Positioning Indigenous Cuisines and their influence on Gastronomic Identity in 3–5-Star Hotels in Greater Accra, Ghana

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ABSTRACT

Indigenous cuisines are emerging as a significant force driving the development of tourism and establishing a cultural identity for destinations; however, they have been given limited consideration within upscale hotel environments, especially in Ghana. This paper explores how indigenous cuisines are presented within the context of 3–5-star hotels located in the Greater Accra Region. Using Service-Dominant Logic as a guiding framework, a mixed-methods design was used in which hotels, hotel guests, and officials from Ghana Tourism Authority constituted the target population for the study. Twenty hotels were included in the population; a census approach was used for managers in these 20 hotels; a purposive sampling approach for 10 officials of Ghana Tourism Authority and finally a stratified random sample of 384 hotel guests was taken for the study. Data were obtained using structured questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, and analysis was performed using descriptive statistics, chi-square test, regression analysis and thematic analysis. It was found that indigenous cuisines are present in the menus in hotels, there are high rating regarding diversity and authenticity of the presentation of the indigenous cuisines in hotel menus; and that there is a lack of effective strategy for promoting indigenous cuisines. A chi-square test result revealed no statistically significant association between the classification of a hotel in terms of stars and a respondent's view of whether indigenous cuisines have been included in a hotel (= 3.207, p = 0.524); however, the results of the regression show that authenticity, uniqueness, and sustainability positively influence the gastronomic identity of a hotel and exotic appeal negatively influences it. The study concludes that strategic positioning rather than a hotel's classification is what determine gastronomic identity of the country, therefore; branding of indigenous cuisines is paramount for up-scale hotels.

Key words: *Indigenous cuisines, Gastronomic identity, Culinary tourism, Hospitality industry, Destination branding, Service-Dominant Logic, Culinary branding*

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INTRODUCTION

Gastronomy tourism highlights food's importance as an object of cultural expression, an aspect of identity construction, and a key factor in the creation of destination image worldwide. Today, it is widely regarded as an "experience" commodity, something beyond mere consumption but a manifestation of place, tradition, and lifestyle (Yu, 2023). This conceptual change affects how foods are grown, presented, and consumed in tourism and

hospitality. Native food has now been identified and utilized by international hospitality and tourism professionals to attract tourists seeking rare and unusual taste experiences (Syahrial & Anjarsari, 2023; Virto & Arrspide, 2024). Indigenous food is increasingly recognized as an asset for enhancing tourism competitiveness, traveler experiences, and the development of national and local identities (Yeboah & Ashie, 2024; Chatterjee, 2025). Traditional culinary traditions based on indigenous knowledge and agricultural practices are now becoming important tourism resources and cultural assets in Africa as well (Woyo, 2025; Sanful et al., 2024). It is against this backdrop that Ghana, with its richly diversified cuisine, serves as a compelling case study for investigating how the promotion of authentic indigenous foods by hotels can contribute to the development of gastronomic identity. Gastronomic identity encompasses distinct food traditions, customs, and values that foster a cultural sense of self and distinctiveness (Cheng et al., 2024; Shahrin & Hussin, 2023). The luxury hotel context offers localized dining experiences within globally defined service standards to balance and promote the local cultural characteristics (Michael & Fust-Forn, 2022). Nevertheless, the process of commercializing these culinary traditions into tangible tourism experiences and products raises questions about authenticity and the commodification of cultural heritage. Despite these emerging developments, very limited research has been conducted on the inclusion of indigenous cuisine in the service of 3- to 5-star hotels. Fine-dining hotels operate within globalized service frames, where international regulations and norms supersede authenticity and the preparation and presentation of indigenous food (Cheng et al. 2024, Koufodontis and Gaki 2025). This creates a situation in which the guest wants an indigenous experience, but the hotel is expected to operate to international standards. It consequently follows that indigenous food is insufficiently incorporated or misrepresented on menus. Whereas local cuisine is increasingly identified as a significant cultural and tourism resource (Zain et al., 2023), the incorporation of indigenous food into luxury hotels has not been extensively studied, especially in the African context. Little attention has been paid in this area, especially regarding high-end hotels and traditional foods in the African context (Kar et al., 2023). In Ghana, hospitality studies have primarily focused on heritage and cultural tourism; little has been documented about the use of indigenous food in creating culinary brands and gastronomic identities in upscale hotels. Furthermore, the intentions of managers, consumer expectations, and the influence of institutional forces in this process have not been examined in detail. Recent literature suggests that gastronomic identity can be associated not only with the availability of local food, but also with how it is prepared and consumed, as well as the meaning it holds for consumers (Onem et al., 2025). This study aims to: (1) assess how indigenous foods are represented in 3-5-star hotels in Greater Accra; (2) evaluate the contribution of these menu selections to guests' gastronomic identity; and (3) determine whether hotel class predicts the inclusion of indigenous foods and affects guest perceptions, accounting for service standards and target markets. Guided by Service-Dominant Logic, which frames value as co-created by providers and consumers (Budeanu et al., 2024) for upscale hotels to foster cultural identity and strengthen tourism competitiveness, the research directly addresses these objectives. The null hypothesis (**$H_0$1**) posits that there is no significant relationship between hotel star rating and guests' perceptions of indigenous food inclusion. The alternative hypothesis (**$H_0$1**) asserts a significant difference between hotel ratings and guests' perceptions of the inclusion of indigenous foods. This study aims to advance theory and practice by collecting empirical data from underexplored contexts and proposing strategies

