



University of
Massachusetts
Amherst

Old Food was Never Better: Augmenting event authenticity at a medieval festival

Item Type	pap_emp;event
Authors	Robinson, Richard N.S.
Download date	2025-03-21 04:57:09
Link to Item	https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14394/42604

OLD FOOD WAS NEVER BETTER:

AUGMENTING EVENT AUTHENTICITY AT A MEDIEVAL FESTIVAL

INTRODUCTION

Food and beverage (F&B) service within the tourism industry has been a topic of much scholarly attention. Food provision and service can influence intention to visit destinations and events and even shapes a visitor's daily itinerary (Kivela & Crofts, 2006). Various studies have measured the foodservice expenditure of tourists. The general consensus is that upwards of 25% of visitor expenses are attributable to F&B (e.g. Hall & Sharples, 2003) and perhaps much higher in certain niche markets. More than this, food consumption is not only a means of generating revenue, but is also an integral part of the overall tourist experience (Hjalager & Richards, 2002). Reasonable evidence suggests that the provision of well-designed F&B services can enhance visitor satisfaction by creating more distinct and memorable experiences (Beer, 2008).

In contrast to the hospitality and catering sectors of tourism, where eating and drinking are the core products, foodservice appears to play a less central role in the events sector. Catering at these events could be viewed as largely a secondary activity. From a marketing perspective, foodservice in these situations is considered an augmented product (Kotler, 1994), or one that supplements and adds value to the core product, which in the case of a festival is the provision of environs and artefacts for the entertainment of visitors.

The literature suggests that the provision of a perceived authentic experience can increase visitor satisfaction with a product, whether that is a destination, an event or a consumable product like food or drink. As Pine and Gilmore explain, "while

commodities are fungible, goods tangible and services intangible, experiences are memorable” (1999:11). There is, however, a gap in research of the connection between event visitor satisfaction and the provision of F&B services in an authentically recreated heritage or historical context. As there is a current proliferation of tourism destinations and special events that ‘trade’ in (visitor perceived) authentic experiences and products, further research can make a timely and significant contribution - both practical and theoretical.

LITERATURE REVIEW

For tourism and special events studies, authenticity is a contentious issue. Theoretical developments in the literature widely reject the rigid cultural critique of ‘staged’ authenticity perspectives (e.g. Baudrillard, 1983; Boorstin, 1964; MacCannell, 1973; Urry, 1990). Rather than authenticity being a scientific or historical ‘artefact’ current thinking is that tourists/ event visitors actively construct their own meanings in relation to various environmental factors. This position on perceived authenticity holds that meanings are related to experience, rather than to the authenticity ascribed to objects by ‘experts’. This is labelled the ‘existential’ or activity-related approach (e.g. Kim & Jamal, 2006; Peterson, 2005; Reisinger & Steiner, 2005; Uriely, 2005; Wang, 1997). Although acknowledging a multiplicity of perspectives and theoretical positions, which are debated in the literature *vis-à-vis* authenticity, this study is grounded in the existential approach. This maintains that an individual’s perception and interpretation (of authenticity in this case) is privileged, however those perceptions have been formed, or are indeed judged.

In the context of events, some research has investigated the notion of authenticity. Indeed, Getz advocates this approach: “authenticity can be considered as a part of the event product, because it is something that can motivate certain tourists,

and it is a benefit that can at least be partially controlled by organizers” (1994: 316). Yet the role of F&B provision in augmenting the authenticity of a special event remains relatively unexplored, despite at least one study suggesting that over 60% of visitors find (what they perceive as) authentic food an “important [event] feature” (Chhabr, Healy & Sills, 2003:712).

Existential approaches for investigating the authenticity of visitor experience, generically, are not supported by much empirical work (Kim & Jamal, 2006). Moreover, despite the fact that there is some literature that links the perceived authenticity value of F&B services to event success (Chhabra et al., 2003), there is a lack of empirical evidence for this proposition. Furthermore, how event organisers and other event stakeholders try to control the perceived value of authenticity for F&B service is not well understood. Finally, tools to measure the benefits of authenticating F&B services - whether for event organiser/ stakeholder profitability, visitor satisfaction, repeat visitor indicators and destination attractiveness - are few.

