

Unveiling perceived authenticity in Kazakhstan's casual dining: a text mining approach to international tourist perceptions

Available to Purchase

[Zhaxylyk Akimov](#)



;

[Deniz Karagöz](#)



;

[Dinmukhammed Shaikin](#);

[Dariga Jangeldina](#);

[Emin Atasoy](#)

[Author & Article Information](#)

Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes 1–14.

<https://doi.org/10.1108/WHATT-05-2026-0159>

Article history

- [Share Icon](#)Share
- [Get Permissions](#)
- [Cite Open Menu](#)

Purpose

This study aims to examine mainstream tourists' perceptions of authenticity within restaurant experiences in Kazakhstan, a developing tourism destination. Specifically, it seeks to identify these perceptions through the lens of tourists' own narratives by analyzing their online reviews.

Design/methodology/approach

This study adopts a text mining approach to identify authenticity patterns within unstructured user-generated content. A total of 5,130 English-language customer reviews from 535 restaurants in Kazakhstan were extracted from TripAdvisor using Python-based web scraping techniques. The dataset underwent comprehensive preprocessing and was analyzed through a purposeful sampling and keyword-based sub-corpus construction approach based on a multi-dimensional authenticity framework.

Findings

The findings reveal that mainstream tourists' perceptions of authenticity are formed through three primary dimensions: traditional food and heritage (object-based authenticity), restaurant atmosphere (atmospheric authenticity) and interpersonal interaction (experiential and interpersonal authenticity). The results indicate that while traditional

Kazakh cuisine serves as a key element of authenticity, genuine hospitality and interpersonal interactions significantly enhance the authentic restaurant experience.

Research limitations/implications

This study enriches knowledge by uncovering the multidimensional structure of authenticity through tourists' own narratives and subjective meaning-making processes. By focusing on mainstream tourists rather than only cultural or gastro-tourists, it provides a richer understanding of how authenticity is conceptualized across object-based, atmospheric and experiential/interpersonal dimensions. These findings demonstrate that authenticity is an integrated structure associated with spatial and relational elements beyond the object itself. A key limitation is the reliance on English-language TripAdvisor reviews, which may not capture the full diversity of all visitor segments or non-English narratives.

Practical implications

The study offers actionable insights for destination marketers and restaurant managers in developing destinations. To enhance perceived authenticity, practitioners should prioritize the preservation of gastronomic heritage while simultaneously investing in authentic atmospheric designs and staff training for genuine hospitality. Since interpersonal interactions significantly shape the authentic experience, fostering local engagement and storytelling can create competitive advantages.

Originality/value

This study provides a more detailed and richer understanding of authenticity by focusing on the experiences of mainstream tourists rather than only cultural or gastro-tourists.