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study used a cross-sectional mixed-methods research design to determine the relationship between the inclusion of indigenous dishes on hotel restaurant menus and Ghana's gastronomic identity. The study used a cross-sectional approach to determine how indigenous dishes were positioned at a single point in time. It applied a mixed-methods approach so that the findings from hotel management and hotel guests could be supported by those from Ghana Tourism Authority officials. This approach was selected because the subject being examined requires not only facts and figures but also a qualitative perspective from the decision-makers and clients in hotel restaurants. While quantitative methods focus on variables such as inclusion, diversity, authenticity, and the guest experience with indigenous dishes, qualitative methods, in turn, provide explanations of these trends from an institutional-level perspective. All study variables were operationalized using Likert-scale questionnaire items to elicit information on aspects such as the availability of indigenous foods on the menu, variety, authenticity, and source, advertising of indigenous foods, and promotion of indigenous foods and variety. Responses were collected using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Through this, respondents' perceptions were quantified, and these relationships were further tested statistically.

Location of the Study

The study was conducted in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. The region was chosen because it is the seat of Ghana’s administration and also serves as the country's center of commerce and tourism. Thus, Greater Accra is an ideal location to perform this research since it has the greatest concentration of hotels (3-5 stars) that accommodate both foreign and domestic clients in Ghana

Table 1A: Reliability Analysis of Research Instrument Using Cronbach's Alpha

Construct	Respondents	Number of Items	α	Interpretation
Positioning Strategies for Promoting Cuisines	Managers	12	0.76	Acceptable Reliability
Gastronomic Identity	Guests	10	0.82	Good Reliability

and also has many tourism amenities like the Kotoka International Airport, which serves as one of the primary accesses to the country. Therefore, it is one of the largest and most recognized markets for the hospitality industry in the country.

Target Population

Three categories of respondents were selected for the study: hotel managers in 3-5-star hotels; hotel guests who had a food experience in such hotels; and Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA) officials involved in promoting tourism and cuisine in the Greater Accra Region. Hotel managers were targeted because they play a crucial role in menu decisions. Hotel guests were targeted because their experiences with the restaurants will help the study to achieve its objectives. GTA officials were targeted because their responses will contribute to the institutional aspect of the study (the policy environment).

Inclusion and Exclusion criteria

The inclusion criteria for hotels were those rated 3-5 stars within the Greater Accra Region. For managers, they should hold a position directly related to either serving food on the menu or controlling food service. Hotel guests should have dined at the selected hotels and have expressed consent to participate in the study. GTA officials in relation to tourism and culinary issues were included, and excluded were hotels with fewer than 3 stars, workers below a managerial level who have no direct influence over menus, guests who have not dined at the restaurants of the selected hotels, and other public bodies not related to tourism.

Sampling Frame, Sampling techniques and Sample size

The sampling frame for the hotels was derived from the Ghana Tourism Authority's registry of hotels located in the Greater Accra region. Out of 40 3-5-star hotels in the region, according to the GTA registry, 20 met the study's requirements of placement of indigenous dishes. Thus, all 20 hotels participated. In each selected hotel, a key manager, directly or indirectly involved in menu composition, was selected, for a total of 20 hotel managers. A purposive sample of 10 officials from the Ghana Tourism Authority, focused on tourism promotion and cuisine, was selected for their direct involvement and specialized knowledge of the topic of study. Using Cochran's formula and a population of unknown size, a sample of 384 hotel guests was selected from each hotel to determine guests' perceptions and experiences of indigenous cuisine in the restaurants. The total number of guests is derived from: n = N/ (1+Ne^2) where the acceptable margin of error (e) is 0.05, at a 95% confidence level. As there are a large number of guests at each hotel and it is impossible to access a sampling frame of guests, given the sample size requirement, a stratified-random sampling method proportional to hotel star rating (3, 4, and 5 stars) was applied. A census method was applied to both hotels and managers, whereas purposive sampling was used to obtain the opinions of Ghana Tourism Authority officials.

