



AUTHENTICITY AND FESTIVAL FOODSERVICE EXPERIENCES

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Abstract: This paper investigates how the medieval festival visitor's foodservice experience might augment negotiated aspects of event authenticity and prompt revisitation intent. A dualistic authenticity framework is applied to relatively untested aspects of the tourist/visitor experience thus bridging the nexus between tourism, events and hospitality research. A scale to measure various authenticity dimensions of foodservice, drawn from the literature, was designed and administered at an Australian medieval festival. Results revealed significant differences between overall visitor-perceived event authenticity and the foodservice and event servicescape and hygiene factors and found associations between perceived authenticity and revisitation intentions. This research develops a practical checklist of authenticating agents of foodservice and conceptually provides further credence to recent studies advocating reconciliation between the essentialist and existentialist authenticity discourses. **Keywords:** event management, medieval festival, foodservice, experiences, negotiated authenticity. © 2011 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

INTRODUCTION

Foodservice provision within the context of the touristic experience is a topic of much recent scholarly attention. Various studies have measured the foodservice expenditure of tourists—the general consensus being that between a quarter and a third of tourist expenses are attributable to food and beverages (e.g. Hall, Sharples, Mitchell, Macionis, & Cambourne, 2003; Telfer & Wall, 2000) and that this may be 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); one that is increasingly leveraged in destination branding (Okumus, Okumus, & McKercher, 2007). Food offer and service, especially that 'typical' of a destination, can influence intention to visit (Sedmak & Mihalic, 2008) and might even organise a visitor's daily itinerary once there (Kivela & Crofts, 2006).

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As Pine and Gilmore explain, “while commodities are fungible, goods tangible and services intangible, experiences are memorable” (1999, p. 11). Experiences, especially in the tourism context, are constructed from a range of dimensions. Work on ‘emotional tourism’ (e.g. Bialski, 2006) flags that experiences are highly subjective responses to a range of physical, social and product and service stimuli, including food, influenced by an individual’s ‘personal realm’ dimensions of knowledge, memory, perception, self-identity and indeed emotion (Quinlan Cutler & Carmichael, 2010). Since contemporary economies are progressing along a continuum from commodity to service to experience-centred interactions there is clearly justification for examining foodservices through the lens of alternative approaches and in a range of tourism settings.

Moreover, while the tourist’s sensual consumption experience has generally focussed on the gaze (e.g. Tribe, 2008; Urry, 1990)—a sense permitting detachment—recent studies have investigated the benefits, and risks, of touristic experiences from other corporeal perspectives (Cohen & Avieli, 2004). The consumption of food and drink engages a range of senses from taste, smell, sound, feel as well as sight and indeed, begins long before, and ends long after, ingestion (Bell & Marshall, 2003). Foodservice experiences have the potential to intimately engage and submerge consumers into various cultural, spiritual, spatial and temporal ‘places’ (Sims, 2009) and also provide sensory triggers for their experiences’ recollection into the future (Lupton, 1994). It is these dimensions of the foodservice experience that contribute to place attachment (Gross & Brown, 2008) and hence tourist satisfaction and loyalty.

Yet food assumes no, or only peripheral, importance in the literature (e.g. Beverland & Farrelly, 2010). Whilst central to the hospitality and catering sectors of the tourism industry, where eating and drinking are core products, foodservice appears to play a less direct role within the events sector of the industry. Notwithstanding extant pre-modern food festivals of rooted cultural significance (see Boniface, 2003) and their contemporary, oftentimes commercially-orientated manifestations, catering at events could be viewed as predominantly a secondary activity. These secondary activities are of lesser importance than other elements of the servicescape: that is the physical environs and artefacts (Bitner, 1992) provided for the entertainment, enjoyment and comfort of visitors.

From a marketing perspective, foodservice in these situations is considered an augmented product, or one which supplements and adds value to the core product (Kotler, Bowen, & Makens, 1996). This is despite foodservice elements of the servicescape contributing to the visitor experience (Nelson, 2009). Yet there is also reasonable evidence in the literature to suggest that well-designed food and beverage offerings, including its servicescape, can benefit tourist satisfaction through enhanced value for money (Buchanan, Simmons, & Bickart, 1999). In foodservice environments elements of the servicescape can increase the willingness of customers to pay more (Andersson & Mossberg, 2004). Furthermore, the atmospherics, or ambience, generated by

servicescapes can heighten experiences and emotional connections (Bitner, 1992), as can the design of an event (Nelson, 2009).

Provision of a perceived authentic experience can also increase tourist satisfaction with a product—whether that is a tourist destination or an event experience: “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” (Getz, 1994, p. 316). Certainly, a controllable dimension of an event is the consumable product like food or drink. For heritage events and festivals ‘fab-creating’ authenticity is their stock-in-trade, the *milieu* in which they operate and the discourse by which they communicate—or as Crang (1996) has it, a ‘quixotic quest for the quintessential’. There is however, a research gap connecting overall tourist authenticity perceptions with those of the provision of foodservices in recreated heritage/historical event contexts. As there is a current proliferation of tourism destinations and special events that ‘trade’ in (tourist perceived) authentic experiences/products, further research can make a timely and significant contribution to the nexus between tourism and hospitality research, from practical and theoretical perspectives. The general aim of this study then, is to investigate the impact of authenticating agents/dimensions during foodservice on the experience of event attendees in historically presented leisure settings adopting a theoretical framework drawn from the authenticity literature.

AUTHENTICITY IN TOURISM STUDIES

A recurring theoretical, if not lexical, obsession in the cultural literature since Boorstin (1964), and in early tourism studies (e.g. Cohen, 1988; MacCannell, 1973), is ‘authenticity’. Indeed, throughout the first part of this new millennium too, authenticity has been a hot topic in tourism’s foremost journals (Buchmann, Moore, & Fisher, 2010) perhaps reflecting the corporate world’s realisation that the construct “is becoming a critical consumer sensibility” (Pine & Gilmore, 2008, p.35). Despite some inherent problems regarding its understanding and application to the tourism context, for example the predominance of Euro-centric perspectives (Cole, 2007; Waitt, 2000), which is clearly applicable to a medieval festival setting in a multicultural new world nation, or the malleability between its tangible or embodied nature (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006), there is some conceptual consensus emerging in terms of its subjective interpretation orientations (Belhassen, Caton, & Stewart, 2008). Current theoretical developments widely reject the rigid cultural critique of ‘staged’ authenticity perspectives (e.g. Baudrillard, 1983; Boorstin, 1964; Cohen, 1988; Eco, 1986; MacCannell, 1973; Urry, 1990). Indeed, latterly interpretations have investigated authenticity’s role in the commodification of a tourism product and how it then becomes an agent of power and even politicised (Chhabra, 2008; Cole, 2007). Wang (1999) posits a duopolous framework for understanding authenticity in the touristic experience.

