

Eatertainment and thematic restaurants in Medellín. An experiential construction for consumers from the creative and cultural industries/companies

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Abstract. This article focuses on understanding the symbolic and meaningful constructions that people attribute to their experiences lived at thematic restaurants in the city of Medellín (Colombia), as these are a fundamental part of the *eatertainment* trend, which has emerged worldwide, outstanding unpublished consumption situations that fuse gastronomy and entertainment. To this end, studies, on consumer situations related to entertainment and food were investigated, and theoretical contributions on perception, experiences, restaurants, gastronomy, leisure, symbolic constructions and social interactions were reviewed. The epistemological parameters were based on phenomenology as an eclectic current that studies experiences, whose methodology used was qualitative, with collection techniques based on interviews with consumers and restaurant's owners. On the other hand, results showed that people are attracted to new and creative restaurants, where they can find experiences that generate added value in terms of decoration, entertainment, gastronomy and service, which is what thematic restaurants offer, and that is low in the city. This information about local consumer behaviour is not only relevant to those living in the city or country, but to future foreign investors who want to develop a thematic restaurant proposal in Medellín.

Keywords: *eatertainment*; thematic restaurants; creative and cultural industries; gastronomy.

[en] *Eatertainment* y los restaurantes temáticos en Medellín. Una construcción experiencial para los consumidores desde las industrias creativas y culturales.

Resumen. Este artículo se enfoca en comprender las construcciones simbólicas y significativas que las personas atribuyen a sus experiencias vividas en restaurantes temáticos en la ciudad de Medellín (Colombia), ya que estas son una parte fundamental de la tendencia de entretenimiento, que ha surgido en todo el mundo, situaciones de consumo inéditas sobresalientes que fusionan la gastronomía y entretenimiento. Con este fin, se investigaron estudios sobre situaciones del consumidor relacionadas con el entretenimiento y la comida, y se revisaron las contribuciones teóricas sobre percepción, experiencias, restaurantes, gastronomía, ocio, construcciones simbólicas e interacciones sociales. Los parámetros epistemológicos se basaron en la fenomenología como una corriente ecléctica que estudia experiencias, cuya metodología utilizada fue cualitativa, con técnicas de recolección basadas en entrevistas con consumidores y propietarios de restaurantes. Por otro lado, los resultados mostraron que las personas se sienten atraídas por restaurantes nuevos y creativos, donde pueden encontrar experiencias que generan valor agregado en términos de decoración, entretenimiento, gastronomía y servicio, que es lo que ofrecen los restaurantes temáticos, y eso es bajo en el ciudad. Esta información sobre el comportamiento del consumidor local no solo es relevante para quienes viven en la ciudad o el país, sino también para futuros inversores extranjeros que desean desarrollar una propuesta de restaurante temático en Medellín.

Palabras clave: entretenimiento; restaurantes temáticos; industrias creativas y culturales; gastronomía

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1. Introduction

The creative industry field, where the gastronomic sector is located, it generates leisure experiences through activities or pleasant and new places that lead individuals to hedonism, so that they tend to captivate them as consumer by supplying certain needs, forging motivations, allowing remembrance in their experiences and generating pleasant sensations; all this, together with symbolic elements, helps to build an interpretation of such an experience that, if positive will be repeated and recommended others.

The world is changing. The new generations, among those, the so-called *millennials*, want to live the present to the fullest; work is no longer the main driver of their life. People want more rewarding, pleasurable and hedonistic activities, a fact that is facilitated through increasing leisure experiences, which refer to events experiences by the individual (what he or she sees, feels, knows or is provoked by) that are synonymous of fullness and satisfaction. However, the field of the creative industry promotes a hedonistic sphere with the generation of this type of experience, with the gastronomic sector being one of the most attracted to consumers.

For this reason, the study is carried out in order to respond to the objective of understanding the symbolic and meaningful constructions of people between the ages of 20 and 40 from their perception by consuming *eatertainment* experiences in Medellín thematic restaurants, and other aims in relation to how the thematic restaurants trend is presented worldwide and its consequent adaptation in Colombia, specifically in Medellín, taking as a starting point that the majority of the thematic restaurants in the city have a lower level of investment (compared to the capital, Bogotá), in addition, it is difficult for them to survive over time.

This phenomenon generates a degree of curiosity. Considering that although Medellín was considered as the most innovative city in the country in 2013, according to the Urban Land Institute (www.goo.gl/ZheJhm), it still needs to excel in this specific area of thematic restaurants, especially as found in the broadcasted news in the media that the city is not yet in the innovation plans of some local and national entrepreneurs that want to transcend the borders of their own thematic restaurants, located mainly in Bogotá, and to open headquarters nationwide. The above encourages to investigate what consumers think in the city of Medellín about the consumption of experiences in this type of restaurants, especially the way they give sense and meaning to them, whether or not this trend is attractive to them and whether the establishments themselves know how to offer a pleasant experience.

The study attempts to provide information about the area of consumption of thematic restaurants in the city, to investigate whether consumers perceive them as an attractive trend that could be emphasized and potentialized within the framework of the program «Medellín sí sabe» (Medellín Knows), or from the strategies of entrepreneurship and city promotion. Tracking has neither yet found studies on the thematic restaurants in Medellín, nor how they are perceived by consumers. Restaurant research is often addressed from their intentionality, without reaching the consumer's opinion, or if is done, it is inferred from surveys that do not get to the why of things.

Understanding human beings from a psychological, sociological and anthropological side, and the bets that have been made around experiences from marketing, it is one of the major motivations to deepen in the consumer behaviour, especially, because from this perspective, one can account for this topic from an interdisciplinary approach that will help to understand thoroughly the opinions, decisions and behaviours of the individuals; understanding, for instance, that

[...] the social sciences, such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, statistics, philosophy and economics, now find the opportunity to expand their borders of knowledge with technological advancement and contributions from disciplines such as medicine, biology or cognitive psychology⁴.