Research Instruments

A mix of quantitative and qualitative research instruments was used to collect relevant data to achieve the study's objectives. They include: 1) a structured questionnaire for hotel managers, which covered issues regarding the extent of indigenous cuisine inclusion on hotel restaurant menus; its positioning; challenges encountered; and the role of the managers in the phenomenon being investigated; 2) a structured questionnaire for hotel guests which measures their perception of inclusion and experience with indigenous cuisines in hotel restaurants and 3) an interview guide for Ghana Tourism Authority officials aimed at capturing information on policy support, tourism and culinary promotion initiatives and collaborations with private sector and its challenges.

Pre-Test, Validity

The research instruments were pre-tested among a small group of respondents with characteristics similar to those of the participants in the main study. Pre-testing the questionnaires enabled us to address ambiguities, assess their relevance, identify potential duplication, and enhance their readability before their main use. This is particularly important to ensure that all parties to the study have a deeper understanding of positioning strategy and gastronomic identity within hotel restaurants. Content and face validity were the main approaches employed in the validation process. The questionnaires were validated by leading academics in hospitality and tourism, and pilot survey responses were used to assess content validity. (Table 1A) Internal reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha; the questionnaires yielded acceptable scores for almost all constructs, consistently exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70. value of 0.70.

Table 1B: Response Rate of Respondents

Respondent Category	Questionnaires/Interviews Administered	Completed/Returned	Response Rate (%)
Hotel Managers	20	20	100
Hotel Guests	384	358	93.2
GTA Officials (Interviews)	10	10	100
Total	414	388	95.1

Data Collection Techniques

The data collection process spanned over 8 weeks, following official approval of the study by the Ministry of Tourism and Hospitality Management, the Ghana Tourism Authority, the hotels involved and other relevant bodies. This period was chosen to allow for sufficient interaction with each respondent group without significantly interrupting their normal business or routine. Questionnaires were distributed and collected by trained enumerators who assisted in administering and explaining any part of the questionnaire to the hotel manager, guests in the hotel's restaurants, or their proxies, and then collected relevant responses. Interviews were conducted by the lead researcher. The semi-structured interviews were audio-taped with the interviewee's permission and later transcribed.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data obtained from questionnaires distributed to hotel managers and guests were coded, entered and analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 16.0. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were calculated to summarize the characteristics of the respondents and their perspectives on the inclusion of indigenous cuisine and guest experiences in hotels. A chi-square test was employed to analyses whether hotel star ratings significantly influenced guests' perceptions of whether indigenous dishes were on the menu. It was chosen as a technique to test the relationship between two nominal or grouped variables: the inclusion of indigenous cuisine in the hotel and its contribution to the guest experience. Qualitative data collected from interviews with GTA officials were analyzed using thematic content analysis, which identified common themes of policy support, tourism promotion strategies, collaborations, and challenges in culinary promotion. The results from both quantitative and qualitative analyses were then integrated into the final analysis section, so that the interview information complements and reinforces findings from the questionnaire analysis. This method was most consistent with the actual study report and further addresses the reviewer's suggestion regarding the lack of a clear explanation of the regression analysis results.

Logistical and Ethical Considerations

The researchers adhered to the highest ethical standards. Ethical considerations included: voluntary participation in the research study, informed consent from respondents, confidentiality of responses, and ensuring respondents have the right to withdraw from the research at any time without penalty. No personal identifiers were recorded in the questionnaire. The data obtained was securely stored to prevent it from falling into unauthorized hands. Logistic considerations: approval for the study was sought from the Ministry of Tourism and Hospitality Management, the Ghana Tourism Authority and the various hotels. The researchers arranged meetings with these organizations to obtain permission to access the stakeholders.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic characteristics of respondents

Response Rate

(Table 1 B) presents the response rate results which researchers obtained from their study participants. Researchers distributed a total of 414 surveys and interview schedules to three different responding groups. Hotel managers returned all 20 surveys, which resulted in a complete 100% response rate. Again, 384 questionnaires were administered to hotel guests and 358 of the questionnaires were completed and returned achieving a 93.2% response rate. The study involved 10 semi-structured interviews with officials from the Ghana Tourism Authority, who completed and returned all 10 interviews to achieve a 100% response rate.

The high response rate allowed researchers to achieve both reliable results and representative study outcomes. The research study achieved high response rates because researchers used effective follow-up methods and hotel management directly contacted potential participants while ensuring respondents that their answers would remain confidential. The response rate for this research study met the requirements for data analysis according to Ali et al. (2021), who established that research in the hospitality and tourism industry requires a minimum response rate of 70%.

