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The cuisine of product: hallmark and communication resource in the haute cuisine in Spain

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Abstracts

[ES] Introducción: Esta investigación analiza los mensajes transmitidos por la alta restauración española al objeto de valorar cómo la cocina de producto es utilizada como seña de identidad gastronómica y recurso comunicativo. **Metodología:** La muestra la componen los restaurantes más relevantes del país en la modalidad culinaria de cocina de producto y aquellos con dos y tres estrellas otorgadas por *La Guía Michelin* en el año 2018; en total, han sido cuarenta y nueve. **Resultados y conclusiones:** La mayoría de los restaurantes de producto consideran en su comunicación los elementos materia prima, especialización y tradición; los de vanguardia eligen innovación, materia prima y tradición, de manera que hay coincidencias en los dos últimos, lo que podría significar que la identidad gastronómica es un concepto que, transmitido en sus mensajes, puede asimilarse al de identidad territorial.

[EN] Introduction: This research analyses the messages transmitted by the Spanish haute cuisine in order to assess how the product-based cuisine is used as a symbol of gastronomic identity and communication resource. **Methodology:** The sample is composed of the most important restaurants in the country in the culinary modality of product-based cuisine and those with two and three stars awarded by the Michelin Guide in 2018; a total of forty-nine. **Results and conclusions:** Most of the product-based restaurants consider the elements raw material, specialization and tradition in their communication; those in the *avant-garde* choose innovation, raw materials and tradition instead, so that there are coincidences in the last two, which could mean that the gastronomic identity is a concept that, conveyed through its messages, can be assimilated to that of territorial identity.

Keywords
[ES] gastronomía; comunicación; cocina de producto; identidad; tradición; restaurante.
[EN] gastronomy; communication; product-based cuisine; identity; tradition; restaurant.

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1. Introduction

The messages restaurants use to interact with their consumers do not (or at least should not) emerge arbitrarily, nor seem surprising or fanciful witticisms; rather they result from a task product of years of work, of a professional activity based on training and effort, but also a choice that, in the particular case that concerns us, is the product-based cuisine, and that goes beyond the fact of working with excellent raw materials.

Already in the first decade of the 21st century this modality in the haute cuisine started to gain relevance; however, and also since then, the concepts and the different culinary modalities blend and contaminate.

Outside these issues, the recognition of this cuisine represents an added value for restaurants and, as such, it started to be required and demanded more and more by consumers, in such a way that chefs have been integrating it as hallmark in their communication.

Precisely, this research aims to analyse how the product-based cuisine is shown as hallmark and communication argument in the Spanish haute cuisine. It is about transferring identity to the gastronomic experiences that compose it through this culinary typology; in order to do so, a study *corpus* has been selected, constituted by restaurants awarded two or three stars by the Michelin Guide and by the restaurants defined as *Product Temples* (Beneyto & Mateos, 2018). The object of this research has been the messages contained on the websites of these restaurants following these parameters: raw material, specialisation, innovation, research, tradition and simplicity, since it has been considered that their presence is a conscious and explicit choice of these chefs to convey their gastronomic identity to their publics which, in most cases, is a reflection of the gastronomic identity of the region where the restaurant is located.

1.1. Communication and gastronomy

The gastronomical voice appeared on lexicographic *repertoires* of the Royal Spanish Academy and by eminent philologists and scholars by the end of the 19th century. Núñez de Taboada was the one who, as neologism, included it for the first time in its dictionary with the meaning “Science or treaty about

the way of eating in luxury" (1825: 744-745). Since then, it shifted and enriched together with other notions: "The art of preparing the delights of the table" (Salvá, 1846: 548); the "Science of the healthy and intelligent appreciation of the good delicacies" (Domínguez, 1853: 849). Meanings that have maintained alongside the current "group of dishes and culinary uses typical from a specific region" (RAE, 2016). The latter, connected to the patrimonial meaning, was advocated by Dr. Thebussem and a Chef of S.M (Pardo de Figueroa and Castro and Serrano, respectively) in the letters written to each other and published between 1876 and 1877 and *La Ilustración Española y Americana*, where they warned about the disastrous consequences for our own cuisine of emulating the French cuisine in excess, at the same time there were discussions about the convenience of striving for the national gastronomic unity (Aguirregoitia & Fernández, 2015: 22). Years later, this approach was followed by Dionisio Pérez in his enormous journalistic labour; renowned newspapers of the time -*Nuevo Mundo, La Voz, Alrededor del Mundo…*- published columns and articles where its culinary ideology was captured, where there outstands the advocacy of the Spanish cuisine, but also interesting and advanced proposals so to improve the Spanish gastronomical culture like, for instance, promoting regional fairs and international expositions like the ones held in Barcelona and Seville, for which he suggested to build a pavilion where the Spanish cuisine would be praised and presented, which will also serve to attract tourists who would remain longer in the country thanks to the promise of tastings.

The *Guía del buen comer español*, the summit production of his work; besides summarising the most outstanding dishes of our cuisine, he recognised its relevance to increase the national richness: "When we say cuisine, we mean production. Its boom, its fame, its advertising, will depict a greater appreciation and a higher consumption of Spanish products" (Pérez, 1929: 12). No wonder, this publication was edited by the *Patronato Nacional de Turismo* as part of its promotional strategy to encourage tourism in Spain. Since then, testimonies on press that defended the interest of gastronomy as tourism attraction factor became usual.

Thus, leaving culinary treaties, advertising claims or costumbristic articles aside, the first communicational activity in the gastronomic scope is confirmed in the newspapers of the end of the 19th century. These testimonials left a mark under the form of texts, which content can be grouped into different categories: history (and stories about gastronomy), gastronomic theory, advertising, recipes and curiosities, innovation and technology, education (Aguirregoitia & Fernández, 2015).