Wang (1999), and others (e.g. Reisinger & Steiner, 2006; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006), ascribe the first as *object* authenticity and then two

subjective authenticities; constructivism and existentialism. These broadly reflect paradigmatic shifts from the positivist tradition to the critical turn to postmodernism in contemporary thinking. The key distinction between the objective and subjective approaches is predicated on acknowledging the role of the individual living the experiences, rather than privileging that of the creator. As Hughes argues, authenticity is couched within a larger debate: "... a crisis of representation" (1995, p.782) that has questioned the construction of reality itself. The authenticity conundrum is ably articulated by posing the question 'who is it that ascribes or arbitrates authenticity'? Is it commercially-driven tourism suppliers, often uninformed tourists or scribes such as us who deconstruct from the safety of detachment (Chhabra, 2005)?

For the proponents of the objective viewpoint authenticity is a scientific or historical 'artefact'. The original, or at least a certified and immaculate imitation of it, is sacred, since it is the original that remains referential. It is the original that confers legitimate authority and power (Wang, 1999), although in the context of heritage studies the original, and the artefacts (emblems) that authenticate them, have in themselves been called into question (see Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983). This interpretation plays itself out in the tourism literature *vis-à-vis* staged authenticity and the tourist's desire to reject the 'front' stage experience in favour of the 'back'—which paradoxically is usually the front anyway (see MacCannell, 1976).

Contrary to the above described objective authenticity two generalist paradigms interpret authenticity in a subjective light. The first, constructivism, celebrates a mutual meaning-making process—embracing the idea that tourists actively construct their own meanings in negotiation with various environmental factors. Constructivism recognises that there is not a single objective reality, one that is independent of human interpretation or that which is pre-determined. There are for constructivists multiple, or plural, realities and these are relativist, or dependent on situation and context. Authenticity emerges, or is emergent—that is it is socially constructed and evolves over time (Kim & Jamal, 2007). More than this, Reisinger and Steiner (2006) argue, constructivists are ambivalent about authenticity—they realise that concern over the space between what is and what is not authentic, by the various agents that manufacture and interpret it, is of little consequence. From this perspective then, authenticity is not proprietary—it is democratised. Individuals socially construct authenticity in negotiation between their own experiences and context—whether what they find is 'authentic' though, is a matter of conjecture—but largely irrelevant.

The second subjective authenticity, the existential approach, builds on the tenets of constructivism, but utilising a post-modern perspective further liberates the individual. If constructivism is about meaning-making, which still operates within boundaries, then existentialism *vis-à-vis* authenticity is meaningless: where differences between real and unreal objects and experiences are no longer perceptible or relevant (Kim & Jamal, 2007). Indeed, for the existentialists the litmus-test of authenticity is truth-to-oneself, reducing the dimensions of space, place, time, and other physical artefacts and social contexts, as simply

props for the mediating (un/authentic) alternative and transformative reality. Matheson's (2008) study of authenticity as mediated by the emotions responding to Celtic music serves as a poignant example. In essence the existentialists harness the post-modern concepts of Baudrillard's (1983) 'simulcra' and Eco's (1986) 'hyper-reality', which render authenticity moribund. Nonetheless, this existential approach has been embraced by much of the tourism fraternity (e.g. Peterson, 2005; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006; Uriely, 2005; Wang, 1999). Recent work, fortunately perhaps, has attempted to negotiate the existential and the objective, or essentialist, approaches.

Belhassen et al. introduce 'theoplicity', "bringing together the Greek *theos* (god) and the Medieval Latin *placea* (place)" (2008, p.683), to the tourism authenticity lexicon. They propose that experienced authenticity resides at the intersection of a (visited) place, an individual's touristic behaviours and their belief systems. In essence, Belhassen et al. (2008) conceptualise an integrated approach to authenticity—the bringing together of the essentialist and existential perspectives. Theoplicity's union of the objective and subjective, in their study however, hinges on the phenomenological proximity of the ideological, spatial and even temporal authenticity dimensions to the visitor experience. Clearly, in many heritage reconstructions this is not the case, for example Kim and Jamal's (2007) study of a contemporary Texan medieval/renaissance festival, where the abovementioned authenticity dimensions lack congruence. Yet as argued in subsequent studies (see Buchmann et al., 2010; Chhabra, 2010; Spracklen, 2011) it is the renewed negotiation of the essentialist and existentialist perspectives that promotes the conceptual attractiveness of theoplicity.

Nonetheless, regardless of theoretical perspective a framework must be fit-for-purpose. The existential position aligns with the Heideggerian notion that phenomena are defined in two contrasting ways—the theoretical and the practical. This paper argues that, especially in the context of tourism as a leisure pursuit, special events should be conceived of as a phenomenon that consumers immerse themselves in practically—thus interpreting authenticity, albeit in response to its object markers, liberally rather than critically. This, no less, underpins the essential distinction between conceptual authenticity and grounded authenticity. Although acknowledging that there are a multiplicity of perspectives and theoretical positions which are debated in the literature regarding authenticity, this study is rooted in the negotiated realms of the essentialist and existential authenticity ideologies. In so doing we recognise the existential approach which maintains that an individual's perception and interpretation (of authenticity in this case) is privileged, regardless of how those perceptions might have been formed, or are indeed judged, yet also acknowledge the power of toured objects as the referential point/s of departure for perceiving authenticity.

Various studies have contributed to the development of dimensions of authenticity in the touristic experience (e.g. Chhabra, 2008; Halewood & Hannam, 2001). It is worth discussing several studies, including some adopting quantitative instruments, in relation to the dimensions of authenticity they reveal together with their framing

discourses. Waitt (2000), in his study of the historicism of The Rocks precinct in Sydney, Australia, identified thirteen authenticating signifiers and distilled these to ‘setting’ (4 signifiers), ‘activities and demonstrations’ (5) and ‘buildings’ (4). Clearly, the majority of the agents of authenticity were static objects. Similarly, Chhabra, Healy and Sills (2003) predominantly integrate various objects, for example souvenirs themselves, and settings and activities that carry authenticity by association. Littrell, Anderson, and Brown (1993) alternatively, in their research pertaining to the authenticity of tourist souvenir crafts, drill down to the characteristics of an object, or setting. They identify several factors that in the eyes of tourists convey authenticity. These included uniqueness and originality and genuineness, cultural and historical integrity, the craftsmen’s workmanship and materials used together with aesthetics and functionality. Unlike Waitt’s (2000) signifiers, these largely communicate authenticity by association. Overwhelmingly, while these studies opened themselves to negotiated authenticity stances, an essentialist discourse resonated in the findings, emphasising the referential power of the toured object.