Guest demographic profile

The demographic profile of hotel visitors, as shown in

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Hotel Guests by Hotel Star Category (n = 358)

Variable	Category	3-Star	4-Star	5-Star	(n)	% valid
Gender	Male	87	70	45	202	56.4
	Female	74	56	26	156	43.6
	Total	161	126	71	358	100
Age	18–25 years	15	13	4	32	8.9
	26–35 years	12	9	5	26	7.3
	36–45 years	52	33	20	105	29.3
	46–55 years	51	40	28	119	33.2
	56+ years	31	31	14	76	21.2
	Total	161	126	71	358	100
Education Level	Senior High	19	12	17	48	13.4
	Diploma	4	3	3	10	2.8
	HND	45	29	16	90	25.1
	Bachelor's Degree	41	43	10	94	26.3
	Master's Degree	50	35	25	110	30.7
	PhD	2	4	0	6	1.7
	Total	161	126	71	358	100
Nationality	Foreign	27	24	9	60	16.8
	Ghanaian	134	102	62	298	83.2
	Total	161	126	71	358	100
Frequency of Stay	First-time visitor	39	24	19	82	22.9
	Occasional visitor	76	53	29	158	44.1
	Regular visitor	46	49	23	118	33
	Total	161	126	71	358	100

(Table 2), indicates that the majority use the services of 3- and 4-star hotels. In contrast, the number of visitors to 5-star hotels is relatively small. The demographic profile shows that male visitors are slightly more numerous than female visitors, though both genders are adequately represented in the study. The majority of visitors are in the middle age bracket, i.e., between 36 and 55 years old. In terms of education, the majority of visitors hold a bachelor's degree, a master's degree, or a higher national diploma. Furthermore, the majority of visitors are Ghanaian nationals, and most are not first-time visitors to the hotels; they are either occasional or regular visitors. This shows that the respondents' perceptions are based on experienced Ghanaian national visitors, who are relatively well educated, knowledgeable about the hotel's dining services and indigenous cuisine, and who are the majority of visitors to the hotels. The demographic profile of visitors is important in the hospitality industry, as the majority are likely to evaluate indigenous cuisine based on taste, authenticity, presentation, and other factors. Therefore, visitors' perceptions are important for understanding the contribution of indigenous cuisine to the hotels' gastronomic identity, as they are the majority of visitors.

Management Characteristics

From (Table 3), it is evident that the managerial cluster comprises mostly F&B Managers, followed by Sales and Marketing Managers. This indicates that respondents are actively involved in menu creation, kitchen operations, and branding issues. It can be inferred that this survey is reliable for deriving information from respondents who directly influence how indigenous cuisine is chosen, marketed, and presented in hotels. Based on the demographics of managers, a large proportion falls in the age group 36-45, has a postgraduate degree, and has a relatively short career duration of 1-3 years. This indicates a dynamic, professionally qualified mid-career workforce capable of absorbing new trends in the hospitality industry. The implications are that this cluster of managers, who are competent and skilled due to their professional backgrounds, are more open to new concepts such as indigenous cuisine in their operations. These findings align with recent research indicating that managerial expertise and capabilities have a profound effect on strategic decision-making in hospitality, including innovative cuisine development and branding (Shin et al. 2025). Also, research concludes that younger and mid-career managers are the most responsive and adaptive to current trends, such as sustainable practices in the tourism and gastronomy industries (Dang et al. 2025). It could also be interpreted that a short career span within an organization offers adaptability, and thus, the use of indigenous cuisine can be easily implemented and practiced. However, one can also consider the lack of experience and institutional memory to execute a long-term culinary branding strategy. Recuero-Virto & Valilla Arrspide (2024) point out that gastronomic identity needs constant managerial input and aligned strategies over time. As far as the practical implications of this finding are concerned, it is suggested that hotels possess a certain extent of resources (human) to implement the use of indigenous cuisine. These resources need to be supported

Table 3: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Hotel Managers (n = 20)

Variable	Category	3-Star	4-Star	5-Star	(n)	% valid
Gender	Male	5	5	3	13	65
	Female	4	2	1	7	35
	Total	9	7	4	20	100
Age	18–25 years	0	1	0	1	5
	26–35 years	5	0	0	5	25
	36–45 years	3	4	2	9	45
	46–55 years	1	2	1	4	20
	56+ years	0	0	1	1	5
	Total	9	7	4	20	100
Education Level	Senior High	1	0	0	1	5.3
	Diploma	0	2	0	2	10.5
	HND	1	0	0	1	5.3
	Bachelor's degree	2	1	0	3	15.8
	Masters' degree	4	4	3	11	57.9
	PhD	1	0	0	1	5.3
	Total	9	7	4	20	100
Job Title	Food & Beverage Manager	6	7	3	16	80
	Sales & Marketing Manager	3	0	1	4	20
	Total	9	7	4	20	100
Years in Industry	1–3 years	6	4	4	14	70
	4–6 years	3	3	0	6	30
	Total	9	7	4	20	100
Years in Current Hotel	1–3 years	8	5	4	17	85
	4–6 years	1	2	0	3	15
	Total	9	7	4	20	100