The first category generally consisted of stories ranging from the antiquity until the current times. In the theoretical disquisitions there were discussed issues about cuisine-related art, its functions, products and elaborations or matters of moral character. From advertising, the ads about inns and shops, as well of chefs, were usual. Regarding recipes, they were disseminated mostly in magazines targeted to women, although by the end of the 19th century, prestigious weekly publications like *La Ilustración Española y Americana* or *Nuevo Mundo* often covered culinary sections among their pages. Regarding curiosities, there are news of diverse origin: unusual products, foreign customs or eccentric culinary stories. Regarding innovation and technology, during this time ingenious and many cooking gadgets were created such as the beater, juicer… electric devices which purpose was to make the work processes in the kitchen more agile. The education, cooking classes targeted to women, but also the first regulated courses started by the early 20th century.

Logically, this increase of culinary issues needed to have its correlative in the medium *par excellence* back then, the newspaper, although it wasn't until the end of the 1960s when it would develop one of its consubstantial genres: the gastronomic critique. The first fixed section published in a Spanish newspaper appeared in *ABC* on 23 November 1969. In fact, the *Conde de los Andes* started to sign the weekly critique in the newspaper by using the pseudonym Savarin; in the first paragraph, after the

opening line, he stated that "The good cuisine is the result of the art of choosing the right ingredients, seasoning them, cooking them and combining them"; it won't be too unreasonable to deduce here that "choosing the right ingredients" entails quality raw materials, while seasoning, cooking or combining relate to the technique.

The gastronomic critique as a genre developed ever since, and if it was not done earlier, it was because there were not the social and economic conditions in Spain for that, nor quality restaurants, nor a gastronome public who demanded information, news… knowledge, in short; a process that would constitute in Spain later between the seventies and the nineties, in a staggered manner and coinciding with every change of socio-gastronomical cycle (Sánchez Gómez, 2013: 129).

This delay in encouraging the gastronomical culture to become an object of interest and knowledge compared to other countries like France and Italy caused that Spain remained outside the first great transformation of the haute cuisine back in the 70s with the *Nouvelle Cuisine* in France. However, there were exceptions like the Basque Country, where its care and value have maintained historically as a tradition integrated in the patrimonial heritage of its region. In fact, the first milestone regarding a renewed and excellent gastronomy also emerged in the seventies with the chefs and the new Basque cuisine, which main representative was Juan Mari Arzak, considered the father of the modern Spanish gastronomy. Most professionals from the time supported on them, among whom there was Ferrán Adrià as outstanding figure among the Catalans, and who was the most renown both nationwide and worldwide in the early 21st century. Both boosted the prestige of the Spanish cuisine beyond our frontiers and forged the ground for the current generation of famous chefs (Svejenova *et alter*, 2007: 543-544). According to Lubow (2003), the second and current transformation, started in the end of the 20th century with the regional cuisines that arrived, likewise, by the hand of prominent Basque chefs and Ferrán Adrià. It was what Adrià called the *New Nouvelle Cuisine* (Lubow, 2003).

Along with them, there also came the mediatic success, the interest of television to design programmes, especially where the cuisine became a secondary character to privilege the leading role of chefs. It was not only about broadcasting spaces to teach cooking like
Vamos a la mesa (broadcasted between 1967 and 1968, hosted by Maruja Callaved), *Gastronomía* (1970; no host), *Con las manos en la masa* (1984-1991; Elena Santonja) or the popular programmes of Karlos Arguiñano that, since 1991 and until today, are broadcasted by different television networks.

Since the early 21st century, the gastronomic mediatic discourse is so diverse and varied that it is convenient to stablish classifications to distinguish them. Ketchum (2005: 223-231) groups them into four categories: *Traditional Domestic Instructional Programs, New Domestic Cooking Shows, Food and Travel* and *Avant-Garde Food Shows*. In the first category, the elaboration of dishes is taught. The second category consists of programmes often broadcasted live, where the chef interacts with the audience in the set. In the third, the chefs travel to cities and countries showing what is eaten, but also what can be bought in those places. Lastly, the *Avant-Garde Food Shows*, classified by Ketchum as vanguard shows due to their unusual aesthetical standards, using surrealistic combinations and strange customs (2005: 229).

The new logic of television, focused in the maximization of the audience since the nineties in Spain, has caused that those spaces of cuisine aiming to teach became, over time, impregnated from a halo of frank naivety. Today, these traditional programmes have shifted to the format of *New Domestic Cooking Shows*, although they coexist together with the other two modalities. In *Food and Travel* the aim is showing the culinary richness of other Spanish regions -*Un país para comérselo*- or from other countries, being often hosted by renowned personalities or renowned chefs such as Jamie Oliver. In

the *Avant-Garde Food Shows*, very close to reality television, famous chefs host deranging programmes (*Pesadilla en la cocina, con* Chicote), show the human banality (the recently released *Ven a cenar conmigo*) or put the expertise of children, young unknown chefs or amateurs to the test in the noble art of cooking, stressing them with its frenetic pace (*Masterchef, Masterchef Junior or Top Chef)*, but also to advertise brands of products, cooking gadgets that we will soon be found in stores. Leaving commercial interests aside, from these four modalities, the traditional and *Food Travels* are perhaps the ones that keep an attitude of respect and interest towards products and culinary traditions, which would relate to the object of this study.

Internet has been the last medium to participate in the gastronomic discourse which, together with television, has noticeably increased the dissemination of news: from restaurants to renowned places of recommended visit due to their culinary tradition. On that subject, if we take as reference, the subject sender of communication through the Internet, the information comes from public and private entities, gastronomic critics or *foodies* (bloggers, youtubers and influencers).

