes, categories, and subcategories of authenticity that were analyzed are depicted in Figure 2. These categories were found in previous studies to influence consumer perceptions of authenticity and represented various elements of the restaurant dining experience.

Each of the smaller authenticity subcategories were measured for their frequency or how often they appeared within the reviews, and were only counted if the reviewer's language pointed to or suggested one of the themes. If a subcategory appeared more than once within a single review, it was only counted once. Additionally, notable authenticity categories that had not yet been introduced were added as the content analysis progressed. These new categories were sorted into a separate authenticity theme and were identified through recurring patterns and trends in the restaurant reviews.

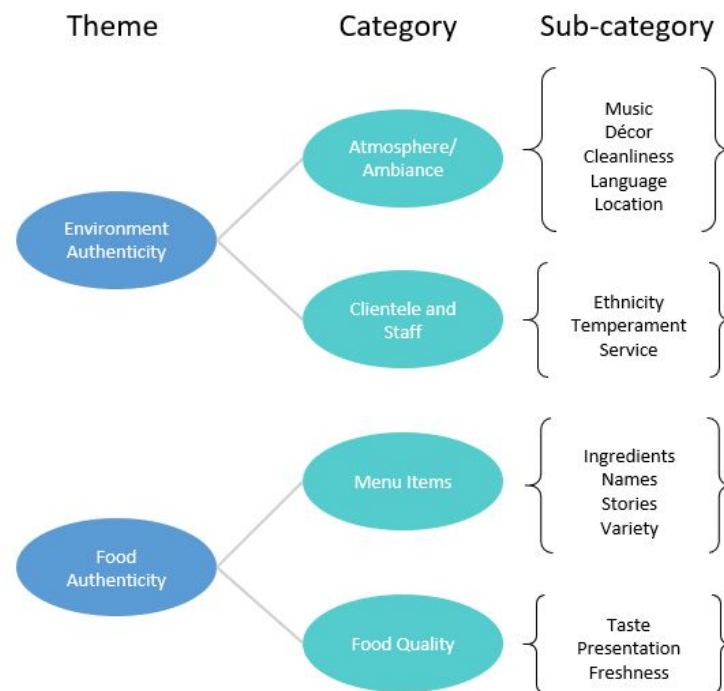


Figure 2. Organization of authenticity categories

Authenticity themes and categories were identified in the reviews using a mixed-method approach that combines qualitative and quantitative aspects of content analysis. On the quantitative side, code words were set to denote each subcategory to reduce text interpretation

and increase research replicability (see appendix). On the qualitative side, reviews were manually read to pick up on the connotations and hidden tone of the language. Both aspects work together to help identify the supposed source of authenticity, using the code words to quickly pinpoint themes and verifying their existence through a manual read of the text.

Results

A combined total of 8,570 reviews were available for analysis among the 15 Chinese restaurants chosen as of March 5th, 2020. Reviews that discussed authenticity constituted a small portion of the total reviews. After isolating the reviews that mentioned the word “authentic”, only 764 reviews (8.91%) remained. Of the 764 reviews that included the term “authentic”, 386 were used as data. The rest of the reviews were excluded from the data set, either because they did not mention any authenticity themes or were not posted within the designated time frame for analysis.

