



Research Article

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## Menus as Marketing Tools: Developing a Resort Hotel Restaurant Menu Typology

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### Abstract

Resort hotels are unique. Resort hotel guests generally stay longer than for other hotel types and often do not venture outside the resort. They are therefore a captive audience. Their perceptions of the quality of the food and beverage offer in a resort hotel may be crucial in their selection of that resort hotel. Putting a menu on a resort hotel's website may influence resort hotel selection by potential guests, particularly those with special dietary requirements. This paper develops a typology of menu types and explores their use by resort hotel restaurants worldwide. Following the development of the typology, analysis of the online dinner menus of the 66 resort hotels included on the 2011 World's Best Hotels/Travel + Leisure website against the typology was undertaken. 39 of the 66 resort hotel restaurants offered online menus. The menus ranged from offering little or no description of menu items (8) to offering detailed descriptions of menu items (7). Some emphasized the affective or sensory aspects of menu items (3) or the use of local and/or organic foods (11). Six menus offered geographic labelling or branding to indicate the provenance of their dishes. Menu descriptions promoting the use of local foods and wines enhanced the Sense of Place and differentiated a resort hotel product from its competitors increasing its perceived value to guests. Four restaurants offered tasting menus. The study concludes that not displaying a restaurant menu on a resort hotel website is a lost opportunity.

### Keywords

Restaurant menu design; Menu typology; Menu description; Sense of Place (SoP); Menu development

### Introduction

Traditionally a restaurant menu would have been a blackboard in a restaurant kitchen continuously updated through a service period to notify waiters of the price and the number of portions of different menu items remaining [1]. Today, however, menus are vital marketing tools and major factors in influencing guests' first impressions of a restaurant and raising expectations about the food and beverage (F&B) on offer [1]. Developing a successful restaurant menu requires an in-depth understanding of guest preferences and F&B managers construct the menus they think are best for their guests [2]. Cichy and Wise [3] emphasised the importance of menus

as business cards for restaurants.

According to Mill [4] the menu is both "*a contract with the customer*" specifying what will be served and "*a marketing tool for the establishment*". Indeed, Frei [5] and Davis et al. [6] have identified that the menu is the most important marketing and selling tool for a hotel restaurant. The main function of a menu is to appeal to guests; to direct their attention to the items that the restaurant has to offer; to enable predictions, costing and planning; and to analyse a restaurant's sales history [7]. Menus are major factors in restaurant guests' loyalty and in guaranteeing return visits; they are considered more important than the location of the restaurant, the quality of service and the service staff [5,8].

This study focuses on menus in resort hotel restaurants. The length of stay for guests in a resort hotel is generally longer than for other hotel types [9] and therefore, menu development and marketing is a critical aspect of product development by a resort hotel and essential to maintaining competitiveness [10]. Resorts are designed to cater for every guest need so that a guest does not need to venture beyond the security of the resort. Resort hotel guests are effectively a captive audience and the diversity of the F&B offer in a resort hotel as reflected in a menu disseminated online may be a differentiating factor in resort hotel selection [11]. For guests with specific dietary requirements, e.g. vegetarians or guests suffering gluten-intolerance, this information may be crucial. The menu provides the 'interface' between a resort hotel restaurant and its potential guests [7]. Hence, the design of a resort hotel's restaurant menu communicates a number of explicit and implicit messages that may (or may not) persuade potential guests to select the resort hotel over its competitors. Many regular resort hotel restaurant guests apparently believe a resort hotel restaurant's "*signature*" or identity is created by its menu [9].

This paper aims to explore the role of menus as marketing tools for resort hotel restaurants and to develop a menu typology that differentiates menu types. It uses this typology to analyse the online menus of the resort hotel restaurants included in the 2011 World's Best Hotels/Travel+Leisure website. The paper answers the following research questions: Do resort hotel restaurants disseminate their menus online? What do the menus of resort hotel restaurants say about the F&B offer in the resort hotel? The paper offers insights into the importance of resort hotel restaurant menus as promotional tools [12,13]. The research emphasises that in an increasingly-competitive industry with a major focus on operational efficiencies and organizational effectiveness, sharing menus online with prospective guests can be an extremely effective promotional tool.

### Literature Review

#### Menu merchandising

Menu merchandising focuses on how a menu can be operated to maximise sales [12]. Antun and Gustafson [1] explained that one of the complexities of menu design is assessing its impact on F&B selection by guests. A guest's aim when entering a restaurant is to obtain a meal but what and how much the guests' eat are key factors in a restaurant's revenue [1]. Guests may decide to eat at a restaurant because they have seen it advertised and already have expectations

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of the restaurant, such as its service standards and the quality of its food. Thus, it is essential for F&B managers to ensure that menus are accurate against a checklist including presentation, design, legibility, availability and descriptions. To emphasise this point, Davis et al. [6] explained that if a restaurant has been advertising speciality items, these must be available when a guest arrives at the restaurant [14].

Tactical marketing is a technique used by restaurants to guarantee that guests are aware of new menu items, such as healthy eating options and organic or locally-sourced produce [15]. In addition, Davis et al. [6] identified four kinds of tactical marketing often employed by hotel restaurants: floor stands, posters, tent cards and menu clip-ons.

