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THE MEANING OF AUTHENTICITY IN THE EXPERIENCE INDUSTRY: THE CASE OF LATVIAN RESTAURANTS

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THE MEANING OF AUTHENTICITY IN THE EXPERIENCE INDUSTRY: THE CASE OF LATVIAN RESTAURANTS

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Abstract

In this study we explore the meaning of authenticity in the Latvian experience industry based on five chosen restaurants in Riga: Folkklubs Ala Pagrabs, LIDO, Navat Club, Slāvu, and Uzbekistāna. Interviews with the administration of the restaurants, with the customers of restaurants, as well as the authors' personal observations are carried out in order to obtain the data. Triangulation is used in order to check the information and establish validity. Coding is applied to give meaning to the data. The research reveals five different key codes: passion, consistency, genuineness, expressing identity and clues. Based on triangulation method the paper concludes that only three key codes out of five are equally significant: genuineness, expressing identity and clues. In turn, passion and consistency, which were obtained through interviews, could not find support by the data gathered through observations.

Keywords: authenticity, experience industry, Latvian, restaurant industry, restaurants

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1. Introduction

The Industrial Revolution, which brought mass production of goods and services, has made significant changes in how consumers perceive products. This has happened because of the competitive environment, which has made different goods and services increasingly similar to each other; hence, they look more like commodities. For instance, it is often difficult to distinguish the difference between the same products of different brands (Pepsi vs. Coca-Cola), or the difference between the food at different eating places (two restaurants that represent same ethnic food). Therefore, companies try to differentiate themselves in other ways. This has made companies go in great lengths to make the experience as a differentiator (Pine & Gilmore, 1998).

Experience as a differentiator is the main driver of a new economy – the experience economy (Pine & Gilmour, 1999). The rise of the experience economy can be observed in the restaurant industry. In order for a restaurant to distinguish itself from competitors, it needs to offer not only excellent food but also a unique experience. By using a specific theme, restaurants can charge a higher price because customers receive higher value; they receive more than food and services (Jugård & Modig, 2009).

Authenticity could be one part of experience. For example, in 2012 Riga was announced as the Delightfully Delicious Destination (“LIVE RĪGA Calendar 2013”, n.d). Through the cooperation with chefs from Riga’s best restaurants and cafes the project under the bold title ‘Delightfully delicious destination – Riga – the gastronomic capital of the Baltics’ was launched. The main idea behind the project is to provide people with the opportunity to experience the best Latvian nature has to offer every month of the year as well as to build up the image of Riga as a “citadel for gourmands”. Thus, the restaurant industry in Latvia not only claims itself to be excellent in terms of the cuisine, but it also announces itself as genuine and exceptional. The Latvian restaurant industry aims at being unique to offer experiences no one can get anywhere else.

Authenticity in the experience industry is a well researched topic and it mostly concerns the tourism and restaurant industries. However, in the case of Latvia, no studies on authenticity can be found in either the experience industry or, more specifically, the restaurant industry. This means that the Latvian restaurant industry in terms of authenticity is an unexplored subject. This research will help future restaurants to become more successful or avoid unnecessary bankruptcies. It is an especially relevant subject because the importance of authenticity has been growing faster than ever; more and more marketing messages chase consumers around the world. Pace (2011) has stated: “when you’re not as genuine, people

tend to tune you out and hold you in lower regard”. This and many other studies suggest that in order to be competitive, a restaurant should offer an authentic experience to its clients. But since being unique is not an easy part of a business it is important to understand what makes it authentic to customers.

The purpose of this study is to explore the meaning of authenticity in Latvia, more specifically in the context of the restaurant industry. Several case studies will be conducted in Riga. In order to narrow down the scope of the study, the authors focus on five concept restaurants in Riga: Folkklubs Ala Pagrabs, LIDO, Navat Club, Slāvu and Uzbekistāna. Folkklubs Ala Pagrabs positions itself as “the first and the only traditional musical bar in Latvia” that offers everyone the atmosphere of true Latvian style; LIDO claims that its bistro and restaurants represent a family-friendly Latvian motive with a variety of food and unique entertainment; Navat Club wants its guests to enjoy the *dolce vita* not just through the offered cuisine but mainly through feelings that one can experience in the restaurant; Slāvu is proud of the genuine Russian cuisine and the way the food is being prepared; and finally, Uzbekistāna, through a beautifully-told narrative, calls itself “an oasis for exhausted travellers” where magic atmosphere, skilful interior items, and gourmet dishes made from natural products introduce each customer to the culture of the East (LIDO (2012), Ala (2013), Slavu (2012), Navat Club (2012), Uzbekistana (2012)). All five restaurants offer unique experience for their customers, thereby hinting at the authenticity of each.

Buckingham has suggested: “with authenticity, you can never have a complete formula, otherwise, it stops being authentic” (Yates, 2012). The central research question that will be answered within the current study is “What is the meaning of authenticity in the Latvian experience industry based on five chosen restaurants in Riga: Folkklubs Ala Pagrabs, LIDO, Navat Club, Slāvu, and Uzbekistāna?” By answering the question we will find a definition of authenticity in the Latvian restaurant industry. The definition in turn might help to understand what is essential for both the customer and the owner in order to call a restaurant authentic.

The main source of data will be observations, personal interviews with the owners and online interviews with the visitors of the five restaurants. Preliminary investigation of the five restaurant’s websites and printed materials, i.e. use of secondary data, will not only provide us with a clearer image of each dining place but also help in forming the interview questions. Questions for the interviews will be based around the research question, and they will be mostly open-ended; however, some closed-ended questions will be asked as well.

Following the introduction, chapter 2 is a broad literature review which covers previous studies on the topic where the experience industry and authenticity in the industry are explained, as well as different approaches to explain the authenticity are presented. The authors also cover previous studies on authenticity: first, in the tourism industry and, second, in the restaurant industry. The third chapter includes a description of the methodological approach chosen by the authors, based on methodologies of previous studies together with the suggested methods from the literature. Results obtained during the observations and interviews are presented in chapter four, and are followed by analysis and discussions of the results in chapter five. Finally, we conclude by answering the research question in chapter six.

2. Review of Literature

2.1. The Experience Economy

History of the concept “experience economy” dates back to 1970 when the book *Future Shock* written by Alvin Toffler was published. The book became the international bestseller and has sold over 6 million copies. Toffler (1970) wrote about the information overload in the future and that there will be too much change in too short period of time, which will eventually lead people to spend a great portion of their salaries on having amazing experiences.

The experience economy became a more well-known term after Pine and Gilmore (1998) discussed it in their research paper under the title “Welcome to the Experience Economy”. This paper was the first to differentiate experience economy from service economy. In the paper, they emphasized that the idea of staging experience is spreading beyond theatres and theme parks. The experience is combined with the product or service, so when using the latter one can get additional emotional benefit. This means that experience is the “fourth economic offering” after commodities, goods and services. Pine and Gilmore stated that the companies, which ask admission fee for the experience, also belong to the experience industry. In Pine and Gilmore’s view, if the experience has not been priced yet, all the managers should have started to think of what they would have changed if they priced it, which motivates them to charge admission fees.

On the other hand, Edensor (1998) has a different opinion of the experience economy. He believed that sensual experience is more powerful when it has an element of surprise. Edensor described two types of tourist spaces in his book *Touring the Taj: Performance and Meaning at Symbolic Site*, heterogeneous tourist space and enclave tourist space. The latter is the type of tourist space, which is well regulated and serves the capitalistic society, while the former is not regulated and is more hectic. Edensor (1998) described it as following:

It seems that the sensual and social body passing through heterogeneous tourist space is continually imposed upon and challenged by diverse activities, sensations and sights which render a state at variance with the restrained and distanced distraction of the tourist enclave. (p.50)

This contradicts Pine and Gilmore’s theory mainly because pricing experience would make it less valuable and can even ruin the experience.

There are other theories about experience economy that are worth mentioning. Jensen (2001) described in his book *The Dream Society* that in the future the story behind the

product will be increasingly important. He differentiated markets for adventure, love and friendship, care, self-identity, peace of mind, beliefs and convictions. Darmer and Sundbo (2008) indicated that food and eating, video games, and tourist attractions belong to the experience economy. For example, one can create the experience in the restaurant by hiring a famous chef, changing the restaurant design or having live music in the restaurant. Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman, and Hansen (2003) agreed that by matching services and goods one can construct a setup for the positive experience. They pointed out that positive experience should have the five aspects of the “experience scorecard”. These are personal relevance, novelty, surprise, learning and engagement.

In order to create experience, one needs to engage his customers. Pine and Gilmore (1999) described two different dimensions of how people are engaged into the experience. The first dimension is *guest participation*, which means that guests are either actively participating in creating the experience or are passive. A fine example of this could be visiting symphony orchestra concert, where visitors are expected to be quiet and are not actively involved in creating the experience, while, when people go skiing, they actively participate in creating their own experience. The second dimension is *environmental relationship*, which connects the performance with the customer. In one end of the spectrum, it means that the visitors are absorbing the experience, and on the other end, it means that they are immersed by the experience. Example of this could be brought from watching live football match, where the match visitors absorb the action happening, while the players are immersed by the game itself and the surrounding created by the visitors. When one puts these two dimensions together, four different experiences are created: entertainment, education, aesthetics, and escapism.

Different enterprises make a lot of effort to end up in the right category of the different aforementioned experiences. Businesses give positive cues and try to eliminate negative cues so that the customer gets the experience. The reason for this is that businesses like restaurants can differentiate themselves from others and customers know what experience to expect. For example, restaurants like Hard Rock Café offer entertainment as experience. The restaurant has created a specific theme, which leaves its customers with certain impression of the restaurant. At the same time, British Airways use their base service as a stage to give their customer a breather from the stressful everyday life (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). Although companies go to great lengths to be authentic and deliver the appropriate experience, in the end customers will always be the ones who decide whether the experience is authentic or not.

