

## CONCEPT RESTAURANTS AS A RESTAURANT TYPE<sup>1</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

In the 21st century, differences, individuality and identity notion have come to the forefront, and it has affected demand and supply in markets. The restaurants which compete in the monopolistic market should be perceived differently from other enterprises. As a result of these developments, concept restaurants which reflect a stated theme to customers with their menus, services and interiors have emerged in recent years. Concept restaurants create both a new service style and identity in the sector. Although service quality, customer satisfaction and preference factors of restaurants are frequently investigated in the literature, it is seen that the studies on concept restaurants are extremely limited. On the other hand, no study examining concept restaurants among the restaurant types has been found in the literature. The aim of the research is defining the concept restaurants, examining the examples in the world and classifying concept restaurants in terms of themes among restaurant type. In this context, the history of restaurants and their types were examined and examples of concept restaurant in the world were presented. As a result, it is seen that concept restaurants can be classified as a restaurant type. The concept restaurants can also be classified as food and beverage-themed concept restaurants, national and ethnic-themed concept restaurants, place-themed concept restaurants, fairy-tale, series and movie-themed concept restaurants and historical event and phenomenon-themed concept restaurants.

## 1. Introduction

Changing environmental conditions have affected the demand and supply in the marketing sector continuously. Businesses that want to be active in their sectors must keep pace with this change. Considering the most important requirement, it is clear that today's restaurants should take into account both the demands and trends focusing on experience (Hotelling, 1990). On the other hand, the fact that restaurants compete in the monopolistic market where there are similar businesses in terms of food and beverage, service quality and price constitutes the necessity to be perceived and different from other enterprises. In this context restaurants who want to be located in a different place for customers have to constitute an identity (Bell, Meiselman, Pierson, & Reeve, 1994). In the 21st century, where the effects of postmodernism are so high, the individuality, differences and identity come to the forefront, and restaurants serve experiences to customers through their own identity (Featherstone, 2007).

Food, beverage, service and interior design are the basic elements of the identity for the restaurants.

Restaurants which have many similar competitors in terms of food, beverage, service quality and price must create a different service style and interior design for the identity. In addition, many researches showed that restaurants should pay attention to interior design and service for shaping customer perception (Namkung & Jang, 2008). For all these reasons, concept restaurants have emerged in recent years, and they have created a new service style while reflecting a specific theme with their food, beverage, services and interior design. Although service quality, customer satisfaction and preference factors of restaurants are frequently investigated in the literature (Wall & Berry, 2007; Heung, Wong & Qu, 2000; Mattila, 2001), it is seen that the studies on concept restaurants are extremely limited. On the other hand, no study examining concept restaurants as a restaurant type, is found in the literature.

The aim of the research is defining the concept restaurants, examining the examples in the world and classifying concept restaurants in terms of themes among restaurant type. In this context, in the research, history of restaurants and their

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types were examined and examples of concept restaurants were presented. The concept restaurant notion was also explained. As a result, concept restaurants can be claimed to be a restaurant type. These restaurants can be classified as, food and beverage-themed concept restaurants, national and ethnic-themed concept restaurants, place-themed concept restaurants, fairy-tale, series and movie-themed concept restaurants and historical event and phenomenon-themed concept restaurants.

## 2. History of Restaurants

The first transformation of food establishments, which were established to meet the needs of travellers and eat and serve the commons, took place in France in 1766. It is not a coincidence that the foundations of the modern restaurant, which is defined as commercial enterprises that provide the needs of individuals outside the house through space and serve according to a certain service system, were realized in France. With the revolutions taking place in France, the chefs serving the noble class became unemployed and the quest for haute cuisine, which the noble class could consume outside the palace, was the basis of the emergence of the first modern restaurants (Morgan, 2006). In 1766, Maison de Sante, which can be expressed as the first example of concept restaurants with food and beverage theme, was opened in France by Boulanger. The restaurant, which means a health house, has become the history as the first modern restaurant by offering healing broths prepared with vegetable juices to the individuals sitting at separate tables through a menu and service system. Another modern restaurant of this period, Le Grande Taverne de Londres, opened in 1782 in Paris, served fine cuisine. It was the first example of today's luxury restaurant type with a superior service understanding in a place with stylish design (Spang & Şener, 2007).

