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The Impact of Ethnic Restaurant Menu Visual Appeal and Informativeness on Customers' Desire to Order

Salman Alotaibi [a], Ahmed Alshiha[b]
[a,b] *Department of Tourism and Hotel Management, College of Tourism and Archeology, King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia*

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ABSTRACT

As restaurant menus play a critical role in customers' perceptions and behavioral intentions, this study examined the effect of ethnic restaurants' menus' visual appeal and informativeness on customers' perceived authenticity, quality, and desire to order. This study also examined the mediating role of the menus' informativeness between the menus' visual appeal and customers' perceived authenticity. Data were obtained from 416 customers who had visited an ethnic restaurant one month prior to the data collection. Based on the structural equation modeling results, this study found that only the menus' informativeness increased these customers' perceived authenticity. Also, the indirect effects of visual appeal on perceived authenticity through the menus' informativeness were discovered. Lastly, perceived authenticity is an antecedent of the customers' desire to order and perceived quality. These findings suggest that ethnic restaurants should carefully encourage customers to read the information provided in menus to positively increase their perception of authenticity. Theoretical and managerial implications are also provided.

Introduction

Customers' desire to dine out at an ethnic restaurant has increased as a way to have different experiences with different cultures. The primary goal for ethnic restaurants is to create an authentic dining experience for their customers (Ebster & Guist, 2005; Sukalakamala & Boyce, 2007). Scholars agree that perceived authenticity is a key factor that customers' use to evaluate an ethnic restaurant's authenticity (e.g., Liu & Mattila, 2015). Menus can be considered as the customers' first point of communication with the restaurants (Lee & Kim, 2020). According to Namkung and Jang (2007), the menu is an essential marker for authenticity because it works as a tangible cue for customers' perceptual assessment of the food before they consume it. Because the information that the menus contain can influence customers' perceptions, expectations, and behavioral intention (Magnini & Kim, 2016), it is important that

ethnic restaurants carefully engineer their menus by selecting effective pictures and good information to increase customers' positive perceptions (i.e., perceived authenticity and quality).

For ethnic restaurants, authenticity is a critical advantage for competition (Gilmore & Pine, 2007), and it is often used by customers to describe a service, product, or experience as something genuine, real, original, or true (Abarca, 2004; Taylor, 1991). Therefore, it is important to ensure every component of ethnic restaurants' atmosphere provides authenticity. To date, the literature has focused on menus as a tool to increase customers' intention to visit (i.e., Jang & Kim, 2015) or customers' satisfaction and repurchase decisions (i.e., Chu et al., 2014). Yet, no research has attempted to examine how menus' visual appeal and informativeness influence customers' perceived authenticity and how this perception could increase both customers' desire to order and their perceived quality.

Based on Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) Stimulus-Organism-Response model (S-O-R), this study tests a conceptual framework to predict customers' perceived authenticity, quality, and desire to order in ethnic restaurants. Although several hospitality scholars have studied menu designs in restaurants (e.g., Bowen & Morris, 1995; Hou et al., 2015), studies of the influence of ethnic restaurants' menus' visual appeal and informativeness on customers' perceived authenticity are scarce. The relationship between customers' perceived authenticity, their perceived quality, and their desire to order needs more insightful investigation. Thus, this study aims to examine 1) the influence of ethnic restaurants' menus' visual appeal and informativeness on customers' perceived authenticity. 2) the influence of customers' perceived authenticity on their perceived quality and desire, and 3) the mediating role of menus' informativeness on the relationship between menus' visual appeal and customers' perceived authenticity.

Literature Review

To achieve the purposes of this research, the literature on menus' visual appeal and informativeness, customers' perceived authenticity and quality, and customers' desire to order was reviewed. While various elements of ethnic restaurants contribute to customers' perception of authenticity (Chen et al., 2020), the influence of ethnic restaurants' menus' visual appeal and informativeness in shaping customers' perceived authenticity has received limited attention. Additionally, how customers' perceived authenticity increases their perceived quality and desire to place an order in ethnic restaurants needs more studies.