2.2. Authenticity in the Experience Economy

According to Nehamas (1998), authenticity was first described by Plato who tried to distinguish the meaning between authentic and artificial. Plato constructed the Theory of Forms. The theory hinges on the fact that nothing is authentic unless it is inherently the thing itself. Nehamas (1998) described Plato's thinking: "nothing fake can be good and nothing good can be fake. Only the genuine can be a proper model of imitation, and nothing short of the genuine can ever be perfect".

In the academic context, authenticity became a more popular theme only in the end of the 20th century. The first academic who discussed authenticity in a scientific research was MacCannell (1973). He studied "staged authenticity" in the tourism industry. He showed that in the tourist attractions tourists are being framed to believe that they are in the back region of a setting where the authentic experience is the strongest. After the MacCannell study, authenticity has been discussed more widely by academics in the tourism industry.

According to the Oxford Dictionaries Online (n.d.), authentic represents something "of undisputed origin and not a copy; genuine". For instance, in a sentence "the restaurant serves authentic Italian meals" authentic, according to the dictionaries, means "made or done in the traditional or original way, or in a way that faithfully resembles an original". Thus, the Oxford Dictionaries suggest that when taking restaurant industry as an example, Italian cuisine does not necessarily has to be prepared in Italy in order it to be authentic. It only needs to be made as closely as possible in the genuine way.

Today, however, the word "authenticity" has many interpretations behind it, and there is no clear consensus among the academics which one is the most appropriate. Branch (2012) defined four different concepts of authenticity by presenting an example of Porsche 356 Speedster. These concepts are: objectivist conceptualism, subjectivism/constructivism, interactionism and postmodernism.

Reisinger and Steiner (2006), intrigued by the variety of different concepts, have studied authenticity in tourism. They have concluded that academics should not use the term "authenticity" as there is no clear consensus among academics which explanation is correct for the tourism industry.

However, Belhassen and Caton (2006) challenged the final word of Reisinger and Steiner (2006) by arguing that tourism should be studied through many different theoretical concepts as those concepts are alive and in the minds of tourists.

2.3. Different Approaches in Understanding Authenticity

Several studies conducted by such authors as Jugård and Modig (2009), Belhassen, Caton and Stewart (2008) as well as Wang (1999) defined three different approaches: objectivism, constructivism and postmodernism. Therefore, we also proceed by reviewing the existing literature on the three concepts.

Objectivist conceptualism

In objectivist conceptualism approach items are important because there is something unique in them, something that makes them valuable. In his manuscript, Hartman (1973) described this concept in the following way:

A good chair, then, has all the properties you learn chairs have. It is a knee-high structure with a seat and a back. Now if a chair is nothing but a back it's a pretty poor chair. It's a good back but a bad chair. There you have another little beautiful thing of our simple definition. Anything which is good if it has the totality of its properties is not good when it has less than the totality of its properties. (p.7)

MacCannell (1999) described how businesses use “staged authenticity” concept to trap tourists by staging authentic experience to them. He divided the tourist setting into six stages in which “stage authenticity” is being used. For instance, in stage two he described how fish restaurant tries to stage front region into back region by decorating the surrounding with fishnet hanging on the wall. This is done so to replicate the authentic experience of eating in a true fish restaurant near the sea and not in the centre of the city.

Boorstin (1961) introduced the concept of “pseudo-events” to authenticity. He stated that the United States of America were surrounded by illusions created by the society. He claimed that the society is packed with fake events and people, who are staged in order to create illusion, which tries to replicate reality. Moreover, he believed that people actually prefer the illusion to the authentic experience. He explained this as following:

The tourist seldom likes the authentic (to him often unintelligible) product of the foreign culture; he prefers his own provincial expectations. The French chanteuse singing English with a French accent seems more charmingly French than one who simply sings in French. (p.6).

Subjectivism/Constructivism

Different view on authenticity is offered by subjectivism. This view supports the idea that meaning of authenticity is created by one's own mind and that the mindset is socially constructed. Wang (1999) described authenticity by the view that it is determined by the beliefs or expectations tourists have in connection to the experience. These beliefs may depend on religion or on other characteristics what person may have. Wang found that tourist explores or discovers himself in the tourist setting and by this achieves the state of being true to oneself. However, he also mentioned the fact that history of the item in the social context determines authenticity. This means that something that is thought not to be genuine in the present can become authentic in the future.

Spooner (1986) wrote that the meaning of authenticity of one certain product is different in different cultures. Oriental carpets may be authentic in the eyes of the western viewer, but in the eyes of eastern viewer they may carry different meaning.

There are many different studies done in subjectivism approach in an effort to understand what affects authenticity. For example, Salamone (1997) suggested that authenticity may vary in a different context. He stated that the image of Mexico in the two San Angela Inns means success in Mexican context, however, in the Western world it has more romantic context. Silver (1993) believed that ideology determines authenticity. However, Bruner (1989) researched the fact that the determining authenticity in one's head depends on what views one has on the events, which happened in the history.

Postmodernism

Third view on authenticity is postmodernism, where tourist actually cannot make a difference between the authentic and inauthentic product and believe that the replicated product is realer than the real product itself. Eco (1998) found that postmodernism emerged with the technological development. He described that Disneyland is being even more hyperrealistic than wax museums mainly because the wax museums are informing us that they are replicating reality, while Disneyland let us know that illusions are being replicated.

Gottdiener (1995) brought out many examples of hyperreality happening in theme parks, such as Disneyland, shopping malls, i.e. everywhere where the objects in the life have been conceptualized in order to produce simulated versions.

Another approach to postmodernism view is offered by Baudrillard (1995) with "simulacrum". Simulacrum is a concept, which identifies the fact that society is becoming

more acquainted with the replicated item than the real thing by which it becomes the real thing – hyperreality. Baudrillard described it with a twist:

But what if God himself can be simulated, that is to say can be reduced to signs that constitute faith? Then the whole system becomes weightless, it is no longer anything but a gigantic simulacrum - not unreal, but simulacrum, that is to say never exchanged for the real, but exchanged for itself, in an uninterrupted circuit without reference or circumference. (p.4)

2.3.1. Approach used in the study

In our study, we look at authenticity from the constructivist approach. Constructivist approach is confirmed and supported by many researchers such as Spooner (1986), Silver (1993), and Wang (1999). Moreover, the study is partially based on Jugård and Modig's (2009) methodology that in turn supports subjective position: according to Jugård and Modig, "authenticity lies in the eyes of the beholder".

2.4. Previous Studies on Authenticity in the Restaurant Industry

While many studies are conducted on customer satisfaction in the restaurant industry, there is a relatively limited number of studies on authenticity in the experience industry and in the restaurant industry in particular. However, the increasing importance of authenticity in relation between consumers and businesses boosts up interest in this field among researchers and publishers.

In case of services, they cannot be evaluated as easily as goods. Zeithaml (1981) and Kotler (1999) distinguished three main characteristics of services: intangibility, nonstandardization, and inseparability of production and consumption.

Game (1991) believed (as cited in Mohammad & Chan, 2011) that the vital part of travelling to a new land is to try cuisine from a different culture. The author stated that anything visible can be seen on television; whereas, local food is an essential element of any destination, combined with other attractions and travelling experience (Symons, 1999, as cited in Mohammad & Chan, 2011).

Ebster and Guist's (2005) study (as cited in Jugård & Modig, 2009) suggested that the extent to which customers identify the authenticity of a restaurant depends on their cultural experience; consequently, the more culturally experienced consumers were able to distinguish a themed Italian restaurant from the real restaurant in Italy better. Interestingly, such cluster attached less importance to authenticity in theme restaurants than the customers

who were not as culturally experienced. Nevertheless, being given a choice between a themed and a truly-located restaurant, both groups gave their preference to the restaurant located in Italy. Taking such findings into consideration is important for the industry specialists as well as new entrants when setting up a concept restaurant; this would help in meeting expectations of clients depending on the level of their cultural experience and awareness (Jugård & Modig, 2009).

An eye-catching article on whether restaurants in Moscow are actually authentic or simply adapted to local tastes is presented by Lavrin (2011). He distinguished four components of authenticity in preparation of dishes: concept of place, products, technologies and trends. Lavrin discussed the following about Italian restaurants: for example, restaurants with democratic prices typically serve “gentlemen’s set” that includes Caesar salad, Margherita pizza, risotto and other well-known titles. But if those are just the names, and if those names are the only thing that resembles Italian roots of the place, it is unlikely that the restaurant will be perceived as the true representation of Italian concept.

According to Cohen (1988), plenty of tourists perceive tourism as a play “the success of which is a great deal of make-believe, on the part of both performers and audience”. People engage in a game of “as if”, believing in the authenticity of a service despite any uncertainty they might have with respect to the service.

Jugård and Modig (2009), who conducted their study based on four concept restaurants in Sweden, found out that the “business soul”, i.e. its uniqueness, can be described as a restaurant’s core value. In the study, core values of the observed restaurants stand for “the owners’ background and passion for what they do”. Such passion, in the opinion of the authors, holds a much more important place and is much more valuable to the owners than the financials of the business.

MacLaurin and MacLaurin (2000) argued of importance of service quality in the restaurant industry. Hard Rock Cafe in Singapore, which has been observed in the scope of their study, required its entire staff to attend the complete customer service-training program before beginning the job. Moreover, the authors distinguished another aspect that helps restaurants to retain their clients: portion size and its reliability turned out to be among the main factors that kept customers (MacLaurin & MacLaurin, 2000).

Menu of a dining place occupies a substantial role in customer satisfaction. Several studies stressed that a good menu possesses such qualities as attractiveness to customers as well as selection of goods and services that are broad enough to keep them happy (Kahn, 1995, as cited in Zhong & Ryu, 2010; MacLaurin & MacLaurin, 2000). This belief has been

confirmed by the fact that either consumers have already had enough of common food, or are simply looking for something new (Kahn, 1995, as cited in Zhong & Ryu, 2010).