The spread of restaurants in France was realized in 1791 with the abolition of guilds and the emergence of the concept of competition by multiplying commercial enterprises. In addition, this is linked to the Industrial Revolution in both France and the world. Living and working conditions in the city, which emerged as a result of the Industrial Revolution, led to the emergence of the first examples of restaurants offering fast food as individuals searched for places to eat at lunch breaks (Schlosser, 2012). Restaurants in Turkey developed in 1820. Tourists who came to Istanbul by steamships and trains met the need to eat outside in Pera. Pera was the first modern and national-themed concept restaurant example in Istanbul. It reflected French culture with its menu, service and interior design. There are also examples of table d'hote restaurants in Istanbul that offered a few pieces of mutton, rice, salad and yoghurt (Onaran, 2015). With all these, beginning from 2000s, restaurant type and functions have increased gradually and the restaurants that want to differ from the other restaurants in the sector are trying

to differentiate by using food, beverage, service, interior design or all these elements together.

In the literature, restaurants are categorized based on regulation, scale, structure, service and type. Besides, restaurants are categorized into type based on the factors as follows (Montagne, 1977):

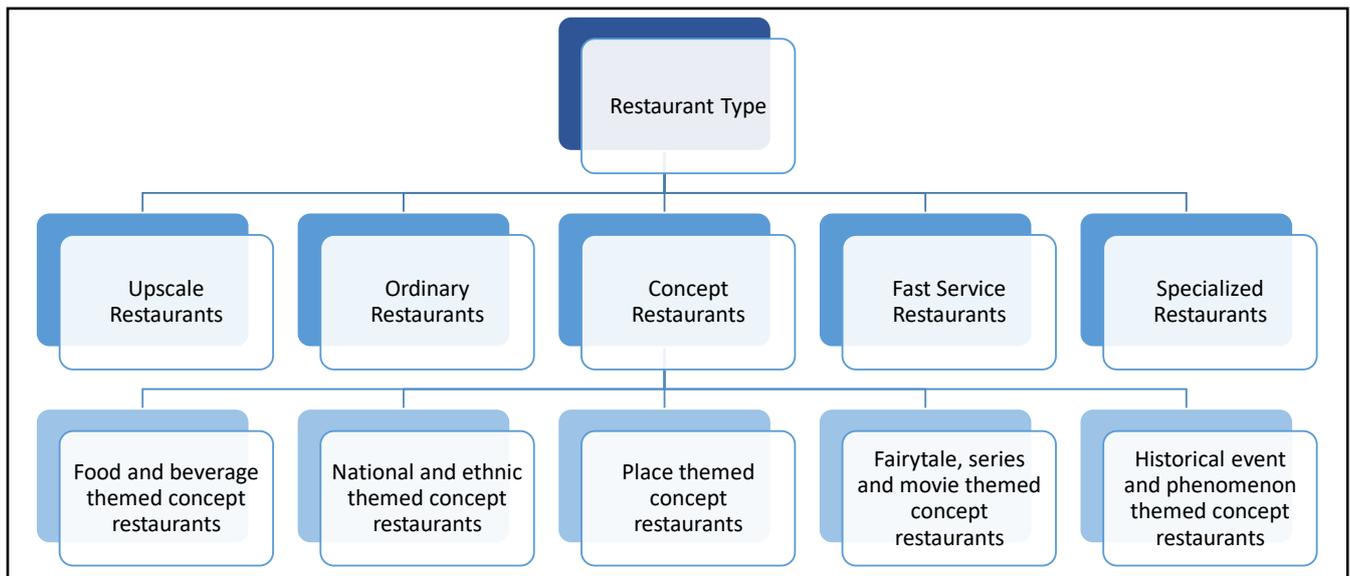
- Upscale restaurants (restaurants are served fine dining in lux interior space),
- Ordinary restaurants (restaurants serving with a normal quality),
- Fast-service restaurants (Restaurants serve quick and usually unqualified food),
- Ethnic Restaurants (restaurants serve with specific country's or nation's food, service type and interior design),
- Specialized Restaurants (restaurants focusing one food such as kebab, meatball, pizza),
- Family Restaurants (Non-alcoholic restaurants for families).