Table 4: Indigenous signature dishes by hotels

	3 Star		4 Star		5 Star		Total	Total
Response	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
Yes	5	83.3	7	87.5	6	100	18	90
No	1	16.7	1	12.5	0	0	2	10
Signature Dish								
Jollof rice	1	20	2	28.6	1	16.7	4	22.2
Banku with tilapia	1	20	1	14.3	1	16.7	3	16.7
Fufu with light soup	1	20	1	14.3	0	0	2	11.1
Kenkey with fried fish	0	0	1	14.3	1	16.7	2	11.1
Waakye	1	20	1	14.3	0	0	2	11.1
Fufu with groundnut soup	0	0	1	14.3	1	16.7	2	11.1
Plantain with kontomire	1	20	0	0	0	0	1	5.6
Tuo Zaafi	0	0	1	14.3	0	0	1	5.6
Red Red	0	0	1	14.3	1	16.7	2	11.1
Rice balls with palm nut soup	0	0	1	14.3	0	0	1	5.6

through consistent training, a clear organizational strategy, and policies that promote the application of local cuisine resources. Improving managerial expertise in storytelling, practices, and culinary branding for indigenous cuisines is crucial to making them drivers of gastronomic identity and destinations' competitive strength.

Indigenous signature dishes by hotels

Table 4 indicates that at least one indigenous signature dish is widely available across hotels (3-star, 4-star, and 5-star), with 90% offering such dishes and only 10% without. The pattern confirms strong adoption across all hotel classes, while the distribution indicates that virtually all 5-star hotels use indigenous signature dishes, with 3-star and 4-star hotels also well represented. Among the dishes served, Jollof rice (22.2%) and Banku with tilapia (16.7%) appear to be the most common signature dishes, with moderate representation of Fufu, Waakye, Kenkey, and red red. Underrepresented indigenous dishes such as Tuo Zaafi and Rice Balls suggest that hotels generally rely on known and 'commercially' safe indigenous dishes. The contribution of this finding is that although hotels use indigenous cuisines, they do so with an emphasis on

Table 5: Indigenous Cuisines Offered in Hotels to Influence Gastronomic Identity

	3 Star		4 Star		5 Star	
Item Description	**M**	**SD**	**M**	**SD**	**M**	**SD**
Indigenous cuisines are regularly included in the menu	4.56	0.53	4.57	0.53	4	0.82
The diversity of indigenous cuisines offered meets customer expectations	4.44	0.53	4.29	0.76	4.25	0.96
The hotel actively incorporates regional indigenous dishes into the menu	3.78	0.97	3.86	1.35	4	0.82
There is high customer demand for indigenous cuisines	4	1.12	4.43	0.53	4	0.82
Ingredients for indigenous cuisines are sourced locally	3.67	0.71	4	1	3.5	1.29
Seasonal variations influence the availability of indigenous cuisines	3.44	0.73	4	1	4	1.15
Indigenous cuisines are frequently promoted through special events or campaigns	3	1.12	3.57	0.98	3.25	1.26
Traditional cooking techniques are emphasized when preparing indigenous dishes	3.67	1.12	3.86	1.07	2.5	0.58

Note: M=Mean, SD=Standard Deviation, D= Disagree, A= Agree

specificity rather than variety, which may limit the scope for fully representing Ghanaian gastronomy. This supports the finding of the above recent report; eating indigenous food within the food tourism journey focuses mostly on preferred/popular food items in order to satisfy the consumer demand, thus creating a reduced variability in choices, or some elements of the local food way may remain unexplored (Hurdawaty et al., 2025). From a theoretical standpoint, the food identity may be strengthened by incorporating not only popular but also regionally and culturally varied indigenous cuisines. Research such as that of Sukthankar et al. (2025) finds that memorability of culinary experience is related to authenticity and variety, thus strengthening affective commitment of the customer to the place.

This finding implies that although Ghanaian hotels use indigenous dishes, they may not have fully embraced the diversity of indigenous food as a source of experience-enhancing attributes for customers. Also, the underrepresentation of indigenous foods reflects a conflict between supply and demand, as market pressures have pushed food toward greater uniformity or selection, thereby hindering diversity (Yeboah & Ashie, 2024). The inclusion of diverse regional food offerings might help augment the experiential and symbolic potentials of Ghanaian cuisine. Generally, indigenous signature dishes are an important aspect of Ghanaian hospitality offerings, yet they are underrepresented on menus. In practice, hotels should feature and embrace a diverse range of indigenous cuisines, supported by interpretations of the dishes' histories and contexts to foster a deeper connection with the cuisine among guests. Beyond that, it could position it as a strategic cultural artifact of hospitality. From a destination perspective, such an initiative would enhance the destination's competitiveness and help build a more enduring tourist attachment and revisit intention (Hurdawaty et al., 2025).