The general aim of the study is to investigate the impact of authenticating agents or dimensions during foodservice on the experience of attendees in historically presented leisure settings. It adopts a theoretical framework drawn from the study of authenticity. At least in the retail domain, research has shown that perceptions of F&B products as authentic elevates their value for the consumer (Groves, 2001). Groves (2001:246) states that “the authenticity of foods... is frequently used to refer to a genuine version of a product in relation to a specific place, region or country”. Previous research has identified what the (British) consumer perceives as the markers of authenticity for food. Kuznesof, Tregear and Moxey (1997) identify three kinds of factors: physical, situational and personal. Physical markers include naming, labelling and packaging. Situational factors, pertinent to this study, include the presence of

tourists or visitors at the locale in question, and the presence of commercial catering or retailers. The personal factors relate to personal individual awareness and their knowledge. Groves (2001) also listed five dimensions of authenticity, based on the perceptions of primary household food purchasers. These are set out in Table 1.

Table 1. Dimensions of authentic British food products

<i>Dimensions of authentic British food products</i>	<i>Definition of dimension</i>
1. Uniqueness [to Britain]	Originally grown, reared or manufactured [in Britain]
2. Cultural and/or traditional	Presence over time association
3. Characteristics of the production process	A natural, or the original production process
4. The presence of an authority	The assurance of authenticity from a trusted body
5. Desired extrinsic attributes	Dependent on individual's own criteria for specific extrinsic attributes instincts

Source: Groves (2001:252)

These findings build on the earlier study by Kuznesof et al. (1997) in several ways. Brands with some heritage are afforded higher authenticity status. Favourable images of authenticity are also augmented by the perceived endorsement, or association with, an authoritative source. These two perceived dimensions of authenticity appear to share a basis of process. That is, the authenticity of a product is acquired over a period of time, be it through brand value or authority, which is generally acknowledged by the trust of the buyer. This is a process in itself.

Significantly, Groves (2001) finds that a perception of authenticity is matched by an expectation that a premium can be charged for the product. By the same argument though, there is an expectation that the price is matched by standard – of quality and taste and, pertinently here, the experience. The authenticity of the whole

dictates the perception of the authenticity of F&B. Therefore, though it is argued that authenticity is as much about the process as the outcome/ encounter, we maintain that in the context of this research it is the final consumption experience – in this instance at a special event. Hence, the key research questions for this study address:

- What are the perceived agents or *dimensions* of authenticity for F&B services at a special event?
- Do these authenticating agents of F&B services affect *visitor satisfaction*?

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

A US-based register for medieval, renaissance and historic festivals lists 165 annual events in the United States alone, and several major medieval festivals in Australia including the Abbey Medieval Tournament (Renaissance Festival, 2009). To varying degrees, these festivals embrace role-playing through costuming and the creation of a medieval ambience with props, participatory events and the like. Research suggests a prime motivator for attendees is to engage in a temporally and spatially distant experience that they otherwise could only read about (Pennington-Gray, Setton & Holdnak II., 2002).

On the supply side, various event industry motivators have been suggested. It has been argued that motivators for event organisers, or at least stakeholders within these organisations, are to promote modern national identity and heritage through a period reconstruction (Ganim, 2002). Moreover, it has been suggested that a calendar of events might form a marketing strategy for a wider tourism destination (Gonzalez & Medina, 2003).

Medieval festivals have attracted academic interest as a context for serious historical research (Callow, 2006). Tourism researchers have appropriated medieval festivals as a milieu for theory building, particularly for understanding the nexus

between global and individual issues in the context of heritage reconstructions (Jamal & Kim, 2005). The literature on F&B service at medieval festivals is scanty. References range from how revellers delight in “gorging on vampireburgers” (Chelminski, 2003:113), to the marketing of F&B services to the perceived tastes of the market niche who attend, regardless of authenticity. Clearly, a focus on F&B service to examine this phenomenon, is justifiable.

This current study investigates F&B service and consumption in the context of a staged Australian heritage event, the Abbey Museum Medieval Festival. About one week before the tournament weekend itself a Medieval Banquet is held. These events take place annually, usually in early July. First held in 1988, it has become a major festival for the Shire of Caboolture (now by incorporation in the Shire of Moreton Bay), about 50 kilometres north of Queensland’s state capital, Brisbane. Although Australia, which was first settled by Europeans in 1788, has no medieval heritage, the population is largely Anglo-Celtic, with other resident communities of European ancestry. Nonetheless, the Festival has a unique and intriguing history, tied to the Abbey Museum and its founding community, which must be understood to contextualise this research.