2.5. Summary of the Literature Review

The term authenticity is becoming more and more popular among scholars and is mainly discussed in the experience industry. Many studies talk about the concept as it is seen in the eyes of tourists, i.e. people who are searching for new experiences. What is appreciated is something that is “not a copy”, something that is “genuine”. There are three approaches to understanding authenticity: objectivist conceptualism, subjectivism or constructivism, and postmodernism. For the purpose of the current study, the most suitable approach is constructivism, which is supported by the literature review. Constructivism implies that authenticity is created at the personal level and that the mindset is socially constructed. This means that each person sees authenticity differently from the other. Some studies suggest that the identification of authenticity in the restaurant industry depends on customers’ cultural experience. Others say that a well-played performance of the restaurant’s staff may make everyone see something as authentic even if it is actually far away from being real.

3. Methodology

3.1. *The Choice of Qualitative Method*

According to Mack, Woodsong, Macqueen, Guest and Namey (2005), qualitative methods are most useful when doing a research about opinions, behaviours or social context. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) wrote that qualitative research is more focused on how social experience is created; while quantitative research focuses on causal relationships of different variables. Thus, qualitative research is able to give detailed information about the socially constructed reality, information about the restrictions that limit the study and information about the researcher and subject relationship. In the point of view of Denzin and Lincoln, “qualitative investigators think they can get closer to the actor’s perspective through detailed interviewing and observation”. Bryman and Bell (2007) said that ‘the stress is on the understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants’. As a result, qualitative method helps in a deeper understanding of a certain social phenomenon, namely authenticity.

Since the purpose of the work is to study such social phenomenon as authenticity, qualitative research strategy is the most recommended. In order to define authenticity one needs to take into account the perspectives of the actors’ answers. Moreover, observation of the answers is necessary, when making conclusions as they might give hints of possible biases or even lies. Silverman (2007) confirmed Denzin and Lincoln (2005) who argued that through interviews in qualitative research, the researcher can get more information about the context of the answers or the feelings respondents have during answers, which in the case of quantitative research is impossible. Therefore, the main sources of information are the participants who are involved in answering the research questions, and who in the scope of the current study are customers of the chosen restaurants.

Mack et al. (2005) brought out three most widely used qualitative study approach methods: participant observations, in-depth interviews and focus groups. Each of them is suitable for a particular purpose when one tries to obtain specific information:

1. Participant observation is the most relevant for gathering information about behaviours in their common context;
2. In-depth interviews is the best choice for collecting information about the history of the personal experience, different perspectives and sensitive topics;

3. Focus groups are suitable in the cases when it is necessary to understand norms in culture and create broad summary about the problems connected with the represented group.

In the scope of the current study, we are turning to two approaches, namely observations and in-depth interviews. Observations allow us to have an insight into details that are necessary for our study: to form our own perception of the restaurants' concepts, understand the methods which the chosen dining places apply to be authentic, try to recognize the characteristics of clientele of each restaurant and, lastly, to make sure that the chosen restaurants fit in the context of the study. In-depth interviews help to understand a single client's experience and feeling he has had in the specific restaurant and let us find out that customer's needs.

Schall (1983) has confirmed that consumers might face difficulties with defining the concept or describing its main characteristics. In the case of authenticity same challenge is likely to occur. Thus, Schall suggested that inferences, interpretations and analysis should be undertaken.

3.2. Methodology in Previous Research on Authenticity

Researchers on the concept of authenticity have mainly turned to qualitative method. For example, Ma and Liao (2009) tried to identify the characteristics of product authenticity through in-depth interviews and focus group interviews. They used a two-stage, multi method approach, in order to understand the properties of authenticity in consumption. First, they conduct personal interviews with ten consumers. Each interview's length ranges within 60-90 minutes. The interviewees are encouraged to have an open mind about the meaning of authenticity when being asked questions related to the meaning of authenticity. After generating six characteristics of authenticity in consumption and three idiosyncrasies of customers, they moved to the next stage. In the second stage authors conducted interviews with three focus groups of seventeen actors in total. The focus groups are formed using snowballing sampling method. They use the same questionnaire, which is used in the first stage, and interviews take approximately the same time.

Another study by Jugård and Modig (2009) researched the meaning of authenticity in the restaurant industry by identifying five different restaurants as cases. The restaurants were selected from the constructivist point of view of authenticity. The authors used the matrix of real and fake created by Pine and Gilmore in order to choose the authentic restaurants. Next, the authors moved on to gather data and understand what determines authenticity. The data

was gathered from secondary data, in-depth interviews and observations. They carried out qualitative interviews with restaurant keepers and advisers so to understand what they have made in their restaurant to be authentic.

There have also been researchers who used quantitative method. Sukalakamala and Boyce (2007) investigated how perceptions and expectations were determined when going to ethnic Thai restaurant. In addition, the study tried to investigate how much of the authenticity consumers desire from the restaurant experience. The authors carried out a survey in three kinds of restaurants: fast food, buffet and table service. The questionnaires were emailed to restaurants, which distributed them and then sent the filled questionnaires back. It was a multiple choice questionnaire in a 10-points Likert scale, which enabled the authors to conduct the following statistical analyses: mean and standard deviation analysis, factor analysis, and correlation analysis.

3.3. Case Studies

First of all, a case study is chosen for the following reason: it investigates a contemporary phenomenon that can be observed in the real-life context. Since the purpose of the research is to explore such social phenomenon as authenticity, a multiple case study is applied. The approach contributes to a broader understanding of authenticity and avoids basing conclusions on one restaurant only. Another reason is the fact that customers of each restaurant usually give different answers; so, different interpretations provide a ground for comparison.

According to Pettigrew (1988, as cited in Eisenhardt, 1989), due to the fact that there is typically a limited number of cases to be studied, it is worthwhile to select cases in which the process of attention is “transparently observable”. In order to choose an authentic dining place, we use the methodology presented by Jugård and Modig (2009). The idea was based on a matrix (see figure 1) created by Pine and Gilmore (2007) with a purpose to help to define what the authors believed to be an authentic restaurant.

	<i>Is not true to itself</i>	<i>Is true to itself</i>
<i>Is what it say it is</i>	Real-fake	Real-real
<i>Is not what is say it is</i>	Fake-fake	Fake-real

Figure 1. The matrix of four modes of authenticity (Pine & Gilmore, 2007)

Such design corresponds to constructivism approach, which supports the view that authenticity is something in the eyes of the beholder. Therefore, the matrix enables a study to show what the researchers believe is authentic. Yet, Jugård and Modig have noted that the selection approach is not the most objective way, hence, weaknesses should be considered.

The matrix is divided into real-real, real-fake, fake-real and fake-fake. Current work aims at studying restaurant that fit the real-real case. A restaurant is authentic, when it is true to itself and is what it says it is. Being true to itself is defined so that the restaurant has not changed its concept and stayed the same for a long period of time. “Is what it says” means that if, for example, a restaurant says it is a Latvian restaurant, then everything that represents that restaurant must be perceived as Latvian.

3.4. Choice of Restaurants

Although the number of cases to be considered for a particular study varies depending on the focus of the work, for the case study research when theory is being built, Eisenhardt (1989) recommended choosing between four and ten cases. At the same time, Yin (1994) proposed that application of a greater number of cases helps to create more certainty. In the scope of this study, we focus on five concept restaurants in Riga: Folkklubs Ala Pagrabs, LIDO, Navat Club, Slāvu and Uzbekistāna. These restaurants were chosen because they have been most successful in communicating the special experience to us. Also, we chose the restaurants that we were familiar with and not the ones recommended by others. Next, the chosen restaurants had to fulfil the real-real requirement presented by the matrix of four modes. All the five restaurants offer a unique experience for their customers, thereby hinting at the authenticity of each. More detailed specifics and claims of uniqueness of each restaurant are discussed below.

Folkklubs Ala Pagrabs (or equivalently in English Folk Club Ala Basement; further in text Ala) is a traditional Latvian tavern and the first and only traditional music bar in Latvia that has been operating since October 1, 2010. Popularisation of traditional Latvian culture, cuisine and lifestyle is what Ala strives for. The place is also unique because of live music, traditional folkdance nights as well as the opportunity to choose from seventeen Latvian beers available on the spot (Ala, 2013).

LIDO is an open-kitchen “democratic” bistro and restaurants’ chain with the original interior and furnishing design. According to the restaurant’s homepage, it aims at “developing hospitality and tourism on the basis of high quality service, a healthy lifestyle and an aesthetic living environment.” LIDO claims to be “an integral part of the current

image of Latvia”, and, thus, represents a unique concept in the Latvian restaurant industry (LIDO, 2012).

Navat Club is a compilation of cuisine of the Middle and Far East, namely, Uzbek and Japanese. Navat Club wants its customers to enjoy the *dolce vita* not just through the offered cuisine but mainly through feelings that one can experience exceptionally in the restaurant. The restaurant is rather young as it was opened in August 2011; yet, the cosiness of the place immediately attracted and kept the audience (Navat Club, 2012).

Slāvu restaurant symbolizes Russian spirit and hospitality. The restaurant is proud of the genuine Russian cuisine, supplemented with exclusive homemade drinks, modern design, excellent service, as well as the skills of the restaurant’s chef from Moscow. Slāvu invites everyone to feel the generosity of the Russian cuisine (Slavu, 2012).

Uzbekistāna tells its visitors a legend about a young pilgrim and a wise man. The two happen to come across “an oasis for exhausted travellers”. The “oasis” opens to its visitors the world of magic atmosphere, skilful interior items, and gourmet dishes made with natural ingredients (Uzbekistana, 2012).

3.5. Triangulation

Triangulation, also known as “mixed method” research, is a method that consists of combining different approaches in order to answer research questions and establish greater validity of the results. According to Patton (2002) the purpose of triangulation is not to arrive at the same conclusions with different sources, but the inconsistencies should be considered as a chance to unveil the deeper and hidden meaning of the given information.

Guion, Diehl and McDonald (2011) brought out the following types of triangulation:

1. Data triangulation
2. Investigator triangulation
3. Theory triangulation
4. Methodological triangulation
5. Environmental triangulation

This study uses data and methodological triangulation. Observations, personal interviews with administration and online interviews with customers are used to increase the credibility of findings. After gathering data from the three different sources, analysis will be performed to understand the areas of consensus and divergence. We discuss the study approach methods used for data collection in the next subchapter. The discussion touches upon the relevance of each method and presents a description of the data collection process.