Based on Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) S-O-R model, the proposed model was developed to examine the relationships among visual appeal (S), perceived authenticity (O), and perceived quality (R), as well as the relationships among menus' informativeness (S), perceived authenticity (O), and perceived quality (R), along with how the visual appeal of a menu influences its informativeness. As noted by Mehrabian and Russell (1974), the S-R-O model was adapted from the theory of environmental psychology in which the stimulus (S) represents the environment, and the organism (O) reacts to specific elements of the stimulus to create an internal

evaluation that produces a specific response (R). This study is significant because it is needed to facilitate a more complete understanding of how menus could increase customers' perceived authenticity.

Menus' Visual Appeal

Menus' visual appeal is a critical component of the menus, and this study assumed that it is more likely to play a significant role in increasing customers' perceived authenticity of an ethnic restaurant. Menus' visual appeal has been widely researched. For example, Brewer and Sebby (2021) and Tonkin et al. (2019) found that menus' appeal influenced how consumers felt about the food they purchased. Choi et al. (2010) argue that menus can psychologically engage consumers' senses when they make food selections. Much of the research on this topic has focused on utilizing menus' visual appeal as a means to augment revenues from food purchases (i.e., Brewer & Sebby, 2021). Menus' visual appeal has been associated with perceived food quality as menus provide a benchmark for establishing customers' expectations for their dining experience (Lin et al., 2015). Verma et al. (1999) found that diners from certain cultures desire more visual stimulation in their menus than others to foster a desire to purchase a menu item. Visual appeal has been shown to exert a positive effect on experiential authenticity (Han, Yoon, & Kwon, 2021); however, the relationships among menus' visual appeal and customers' perceived authenticity have not been extensively delineated in the existing literature.

Menus' Informativeness

Menus' informativeness has also been investigated and utilized as a means for increasing revenues from food purchases (Brewer & Sebby, 2021). While menus' visuals provide an important stimulus to pique customers' curiosity and intention to purchase (Wyer et al., 2008), the descriptions of meals provided on menus can also have an impact on customers' purchase behavior (Peters & Remaud, 2020). Tuorila et al. (1994) indicated the way menus are used to present information can influence an individual's willingness to try novel foods. Studies have indicated that menus' informativeness can positively influence customers' purchasing decision-making (McCall & Lynn, 2008) and also work as a means for increasing restaurant sales (Wansink et al., 2001). Research regarding the relationships between menus' informativeness and customers' perceived authenticity in ethnic restaurants is limited. Thus, this study highlighted the influence of menus' informativeness on customers' perceived authenticity.

Menus' Visual Appeal and Informativeness

People are naturally afraid of, or hesitate to eat, unfamiliar food (Pliner & Hobden, 1992). Therefore, the visual appeal and informativeness of a menu provide important tools for increasing consumers' interest, desire, and decision to purchase (Hou, Yang, & Sun, 2017). Scholars indicated that pictures are more effective in drawing customers' attention, creating positive images, attitudes, and behavioral intentions (Hou et al., 2017). Also, when pictures are used in any advertising, messages are transmitted into cognitive and affective information (Park et al., 2008). Ethnic restaurants face the challenge of how to introduce the food and provide information that decrease customers' unfamiliarity with the ethnic food (Jang & Kim, 2015). This

study assumed that providing pictures in the menu was more likely to increase the menus' informativeness. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Ethnic restaurant menu visual appeal positively increases menu informativeness.

Menus' Visual Appeal, Informativeness, and Perceived Authenticity

Authenticity is defined as something that "is believed or accepted to be genuine or real" (Taylor, 1991, p. 17). Perceived authenticity has been widely examined in many contexts such as tourism (Zhang et al., 2021), advertising (Lawrence et al., 2013), philanthropic activities such as museums (Hede et al., 2014), media including reality television (Molleda, 2010), and ethnic restaurants (Liu et al., 2018). In each of these contexts, the concept of perceived authenticity is often juxtaposed against the assumption that this variable will influence consumers' behavior (Chen et al., 2020). More specifically, scholars have consistently argued that when customers' perception of authenticity increases, they are more likely to spend more (Park et al., 2016) and be relationally committed (Han & Lee, 2020) and loyal to the restaurant (Zhang et al., 2019).