Indigenous cuisine in Hotels (Managers' opinion)

Table 5 indicates that mean scores were similar and high for including indigenous cuisine on the menu (4.00 - 4.57), offering variety (4.25 - 4.44), and customer interest (4.00 - 4.43) across all star categories. It is evident that indigenous cuisine has been incorporated into hotel operations across all star categories. A different trend was observed in the marketing efforts and traditional cooking processes; mean scores were moderate for promotion activities (ranging from 3.00 to 3.57) and lowest for the 5-star hotel in the use of traditional cooking methods (mean score 2.50). This finding is noteworthy because it reveals the incongruence between the operational integration of indigenous cuisine into hotel systems and its positioning and branding strategy. This finding demonstrates that indigenous cuisine is integrated at the operational level but not as a strategic, brandable component in hotels in Ghana. This point of view is consistent with Virto and Arrspide (2024), who argue that local gastronomy adds competitive value to the destination only when it is well-positioned and promoted, not merely available. Also, Cheng et al. (2024) assert that gastronomic identity is best enhanced when elements of authenticity are built into hotel operations through sourcing, seasonality, and cooking methods. This means that although Ghanaian hotels (in the Greater Accra) have incorporated indigenous cuisine on their menus, the hotels are still not strategically leveraging their brand value. The quantitative results are further authenticated by the qualitative evidence offered by the officials of the GTA and hotel managers, which is that the inclusion, variation, and authenticity of indigenous cuisine in the hotel menu of Ghana were high, which implies that it is by the GTA and hotel managers in the country that indigenous cuisine is promoted in Ghana. As officials of the GTA said that "the GTA is the agency that links the industry with the cultural aspect and heritage where indigenous cuisines represent Ghana as a country" (Sanful et al., 2024) and this promotes the indigenous cuisine in the country and these also satisfy the customer thereby leading to recommendations to their peers which in turn benefit the country's tourism potential (Aguirre-Sosa et al., 2024; Gyebi et al., 2025). So, GTA with hotel managers has been using these dishes as part of country tourism promotion, which is important for sustainable gastronomy tourism. (Ylmaz, 2025). Officials also mentioned that "The GTA works closely with hotel managers in the country to promote indigenous cuisine." It is also evident that the GTA officials' view aligns with the study's quantitative results, which indicate that indigenous

Table 6: Indigenous Cuisines Experienced by Guests.

	3 Star		4 Star		5 Star	
Item Description	**M**	**SD**	**M**	**SD**	**M**	**SD**
Indigenous cuisines were included on the hotel menu	3.84	0.79	3.94	0.88	3.96	0.78
The variety of indigenous dishes offered met my expectations	4.23	0.66	4.25	0.69	4.28	0.72
Indigenous dishes were prominently displayed on the menu	4.04	0.76	4.08	0.8	4	0.93
Indigenous dishes I tried were authentic and flavorful	3.94	0.74	4.02	0.78	3.94	0.92
I appreciated the use of traditional presentation styles	4.1	0.78	4.07	0.74	4.14	0.87
Staff provided helpful information about indigenous dishes	3.97	0.79	4	0.81	4.02	0.88
Availability of indigenous dishes enhanced my experience	3.89	0.87	3.95	0.85	3.96	0.92
Traditional cooking techniques were emphasized	4.02	0.84	4.07	0.86	4	0.93

cuisine is widely included in the country.