Restaurant are also categorized by Kivela (1997), Gregson, 2011 and Bujisic, Hutchinson and Parsa (2014). Kivela examined restaurants in four types as fine dining restaurants, themed restaurants, family restaurants and fast-food restaurants; Gregson (2011) grouped restaurants as fast food, chain full service, and independent full service, and Bujisic, Hutchinson and Parsa (2014) handled as quick-service restaurant and upscale restaurant.

Concept restaurants, which reflect a stated theme with food, beverage, service and interior designs, are not included in these classifications. In this research, concept restaurants and their types are examined in detail.

## 3. Concept Restaurants

The origin of the word 'concept' derives from the Latin *conceptus* (embrace, comprehend, be pregnant) verb. According to Cambridge Dictionary, 'concept' means principle and idea (Cambridge Dictionary, 2019). The word 'theme' means 'main subject' (Cambridge Dictionary, 2019). In this context, concept restaurants can be defined as restaurants that reflect a stated theme with food drinks, services and interior designs. With these features, concept restaurants also create an identity for their differentiated food and beverage service process. The studies on ethnic restaurants and themed restaurants are considered very limited in the literature (Bekar & Dönmez, 2014). However, ethnic restaurants and themed restaurants should be evaluated under the title of concept restaurants. Considering the dictionary meaning of concept (Cambridge, 2019), it is clear that concept restaurants cover ethnic or themed restaurants in terms of food, beverage, service and interior designs. On the other hand, concept restaurants can be classified in different themes according to the examples in the world (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Classification of Restaurant Types

### 3.1. Food and beverage-themed concept restaurants

Food and beverage themed concept restaurants which are one type of concept restaurants design their menu contents, services and interiors in harmony with a food or beverage theme they choose. Meat restaurants, fish restaurants, wine and coffee houses are the examples of these type of restaurants. Food and beverage themed concept restaurants offer food and beverage as a theme and differ from the specialized restaurants offering only one food in their menu content. However, it should be stated that, Maison de Sante serving soup, being the inventor of Margharita Pizza Pietro and börek and panch restaurants in Ottoman are the first examples of food and drink themed concept restaurants (Morgan, 2006; Castaldo, 2014). While these restaurants in history focus on a single food for ease of purchase, preparation and presentation, concept examples of today provide cost, quality and niche marketing with single food and beverage. Zauo Restaurant in New York City is one of the food-themed concept restaurant examples. This restaurant focuses on fish and seafood products in its menu and adapts successfully this theme to service and interior design. The restaurant serves its customers in a ship-designed space and includes

customers with hunting experience. Customers who catch fish and seafood in the pools can eat their food which they catch. Their food is served with suitable service equipment for fish and seafood theme with regard to colors and materials (Tripadvisor, 2019). El Capricho, another successful example of food-themed concept restaurants, has become one of the best meat restaurants in the world by reflecting the meat theme to its menu, service and interior design. The restaurant is located on a cattle ranch in Jimenez de Jamuz in Spain and serves meat with meat cutting and cooking shows (Tripadvisor, 2019).