Finally, discovering such appreciations concerning this phenomenon becomes relevant, since it allows to understand even more the human being in its area of consumption and opens the doors for the motivation of providing experiences from the commercial field. In this sense, we will go deep into a topic that might be of great utility for businessmen and entrepreneur, who seeks how to constantly develop businesses that meet needs, promote motiva-

⁴ Muñoz-Sánchez, O. & Vélez-Ochoa, C. I. (2015): «Perspectiva interdisciplinaria del pensamiento estratégico en la figura del planificador de cuentas publicitarias en Colombia». *Revista de Ciencias Estratégicas*, 23, (34), 302.

tions and generate desires, so they could recognise an eminent value in a consumer trend focused on pleasurable leisure experiences. This would allow them to broaden their market view and knowing what matters to the consumer when looking for these types of options and to investors, allows them to open market in a city that stands out for developing the Creative District and betting on innovation.

2. Overview of the consumption of entertainment in Colombia

For Propaís organisation (2013) –which facilitates partnerships between the government and private entities to strengthen business fabric–, in the last report done more than 5 years ago, in 2013, consumer products are divided in two types, goods or services, where goods have as their main characteristic to be acquired in physical condition, while services solve needs without actually being present. For the latter case, the company includes the restaurants in the services line as the consumer pays for food served and prepared by others. Thus, it classifies it as a service within the food category. It is important to make clear that although consumption data in restaurants have been included within the food category, according to the Propaís report, it could also be seen as a service of the entertainment category, especially because of the new trend concerning *eatertainment* restaurants, within which thematic ones are located, as the subject of study of this research. Herrera⁵ reported that Colombia changed in economic terms in the last twenty years, due in part to the constitutional change that brought variations in the economy and with it, an increase in per capita income (four times greater) distributed better, a decrease in poverty and illiteracy, as well as, an increased coverage in health and education. As a result, by meeting more basic needs, the possibility of spending more money towards another type of traditional needs was expanded, which was modifying the shopping and consumption habits towards previously inaccessible goods, making Colombia an attractive country for foreign investment. Thus, the greater the foreign investment, the greater amount of dollars in the country, and thereby further revaluation of the peso against it, implying greater purchasing capacity for non-domestic or imported goods and with them a greater alternative of products that force to change market dynamics. Macroeconomic variables like these helped turn the economy around and, repeatedly, consumer dynamics.

Personal Finance⁶, the Internet information site owned by *Publicaciones Semana S.A.*, published some results of a study on gastronomic trends carried out by the company Groupon, in which it quoted the expert Rafael España, who stated that households are allocating on average a 28% of their family budget to food in general, being 7,2% of their total revenues allocated to restaurants; as a consequence a family whose incomes were two minimum wages in 2015 (\$1.288.700⁷) spent \$360.000 on food, of which \$90.000 went to restaurant consumption. The study found that 76% of Colombians consume in restaurants once or twice a week. This site considers that food is one of the sectors to which Colombians spend the most, including market purchases and going out to restaurants. In consequence, the results showed that more than 90% of Colombians prefer to eat away from home over ordering food delivery, to live different experiences, a trend that has been on the rise since the 1980s. In that Groupon survey, 79% of Colombians usually split the billing statement at restaurants and wait up to fifteen minutes for a table at their favourite restaurant, which would make room to think that they do not attend alone but with their group of friends or family. On the other hand, there are more who prefer Colombian cuisine (31%) above international, of which Italian and Mexican (21% y 16% respectively) stand out. In line with all these studies, Nielsen also confirmed to *El Tiempo*⁸ that food is the category or sector with the highest share of household consumption, in which –as was previously mentioned– diners in restaurants are also taken into account. According to this firm, contrary to what would happen in times of slow economic growth, this type of expenditure has not yet been sacrificed and became to be part of consumption in the 2015 Christmas season, represented at nearly one million pesos per household and 13,6 trillion pesos across the country. Continuing the information provided by the newspaper, surveys conducted by Nielsen report that eating in restaurants has become more frequent, especially for new generations; so those between the ages of 15 and 34 attend to these places at least once a week. For the consulting firm, «Six out of ten *millennials* responded that they do so, doubling the percentage of *boomers* [...] population between the ages of 50 and 64»⁹

Additionally, the newspaper *El Tiempo* (Economic recession is not yet felt in Colombian households, 2016) published the results of another study by the consulting Raddar, in which despite the weakening presented by the economy in 2015, there was an increase in household expenditures by 5,03% compared to 2014, identified at approximately 51 trillion pesos, which brought the total number of Colombian household spending of about 542,5 trillion pesos to reach. At the same time, there is a trend of living more aware of the image, where nutrition, new eating habits, new aesthetic conceptions transform society y make the consumer willing to invest in it; it the tendency to transform products and services individually to turning consumers into prosumers (consumers who produce what

⁵ Herrera, C. (26 de septiembre de 2013). Tendencias de consumo en Colombia. Bogotá, Cundinamarca, Colombia.

⁶ Consumo Inteligente. Finanzas Personales online (14 de mayo de 2015). «Los colombianos, la comida y el bolsillo», <http://www.finanzaspersonales.com.co/consumo-inteligente/articulo/cuanto-gastan-colombianos-comida/56350> web visitada el de febrero de 2019.

⁷ 1 euro = 3.769,61 pesos colombianos según el cambio de divisa el 25 de septiembre de 2019.

⁸ Economía. Finanzas Personales. *El Tiempo* online, (2 de febrero de 2016): «Recesión económica aún no se siente en los hogares colombianos», <http://www.eltiempo.com/economia/finanzas-personales/en-que-se-gastan-la-plata-los-colombianos/16498816> web visitada el 24 de febrero de 2019.

⁹ Economía. Finanzas Personales. *Ibidem*.

they consume), who customise their products, such as the case of a dish in a restaurant that can be modified according to the diner's taste. For the case of Medellín, a population of 2.608.394 is projected at 2022, and an average purchase of \$5.853.834 per month, which means increases of about 260% in eleven years and thus the possibility of increasing purchasing power, more luxury goods and services consumption, among which restaurants can be found.