- ◆ Floor stands or bulletin boards can be used in waiting areas to advertise special events. They should be designed so they are attractive and complement the hotel décor.
- ◆ Posters to promote the menu can be placed in elevators, cloakrooms, reception areas and even in the dining area. Again their design needs to be attractive and to complement the décor.
- ◆ Tent cards can be used on dining tables to promote speciality F&B items and forthcoming events. They are guaranteed to be read and may even be taken home by customers.
- ◆ Menu clips-ons can be used to promote items, such as special wines, plats du jour and table d'hôte items in an à la carte restaurant.

### Menu design and layout

The type of menu, its design, colour and paper must reinforce a restaurant's image. Bowen and Morris [16] emphasised that the menu is an extension of a restaurant's personality. Restaurant menu design considerations start with the needs and expectations of guests. When a menu is presented to a guest, a sales transaction begins. However, if the restaurant menu fails to meet guest needs, it will result in a drop in revenue [7]. A well-designed menu can stimulate sales and enhance the average check of guests. New menus can re-stimulate the jaded palates of a restaurant's loyal guests and revenue from new menus can be a critical element in a restaurant's annual income [17]. Thus, sales history is a measure of the performance assessment of the menu as well as helping restaurant managers to set targets for developing the menu and observing its advancement. Jones [14] stated that the menu presentation, its design and its descriptions of menu items all contribute to the guest experience. Mills and Thomas [18] noted that the menu is considered the initial opportunity to exceed guests' expectations of their dining experience in a restaurant.

The concept of menu layout is based on determining the menu items favoured by guests and maximizing the sale of these items [19]. According to Antun and Gustafson [1], guests don't read the menu, they just scan it, so that items the restaurant wants to promote must be positioned in the most observable locations since guests select items that are placed in these locations [19]. The ultimate location on the menu is at the top right side where the eyes of guests first rest [20]. Several authors [21-23] explained that outlining a menu item with a box, putting it in bold print, using a larger than normal type size and adding a colour photograph can attract attention to it and consequently increase sales.

### The importance of menu items description

The National Restaurant Association [19] has issued a set of guiding principles for menu descriptions, including the portion size, the use of brand names and origin points. As Dittmer and Keefe [24] explained:

*The language used to describe menu items may make a good impression and induce customer orders. The description of foods may make the customer hungry and may help to increase the number of sales ... A food and beverage operator can exercise great influence over the amount of the average check by using written descriptions that make menu items sound interesting. Customers tend to react positively to foods that are appealingly described and negatively to those that are not.*

Menu item descriptions have to create both guest interest and restaurant sales. Accurate descriptions of menu items are a critically important aspect of meeting guest expectations and promoting guest satisfaction [25]. The menu item's description creates an image in the guest's mind about the resort hotel as well as raising the perceptions of value [26]. Most fine dining restaurants present individual menus listing items and providing detailed descriptions; some also offer photographs of menu items.

According to Bessi re [27], customers are increasingly sophisticated in their attempts to be aware of the different components in the food they eat. In that sense, Mills and Thomas [18] pointed out that the number of guests with health conditions (such as diabetes, heart disease, allergies and obesity) has increased and this has impacted on the interest of guests in the nutritional content of menu items.

Although Davis et al. [6] identified that long descriptions take additional space and may confuse guests, Wansink et al. [28] countered this by explaining that menu items that were described in more detail were perceived as being of higher quality and better value by restaurant guests and could "increase sales by 27 percent" and encouraged guests to be more frequent visitors to a restaurant in comparison to those described in less detail. It is very important for restaurants offering menu items at premium prices that their menu items are perceived to be better value when they have detailed and complex descriptions [26,29].

When guests go to a restaurant for a meal, they are looking for something that they would almost certainly not cook at home to enhance their meal experience [30]. Some words have more selling power than others, for example, Panitz [20] explained that the descriptors "marinated", "roasted" or "cooked in our wood-fire oven" are more attractive than "fried"- "If an item is fried and the restaurant does not like to tell the guests that the item is fried, it can say that it is hand-battered". Notwithstanding that there are some items that do not need to be described, if the restaurant has something special or unusual to say about a menu item it is worth a mention [20].

### Using a Sense of Place (SoP) to enhance the F&B experience

The unique attributes of a destination play an important role in tourists' experiences. Every country and region has its own local food dishes and national specialities. Regional culinary traditions include distinctive personal touches and the addition of 'secret ingredients' into standard recipes [31,32]. Many restaurants make themselves distinctive through regionalizing their menus [9] which offers the

additional advantage of lowering production costs by focusing on fresh, high-quality ingredients rather than expensive ones [3]. Regionalization can be achieved in different ways-by adding regional menu items to the menu or by using regional or local ingredients to produce standard menu items. Nam and Lee [33] explained that local foods may be popular with tourists because they are considered as iconic products that capture the essence of a particular place-what makes it special [34], its SoP. Pine and Gilmore [35] explain that the term SoP is used to refer to residents' attachment to their locality and tourists' sense of being in a distinctive place. *"For quality tourism experiences, these types are interrelated as SoP considers the physical and social dimensions of the society which are influenced by distinctive socio-cultural, natural and political environments"* [36]. Food is *"an expression of the region; it is produced from local ingredients that are suited to regional soil and climate and transformed through the specific skills of local people"* [37]. Reflecting the culinary traditions of a region into the menu offer can enhance the culinary experience of guests whilst promoting the region [38]. Bessi re [27] suggested that regional foods can be critical factors in attracting visitors and that customers deduced the authenticity of a food product from the physical attributes of a food product, its place of purchase and/or when its description referred to a specific place, region or country [32,37,39,40].