3.6. Data Collection Methods

3.6.1. Observations

Studying something that exists in the eyes of the beholder means becoming the beholder on one's own, i.e. involving in the process as a participant (Kaša, 2012). As one of the data collection methods, observations served as a helping tool in gaining the idea of the concept of each restaurant and understanding where the real uniqueness is hidden. Since we had a predefined focus of our research, observations followed tight study design which allowed us to agree in advance at what details and specific issues we were going to pay attention to in the restaurants of our interest. As a result, this helped us not only because we were able to understand the way each restaurant presented itself to the visitors, but was also useful afterwards when creating interview guidelines.

First, we studied each restaurant's homepages in the internet which was a good insight into the messages that were conveyed to the visitors. We studied the restaurants' "about" sections, examined their menus and looked at the pictures. Given that we were already familiar with the restaurants for some time before the current study, we could approve or disapprove our belief if the observed dining place were indeed chosen correctly.

Next, closer approach, were the on-site observations where we were able to involve in the settings on our own. We attended the restaurants on weekdays during or after the lunch time so that the places were not crowded too much. During the visits, we paid our attention to everything that might reflect the uniqueness of a place: interior, artefacts, music, staff, menu, food, as well as the clients. We tried food at each restaurant which also helped us to get to know the service part of each place. Short notes were written down on the spot; however, more detailed recording of the insights followed after attending each restaurant.

3.6.2. Interviews with administration

During our observational visits to the restaurants, we approached the administration of each place in order to agree on having interviews either with the owners or managers. The meetings were scheduled in the afternoon on workdays when the interviewees were free, and the sites were not particularly crowded. This was also done with a purpose to maximize and keep the interviewees' attention, and not to make them distracted. In some places, the respondents were the owners, while in some they were administration; in Uzbekistāna it was only possible to talk to the chef of the restaurant. A list of positions that the interviewees held in a particular place is presented in table 1 below. We also mention the language in which each interview took place.

Restaurant	Interviewee	Language of interview
<i>Folkklubs Ala</i>	Owner, manager and chef	Latvian
<i>LIDO</i>	Marketing Specialist	Latvian
<i>Navat Club</i>	Administrator	Russian
Restaurant <i>Slāvu</i>	Owner and manager	Russian
Restaurant <i>Uzbekistāna</i>	Chef (also for Navat Club)	Russian

Table 1. The list of interviewees (created by the authors)

An interview guide was created in advance and remained the same for all the five restaurants. However, the interviews were semi-structured because for some interviewees we had individual questions that mostly arose because of a specific fact about the restaurant or the interviewees' experience. In addition, follow-up questions contributed to the guideline and were essential. Also, we did not name the topic of our study to the interviewees in order to make their answers the least biased.

The interviews lasted for 45 to 70 minutes. We informed the interviewees that we were recording our conversation in order to be able to focus on the interview itself and go through the interviews once again later. We only made some short notes during the interviews if we had some fresh ideas that were worth writing down.

After the interviews had been conducted, we transcribed them to be able to analyze the data. However, from time to time the interviewees told us something we did not ask about. Therefore, we did not transcribe whole interviews; yet, only the data that was meaningful for our topic, or which was useful for generating new ideas and looking for new related literature, was transcribed.

3.6.3. Online interviews with customers

Face-to-face interviews with the administrative side of each restaurant helped us to come up with the most important questions to ask the customers online. Approaching visitors in the restaurants for interviews would be difficult. First, it could disturb them from having a meal. Second, there might be a negative reaction from the administration side. Moreover, awaiting people next to the entrance could be an unsatisfactory solution. We tried to approach visitors several times in LIDO (here it should be noticed that among the observed restaurants LIDO is the least formal place because visitors are not served by waitresses; on the contrary, they choose the food on their own); however, even there that turned out to be with almost no

success: people were enjoying their food while having conversations, and they were not pleased being interfered. Thus, it was decided to use social networks to attract people. In such a way, we found the pages people followed or which they “liked” on Facebook. Customers of four restaurants, such as Ala, Navat Club, Slāvu and Uzbekistāna, were contacted on Facebook, while customers of LIDO were approached through draugiem.lv, a Latvia-based social network. Thus, we turned to convenience sampling in the case of customer interviews.

Messages that explained the purpose why we approached people were sent to 124 Facebook user and 20 draugiem.lv users on March 20. Most responses were received during the first five days after the messages in Latvian and Russian had been sent; however, there were also people who replied later. Overall, we managed to collect responses from 19 Facebook users and only 2 LIDO users. After examining the replies, we were able to identify several respondents with more interesting, deeper thinking, and better mood conveyed. We thanked all respondents, as well as asked those in whom we were interested if it was possible to meet for a cup of coffee someday for a 30-minutes interview. Unfortunately, our messages were ignored.

3.7. Content Analysis – Coding

Qualitative data provides a researcher with a lot of data and the process of its interpretation may be complicated. To understand the meaning of authenticity in the restaurant industry based on the data available from the observations and interviews we decided to use coding.

Coding in qualitative research approach means the application of labels which are further used for classification and giving meaning to information collected. Since data obtained in open-ended interviews is broad, separation of it into smaller pieces allows researchers to organize the information; thus, the findings become easier to understand and interpret (Kaša, 2012). Coding can be considered as subjective because it is up to the researchers to decide which part of the data is crucial (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Because of large-volume data that are obtained through open-ended interviews, we addressed two-step coding process (Kaša, 2012). In the beginning, the information was filtered in a more dispersed way where codes were rather broad. Afterwards, the data was combined into more specific manner where codes were narrowed down.

After transcribing the interviews, we were able to separate our findings into more pronounced concepts, or codes. Since it was feasible to orientate around the data we obtained, we turned to manual coding, though another option might have been a computer software

program NVivo, mentioned by Jugård and Modig (2009). Comparison between theory and the concepts served as a way to answer the research question of our study.

4. Results

In this chapter, we present the results that were obtained from observations and interviews. We first show the administrations' point of view regarding the meaning of authenticity. Later, we present the idea of authenticity based on the online interviews with customers. Finally, we address our personal observations with a focus on authenticity in each of the five restaurants.

4.1. *The Meaning of Authenticity for Administration*

After conducting interviews and writing them down on the paper and reflecting our personal thoughts, which arose during the interviews, we summarized the ideas for each restaurant separately. The ideas present each restaurant's concept as it was described during each interview and reflect the meaning of authenticity as it is perceived by each interviewee and, thus, each restaurant (we presume that administration forms the image of a restaurant based on their personal way of interpreting authenticity).

4.1.1. *Folkklubs Ala Krogs*

In the beginning of the interview the owner, who is also a manager and a chef, told us that he and his friends felt the need for places where Latvian folk could be gathered and exhibited. As a result, Ala was established. Ala is "the place where Latvian wisdom is cultivated: atmosphere, cuisine, selection of drinks and live music altogether result in common Latvian patriotic atmosphere."

We were informed about the experience of the cooks, namely that they had been connected to reconstruction of the old culture. One of them participated in ancient-themed events and gained experience in cooking authentic cuisine. Second cook's background consisted of working in a small village where old women taught him how to make ethnic cuisine. Thus, the owner requires the cooks to have an understanding of the Latvian cuisine.

The owner is not only managing the restaurant. He has created his own recipes, the interior and played in a band in the evenings. In his opinion, it is essential for a person who owns a restaurant or pub to be passionate about what he does, and the person should not be afraid of losing sometimes because it is only then possible to stay true to oneself:

A great mistake in randomly opening a themed bar or restaurant is not knowing the field and not being passionate about the topic itself. It is stupid to rely on an excellent barman. You should be familiar with the field in which you operate. I was once advised to hold some discos at Ala, i.e. transform it into a club at night. Yes, that might be a good source of extra profit; however,

I don't know anything about managing night club and I don't feel that this is my calling.

The cuisine that is represented in Ala follows Latvian traditions: ingredients of the dishes are typical for Latvia, and Ala purchases products that come from the local market. Besides traditional dishes, there are seventeen types of Latvian beer available in Ala, and there is no other place with that wide variety of Latvian beer selection.

In furniture and finishing of the details, considerable amount of wood is used. Many tables and chairs were collected from old beer factories around Latvia, and the owner knew the history of each item. Same applied to pictures on the walls that came from different places.

The interview revealed that Ala is being perceived differently: some say it is ethnic; some find lags behind the concept. As the owner believes, the real truth whether Ala is genuinely Latvian varies from individual to individual: "It all depends on where you draw the line between what is real and what is not." He also talked about authenticity of Ala: "we associate ourselves with the words "traditional", "authentic"; we still try to offer something authentic, however, together with the modern touch."

4.1.2. LIDO

LIDO developed their current style in the bistro and restaurant sector in early 1990s and the idea almost fully belongs to its owner Mr. Ķirsons. The Marketing Specialist who participated in the interview was sure that LIDO differs from other dining places. According to her, the main distinguishing aspects are the following:

- especially cozy atmosphere;
- interior design according to Latvian traditions and events, which is typical only for LIDO;
- prices are targeted at families with children;
- in almost every LIDO people can see how the food is being prepared and can choose the one they like the most;
- huge selection of homemade dishes;
- large investments into decorations, attractions and design: LIDO has its own team of florists, gardeners and decorators, and they even used to have their own design factory;
- LIDO makes its own beer.

The interviewee did not consider LIDO to be a genuinely ethnic; she'd rather call the place stylized: "we are not saying that we have a pure national motive: it is stylized, Mr.

ķirsons' style.” According to her, a restaurant “does not necessarily need to represent folk motive: it depends on what clients want to see in a restaurant; those might be folk elements, or a cozy atmosphere, or a salon atmosphere. There should be a theme which the restaurant represents: be it a rock-café, or high-tech for teenagers, or roller skaters' motive, or surfers' motive.”