2.1. Creative industries. From macro vision to thematic restaurants.

To understand the context, or rather the positioning of the gastronomic sector and its gastronomic industry, taken from a macro and global to a micro level where thematic restaurants appear, it is important that this belongs to an economic sector known as the Creative Economy, which according to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development¹⁰, is composed by all those activities focused on the creation and distribution of goods and services that are based on knowledge and creativity, by generating value and wealth to enhance a country's economic growth and development through innovation, competitiveness and job creation. In the words of this United Nations body:

The cycles of creation, production and distribution of goods and services that are fundamentally based on creativity and intellectual capital [...]. A set of activities based on knowledge, but not limited to arts; to generate revenues concerning trade and intellectual property rights [...]. Tangible and intangible goods or artistic services with creative content, economic value and market objectives [...]. Artisan's point of convergence, services and industrial sectors [...]. A new dynamic sector in the world of trade¹¹.

Continuing with this entity, developed countries are seeing a positive on their economies through the strengthening of these productive activities, which are based on creativity and intellectual property; therefore, tend to further advance them in their future strategies and economic policies. In addition, because creativity is affected by the individual environment, as exposed by Roca, Wilson, Barrios & Muñoz-Sánchez (2017): «The individuals' self-construction influences their behaviour across the different social domains in which they reside»¹².

The above is a clear model that developing countries must follow by leveraging their rich and diverse cultures, their creative talents, resources, knowledge, the digital technological revolution, globalisation and the movement of consumers, with the purpose of stimulating the economy as a key and dynamising factor of progress and development (including marginalised regions) from a transformative perspective.

For the Higher Institute of Cultural and Creative Industries (InsICC for its acronyms in Spanish)¹³, among such Creative Economy you can talk about Creative Industries that include digital design, textile and fashion design, product design, space design, architecture, cultural tourism, gastronomy, advertisement and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT); in addition, within them you can also talk about the Cultural Industries, which take into account television and radio, film and video, music, performing arts, plastic and visual arts, publishing and press, cultural heritage, cultural spaces, and engineering and show architecture. According to UNCTAD¹⁴, these industries value culture, science, novelty, technological innovation and intellectual property rights, and their focus ranges from the arts to science and technology, to be ranked and distributed into four major categories such as heritage, arts, media and functional creations.

Under this gaze, gastronomy can be understood as an industry that is included into the «functional creations» category, as it is a service that produces food, services and creative, aesthetic and functional content environments. In addition, this industry can link research and creative development of new products (R & D), as well as cultural services (concerning the culture they are part of or appeal to) and creative services, as to being one of the sectors that people look for in search of social interaction, celebrating special moments or entertainment. Gastronomy is then part of an economic sector in which creativity is fundamental and brings a distinctive aspect to a particular activity¹⁵.

2.2 Gastronomy

Considering Solórzano¹⁶, the man eats to satisfy his hunger and in turn appreciates the taste of meals; gastronomy has the function of supplying this biological need by mixing elements such as food, flavours, techniques, nutrition and experiences, from a characteristic and communicative expression in the dishes of each chef. It also allows creating a strong social bond between people, because through it are celebrated many situations and social life festivities (social meetings, birthdays, anniversaries, etc.). «Food is an important part of the culture. It entails union with the past, it is

¹⁰ UNCTAD. (2010). *Economía Creativa: Una opción factible de desarrollo*. Ginebra: Naciones Unidas. UNCTAD.

¹¹ UNCTAD. (2010). *Economía Creativa: Una opción factible de desarrollo*. *Op. cit.*, 34.

¹² Roca, D., Wilson, B., Barrios, A. y Muñoz-Sánchez, O. (2017): «Creativity identity in Colombia: the advertising creatives' perspective» *International Journal of Advertising*. 36, (6), 834.

¹³ Razón de ser (2011): *Instituto Superior de Industrias Culturales y Creativas*. <http://www.insicc.com/#/16/razon-de-ser> web visitada el 23 de agosto de 2019.

¹⁴ UNCTAD. (2010). *Economía Creativa: Una opción factible de desarrollo*. *Op.cit.*

¹⁵ rodríguez, E., hidalgo, T., & segarra, J. (2014): «La gastronomía como producto de entretenimiento. Análisis de restaurantes y programas culinarios de éxito en España desde una perspectiva creativa». *Pangea*, 8, 145-157.

¹⁶ solórzano, A. (2012): «Diseño Gastronómico». *Lolee aquí*, 8, 11-14.

a legacy of other civilisations, it is part of the identity and reflects people's lives»¹⁷; it also incorporates a system of symbolic representations, which includes how to value and prepare food as well as the customs around them¹⁸.

Through the careful mix of flavours, smells, colours, textures, sounds found in the various universes of food, each human group builds strong social and symbolic relationships: in every bite of food we live every day our dual status of cultural and biological beings. Each society has codified the world of the senses from its gaze and its rationality, and in eating there are present the particularities of a human group. Food is a wide space of meanings tied to our social history, which is an excellent ground for talking about cultural diversity and contemporaneity¹⁹.

Food, as a communicative medium, it is subject to codes in its preparation, presentation and etiquette standards, which depend on the cultures in which it is immersed and concerns the liking or displeasure of the different dishes. Gastronomy can be understood as an aesthetic expression and art linked to the messages they communicate and the sensory that allow experimenting in individuals (visual, olfactory, taste qualities, etc.). Its art is based on the creativity that has implicit in creating new recipes, combining or playing with the flavours, but also with the memories and emotions that wants to generate to the diner through the significants of each dish²⁰.

The exterior facade it is also taken into account, that is, the furniture, the decoration or *setting* ready to recreate a scenario that gives refinement and enchantment to the kitchen, generating greater pleasure in the diners and calling for their social integration.

Dining can be seen as a leisure moment to regain strength and continue daily work, where people engage in recreation, play and conversation²¹.

For Solórzano²², through this integration people remember moments, talk about their present, plan the future, share interests and analyse their current experience; around the table, individuals are transported spheres of desire and satisfaction where any topic is welcome and they where it is shared with others. Eating in isolation (in the absence of the other) is a bad-seed fact that does not allow to acquire major social background; instead, people seat together around the table to build strong bonds of unity and integration and learn to judge their experiences from the social and cultural patterns they are encouraged to follow. An additional stimulus to taste, such as aesthetics in the visual presentation of space and dishes, the comfort of used furniture and utensils, the predominant music or noise and the odours generated, allow recreating a pleasant or unpleasant environment for diners.