Regarding the first of them, public entities, it is observed how they have increased their interest in the past decade, and they have done so from the area of tourism. In fact, the public policies have turned their attention towards gastronomic tourism as a key sector that should be dynamized. Along with it, the aim is linking the image of a territory with its gastronomy, in such a way that in some cases it has been turning into the fundamental axis of its touristic positioning; about this matter, the Basque Country, one of the pioneer regions, articulated its campaign in 2010 under the slogan "Euskadi, taste it", a word game based on the idea of delighting, enjoying and savouring its gastronomy because of its quality (Aldamiz-Echevarría, Aguirre, Aparicio, 2013), but also because the chefs consider and communicate it as a hallmark of identity.

Perhaps one of the most relevant international backgrounds is the creation in 2008 by UNESCO of the group "Creative cities of gastronomy", with the Colombian city of Popayán as the main nominated. The goal was to boost the creative, social and economic exploitation by local communities to foster tourism and cultural diversity. With this action, the UNESCO recognised gastronomy as a patrimonial element, a factor of interest for tourists, that would contribute to the appeal of a region. An interest, as explained earlier, that was proposed in our country in the first third of the 20 century, and that can be appreciated today through the websites of Turespaña, as well as the autonomic and local websites, where the gastronomic product is unavoidable. Thus, the current website of tourism of Galicia introduces, among its most outstanding resources, the two most prominent tendencies in the cuisine – tradition and *avant-garde* – as a complementary entirety: "Give me rest, promenades and paths and lost forests [...] give me grandmother's recipes and chef dishes [...]", as suggested by its latest campaign. This is an example out of the many that advocate tradition, raw materials and the know-how, as well as the apparent dichotomy faced by the traditional– grandmother's recipes- with the *avant-garde* or most creative cuisine –chef dishes –.

Grosso modo, private companies more directly connected to gastronomy, belong to the food and restaurant sectors. Food, together with the beverages industries, are the first industrial sector in billing in the country, reaching 2.7% of GDP in Gross Value Added (Ministry of Agriculture, Food and the Environment & Fiab, 2017), which reveals the strategical interest of the sector in developing. However, for our study, we are mainly interested in restaurants, which growth was resumed after 2014, following the steady decrease that the sector suffered since 2007. Since then, the restaurant business has been increasing, thanks to the favourable – although faint- economic recovery and, essentially, due to the renowned national and international prestige achieved by a considerable number of Spanish chefs, which has also promoted the recognition of Spain as culinary destination. To a great extent, this

recognition is reflected in the granting of international awards such as Michelin stars or the inclusion in *The World's 50 Best Restaurants* (elaborated by the British magazine *Restaurant*), which sparks a clear interest for the public lover of this area, as well as for media in general and the gastronomic critique, in particular.

The specialised critics in the sector are, perhaps, one of the most reliable sources, despise the component of subjectivity assumed for a gastronomical appreciation. Its relevance started to be felt in our country from the 80s, with noteworthy names such as Xavier Domingo, Luján, De la Serna, Cunqueiro, Carmen Casas, Mª Dolores Serrano, etc. However, in the nineties there was a moment of particular importance where "both chefs and communicators decided that the dishes should be a preferential object of communication", in such a way that the media were responsible for the boasting of the "cooking figure", and also for "the relationship of brotherhood between chefs, suppliers, restaurant managers and critics [sic]", which has caused that, "except for rare exceptions, the gastronomic critique would not allow anything else than praise or adoration" (Méndez, 2008: 30-40). Complaisance and religious bigotry, according to Méndez, who lifted an outstanding critical voice in the chef Santi Santamaria, denouncing that the cuisine of "reservation, of the disproportionate technology" (Urroz, 2008: 29), costed him the renowned confrontation against the most relevant chefs for the time. However, it must be acknowledged that, for better or worse, the gastronomic critique has allowed the extraordinary diffusion of our gastronomy and its recognition.

Regarding this awareness and, overall, the promptness, the boost of Internet through the social networks and amateurs –*foodies* – flooding the medium is undeniable, up to the point that anyone – either informed or under ignorance – can, from it, issue opinions, recommend and, therefore, influence consumers. For now, the object of this study is not dealing with them, but it is necessary at least to indicate their integration as resources and tools for the public and private entities include link on their websites. For better or worse, they multiply gastronomic news, although not always with a rigorous filter, which sometimes might lead to lack of awareness, namely, can produce the opposite effect of what is aimed: misinformation. However, the new technologies have opened the gastronomic knowledge to the large public when earlier, it was generally limited to the opinion spaces in press: gastronomic professionals have lost the exclusivity of gastronomic communication (Sánchez Gómez, 2010).

Along with the greatest abundance, the chefs increase their communicational possibilities thanks to Internet. Most manage their work, their culinary message through websites that include their gastronomic offer, but also their work philosophy; websites that are, or should be, their introduction for a public eager for gastronomic interest and knowledge. A medium that has been chosen, precisely, in this study to analyse the relevance that the gastronomic identity and communication depict in product-based cuisine.

1.2. The gastronomy identity

The concept of identity has been studied by the social sciences from different approaches. Giménez defines it as the "group of interiorised cultural repertoires (representations, values, symbols) through which the social actors (individual and collective) recognise one another, delimit their frontiers symbolically and distinguish from the rest of the actors under a specific situation, all that under specific historically and socially structured contexts" (2007: 56).

According to the same author, the concept of identity cannot be dissociated from the concept of culture, since identity is built from the different subcultures to which an individual affiliate. Therefore, he

states that the first function of identity is to set differences between us and the others, and this distinction can only be made based on the cultural traits that differentiate one another or meaning patterns that we share and that, likewise, identify us in a specific historical moment (Giménez, 2005; 2009). Namely, identity is a representation, a mark or a hallmark where there are manifested, the forms in which a culture is interiorised: they are the cultural patterns with which an individual identifies or where the boundaries between the common traits and differences are stablished.