Even though the interviewee talked about how stylized the place is (with the application of wooden materials, Latvian music, national costumes and ornaments), she stressed that not only tourists associate LIDO as typical to Latvia, but also the locals see “the long-existing Latvian enterprise” as “national pride”. LIDO shows “the way old Latvians lived”. When people come to LIDO, they feel satisfaction that they come to a long-existed Latvian enterprise and that they, in a sense, support locals: local farmers, employees and owners”. Also, during major events they play folk music and invite folk bands and dancers.

Talking about main services, LIDO offers not just Latvian but also European dishes. The interviewee admitted that there are not many dishes that can be called Latvian because cuisines have mixed over time. Despite that, they offer national dishes that can be rarely found in places other than LIDO. “People know when to go to LIDO: for good food, a broad choice, and for entertainment”, said the Marketing Specialist. She is confident that “there is a lot to see with one's own eyes: preparation of the food, decorations, shows and events.”

4.1.3. Navat Club

“Nothing like this had existed in Latvia before”, told the administrator of the restaurant. The place is a “mixture of different cuisines, such as Uzbek and Japanese, a combination of different designs, a place that provides excellent service at a reasonable price.” The place was established by an Uzbek, while an idea to blend beautiful and stylish interior and different cuisines came from Moscow. The ideas were developed in cooperation with the chef and the cooks.

In order to deliver the idea of the East, though not in an unobtrusive way, elements are put in the context of the restaurant. Guests can see national Uzbek dishes and pictures on the walls, each with its own story, books on the shelves, traditional carpets, and a chargrill space where it is possible to see how shashlik is being prepared. However, the music at the restaurant is not Uzbek: it is more typical to a classic restaurant's music.

Uzbek food is the main offering at Navat Club, while Japanese is just an addition. However, “unlike Uzbekistāna where you plunge into Uzbek atmosphere as soon as you enter the restaurant, in Navat Club you will most probably understand it only when you open the

menu”, the administrator said¹. “If the owners wanted the restaurant to be explicitly Uzbek, they would have done so”, she told us. The restaurant distinguishes itself from the others as a beautiful and cozy place where people come to relax, enjoy delicious food and feel like home, and at the same time enjoy the excellent service.

Particularly crucial is the way visitors are treated. At Navat Club, every person is a guest, but not a visitor or customer. Guests are not only welcomed, but also escorted at Navat Club. We were told the following: “the restaurant has very high standards and requirements to the staff: everything should be at the highest level! Meanwhile, the old qualities and values of Navat Club are preserved.” During the interview, the administrator stressed four main things why people come to Navat Club: food, service, interior and reasonable prices.

Many products and ingredients come from Uzbekistan, and, as the administrator joked, sometimes even the cooks bring something from Uzbekistan if they go back home. “Yes, cooks were invited from Uzbekistan”, stressed the interviewee; “we strongly disapprove the situation, when people who are not related to a particular culture are responsible for the cuisine of its culture.” The chef who is responsible for Japanese cuisine is a specialist from Moscow, who worked with world-famous gurus of Japanese cuisine. Nonetheless, staff at the restaurant is local mainly due to the language, and there are no special requirements related to the staff’s knowledge of Uzbek or Japanese culture. “Staff must be competent when it comes to food: they must know all ingredients and tastes, which they must learn when they are hired or when a new dish is introduced”, the administrator, who is also responsible for recruiting and training new employees, told us.

The quality of the food and proximity to the original are essential. There cannot be inconsistencies in the taste, which is controlled by the chef.

However, sometimes different ways of serving here, at Navat Club, and Uzbekistāna exist. Menu does not change often: yet, nothing very exotic is introduced. There are some “standard” dishes available at Navat Club in case a person does not want to have Uzbek or Japanese: for example, Ceasar salad or salmon with rice.

4.1.4. *Slāvu*

The restaurant, which moved to the Old Town of Riga three years ago, has existed for almost thirteen years. When we talked to the manager, who is also the owner of the restaurant, she stressed: “the chef must represent the culture of dishes which he prepares”.

¹ Note: Navat Club and Uzbekistāna belong to the same owner.

Slāvu had a talented chef from Moscow in the early stages of the restaurant who worked in Slāvu for two years. “The cooks are locals now, but we have had them for twelve years already. The school they represent has remained unchanged as it was at the first day of the existence of the restaurant, and we are exceptionally proud of it”, the manager said.

The restaurant has a visually restrained style. Managers are responsible for decoration since the designer is only in charge of the interior. “There is not enough space now for all the decorations, and we also could not move all of them from the old place because they lost their initial shine”, we were told. The main emphasis now is on the collection of gzhel and on the window dressing. Most of the elements were acquired by the owner, though some decorations were presented to the restaurant by its guests.

The main way in which the restaurant tries to deliver the idea of Slavic culture is through its menu; thus, most attention is paid to the cuisine and people come mostly for this reason. Names of dishes in the menu have very appealing titles and descriptions which the owners write on their own. In Slāvu, “I call the meal we serve as “live-food”. Half-stuff is not what we support. Of course, some decorations can be prepared in advance, but never the meat, fish, salads and other food”, the interviewee approved. Many recipes have remained same from the very beginning of the restaurant’s operation. “Luckily, the team remained, thus, the traditions are kept”, said the owner. The restaurant is also proud of its specialty drinks which one can taste only in Slāvu.

There is another restaurant in Jurmala that has existed for a shorter time period. It is more popular during the summer, is more rakish, while the restaurant in Riga is more restrained. This is also expressed by music: “The music depends on the clientele: sometimes we put Russian music, sometimes we prefer calm restaurant music, and sometimes we switch to international artists. The national motive in Latvia makes us focus on the situation in the hall”. The owner also told us a story that once a group of Latvian-speaking visitors had come to the restaurant and the music that had been playing at that moment was Russian. After a while, the owner came to a barman and asked him to change the music. To her surprise, a gentleman from the group approached her and asked why the music had been changed. “I am in a Russian restaurant. Please let me listen to Russian songs!” said the visitor.

Slāvu does not chase modern trends either in interior, or in food. The restaurant preserves its initial idea and initial offerings. “Nowadays, it is rather hard to surprise people”, admitted the owner during the interview, “people see a lot, travel a lot, and have a huge choice of everything. We do something all the time: we never relax. But the most important thing that we want to show is the generosity of the Slavic soul.”

4.1.5. Uzbekistāna

We learned from the interview, which was conducted with a chef of Uzbekistāna (as well as Navat Club), that the restaurant had been opened three years ago by an Uzbek. In order to arrive at the interior one can now observe in the restaurant, a designer had to study the culture of Uzbekistan. A lot of decorations come from Uzbekistan, and each of them represents the true Uzbek culture.

The chef shared how he began to work: “From the very beginning of my career I tried to avoid working in canteens. Practice is tremendously important; when I was 16-17 years old, and I was directed to work in a canteen, I told “No, I want to work in a restaurant!” A person should be committed to what he does. Same is with being a chef.” He followed the idea that only by working in the best environment he could learn how to be a professional.

In Uzbekistāna cooks also come from Uzbekistan. The interviewee believed that cooks can only present the true cuisine of a particular country or culture if they originate from that country or represent that culture. Two months before Navat Club opened the chef taught new cooks how to prepare each dish: “They were talented, but they came with different school. I had to teach them my school.”

The chef stressed the importance of the name of a restaurant. According to him, if a restaurant is given a specific name, and especially if it represents a particular country or culture, everything within the restaurant should attest that. The interviewee touched upon the issue of genuine. He presented the following example:

Let’s say Eurostyle Uzbek restaurant. Forget about it! If you want to boost the restaurant, it should be antique inside. This is why people also come to have a look; they observe the way people lived in the past. Consider the grapevine: in Uzbekistan if you have your own house with the same trestle-bed, there will undoubtedly be a grapevine above the trestle-bed. It is beautiful, stylish. In many places I see Eurostyle, but you see the same at home. Or you enter a cafeteria with European cuisine, and you also find the same. People want to see something different! When people visit a restaurant, they want to get into a completely different world. Thus, every detail should represent that particular world: even plates, even this [here he pointed at a napkin holder with national Uzbek cotton pattern]!

Though, he admitted that it is expensive to maintain the concept, but that everyone who belongs to the restaurant can be proud of it. “This is 200% Uzbekistan! In summer people should have the feeling that they are visiting that sunny country,” the chef claimed.

He told another story that he was once serving plov to an old lady, and she started to cry. When he asked the lady if he was doing something wrong, she replied that during the war she lived in Uzbekistan, and she was hosted by an Uzbek family. The chef's appearance and accent reminded her of those times.

In the chef's words, in the East they say: "the guest is dearer than the father". He taught others this rule: both in Uzbekistāna and Navat Club (here we can remember that in Navat Club we were also told that there are only guests who come to the restaurant). This is how a person would be treated in Uzbekistan, and we cannot do it otherwise.

The interview in a sense was a lecture on the culture of Uzbek people. Talking about the atmosphere and interior, the chef pointed at many elements that could be observed and explained their meaning. Also, he told that Uzbek music plays all the time. According to him, it favours conversation and allows guests fully grasp the feeling of Uzbekistan.

The menu of the restaurant represents most of the Uzbek dishes, which are served on traditional plates. Along with Navat Club, many ingredients come from Uzbekistan. Other products the chef prefers to buy from the central market. We asked him if he bargained as a real Uzbek. "Of course, I do! But I should confess that I am impressed with the quality of vegetables and meat I can buy from the local producers," he said.

4.2. The Meaning of Authenticity for Customers

The following subchapter gives an overview of the results obtained from the online interviews. We separate the results according to the five restaurants and analyze the data later in the next chapter.

4.2.1. Ala

People find Ala truly Latvian because of the atmosphere inside and even due to the fact that it is located in the basement. People say that the place brings them many years back to the Old Town of Riga where locals gather together. The authentic feeling comes from the traditional music (both live and audio), dancing, local beers, the menu with beer snacks and the food itself. Interior of the place with all its candle stands, bottles of Rīgas Melnais balzams and other details contribute to the feeling of something Latvian.