Feeding and motivating eating outside the home is a complex act permeated by biological, social and cultural factors. Food is essentially functional (satisfying hunger) but acquires a symbolic character influenced by status, festivities and the creation of social ties. On the other hand, to obtain a holistic experience around food, it is necessary to include diverse elements such as the choice of the venue, the taste of the dishes, the good service and attention of the personnel, the other diners and the place's atmosphere. Frequenting a restaurant there is not only consumption of food and drinks but also there is the atmosphere, fun, and the relationships established in there²³.

Additionally, it can be noticed how the gastronomic sector is thinking about hedonism and variety as one of the motivational factors of consumption, going from offering purely gastronomic stimulus, which respond to the sense of taste, to the creation of experiences that add entertainment and rely on simultaneous activation of different senses (visual and auditory through shows, elements and decoration; touch, by means of the materials of the furniture and its comfort, among others).

In this terms, and following the phrase of the English Aphra Behn: in the variety is the soul of pleasure, when basic needs such as food are satisfied, the individual looks for variety to also satisfy the desire to enjoy that need²⁴; in other words, looks for pleasure both in the food and in the various alternatives that has to consume it. Hence, offering a variety only in food types and its preparation has become a common value, and therefore opens up the possibility of offering an even more successful gastronomic product whose novelty is to add entertainment and the activation of diverse senses to bring such variety. In other words, if food intake produces pleasure, a phenomenon is known as hedonic hunger²⁵, and the fun or desire for novel products also generates it, the combination of these factors will allow to co-create an attractive product, likely to be highly consumed.

3. Methodology

As researchers we take an investigative approach from hermeneutics and phenomenology; for the latter, we will make a justification from the proposals of several authors.

¹⁷ Roden, C. (November de 2003): «Local food and culture». *Proceedings of Research and Academic Papers of Local Food and Tourism International Conference*, 9.

¹⁸ Menasche, R., & Gomensoro, P. (2007): *Escolhas alimentares: o lugar da cultura*. Curso Alimentação e Cultura. Porto Alegre: REDCAPA.

¹⁹ Delgado, R. (2001): «Comida y cultura: Identidad y significado en el mundo contemporáneo». *Estudios de Asia y África*, XXXVI (1), 83.

²⁰ Tettay, J. P. (2012): «Cocina creativa, ¿igual a arte?» *Lolee aquí* 8, 21-22.

²¹ Solórzano, A. (2012): «Diseño Gastronómico». *Lolee aquí*, 8, 11-14.

²² Solórzano, A. (2012). *Ibidem*.

²³ gimenés, M., fraiz, J., & gándara, J. (2012). «Comidas inolvidables: La construcción de una metodología para analizar las experiencias de comer fuera de casa». *Estudios Y Perspectivas En Turismo*, 21 (4), 802-824.

²⁴ Padrón, C., & Barreto, I. (2011): «Representaciones sociales asociadas al consumo hedónico de alimentos en restaurantes». *Revista Latinoamericana de Psicología*, 43 (3), 487-496.

²⁵ Padrón, C., & Barreto, I. (2011). *Ibidem*.

- Object or phenomenon of study: consumption of leisure experiences in thematic restaurants.
- Geographical area: Medellín and Envigado.
- Analysis unit: people between the ages of 20 and 40 years old, and thematic restaurants.
- Population: people between the ages of 20 and 40 years old who consume at thematic restaurants in Medellín.
- Scope of the research:
 - Exploratory, as it is a study that focuses on knowing the perceptions that exist about consumption experiences in thematic restaurants.
 - Descriptive, by digging into people's own words, spoken or written; in observable behaviour, trying to describe the perceptions, symbolic constructions and meanings that those investigated give to the experiences lived.
- Research approach: Qualitative, since it is applied regardless of the discipline of the researcher (sociology, anthropology, psychology, etc.) and refers to the research that produces descriptive data. In this type of studies, the design of the research is flexible, people are studied in the context of their past and in the situations in which they are; also, the researcher sets aside his own beliefs, perspectives and predispositions to see things without bias.
- Sample: non-probabilistic. More than the sample size, what it matters is the depth that allows to understand the phenomenon of study and to answer research questions in a better way²⁶.
- Restaurants: sampling by judgment, selection of units based on conceptual design criteria (decoration and architecture), exhibitions or expositions, food (taste, presentation and dishes names), employees, entertainment *shows*, shop and prices. Variables delimiting the structural composition of the sample are theoretically defined. The most important characteristics are clearly defined to systematically choose the sample. Those that meet the theoretically defined characteristics, such as thematic restaurants and which allow the study to be carried out, will be selected.
- Sample by convenience: nine thematic restaurants from 12 initially identified are selected, according to their easy availability. It is used in exploratory studies that allow approximating to the characterisation of the object of investigation.
- People: sampling by convenience, the idea is not having a high number of people to interview in a few restaurants, but a greater number of restaurants to be analysed from a smaller consumer base, as it is necessary to have a point of comparison about what is going on in the city against the consumption phenomenon.

4. Analysis of the results

Thematic restaurants focus on a particular theme or concept, which apply to the entire experience generated, taking into account variables such as design (decoration and architecture), exhibitions and expositions, food (taste, presentation and dishes names), employees, entertainment *shows*, shop and prices. These variables allow simulating an atmosphere that takes people out of everyday life and transports them to another place, giving rise to a more holistic experience. In this order of ideas, the experiences that the Medellín's restaurants wanted to recreate around such characteristics, will then be contrasted with the perceptions and symbolic constructions that consumers make about it. The analysis of the nine restaurants is the following:

4.1. Hacienda (Ranch)

Its theme focuses 100% on the Antioquia's tradition, therefore, its architecture is fully developed to simulate a ranch, from the courtyard, stairs, balconies, railings, facades, the style of the walls, doors, etc. As for its decoration, hanging flowers in the corridors were implemented, a courtyard in the middle with a fountain and a cage of fictitious birds, as well as a thick wall at the entrance with some popular adagios or traditional phrases from the *paisa* culture (as it is known to the inhabitants of Medellín) and another on the stairs with old photos of the city, which stand out as exhibitions or expositions.