If we consider as valid, the premise that identities are cultural, it must also be accepted that they are anchored to a territory and a specific space-time, therefore the identity entails the belonging to a collective and it nurtures from memory, because through it is possible to find, within the past, those references or representations that an individual or group recognise as their own (Valenzuela, 2000; Molano, 2007; Giménez, 2009). Thus, the language, place of birth, religion or food define the affiliation of the individual into a community and particular references (name, surname, occupation), allow to differentiate individuals from one another. Thus, we can say that "food is part of the construction of identities and societies" (Muchnik, 2006: 91).

But it is not only about food and its meaning, but also the tools, preparation techniques, and ingredients used which constitute the differentiating element of cultures, which reflect the expression of an historical moment and a collective or geographical region, granting them a feeling of belonging and an unequivocal sign of their identity. In this sense, it can be said that what identifies us or unites us as a social group, rather than regional and idiomatic differences, is traditions and customs about food (Barros, 2005: 33).

For Duhart, the cultural food identity "is included in the narrowest contemporaneity, but it is a cultural *mille-feuille*, the result of a slow sedimentation of innovations […] and discourses (gastronomic images and considerations, recipe books …)" (2001: 1); in such a way that the culinary identity is variable and evolutionary, and what might not be identitarian today, over the years, might become identitarian in the future. Historically, food frontiers have never been rigid nor impassable; on the contrary, it is the permeability and the constant flow of social groups that causes that multiculturality becomes the common process in the territories. A process that shouldn't intimidate cuisines in their identitarian self; indeed, the function of the product-based cuisine should be revitalizing and building cultural bonds between the food and the social group it identifies, and in this way, pointing out a territory to differentiate it from others; for Santamaria, loving cuisine "is accepting a historical heritage that is a collective patrimony to transmit it to future generations totally renovated and alive, recognizable and updated. The challenge is to preserve to progress and understand to communicate" (2012: 64). Granting food, a historical, social or religious meaning, allows to identify them, giving them their own personality or, in other words, to "confer them a character beyond the organic components composing them and a dimension that exceeds the scope of the material" (Duhart 2002: 95). As will be seen later, the messages conveyed by chefs from their websites contain this idea.

From this approach, the concept of Spanish culinary identity is treated here. By the end of the 19th century, it was discussed in Spain whether or not there existed a national culinary unity. Dr. Thebussem and a chef from S.M. considered that, even though our gastronomy was rich and extensive, it was inappropriate to suggest said unity; rather, it was appropriate to talk about a federate cuisine in the same way we have federate languages, uses and customs (1888: 196). In fact, back then it was recognised that Spain had, and still does, two cultural identities: a regional and a national identity, in such a way that the relationship between them lead to subjective identitarian constructions, if not personal. To preserve the specific -gastronomy, music, customs …- of every region, turns into a cultural challenge that needs to be promoted with respect towards the identitarian, but also towards the difference: over the years, the latter would move the former. Before exhibiting the culinary richness of a country, we need to emphasize the relevance of delving into the knowledge of what makes it

different so to consolidate baselines that help build a future. All new creation needs history to evolve and, as a consequence, tradition; we must not forget that transmitting it entails to know, keep and preserve.

The gastronomic identity is built from two routes of knowledge: a popular and social route, linked to the knowledge of a specific geographical area, its customs and its traditional know-how in the kitchen. In this route of historical knowledge, UNESCO (2003) considers gastronomy as an immaterial cultural patrimony of humanity, transmitted from generation to generation and reproduced constantly by communities "depending on their environment, interaction with nature and its history, filling them with a feeling of identity and continuity and thus contributing to promote the respect for the cultural diversity and human creativity." The gastronomy characterises from a know-how in the cuisine; it is not only about a pile of elements and traits, but also a series of acquired capacities through history that help laying the foundations of its identity.

The second, most theoretical route comes from the studies (researches, analyses, etc.) that aim to preserve and construct knowledge, although – we must not forget- they use the popular routes for their purposes; likewise, it helps in the construction of identities through education and sciences as working method, which contributes to the growth and the evolution of the social knowledge. The combination of both -popular and theoretical knowledge – compose and convey gastronomic identity.

And considering that we talk about cuisine and gastronomy; it is necessary to distinguish them. Cuisine would be the technical aspect, most strongly connected to dealing directly with the product and ingredients. According Martínez de Albéniz and Elixabete (2006), it must be related to the common act of eating that, due to its affinity with the quotidian and since it is a basic need, it becomes an activity apparently insignificant, which must not lead necessarily to reducing or minimizing a more gastronomic approach, closest to the pleasure of the gastronomic experience, because this is a chain of events that initiate in the context of product elaboration and end in the sensations of the diner. Before a client, who is more informed and eager to know, these facts transform into an indispensable, almost inherent part, of the gastronomic experience, since "restoring the body has been and constitutes a biological need covered with a diet that matches the region, culture, the time… Learning to eat can be something more than a physiological obligation to become a pleasure when what is eaten, is understood" (Santamaria, 2012: 193).

1.3. The product-based cuisine

In the search of a gastronomic identity that survives the passing of time, and that joins together the traditional and vanguard cuisine, there is a product-based cuisine, most purist, understanding as such the cuisine linked to naturalness, authenticity and customs; a product-based cuisine excluding elements considered alien and hence, expendable; although in many of these cases there is a greater process of culinary elaboration that the one presented in its final elaboration. This cuisine does not ignore the most modern culinary progresses, but instead applies valid methods in the modern culinary revolution without forgetting tradition, the product and the good judgement or, as Santamaria states, it is about "proposing new ways in which origins can have continuity" (2012: 63). This is, to innovate so to perfectionate and preserve.

In the product-based cuisine, the laboratory is used to look for more flavour, to know through taste, to admire the apparent simplicity with which the product is treated; this is, there is an aim to change the paradigm of the traditional cuisine through the know-how and knowledge, which occasionally means to move away from the common sense as historic tool of cuisine. This movement, followed by relevant

chefs, can be contributing to redefine the concept of identity towards a widened, renewed and wiser version that, in addition, could be an appealing attraction for a more thoughtful and curious gastronome public; a tendency framed in a space where the traditional and innovative are intertwined to satisfy the need of the current client.