For ethnic restaurants, the importance of customers' perceived authenticity has been extensively highlighted in the literature (i.e., Chen et al., 2020; Jang et al., 2011; Liu et al., 2018). To assess their perceived authenticity, customers rely on information about authentic ingredients (Cohen & Avieli, 2004). Customers' previous knowledge and experiences with ethnic cuisines positively influence their authenticity perceptions (Ebster & Guist, 2005). Also, Kim and Baker (2017) found information about food originality had a positive influence on customers' perceived food authenticity. Jang et al. (2011) stated that customers rely on written information as it is a critical factor in their interpretations of authenticity. Also, the influence of visual appeal on customers' perceived authenticity has not received enough attention from scholars. According to Jang and Kim (2015), customers are more likely to accept ethnic food when the menus include pictures and information about the items. Lastly, the mediating role of ethnic restaurants' menus' informativeness on the relationship between the menus' visual appeal and customers' perceived authenticity has not been studied before. This study assumes that pictures in ethnic restaurants' menus are more likely to influence customers' perceived authenticity only after they read the information about food items. Therefore, the following hypotheses were proposed:

H2: Ethnic restaurant menu visual appeal positively increases customers' perception of authenticity.

H3: Ethnic restaurants menu informativeness positively increases customers' perception of authenticity.

H4: Ethnic restaurant menu informativeness mediates the relationship between menu appeal and customers' perception of authenticity.

Perceived Authenticity and Desire to Order

Seeing food advertisements in the media or watching others eat increases individuals' desire to order food (Burger et al., 2011). What customers desire in the restaurant industry is typically viewed as a behavioral intention (Fidan et al., 2018). More

accurately, the desire to order is typically equated with the desire or intent to purchase, which has been more extensively investigated in the literature (Chung et al., 2017; Etemad-Sajadi, 2014). When the desire to purchase a product or service is high, the end result is an increase in customer demand that should ultimately lead to an increase in customer spending (Yim, 2017).

Increasing customers' desire to order or to purchase has been a consistent focus for businesses and marketing companies (Lee & Ferreira, 2011). Customers' desire to order can be influenced by price (Son & Jin, 2019), quality (Chiu, Liu, & Tu, 2016), and features of products or services (Lee & Ferreira, 2011). In the restaurant industry, the desire to purchase can also be influenced by numerous variables. Etemad-Sajadi (2014), for instance, argued that a restaurant's website can increase consumers' desire to purchase by generating interest in a unique and authentic dining experience. Sapic (2017) further argues that restaurants' environment or atmosphere can influence consumers' desire to purchase food. While extrinsic factors motivate consumers' desire to purchase, scholars have also argued that intrinsic factors such as individual values, wants, and needs can shape this desire to purchase (Chung et al., 2017). Customers' perception of authenticity influences their desire to purchase and, as demonstrated by Dammann et al. (2021), the perception of authenticity is often viewed as bridging intrinsic and extrinsic factors associated with individual desires. This study assumed that when customers perceived authenticity increased as a result of a menu's visual appeal and informativeness, their desire to order also increased. Thus, the following hypothesis was developed:

H5: Customers' perceived authenticity of an ethnic restaurant increases their desire to order.

Perceived Authenticity and Perceived Quality

Zeithaml (1988) defined perceived quality as "the consumer's subjective judgment about a product's overall excellence or superiority." Customers are more likely to rely on their perception of authenticity when making their quality judgments (Kovács et al., 2013). Broadly, scholars argue that "perceived quality" represents a bundle of attributes that, when combined, provide the customers with a sense that something is superior to similar products that are available for purchase (Snoj et al., 2004). Gaytán (2008) indicated that authenticity plays a significant role in customers' assessment of dining experience quality.

In the restaurant industry, Liu et al. (2018) found that customers' perception of authenticity of a restaurant's food and environment positively increased their perceived quality of restaurant's food and environment. In the ethnic restaurant context, Phung et al. (2019) found a positive relationship between customers' perceived authenticity and their perceived quality. Perceived authenticity has been associated with perceived quality with scholars noting that if a product is judged by a consumer to be authentic in terms of various attributes, then this will augment their perception of quality (Pelet et al., 2020). Although research regarding the relationship between perceived authenticity and perceived quality in ethnic restaurants is scant, the available evidence suggests that there is a linear correlation between these two

variables (Chen et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2017). In particular, scholars argued that perceived authenticity builds consumers' belief that the product and experience are of high quality (Chen et al., 2020). When customers' perceived authenticity is high, this typically leads to an increased level of perceived quality that the dining experience is truly unique, superior, and one that cannot be acquired elsewhere (Kim, Youn, & Rao, 2017). This study assumed that customers' perceived authenticity was more likely to increase their perceived quality. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed. Figure 1. shows the proposed conceptual model.