Asimov [41] indicated that SoP in the wine business relates to the unique aromas and flavours which *"convey the special combination of soil, climate and the human touch that are encompassed in the mystical French word terroir. A wine with a sense of place adds a new chapter in a story that continues, year after year. Some chapters are more fascinating than others, but they are all similar tales"*. Asimov [41] goes on to explain that wines without a SoP are sometimes called Gatsby wines - *"in a hurry to create a story for themselves, but easy to see through"*. *"The taste of terroir or the taste of place is meant to convey freshness found in agricultural products that are locally-sourced and harvested according to cultural and historical legislation"* [42].

## Menu trends

Several menus trends have had a dramatic impact on menu marketing [3]. A huge number of customers are seeking lighter and healthier food choices and this has forced restaurants to meet this growing demand by preparing more healthy food, e.g. grilled not fried, using olive oil not butter [3] and serving smaller portion sizes [43]. Some restaurant menus highlight meals low in fat and cholesterol, while others focus on fresh, seasonal and wholesome food options [6,44,45]. Parents are more demanding of the meals for their children and require more sophisticated healthy eating options. The growing incidence of allergies has prompted a trend for food allergy-conscious items, e.g. gluten-free meals [43]. Delivering healthier options tests the skills of staff members and managers to cope with such change [45,46]. Provenance is increasingly important and has resulted in a trend towards farm/estate branding of menu items [43].

Cicia et al. [47] highlighted organic food as a menu trend likely to grow steadily. Mitchell [48] reported that 35% of Americans ordered organic items when dining out. However, Perlik [49] warned that although several restaurateurs offered organic food items, they should not indicate this on menus because of the limited supply of organic food.

A significant trend in fine dining restaurants is to offer a tasting menu offering a five courses (with or without wine pairings [50]) or a

grand tasting menu with eight courses changing on a daily basis and based on a chef's signature dishes [8,51].

## Developing a menu typology

Menus can be classified using a range of criteria, such as choice, price, description and design, e.g. Jones [14] classified menus into limited menu with low and moderate price; full menu with low/moderate and high price and finally luxury menus with high price. The level of description of menu items is very important for guest decision-making [28] although, as a general rule, the menu should not describe common items: *"Guests are familiar with what roast beef is, you don't need to create an 'ode' to roast beef"*; the menu should be designed to *"make guests talk about the detailed items descriptions, rather than reading wasteful descriptions"* [20].

A first consideration concerns the level of complexity of a description of a menu item and may range from no description beyond the name, e.g. *"Filet Mignon"*, through simple descriptions such as *"10 oz grilled tenderloin, mushroom sauce and served with a choice of potato"* to more complex descriptions, such as: *"10 oz grilled tenderloin served with a sweet garlic and thyme crust, sliced vine ripe marinated tomato and smoked mozzarella cheese with a sherry vinegar demi glace"*. Similarly stuffed breast of chicken may be offered without further elaboration or as *"oven-roasted, stuffed, boneless, skinless chicken breast served with rice and vegetables"* [29]. The National Restaurant Association [19] indicated that descriptions *"are best if they use food related words. Methods of preparation, such as grilled, can be used"*.

A second consideration relates to the language in which the menu is presented and may be used to enhance the SoP. Some menus are presented in a local language or the language related to the cuisine (e.g. Chinese, Arabic or Thai) with translation into language(s) (e.g. English, German, Italian, Japanese) reflecting major market segments [52]. French, again with an appropriate translation, is often used to present menu items regardless of where the resort hotel restaurant is located to benefit from the prestige traditionally associated with French cuisine.

A third consideration relates to menu item descriptions emphasising the use of local foods, organic foods (defined as *"food without chemicals and growth hormones, food which is not intensively produced and is grown as natural"* [53] or in combination as local and organic foods. Several authors [54-57] noted the use of local food items on a restaurant menu as one of several approaches to promote food items to guests. In addition to reducing food miles, nine motivational factors have been related to the consumption of local foods: exciting experiences; gaining knowledge; authenticity; escape from routine; prestige; health concerns; togetherness; physical environment; sensory appeal [58]. Perceptions of health and environmental merits coupled with better taste have been identified as key considerations in the choice of organic foods from restaurant menus [59], despite there being no decisive proof that organic food items are more nutritious than conventional food items [60,61] and are associated with a healthy lifestyle and economic, social and environmental sustainability [62,63]. Poulston [17] indicated that *"organic food was just one of many ingredients in the gastronomic delights offered to customers in the up-scale restaurant"*. According to Lockyer [30] the use of the words local and organic gives a good feeling to guests reading a menu, although five barriers preventing restaurateurs from putting organic food and local food items on the



menu have been identified: high price; lack of availability; lack of trust in the certification process; reduced choice; branding concerns [38,44].

A fourth consideration concerns the nature of the description used for menu items. Wansink et al. [28] explained that descriptions for menu items may be based on sensory or affective wording. Affective descriptions, such as “Classic Old World Italian Pasta”, “Legendary Chocolate Mousse Pie”, “Ye Olde Potato Bread” and “Nana’s Favorite Chicken Soup” [28] promote emotional responses from guests and reactivating pleasing memories. Sensory labels focus on the taste, smell and mouth feel of menu items, for instance, “Hearty Wholesome Steaks”, “Snappy Seasonal Carrots” and “Buttery Plump Pasta” [28].