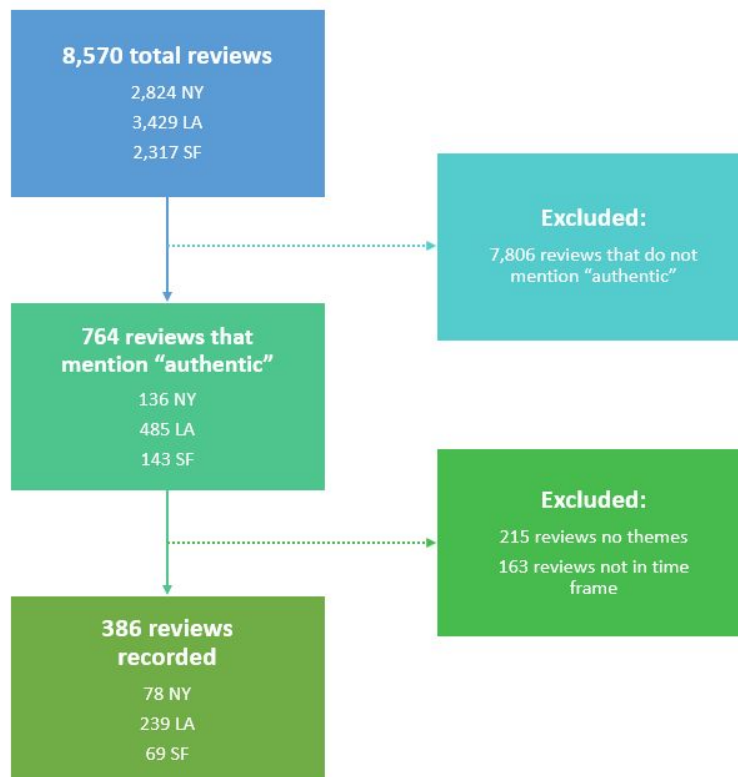


Figure 3. Review isolation process

The authenticity of ethnic food was defined as a measure of how closely cuisine accepted outside of its respective ethnic group resembled its origins. Figure 4 below provides a description or definition of each authenticity factor examined within the reviews. The subcategories with the word “new” next to them correspond to new authenticity factors that were added as the analysis progressed based on recurring trends and patterns.

Subcategory	Description
Music	The songs and ambient sounds played in the restaurant
Decor	The furnishing and decoration in the restaurant
Cleanliness	An estimate of a restaurant’s hygiene based on external appearances
Language	The language spoken in the restaurant
Location	The area or the neighborhood in which the restaurant is located in
Ethnicity	The social or cultural group that the people in the restaurant belong to
Temperament	One’s attitude or behavior in the restaurant
Service	The level and quality of assistance provided to the customers
Ingredients	The materials or substances used to create a dish
Names	The name by which a dish is referred to
Stories	The history or events behind the creation of a dish
Variety	The diversity of dishes available on the menu
Taste	The flavor, taste, or texture of the dish and how much it resembles the original
Presentation	The aesthetic, plating, and image of the food
Freshness	The quality of being recently made or pleasantly new
Nostalgia (new)	Personal associations with authentic elements based on past experiences
Credibility (new)	Personal qualifications to judge authenticity based on ethnicity or experience

Americanization (new)	Resistance or acceptance to/of assimilation into American taste and culture
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Figure 4. Subcategory definitions

For the contents of a restaurant review to be recorded as data, the review must have met the following three requirements: (1) mention the term “authentic”, (2) be posted within the chosen time frame, and (3) justify why the food was authentic or identify the source of authenticity (i.e. point to an authenticity theme). The following is an example of a review that did not meet the requirements for analysis:

“I stopped by here for a quick snack and ended up ordering a noodle dish. The food here is so delicious and authentic.”

While this review included the word “authentic”, the reviewer failed to explain why the food was authentic and what aspect of their experience led them to believe that they had an authentic meal.

Below is another review from the same restaurant that did meet the criteria for analysis:

“A beautiful little place with delicious authentic Yunnan noodle and small dishes. Bring me back to the street of Kunming.”

This review satisfied all the requirements to be considered for analysis, using the word “authentic” within the review and suggesting at least one of the authenticity factors being examined. In this case, the reviewer referred to the factor of nostalgia as a justification for the authenticity of the food, stating that consuming the dishes brought them memories of an authentic experience in Kunming, China.