Nevertheless, for some people it was difficult to distinguish the real Latvian motive in the entire place, except for Latvian language and beer.

4.2.2. LIDO

One respondent mentioned that what made LIDO Latvian were the facilities and design made in the ancient Latvian style, national dresses worn by waitresses and Latvian music hits. Also, most of the respondents believe that the menu offered by LIDO represents the true Latvian cuisine. A different respondent replied that the interior with folk motives, celebrations of Latvian holidays, traditional dishes represented in the menu as well as Latvian music are those aspects that make LIDO Latvian.

Quick on-site questions allowed us conclude that what several people perceived to be exceptional at LIDO was the fact that “there is a lot to see with one’s own eyes: preparation of the food, decorations, shows and events.” Many believe that LIDO had stayed true to itself, which also makes the place special.

4.2.3. Navat Club

The cuisine of the restaurant is different from others; however, with classic dishes, it represents the atmosphere of modern East in the bustle of European life. People compare it with “abundant Asia”, or say that there they can get “legendary Uzbek meal on European table”. According to some, variety of national dishes, interior and many details make Navat Club authentic. However, some say that the atmosphere must be in its original flavour. Others argue that atmosphere and interior play important role in creating a positive impression, and facilitates conversation, but for a restaurant to be genuine staff should be dressed accordingly, authentic food should be offered on the menu, and there should be themed interior.

Another aspect which makes a restaurant authentic are the ingredients: they should either be original, i.e. from Uzbekistan, or at least of the best quality. In addition, service in a restaurant should stay the same, without changes. Moreover, the quality of the food must be maintained.

4.2.4. Slāvu

The atmosphere that makes Slāvu authentic is represented in the music, mostly Slavic visitors and the cuisine. Some people believe that the restaurant manages to convey the breadth of the Russian soul, its friendliness and hospitality. The fact that the tables are already served, the tableware and furniture are of top quality, and the staff is older than 30, is also perceived to be authentic by some respondents. The staff and the interior should be relevant to the dining place.

4.2.5. *Uzbekistāna*

Most of the respondents admit that having pretty interior, delicious and well-served food and excellent service in an ethnic restaurant is not enough. Every detail is essential: staff uniforms, tableware, music, everything must create the national picturesque atmosphere. For some, authentic interior means that they not only “eat with the mouth, but also with the eyes”. Variety of details, such as costumes, the culture of service, traditional Uzbek skullcaps, canary bird, round table, make the whole picture of Uzbekistan. And everything is accompanied by traditional Uzbek music.

Some people pointed out that what makes Uzbekistāna an Uzbek restaurant is the plov: you cannot find the same plov anywhere else in Riga. The way plov is served in Uzbekistāna is unique. When a chef serves plov in front of a client, the impression of authenticity is created; it feels like the recipe is extraordinarily distinctive.

People believe that a restaurant should have its own traditions and always follow them. It was also stated that the presence of Uzbek-looking staff would contribute to the pureness of an Uzbek restaurant.

4.3. *Artefacts as a Hint to Authenticity*

When visiting the five restaurants we paid close attention to the following details: menu and food, music, front line staff, kitchen staff, interior, artefacts, how the restaurant looked from the outside, and clientele. We were able to observe performance stage in Ala, traditionally dressed waitresses in LIDO, front stage cooking areas in Navat Club, grapevine in Uzbekistāna, gzhel collection in Slāvu and much more. Because of the large quantity of observations, we formed a table and made notes for each above mentioned part of every restaurant. Tables that summarize our observations are presented in Appendix 1.

5. Analysis and Discussion of the Results

In this chapter, we present the analysis and discussion of the results obtained during the study. The analysis is interconnected with the literature that we discussed in the second chapter. Based on triangulation approach, we refer the literature to the restaurant representatives' view on authenticity, customers' perception of genuineness, and our personal on-site observations. After summarizing the results, we provide the interpretation of the meaning of authenticity.

5.1. Constructivism and Triangulation

The constructivist approach implies that authenticity is defined on a personal level. As a result, it is a socially constructed concept that is likely to be subjective. Nevertheless, we stick to this approach as it, first, provides the freedom for the people we interview, and, second, gives freedom for our personal interpretations. In order to make our conclusions the least biased, we turn to the triangulation method.

5.2. Offering Authentic Experience

Despite food and service being the basic for each dining place, one can argue that there is something more than that. In order to keep customers, restaurants should offer their visitors greater or completely different experiences than anyone else can. When a restaurant needs to add experience, it can get a fantastic chef, change the interior or have live music (Darmer & Sundbo, 2008). One of the owners stressed the importance of the atmosphere that makes a client feel welcome and being treated honestly: "I could have even put cardboard boxes to eat on, instead of chairs; if there is the good atmosphere, they will not care if you have a 200-years old oak table of the cardboard box. The question is how to reach it? In fact, you get it through your front line staff." (Ala) Similarly, Navat Club's administrator claimed that their aim is to make their guests feel at home. They never call them clients (Navat Club).

Moreover, the issue of opening other places with the same concept under the same management was discussed with the interviewees: "this is a very individual place and opening the same somewhere else is not a good idea because then the current place would stop being authentic." (Ala)

As Ebster and Guist (2005; as cited in Jugård & Modig, 2009) suggested, the extent to which customers identify the authenticity of a restaurant depends on their cultural experience. In this way, foreigners are far less critical towards the concept when they come to a new country. For instance, in Ala foreign visitors take everything for granted, the only thing they

could have complained about is the service, which has not been the case. On the contrary, locals tend to be more critical to the concept of the pub.

5.3. Restaurants' Perspective

Being true to oneself

When asking the interviewees about the development of the concept throughout the years, we were able to see clearly that they have not changed the idea and the message of the places since the beginning of their operation: there were no significant changes in their menus, as well as the interiors have not been modified. It was possible to reflect some personal values of the interviewees which they tried to follow when managing the business:

Nowadays, people, especially young, are chasing for modern trends in the restaurant industry: be it Italian, French or any other sophisticated cuisine. [...]

I do not support the idea of mixing different concepts, especially when it comes to cuisine. We have been staying true to ourselves for already 13 years.” (Slāvu)

In LIDO, for instance, if something new is introduced, it should not contradict the concept. The idea of the way old Latvians lived that is presented in LIDO in a stylized way is still present in today's concept. A Marketing Specialist stressed that locals see “the long-existing Latvian enterprise” as “national pride”. Thus, by remaining true to the initial concept and values, the restaurants express not only the respect to themselves, but also to their customers.

Passion for what you do

Similarly to our study on concept restaurants, Jugård and Modig (2009) concluded that “business soul”, or uniqueness, of restaurants might be considered as the core value, which is represented by “the owners' background and passion for what they do”. After talking to the representatives of the restaurants chosen for our study, we can claim that those people are indeed enthusiastic about the places they own and operate. “My friends and me felt the need in something purely Latvian, a place where Latvian folk music could play all the time and where people could enjoy the true Latvian atmosphere”, told the owner of Ala. He is a musician himself, and has received his education as a chef.

In Uzbekistāna not only the owner, chefs and cooks are fully committed to their job, but also the local staff. “When people visit the restaurant, they do not know much about Uzbekistan, that's true. But, you know, I can see that they get interested in the culture very quickly: they start reading books, look for information in the internet, and ask us, of course.”

What's more, we were able to observe that the interviewees, most of whom were the owners, were all the time engaged into monitoring the staff, as well as talking with the clients. "I am demanding towards the staff when it comes to work: there may be tears, there may be tough times for them. But I am also generous with compliments and rewards. The reason for control is because I want my team to work with full dedication so that they can deliver the best service and treatment with respect to our clients." (Ala)

Maintaining genuineness

As suggested by the Oxford Dictionaries (n.d.), on the example of Italian cuisine, in order to be authentic the food must be prepared in a genuine way, i.e. as close as possible to the original. All interviewees stressed the importance of a chef in the restaurant, and they do implement their doctrines: all the five restaurants have chefs with an excellent understanding of cuisine. Accordingly, in the case of Ala, starting from the owner and ending with the main chef, people who are involved in cooking as well as writing recipes have outstanding experience and knowledge about traditional Latvian cuisine. The main chef, for example, used to be connected to the reconstruction of the old Latvian culture, and he learned a lot about old cooking techniques from participation in ancient-themed events. At the same time, chef and cooks in Navat Club and Uzbekistāna are Uzbeks: "we find it to be essential to have a chef who knows the way the food should be prepared, the way it should look and taste like" (Navat Club). Despite the fact that Slāvu currently has a local chef, the first chef was from Moscow, and he was also the teacher for the current chefs: "we recruit only experienced chefs; another thing is that new chef must be taught the idea of each dish, the way it should be prepared, served and tasted; customers are very sensitive and they notice every change." (Slāvu) The story about the old lady that was told us by the chef of Uzbekistāna and is presented in the previous chapter can be also understood from the position of authenticity. The fact that the lady started to cry when the chef was serving plov can be interpreted as a sign that customers associate an Uzbek chef with something original, genuine.

Another factor that makes the cuisine close to the original are the ingredients used in preparing the dishes. Ala uses locally grown and produced ingredients. Uzbekistāna is proud of the fact that many of the products they use originate from Uzbekistan. Eventually, with the help of culturally-aware chefs, the food can be prepared in a way that is close to the original.

Being who you say you are to others

During all five interviews the importance of keeping promise, or the message that has been sent out to the public, was stressed. According to the chef of Uzbekistāna, if a restaurant is given a specific name, and especially if it represents a particular country or culture, everything in the restaurant should be typical for that country or culture. Uzbekistāna strictly follows its ethnic concept, starting from Uzbek chef and cooks and finishing with traditional Uzbek tableware. The owner of Ala also admitted that, in terms of the operations of the pub, it is essential for them to be honest with their clients with regards to the quality, quantity and prices. He believes that this is one of the core rules in the service industry; one should first consider a customer and only then think of the way of getting more sales from them.