H6: Customers' perceived authenticity of an ethnic restaurant increases their perceived quality.

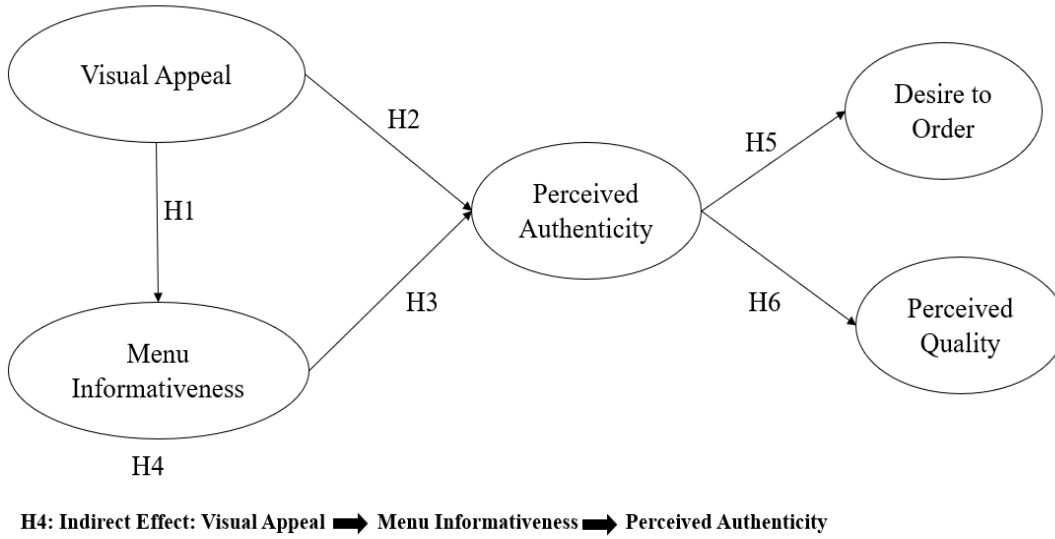

Fig.1. Conceptual framework.

Methodology

Sample and procedure

A cross-sectional research design was used. The target population was customers who were 18 years old or older and visited ethic restaurants within one month prior the data collection. This study selected the one-month period to minimize the respondents' recall bias for their previous visit (Indrayan, 2008). This study used Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) to collect the data. MTurk is known as an online platform that is used commonly in behavioral research (Goodman et al., 2013). To ensure data quality, two check-attention statements were used (e.g., You have to select agree for this statement, otherwise you won't move to the next question). Respondents who did not to pass the check-attention statements were excluded from final data analysis. Data were collected between May 2021 and June 2021.

Instrument development

The survey instrument contained three sections: screening questions, survey questionnaire, and questions to collect respondents' demographic information. The current study borrowed validated measurement items that were published in previous studies. To measure the menus' visual appeal, this study used five items borrowed

from Brewer (2017) and Montoya-Weiss et al., (2003). Menus' informativeness was measured by borrowing five items from Feldman et al., (2006). For the desire to order variable, seven items were adopted from Fedorikhin and Patrick (2010). Customers' perceived authenticity was measured by using five measurement items developed by Jang et al. (2012) and Liu et al. (2018). Lastly, perceived quality was measured by using four items borrowed from Ha and Jang (2010). A seven-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree) was used to measure all variables in this study.

Data screening

A total of 454 completed surveys were received. Out of the 454 surveys, 45 were removed (31 did not pass the check-attention statements and 14 did not visit an ethic restaurant within a month prior to data collection). Thus, 409 were used in the final data analysis. The sample size of this study was determined based on Baumgartner and Homburg's (1996) recommendation. Baumgartner and Homburg (1996) stated that the free parameters number can be utilized to determine the minimum sample size when structural equation molding is used. The proposed model of this study contained 76 free parameters. Thus, the minimum proper sample size for this study is 380 (76 × 5 = 380). To check the data normality assumption, the skewness and kurtosis values were checked. Skewness ranged between -0.564 and -1.056, and values of kurtosis ranged between 0.014 and 1.025. Therefore, based on the recommendation that Kline (2011) provided, the data distribution was within the acceptable range. To check multicollinearity, the variance inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance were checked (Neter et al., 1996), and it appear that multicollinearity was not an issue in this study. Lastly, histograms and a scatter plot matrix were used to examine the homogeneity and linearity of variance.