Abbey Museum is the legacy of Rev. John Ward, an enigmatic British cleric, scholar and archaeological hobbyist. After undergoing a spiritual experience, he established a monastic community and a working recreated folk village north of London in 1934 which exploited his ever-growing collection of artefacts and antiquities. Various factors caused the closure of the village in 1940 and a destitute Ward and his loyal followers were forced to leave England at the end of the Second World War.

Subsequently, his community endured a period of uncertainty, which involved residence in Cyprus, where Ward died, Egypt and Sri Lanka. Ward's followers arrived in Sydney, Australia, in the mid-1950s and finally founded the St Michael's monastic community at its current home in the late 1960s. This was a period of extreme hardship, dislocation and insecurity for the community and resulted in much of the collection's finest assets being sold off. Nevertheless, in 1978 the community decided to embark on an ambitious project to build a museum so the remaining collection could be safely housed and made accessible to the public. With the assistance of various foundations, government schemes and local support, the Abbey Museum was opened in 1986.

In 1988, the inaugural Abbey Medieval Festival was staged. Its primary mission was to raise funds for the Museum, but there were two secondary, but critical aims. The first was to raise publicity and awareness for this collection, which unlike most public collections was not funded, administered, maintained, developed or marketed at the taxpayers' expense. This resulted in some scepticism amongst the public regarding the authenticity of the collection. For this reason, the Abbey leaders developed a charter that set strict guidelines for the festival participants including re-enactors, performers, volunteers and various 'merchants and artisans'. Included, of course, were F&B stallholders. This imperative for authenticity became more important as the Abbey Museum was able to secure contracts with the Queensland Government for educational programs. In this light, the other secondary aim of the festival was the hope that the general public would positively associate the authenticity of the festival and the museum collection.

In 2007, the festival attracted around 18,500 participants, including medieval hobbyists and a large contingent of re-enactment groups and visitors (Abbey Museum,

2009). Besides being recognised as the “most prestigious festival of its kind” by various Australian living history groups (Abbey Museum, 2009), significantly for this study, it is also judged the most authentic such festival in Australia, and among the ten most authentic internationally (Abbey Museum, 2009). It should be noted, though, that the designated medieval time period of 600-1600AD gives some latitude for the interpretation of what is authentic.

In 2006, the festival incorporated several events in a week long format. Apart from a number of promotional events, workshops and themed evening pastimes, there were three key Medieval Festival events. They were the main Abbey Medieval Tournament, held over a full weekend, the inaugural Masque Ball and on the weekend preceding the tournament proper, the Medieval Banquet. The 2006 event was staged in the Great Hall on the Abbey Museum’s property just east of Caboolture. Attracting some 320 guests, the event format was an eclectic blend of ceremony, entertainment both serious and slapstick and, of course, the provision of a banquet. Patrons were charged \$70 a head which included one complimentary alcoholic beverage. Further details will be provided in the observations. However, it is first necessary to outline the methodology for this current study.

METHODOLOGY

There were two phases to the fieldwork. Firstly, an ethnographic study was conducted at the festival’s Medieval Banquet to inform the development of a scale to incorporate into a visitor survey. Secondly, this survey was administered at the festival’s Abbey Museum Tournament the following year. The aim of the ethnographic participant observation phase of the research was to observe and interpret perceived agents or dimensions of authenticity of F&B services at the Medieval Banquet, many of these having been informed by the literature.