A fifth consideration concerns the provenance of menu items. Simpson and Weiner [64] defined provenance as the place of origin or earliest known history of something. Some menu items are given geographic names indicating a method of preparation or service understood by guests [65]. In Europe geographic designations are fiercely protected under European Commission Regulation CE 510/2006 which identifies three designations: Protected Designation of Origin (PDO-for products traditionally prepared, processed and produced within a specific region, e.g. Traditional Balsamic Vinegar), Protected Geographic Indication (PGI-for products traditionally prepared, processed or produced within a region with unique properties attributable to the region, e.g. Melton Mowbray Pork Pies) and Traditional Specialities Guaranteed (TSG-for traditional products which are not manufactured in a specific geographically-delimited area but are distinctively different to other similar products, e.g. Traditional Gloucestershire Old Spot Pork). The place of origin of a food product may invoke positive or negative reactions depending on its quality and value [66] customer perceptions of provenance have a key role in affecting customer’s choice of food product [67].

A sixth consideration relates to the use of branding, (e.g. the resort or restaurant branding of a recipe or farm/estate branding to indicate

the provenance of the ingredients). Kotler et al. [68] defined a brand as “a name, term, sign, symbol, design or combination of them”. The use of branded menu items in resort hotel restaurants differentiates them from those of competitors. Branding adds value to menu items [69] and can “attract guests by developing a perception of good quality and value” [68] although guests may perceive the product as high cost as well as high quality [68]. It can be seen as a “product characteristic” because the brand is related to the guest’s mind with the product it represents [70]. Hartwell and Edwards [71] added that brand names and logos may encourage guests to choose the particular food item because they communicate familiarity and safety.

## Methodology

A qualitative research approach was adopted in this study to analyse the online menus of the 66 resort hotels featured on the 2011 World’s Best Hotels/Travel and Leisure website ([www.travelandleisure.com/worldbest/2011/hotels](http://www.travelandleisure.com/worldbest/2011/hotels)) of which 39 offered online menus. This list is compiled from the results of an annual survey of readers of *Travel and Leisure* magazine inviting them to nominate the resort hotels they love the most. The online menus were printed off and analysed according to the complexity of the description as reflected in the six considerations identified in the literature review and captured in the fixed set of six questions listed in table 1 so that a quantitative result could be achieved.

Analysis of the menus demonstrated that these categories were not mutually exclusive and resulted in the identification of eleven menu types (Table 2).

## Results and Discussion

Examples of each of the different menu types are shown below:

### Type 1: Little or no description of menu item

Four resort hotel restaurants [7,9,25,29] had menus identifying menu items using little or no description. The entrées from the menu

**Table 1: Questions**

1.	Is there a detailed description of the menu items?
2.	Is the menu item described in English, a local language or another language reflecting major market segments?
3.	Is the use of organic or local foods emphasised?
4.	Are sensory or affective wording used for the descriptions?
5.	Is the provenance of the food emphasised?
6.	Is resort or restaurant branding used?

**Table 2: Menu types.**

Type 1	Little or no description of menu items
Type 2	Other language menu item names (e.g. French, Italian, Chinese) with a translation of the menu item name in a language to match key market segments, e.g. English, German.
Type 3	Detailed description of menu items
Type 4	Other language menu item names (e.g. French, Italian, Chinese) with a detailed description of the menu item in a language to match key market segments, e.g. English, German.
Type 5	Detailed description emphasising the use of organic ingredients
Type 6	Detailed description emphasising the use of local ingredients
Type 7	Detailed description emphasising the use of local and organic ingredients
Type 8	Affective or sensory labels used for menu items
Type 9	Geographic labels for regional menu items
Type 10	Name branding on menu items (resort/restaurant/farm/estate branding to indicate the provenance of the ingredients)
Type 11	Tasting menu with or without wine pairing

of the Excellence Riviera Cancún resort hotel’s menu are shown in [figure 1](#).

**Type 2: Other language item name (e.g. French, Italian and Chinese) with a translation of the name in a language to match key market segments, e.g. English and German**

Four resort hotels [19,31,34,36] used Type 2 menus. Two [34,36] used Italian names with English translations; one [19] used French names with English translations and one [31] used Chinese names with English translations, for example: “楊州妙飾”/- *fried rice with barbecue meat*” and “人蒸參斑片”/- *steamed grouper fillet with fresh ginseng in fine soya sauce*”. In terms of translation all the translations were into English ([Figure 2](#)).

**Type 3: Detailed description of menu item**

Resort hotel numbers [17,18,20,35] offered detailed descriptions of their menu items ([Figure 3](#)).

**Type 4: Other language item name (e.g. French, Italian and Chinese) with a detailed description in a language to match key market segments, e.g. English and German**

The fourth type of menu used other language item names (e.g. French, Italian, Spanish, Thai and Chinese) with detailed descriptions in a language to match key market segments, e.g. English, German. Resort hotels numbers [10,30,33] were classified under this type ([Figure 4](#)).

Chicken breast  
Fruited curry chicken  
Beef tenderloin with shrimp  
Mixed grill (*Fillet Mignon, top sirloin steak, pork chop and chicken breast*)  
Meat and shrimp kebab  
Tenderloin brochette  
Fillet Mignon 8 oz.  
Baby BBQ ribs  
Rib eye steak 10 oz.