Data analysis

To explore the sample's characteristics and obtain descriptive statistics, SPSS v. 24.0 was employed. This study utilized the two-step process of structural equation modeling (SEM) that was recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988). Mplus v. 7.3 was used to test the structural proposed relationships. In the first step, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to assess if all measured variables were associated with the latent variables. Then, SEM was conducted (second step) to examine the proposed relationships. Also, to examine the reliability, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) were calculated. Lastly, to assess construct validity, the average variance extracted (AVE) was calculated.

Results

Respondents' profile

As shown in Table 1, 50.5% of respondents were male, while 49.5% were female. Regarding the ages, 59.8% of respondents were between 35 years old and 54 years old. In terms of education, the majority of respondents hold a bachelor's degree (54.6%). Most (57.8%) of the respondents made between $25,001 and $75,000. Lastly, the majority of respondents were married (66.8%). According to the demographic characteristics of this sample, it seems that this sample is normal and representative for the target population.

Table 1
Respondents' profile (*n=409*).

Variable	Frequency	%
Gender		
Male	207	50.5
Female	203	49.5
Age		
18-24	10	2.4
25-34	81	19.8
35-44	134	32.7
45-54	111	27.1
55-64	49	12.0
65 and over	25	6.1
Education		
Less than high school	7	1.7
High school diploma or equivalent	32	7.8
Some college	62	15.1
Bachelor's degree	224	54.6
Graduate degree	85	20.7
Income		
$25,000 and less	56	13.7
$25,001 to $50,000	119	29.0
$50,001 to $75,000	118	28.8
$75,001 to $100,000	71	17.3
$100,001 and over	40	9.8
Prefer not to disclose	5	1.2
Marital status		
Married	274	66.8
Widowed	6	1.5
Divorced	18	4.4
Separated	7	1.7
Never married	105	25.6

Measurement Model

CFA with maximum likelihood estimation was used to assess the proposed measurement model. The proposed model yielded an acceptable fit: χ^2= 1295.034, *df* = 289, p<0.001, RMSEA= 0.097, CFI = 0.856, TLI =0.846, SRMR = 0.062. In order to improve the model, the standardized factor loading and standardized residuals were checked based on Hair et al.'s (2006) recommendation. In this study, all measurement items were above 0.60 and in the acceptable range (Hair et al., 2006).

As shown in Table 2, all standardized loading for all factors ranged from 0.614 to 0.861. Additionally, all of Cronbach's alpha and composited reliability values were above 0.7, which indicated that the model's reliability was satisfactory (Hair et al., 2006). To assess construct validity, average variance extracted (AVE) was computed.

According to Fornell and Larcker, (1981), when all AVE values are above 0.70, construct validity will be achieved. In this study, all AVE values ranged from 0.63 to 0.52, which indicates that the construct's validity is not an issue. Composited reliability ranged from 0.81 to 0.91, which is above the cutoff point of 0.70 suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981). Lastly, the constructs of this study were positively associate at p <0.001, which indicates possible relationships among the constructs (see Table 3).

Table 2

Constructs' validity and reliability and Confirmatory factor analysis's results.

