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

Ahmed Elbadawy Anwar Mohammed Baiomy, Eleri Jones, Ahmed Nour El-Din Elias and Rania Taher Dinana

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 to offering detailed descriptions of menu items. Some emphasized the affective or sensory aspects of menu items or the use of local and/or organic foods. 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 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 aim to sell to 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 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...
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 specialty 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 specialty F&B items and forthcoming events. They are guaranteed to be read and may even be taken home by customers.

♦ Menu clip-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 Bessière [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
Similarly stuffed breast of chicken may... 

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

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**Table 1: Questions**

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

**Table 2: Menu types.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type 1</td>
<td>Little or no description of menu items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type 2</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type 3</td>
<td>Detailed description of menu items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type 4</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type 5</td>
<td>Detailed description emphasising the use of organic ingredients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type 6</td>
<td>Detailed description emphasising the use of local ingredients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type 7</td>
<td>Detailed description emphasising the use of local and organic ingredients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type 8</td>
<td>Affective or sensory labels used for menu items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type 9</td>
<td>Geographic labels for regional menu items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type 10</td>
<td>Name branding on menu items (resort/restaurant/farm/estate branding to indicate the provenance of the ingredients)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type 11</td>
<td>Tasting menu with or without wine pairing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 “人参蒸鲈片”/- 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).

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


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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 [1,6,37,39] 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.

**Baja Lobster Risotto**
- lime zest, yuzu, sweet pear & cherry tomato confit
- Sea bass
- pan-seared with assorted wild mushrooms, green pea & bottarga butter

**Seasonal local catch**
- sous-vide & roasted endives, braised beetroot, orange wedges, toasted hazelnuts & cashews with parsnip purée

**Red snapper maïze**
- corn-vanilla pudding, baby yellow corn, corn kernels, roasted romaine lettuce & corn jus
- "Viaja“ fish
- pea purée, snap peas, organic baby carrots, suenchoke & carrot glaze

**Inspiration**
- Special Chef’s daily creation

**Tuna à l'ancienne & Dijon rubbed, suenchoke & vegetable ratatouille**
- The eye of the rib
- vanilla-carrot purée, fondant potato & porcini crumbs

**Beef tenderloin**
- organic baby vegetables, pine nut, topped with rustic card pesto & white truffle parmesan sauce
- Short rib
- slow cooked, sherry vineger pickled vegetables & crivella sauce

[Source: Esperanza, Punta Ballena, Los Cabos, Mexico]

**Figure 7:** Type 7 menu emphasizing the use of local and organic ingredients.
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.

A resort hotel restaurant is in a unique position. A resort is in a unique position. A resort is in a unique position. Of these, four resort hotel restaurants opted for gluten-free options and five resort hotels the provision of vegetarian options on their menus. In addition to identifying gluten-free items, 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.

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 hotels 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.

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

References
20. Panitz B (2000) Reading between the lines: the psychology of menu design. Restaurants USA, USA.