The idea of staged authenticity, formed by MacCannell (1973), could be also observed in some of the restaurants. Namely, LIDO has an open kitchen in most of its bistro and restaurants, while Navat Club and Uzbekistāna have exposed kitchens with either open-window kitchen in the first case and traditional Uzbek oven tandoor in the second. On special days, Ala offers its visitors to cook together with the chefs, which is also a way of removing the so-called boundaries between the staff and clients. Interestingly, there was even such an event in which the customers switched the roles with the staff: while the staff was celebrating Christmas, clients became barmen or waitresses.

The interviewees also admitted that even though their restaurants represent unique concepts, some aspects of the theme cannot be fulfilled. Thus, while many accept the music played in Ala the way it is and consider it to represent pure Latvian folk music, some locals blame the owners of the pub on adding modern versions of music to the content.

We take traditional, and we take the modern. Because if we took some really old folk music, something very ritual, it might have deterred people more than attracted. And that's why we call our style "post-folk": a modern way of performing old songs and folk music. (Ala)

On the example of tourists Wang (1999) shows that everyone has his own beliefs and expectations in connection to the experience. Therefore, everyone who visits Ala, or other restaurant, will have his own position with regards to authenticity.

As another example of adjustments to nowadays the following might be considered:

We do have some dishes that are neither Uzbek, not Japanese. For example, salmon with rice were included because in majority situations there is at least one person in a company of our guests who wants to have fish. Otherwise, we have only two cuisines. (Navat Club)

Even though there is something in the menu which does not represent cuisines, Navat Club focuses on, this does not, according to the administrator, imply that traditional dishes they offer are not authentic.

Using clues to communicate the concept

It is rather difficult to evaluate the quality of service, atmosphere, cuisine and the concept itself, and the assessment might be subjective, as a more tangible part of a concept restaurant are the artefacts. Each interviewee finds it necessary to use artefacts in a themed restaurant. The artefacts come from the country depending on the concept represented in the restaurant. Moreover, some artefacts have been presented to the restaurants by guests.

A Marketing Specialist at LIDO told us that the company used to have its own design factory that produced furniture and other wooden elements. In order to preserve the stylized concept now, LIDO specially orders everything it needs from local producers. Moreover, LIDO has its own team of gardeners, designers and decorators who help in maintaining the concept. Similarly to LIDO, Ala represents Latvian concept. The owner of Ala could say a lot about the furniture: almost each table and chair have their own origin stories.

From the five restaurants, Uzbekistāna probably can be called the most complete with artefacts. Everything has been brought from Uzbekistan, and the chef is grateful that there are people who agree to help if something is needed. Since the chef is Uzbek, he appreciates every element of the interior that is represented in the restaurant. He assures that every guest will undoubtedly feel like being in Uzbekistan if he comes to the restaurant.

Overall, the restaurants pay a lot of attention to the visual appearance of each place because this is one of the first things visitors notice.

5.4. Customers' Perspective

Adhering to the concept

Based on the answers to the online questions we could observe that visitors try to use as many of the five senses, such as sound, sight, touch, smell and taste, as possible to assess a new place. For example, almost every customer mentioned music that is being played in the restaurant: be it folk music in Ala, Latvian hits in LIDO, Russian songs in Slāvu, or Uzbek music in Uzbekistāna. However, in the case of Navat Club none of the respondents told anything about the music. Such an observation may be interpreted in the following way: while Ala, LIDO, Slāvu and Uzbekistāna are attributed to ethnic restaurants, Navat Club does not position itself as such, apart from the cuisine. At the same time, people did not distinguish

whether it had to be folk music, as in the case of Ala, or hit music, as it is in Lido: in both cases everyone called the music Latvian, by this implying its authenticity. Such observation was discussed by Wang (1999) who claimed that the history of an item in the social context determines authenticity. Thus, in music, authenticity can be hardly defined: it just has to be of that language, and, maybe not too up-to-date.

Attention to details

When it comes to visual assessment of a site, customers pay a lot of attention to national motives. In case of Ala and LIDO, people notice wooden furniture and finishing. In LIDO, open kitchen and national dresses were also mentioned by respondents. In this way, customers from Uzbekistāna say about national costumes on the staff, as well as numerous decorations on the walls, tableware, and other details. According to the respondents, every detail is important in creating national picturesque atmosphere.

Demanding the truth

The quality and genuineness of cuisine, undoubtedly, remain the determinants of authentic restaurant. This corresponds to the Symons' (1999, as cited in Mohammad & Chan, 2011) suggestion that whereas television can offer us a good visualization of almost every part of the world, local food is an essential element of any destination. In Navat Club, one respondent said that authentic cuisine is the essential part of a restaurant. To fulfil this, i.e. to deliver the genuine cuisine, the restaurant should use original ingredients or at least the ones of the best quality. The way the food is served, as mentioned by a customer of Uzbekistāna, might have a substantial impact on the perception of the dining place. When the respondent talked about the way plov is served in the restaurant, she stressed that the personal service by the chef created the feeling that the recipe was truly special. Visitors of Navat Club also mentioned the inartificial experience they could get in the restaurant.

According to customer responses, the restaurant can claim to be authentic only if it stays true to itself. This was told by several visitors of LIDO as well as one of Navat Club. Lido as a dining place has existed for more than twenty years, thus such statement is perceived to be valuable. In the case Navat Club, which has existed for just one and a half years, it may be argued that drawing conclusions on the meaning of authenticity in such case would be wrong. However, the meaning of the phenomenon is something very individual. Moreover, the truth that newly opened places change the most during the first year of their

operations, might add to the credibility of the claim. Nevertheless, this shows that customers have noticed and highly appreciated the fact that Navat Club has not changed.

Darmer and Sundbo (2008) told that in order to add experience, a restaurant could, for example, get a skillful chef or have live music. For instance, in LIDO customers perceive celebrations of Latvian holidays as particular experience that can be found only in LIDO. In Uzbekistāna visitors are extremely keen on the fact that the chef and the rest of the staff are exceedingly hospitable, so that the true atmosphere of Uzbekistan is conveyed in the right manner.

5.5. Analysis of the Results of Observations

In this analysis, we try to bring out key details that restaurants use to create an authentic experience. This is done by identifying similarities between the restaurants we observed. Based on the evidence, we have distinguished three main key codes of these details in creating the authentic experience: genuineness, expressing identity and clues.

Genuineness

We consider genuineness by exploring the way in which the restaurants present details, so that what they make resembles original. In Uzbekistāna one can see that the chef and the cooks are from Uzbekistan and hear the Uzbek language; while in LIDO one can hear native Latvian speakers and they put emphasis that the waitresses are mostly blonde, bringing out the ethnic characteristics of northern people. In the five chosen restaurants, we could observe several details, which symbolized the fact that the dishes are made in a traditional way. For example, LIDO and Ala use Latvian products. Uzbekistāna and Navat Club offer their visitors to see how shashlik is being cooked, putting emphasis that it is made in an original way.

Expressing identity

From observations we can identify how the chosen restaurants are expressing identity. The most evident way of how all the restaurants express identity is by offering ethnic dishes, which characterize the restaurant. According to Kahn (1995), menu plays a critical role in customer satisfaction. LIDO, Ala and Slāvu emphasize, in the menu, such details as original names of the dishes, which make the restaurant more ethnic. Slāvu's menu describes the dishes thoroughly and uses peculiar names for them. Ala has 17 different Latvian beers to offer its customers. Additionally to ethnic dishes, in LIDO and Uzbekistāna the waitresses wear traditional clothes with traditional ornament; Ala, LIDO and Uzbekistāna offer ethnic

background music. Also, the chosen restaurants express identity through interior. We could observe that each restaurant has developed interior which matches the ethnic background of the restaurant. In this way, LIDO, Slāvu and Uzbekistāna use wood when decorating the interior.

Clues

The observations gave us information of how the restaurants use original artefacts, or clues. All the restaurants use artefacts to stage authentic experience, which corresponds to MacCannell (1973) study: customers are made to believe that they are in a setting where there is strong authentic experience. All the artefacts symbolize historical values and give the impression of being in a different environment. Ala uses craft wheel, beer kegs, old piano; LIDO has wooden barrels and other old decorations and saktas (traditional Latvian brooches) are used as curtain clips; Slāvu has samovars, gramophone; Uzbekistāna has clay statuettes, pots, old lamps, plants in clay pots, a tree with traditional Uzbek and oriental desserts under it, as well as they use traditional Uzbek tableware with cotton pattern. These artefacts indicate that authenticity lies in bringing back the historical surrounding to the customer. This is supported by the postmodernism approach of the authenticity. Similar to the findings in Gottdiener's (1995) study, the restaurants try to create hyperreality and bring back historical surrounding, which makes customers believe that they have gone back in time.

5.6. Summary

In triangulation analysis, we look at different codes and how data lead to that code. In addition to the three methodological approaches looking at the meaning of authenticity, such as interviews with the administrative side, online interviews with customers, as well as our personal observations, we add the theory suggested and supported by the literature. We cover the following codes: genuineness, clues, expressing identity, passion, and consistency. For the purpose of more convenient overview, we have created a table with the codes where each of them is described based on the different data sources (see table 2). We can see from the table that only three codes (genuineness, expressing identity and clues) can be explained by the four approaches, while it was challenging to explore passion and consistency through observations. However, this follows a logical explanation: in the case of our observations, it was difficult to reveal the passion of the owners' because of no personal contact with them in the beginning of the study; whereas consistency is related to time, thus, we cannot make conclusions based on one visit.