Guest's experience of indigenous cuisine

Table 6 presents guests' perceptions of the indigenous cuisine of hotels. The means are all high in terms of variety (M=4.23-4.28), presentation (M=4.07-4.14), and authenticity (4.00). There seems to be a slight drop in menu options and experience enhancement (3.84-3.96). This implies that experience quality is more significant than availability; it appears that guests would prefer indigenous cuisine to be offered in a "well-designed" context rather than in a "ready-offered" way. It means the importance of designing the food experience is proven, which influences the construction of gastronomic identity. This finding confirms Onem et al. (2025), who claim that symbolic meaning and variety play an important role in forming food experience and identity. Additionally, Onat and Gneren (2024) support this, showing that the gastronomic image affects customer satisfaction and behavioral intention. Notably, this pattern holds across different hotel grades (3-star, 4-star, and 5-star). This finding aligns with Koufodontis and Gaki (2025) in arguing that luxury hotels may be less authentic under Globalization. This implies that indigenous cuisine already enhances the guest experience and identity. The qualitative data support the quantitative findings by providing information on how guests rate indigenous hotel cuisines based on their perceptions. The findings indicate that guests appreciate indigenous cuisines in hotel menus because they are essential in cultural and dining experiences. Guests feel satisfied with indigenous cuisines because of their authenticity, variety, presentation, and hotel staff engagement. Guests appreciate indigenous cuisines in hotel menus because they feel that traditional dishes offered in the hotel menus give them the real experience of the culture of their host country or region. An international guest explained that the presence of Jollof rice and Banku on the hotel menu made them feel that they were in Ghana because this was their traditional dish. Another international guest explained that indigenous cuisines give the hotel identity and a unique cultural experience. Guests appreciate indigenous cuisines in hotel menus because of their variety. A domestic guest explained that the hotel menus offered variety because they had northern and coastal dishes on the menu. In contrast, another international guest explained that Tuo Zaafi was a highlight on the hotel menu, showing that guests appreciate indigenous cuisines in hotel menus because of their variety (mean diversity scores 4.23-4.28). Guests value indigenous cuisines in hotel menus because of their authenticity and presentation. An international guest explained that the hotel offered more authenticity because the hotel served Waakye with leaves, while another guest explained that the hotel offered more authenticity because the dishes were not too adjusted to suit foreigners (Sanful et al., 2024). These findings support the fact that indigenous cuisines in hotel menus increase emotional satisfaction and cultural appreciation. Guests appreciate indigenous cuisines in hotel menus because of their cultural knowledge and pride. A Ghanaian guest explained that they felt proud to eat traditional dishes in a nice hotel. In contrast, another international guest explained that they had a delicious experience with indigenous cuisines in the hotel, supporting the fact that indigenous cuisines in hotel menus increase emotional satisfaction and cultural appreciation.

Hypotheses testing: Positioned (branding elements) on gastronomic identity

Table 7: Multicollinearity Test

Variable	VIF	1/VIF
Sustainability	2.32	0.431
Uniqueness	2.08	0.481
Exotic Appeal	1.85	0.541
Years of Operation	1.83	0.546
Country of Residence (Local vs Foreign)	1.74	0.574
Years of Operation	1.38	0.725
Star Rating of Hotel	1.28	0.780
Authenticity	1.18	
Mean VIF	1.71	

(Table 7-9) shows the regression results of the impact of branding elements on gastronomic identity. Diagnostic tests showed that the model is appropriate; there is no concern about multicollinearity (mean VIF = 1.71), and the results of the Breusch-Pagan test indicate no heteroscedasticity (= 1.93, p = 0.179). The overall model

Table 8: Breusch-Pagan / Cook-Weisberg Test for Heteroscedasticity

Ho: Constant variance **Variables: fitted values of Gastronomy Identity**	
χ^2	1.93
Prob> χ^2	0.1792

Table 9: Regression Results Influence of Branding Elements on Gastronomic Identity

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	P-Value
Constant	-1.966	0.374	0.000
Authenticity	0.848	0.047	0.000
Sustainability	1.421	0.108	0.000
Uniqueness	1.342	0.114	0.000
Exotic Appeal	-0.707	0.162	0.000
4-Star (vs 3-Star)	-0.254	0.019	0.000
5-Star (vs 3-Star)	-0.153	0.255	0.548
Years of Operation	-1.693	0.371	0.000
Country of Residence (Local vs Foreign)	2.203	0.330	0.000
R^2	0.592		
Adjusted R^2	0.584		
F- Statistics	92.13		
Prob > F	0.000		
Root MSE	0.680		