Ethnography is a qualitative method of inquiry, with a long tradition, that can embrace both fieldwork and participant observation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Newman, Ridenour, Newman & De Marco, 2003). It is particularly suited to the study of people and culture. Although the initial rigour of its methods has subsequently been questioned, it is widely accepted that ethnography was popularised as a methodology by the Chicago School (Fontana & Frey, 2000), progressing from the anthropological to the sociological disciplines. Inherent in this questioning is the ‘observer bias’ or ‘crisis of representation’ (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000) – that is acceptance that a researcher brings their own view of the world into understanding a phenomenon. Key to the analytic process adopted for this study was notetaking of observations, which is then related to the literature to extrapolate themes and patterns. As is appropriate for ethnographic study, the researcher adopted a liberal view of what was interpretable during the study including “documents..., analysis of food... and whatever... help[ed] the researcher to answer the research question” (Newman et al., 2003:192). Interestingly, ethnography, in its various manifestations, has previously been used as a research methodology for event and festival management (Jeong & Santos, 2004), particularly in the sporting context (Choi, Stotlar & Park, 2006; Ollis, MacPherson & Collins, 2006). As such, particularly given the complex cultural and social discourses at play in this research, ethnography has proved a useful medium of initial investigation.

The researcher gained access to the Great Hall during the ‘setup’ period. Largely, participant observation was from behind a slatted screen placed in front of the operational catering and service area. This provided an excellent vantage point to observe the production of the food, the delivery of the service, food consumption both at the High Table and ‘on the floor’. It also conveniently brought to view various

aspects of entertainment, which were packaged with the event. An in-depth understanding of the menu design, food procurement, production and service for the banquet was gleaned both through questioning various members of the catering and service teams and observation. This experience was enhanced by regular tastings.

The findings of the ethnographic participant observation fieldwork, reported in the next section, informed the design of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was incorporated into a visitor survey for which the festival organisers provided a template. Much of the survey's content concerned the collection of demographic and psychographic information that the organisers utilised for marketing. The researchers agreed to manage the administration of the survey and the data entry in exchange for questions being added to it relating to the event's perceived authenticity. This is the focus of this study.

A total of 800 surveys were distributed over the two days of the Abbey Medieval Tournament. The questionnaires were distributed to event attendees, excluding staff and volunteers. Most importantly, data collectors were asked not to target re-enactors. This parameter was established as the oftentimes obsessive nature of community members to sub-cultures risked biasing the results. Responses were predominately gathered on-site by volunteer research assistants. A total of 588 useable surveys were received. After coding, the data was entered initially into Microsoft Excel spreadsheets. Further recoding and data cleaning were required before the data set was transposed into SPSS 13 for initial analysis. Given the raw nature of the data from the surveys, these reported findings are still preliminary.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Although held in a modern multipurpose school hall, the setup for the Abbey Medieval Banquet comprised the High Table, placed on the stage of the Great Hall at

right angles to a number of long trestle tables. The High Table was lavishly embellished with embroidered skirting draped from an overarching frame and was approachable, during the event, only by centrally placed steps, from the ground floor. In the Great Hall proper, each banquet table each sat, again on long wooden benches, about 50 guests. Various heraldic and coloured streaming fabrics hung from the walls and rafters. In the front corner, by the entrance, was placed the bar for the evening. Diagonally opposite, beside the High Table, were the kitchen and catering amenities. These were hidden by the large slatted screen from behind which the researcher made most observations.

Both the High Table and the banquet trestles were simply laid with a white table cloth. Guests received a glass, a wooden handled knife (but no fork), and a 'trencher'. Each trencher was a round flat loaf of bread cut in half longways to create a makeshift, but authentic, plate. Above the trencher was a copy of the menu, in a tied scroll, for each guest. The tables were candlelit and had baskets placed at intervals for bones and the like.

On entering, guests joined in a traditional hand washing ritual, before proceeding to their places to await the guests of honour. The official party was led to the High Table by the 'Steward of the Feast'. The Steward's role on the evening was to orchestrate the entertainment, manage the formalities, act as arbiter between the operational staff and guests, to generate a jovial atmosphere and, on occasion, reprimand guests.

Once the High Table had seated and formalities (including behavioural directives) were dispensed with, the first 'Remove' was served (see Figure 1). A self-contained meal, covering the full suite of sweet and savoury dishes, a remove is a meal structure which lends itself to extended banqueting. Two removes were served at

the event, followed by an 'Issue', made up of a cheese and fruit platter. All the guests received a complimentary glass of mulled wine. Additional drinks were at personal expense. While an effort was made to authenticate some of the beverages, for example mead and 'ale', this service clearly generated much additional revenue during the evening.