Variable	**Std. loadings**	**CR**	**AVE**	**Cronbach's Alpha**
Menu Visual Appeal		0.87	0.63	0.89
The way this restaurant displays its online menu is attractive.	0.804			
The online menu is visually appealing	0.861			
I like the look and feel of this online menu	0.779			
I like the layout of this online menu	0.727			
I like the graphics of this online menu.	0.737			
Menu Informativeness		0.83	0.50	0.83
The way this restaurant displays its online menu is informative.	0.721			
The menu provides a good description of the food being offered	0.785			
The menu provides clear details about ingredients and food preparation methods.	0.689			
The menu provides potential diners with a comprehensive picture of the food being offered	0.689			
The menu provides enough details for me to decide whether the food being offered would be a good fit for my appetite.	0.674			
Desire for Food		0.91	0.59	0.91
I feel hungry after viewing the restaurant's menu.	0.704			
The menu made my mouth water.	0.783			
The menu made me desire for the food.	0.750			
While I was viewing the menu, I began to salivate.	0.776			
felt an impulse to eat the food after I saw the menu.	0.760			
When I saw the menu, I felt a desire to grab and eat the food.	0.833			
I felt a strong irresistible urge to eat the food when I saw the menu.	0.795			

Continued

Perceived Authenticity		0.86	0.55	0.86
I perceived the presentation of the food as authentic	0.767			
I perceived the taste of the food as authentic	0.784			
I perceived the menu/name of dishes as authentic	0.748			
I perceived the cooking/recipes of dishes as authentic	0.765			
Overall, I think this food truck was authentic	0.657			
Perceived Food Quality		0.81	0.52	0.81
I think the food had good taste	0.735			
I think the food had good portion	0.780			
I think the restaurant has variety of food	0.756			
I think the food has healthy food options	0.614			

Note: * denotes the dropped items.

Structural Equation Modeling

The SEM's results (See Figure .2) indicate that the model has an acceptable fit χ^2= 1237.93, *df* = 269, p<0.001, RMSEA= 0.099, CFI = 0.862, TLI =0.846, and SRMR = 0.063. The results of the proposed hypotheses indicate that, when customers perceived a menu as having visual appeal, that positively increases their perception of the menu's informativeness. Therefore, H1 is supported (β= 0.887, p< 0.05). Visual appeal did not influence customers' perceived authenticity (β= -0.236, p> 0.05). Therefore, H2 is not supported. Menus' informativeness has a significant positive influence on customers perceived authenticity (β= 1.165, p< 0.05). Hence, H3 is supported. For the mediation effect of menus' informativeness on the relationship between visual appeal and perceived authenticity, the results indicate a full indirect mediation of menu informativeness (β= 1.034, p< 0.05). Therefore, H4 is supported. Desire to order (β= 0.772, p< 0.05) and perceived quality (β= 0.949, p< 0.05) are increased by customers' perceived authenticity. Therefore, H5 and H6 are supported.

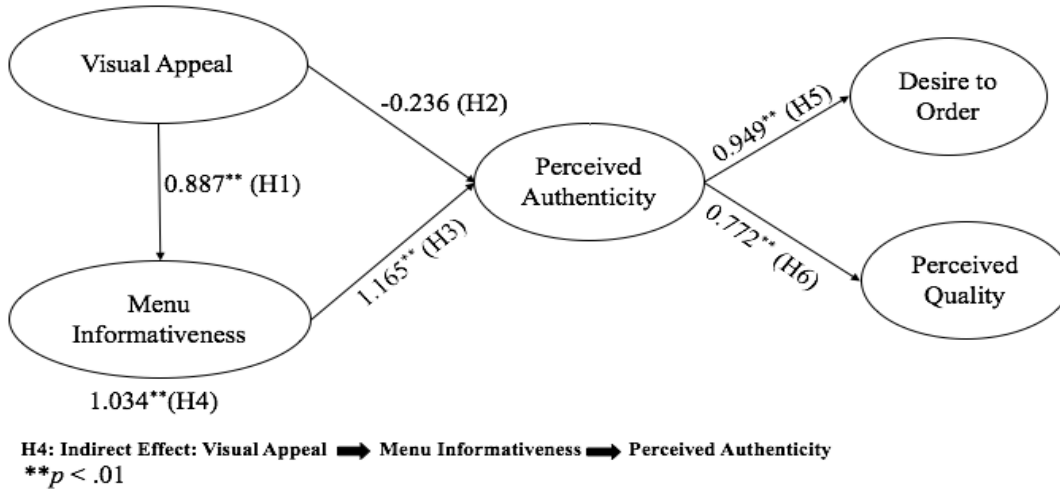

Fig. 2. The Results of Structural Model.