Key code	Theoretical concept	Interviews with administration	Interviews with customers	Observations
Genuineness	Made or done in the traditional or original way, or in the way that faithfully resembles an original (“authentic”, n.d.)	All chosen restaurants have chefs who are specialists in certain cuisine.	People who especially praise the chef are visitors of Uzbekistāna and Navat Club. This is mostly because of the special way plov is served.	Uzbekistāna and Navat Club offer their visitors to see how shashlik is being cooked
Clues	Original artefacts (MacCannell, 1999)	“Solid wood tables from old brewery, Latvian patterns and folk make the place authentic, though in a more modern way” (Ala)	Each detail is important: staff uniforms, music, tableware, everything must create the national picturesque atmosphere.	All the artefacts symbolize historical values and give you the impression that you are in different environment.
Expressing identity	Staged authenticity, be what you say you are (MacCannell, 1999; Pine & Gilmore, 2007)	Navat Club and Uzbekistāna have exposed kitchens with either open-window kitchen in the first case and tandoor in the second.	Celebrations of Latvian holidays in LIDO; dancing and music concerts in Ala; Uzbek music at Uzbekistāna.	The most evident way how all the restaurants express identity is by offering ethnic dishes, which characterizes the restaurant.
Passion	“Core values stand for the owners’ background and passion for what they do” (Jugård & Modig, 2009)	“Me and my friends felt the need in something purely Latvian, a place where Latvian folk music could play all the time and where people could enjoy the true Latvian atmosphere” (Ala)	In order for a restaurant to stand out, it should have a strong team in which everyone is committed to and passionate about the job they are responsible for (Uzbekistāna)	
Consistency	Stay true to oneself (Pine & Gilmore, 2007)	“I do not support the idea of mixing different concepts, especially when it comes to cuisine. We have been staying true to ourselves for already 13 years” (Slāvu)	A restaurant can claim authenticity if only it stays true to itself throughout its operations (customers of LIDO and Navat Club)	

Table 2. Coding analysis (created by the authors)

6. Conclusions

6.1. The Meaning of Authenticity in the Latvian Restaurant Industry

The purpose of this research was to explore the meaning of authenticity in the Latvian experience industry based on five concept restaurants in Riga: Folkklubs Ala Pagrabs, LIDO, Navat Club, Slāvu, and Uzbekistana. After carrying out the extensive study comprised of personal interviews with the restaurants' administration, online interviews with customers, individual observations, and analysing the data through coding we came to the following conclusions.

Factors that drive the meaning of authenticity in the experience industry in Latvia can be characterized by five codes; they are passion, genuineness, expressing identity, clues and consistency. The meaning of authenticity lies behind those codes. In order for a company to be authentic in the experience industry, it has to match the codes.

Based on the findings of this study, the codes can be explained in the following way: restaurants should show their genuineness by making or doing something in an original way; clues should be offered in a way of artefacts, which will create hyperreality; restaurants should express identity by being what they promise to be; administration should show passion in what they do by actively being involved in a restaurant's operations and captivated by the theme; and the restaurants should stay true to themselves by not changing their concepts.

We ranked the significance of the key codes greater for those which were supported by the three different perspectives. We concluded that three codes, such as genuineness, expressing identity and clues are equally significant, while passion and consistency are less significant.

There are many possibilities for future research in this area. The main obstacle to defining authenticity is subjectivity of human beings: what is authentic for one person can be inauthentic for another. Also, there can be more key codes, which this research has not identified. In addition, one should take into consideration that it is difficult to determine the correct number of key codes that a company in the experience industry must fulfil in order to be truly authentic. What is more, interaction between the key codes remains a debatable question. Lastly, the focus of the current study was on restaurants; however, there is a wide range of other industries using experience to become more authentic that can be considered.

6.2. Research Limitations

Despite the thorough research, the paper still has some limitations, which need to be clarified. First, there is subjective bias in choosing the restaurant. Even though, the research uses 4-mode authenticity matrix in order to determine authentic restaurants, there still remains bias in the choice of the restaurants based on our own perception.

Second, convenience sampling method was used when conducting interviews with customers. This sampling method has a bias that the sample is not representative of the whole population and limits us from making strong conclusions related to the whole population.

Third, it is important to remember that, according to constructivism, authenticity is not given, but it is in the eyes of the beholder. Hence, the research is limited in answering hypothesis questions and giving strong conclusions about authenticity. Instead, it aims to explore the meaning of authenticity in the restaurant industry in a wider scale.

Fourth, this research is unique because it carries out interviews among owners and customers in Latvia. Moreover, there are many studies done in the tourism industry related to this topic, however, considerable less in the restaurants industry. Thus, this has brought some limitations as it is hard to compare the results with other similar researches.

Fifth, we find it to be essential to indicate the difficulty in studying the topic of authenticity because of language. First, in order not to lead interviewees' answers in any direction, we had to discuss the topic by using words other than "authentic". As a result, such words as "unique", "genuine" and "original" were mentioned during the interviews, and therefore, we use them throughout this study. Second, as the interviews (both personal and online) were held in Latvian and Russian words might have been given different meaning than they have in English, as well as there might have been a different inconsistencies between the Latvian and Russian languages. This could have been a reason for biased answers of some interviewees. Though, in most of the cases people arrived at the issue of authenticity on their own by saying words "authentic" and "authenticity". Also, language bias might have occurred when we translated the data obtained through interviews; however, we tried to stay as precise as possible.

Sixth, because data analysis takes more time than one might initially assume, this research carried out research in five restaurants. This could limit our research in terms of very small sample; however, the aim of this research was to focus on these restaurants and put more emphasize on quality.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Tables of the Main Observations in the Restaurants

Folkklubs Ala Pagrabs

Menu & Food	Traditional Latvian food Grey peas and bacon Dessert with Rīgas Balzams 17 Latvian beers Monthly offers Themed days of the week Latvian wines Eco-products grown in Latvia
Music	Latvian folk music Live performances Folkdances
Front line staff	Simple uniforms Waitresses Cheerful barman
Kitchen staff	Cannot observe them
Interior	Elements of the old basement wall (bricks) Traditional Latvian patterns used in decoration Old wallpaper Backlight
Artefacts	Solid wood furniture Beer kegs Bordeaux napkins Craft wheel used for lamps Old piano Pictures and visual work exhibitions on the walls Bottles as decorative elements
From the outside	Located in the basement The logo has a Latvian ornament Daily offers are on a display
Clientele	Mostly Latvian-speakers Of different age The interest among foreigners is growing

Table 3. Observations in Folkklubs Ala Pagrabs (created by the authors)

LIDO

Menu & Food	<p>Many dishes are prepared from products that come from Latvia</p> <p>Natural products</p> <p>Latvian and European cuisines</p> <p>Broad choice of dishes (starters, meat, fish, salads, soups, sides, desserts)</p> <p>Cold dishes stored in ice which is periodically being replaced</p> <p>Self-service: possible to observe and choose the food</p>
Music	Mostly Latvian hit music
Front line staff	<p>Traditional clothes (skirts, shirts, vests, headbands)</p> <p>Waitresses are mostly blond girls</p> <p>Don't serve the food: they are responsible for checking and putting fresh dishes, accepting orders and clearing tables</p>
Kitchen staff	Open kitchen, thus, can see cooks preparing food
Interior	<p>Wood as the main material for construction and furniture</p> <p>Nails in the walls (some are also used as hooks for clothes)</p> <p>Wooden baskets with flowers</p> <p>A huge lamp in the middle of the hall</p> <p>A lot of decorations (seasonal): animals, plants, small decorative arrangements on the tables, etc.</p> <p>A lot of lights (windows, skylight, and lamps)</p>
Artefacts	<p>Saktas (traditional Latvian brooches) used as curtain clips</p> <p>Wooden window frames with metal handles (a distinctive element of LIDO design houses), as well as wooden cornices and windowsills</p> <p>Latvian patterns on the walls and furniture</p> <p>Wooden barrels</p>
From the outside	<p><i>The following can be observed in the main LIDO center:</i></p> <p>A lot of attractions for children: skating rink, racetrack, etc.</p> <p>LIDO design wooden houses</p> <p>A lot of decorations</p>
Clientele	International

Table 4. Observations in LIDO (created by the authors)

Navat Club

Menu & Food	Uzbek cuisine as the main offer as well as Japanese cuisine A lot of ingredients come from Uzbekistan
Music	Neutral
Front line staff	Mostly Russian-speakers Mostly waiters (men) Classic uniforms
Kitchen staff	Uzbek chefs at chargrill as well as serving plov
Interior	4 different halls Stylish, cozy and homelike Soft chairs and sofas Open-kitchen window Brick ceilings
Artefacts	Pictures representing Uzbek culture and food Traditional Uzbek plates and other tableware as decor Books Navat (Uzbek sugar) A canary in a birdcage Carpets and cushions Mirrors and TVs Wine shelves and cupboards
From the outside	Located in the basement Elegant logo
Clientele	More local

Table 5. Observations in Navat Club (created by the authors)**Slävu**

Menu & Food	Traditional Russian (Slavic) dishes Peculiar names of dishes Specialty drinks Have to wait for the food relatively long
Music	Depends on the audience Violin three times a week Mostly classical music
Front line staff	Native Russian speakers Classic uniforms
Kitchen staff	Cannot see them
Interior	Discreet interior Wooden elements
Artefacts	Artefacts are mainly presented on display Gzhel (a style of ceramics) Samovars Traditional Russian shawls Gramophone

	Posters in the washing room
From the outside	Display with many artefacts Red inscription on green background
Clientele	International

Table 6. Observations in Slāvu (created by the authors)

Uzbekistāna

Menu & Food	Traditional Uzbek dishes Pilaf is served by the chef Have to wait for the food quite long
Music	Traditional Uzbek music
Front line staff	Native Russian speakers Traditional ornament in waiters' and waitresses' uniforms
Kitchen staff	A chef and cooks from Uzbekistan Often speaking Uzbek The chef serves plov
Interior	Wooden elements Brick elements in walls Several halls Chargrill window
Artefacts	Traditional Uzbek tableware with cotton pattern Cotton branches and vine A tree with traditional Uzbek and oriental desserts under it (chak-chak, dried and fresh fruit, baklava, etc.) Carpets, upholstery, cushions, plaids and curtains A canary in a birdcage Traditional music instruments, clothes, paintings, plates and hats on the walls Clay statuettes, pots, old lamps, plants in clay pots Carved door
From the outside	The logo has a shape of the dome of a mosque Blue and yellow colours that are very typical for Uzbekistan
Clientele	Mostly Russian speaking, yet diverse

Table 7. Observations in Uzbekistāna (created by the authors)