The product-based cuisine is responsible for advocating the excellence of the raw material in its entire entity, almost in its pure state with hardly any transformation from the chef; there, the simplicity leads to purity, since its core idea resides, as its name indicates, in the selection of a first quality, as well as an identitarian product. The identitarian products of a locality are determined by their origin, but also by social factors conditioning their consumption; according to Numes dos Santos, (2007), who considers Bourdieu's ideas (1996), the religion, social class, education, need and customs determine, among other variables, the culinary habits and products that identify a social group and that would alter their tastes and tendencies, influencing in the consumption behaviour and the product selection. All these elements compose the identitarian culinary culture, and represent a specific community either out of tradition, heritage and closeness. Thus, identity through products is constructed, depending on the region, the geographic context, the weather, economy and society.

Even with the conviction that there are different criteria to consider that a cuisine can be qualified "product-based and identitarian", it is necessary that certain elements coincide contributing to its definition; components that, in addition, can be used by the restaurants as arguments for appealing, alluring and commercialising; we refer to the raw material, specialisation, innovation, research, simplicity and tradition.

Regarding the raw material, and under the variable of gastronomic quality, it is necessary that it is in-season, fresh and of proximity; attributes that grant validity to Brillat-Savarin's words when he stated that the purpose of gastronomy "is to ensure the preservation of men using the best foods" (1999: 51). In addition, it must be considered that every product has a lifecycle that determines the most suitable moment for exquisiteness; to recognise it means to acquire experience, but also knowledge and even, intuition. The raw material constitutes an excellent persuasion argument in the logic of the market; however, in return, some restaurants say that "the shortage [of these quality raw materials] and the demand of the client oblige to diversify and look for the best product beyond the obvious and close channels" (Beneyto and Mateos 2018: 42). Precisely, this excellence in product quality is so high that its acquisition is very limited; the excellent –and scarce – gastronomic products are used by restaurants as communicational arguments in their cuisine.

On its part, specialisation involves knowledge, methods and steady quality standards. Specialisation is demanded to the chef, but also to the supplier, the stockbreeder, the horticulturist, etc.: the greater specialisation in the product selection process, better results and elaborations.

Regarding the third component, innovation, in the case of product-based restaurants, it could be the most complex, if not a real challenge; precisely, the search for perfection would be one of its keys. In this process there is conception, invention and devising to achieve the best results with a material or a technique that, *a priori*, are assumed as condemned. Thus, for instance, if Bittor Arginzoniz (from Asador Etxebarri) would have considered the innovation about grill already solved, then he wouldn't have thought about a working method where independent ovens are used for every product, as well as a specific type of wood so to guarantee a handling closest to excellence for the different raw materials; without mentioning the collection of cult tools that Arginzoniz claims to have invented to "work properly with every product (Beneyto & Mateos, 2018: 238). On the other hand, *avant-garde* restaurants must offer freshness, originality and innovation; they must offer the diner not only pleasure

to the taste, but also must combine different sensory sensations, altogether with the intervention of elements unknown up until then (Navarro &Acosta, 2012). The *avant-garde* cuisine is not incompatible with the regional or traditional cuisine, they can be complementary and, therefore, can be based on local and identitarian products and techniques.

The research –fourth element– means to not take anything for granted or known; the premise is obvious: everything is susceptible of being improved. An exhaustive knowledge of the technique and the product is indispensable to guarantee success. There is no use in having the best product if there is unawareness about how to handle it in an excelling manner.

The component of tradition, the fifth, means maintaining the group of features that characterize the culture it belongs to; therefore, the preservation and relevance granted to the local product is indispensable; No wonder the "traditional cuisine is able to show the local culture and allow the maintenance of recipes and modes of preparation of the local cuisine" (Mascarenhas & Gândara, 2010: 780).

Lastly, simplicity, complex art involving a positive evaluation and that is essential to highlight the characteristics of a product. The product is the protagonist and, as such, it must be treated with respect, simplicity and coherence; on its part, simplicity is also key in the development of this study, because it presents as a new trend within the creative processes of Spanish restaurants. For Slavich *et alter* (2014: 30), the haute cuisine is positioned among the sectors mixing creativity with routine work and standardisation in order to reproduce creative products. On this matter, the study questioned how there coexist the continuous generation of new ideas alongside with non-creative processes and processes targeted to standardising. Precisely, to state that the haute cuisine is a form of art, researchers argue that the experience while consuming it, becomes an artistic or theatrical performance, where aesthetical and symbolic needs, rather than utilitarian, are met (Svejenova *et alter*, 2010).

1.3.1. Simplicity: key concept of the product-based cuisine

The objective of simplicity in the cuisine is that only one product comprises all the characteristics and features able to thrill the diner, which are mostly obtained through complex processes. This work method consists of extracting the unnecessary and achieve the specific, which is characteristic and distinguishes it from others; the purpose is to release the product from evident ingredients and incorporate the relevant ones in order to grant to the dish of greater strength, character, personality: "We must promote a cuisine where the synthesis is a value, where simplicity is a form of expression to make society understand the art of the cuisine." (Santamaria, 2012: 58). That liberation from the evident is part of one of the most complex creative processes: the simplicity that, besides being a very appealing quality for the diner, since it potentiates the strength of the recognisable, it has become a strategic process so that chefs face their complexities: "The simple is so extremely simple, that is complicated" (Gueyumar, 2018). Said liberation process is connected to the culmination of knowledge: to know so to reduce (Maeda, 2007). Thus, there is appeal to simplicity as creative process to grant value to the gastronomical product.