Authenticity, Events and Food and Beverage

Various studies have examined authenticity in the context of events (e.g. Kates & Belk, 2001; Papsen, 1981), and heritage events/tourism (e.g. Chhabra, 2004; Chhabra et al., 2003; Coupland, Garrett, & Bishop, 2005; Hunt, 2004; Jamal & Hill, 2004). Some of the aforementioned heritage tourism research projects begin to explore notions of authenticity as connected with tourist satisfaction and/or event production profitability/sustainability. The provision of foodservices is an integral part of an event’s offering, which can contribute much to the tourist experience, and to various ways in which the success of an event may be measured. At least in the retail domain, research has shown that perceptions of foodservice products as authentic elevates its value in the eyes of the consumer (e.g. Camus, 2004; Groves, 2001; Kuznesof, Tregear, & Moxey, 1997). Food and drink though, is expressive of region, community, and its culture or a place remote in time. Hughes suggested that “associating dish/ingredient with a specific place, using local/colloquial terminology, associations with personalities, real or fictional, use and promotion of ‘naturalized’ ingredients and reference to miscellaneous historical or fictional events” (1995, p.784) are strategies by which regions, communities and cultures might appropriate food and drink to elevate perceptions of product authenticity. Yet the role of foodservice provision in augmenting special event authenticity remains relatively unexplored.

This is despite a number of studies investigating the motivations of food festival tourists (e.g. Nicholson & Pearce, 2001; Smith & Costello, 2009a, 2009b), research findings suggesting that food and wine festivals can promote the authenticity of destinations (Park, Reisinger, & Kang, 2008) and at least one study suggesting that over 60% of tourists find (what they perceive as) authentic food an “important [event] feature”

(Chhabra et al., 2003, p.712). While foodservice offer at special events can serve as the *raison d'être* or as a peripheral service to the tourist experience (Fields & Stansbie, 2004), previous case studies have suggested that foodservices can augment overall event authenticity through differentiation, association and as a quality control mechanism (Robinson & Clifford, 2007). Yet a scale that individually identifies various dimensions of foodservice authenticity appears elusive although there are clues in the generic culinary and gastronomic literature.

FOOD AND AUTHENTICITY

If authenticity as a construct has precipitated much consternation among the tourism fraternity then in the world/s of cuisine, gastronomy and foodways the term has equally befuddled. While food science advances have necessitated the development of techniques to test the compositional integrity and authenticity of foodstuffs (e.g. Reid, O'Donnell & Downey, 2006), this current enquiry is expressly concerned with food as a cultural artefact. Some argue authenticity in the context of food is conceptually bunk, being applied to an evolving phenomenon to which authenticity cannot anchor itself either temporally or spatially (Appaduria, 1981). Yet this approach epitomises the rigidity of the objective stance. Other interpretations highlight the negotiated aspects of food and authenticity. Heldke (2003) identifies three key definitions of authenticity in food. The most common usage is for a food that is simply 'different', or novel, which is distinct from 'native' authenticity—that is a food experience produced by and in a specific culture. Contrarily, 'replicable' authenticity is an effort made by the cook to produce food as it is somewhere else, or sometime else.

Nonetheless, and pivotally for this study, Heldke (2003) argues that food is a medium that allows an immediately authentic relationship with a culture or tradition, even if the motives of the consumer are often colonialist. Hence, authenticity in the food studies, anthropological and sociological literature is replete with politics be they of a nationalistic (DeSoucey, 2010), racial (Morris, 2010), economic (Schlosser, 2002) or urban social nature (Zukin, 2008). Nonetheless, the literature reveals some common agents, or dimensions, of a food product's authenticity besides these political considerations (see Table 1).

These dimensions of food authenticity emerge from a variety of disciplines and a range of contexts yet a number of themes surface. While perhaps the most superficial, and as will be seen in this study as most manipulable, is nomenclature—or 'physical' factors (Kuznesof et al., 1997). As Groves notes, "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" (2001, p.246). The dish or product name conveys authenticity by association; to geographic place and also to a time (Hughes, 1995; Johnston & Baumann, 2010), to a tradition (Bessiere, 1998) even if mythologised. Product or dish labelling connotes trustworthiness, often by association with an authority (Hughes, 1995), and these are increasingly being ratified by law (Beer, 2008). Tellstrom,

Table 1. Food Literature Authenticity Dimensions

Dimensions of authentic food	Key themes	Sources
Politics	Consuming other; social and economic injustice	Appaduria (1981), Heldke (2003), DeSoucey (2010), Morris (2010), Schlosser (2002), Zukin (2008)
Naming/branding/presentation	Association with place/time; mythologising; trustworthiness/legality/authority; delivery style	Beer (2008), Bessiere (1998), Hughes (1995), Johnston and Baumann (2007), Kuznesof et al. (1997), Tellstrom et al. (2006)
Provenance	Heritage/tradition; 'local' ingredients; uniqueness	Beer (2008), Groves (2001), Hughes (1995), Moisio et al. (2004), Tellstrom et al. (2006), Sims (2009)
Production process	Integrity of cook/vendor/organisation; association with celebrity; methods, simplicity/natural	Abarca (2004), Carroll and Torfason (2011), Groves (2001), Hughes (1995), Jones and Taylor (2001), Johnston and Baumann (2007), Kuznesof et al. (1997)
Personal	Individual connection (e.g. ethnicity); self-identity; prior knowledge	Beer (2008), Camus (2004), Groves (2001), Johnston and Baumann (2007), Kuznesof et al. (1997)
Social	Context; place of consumption	Beer (2008), Carroll and Torfason (2011), Johnston and Baumann (2010), Kuznesof et al. (1997), Lu and Fine (1995), Moisio et al. (2004)

Gustafsson, and Mossberg (2006) add that labels marketed since medieval times maturing into brands with nostalgic value. Less manipulable is provenance. Central to this food authenticity dimension are ingredients, locally sourced and unique (Groves, 2001; Moisio, Arnould, & Price, 2004; Sims, 2009). Standalone ingredients, or those that compose a dish, are reflective of a culinary heritage (Beer, 2008) and the foodstuff's historicism, although the composition itself might be contemporary (Hughes, 1995).

Alternatively, food authenticity, Abarca (2004) argues, can be reduced to two determinants: the authenticity of the cook and the authenticity of the process. What binds the process is the foodstuff's production, which for Kuznesof et al. (1997) represents the situational factors. On the one hand the authenticity of the production process is elevated by its methods simplicity and naturalness (Groves, 2001; Hughes, 1995; Johnston & Baumann, 2010) and on the other being reflected in the small-scale or non-commercial characteristics of the producing organisation (Carroll & Torfason, 2011; Johnston &

Baumann, 2010). The integrity of the cook too implies authenticity (Beer, 2008) as do celebrity status or product endorsement (Johnston & Baumann, 2010). For example, Jones and Taylor (2001) deconstruct the role of celebrated food writers Elizabeth David and Jane Grigson. For instance, by recreating recipes from provincial Italy in Britain, where the seasons, availability, quality and substitutability of produce, and even technical equipment differ, David and Grigson may alter the perception, of the final product's authenticity, a process Heldke (2003) would find unpalatable.

Another key dimension of authenticity resides with the individual. These 'personal' factors (Kuznesof et al., 1997) include the cultural awareness and knowledge of consumers (Groves, 2001). Personal factors might emerge as an individual connection between the produced and the consumed, which may be based on ethnicity for example (Johnston & Baumann, 2010) or simply the contemplative process (Beer, 2008) so the food just tastes 'right'. Perceived authenticity depends much on self-identity—personality, personal goals, life style and values—as revealed by marketing research from the retail domain (Camus, 2004). Regardless, as Johnston and Baumann (2010) emphasise, authenticity is a social construction, not inherent only to an individual or an object. Here, by who else (Beer, 2008), and where the food is consumed embodies authenticity, whether this be in the family home (Moisio et al., 2004), in a culturally ambient restaurant with a plethora of authenticity 'signifiers' (Lu & Fine, 1995) or in a (merchant) precinct which communicates authenticity by a range of product signifiers other than food (Carroll & Torfason, 2011).