Figure 1. Excerpt from Medieval Banquet (First Remove)

<p>Banquet Menu 2006</p> <p>FIRST REMOVE</p> <p>Soup of Herbs and Chicken</p> <p>Venyson Y - bake - Venison Pies</p> <p>Baked Fish with a White Wine Parsley Cream Sauce</p> <p>Candied Carrots in Cinnamon and Honey</p> <p>Baked Lamb Shanks with Rich Red Wine Gravy</p> <p>Almond Cheesecakes</p> <p>Sallets for fish daies - Green salad with Carrot and prawns</p>
--

Source: Abbey Museum, 2006

For all courses, the High Table was served first. Moreover, this was done with some ceremony. Each of the service staff, period costumed volunteers from the community, were required to walk out of the kitchen directly to the back of the Great Hall, before marching up the centre isle and stopping to bow low to the High Table. Only then could the server take their dish to its destination. This ceremony was performed regardless of whether the server was carrying roast pork for the High Table or a toothpick for a guest at the back of the hall.

Efforts were made to describe the items on the menu authentically. For instance, 'Venyson Y' described the venison pie and 'Coll-Flower' the buttered cauliflower. Menu descriptions indicated that some research had been conducted to reproduce dishes for the banquet that truly represented either the medieval availability

of raw produce or contemporary culinary techniques and styles. Most impressively they echoed the eating styles and etiquette of the time. The serving of just the first remove illustrates these points.

A simple soup of chicken and herbs was served in large earthenware jugs, which were left on the table for guests to share. The remainder of the dishes were served on flat round ceramic dishes, in portions adequate for about six to eight people. These were shared at the table between guests, who placed food items on their trenchers and ate as best they could with the limited cutlery at their disposal. The Baked Lamb Shanks serve as a good example of a dish, which once at the table, necessitated eating by hand, hence creating that medieval banquet 'feel' in consumption. The researcher experienced these challenges first hand when juggling unboned quarters of Quail with Pancetta, Peas cooked in Broth and Roast Pork dripping in Pomegranate Gravy. Accompanying the soup and shanks in the first remove were Cinnamon spiced Honeyed Carrots, Almond Cheesecake and a Green Salad with Carrot and Prawns. Evidently there was a mixture of sweet, spice, salt and sour in the one course that reflected past meal constructions.

Several of the meal items were made to authentic recipes, the very doughy Treacle Tart with Rosewater Cream being an example. Perhaps the gastronomic highlight of the evening was the serving of the Whole Roast Pig (which was actually roasted as separate primal sections then carefully reassembled). Placed on a large wooden stretcher, which required four men to carry, the pig, now garnished with quantities of parsley, was presented to the High Table in the same fashion as all the food. Ironically, the paraded pig was not carved for the guests, as the evening's logistics prompted the caterers to 'cook double'. So after the whole pig had been

returned to refrigeration, and a tactful delay, the pre-sliced pork was served as part of the second remove.

After the second remove a number of performers, period dancers, acrobats and swordsmen entertained the gathering. These performances were punctuated by the historically appropriate witticisms of the Steward, who did much to contribute an extrasensory layer of perceived authenticity to the event.

Following content analysis of the notes taken during the ethnographic fieldwork, various agents or dimensions of foodservice were identified and refined. For the Abbey Medieval Banquet, the F&B service components augmented the overall authenticity by means of authenticating 'agents'. These agents included notions of impression and image management, the consumption context and instrumental use of history and association. It is reasonable to suggest that the Abbey Medieval Banquet participants had an enhanced event experience on account of these F&B authenticating agents, and that this complemented the overall success of the event from the perspective of its organisers. Some of the agents had presented themselves in the literature and others emerged from the fieldwork and subsequent data analysis. To inform the development of the scale representing agents of authenticity a range of factors were refined in a reductionist process to construct the survey items. Table 2 summarises the concluding stages of this process.