[Source: Excellence Riviera Cancún]  
**Figure 1:** Type 1 menu showing little or no description of menu items.

**Filetto di Vitello in crosta di Basilico con Melanzane**  
*Fillet of veal in basil crust and eggplant*  
**Agnello con Fichi e Fagiolini**  
*Lamb with figs and mounge tout*  
**Galletto arrosto con Verdure e Tartufo estivo**  
*Roasted baby chicken vegetables and summer truffle*  
**Controfiletto di Manzo alla Pizzaiola**  
*Entrecote beef steak on “Pizzaiola” style*

[Source: Hotel Caruso, Piazza San Giovanni del Toro, Ravello, Italy]  
**Figure 2:** Type 2 menu showing Italian names and English translations.

Simple “Sole meunière” prepared in the restaurant with rice flavoured with Combava & some grilled vegetables  
Roasted rack of Lamb with an olive & orange crust, mashed potatoes with herbs & white truffle oil  
Filet of local Yellow Tuna caramelized with Asian flavours young spinach, asparagus & grated lime  
Chicken breast stuffed with tomatoes, cooked with bacon & candied lemon, roasted vegetables  
Filet of local Mahi-Mahi marinated with teriyaki sauce, artichokes & vegetables finished in a fish juice  
Seabream cooked in the oven with green Cardamom seeds & tomatoes roasted with citrus & herbs  
Milanese Veal scaloppini served with linguini lightly perfumed with garlic and fresh mushrooms

[Source: Hotel Saint-Barth, Baie des Flamands, San Bartolomé, France]  
**Figure 3:** Type 3 menu showing detailed description of menu items.

**Gai Pad Med Mamuang**  
*Wok-Fried Chicken with Cashew Nuts*  
**Ped Ob Kafe**  
*Deep-Fried Roast Duck with Nacha Coffee Sauce*  
**Nua Pad Narm Mun Hoy**  
*Wok-Fried Beef with Straw Mushrooms, Scallion and Oyster Sauce*  
**Poo Nim Kapraow Grob**  
*Crispy Soft-Shell Crab with Hot Basil Sauce*  
**Hoi Shell Pad Prig Pao**  
*Wok-Fried Sea Scallops with Basil and Roasted Chili Sauce*  
**Goong Mae Narm Sauce Makarm**  
*Fried Blue River Prawns with Tamarind Sauce and Fried Shallot*  
**Pla Kapong Sarm Rod**  
*Fried Whole Sea Bass with Three Flavour Sauce*  
**Pla Kapong Nueng Manaow**  
*Steamed Whole Sea Bass with Chili Lime Sauce*  
**Pla Tub Tim Nueng Takrai**  
*Steamed Whole Ruby Fish with Lemongrass and Spicy Cashew Nut Sauce*

[Source: Four Seasons Resort, Mae Rim-Samoeng Old Rd, Chiang Mai, Thailand]  
**Figure 4:** Type 4 menu using a Thai name with a detailed description in English.

Chilean Salmon, Breaded in Spices with Moroccan Couscous, Burnt Lemon Cream  
Saffron Risotto with Mussels, Squids, Prawns, Shrimps  
Rib Eye Steak, Baby Potatoes Double Cooked, Tomatoes Pistou  
Tenderloin, Mushrooms Crut, Vegetable Ratatouille, Narbona Tannat Pearl Onions  
Grilled Lamb Entrecote over Peas, Fava Beans and Conifed Garlic  
Organic Chicken Breast, Spinach Sautéed, Sprouts and Glazed Carrots  
Penne Rigate, Putanesca Sauce and Roasted Tomatoes

[Source: Four Seasons Resort, Carmelo, Colonia, Uruguay]  
**Figure 5:** Type 5 menu emphasizing the use of organic ingredients.

**Whole Daintree Baby Barramundi**  
*Ginger & Lemon Grass infused Rice, Cucumber Herb Salad, AsianStyle Chilli Jam*  
**North Queensland Reef Fish**  
*An ever changing special, featuring some of Queensland’s best fish...*  
**Pan Roasted Chicken Breast**  
*Potato Dauphinoise, Tomato, Basil & Fetta Salad, Sautéed Mushroom Jus*  
**North Queensland Tiger Prawn & Morton Bay Bug Risotto**  
*Saffron, Braised Leek & Fresh Basil*  
**Pan Fried Fresh Gnocchi**  
*Semi-Dried Tomatoes & Rocket in a Creamy Porcini Mushroom Sauce*  
**Grain Fed Sirloin Fillet**  
*Potato Dauphinoise, Rocket, Spanish Onion, and Fetta Salad, Pepper Jus*  
**Herb Crusted Lamb Rack**  
*Caponata Stuffed Tomatoes, Potato Fondant & Rosemary Jus*  
**Black Angus Eye Fillet**  
*Parsnip Puree, Wilted Spinach, Prosciutto wrapped Green Beans, Parmesan Crisp & Red Wine Jus*

[Source: Reef House Resort & Spa, Williams Esplanade Palm Cove, Queensland, Australia]  
**Figure 6:** Type 6 menu emphasizing the use of local ingredients.

**Type 5: Detailed description emphasising the use of organic ingredients**

The fifth menu type emphasised the use of organic foods, albeit fairly sparingly, as evidenced by the menus of two resort hotels [24,28] ([Figure 5](#)).