What these summarised dimensions of perceived authenticity appear to share is an undercurrent of process—that the authenticity of a product is acquired over a period of time, be it through brand value or authority, which is generally acknowledged by trust—a process in itself. Therefore, though it is argued that perceived authenticity is as much about the process as the outcome/encounter, we maintain that in the context of this research it is the final engagement—in this instance at a special event and through the prism of a dualistic authenticity conceptualisation. Indeed, Beer alludes to both the essentialist and existential domains inherent in food: "The legal basis of this authenticity (object authenticity?) is constructed by consensus (constructivist authenticity?), and we may choose to engage with it in whatever way we wish (postmodern authenticity)" (2008, p. 161).

Research revealing the agents authenticating tourist experiences, generically, are not supported by much empirical work (Kim & Jamal, 2007). Moreover, despite the fact that there is some literature that links the perceived authenticity value of foodservice to event success (Chhabra et al., 2003) there is a lack of empirical evidence to substantiate this proposition. Furthermore, the mechanisms and processes by which event organisers and other event stakeholders might control the perceived value of authenticity for food and beverage service are not well understood. Finally, tools that actually measure the benefits of authenticating foodservices—whether for event organiser/stakeholder profitability, tourist satisfaction, repeat tourist indicators and

destination attractiveness—are few. Although there is a considerable literature on food and wine focussed events there are few instances in which the authenticity issues are raised (e.g. Hall, 2006). Hence, the key research objectives for this study are; what are the perceived agents or *dimensions* of authenticity for food and drink services at a special event?, do these authenticating agents of foodservices contribute to *overall event authenticity*?, and do these authenticating agents of foodservices contribute to overall *tourist satisfaction and revisitation*?

INVESTIGATING EVENT FOODSERVICE AUTHENTICITY

An online register for medieval, renaissance and historic period festivals lists 165 annual events in the USA alone, and several major medieval festivals in Australia including the Abbey Medieval Festival (Renaissance Festival, 2009). To varying degrees these festivals embrace various 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, 2002) and engage in behaviours that would not be permissible in their normal lives (Kim & Jamal, 2007). 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 and construct modern national identity (see Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983) and heritage through a period reconstruction (Ganim, 2002). Moreover, it has been suggested that a calendar of events might prove a further marketing strategy for a wider tourism destination (Gonzalez & Medina, 2003).

Medieval festivals have attracted academic interest as a context for serious historical research (e.g. Callow, 2006; Kim & Jamal, 2007). Tourism researchers have appropriated medieval festivals as a *milieu* (surrounding) 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 foodservice at medieval festivals, though, is fleeting. References range from how revellers delight in “gorging on vampireburgers” specially created for a Transylvanian Dracula themed festival (Chelminski, 2003, p.113), or on marketing food and beverage services to the perceived tastes of the market niche who attend, regardless of authenticity. Clearly, a focus on food and beverage service, for this phenomenon, is justifiable.

Research Setting

This current study investigates foodservice consumption in the context of a staged Australian heritage event—the Abbey Medieval Festival: Medieval Tournament. The festival is staged annually, usually in early July. First held in 1988, it has become a major festival for the Moreton Bay Shire, about 50 kilometres north of Queensland’s state capital, Brisbane. Although Australia, which was first permanently settled by

Europeans in 1788, has no medieval heritage the population is largely of Anglo-Celtic heritage, with other significant resident populations of European ancestry (ABS, 2009). 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 S.M. 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 utilised his ever-growing collection of artefacts and antiquities. A number of circumstances contributed to the closure of the village in 1940 and a destitute Ward and his loyal followers were forced to leave England around the end of the Second World War. Subsequently, his community endured a tumultuous period, which involved residences in Cyprus, where Ward died, Egypt and Ceylon before arriving in Sydney, Australia in the mid-50s and finally founding the Confraternity of Christ the King monastic community at its current home in the late 60s. This was a period of extreme hardship, dislocation and uncertainty for the community and resulted in much of the collection's prized 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 core mission was to raise funds for the Abbey Museum, but there were two secondary, but critical aims of the festival. One was to raise publicity and awareness for this collection which unlike most public collections was not funded, administered, maintained, developed or marketed at the tax payers' expense. Given the museum was private, and its semi-rural location, the founding monastic community perceived there to be some scepticism amongst the public regarding the authenticity of the collection. Thus, the Abbey Museum and festival boards developed a charter that outlined strict guidelines for the festival participants including re-enactors, performers, volunteers and various 'merchants and artisans', including of course foodservice stallholders (Abbey Museum, 2009). These guidelines resonate with the object authenticity ideology underpinned by historicism. This imperative for authenticity intensified as the Abbey Museum was able to secure contracts with the local state government for educational programs. Hence, the other secondary aim of the festival was that the Abbey community hoped the general public would make a positive association between the perceived authenticity of the festival and that of the museum collection.

The festival regularly attracts around 20,000 participants, including medieval hobbyists and large contingents of re-enactment groups, and tourists (Abbey Museum, 2009). Besides being recognised as the "most prestigious festival of its kind" by various Australian living history groups, significantly, for this study, it is also recognised as the most authentic such festival in Australia, and among the ten most authentic

internationally (Abbey Museum, 2009). It should be noted though, that the festival's designated medieval time window (600–1600AD), and geographical range, which reflects the lack of historical consensus on what is 'medieval', gives some latitude for the interpretation of object aspects of the authentic, as evident by the melange of costuming choices in Figure 1. Equally, the interpretation of authentic apparent in the foodservice offering at the festival ranged from the faithful to the commercially expedient. Of the 100 festival stallholders about a fifth were food and beverage vendors. These ranged from committed medieval devotees like the operators of the Stag Inn and the Runnymede Tavern to hamburger merchants and tropical fruit ice vendors. While all foodservice stallholders were required to comply with merchant conditions of entry, detailing merchandising and clothing guidelines (Abbey Museum, 2009), the local school's Parents and Citizens Association (P&C) canteen, which sold predominantly convenience foods, was exempt. The P&C canteen though, was not located in the market precinct designated for all the stallholders. Clearly, the organisers, as Getz (1994) opines, were attempting to control for aspects of authenticity.

The festival incorporates several events in a week long format. Apart from a number of promotional events, workshops, and themed evening pastimes, the three key Medieval Festival events are the main Abbey Medieval Tournament, held over a full weekend, the Masque Ball, and on the weekend preceding the tournament proper, the Medieval Banquet. The Medieval Banquet event is staged on the Abbey Museum's property in the school and community hall. The banquet offered the researchers an opportunity to explore, observe and formalise various foodservice authenticity dimensions. Attracting some 320 guests, the



Source: *Abbey Museum, 2009*

Figure 1. Abbey Medieval Festival Re-enactors

event format was an eclectic blend of ceremony, entertainment both serious and slapstick, and of course, the provision of a multi-course medieval themed meal. Patrons were charged \$70/head which included one complimentary alcoholic beverage. Further details will be provided in the instrument design discussion. However, it is necessary to outline the methodology for this current study.