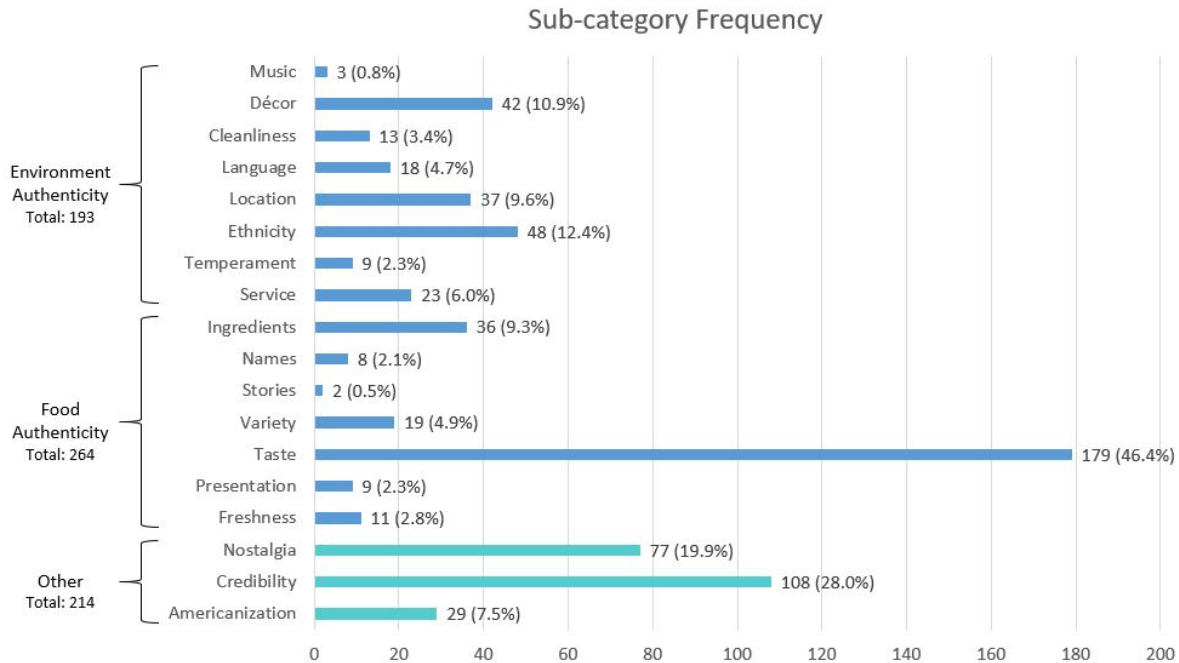


Figure 5. Category frequency chart

Figure 5 depicts the results from the data collected and displays the frequency of occurrence for each authenticity factor examined. Of the 386 reviews analyzed, the factor of taste was used the most often to justify authenticity, with 46.4% of the reviews describing the flavor and taste of the Chinese food as being on par with its original. Credibility was the second most used factor to identify cuisine authenticity, followed by nostalgia, clientele and staff ethnicity, and the décor of the restaurant. Furthermore, the dining elements of music played in the restaurant and the origin stories of dishes were the least integral for judging authenticity.

Summing together all the subcategory frequencies for each authenticity theme, factors relating to the environment were mentioned a total of 193 times, while factors relating to the food were used to justify authenticity a total of 264 times. This meant that aspects of the food were used 36% more as criteria for judging authenticity than aspects of the restaurant environment, suggesting that it was more influential in creating perceptions of cuisine authenticity.

Discussion

Environment Authenticity

One of the first aspects of the dining experience that customers encounter when they first walk into a restaurant is the environment or atmosphere of the establishment. These various environmental elements serve as stimuli for consumers to create preconceived ideas and quick judgements about the authenticity of their meal to come. Jang et al.'s study was the first to explicitly differentiate between environment and food factors, identifying characteristics such as service quality and atmospherics to be critical in producing perceptions of authenticity (Jang et al. 990). An in-depth examination of environment authenticity suggests that race and traditional atmospherics were key themes in determining gastronomical authenticity.

For many of the reviewers, traditional décor appeared to signal positive perceptions of authenticity and were used as the first indicator to make assumptions about the quality and credibility of the restaurant. One reviewer referred to ethnic decoration as central to capturing the authenticity of a cultural experience:

“I also wanted to point out the owner has a picture of her grandfather making noodles in Taiwan back in the 1960s , and the utensil holders they have on the tables are vintage tins from Taiwanese companies. Little attention to details like this really makes me appreciate this place as a Taiwanese - American because it's a fuse of who we are while maintaining some of the traditions and adapting the American culture.”