It is necessary to analyse the concept of simplicity within the gastronomic experience; in order to do this, the concept of *prägnanz* will be used, coming from the Theory of the Form of the Gestalt, which considers perception as a fundamental process of the mental activity; in said process, the individual selects the relevant information that will help him generate a mental representation. These data selection is called organization categories, among which there is the Law of *Prägnanz*, which consists of grabbing the attention of the observer through simplicity. Or as Oteiza (2018) says, through the void

resulting from the materialization of an idea; a void considered *prägnanz*-like, full of meaning. It is recognised and assumed, that before an unfinished form, the human being is able to imagine, complete what it does not exist yet. Transferring this process to the cuisine would allow to interpret that when a chef eliminates elements or processes of a dish he or she is working on, it causes new possibilities of interpretation in the diner.

Oteiza delves into this concept when he states that "the *prägnanz* of an ongoing draft consists of, after a stage of accumulating expression in a production, the artist moves towards a different stage, eliminating material from the production. Sometimes it happens that the production responds to that action, potentiating its meaning" (Bilbao, 2018: 123-124), and what it suppresses is replaced by an open scope of possibilities: to eliminate so to witness growth. Under this premise, the first interpretation of the chef before the creative process of a dish would be associated to the most rational and technical work. In this point, we must recall that the studies about gastronomy have focused on teaching the analysis of the technical aspect, without analysing the most sensitive aspect connected to the emotional. It is not about a critique to the educational models, since the discipline and knowledge of the technique are necessary to develop the creative process successfully, but instead what Santamaria wisely said: the chef "must master certain techniques up to the point of being able to distance from them so to find personal pathways to build his own world, his own language" (2012: 258). In addition to the technique, and already in the creative process, the chef requires an emotional gesture that grants the dish of greater personality and sensitivity; a gesture that fuses with the environment (landscape, society, culinary identity), with the message and the concept as a whole. From this perspective, that we appropriate, that gesture -that act- must be related to the art of suppressing so that it is the product who speaks.

According to Maeda, and from a more technical perspective, "the authentic simplification is obtained when it is possible to reduce the functions of a system without suffering too many hardships" (2007: 2). Once what will be eliminated has been decided, Maeda questions himself whether eliminating is the appropriate term, and he suggests the triad To Stylise-Omit–Integrate.

The act of stylising entails more complexity in a product that does not seem to promise much at first glance. In fact, a more primary and traditional cuisine may lead to a more artistic and thrilling complexity that the most unusual mix of ingredients. The concealing act – omit – means that, once all those elements that do not enrich the proposal are eliminated, in the rest there must be included all the complexity of the technique and the learning to reach the goal of the chef. Finally, the act of integration means that the gastronomic proposal must be composed of the best raw materials and elaboration techniques to captivate our client. It is about the fact that the end product is capable of achieving the appeal and thrill of whom are about to consume it: only then can the product become the object-protagonist of communication.

2. Methodology

Considering the relevance, boost and growth the gastronomy is acquiring, and considering the scarcity of studies about the subject in Spain, the objective is to analyse and assess how the product-based cuisine is used as a gastronomic identity hallmark and as communicational resource by the Spanish haute cuisine; especially, by restaurants considered by Beneyto & Mateos in their work *Product Temples* (table 1), and that contain a selection of the most relevant restaurants in Spain within the culinary modality of product-based cuisine and those awarded two and three stars by the Michelin Guide in 2018 (table 2). In total, the study *corpus* was composed of forty-nine restaurants. The first cluster has been called Product-based Restaurants and it included twelve in total (24.4%); the second

cluster, *Avant-garde* Restaurants, of which eleven have been awarded three stars (22.4%) and twenty-six, two stars (53.06%).

We have chosen the Michelin Guide by its rigour and its solid international trajectory; no wonder, it started to assess the quality of restaurants back in 1923. It is considered, together with the Gault Millau Guide, a formal authority to identify the excellent culinary practice (Stierand & Dörfler, 2012). Its classification system –between one and three stars– is widely accepted by the different stakeholders of the gastronomic field (Galindo & De la Varga, 2014), assuming that its function is granting legitimacy to students through a series of criteria, regulations and rules. For Bouty *et alter* (2013), the Michelin Guide has been the indisputable referee of this field in Europe. A guide that was technical at first, then touristic and currently is only gastronomical. The restaurants, independently of the style of their cuisine, are assessed by the quality of their products, the regularity and personality of their kitchen, the quality-price relationship, the mastering of the technique and the creativity of the chef (Eren & Güldemir, 2017). Despite that, like every other scoring system, it is a guide questioned by some cuisine professionals or by other compendiums, it is a recognised authority and there is no doubt about its institutional domain about the contemporary haute cuisine (Surlemont, 2005). It offers a standardised system of criteria for their scoring: it is independent, lacks advertising and its inspectors are regular employees of Michelin, anonymous, trained in restaurants, who pay their own meals and visit the restaurant they will score several times. The criteria are applied to each restaurant to be scored in the same manner.

Table 1. Product-based Restaurants (2018)

Restaurants	Websites
Asador Etxebarri	http://asadoretxebarri.com/es/
Askua	http://www.askuarestaurante.com
Ca L´Enric	http://www.restaurantcalenric.cat/es/
D´Berto	http://www.dberto.com/es/mariscos-pescados.aspx
El Campero	http://www.restauranteelcampero.es
Elkano	http://www.restauranteelkano.com
El Faralló	http://elfarallo.com
Els Casals	https://elscasals.cat/es/
Güeyu Mar	http://gueyumar.es
Lera	https://www.restaurantelera.es
Los Marinos José	http://losmarinosjose.com
Tasquita de Enfrente	http://latasquitadeenfrente.com

Author's own elaboration

Table 2. Michelin Stars. *Avant-garde* restaurants (2018)