Table 3
Correlation's matrix and descriptive statistics (*n = 409*)

Construct	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Visual Appeal	5.47	0.96	**1**				
2. Menu Informativeness	5.43	1.00	0.762**	**1**			
3. Perceived Authenticity	5.63	0.98	0.675**	0.785**	**1**		
4. Perceived Quality	5.70	0.93	0.647**	0.755**	0.778**	**1**	
5. Desire to Order	5.23	1.17	0.618**	0.686**	0.674**	0.599**	**1**

Discussion

This study aimed to examine how ethnic restaurants' menus' visual appeal and informativeness increase customers' perceived authenticity and, ultimately, their perceived quality and desire to order. Additionally, this study investigated the mediation effect of ethnic restaurants' menus' informativeness between the relationship between menus' visual appeal and perceived authenticity. This study's findings indicated that ethnic restaurants' menu's visual appeal increased the extent to which customers perceived menus as providing enough information. While previous studies found that both menus' visuals (Wyer et al., 2008) and the information provided can influence customers' behavioral intentions such as intention to purchase (Peters & Remaud, 2020), there is little empirical evidence showing how the menus' visual appeal increases customers' perception of menus' informativeness. It is therefore critical to design a menu that increases customers' desire to eat ethnic foods by providing useful information about the items (Bowen & Morris, 1995). This study added new knowledge by highlighting the importance of selecting the appropriate menu visuals in ethnic restaurants as they positively increase customers' perception of menus' informativeness.

The literature indicated that customers' perceived authenticity can be influenced by many variables such as ingredients and food names (Youn & Kim, 2017), employees' names (Kim & Baker, 2017), and restaurant theme (Song, Phan, & Kim, 2019). Although menu design as a topic has been discussed in the restaurant literature (Baiomy, Jones, & Goode, 2019), little attention has been paid to the influence of ethnic restaurants' menus' visual appeal and informativeness on customers' perceived authenticity. The importance of visual and written information in understanding the impact of consumers' selections has been documented in the literature (e.g. Tuorila et al., 1994, Sojka & Giese, 2006). The results of this study indicated that only ethnic restaurants' menu' informativeness increased customers' perceived authenticity, while menu visuals had no influence on customers' perceived authenticity. One possible explanation for this finding is that customers don't rely on pictures to make their judgment of authenticity. However, the written information in menus that provides more details about the ingredients or the way the food is cooked by local people does increase customers' perceived authenticity. This finding is consistent with previous research where Kim and Baker (2017) and Jang et al., (2011) found that information provided to customers positively influences perceived authenticity. Also, Cohen and Avieli (2004) found that customers rely on information about authentic ingredients to assess their perceived authenticity.

This study hypothesized that ethnic restaurants menus' ethnic informativeness mediates the relationship between menus' visual appeal and customers' perceived authenticity. This finding implies that when customers see menu pictures and then read some information about the meal items or ingredients, their perceived authenticity is more likely to increase. One possible explanation is that, because customers are not familiar with the ethnic food that ethnic restaurants provide, it would be hard for customers to rely only on pictures to make authenticity judgments. Rozin and Vollmecke (1986) indicated that individuals' fear or are reluctant to try unfamiliar or novel foods. Therefore, customers of ethic restaurants need more than pictures to make their evaluation of authenticity.

Perceived authenticity is a critical feature of ethnic restaurants (Kim & Jang, 2016). Therefore, as hypothesized, perceived authenticity is an antecedent of customers' perceived quality and desire to order. Previous studies found that perceived authenticity is a motivator to increase customer spending (Park et al., 2016). Thus, the more customers perceive ethnic restaurant as being authentic, the more desire they would have to order. Also, the findings indicated that when customers perceive an ethnic restaurant as authentic, they would also perceive the restaurant and the food as high quality. This finding is consistent with previous studies that found that perception of authenticity often drives quality judgements (Kovács et al., 2013) and does play a role in shaping the customers' assessment of dining quality (Gaytán, 2008).

Theoretical implications

This study yields some important theoretical implications. First, the relationship between menu appeal and menu informativeness has received limited attention. Therefore, this study contributes to the existing knowledge by showing that visual appeal in ethnic restaurant menus does increase customers' perception of the effectiveness of the information the menus contain.

Second, this study contributes to the existing literature by highlighting the full mediation effect of ethnic restaurants' menus' informativeness on the relationship between visual appeal and perceived authenticity. Such findings indicated that, when customers see pictures and other visual appeals in the menu, their evaluation of authenticity will be based only on the information they read.