As such, traditional décor is seen as a way to experience cultural immersion, allowing the consumer to have a simulated encounter with the exotic. Additionally, restaurant décor that was not considered traditional or typical of a Chinese restaurant was regarded as a mark of Americanization, producing skepticism about the authenticity of the establishment:

“[The restaurant has] modern restaurant decor, which is something that lacks in many Chinese restaurants. Well, simply

because most Chinese restaurants don't really put a lot of thought into the design and flow of the restaurant. So for a second, I thought maybe this place wouldn't be authentic."

Moreover, a poor level of cleanliness in the restaurant denoted a high level of authenticity, where a lack of hygiene and fanciness comparable to the "typical" Chinese restaurant was used as a method to measure the authenticity of the experience:

"A little dirty? No problem. Usually the food more than makes up for it and for some reason authenticity seems to sometimes tie in more with a little ruggedness. Going to an Asian place that's super fancy or hipster always raises a couple red flags to me."

Reviewers often compared their dining experience to what they believed were the typical conditions of authentic Chinese restaurants—characterized by dirtiness, griminess, and simplicity—and used these characteristics as a benchmark for authenticity.

Additionally, criteria for authenticity often revolved around discussions of race and language, where a presence of Asian clientele and staff as well as spoken mandarin were regarded as signs of authenticity:

"This is a Taiwanese place for WHITE PEOPLE. The staff isn't asian. The patrons aren't asian. I should have known from all the white people inside that this place would be disappointing."

"You know it's pretty authentic when there's a line out the door and everyone is speaking Chinese. I think I was the only one that uttered a word of English the entire 15 minutes I was there, and there were at least 20 people going in and out of the tiny corridor that is this establishment."

Through the racialization of the people within the restaurant, their ethnicity and fluency in the ethnic language became the validating source of an authentic cultural experience.

Similarly, a generalized stereotype of the service and temperament of staff was used to produce a racialized narrative of the customer's dining experience. Reviewers argued that the

authentic Chinese restaurant experience is one of poor, unfriendly, and as one reviewer described it, “standoffish but well-meaning” service:

“Authentic places that serve this food usually have shitty service. This place I would give them 10 stars on service. It was so refreshing to go to a place where the service is top notch.”

As a result, reviewers often utilized stereotyped descriptions of Chinese restaurant staff as rude and unsophisticated as proof of an authentic dining experience.

Food Authenticity

Aspects of the food were also examined for their connection with notions of authenticity. Factors relating to food authenticity were derived from the experience of choosing and consuming the food itself, with the event of tasting ethnic cuisine serving as the perceived origin of authenticity. Similar to environment authenticity, generalized characteristics about race and Chinese restaurants were employed to dictate the authenticity of the food served.

Unsurprisingly, taste was the largest determinant of authenticity, where reviewers compared the flavor and texture of the food to an idealized authentic version that they had prior. Using their knowledge of the dishes, whether limited or extensive, reviewers identified the source of authenticity within the various components of the food, including the ingredients used to prepare the dishes:

“Every dish is made the same way we have in China, and the chef (2 ladies from Yunnan) do not compromise taste or materials. They offer fresh rice noodles, the right ingredients (nothing short from the original), and most importantly, the right flavors. That's the flavor of my hometown.”

Tying into the stereotyped dirty environment of an authentic Chinese restaurant, reviewers believed that poor dish presentation and freshness were indicators of an authentic Chinese meal:

“Eight Tables is one of our favorite fine dining experiences... Everything tasted very familiar and authentic but also presented beautifully which is very rare for Chinese cuisine.”

“Sadly, I'm sure most of us are all too familiar with that greasy "been-sitting-out-for-most-of-the-day-with-swarming-flies-like-it's-part-of-the-presentation" type of Chinese / Taiwanese food.”