As for entertainment, the interviewees emphasised that artists sang very well, they liked the *crossover* music because it applies to all tastes and prefer live music rather than the ambient one, as it makes the difference by giving them a plus that brings them closer to the place, however, they have no problem when music from the sound equipment plays. Consumers consider that the structure and decoration of the place are complemented with the employees' outfit, the latter being one of the variables that they like the most as it generates that the atmosphere is not only left in the infrastructure but also the service, offering them a complete experience. The staff and the service were very

²⁶ Hernández, R., Fernández, C., & Baptista, P. (2010): *Metodología de la investigación*. México D. F: Mc Graw Hill.

good as well as the very well presented place. The food was delicious and completely combined with the theme of the place.

4.2. Haiku Café Maid (Haiku Maid CoffeeShop)

It is located in the residential sector, close to a large company; there are few restaurants nearby. Space is not that big. It is part of a building's basement. People in the exterior have no idea about its existence, so it generates a certain expectation that is validated when coming downstairs and finding the recreated experience.

This restaurant opens only on Sundays from 1:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., and it has become the only restaurant in Medellín to deal with the Japanese theme from another angle, referring to the manga series that are about the life of *maids*. Inside it is surrounded by an art gallery with paintings by one of the owners that allude to famous series, bands and videogames. It also tries to utilise novel elements used by thematic Japanese restaurants, however, as the majority are difficult to get in Colombia, you must buy them by *e-commerce*. One of the elements that stand out are the sanitary-shaped glasses, which replicated the international restaurants that simulate toilets.

As for entertainment, background music is played to liven up, which usually refers to a musical genre focused on what young people of Japan or group of *otakus* of the city (who like manga, anime, and Japanese culture) listen to; this genre is known as k-pop or J-pop, however, they also play more common music for people that has nothing to do with the theme or do not know it. Consumers can play videogames; on special occasions, such as Halloween, they invite consumers to go dress up to compete for the best *cosplay* (anime or comic costume).

The waitresses of the place portray the *maids*' characters who represent the French maids and appear in the anime; they are dressed as such and vary their costumes, but in times like Christmas they have a special one. These characters have become the taste and fetish of the Japanese, who like the costumes and being served as masters, so when consumers get inside, girls make them a bow and say in Japanese: «Welcome home master (mistress)». Once they are seated at their tables, they start with their presentation monologue in the same language in which they say: «please to meet you, my name is..., I am going to be the one to take care of you, I hope we get along».

This possibility of finding strange dishes is what stands out most for some diners, who want to try them all. The taste they like and the presentation of the dishes seem very thematic because it has to do with the anime or series they watched from their childhood.

In general, they consider the dishes are always the same and do not vary, they only do so on special dates, such as the Halloween ice cream. They consider the prices very appropriate for the place.

Consumers have known the restaurant since its inception as a shop only because they bought animation elements and there was also a manga drawing workshop. They take this restaurant space as a place of entertainment while waiting for food. Among the items they bought, the watches alluding to some anime stand out.

4.3. Interstate 80's

It is located on Avenida Jardín, near La Nutibara, a pink zone in the residential neighbourhood of Laureles (exclusive sector) where there are many restaurants. Their opening hours are from midday to ten o'clock from Sunday to Thursday, and from midday to one in the morning on Fridays and Saturdays. This restaurant has been in Medellín for almost three years and eight in San Andrés (where it was born) and focuses on the 80's theme, therefore, its decoration is designed as a museum with allusive exhibitions to elements of that time, such as, toys (Chucky and the bride, *Topo Gigio*, Alf, etc.), the wall of Mario Bros with the Nintendo and different symbols of this videogame, Atari consoles, old TVs, among others. As additional elements of decoration, when it is someone's birthday, they put balloons and evocative articles on his/her table.

In regards to entertainment, you can give a direct and experimental interaction with the exhibited elements allowing consumers to touch, play and take pictures with them; one of those that apply the most participation between people and objects it is the case of the Atari and Nintendo consoles, which they can also play with. They have music alluding to the eighties, constantly, which they present in different formats, the karaoke's Thursdays, Fridays every fortnight with live band music and daily as a background stimulus or music videos screened on the different televisions of the place. On some occasions, they do parties with *disc-jockey* and garage dancing and have resorted to shows with dancers who pass between the tables and dance with the waiters, but they have not performed again.

Employees have a normal uniform (jean and t-shirt); however, among their planes, they hope to create a very innovative one, alluding to the eighties. Their service is limited to serving tables and they do not portray any character.

In terms of consumers, for these, it was very obvious that the theme of the restaurant was associated with the eighties referencing its music and decoration. People found it important to innovate a little more in the architecture and setting of the walls to make it older and more allusive to that time that goes beyond toys or decorative games, generating an experience that transports even more to those years. In general, they liked the decoration; they see it as imposing and well worked and associate it with the most famous elements of that decade, some of them related to horror movies and their games or childhood tastes, in which for example, *ninja turtles* stand out. They associated the place with a museum, whose exhibitions make them remember and go back in time by watching televisions and identifying items that they did not know and that are novel.

In terms of entertainment, people highlight the experience at this restaurant as they can mainly interact with the elements of the decoration, such as playing, something not allowed in other places of this kind. At the time of the publication of this text, it was evident that the restaurant ceased to function in 2018.

4.4. *La Tienda (The Shop)*

It has four branches throughout the *Aburrá* Valley, specifically located at the Sabaneta, Envigado, Bello and Medellín municipalities, with the Medellín shop being selected as part of the sample. This branch is located at La 70 sector, between Laureles and San Joaquín, a traditional pink zone where more restaurants, bars and hotels are located. The theme focuses on a typical village shop from the fifties and sixties. Serves Monday to Wednesday from six in the morning to midnight; Thursday, Friday and Saturday from six in the morning to four in the morning, and Sundays from midday to four in the afternoon depending on the people. Tourists and people especially visit on the Flower Fair Festival (cultural event and city heritage) held in August every year.