History of beverage-themed concept restaurants dates back to the oldest breweries and wine houses. U Fleku is one of these restaurants opened in Prague in 1499. This restaurant has served to banquets, cocktails and event as well as functioning as a museum (U Fleku, 2019). Nowadays, beverage themed concept restaurants have also opened for soft drinks such as coffee and tea. One of them has been The Coffee Academics serving in Hong Kong since 2010. The restaurant is a good example that can adapt the theme of coffee to service and interior design. The interior design was based on an open kitchen for interaction with the customers and the service is carried out with various equipment



**Image 1.** Zauo New York a (Zauo New York, 2019)



**Image 2.** Zauo New York b (Zauo New York, 2019)



**Image 3.** The Coffee Academics a, Hong Kong (The Coffee Academics, 2019).



**Image 4.** The Coffee Academics b, Hong Kong (The Coffee Academics, 2019).

to perform a cooking coffee show (The Coffee Academics, 2019).

### 3.2. National and ethnic themed concept restaurants

National and ethnic-themed concept restaurants reflect their regional food culture with their services and interior designs. Turkish, French, Italian restaurants are national-themed while Circassian and Bosnian restaurants are ethnicity-themed concept restaurant examples. Salamis Chinese Restaurant is one of the examples of national-themed concept restaurants in North Cyprus. The restaurant serves Chinese dish to its customers with Waribashi and Chinese special spoon on the table covered with a special Chinese table cloth. Interior design of Salamis Chinese Restaurant was constituted generally red, black, yellow colors and wood materials (Salamis Chinese Restaurant, 2019).

An example of an ethnic-themed restaurant is located in Eskişehir, where the Circassian people emigrated during the Ottoman period. Kafkas Kültür Evi, which serves Circassian dish to its customer with special ethnic music was designed according to Circassian culture ingredients. In addition, the restaurant is a living museum (Foursquare, 2019).

### 3.3. Place-themed concept restaurants

Place-themed concept restaurants constitute their menus, services and interiors through the place

theme. The place as a theme can be related to the establishment of the restaurant or independent. Considering that service location is the primary effect among the factors affecting restaurant preference of the customers (Rapoport, 1990), it is important that restaurants use the place to increase the impact of their experience. In this context, Fortezza Medicea, which was established in a historical prison in Fortezza Medicea Castle in Italy, is one of the concept restaurants that reflects its theme through its physical structure. In the restaurant, menu was composed of a table d'hote menu and customers eat their food with the supervision of the guard (Tripadvisor, 2019).

Christon Cafe is located in Tokyo as an example of a restaurant that reflects the theme of place to the menu and service through interior design rather than the place. The restaurant's interior was designed with a church theme and Italian cuisine is served related to the church. In addition, meals are served in a coffin in the restaurant and are eaten with special crusade service equipment (Christon Cafe, 2019).

### 3.4. Fairy-tale, series and movie-themed concept restaurants

Fairy-tale, series and movie-themed concept restaurants reflect international fairy-tale, series or movies to their menus, services and interior designs. There are mostly fairy tale and movie-theme



**Image 5.** The Green Dragon Inn, New Zealand a (The Green Dragon Inn - Hobbiton Movie Set Tours, 2019)



**Image 6.** The Green Dragon Inn, New Zealand b (The Green Dragon Inn - Hobbiton Movie Set Tours, 2019)



**Image 7.** Eatsa, San Fransisco, California a (Eatsa, 2019)



**Image 8.** Eatsa, San Fransisco, California b (Eatsa, 2019)

in application. The idea that restaurants make a difference by choosing fairy tales and films as a theme is related to the influences and revenue of fairy tales and films, and even more fantastic films. On the other hand, individuals who want to escape the true stories in their lives, explain the desire to experience free time in the restaurant with this theme (Lim, 2009).