Table 2. Observed foodservice agents/ dimensions of authenticity

<i>Categorised dimensions</i>	<i>Examples</i>	<i>Developed items</i>
Preparation, cooking styles, equipment used	Whole roast pig; emphasis on baking; general 'heaviness' of dishes	The food & beverage is produced authentic to Medieval times
Verbal and written description of menus, dishes and ingredients	Venyson Y; Coll-Flower	The food & beverage is described/labeled authentic to Medieval times
Sourcing of and selection of ingredients	Venison and pomegranate (sourced in trade with the East)	The food & beverage ingredients are authentic to Medieval times
Presentation of food platters and utensils on table	Trenchers, no forks, candle light, ceramic and pottery for service crockery	The food & beverage is presented authentic to Medieval times
Combination of other authenticating agents on perceived taste	'Remove' structure of meal combining 2 rounds of sweet, sour, salt and spice at once	The food & beverage tastes authentic to Medieval times
Role playing and costuming of service staff	Ritual hand washing and service protocol of bowing to High Table	The food & beverage is served authentic to Medieval times
Menus and dishes attempting to replicate that perceived as medieval	Authentic recipes e.g treacle tart with rosewater cream	The food & beverage is traditional Medieval
Packaging of agents of authenticity to deliver an experience specific to the medieval	Combination of above agents, performance of Steward	The food & beverage is unique to Medieval times

In the second phase of the research, as described previously, these items were incorporated into a visitor satisfaction survey, although several items relating to overall perceived authenticity preceded those developed as in Table 2. Four items in total were added which tested for visitor perceptions of overall event authenticity, perceived authenticity of the stallholders, overall perceived authenticity of the foodservice and value for money. These items were ascribed a '1' to '7' Likert scale, '1' indicating lowest satisfaction and '7' highest satisfaction. Before analyses were

conducted, tests of normality and instrument reliability were performed on the ten items. Whilst normality was violated for these items, no corrective action was taken since the significance of results, especially the significant skew towards respondent agreement, would have been compromised. A Cronbach alpha of 0.921 was returned on these items from Table 2, indicating high reliability. Descriptive analyses followed to determine the comparative mean scores for all the ten items. These are displayed in Table 3 ranked in descending order and are discussed below.

Table 3. Authenticity items ranked

<i>Item</i>	<i>Question</i>	<i>Mean statistic</i>	<i>Standard deviation statistic</i>
q1a	An authentic Medieval atmosphere was created	5.94	0.993
q1c	Food & beverage stallholders enhanced the authentic Medieval atmosphere	5.27	1.394
q1l	Value for money of food and beverages	5.03	1.280
q1b	Authentic Medieval foodservice is available	5.01	1.362
q1d	The food & beverage is produced authentic to Medieval times	4.59	1.399
q1g	The food & beverage is described/labeled authentic to Medieval times	4.54	1.495
q1h	The food & beverage ingredients are authentic to Medieval times	4.45	1.438
q1i	The food & beverage is presented authentic to Medieval times	4.44	1.414
q1k	The food & beverage tastes authentic to Medieval times	4.43	1.422
q1j	The food & beverage is served authentic to Medieval times	4.42	1.431
q1e	The food & beverage is traditional Medieval	4.41	1.430
q1f	The food & beverage is unique to Medieval times	4.23	1.366

'An authentic Medieval atmosphere was created' returned a mean of 5.94 from 582 respondents, indicating overall strong agreement. The standard deviation

was the narrowest of all the following authenticity items at 0.993. Of all respondents, 567 indicated overall strong agreement with '*Authentic Medieval foodservice is available*'. However, the mean of 5.01 represented a statistically significant difference from Qa1, as determined by a one-sample t-test ($p < 0.05$) indicating F&B contributed significantly less to the event's authenticity than other factors. This suggests that even as an augmented product (Kotler, 1994) F&B service detracted rather than value-added to the one of the Festival's core missions (Abbey Museum, 2009). '*Food & beverage stallholders enhanced the authentic Medieval atmosphere*' recorded a mean of 5.27 from 574 respondents indicating overall strong agreement. This is higher than the overall rating for Q1b, perhaps suggesting that some dimensions of the stallholder foodservice were more authentic.

Registering a mean of 4.59, '*The food & beverage produced is authentic to Medieval times*' from 558 respondents, indicates modest overall agreement. This begins the trend of only modest agreement from the sample when asked to rank the various dimensions of F&B service, items informed by the ethnographic study. '*The food & beverage is traditional Medieval*' scored a mean of 4.41 from 554 respondents, indicating modest overall agreement again. This continues the trend of only modest agreement from the sample when asked to rank the various dimensions of F&B service. From 553 respondents '*The food & beverage is unique to Medieval times*' yielded a resultant mean of 4.23, indicating modest overall agreement. This is the lowest ranking of all the F&B foodservice items. It also recorded the highest standard deviation, indicating greatest inconsistency of responses. '*The food & beverage is described/labeled authentic to Medieval times*' scored a mean of 4.54 from 553 respondents, again indicating modest overall agreement. This ranks it

second only to 'production' (Q1d) in terms of the sample's ranking of the dimensions of authentic F&B service.