**Type 6: Detailed description emphasising the use of local ingredients**

Three resort hotels [6,21,22] emphasised the use of local ingredients on their menus. One resort hotel restaurant in North Queensland near the Daintree National Park offered Daintree Baby

Barramundi and a range of local seafood items (Figure 6). The welcome page of this restaurant explained that:

*Our kitchen brigade operates with one key goal. That goal is to offer fresh local produce, taking inspiration from the beautiful Coral Sea. Every element is prepared with passion and dedication. Our menu has been created using North Queensland's best produce, seafood caught from the waters out the front, herbs picked from the mountains behind us and vegetables grown all around us.*

**Type 7: Detailed description emphasising the use of local and organic foods**

Six resort hotels numbers used detailed descriptions emphasizing the use of local and organic foods [4,5,14,23,26,27] (Figure 7).

**Type 8: Affective or sensory labels used for menu items**

Three resort hotels number [2,15,32] offered menu items described using affective or sensory labels (Figure 8).

**Type 9: Geographic labels for regional menu items**

The ninth menu type used geographic labelling to emphasise the provenance of regional menu items and was used by three resort hotels [8,11,38] (Figure 9).

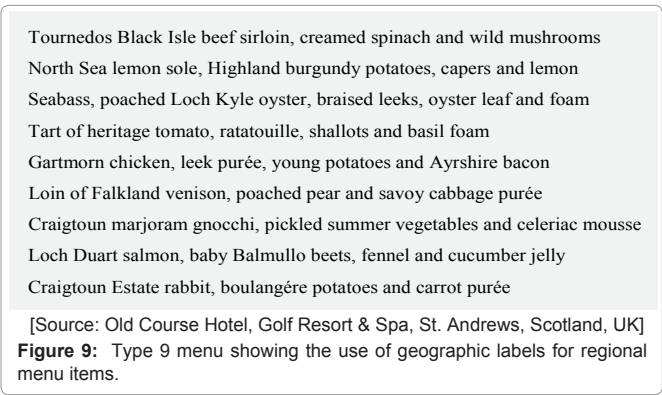
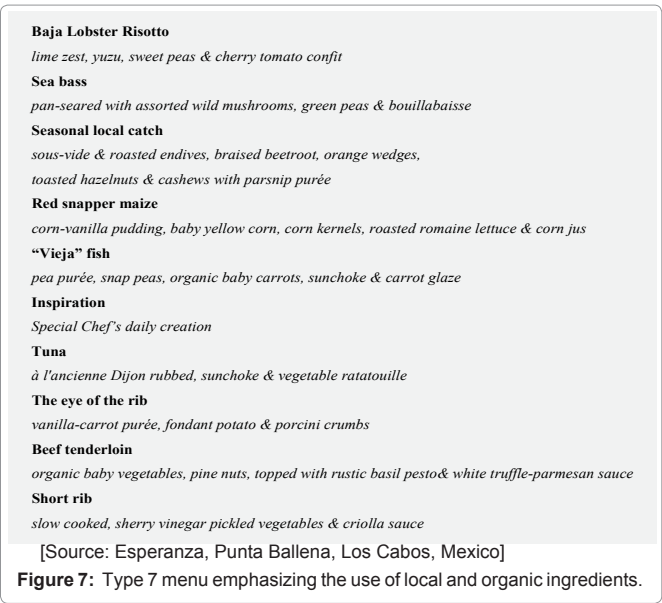
**Type 10: Name branding on menu items (resort/restaurant/farm/estate branding to indicate the provenance of the ingredients)**

Type 10 menus were used by three of the resort hotels [3,12,13] (Figure 10).

**Type 11: Tasting menu with or without wine pairing**

Four resort hotels [1,16,37,39] were classified under this category. As explained by McVety et al. [8] and shown below, guests normally choose between two items in each course of the tasting menu and each course is often paired with a wine selected by the sommelier (Figure 11).

Looking at the usage of the different menu types by the resort hotel restaurants it can be seen that the most popular menu type was

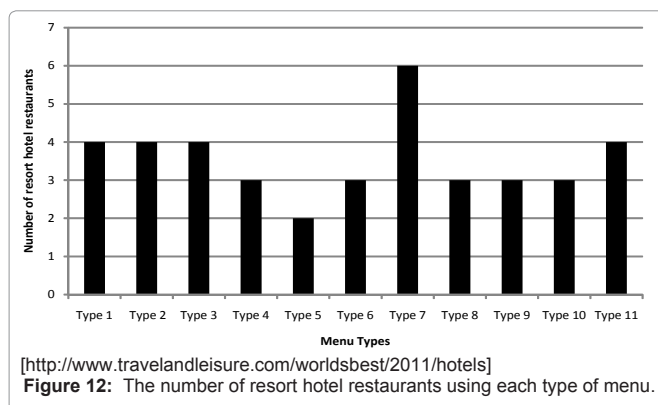


Type 7 emphasising the use of local and organic foods and was used by six of the resort hotels (Figure 12). Four resort hotel restaurants did not exploit the opportunity of using descriptors that differentiated their menus and opted for menu items with little or no description. This would seem to be a lost opportunity to provide visitors with a unique experience and to develop a Sense of Place The opportunity to regionalise menus was taken by three resort hotels and to provide name branding by three resort hotels.