Third, the relationship between customers' perceived authenticity, their desire to order, and perceived quality has received limited attention in the existing literature. Therefore, this study theoretically contributed to the ethnic restaurant literature by uncovering the relationship between the abovementioned variables. When customers perceive an ethnic restaurant as authentic, their desire of ordering increases as does their perceived quality.

Practical implications

This study provided several practical implications. First, ethnic restaurants' customers may have different levels of familiarity with these restaurants. Therefore, in order to positively manage customers' perception of authenticity, ethnic restaurant owners or managers need to design their menus with the right visual appeal and information and

encourage customers to read the provided information. Based on the study's finding, pictures alone do not influence customers' perception of authenticity. However, when customers see pictures of food items and then read information about the items, their perceived authenticity increases.

Second, using this study information helps managers to design the best menus for ethnic restaurants that increase customers' authenticity perception, which ultimately increases their desire to order and their perceived quality.

Third, although this study focuses on the written information in ethnic restaurants' menus, managers should train and encourage their employees to provide verbal information about food ingredients to customers during their interactions.

Limitations and Future Studies

This study has several imitations. This study utilized a convenience sampling of customers who had visited ethnic restaurant before. Therefore, the results of this study cannot be generalized beyond the target population. For future studies, it is recommended that data be collected from real settings and that the results be compared with the current study results. Also, it is recommended that future studies replicate this study by using it experimental research design to control the visual appeal and the informativeness of the menus.

This study tried to minimized the potential recall bias by recruiting respondents who had visited an ethnic restaurant within one month before the data were collected. Yet, the recall bias cannot be completed eliminated. Thus, this study recommends future studies to collect data right after customers are done with their dining experience in ethnic restaurants. Additionally, this study did not explore how demographic differences in the sample could influence the results. Future studies should determine how variables such as race, gender, or age impact proposed hypotheses. Lastly, this study focuses on the written information in menus. Therefore, for future studies, it would be interesting to examine the verbal information employees provide to customers during their interactions. Lastly, this study recommends future studies to explore the mediation role of perceived authenticity on the relationship between visual appeal, informativeness and customers intention to order and perceived quality.

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تأثير الجاذبية المرئية والمعلوماتية لقوائم المطاعم العرقية على رغبة العملاء في الطلب

سلمان العتيبي وأحمد الشيحة

قسم السياحة وإدارة الفنادق، كلية السياحة والآثار، جامعة الملك سعود

معلومات المقالة

الكلمات المفتاحية

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الملخص

نظرًا لأن قوائم المطاعم تلعب دورًا مهمًا في تصورات العملاء ونواياهم السلوكية، فقد اختبرت هذه الدراسة تأثير المظهر المرئي لقوائم طعام المطاعم العرقية ووفرة المعلومات على تصور الزبائن لأصالة وجودة الطعام ورغبتهم في الطلب. تناولت هذه الدراسة أيضًا اختبار الدور الوسيط لوفرت المعلومات في قوائم الطعام في العلاقة ما بين المظهر المرئي للقوائم وتصور الزبائن للأصالة. تم الحصول على البيانات من 416 زبون زاروا مطعمًا عرقيًا قبل شهر واحد من جمع البيانات. باستخدام نمذجة المعادلات الهيكلية، وجدت هذه الدراسة أن وفرت المعلومات قوائم الطعام فقط هي التي زادت من تصور العملاء لأصالة الطعام المقدم في المطعم. أيضًا، تم اكتشاف التأثير غير المباشرة للمظهر المرئي لقوائم الطعام على الأصالة المتصورة من خلال وفرت المعلومات في القوائم. أخيرًا، عندما يكون تصور العملاء عن أصالة المطعم عالية، تزيد رغبتهم في الطلب ويزيد تصورهم أن المطعم يقدم طعام ذو جودة عالية. تشير هذه النتائج إلى أن المطاعم العرقية يجب أن تشجع العملاء بعناية على قراءة المعلومات المقدمة في القوائم لزيادة إدراكهم للأصالة بشكل إيجابي. أخيراً هذه الدراسة قدمت تطبيقات نظرية وتطبيقية.