A consistent pattern emerged from the remainder of the dimensions of foodservice items. '*The food & beverage **ingredients** are authentic to Medieval times*' ($m= 4.45$) from 443 respondents, '*The food & beverage is **presented** authentic to Medieval times*' ($m= 4.44$) from 544 respondents, '*The food & beverage is **served** authentic to Medieval times*' ($m= 4.42$) from 543 respondents and '*The food & beverage **tastes** authentic to Medieval times*' ($m= 4.43$) from 513 respondents all indicated modest overall agreement. The lowest number of responses from the F&B items and the consistency of these last four means suggest there may be a response set bias occurring. However, it also may indicate that, despite previous studies identifying that the overall F&B might contribute to event authenticity (Chhabra et al., 2003), various dimensions might either diminish or indeed not contribute to this perception.

Finally, '*Value for money of food and beverages*' registered a mean of 5.03 from 564 respondents, indicating overall moderate agreement. This breaks the suspected pattern of response set bias, indicating the sample was relatively positive about the value for money of the F&B service.

Analysis of the item interrelationships indicated that the specific dimensions of F&B authenticity, as determined by items Q1d to Q1k, ranked lower than the overall foodservice item (Q1b). In fact, a one-way ANOVA test of variance determined there was a significant difference ($p<0.05$) between the overall item '*Authentic Medieval foodservice is available*' and the eight dimensions of foodservice authenticity as detailed in Table 2. This suggests that, once pressed for specifics regarding their perceived authentic F&B experience, the sample was less satisfied.

CONCLUSIONS

In summary, the survey provides evidence of general visitor satisfaction *vis-à-vis* perceived authenticity at the Tournament. Nevertheless, the gaps between overall perceived authenticity and that of the foodservice, and again the gap between the overall perceived authenticity of the foodservice and the various dimensions of foodservice, suggest that this study was warranted. But it also suggests that further investigation is required.

The Medieval Banquet provided a rich environment from which to identify authenticating agents of F&B service and a controlled and manageable fieldwork setting. The key finding was that a range of agents, or dimensions of foodservice at a special event, could be distilled, which differed from that in a retail setting as previously identified (Groves, 2001; Kuznesof et al., 1997). This enabled the design of the multi-item scale, previously untested in a quantitative study, to test for perceived dimensions of F&B service around a theoretical framework. As several respondents poignantly observed, it is nigh impossible to authentically recreate anything, let alone F&B, when so dramatically temporally and spatially dislocated in context from the original. The theoretical framework, then, is that authenticity is a matter of perception and this is supported by the literature (e.g. Kim & Jamal, 2006; Reisinger & Steiner, 2005; Uriely, 2005; Wang, 1997). Notwithstanding these limitations, statistical testing, as reported, gives confidence that the scale items are both valid and reliable. A gap in the literature, identified as a lack of empirical research on supporting the construction of authenticity by visitors through the existential approach (Kim & Jamal, 2006) was a key goal of the research. At a more specific level, understanding the existential approach through the dimension of F&B services, also relatively unexplored in the literature (Chhabra et al., 2003), can

enhance general demand-side tourism thinking as well as F&B management theory. The research provides evidence regarding the authenticating agents of F&B in a historical leisure event.

Although the findings from the initial analysis of the data reveal some interesting findings which potentially inform both theoretical and practical implications there are some limitations. The survey data set has only been dealt with summarily and needs closer analysis to extrapolate further findings. Future research could also conduct in-depth interviews with F&B stallholders attending the Abbey Medieval Festival as well as an ethnographic study at the Tournament itself to map the dimensions of foodservice apparent there.