Instrument Design

This paper primarily reports the findings of the survey conducted at the Abbey Medieval Festival: Medieval Tournament, 2007. The survey instrument, however, was informed by the various dimensions of food authenticity apparent in the literature (see Table 1), which were explored in a preliminary direct observation study, a method suitable for event research (Nelson, 2009). These dimensions were also congruent with previous generic tourism authenticity scales (e.g. Littrell et al., 1993; Waitt, 2000). Conducted at the festival's Medieval Banquet the preceding year, the aim of the direct observation study was to witness the operationalisation of perceived agents, or dimensions, of authenticity of food and beverage services. In particular, the study sought evidence for strategies that enhance perceived authenticity. Thematically these included naming, branding, labelling or presentation, provenance, either real or implied, elements of the production process and the social context—that is the themes apparent in the food studies literature. Given no researcher contact was allowable with the guests at the banquet (at the organisers' behest) no personal insights such as those pertaining to previous knowledge, self-identity or truth-in-moment experiences were accessible. Following content analysis of the exploratory study field notes, which also recorded conversations with the organisers, the caterers and their staff, and other source documents such as menus, seating plans and event orders, various agents, or dimensions, of foodservice were identified and refined. 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 tabulates this process.

Thus the researchers negotiated incorporating the developed food authenticity questionnaire items into a visitor survey design, for which the festival organisers provided a template, to be administered at the festival proper. The survey included a battery of items (9) that asked respondents to register their satisfaction regarding aspects of the festival's facilities, services, atmosphere and value for money. Much of the remaining 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, data entry and preliminary analysis for respondent access. Several items relating to overall perceived event and foodservice authenticity preceded the foodservice specific authenticity items. Four items in total were added which tested for tourist perceptions of overall event authenticity, perceived authenticity of the stallholders, overall perceived authenticity of the foodservice and value for money. These

Table 2. Observed Foodservice Agents/Dimensions of Authenticity

Categorised dimensions	Examples	Developed scale items
Preparation, cooking styles, equipment used	Whole roast pig; emphasis on baking; general 'heaviness' of dishes	The food & beverage are produced authentic to Medieval times
Verbal and written description of menus, dishes and ingredients	Venyson Y; Coll-Flower	The food & beverage are 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 accoutrements on table	Trenchers, no forks, candle light, ceramic and pottery for service crockery	The food & beverage are 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 taste 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 are 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 are traditional Medieval
Packaging of agents of authenticity to deliver an experience distinctive of the medieval	Combination of above agents, performance of Steward	The food & beverage are unique to Medieval times

items were ascribed a '1' to '7' Likert scale—'1' indicating lowest satisfaction and '7' highest satisfaction as consistent with other tourism authenticity scales (e.g. Chhabra, 2008; Waitt, 2000), though a seven point scale was preferred to allow greater scope in statistical analyses.

To complement the above-described ordinal scale items for perceived authenticity several other questions were asked which are reported. 'Yes', 'No' and 'Unsure' responses were sought to determine whether respondents intended to revisit the festival, related to event satisfaction as established by the loyalty profit chain (e.g. Heskett, Jones, Loveman, Sasser, & Schlesinger, 1994; Oliver, 1997), and also intention to visit the Abbey Museum on the day of their festival trip. An open-ended question, which related to the foodservice, was also included in the survey: 'What was the most/least memorable Food & Beverage stallholder/s? (Q4)', and this is reported. But questions relating to expenditure were poorly responded to which prevented meaningful analysis.

FOODSERVICE AUTHENTICITY DIMENSIONS

A total of 800 surveys were distributed over the two days of the Abbey Medieval Tournament. The questionnaires were distributed to

event attendees, excluding Abbey staff and volunteers and most importantly data collectors were asked not to target re-enactors since this highly involved group might bias results due to their knowledge but also their orientation (Kim & Jamal, 2007; Sedmak & Mihalic, 2008). Responses were gathered on-site by the research team and trained 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.

Demographics

Table 3 reports the basic demographic details of the respondents. More females (61%) than males (38%) completed the survey. Given that 95% of the respondents attended with friends and family and nearly half the sample (47%) were accompanied by children it can be inferred that on occasions the female responses represented the interests of their companions. Interestingly, over half the respondents were return visitations to the festival, which is not unusual for heritage events (Chhabra et al., 2003), nearly half again worked fulltime and almost a third of the sample were between 30 and 59 years of age.

Perceived Authenticity

Before further analyses were conducted tests of normality and instrument reliability were performed on the 12 ordinal scale authenticity

Table 3. Demographic Profile of Sample

Variable	Categories	Frequency (Valid%)
Gender	Male	38
	Female	61
Age	18–29 years	23
	30–39 years	21
	40–49 years	31
	50–59 years	13
	>60 years	11
	Accompanied by	Family/Friends
	Children	47
Employment Status	Alone	4
	Fulltime	48
	Part-time	9
	Unemployed	21
	Student	12
	Homeworker/Carer	1
Previous Festival Visitation	Retired/Other	10
	Yes	51
	No	49

items (*Q1a–Q1l*). Whilst normality was violated for these items no corrective action was taken since the significance of results, especially the positive skew towards respondent agreement, would have been compromised. Tests of scale reliability were conducted on all the 12 items (*Q1a–Q1l*) returning a Cronbach's alpha of .952 and on the eight dimensions of foodservice authenticity (*Q1d–Q1k*), as displayed in [Table 2](#). A Cronbach's alpha of .967 was returned on these foodservice authenticity items, indicating high reliability. Descriptive analyses followed to determine the comparative mean scores for all the 12 items and these are displayed in [Table 4](#) ranked in descending order.

'*An authentic Medieval atmosphere was created*' returned a mean of 5.94 from 582 respondents indicating overall strong agreement. A total of 567 respondents indicated overall strong agreement with '*Authentic Medieval foodservice is available*'. The mean of 5.01 however, represented a statistically significant difference from *Qa1*, as determined by a paired samples *t*-test ($t(566) = -17.96; p < 0.001$) indicating foodservice contributed significantly less to the perceived event authenticity than other factors on the festival program. Equally, there was a statistical difference between '*Food & beverage stallholders enhanced the authentic Medieval atmosphere*', which recorded a mean of 5.27, according to a paired samples *t*-test ($t(573) = 13.32; p < 0.001$), when compared to the overall perceived event authenticity item (*Q1a*). This suggests that as an

Table 4. Authenticity Items Ranked by Respondent Satisfaction

Item no.	Item	Mean statistic	Std. deviation statistic	n statistic
q1a	An authentic Medieval atmosphere was created	5.94	0.993	582
q1c	Food & beverage stallholders enhanced the authentic Medieval atmosphere	5.27	1.280	574
q1l	Value for money of food and beverages	5.03	1.366	564
q1b	Authentic Medieval foodservice is available	5.01	1.394	567
q1d	The food & beverage are produced authentic to Medieval times	4.59	1.362	558
q1g	The food & beverage are described/ labeled authentic to Medieval times	4.54	1.438	553
q1h	The food & beverage ingredients are authentic to Medieval times	4.45	1.414	543
q1i	The food & beverage are presented authentic to Medieval times	4.44	1.422	544
q1k	The food & beverage tastes authentic to Medieval times	4.43	1.430	513
q1j	The food & beverage are served authentic to Medieval times	4.42	1.431	544
q1e	The food & beverage are traditional Medieval	4.41	1.399	554
q1f	The food & beverage are unique to Medieval times	4.23	1.495	553

augmented product (Kotler et al., 1996) foodservice delivered less value than overall atmospherics to the one of the festival's core missions, authenticity.