The Green Dragon Inn is an example of a concept restaurant that reflects the fantastic film of *The Lord of the Rings*, which does not accidentally reach a huge fan by telling the battle between remain good and the desire to be bad and strong. Located in Hobbit Village, where the film was shot in New Zealand, the restaurant integrated its interior with its place. The restaurant adapted its menu according to the legendary hobbits and menu was composed of vegetarian-friendly dish. Service reflects a hobbits dining eating from the same table (The Green Dragon Inn - Hobbiton Movie Set Tours, 2019).

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### 3.5. Historical event and phenomenon-themed concept restaurants

Historical event-themed concept restaurants reflect historical events such as revolutions, explorations and inventions while phenomenon-themed concept restaurants make it through some daily phenomenon. An example of a technology is one of the most important phenomenon today and shape our lives. In this context, Eatsa is a technology phenomenon-themed concept restaurant, and it is located in California. In the restaurant, which does not have any kitchen, service and security staff, customers order their menu on smart menu screens and then take their meals from the digital food

receiving units. The customers also pay their meals through digital payment system (Eatsa, 2019).

An interesting example of menu, service and interior design based on the phenomenon of war is located in the Beirut. Buns and Guns Restaurant, which has a military base like interior design, serves meals by staff wearing military uniform with gun and bomb with their sounds. The restaurant also serves its menu including meals such as killer burger, poisoned sandwich (Facebook, 2019).

An another example regards to military concepts can be seen in North Macedonia. Industrial and military buildings in Skopje that have not used after the collapse of Yugoslavia have restored and opened for use. The restaurant of the Public Room in this complex is an example of concept restaurants (Grcheva, 2019).

An example of a historical event-themed concept restaurant is the Gasova Lampa in Ukraine Lviv. The restaurant reflects the invention of the gas lamp and design its interior with sculpture and pictures of Ignacy Lukasiewicz who invented the gas lamp. The restaurant's menu constituted cocktails predominantly and serves with scale containers to remind the experiment (Tripadvisor, 2019).

### 3. Conclusion

As a result of the French Revolution, the chefs in the palace became unemployed, and the industrial revolution led to the supply of food that meet the need for eating out in the modern cities. In this context, in the 1800's, modern restaurants emerged that can be defined as food and beverage establishments that meet the needs of individuals to eat out through space and service system. From that time to today, restaurants have increased developed. This increase has led to the differentiation of restaurants gaining various functions. On the other hand, the fact that restaurants have become inseparable due to the competitive conditions has encouraged restaurants to constitute their identity. As a result of all these developments, concept restaurants have emerged as an experience space with the stated theme. In the literature, restaurants are examined based on food and service type, service quality, preference and satisfaction factors largely and limited research

has been conducted on food, service and design. In addition, although there is limited number of studies on concept restaurants in the literature, there is no study that classifies concept restaurants into restaurant type and their own type.

The aim of the research was to examine restaurants based on food, services and interiors and identify them as new models in the world. In this context, history of restaurants and their type were examined in detail in this study, concept restaurant notion was explained, and concept restaurants examples in the world were presented. According to the findings of the research, concept restaurants which can be defined as food and beverage establishments, reflect a stated theme with food and beverage, service and interiors. It can be said that concept restaurants present a whole of identity to their customer with their interiors besides food and services. There are studies claiming that interior design affects identity (Brayton & Millington, 2011; McKellar & Sparke, 2004). Concept restaurants can be classified as follows:

- Upscale restaurants
- Ordinary restaurants
- Concept restaurants
- Fast service restaurants
- Specialized restaurants

It is seen that concept restaurants can also be classified as follows:

- Food and beverage-themed concept restaurants,
- National and ethnic-themed concept restaurants,
- Place-themed concept restaurants,
- Fairy-tale, series and movie-themed concept restaurants,
- Historical event and phenomenon concept restaurants.

As a result of the research, it is suggested for the relevant literature that concept restaurants should be examined with different techniques and aspects, and new restaurant applications in the world should be examined in terms of menu, service and their interior design, and new restaurant classification should be made.

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