As decorative elements they exhibit those that symbolise typical items of the *paisa* culture and others allusive to Christmas, such as, toys and hanging lights of many colours; it also features old objects like radios.

The waiters do not personify anything in particular, as they believe there must be seriousness in the service, therefore they are focused on offering good attention. Their costumes consist of a blue jean (*vaqueros* in Spain) and an apron. The gastronomic concept is typical food, however, they have national and international menu, in which the most desirable dishes are known as «*Ricuras de mi Tierra*» (Delights of my land), where *bandeja paisa*, *mondongo*, *sancocho de gallina* (chicken soup) or *seco paisa* and others such as roasts or salmon, stand out.

Contrasting this experience with the consumers' opinions, they associate this theme with the one of *pueblito paisa* (another touristic site of the city) and Antioquia's traditional Christmas. Among its decorative objects exhibited, the curious hanging toys stand out, since they show the place very folkloric and characterise the *paisa* culture a lot, which also seem to be taken from a pottery shop where old items are sold. One of the elements that stand out the most are the pork (which they see as very funny) or the Christmas lights, as not being so common in months other than December.

About entertainment, they highlighted animation, as well as, the live music and the atmosphere which they considered very varied and lively. They also highlighted karaoke, which they had been waiting for since their arrival and although initially, they did not feel very willing to sing, they dared as seeing the other people interacting. In general, they associated the place more with a nightclub or restaurant bar where they appreciate to have food at the same time as entertainment without having to move to another place; in this sense, they highlighted the «crazy hour» as the best moment of the experience where they also receive prizes such as liquor. They associated the experience in this restaurant with another *Fonda* (a cheap restaurant) where they dress up as particular characters of a village and play new year's eve music.

The interviewees also highlighted the kindness of the waiters, the speed and willingness to serve, the fact that they were so attentive to their comfort and the animation of the karaoke's presenter, which is something that they always look for in a place. They would like waiters to be dressed up and acting.

4.5. *Los Robots (The Robots)*

This is a recent business that was born in 2016. It is located at the Veracruz Shopping Centre, next to *Plaza Botero* (Botero Square), in town, a place crowded by tourists and workers from the area. It is the only restaurant that took over a whole dining area, while the other competitors were located in other share areas on different floors. Its schedule is from Monday to Saturday from eleven in the morning to three in the afternoon, which is the lunchtime and does not extend until the evening, as the shopping centre closes at seven o'clock at night.

Its theme relates to the vegan lifestyle associated with robots, where the world and technology continue evolving without having to sacrifice animals. This restaurant is intended to be the most complete in the world in terms of variety of robots and their functions, as research carried out by the owners showed that in the world there are basically two types: some robots that bring food to the tables and others that make some preparations in the kitchen. As a result, they wanted to have these two types and venture into other novel ones.

In regards to decoration, it is a very educational space that exposes messages to teach the goodness of veganism. Such messages can be seen in each dispenser, which has the benefits of the dish with its nutrients, as well as the drawbacks of the associated products of animal origin; or there can also be seen on the walls making allusion to animal tortures, to the comparisons between vegan and non-vegan humans, famous characters as validators, a trophology course (science that studies nutrition in living beings) with examples and images of love for animals. Several robots exhibited in different places and the decoration with the solar system can also be observed.

As entertainment, it can be associated with a small interactive park that features different robots and areas such as the playground, with ball pool, and a robot babysitter; the Galactic VIP area, that simulates the space; the area of Atom-Spaxium-Neuron, in which atoms and neurons are displayed in augmented version, as well as the theory of the universe; the Energy area to recharge with this; the optical music area to perceive by the eyes the kinetics of sound (this being a unique case of real synesthesia in the restaurants analysed); a relaxing room with furniture massage; the robotic clinic where you can see a static image of Dr Salutron and Computronia, a robot that operates another to make

it almost human, and two robots (*Electra* and *La Campesina*) that circulate with music and handing out desserts to diners, becoming waitresses.

As for the decoration, consumers see the place divided into different areas that exhibit specific robots, mainly mentioning *Computronia*, *Electra* and *Titanio*; they are also impacted by the dispensing machines they associate with food ATMs and the exhibition of educational images for those who want to learn about the vegan world, where they see strong messages coming to certain hyperboles and metaphors that speak about animals as corpses or humans as wild animals.

On entertainment, they associate it with a place where apart from eating they also find material to learn about better eating habits that benefit health, therefore, they value the information and advice they get all over the place. They also appreciate the entertainment of different areas and robots, so they prefer to look all over the place before eating to identify what is new, interact with it and take photos. Highlights include the massage area, *Computronia*, the novelty of food dispensers and the robots waitresses as a point of attraction for its movement system that allows them to pass through all the tables.

4.6. Mano Calamita (Calamita Hand)

It is in the surroundings of Provenza, one of the most exclusive pink areas of El Poblado (a neighbourhood) in which new formats of gastronomic and party businesses are appearing. It is located specifically at the *Lalinde* neighbourhood, which is characterised by a more residential environment, a few premises for trade, famous hotels and restaurants in the city (which although not thematic, are very busy). The service opens Monday to Thursday from midday to two and a half in the afternoon, and from six in the afternoon to ten or eleven o'clock at night, depending on the number of people. Weekends or Saturdays range from seven to ten or eleven o'clock at night. This area has a good offer of hotels and hostels, especially for foreign tourists.

It is a restaurant conceived two years ago as the house of a travelling chef, whose decoration is considered as the most important factor. Change some of its elements every one or two months –for instance the placemats– and try to implement new things. It has a wall that has an exhibition of clocks, which allude to different hours in the world; the walls have maps of various cities and countries. Tables and chairs are heterogeneous, with different shapes, colours, sizes and materials; toilets have varied hanging paper. Its spaces are divided and in each one of them, you can observe elements from different countries, such as Asian articles.

They recreate a thematic experience in which they select a country, create a typical characteristic dish and bring live music with musical genres and allusive songs to it. The idea is to have this experience two or three times a year, on special occasions, to prevent people from place becoming common and valuing it every time it is presented. They have already recreated experiences associated with China and Mexico. They also have tablecloths in *mandala* shapes or colouring figures.