A consistent pattern emerged from the remainder of the dimensions of perceived foodservice authenticity (i.e. *Q1d–Q1k*), which all scored under a mean of '5', as displayed in Table 4. The lowering number of responses from the dimension of foodservice items and the consistency of these last items' means suggest there may be a response set bias occurring (Zikmund, 2000). However, it also may indicate that despite previous studies identifying that overall foodservice might contribute to tourist experiences (Cohen & Avieli, 2004), and to event authenticity (Chhabra et al., 2003), various individual dimensions might either diminish, or indeed not contribute to this perception. Finally, the item 'Value for money of food and beverages', which registering a mean of 5.03, indicated the sample was relatively positive about the foodservice value proposition. As the last item of the perceived foodservice authenticity set, this also arrested the suspected pattern of response set bias (Zikmund, 2000). Figures 2–4 provide examples of the physical evidence and situational factors (e.g. Kuznesof et al., 1997) from the festival that respondents may have appropriated in the interpretation of these dimensions of perceived foodservice authenticity.

Analysis of the item inter-relationships indicated that the specific dimensions of perceived foodservice authenticity, as determined by items *Q1d* to *Q1k*, ranked lower than the overall foodservice item (*Q1b*). A paired samples *t*-test determined there was a significant difference between the overall item 'Authentic Medieval foodservice is available'



Source: Authors' presentation.

Figure 2. Example of 'Authenticating' Foodservice Production



Source: Authors' presentation.

Figure 3. Example of 'Authenticating' Foodservice Presentation



Source: Authors' presentation.

Figure 4. 'Stag Inn' Menu 'Authenticating' Foodservice Description/Labeling and all the eight dimensions of foodservice authenticity as detailed in Table 4. This suggests that once quizzed for specific dimensions

regarding their perceived authentic foodservice experience the sample was either less satisfied, or more discerning in their responses. Hollinshead (1998) has commented on the ‘Disneyfication’, or commoditisation of tourism products in creating ‘distory’ and an awareness of this by the respondents may be apparent in these findings. Either way various dimensions of perceived foodservice authenticity, as identified in the literature (e.g. Abarca, 2004; Hughes, 1995; Johnston & Baumann, 2010; Kuznesof et al., 1997) and empirically developed in the preliminary direct observation study, appear to have theoretical and practical relevance.

A range of cross-tabulation analyses were conducted to determine whether there were any statistical differences between item responses according to demographics. Chi-Square testing revealed no difference between the grouped items *Q1a* to *Q1l* according to whether respondents were accompanied by children or not. No statistical differences were apparent according to gender although a significant difference was registered for only one of the items according to age. A one-way Anova found that there was a significant difference between age groups in relation to the perceived authenticity of ingredients ($F(4) = 2.686$; $p = 0.031$). Bonferroni *post hoc* tests indicated this significance was attributable to the middle-aged brackets, specifically the 40–49 and 50–59 age groups. Perhaps surprisingly, there were no statistically significant differences according to whether the respondents had attended medieval fairs previously or not.

Perceived Authenticity and Event Satisfaction

To further investigate the value of perceived authenticity to the Medieval Festival’s overall visitor experiences analysis was conducted to determine how the perceived food authenticity items ranked against other of the scale items related to event satisfaction. Principal component analysis (PCA), using the varimax with Kaiser normalisation rotation method, was conducted on all the 21 items on the satisfaction scale. Although three factors were extracted in the first rotation, to achieve a robust solution those items with communalities <0.4 were progressively eliminated from the analyses. After four more iterations a determinant value of >0.00001 was returned thus indicating that multi-collinearity was not an issue and hence the data factorable. During this process four items were deleted until the final stable solution displayed in Table 5 was achieved.

The first factor was comprised of seven items (*Q1h*, *Q1d*, *Q1f*, *Q1k*, *Q1j*, *Q1b*, and *Q1c*). These items all relate to the perceived foodservice authenticity, and so the factor is named thus, and given an aggregated mean (4.63) for further analyses. Interestingly, all of the four items deleted during the solution strengthening process (*Q1e*, *Q1g*, *Q1i* and *Q1l*) were foodservice-related items. Six items (*Q1q*, *Q1t*, *Q1r*, *Q1a*, *Q1u* and *Q1s*) loaded on the second factor. Atmospherics, or ambience, and various event services (e.g. information, admission and parking) dominated this factor, which was hence named ‘Servicescape’. Although ‘the Tournament’s overall value for money’ appears an

Table 5. Principal Component Analysis of Overall Event Satisfaction Items

Items	Aggregated mean	Eigenvalue	Factor	Cronbach alpha
Q1b. Authentic Medieval foodservice is available	4.63	7.219 (42.5% of variance)	Perceived Foodservice Authenticity	.930
Q1c. Food & beverage stallholders enhanced the authentic Medieval atmosphere				
Q1d. The food & beverage produced are authentic to Medieval times				
Q1f. The food & beverage are unique to Medieval times				
Q1h. The food & beverage ingredients are authentic to Medieval times				
Q1j. The food & beverage are served authentic to Medieval times				
Q1k. The food & beverage tastes authentic to Medieval times				
Q1a. An authentic Medieval atmosphere was created	6.02	2.504 (14.7% of variance)	Servicescape	.807
Q1q. The Tournament's atmosphere				
Q1r. The Tournament's overall value for money				
Q1s. Information provided by the internet				
Q1t. Front Gate Admission Procedures				
Q1u. Parking				
Q1m. Quality and comfort of venues, seating, etc	5.27	1.299 (7.6% of variance)	Hygiene	.766
Q1n. Cleanliness/condition of amenities				
Q1o. Number of amenities blocks available				
Q1p. Cleanliness of the site				

anomaly, to preserve the integrity of the statistical process the item is retained based on the justification that previous research finds a strong correlation between servicescape and value for money (Buchanan et al., 1999) especially in foodservice settings (Andersson & Mossberg, 2004). Indeed, Bitner's (1992) original conceptualisation of servicescape was *vis-à-vis* service and price (Nelson, 2009). Again, an aggregated mean (6.02) is assigned to the factor for further analyses.