Restaurants	Michelin Stars	Websites
Abac	***	http://www.abacbarcelona.com/es/restaurante
Akelarre	***	https://www.akelarre.net/es/menus
Annua	**	https://annuagastro.com
Aponiente	***	http://www.aponiente.com
Arzak	***	https://www.arzak.es
Atrio	**	https://restauranteatrio.com
Azurmendi	***	https://azurmendi.restaurant
Bon Amb	**	https://bonamb.com
Cabaña Buenavista	**	http://www.restaurantelacabaña.es
Casa Marcial	**	https://www.casamarcial.com
Cenador De Amós	**	https://www.cenadordeamos.com
Club Allard	**	http://www.elcluballard.com
Coque	**	http://restaurantecoque.com
Dani Garcia	**	http://www.grupodanigarcia.com
Disfrutar	**	http://es.disfrutarbarcelona.com
Diverxo	***	https://diverxo.com
Dos Cielos	**	https://www.melia.com
Dstage	**	http://www.dstageconcept.com
El Celler de Can Roca	***	http://www.cellercanroca.com/index.htm
El Portal de Echaurren	**	http://echaurren.com/elportal
Enoteca	**	http://enotecapacoperez.com
La Escaleta	**	http://www.lescaleta.com

La Terraza del Casino	**	http://www.casinodemadrid.es
Lasarte	***	https://www.restaurantlasarte.com
Les Cols	**	http://www.lescols.com
Maralba	**	http://www.maralbarestaurante.es
Martín Berasategui	***	https://www.martinberasategui.com
Mb	**	http://www.ritzcarlton.com
Miramar	**	http://restaurantmiramar.com/es
Moments	**	https://www.mandarinoriental.es
Mugaritz	**	https://www.mugaritz.com
Nerua	**	http://www.neruaguggenheimbilbao.com
Quique Dacosta	***	http://www.quiquedacosta.es
Ramón Freixa	**	https://www.ramonfreixamadrid.com
Sant Celoni	**	http://www.restaurantesantceloni.com
Sant Pau	***	https://www.ruscalleda.cat
Zaranda	**	http://zaranda.es

Authors' own creation

The research has developed following these steps: 1) Review of the bibliography about the concepts analysed; 2) Selection of the study corpus; 3) Determination of variables to measure the parameters that enable a restaurant to be considered product-based cuisine and 4) Analysis of the message conveyed through the websites of the selected restaurants in order to assess the use of product-based cuisine as communication and identity resource.

We are based on the fact that the website of the restaurant Asador Etxebarri must be the one integrating the concept of Product-based cuisine in its entirety due to the long and continued national and international award-winning that endorse it as one of the best restaurants in the world in this modality; in this regard, one of the most prestigious lists internationally, *The World's 50 Best Restaurants*, positions this restaurant in sixth place in the 2017 edition. Likewise, we have estimated that the rest of restaurants should have considered these elements as well since, in such a way, they would potentiate their awareness and purpose as product-based and identitarian cuisine.

The object of research, as said earlier, have been the messages contained on the websites of the restaurants included on tables 1 and 2, which means a study *corpus* of forty-nine. Therefore, the suitability of their websites is not analysed nor assessed (Daries-Ramon *et alter*, 2017), but instead the

presence of these messages or not. The study was conducted between January and March 2018 (both inclusive), and it was carried out using the related variables described below. The content analysis was done based on the Spanish version.

To measure how the studied restaurants, use the message of product-based cuisine as communication argument and identity hallmark, an analysis based on six parameters of the authors' own creation was done (just as has been explained on previous sections), which are considered relevant to state that a restaurant gathers the main features to be considered product-based cuisine: 1) Raw material, 2) Specialisation, 3) Innovation, 4) Research, 5) Tradition and 6) Simplicity. Likewise, it is worth mentioning that this proposal does not have precedents in the academic literature that could guide us. Each element was scored with 0 or 1, whereas 0 stands for "it does not appear" and one "it appears".

According to this, websites analysed can reach a maximum of 6 points, if they obtain a score of 1 in all parameters. Once the analysis of the websites has been completed, and these elements scored, if a restaurant is rated between 5 and 6 points it means that the concept of product-based cuisine is conveyed in a "suitable" manner. If it is rated between 3 and 4 points, it is considered "acceptable"; lastly, if it is rated ranging from 2 and 0, it is qualified as "improvable."

3. Results

Regarding product-based restaurants, it is observed (tables 3 and 4) that only one –El Campero- has reached the maximum score (6 points), namely, it is the only one that integrates all the elements of the product-based cuisine in the communication conveyed in its website. Now, three of them –Asador Etxebarri, La Tasquita de Enfrente and Güeyu Mar- get 5 points, although they do not coincide in the same measuring elements. There follow Ca L´Enric and Lera rated 4 points. Next, D´Berto, Los Marinos José and El Faralló get 3 points and, lastly, Elkano and Askua only 2 points. In one way or another, they all use the elements analysed in their communication.

Table 3. Classification of Product-based restaurants

Conveyed concept	Websites	Final score
Suitable	El Campero	6
	Asador Etxebarri	5
	Güeyu Mar	5
	Tasquita de Enfrente	5
Acceptable	Ca L´Enric	4
	Lera	4
	D´Berto	3
	El Faralló	3
	Los Marinos José	3
Improvable	Askua	2
	Elkano	2
	Els Casals	2

Authors' own elaboration

Table 4. Summary of communicational parameters in product-based restaurants

Restaurants	Elements of product-based cuisine used in the communication					
	Raw material	**Specialisation**	**Innovation**	**Research**	**Tradition**	**Simplicity**
Asador Etxebarri	1	1	1	0	1	1
Askua	1	1	0	0	0	0
Ca L´Enric	1	1	1	0	1	0
D´Berto	1	1	0	0	1	0
El Campero	1	1	1	1	1	1
El Faralló	1	1	0	0	1	0
Elkano	1	1	0	0	0	0
Els Casals	1	0	0	0	1	0
Güeyu Mar	1	1	1	1	0	1
Lera	1	1	1	0	1	0
Los Marinos José	1	1	0	0	1	0
Tasquita de Enfrente	1	0	1	1	1	1
Total	**12**	**10**	**6**	**3**	**9**	**4**
Total (%)	**100%**	**83.3%**	**50%**	**25%**	**75%**	**33.3%**

Authors' own elaboration

Regarding the relevance of each one of the elements, the "raw material" is present in all websites (100%); "specialisation", in 10, namely, in 83.3% and "tradition" in 9 (75%). An intermediate value achieves "innovation" (50%). Less relevance is shown by "simplicity" (33.3%) and "research" with 25%. It is noteworthy that the product-based restaurants privilege "raw material", "specialisation" and "tradition" as quality parameters in the product-based cuisine. Since "innovation" is also granted relevance, (it may be perceived as opposite to tradition at first glance), restaurants deem convenient to integrate it in the traditional cuisine so to regenerate gastronomic culture. If, in addition, the concepts of "learning" and "research" are added, the appealing nature of the message could be reinforced.