REFERENCES

- Abbey Museum (2009). www.abbeymuseum.asn.au, visited 18th January.
- Baudrillard, J. (Ed.). (1983). *Simulations*. New York: Semiotext.
- Beer, S. (2008). Authenticity and food experience – commercial and academic perspectives, *Journal of Foodservice*, Vol 19: 153–163
- Boorstin, D.J. (1964). *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*. New York: Atheneum.
- Callow, C. (2006). Reconstructing the past in medieval Iceland, *Early Medieval Europe*, Vol 14(3): 297-324.
- Chelminski, R. (2003). The curse of Count Dracula, *Smithsonian*, Vol 34(1):110-113.
- Chhabra, D., Healy, R., & Sills, E. (2003). Staged authenticity and heritage tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol 30(3): 702-719.
- Choi, J. A., Stotlar, D. K. & Park, S. R. (2006). Visual ethnography of on-site sport sponsorship activation, *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, Vol 15(2):71-79.

- Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. [Eds.] (2000). *Handbook of Qualitative Research* [2nd ed.], Sage: Thousand Oaks.
- Fontana, A., & Frey, H.J. (2000) in N.K. Denzin, and Y.S. Lincoln, [eds] *Handbook of Qualitative Research* [2nd ed], Sage, Thousand Oaks:645-672.
- Ganim, J.M. (2002). Medievalism and orientalism at the World's Fairs, *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia: International Review of English Studies*, Vol 38:179-191.
- Getz, D. (1994). Event tourism and the authenticity dilemma. In W. F. Theobald (Ed.), *Global Tourism*. Oxford: Butterworth- Heinemann.
- Gonzalez, R.C.L. & Medina, J.S. (2003). Cultural tourism and urban management in northwestern Spain, *Tourism Geographies*, Vol 5(4): 446–460.
- Groves, A. (2001). Authentic British food products: A review of consumer perceptions. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, Vol 25(3): 246-254.
- Hall, M. C., & Sharples, L. (Eds.) (2005). *Food Tourism around the World*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Hjalager, A-M. & Richards G. [Eds.] (2002). *Tourism and Gastronomy*. London: Routledge.
- Jamal, T. & Kim, H. (2005). Bridging the interdisciplinary divide: An integrated framework for heritage tourism research, *Tourist Studies*, Vol 5(1): 55–83.
- Jeong, S. & Santos, C.A. (2004). Cultural Politics and Contested Place Identity, *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol 31(3):640–656.
- Kim, H., & Jamal, T. (2006). Touristic quest for existential authenticity. *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol 34(1): 181-201.
- Kivela, J., & Crofts, J. (2006). Gastronomy and tourism: A meaningful travel market segment. *Journal of Culinary Science and Technology*, Vol 4(2/3): 39-55.
- Kotler, P. (1994). *Marketing : Australia & New Zealand*. Sydney: Prentice Hall.

- Kuznesof, S., Tregear, A., & Moxey, A. (1997). Regional foods: a consumer perspective. *British Food Journal*, Vol 99:199–206.
- MacCannell, D. (1973). Staged authenticity: Arrangements of social space in tourist settings. *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol 79: 589-603.
- Newman, I., Ridenour, C.S., Newman, C. & De Marco Jr, G.M.P. (2003). A typology of research purposes and its relationship to mixed methods, in A. Tashakkori & Teddlie, C. [Eds.] *Handbook of Mixed Methods: In social and behavioral research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage: 167-188.
- Ollis, S., MacPherson, A. & Collins, D. (2006). Expertise and talent development in rugby refereeing: an ethnographic enquiry, *Journal of Sports Sciences*, Vol 24(3): 309-323.
- Pennington-Gray, L., Setton, J. & Holdnak II, A., (2002). Hoggetowne Medieval Faire, *Parks & Recreation*, Vol 37(9): 109.
- Peterson, R. A. (2005). In search of authenticity. *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol 42(5): 1083-1098.
- Pine B.J., & Gilmore J.H. (1999). *The Experience Economy: Work is theatre and every business is a stage*. Boston: HBS Press.
- Renaissance Festival (2009). www.renaissancefestival.com, visited 17th January.
- Reisinger, Y., & Steiner, C. J. (2005). Reconceptualizing object authenticity. *Annals of Tourism*, Vol 33(1): 65–86.
- Uriely, N. (2005). The tourist experience: Conceptual Developments. *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol 32(1): 199-216.
- Urry, J. (1990). *The Tourist Gaze*. London: Sage.
- Wang, N. (1997). Rethinking authenticity in tourism experience. *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol 26(2): 349-370.