The third factor consisted of four items (*Q1n*, *Q1o*, *Q1p* and *Q1m*). These items clearly all relate to comfort and cleanliness aspects of the event and its facilities. This factor is named ‘Event Hygiene’ and an aggregate mean (5.27) is computed for use in further analyses. Thus, various tangible, social and product and service elements (Quinlan Cutler & Carmichael, 2010) of the festival experience, including food, are identified, and grouped.

As displayed in Table 5 the Cronbach alpha of each factor ranges from acceptable to strong. Moreover, the reliability value for all 17 items ($\alpha = .912$) decreased with the deletion of any items. It is concluded that the overall scale, and that of each of the three factors, has high internal consistency, or reliability. What the raw aggregated means reveal is that the festival’s servicescape was the highest contributor to event satisfaction followed by event hygiene factors and lastly, although still satisfactorily, ‘Perceived Foodservice Authenticity’ contributed least to event satisfaction. It should be noted however, that one dimension of the ‘Servicescape’ factor (*Q1a*) relates to overall authenticity, which for Pine and Gilmore (1999) transforms services into staging experiences. Chi-Square tests using the aggregate means however, revealed no significant differences between the three factors according to age or gender.

Intention to Revisit the Tournament

Although most of the respondents (81.3%) had not visited any other Medieval festivals in the last two years and only 33% ($N = 532$) of respondents indicated they were repeat visitors to the Abbey Medieval Tournament, over 93% ($N = 581$) indicated they would consider repeating their visitation, which indicates a high level of satisfaction with the event overall (Heskett et al., 1994; Oliver, 1997). To compare if the aggregated mean scores of factors identified through the PCA (‘Perceived Authenticity’, ‘Servicescape’ and ‘Event Hygiene’) differed significantly between the two groups (those ‘likely to visit again’ and those ‘not likely to visit again’) the Mann-Whitney U test was applied.

Those who indicated they are likely to visit future tournaments had statistically significantly higher mean ranks for all three factors than those who indicated they will not visit future tournaments ($p < .05$). The mean rank for ‘Perceived Foodservice Authenticity’ of those likely to visit again was 229.34 and for those unlikely to visit again was 145.95 ($U = 1404.500$, $p < .05$, $A = 0.68$) with a medium effect size. The mean rank for ‘Servicescape’ of those likely to visit again was 224.41 and for those unlikely to visit again was 91.19 ($U = 693.500$, $p < .05$, $A = 0.74$) with a medium effect size. The mean rank for ‘Event Hygiene’ of those likely to visit again was 262.52 and for those unlikely to visit again was 102.85 ($U = 1246.000$, $p < .05$, $A = 0.81$) with a large effect size. Isolating this result to perceived foodservice authenticity this is an interesting finding given a positive relationship between intention to revisit and perceived authenticity is hypothesised in previous studies (Chhabra et al., 2003). Moreover, this supports the notion that place, or in this instance event attachment, is positively correlated with foodservice satisfaction (Gross & Brown, 2008).

Table 6. Predictors of Tournament Revisitation

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95.0% C.I. for EXP(B) Lower	95.0% C.I. for EXP(B) Upper
Perceived Foodservice Authenticity	-.231	.403	.329	1	.566	.794	.360	1.748
Servicescape	1.121	.535	4.393	1	.036	3.069	1.075	8.758
Event Hygiene	.722	.497	2.110	1	.146	2.059	.777	5.457
Constant	-4.562	2.823	2.612	1	.106	.010		

Although from these tests of significance it can be inferred that the three factors might be indicative of repeat visits to an event, a logistic regression analysis was performed with returning for a future visit as the dependent variable and ‘Perceived Foodservice Authenticity’, ‘Servicescape’ and ‘Event Hygiene’ as predictor variables for tournament revisitation. A total of 371 cases were analysed and the full model significantly predicted return visits (*Omnibus Chi-square* = 10.099, *df* = 3, $p < .05$). The model accounted for 2.7% and 17.6% of the variance in future visits, with 98.4% of predictions for returning for future visits successfully predicted. Table 6 gives coefficients, the Wald statistics, associated degrees of freedom and probability values for each of the predictor variables. The values suggest only the ‘Servicescape’ factor reliably predicted returning for future visits. The value of the coefficient reveals that for every increase in one unit of ‘Servicescape’ scores, the odds of returning for a future visit increase by a factor of 3.069. The 95% confidence interval (CI) values indicate that the magnitude for this increase is likely to be in the range .360 to 1.748.

Several points are worthy of discussion here. While the regression analysis isolates ‘Servicescape’ as the best predictor of revisitation, confirming much of the literature regarding the importance of event environment, atmospherics and ambience in event (Nelson, 2009) and foodservice environments (Andersson & Mossberg, 2004), the earlier tests of difference did suggest the foodservices’ perceived authenticity factor was indicative of revisitation. Moreover, embedded in the servicescape factor is an authenticity dimension of event atmospherics. Finally, for this research revisitation was measured categorically. Given the distorted distribution of revisitation responses (i.e. 93% indicated likelihood of revisitation), thus compromising analyses, a continuous scale (e.g. a Likert five-point) in future research might yield different results.

Intention to Revisit the Museum

On the other hand only 23% ($N = 577$) responded that they had either visited, or intended to visit, the Museum on the day of their

excursion. Significantly, the majority of the sample (75%) responded either in the negative or was unsure as to whether they would visit the Museum subsequently ($N = 467$). These percentages were insufficient to pursue the analyses using the three event satisfaction factors as a function of museum visitation. Nonetheless, independent t -tests were repeated using the individual perceived foodservice authenticity items as a function of realised or intended visitation of the museum, an important issue for the festival organisers. Only one dimension was found to be significant, ‘*The food & beverage tastes authentic to Medieval times*’ ($t(508) = 2.01$; $p = 0.045$). Although a highly subjective sense this finding is consistent with the dualistic authenticity framework of this study, which accommodates personal experience, and further endorses exploring alternative sensory touristic experiences (Cohen & Avieli, 2004). Although previous research has demonstrated linkages between tourist motivation and free-choice learning (e.g. Ballantyne & Packer, 2002), it is apparent that the mixing of leisure and educational experiences was not a key motivation for the majority of the sample. On this count the organiser’s stated objective of creating a tourist linkage between the festival and the museum is less successful than generating perceived authenticity *per se*.