In terms of explicit statements of provision of menu items catering for people with special dietary needs, three of the resort hotels [22,23,25] explicitly identified gluten-free menu items on their menus. Five of the resort hotels [12,27,31-33] identified vegetarian menu items on their menus. In addition to identifying gluten-free items on their menus, the chefs at two resort hotel restaurants [22,23] explained that they (and their teams) would be happy to assist with any dietary restrictions or special requests.

## Conclusions, Limitations and Future Research

The literature identifies menus as the most important marketing and selling tools for restaurants and as a major factor in influencing a guest's first impressions of a restaurant. The menu is an extension of a restaurant's personality and a well-designed menu can stimulate sales and enhance the average spend per guest. A restaurant menu communicates explicitly what a restaurant can offer and through any omissions implicitly what it cannot offer. Explicit statements identifying vegetarian or gluten-free options may allay any fears a guest might have about not being able to satisfy their specific dietary requirements. Just three of the resort hotels explicitly mentioned gluten-free options and five resort hotels the provision of vegetarian options on their menus.



### Wild Salmon Cooked on a Cedar Plank

*Charred Local Green Asparagus with Shaved Fennel and Garden Cucumber Salad  
 SYR Meyer Lemon Vinaigrette*

### Butter Braised Maine Lobster

*Homemade Ranch Garden Herb Gnocchi  
 Organic Spinach and Saffron Emulsion*

### Five Spice Seared Big Eye Tuna

*Enoki Mushroom and Jalapeño Fricassee, Cilantro and Lime Veloute*

### Seared Alaskan Halibut

*Julienne of Pancetta with Salsify Strewn Quinoa  
 Hickory Smoked Tomato Vinaigrette*

### SYR Classic Fettuccine Carbonara

*"Patta Negra" Iberico Ham with Sweet Peas and Organic Poached Egg*

### Braised Veal Cheeks

*Cumin Scented Farmer's Market Carrots with a Mild Green Curry Reduction*

### Grilled Snake Farms River Pork Chop

*Organic Wild Arugula with SYR Garden Black Mission Fig Jam*

### Roasted Colorado Lamb Loin

*Farmer's Market Squash and Eggplant Ratatouille with  
 Sautéed Garden Sweet Pepper, Thyme Jus*

[Source: San Ysidro Ranch, A Rosewood Resort, Santa Barbara, California, USA]

**Figure 10:** Type 10 menu using resort/restaurant/farm/estate branding on menu items.

### Astice all'insalata con zuppa fredda di PomodoroPesca, Anguria e Cetriolo

*Lobster salad, with cold Tomato soup, Peach, Water Melon and Cucumber  
 O / Or*

### Carpaccio gratinato di Patate e PorciniUovo molle e Tartufo nero

*Porcini and Potatoes gratin Carpaccio, soft poached egg and black Truffle*

### Linguine con le Acciughe e mollica abbrustolita

*Flat Spaghetti with Anchovies and toasted Breadcrumbs  
 O / Or*

### Tortelli di Provolone del Monaco e aceto di Moscato

*Provolone cheese Tortelli and Moscato vinegar*

### Merluzzo in crosta di Pane, purè di Cianfotta

*Cod fish in bread crust, mashed Vegetables  
 O / Or*

### Maialino da latte croccante, purè e salsa Amatriciana

*Crispy roasted suckling pig, mash potatoes and Amatriciana sauce*

### Dessert a scelta

*Selection of Desserts*

[Source: Grand Hotel Quisisana, Via Camerelle Capri, Italy]

**Figure 11:** Type 11 Tasting menu.

A resort hotel restaurant is in a unique position. A resort is designed to cater for every need of its guests so that guests do not need to venture beyond the security of the resort and are effectively a captive audience. Thus the resort hotel restaurant menu may be a critical factor in determining resort hotel selection. The design of the resort hotel restaurant menu is therefore important in conveying to potential guests messages about the food and beverage offer they are likely to experience.

The study develops a menu typology identifying eleven different menu types ranging from Type 1 with little or no description of the menu items to Type 10 using resort/restaurant/farm/estate branding to indicate the provenance of the ingredients in a menu item or its recipe. An eleventh menu type, Type 11, combines menu items into a tasting menu showcasing the resort hotel restaurant's chef's signature dishes. Descriptions of menu items and indications of provenance add value to menu items. The use of local and organic ingredients is attractive to restaurant guests and suggests that the food is fresher and healthier than non-local or non-organic items. Regional recipes and the use of resort/restaurant/farm/estate branded items communicate a Sense of Place to restaurant guests.

Only 39 of the 66 resort hotels listed on the 2011 World's Best Hotels/Travel+Leisure website displayed their restaurant menus online (Table 3). Of these, four resort hotel restaurants opted for a Type 1 menu with little or no description of their menu items. Four used a Type 2 menu with the menu items identified in another language (e.g. French, Italian and Chinese) to match the style of the restaurant with a translation of the menu item name in a language to match key market segments, e.g. English, German. Four resort hotel restaurants used a Type 3 menu with detailed descriptions of menu items but did not emphasise the use of organic, local or local and organic ingredients. Two resort hotel restaurants noted the use of organic ingredients, three the use of local ingredients and six the use of local and organic ingredients. Three resort hotels used affective or sensory labelling for menu items. Six resort hotels used geographic labels for regional menu items and three used resort/restaurant/farm/estate branding to indicate the provenance of the ingredients. Four restaurants offered a tasting menu. Only three of the 39 resort hotel online menus made explicit statements about catering for people with special dietary needs. Three of the resort hotels explicitly identified gluten-free menu items on their menus and five identified vegetarian menu items. In addition to identifying gluten-free items on their menus, the chefs at two resort hotel restaurants explained that they (and their teams) would be happy to assist with any dietary restrictions or special requests.

