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Exploring the Culinary Experiences of Diners at Pop-up Restaurants

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Introduction

In recent years, novel and innovative ways to accommodate diners and visitors' desire for new experiences have been emerging (Niehm et al., 2006). Pop-up restaurants are indicative of this growing trend to provide an appealing combination of experiences and food. Considering the temporary nature of pop-up restaurants, it is important to understand diners' perceptions regarding multi-dimensions of pop-up dining experience compared to traditional dining in normal restaurants. This poster presentation will discuss the role of the self, food, place, context, and time as multiple dimensions of a pop-up restaurant dining experience (Kaupinnen Raisanen et al., 2013).

Literature

Academic research on pop-up restaurants have been scarce; however, this study builds upon prior research on food service, tourism and hospitality disciplines. Mak, Lumbers & Eves (2011) conceptualized tourists' dining behavior within a two-dimensional framework presenting the 'symbolic' nature of food versus the 'obligatory' nature of food which makes a division between the two categories of eating tendencies: neophilia vs. neophobia (Pliner & Hobden, 1992).

Research is needed to understand pop-up diners dining behavior in terms of both food and experience based on these categories. This research considers both visitors and residents categories due to the inclusive groups of diners to pop-up restaurants. Pop-up restaurants' specific feature is their temporary nature. They emerge at a temporary place within a temporary period of time. The Mehrabian-Russel model (1974) provides a theoretical explanation for the effects of physical environmental stimuli on human behavior which can be characterized by three dimensions: pleasure, arousal, and dominance. This research will provide insight into the effects of the place and context dimensions of pop-up restaurants on diners' experiences compared to other experiential settings. The study will also investigate how diners' value their eating experience in the temporary setting of pop-up restaurants based on the dimensions of 'Experiential Value' conceptual model (Mathwick et al., 2001). This study proceeds to investigate the pop-up dining experience with a holistic approach, considering multi-dimensions of eating experience in the innovative setting of pop-up restaurants.

Methods

This study takes an interpretive phenomenological approach using interview and thematic analysis as qualitative methods. The research aims to get a deep understanding of diners' perceptions about various aspects of their pop-up dining experiences. Semi-structured in-person or telephone interviews with open-ended questions will be conducted which are expected to take approximately 45-minutes. The participants will include 15-20 (above 18-year old) individuals with a variety of characteristics including males, females, visitors, and residents who have the experience of dining in a pop-up restaurant within Canada during the last recent year. Thematic Analysis will be conducted for analyzing the data using NVivo 12 Pro software.

Implications

This research is intended to provide insight about the multi-dimensional nature of eating experience in a pop-up restaurant from the diners' perspectives. While the research is still in progress, the 3 conceptual models mentioned above will be presented and findings from preliminary interviews will be used to provide evidence to work towards integrating the models or suggest new directions for the existing models. The findings of this study will further the literature on food services and tourists' experiences by considering individuals' experiences in the 'temporary setting of pop-up restaurants' which has not been studied thoroughly in previous academic research. From a practical standpoint, this study concentrates on each individual's detailed perceptions and expectations of the positive and negative aspects of their dining experience which helps the restaurants operators to better understand how their customers perceive the whole quality of dining environment in pop-up restaurants.

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