Through implying that typical authentic Chinese food is characterized by mediocre plating and substandard freshness, reviewers reinforce the notion that the Chinese restaurant dining experience is unrefined and dirty.

Other authenticity factors

During the data collection process, new authenticity themes that frequently appeared were recorded as well to provide a more comprehensive and rigorous analysis of the reviewers' perspectives on authenticity. These new factors were featured in a significant portion of the reviews, demonstrating their importance and influential magnitude in fabricating perceptions of authenticity. Additionally, these authenticity factors employed narratives based on race and identity to appear culturally competent and display cosmopolitan tastes.

The factor of nostalgia played a large role in forming perceptions of authenticity and enhanced ideas about the quality and taste of the cuisine. Many reviewers recounted their experience of dining at the restaurants, noting that consuming the food evoked warm feelings of the past and drew out sentimental memories of a prior ethnic experience:

“I'm from Yunnan so I put a lot of expectation into my visit... This store is like the noodle shop in my town at home. And I will make this my new home away from home while I'm here.... This place brought me right home to my childhood.”

These strong feelings of nostalgia can most likely be attributed to the locations chosen for analysis that specifically targeted areas with a large Asian American population. As such, a majority of the presumed Asian patrons at the restaurants cited the ability of the food to conjure up childhood memories as a justification for their claims to authenticity. These nostalgic

memories often took the form of reminiscing about their mother's cooking or a remembrance of their hometown food.

Similarly, the new authenticity factor of credibility revolved around personal stories of an ethnic experience in order to elevate their status to a culturally-informed critic of authenticity:

"I was born in Taiwan so trust me when I say that this food is extremely authentic and tasty!" (1)

"To pull the obligatory card, my friend whose family is from Yunnan brought us here and vouched for it, and I'm quite glad she did." (2)

"Amazing, authentic Chinese food. It's my favorite by far in the city! I lived in China for 16 years, and Jiangnan Cuisine is on par or better than any of the food I had there." (3)

This authenticity theme typically operated around three different racial narratives depicted in the quotes above: (1) the reviewer claimed cultural literacy due to their own ethnicity, (2) the reviewer knew someone who was authentically ethnic, and (3) the reviewer had prior ethnic experience. These racial narratives were utilized to imbue the reviewer with qualifications for determining gastronomical authenticity, and were used frequently due to the high Asian American population in the selected locations.

Lastly, discussions about the Americanization of Chinese restaurants and the gentrification of Asian locales were deployed as a means to gauge levels of authenticity for each establishment:

"Joy's atmosphere brings to the area a dash of gentrification: chic and hip decor of exposed brick and hardwood floor adorned with traditional Asian trinkets. White enough to be cool, Asian enough to be exotic."

Restaurants that were identified as Americanized were criticized for "catering to the Caucasian palate", instilling the belief that they were inherently inauthentic. Additionally, some reviewers noted the delicate balance restaurants maintained between exoticism and familiarity in order to satisfy contrasting demographics.

Stereotyping the dining experience

The varied criteria of the Yelp reviewers suggests that claims to authenticity revolve around racialized narratives and generalized perceptions of an Oriental experience. Through the deployment of racial stereotypes, reviewers craft and contribute to the belief that the Chinese restaurant dining experience is unsophisticated, dirty, and exotic. These beliefs foster imagined expectations of authenticity, where prejudice regarding ethnicity dictate an individual's judgement of authenticity.

Josée Johnston and Shyon Baumann discuss the role of authenticity in valorizing ethnic cuisine in their study "Democracy versus Distinction", asserting that the idea of authenticity serves to bring value to cultural consumption. At the same time, authenticity implies the existence of exclusionary criteria that diminishes the value of inauthentic food to sustain status distinctions between highbrow and lowbrow culture (Johnston and Baumann 188). With the implementation of authenticity as a measure of exoticism, cultural consumption brings important social value in an era of cosmopolitanism. Now more than ever, the projection of authenticity onto food transforms ethnic cuisine into a gateway to an exotic experience, where authentic food is mass-consumed as a conceptual commodity (Chadwell 4).