The names of the dishes area alluding to the theme. Every six or eight months they renew the menu, although there are dishes that are untouchable such as *Morrillo* and *Risotto*. In fact, the menu they developed it has very traditional Colombian ingredients that they present in another way, for example, *Morrillo*, a type of meat normally used for *sancocho*, is transformed into a luxury dish. They do not have a specific point for the shop, but they do have elements for sale such as coffee maker, glasses, plates, sachets or some decoration items of which consumers can fall in love with. The idea is that if consumers like something they can take it with them. Also, they give away some postcards as a souvenir at the time of delivering the bill.

This experience is associated by consumers with the concept of a trip, where cultures are mixed and mainly Asian countries stand out. The exhibited elements are associated with memories that captivate them, such as the Budha's head, walls and placemats with maps, the Japanese cat or clocks. From the toilet stood out an atypical and novel decoration which highlighted the sliding doors and associated the washbasin with a barrel supported by two hands of a Japanese cat. They also highlighted the entrance, which they seem to be as the ice cream parlours found at the cinemas. Some consumers mentioned that without these elements, the place could become more common as other modern restaurants in the city, which are not necessary thematic.

As for the fact that they can buy the products they like from the decoration, consumers have no idea of this because nobody had informed them about it. Everyone considered that they would like to buy something, as there was very pretty stuff, but at the moment they would not know what it would be, some mentioned the glasses as an attractive element because they simulate to be cup and glass at the same time.

4.7. Planet Comics

It was established two years ago in the *Santafé* Shopping Centre, one of the busiest of the El Poblado sector. It is not located in the food area, as is the case with other restaurants, however, it is located next to the cinemas, a key point since a large number of people pass through the place. Its opening hours are from midday to nine a half at night from Sunday to Thursday, and from midday to ten o'clock at night on Fridays and Saturdays. This schedule is subject to the Shopping Centre's closure.

It carries out a very unique concept in Medellín in terms of the topic of superheroes, series and comics. Its name arose from the existence of shops called *Planeta Comics* or *Ciudad Comics* and one with the same name in the United

States. In its decoration, it has a large exhibition of pieces alluding to the most famous characters, which are exclusive and expensive as they come from other parts of the world. They have elements that are very difficult to see in Medellín such as the throne of the Game Of Thrones series or the Harry Potter broom, and in their decoration highlight the display of paintings alluding to comics and superheroes on a human scale like Spiderman, Superman, Batman, The Joker, Captain America, Hulk, Ironman and others from *Star Wars*. The idea is to keep moving the elements of the place, bring new ones and decorate more on special dates like Halloween to generate expectation.

Its gastronomy is oriented to *gourmet* American food with dishes such as salads, ribs or burgers, the latter being the speciality. They include ingredients like blue cheese, cheddar, *chimichurri*, etc. which make them more elaborate dishes. Each dish has a name allusive to the thematic, for example, the «Planet» (traditional) burgers, the *X-Men* «XBurger», the «Donatello» of the ninja turtles, the «Jumanji» for the film, among others. The most desirable dishes are the «Mole» (Mexican traditional sauce) burger, being the largest with double meat, double cheese and double bacon; the «Geek» with *chicharrón* (fried pork), *patacón* (fried plantain), *hogao* (tomato and onion mix sauce) and avocado. The prices set are \$20.000 on average per plate.

The shop simulates a magician's house and exhibits displays with masks, superheroes, elements of films such as *Harry Potter* (butterbeer, *grajeas* or the necklace of the relics of death) or *The Hunger Games* (Mockingjay), notebooks, books, miniature collections that complement the decoration, etc.

About their cuisine, consumers ordered burgers, nachos and beer, which they liked in general and approved their prices. About the shop, this one catches a lot their attention when going through for the cinema because of the number of curious elements they have, once inside they discover the restaurant. The elements that appeal them the most are the scary masks as well as the stickers, teddy bears and small collectable toys alluding to the series and films.

4.8. *Tal Cual* (Just as it is)

This restaurant can be found in the *Manila* neighbourhood of *El Poblado*, more specifically in the area known as *La Calle de la Buena Mesa* (the good cuisine street), a gastronomic point of reference in the city that has numerous restaurants, hostels and residential houses. In its beginnings, in the 90s, it was an art supply shop, becoming a gallery eight years ago and a restaurant two years ago. Its theme always has revolved around art. The schedule goes from Monday to Thursday between midday and three o'clock in the afternoon, resuming from six to ten at night; Fridays and Saturdays from midday to eleven o'clock at night, and Sundays from ten in the morning to four o'clock in the afternoon.

Its architectural type is associated with a common old house, in which interior, a space completely alluding to art is recreated which makes it stand out from the surrounding restaurants for its colourful and variety of styles. In its decoration, it has an exhibition of paintings and sculptures, due to its merger with an art gallery. It wants to recreate an atmosphere where every corner has something artistically unique to be appreciated. It is divided into five areas such as *La cava* (cool box), in the style of a wine cellar; Rococo, alluding to the decoration of this style, with detailed flowers; *La Galería* (The gallery), where large-format works are exhibited with the proper lighting; *La Pérgola* (The Pergola), with an outdoor atmosphere, and *el Parque Londinense* (the London Park) with a telephone box and an old lighthouse. In general, all the chairs and tables are different, the lighting varies according to each space and changes works constantly, where sometimes you can appreciate a more colourful trend, other times with a more ochre colour palette, depending on each artist.

On the denominations of the menu dishes, some refer to topics related to elements that traditionally appear in the paintings of artists such as wind and sea, four seasons; skewers trilogy or prawns watercolour painting that comes together with sauces of different colours. As for drinks, rose sangria is listed by *TripAdvisor* as the best, it comes with rose petals, cherry and Spanish wine (needle), which gives it a nice presentation and generates a pleasant sensation on the palate. They also have a very artistic cocktail bar, like the «Dalí» mojito, «Hendricks of roses» and others allusive to art, colours and textures.