is highly significant (F = 92.13, p < 0.001), and it explains a substantial proportion of variance (R = 0.592), demonstrating its high explanatory power. According to H02, which states that there are no significant effects on gastronomic identity from branding elements, and H01, which states that branding elements do have significant impacts on gastronomic identity, the null hypothesis H02 is rejected, and H01 is accepted due to the significant model as a whole and the statistically significant effects of the variables. Sustainability has the largest significant positive impact on gastronomic identity (= 1.421, p<0.001), followed by uniqueness (= 1.342, p<0.001) and authenticity (= 0.848, p<0.001). This suggests that gastronomic identity is enhanced when it's grounded in ecological principles, uniqueness, and authenticity rooted in local origins. This aligns with recent literature suggesting that authenticity and sustainability play important roles in creating value and identity in gastronomy and tourism (Cheng et al., 2024; Recuero-Virto & Valilla Arrspide, 2024). On the other hand, exotic has a significant negative impact on gastronomic identity (= 0.707, p<0.001), meaning that over-emphasising it is not helpful. The pattern suggests that branding local cuisine as "exotic" makes guests believe it may not have local origins and is less authentic. This result is consistent with some recent findings claiming that the impacts of globalization on culture, like cuisine and origin link, are weakened when food is positioned in an entertainment-like way (Koufodontis & Gaki 2025). The control variables show that 4-star hotels are negatively and significantly different from 3-star hotels (= 0.254, p<0.001), while 5-star hotels are not significantly different (p>0.05). The pattern of these findings indicates that hotel class is not a significant predictor of gastronomic identity once branding elements are taken into consideration. The years of operation also have significant negative impacts on gastronomic identity (= 1.693, p<0.001) which suggests that older hotels may not be as adept in adjusting and adopting modern branding concept like younger ones, which is supported by the recent findings that evolving consumer demands and expectations have brought about a food culture that values dynamic, experiential and aesthetic-oriented food (Onem et al., 2025).., 2025). The positive and significant impact of country of residence (= 2.203, p<0.001) indicates that different market segments respond differently to branding elements, suggesting that branding efforts work better with some segments than others (depending on coding). This is consistent with emerging studies arguing that market segments lead to different perceptions of food experience, symbolism, and destination image (Onat & Gneren, 2024). Overall, the regression results suggest that sustainability, authenticity, and the uniqueness of local cuisine, as branding elements, contribute positively to gastronomic identity, whereas exoticism, as a brand attribute, has a negative impact. From a theoretical perspective, it aligns with Service-Dominant Logic, suggesting that value can be co-created through unique, culturally oriented interactions. In practice, it highlights the importance of building branding on authenticity, sustainability, and uniqueness to help hospitality practitioners enhance gastronomic identity and destination competitiveness.

Conclusion

This study investigated the integration of indigenous cuisines in 3–5-star hotels in the Greater Accra Region and their contribution to gastronomic identity from a Service Dominant Logic perspective. Findings indicated that indigenous cuisines are prominently integrated into hotel operations and have high levels of integration, authenticity perceptions, and consumer acceptance across all classifications. Although well integrated, the findings suggest that the integration of indigenous cuisines is predominantly operational rather than strategic, with only low levels of activity in traditional preparation methods, marketing, branding, etc. The findings also suggest that although indigenous signature dishes are available on most hotel menus, only a select few are showcased. This may portray a lack of reflection in the variety of Ghanaian culinary Heritage. The findings from the guests' perspective showed that indigenous cuisine is important for enhancing the dining experience through authenticity, presentation, and a sense of familiarity, thereby strengthening gastronomic identity in the hotel industry. At the hypothesis-testing level, the findings revealed that the degree of hotel star classification has no effect on the integration of indigenous cuisines or on guests' perceptions of indigenous cuisines; thus, the null hypo -

thesis is accepted. Hence, gastronomic identity is not influenced by hotel star classification, but rather by the position of indigenous cuisine or the way it is perceived. The regression results, on the other hand, revealed that the positioning strategy (through branding elements such as authenticity, sustainability, and novelty) has a positive impact on the development of gastronomic identity, whereas that through exoticism has a negative impact. From a theoretical point of view, the study confirms the view that gastronomic identity is co-created, in which food is viewed as both product and cultural experience; the interaction between service providers and customers contributes to the creation and realization of food as a product and an experience. In the practical aspect of the study, it shows the relevance of hotel providers developing a more strategic approach to strengthen cultural identity. The results of this study demonstrate that indigenous cuisine has already been incorporated into high-end hotels, but its potential remains under-recognized by hotel operators, who could strategically leverage it to enhance cultural identity and gain a competitive advantage.

Recommendations

Based on the evidence in this study, hotel operators in the Greater Accra Region should no longer treat the inclusion of indigenous cuisines as an ordinary addition but as a strategy to be used purposefully. Instead of simply providing these cuisines to meet customers' perceived expectations, hotels should purposefully position indigenous cuisine through storytelling, menu discourse, and the experience of traditional cooking. This will highlight indigenous cuisine as a gastronomical identity and increase its consumption and visibility. Stakeholders, such as the Ghana Tourist Authority, could be proactive in encouraging indigenous cuisines in hotels' food and beverage services. There is a need for programs or systems, such as accreditation or cooking festivals that encourage the consistent and authentic preparation and presentation of traditional recipes. Partnerships between hotels and local producers should also be facilitated to ensure consistent use of local products. Finally, further research on the extent to which the positioning of indigenous cuisine influences a destination's competitiveness and customer loyalty could provide a deeper understanding of how to sustainably preserve gastronomic identity and build a competitive asset. Comparing this across regions and hotel types would also be important for a thorough understanding of this phenomenon.

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