Conclusion

Through a retrospective discourse analysis of Yelp reviews for Chinese restaurants, this study examined the various factors that contribute to perceptions of authenticity. The findings of this study not only advance scholarly understanding on how the American public defines gastronomical authenticity, but also addresses a crucial gap in prior research—the influential magnitudes of each authenticity factor. An analysis of the language Yelp reviewers use to describe authenticity revealed that aspects of the food were more influential in creating perceptions of authenticity than aspects of the restaurant environment, a result that confirms the findings of Jang et al. and contradicts that of Liu et al. Further research on the influential magnitudes of the factors is needed, given the relatively small sample size and selective method of this study. I recommend that future research should also examine how authenticity criteria

compares between various ethnic cuisines, due to the differing status distinctions of ethnic cultures in America suggested by Johnston and Baumann. Identifying these differences in cultural expectations will allow us to gain a deeper understanding of how authenticity operates in conjunction with racial stereotyping and provide a fuller picture of modern cosmopolitan ideologies in an era of globalization.

Appendix: Sample code words

Subcategory	Code words
Music	Song, music
Decor	Decoration, furnishing
Cleanliness	Clean, hygiene, dirty
Language	Mandarin, chinese, speak
Location	Chinatown, neighborhood, local, area
Ethnicity	Asian, Chinese
Temperament	Angry, rude, attitude
Service	Service, fast, wait
Ingredients	Ingredients, dish
Names	Name
Stories	Backstory, story, origins
Variety	Variety, choice, items
Taste	Traditional, authentic, taste, flavor
Presentation	Plating, decoration, presentation
Freshness	Fresh, new, hot
Nostalgia (new)	Remind, hometown, childhood, brings back
Credibility (new)	~
Americanization (new)	True to roots, catering to american palate

Note: No code words were set for the factor of credibility due to the large variation in language for that subcategory when discussing authenticity.

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Academic Paper

Note: Student samples are quoted verbatim and may contain spelling and grammatical errors.

Sample: D

Score: 4

“Not Asian Enough” Authenticity and Chinese Cuisine

This paper earned a score of 4. It identifies a clear purpose on page 1: “Through a retrospective discourse analysis of online Yelp reviews for Chinese restaurants, this study aims to identify what factors Americans believe are necessary for Chinese cuisine in America to be labeled as authentic.” It also engages with various scholarly sources about its topic on pages 2-4. In fact, this paper is an exemplar of a professional discourse: it places each expert voice in conversation with others and uses the professional conversation to explicitly, and logically, situate its research question in a clear gap, found on page 6: “Additionally, existing literature on this topic lacks comprehensive research on the varying influential magnitude of each authenticity factor, failing to identify which factors are more important in creating perceptions of authenticity. This current gap in literature allows for further research into ethnic restaurants in locations that are cultural hubs.” The paper also places its findings into conversation with previous research, as evidence on page 19: “An analysis of the language Yelp reviewers use to describe authenticity revealed that aspects of the food were more influential in creating perceptions of authenticity than aspects of the restaurant environment, a result that confirms the findings of Jang et al. and contradicts that of Liu et al.”

This paper didn’t earn a score of 3 because its method and rationale are well-described and defended (pages 6-9). The paper also shows a heightened awareness of the limitations of its approach, documented on page 6: “While there is no way to ensure the validity and legitimacy of these reviews, Yelp provides strict guidelines for reviewing restaurants.” Likewise, on page 19, the research states, “Further research on the influential magnitudes of the factors is needed, given the relatively small sample size and selective method of this study.”

The paper’s results fall short of the preponderance of evidence often found in papers that earn a score 5. This paper also didn’t earn a score of 5 as it does not address the implications of their findings. And while the limitations of the method are well documented, the limitations of their conclusion or new understanding is not. In fact, the convincing and well-written narrative beginning with its context and continuing through the literature review, methods, and results falls flat at the end. The paper’s conclusion ends abruptly.