Consumers, as a result, associate the restaurant theme with art and culture mainly, but also with fashion, where highlight several factors: an environment associated with a park in United Kingdom or France (very European); another cooler gallery atmosphere with exhibited paintings, which are very striking for their large size; outside, an ambiance that mix colour tiles under Gaudí's technique (Barcelona) with the most Latin and local bushes and chairs; and old space next to the kitchen that they consider warmer, welcoming and beautiful because of the contrasts with gilt, nature and lighting; an a contemporary toilet with also a very nice washbasin. Consumers consider the atmosphere to be very good, they like the ambient music because it is quiet, with a moderate volume that allows them to talk, however, they believe that they could also include other genres such as jazz, music from France and other countries like Portugal, Germany, etc. that allows them to transport more easily to these places which they feel identified through the decoration.

They consider that they entertain themselves by observing the paintings that are on display and would like to be able to see more sculptures and other types of plastic arts; they also believe that the restaurant could set experiences from a more artistic perspective, such as an artist recreating any manifestation of art in front of consumers while they live their gastronomic experience.

Art is reflected in the presentation of the dishes and the menu. Good taste of the food it also fulfils their expectations regarding what they are reading in the menu, because in a way, a menu showing sketches and phrases of the artists, makes consumers expect something very different on the plate. The food is very good and varied, the dishes they ordered were a salmon tornado and serrano ham, a *carpaccio* fusion with three types of fish, a timbale, a *solomito* (a type of meat) and a prawn watercolour painting. They recommend the rose sangria (from which you can enjoy every drink), any type of dish and finish with a dessert.

4.9. Woka

It is part of the group «Live the night», a program from the Mayor of Medellin for establishments that have a larger time extension. The restaurant is owned by the *Triada* business group, owner of some of the city's most prestigious bars and restaurants. It is situated on a terrace on the third and last floor of a building (in whose lower floors there are two businesses of the same group) that is located in the *Lleras* Park sector, the traditional city's pink area, most visited by tourists and locals which have nightclubs, bars, restaurants, hotels and hostels. Its schedule ranges from five in the afternoon to two in the morning on weekdays, and five in the afternoon to three in the morning on weekends. This time depends on the weather as it is a terrace.

Waiters are trained and show interest in their work, they are not limited to take orders but can offer advice regarding dishes, the *Tiki* cocktails bar, the reason why of a cocktail's name and in telling the Woka's story to the customer. They do not wear allusive suits but a normal uniform with trousers and a black shirt. The *disc-jockey* and the *bartender* are the only ones who perform the entertainment *show*, as having waiters portraying a character would imply that they were actors or artists, and it is very complicated.

The Woka menu is a fusion of several Mediterranean, Peruvian, Oriental, etc. influences, where international classic dishes are subject to adaptations of the restaurant, but they do not have names or presentations allusive to the theme. They offer meat, chicken, fish and vegetarian options for all tastes; filet mignon and beef «Woka» stand out. The cocktails are thematic, related to the *Tiki* trend of the jungle or nature, which was born in the 1930s alluding to the Easter Island and its aboriginals; hence the glasses are long faces with a mixture of tradition liqueurs with fruity and natural flavours that tropicalised cocktails.

Facing this experience, consumers highlight every corner of the place as alluding to nature, whose elements of decoration such as trees, stems and beards are very well simulated; feature the rocky bottom of the wall with the liquor display, the centre where the *disc-jockey* is, the waterfall and the fish tank, the strange entrance that looks like a tunnel which they describe as very pretty and the terrace-like atmosphere with the roof opening which impacts consumers because it exposes them outdoors to enjoy a starry sky or a full moon.

When it comes to entertaining, the music seems very agreeing as the *lounge* genre combines with the design and the nature-like setting which is calm, and it also allows the conversation for its moderate volume. They also highlighted the images shown on the giant screen, the mixes of songs made by the *disc-jockey* and the contrasts that he achieved between an electronic rhythm and another classic (with the saxophone) which was very romantic. They consider the place to encourage them to keep partying in some nightclub and they believe that the *show* they do with fire is spectacular, unique and different.

5. Conclusion

Most of the thematic restaurants that exist in the city of Medellin are located in traditional and exclusive pink areas, or places with lots of crowds such as shopping centres. Are aimed to people of medium and high strata and focus on further exploiting the common decoration and *eatertainment*. Can be considered consumption cathedrals as they merge different spaces such as shopping centres, galleries and restaurants; and although many of them are replicated concepts and brought from other countries, they bring novelty to the Medellin industry and are liked a lot despite some recommendations.

About the intentionality of the restaurants, these were mostly not born as thematic, simply the experience was transformed from an elementary shop or restaurant to achieve a good atmosphere with decoration, employees and entertainment. What they always have in mind was to create a successful experience and inadvertently adopted a concept or theme. However, as for the multisensory that restaurants are recreating, this does not generate a synaesthetic experience in which stimulus impacting the five senses are mixed at the same time, but are limited to synaesthesias oriented to sight, taste, and hearing; in other words, only do sensory stimulation.

Usually, what restaurants try to do with employees is that they can tell the story of the place, explain in what their gastronomy consists of and the elements they sell, but they do not always do so and consumers are left without knowing the services they offer (very associated to the shop) or the thematic experience context. Usually, the symbolic constructions or the meanings attributed by consumers to restaurants coincided with those they wanted to recreate, although in other cases the theme was not as tangible or concrete for them, which modified their perceptions.

In most cases, waiters are only limited to service and in very few there is a costume that conveys a story; in spite of this, consumers appreciate the excellent attitude of waiters and consider it more important than food, as it is a

pleasant memory that can be taken away. Consumers pay for the service, the food quality of the products and a nice place, but for them, the service takes a fundamental part.

As for gastronomy, some restaurants are oriented to international cuisine combining different cultures and adapting them to their preparations, but others are governed by the typical and ethnic that is also very desirable. For the dishes, they use names associated with the themes and few are oriented to present them creatively alluding to the concept. On the other hand, when it comes to prices, people agreed with these and in cases in which were higher, they were aware to be paying for a different and more complete experience that includes entertainment and a more elaborated atmosphere.

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