Memorable Aspects of the Foodservice

Open-ended questions probing for the most and least memorable aspects of the festival’s foodservice provided an independent measure of the scale development and a reflection of individual foodservice stallholders. The findings are summarised in Table 7. Clearly, the most memorable stallholder was the Stag Inn as selected by nearly one fifth of respondents ($N = 283$). This is an encouraging result for the authenticity of foodservice since the Stag Inn adopted many of the authenticating agents to reflect the historical periods represented at the festival and is a stallholder that is heavily used in the promotion of the festival by the organisers. Other ‘European’ food stallholders fared

Table 7. Most and Least Memorable Aspects of Foodservice

Most memorable foodservice ($n = 283$)	No.	Least memorable foodservice ($n = 79$)	No.	Why un/memorable ($n = 265$)	No.
Stag Inn	19*	Too many sausages	10.5	Taste	34
Pancake Inn	11	Lamb shanks	10	Authenticity	17.5
Hare Krishnas	8	Not authentic	10	Good value	6
Gypsy Coffee	8	Pancakes	9	Looked nice	5
German Sausage	7	Line ups	8.5	x	x
Hungarian	6.5	x	x	x	x
Corn on Cob	6	x	x	x	x

* Percentage (%) of valid responses.

well suggesting a respondent association of Old World cuisines with the medieval and this resonates with the naming and provenance dimensions of authenticity recurring in the literature (e.g. Beer, 2008; Hughes, 1995; Tellstrom et al., 2006) but also with the essentialist dimensions of the dualistic authenticity ideology framing this study.

The least memorable foodservice responses do not offer too many insights. That 10% of the sample cited 'not authentic' as a least memorable attribute of the festival foodservice further validates the earlier statistical discrepancies between overall perceived event authenticity (*Q1a*) and that of the foodservice (*Q1b*) and stallholders (*Q1c*). Clearly, the most important consideration as to why respondents had selected stallholders for attention regarding most/least memorable experiences was taste, reflecting the earlier reported finding regarding intention to revisit, and again authenticity. It is not clear whether these considerations resulted in a positive or negative rating—just that they were important considerations in arriving at this decision.

CONCLUSIONS

Getz (2008) suggests that authenticity has been negatively portrayed in that events invariably seek to commodify various markers and appropriate them for commercial purposes in temporally discrete spaces. This study has investigated how a particular marker of perceived authenticity, the foodservice, might complement an event's overall authenticity mission from a dualistic theoretical perspective and contribute to event satisfaction and revisitation intent. While the subjective authenticity theoretical framework maintains that authenticity is a matter of individualistic perception and negotiation (e.g. Kim & Jamal, 2007; Wang, 1999) this research supports reconceptualisations of tourist perceived authenticity which reaffirm the object's role as a reference point (Belhassen et al., 2008). At a more specific level, this study develops and tests tourist understandings of foodservice's authenticating agents, also relatively unexplored in the literature (Chhabra et al., 2003), yet an approach previously applied to other tourist authenticity artefacts (e.g. Littrell et al., 1993). Clearly however, the spatial and temporal distance between the recreated medieval objects and their 'originals' is the *milieu* in which dimensions of existential authenticity operate.

This study provides evidence of general festival tourist satisfaction *vis-à-vis* perceived authenticity and also finds that revisitation intention is positively correlated with the satisfaction with the perceived authenticity of the foodservice although servicescape is a better predictor. 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 both warranted but also that further investigation is required. Furthermore, the statistical differences between overall perceived authenticity and in this case that of perceived foodservice authenticity, as reported above, suggest that once

prompted to further scrutinise dimensions of authenticity tourists are equipped to differentiate levels of perceived authenticity. In the case of this study it is clear that the festival foodservice does not augment this event's overall perceived authenticity although overall event authenticity is a dimension of servicescape atmospherics.

The research also provides evidence regarding the authenticating agents of foodservice in a historical leisure event setting. Primarily thematically distilled from the food studies literature and then explored in the direct observation study, this research has identified a range of agents, or dimensions, of foodservice operationalised at an event. Previous research in tourism contexts has investigated authenticity perceptions of settings (e.g. Halewood & Hannam, 2001; Waite, 2000) and products (e.g. Chhabra et al., 2003) but rarely for that product's dimensions (see Littrell et al., 1993). These foodservice dimensions revolve around the physical aspects of naming (Kuznesof et al., 1997) and provenance (Sims, 2009) together with status of the cook and of the cooking process (Abarca, 2004), all of which convey authenticity by association. This was perhaps the key finding of the study—in that once dimensions of a particular product (for instance dancing or jousting), within a heritage/historical context, are isolated and tested then tourist perceptions of the products in relation to how they are packaged can be usefully interrogated. A major contribution of this research is a scale measuring dimensions of perceived foodservice authenticity.

Many explanations have been worked and reworked to develop authenticities' applicability to the touristic experience much of which is shaped by a destination's or event's appropriation of cultural artefacts. Yet few account for the term's literal, semantic and semiotic connotations—essentially in that the experiences are 'the real thing'. Experiences in the field could be at best pseudo-authentic, or in post-modern parlance simulacra, and at worst *ersatz*. This paper develops understanding of the authenticity tourism phenomenon in augmenting or embellishing the tourist experience by various perceived authentic cultural markers and in so doing enhances general demand-side tourism thinking as well as foodservice management practice.

From the evidence of this study there is still much to be gained from investigating, in more focus, the tourist corporeal or bodily experiences, beyond the gaze (e.g. Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Tribe, 2008; Urry, 1990). In an abstract sense food experiences mediate the individual's relationship between self, object and society (Beer, 2008), but in a practical sense, through memory recall for example (Lupton, 1994), food experiences might drive place attachment and revisitation. Food, culinary or gastronomy tourism and food studies have emerged as a distinct literature in the tourism literature over the past decade, largely in response to the realisation that food consumption is so individualistic and as such drives experiences and provides immediate, tangible but multi-sensory access to traditions (Heldke, 2003). Its intersection with other research streams, in this case experience economies and authenticity (Pine & Gilmore, 2008), as well as reconciliatory research

paradigms such as theoplacity (Belhassen et al., 2008) serve to enliven and provide further directions for theory development. Moreover, studies of this nature can potentially inform hospitality practice, which in itself ultimately enriches the tourism experience.

Future research should further investigate the personal dimensions of authenticity as they inform, mediate and/or moderate food consumption experiences. Pursuing in-depth qualitative approaches (see e.g. Beverland & Farrelly, 2010), particularly to determine tourist perceptions of the 'native' version of the product being 'replicated' (Heldke, 2003), or incorporating authenticity scales from the psychology literature (see e.g. Wood, Linley, Maltby, Baliouis, & Joseph, 2008) into quantitative instruments would advance knowledge in this area. So too could exploration of the food and beverage vendor perspectives—whether they are cognizant of various perceived foodservice authenticity dimensions, whether they attempt to manage them and whether these are an encumbrance or asset to their businesses.

Conceptually too, progress is to be had in reconciling authenticity positions. As much as contemporary society may worship at the 'authentic' altar of leisure (Chhabra, 2010), whisky (Spracklen, 2011) or food, 'theoplacity remains an unsatisfactory nomenclature in domains where the tourist is pilgrim in anything other than the strictest sense of the word. Theoplacity is nonetheless, a most useful conceptualisation of the reconciliation of object, or essentialist, and subjective authenticity ideologies. That the tourism academy should abandon authenticity however, as Reisinger and Steiner (2006) suggest, is philosophically premature. More than this so long as practitioners, such as the organisers of the Abbey Medieval Festival, continue not just to cherish but also deploy agents of authenticity as an integral asset of their tourism product, it is incumbent on the academy to continue to investigate and work towards a reconciliation of this problematic phenomenon. ■

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