Table 3: Resort hotels that have menus online.		
No.	Resort Name	Type
<b>Top resorts in US and Canada</b>		
1	Blackberry Farm, West Millers, Walland, Tennessee, USA.	11
2	Stein Eriksen Lodge, Stein Way, Park City, Utah, USA.	8
3	San Ysidro Ranch, A Rosewood Resort, Santa Barbara, California, USA.	10
4	Four Seasons Resort Jackson Hole, Teton Village, Wyoming, U.S.A.	7
5	Stephanie Inn, Cannon Beach, Oregon, USA.	7
6	Inn at Palmetto Bluff, an Auberge Resort, South Carolina, USA	6
7	Omni Bedford Springs Resort, South Central Pennsylvania, USA	1
8	Ritz-Carlton, Tiburon Drive, Naples, Florida, USA	9
<b>Top resorts in Hawaii</b>		
9	Four Seasons Resort Hualalai at Historic Ka'upulehu, Hawaii	1
10	Halekulani Hotel, Kalia Rd Honolulu, Hawaii ulu, Ha	4
11	Four Seasons Resort Maui at Wailea, Alanui Drive, Hawaii	9
12	Four Seasons Resort Lanai, The Lodge at Koele, Lanai City, Hawaii	10
13	Hapuna Beach Prince Hotel, Big Island, Kaunaoa Dr, Kamuela, Hawaii	10
14	Mauna Kea Beach Hotel, Big Island, Mauna Kea Beach Dr Kamuela, Hawaii	7
15	Ritz-Carlton Kapalua, Maui, Kapalua, Hawaii	8
16	St. Regis Princeville Resort, Kauai, Ka Haku Road Princeville, Hawaii	11
17	Hyatt Regency Maui Resort & Spa, Nohea Kai Drive Lahaina, Hawaii	3
<b>Top resorts in the Caribbean, Bermuda, and the Bahamas</b>		
18	Hotel Saint-Barth, Baie des Flamands, San Bartolomé, France	3
19	Eden Rock, Saint-Barthélemy, French West Indies.	2
20	Curtain Bluff Resort, Old Rd Antigua, West Indies	3
21	Lilianfels Blue Mountains Resort & Spa, New South Wales, Australia	6
22	Reef House Resort & Spa, Williams Esplanade Palm Cove, Queensland, Australia	6
<b>Top resorts in Mexico</b>		
23	Esperanza, Punta Ballena, Los Cabos, Mexico	7
24	Ritz-Carlton, Retorno del Rey, Cancún, Mexico	5
25	Excellence Riviera Cancún, Carretera Federal, Puerto Morelos, Mexico	1
26	Maroma Resort & Spa, Riviera Maya, CarreteraCancún Tulum, Solidaridad, Mexico	7
27	Four Seasons Resort, Punta Mita, Bahía de Banderas, Mexico	7
<b>Top resorts in Central and South America</b>		
28	Four Seasons Resort, Carmelo, Colonia, Uruguay	5
29	Four Seasons Resort, Peninsula Papagayo, Peninsula, Costa Rica	1
30	Los Sueños Marriott Ocean & Golf Resort, Playa Herradura, Costa Rica	4
<b>Top resorts in Asia</b>		
31	Mandarin Oriental DharaDhevi, Sankampaeng Rd, Chiang Mai, Thailand	2
32	La RésidencePhouVao, PhouVao Hill, LuangPrabang, Laos	8
33	Four Seasons Resort, Mae Rim-Samoeng Old Rd,Chiang Mai, Thailand	4
<b>Top resorts in Europe</b>		
34	Hotel Caruso, Piazza San Giovanni del Toro, Ravello, Italy	2
35	Turnberry Resort, Maidens Rd, Turnberry, Scotland, UK	3
36	Hotel Splendido, SalitaBaratta Portofino, Italy	2
37	Park Hotel Kenmare, County Kerry, Ireland	11
38	Old Course Hotel, Golf Resort & Spa, St. Andrews, Scotlan, UK.	9
39	Grand Hotel Quisisana, Via Camerelle Capri, Italy	11



Displaying an online menu provides a resort hotel with the opportunity to differentiate itself from its competitors. The menu is an important marketing tool and, through the use of rich descriptions of menu items indicating provenance and a Sense of Place, a resort hotel restaurant can communicate to guests the promise of a unique experience and add value. Knowing that their special needs are understood and can be catered for is likely to make a potential resort hotel guest feel much more confident and comfortable about making a reservation. A resort hotel not displaying its restaurant menu online and not using detailed descriptions for menu items on its menu represents a lost opportunities in a highly-competitive marketplace.

This study is the first step in a larger study to explore the effectiveness of different resort hotel restaurant menus in influencing the decision-making processes of potential guests. Classifying menus is particularly important for resort hotel restaurants that need to understand their product, their target market and the distinctiveness of their restaurant so they can meet and exceed guest expectations and remain competitive. Further research will explore the reactions of resort hotels guests' concerning the menu design and its description to identify their perceptions.

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