At the beginning of our study, there was mentioned the relevance of simplicity as gastronomic process in order to highlight the characteristic features of the product. Once the analysis was completed, it is observed that it is the second least used element, in such a way that those restaurants that do not

consider it -Elkano, Ca L´Enric, D´Berto, Els Casals, Los Marinos José, Lera, El Faralló and Askua- are wasting a very relevant resource to enrich their gastronomic offer.

On their part, none of the Avant-garde restaurants achieve the qualification of "suitable" (6 and 5 points); on the contrary, most of them -64.8%- are scored between 2 and 0 points, namely, they barely use the elements considered in this research in their communication; and the rest of them, 35.1%, do so occasionally; even a 13.5% do not use any.

Table 5. Classification of *Avant-garde* restaurants

Conveyed concept	Websites	Final score
Suitable	–	-
Acceptable	Annua	4
	Arzak	4
	Casa Marcial	4
	El Celler de Can Roca	4
	Enoteca	4
	Nerua	4
	El Portal de Echaurren	3
	Miramar	3
	Moments	3
	Mugaritz	3
	Quique Dacosta	3
	Ramon Freixa	3
	Sant Pau	3
Improvable	Abac	2
	Atrio	2
	Azurmendi	2
	Bon Amb	2
	Cabaña Buenavista	2
	Club Allard	2
	Coque	2
	Dani García	2
	Disfrutar	2
	Dos Cielos	2
	Lasarte	2
	Les Cols	2
	Mb	2
	Sant Celoni	2
	Zaranda	2
	Akelarre	1
	Cenador de Amós	1
	Diverxo	1
	La Terraza del Casino	1
	Aponiente	0
	Dstage	0
	La Escaleta	0

	Maralba	0
	Martín Berasategui	0

Authors' own elaboration

Regarding the communicational elements, in the a*vant-garde* restaurants (table 5), there outstand "innovation" with 70.2%, "tradition" (56.7%) and "raw material" (48.6%). "Research" is represented in the 27% and "specialisation" and "simplicity", with a 5.4% each, are hardly relevant.

Table 6. Summary of communicational parameters in *Avant-garde* restaurants

Restaurants	**Elements of product-based cuisine used in communication**					
	Raw material	**Specialisation**	**Innovation**	**Research**	**Tradition**	**Simplicity**
Abac			1		1	
Akelarre				1		
Annua **	1	1	1	1		
Aponiente ***						
Arzak ***	1		1	1	1	
Atrio **			1		1	
Azurmendi ***			1		1	
Bon Amb **	1			1		
Cabaña Buenavista **	1		1			
Casa Marcial **	1		1		1	1
Cenador De Amós **			1			
Club Allard **	1		1			
Coque **			1	1		
Dani Garcia **			1		1	
Disfrutar **			1		1	
Diverxo ***			1			
Dos Cielos **			1		1	
Dstage **						

El Celler De Can Roca ***	1		1	1	1	
El Portal De Echaurren *			1		1	1
Enoteca **	1	1	1		1	
La Escaleta **						
La Terraza Del Casino **			1			
Lasarte ***	1				1	
Les Cols **	1				1	
Maralba **						
Martín Berasategui ***						
Mb **	1		1			
Miramar **	1		1		1	
Moments **	1		1		1	
Mugaritz **			1	1	1	
Nerua **	1		1	1	1	
Quique Dacosta ***	1		1		1	
Ramón Freixa **	1		1		1	
Sant Celoni **	1			1		
Sant Pau ***			1	1	1	
Zaranda **	1				1	
Total	**18**	**2**	**26**	**10**	**21**	**2**
Total %	**48.6%**	**5.4%**	**70.2%**	**27%**	**56.7%**	**5.4%**

Authors' own elaboration

When comparing the communicational parameters of the two modalities of restaurants analysed (table 7), the coincidences and divergences between them are clearly appreciated. In the first cluster, and always above 50%, there are three key elements: "raw material", "specialisation" and "tradition"; in the second, "innovation" and "tradition", which manifests the will or need by both to excel in the

cuisine style they use –product-based and *avant-garde*-, but also that both advocate the value of tradition in their cuisine.

Table 7. Comparison of the product-based and *avant-garde* restaurants

Restaurants	Elements of the product-based cuisine used in communication					
	Raw material	Specialisation	Innovation	Research	Tradition	Simplicity
Product-based	100%	83%	50%	25%	75%	33%
Avant-garde	48%	5.4%	70%	27%	56%	5.4%

Authors' own creation

4. Conclusions

This study identifies the use with divergences of the product-based cuisine as hallmark of gastronomic identity, as well as communication argument by the haute cuisine in Spain. From product-based restaurants, 75% do so in a "suitable" or "acceptable" manner. Compared to them, none of the *avant-garde* restaurants is "suitable" and only 35.1%, is "acceptable".

This absence of elements favouring a message that privileges the product-based cuisine should not be interpreted as contrary or opposite to it; rather, *avant-garde* restaurants have implicitly involved excellent raw materials and specialisation in their cuisine, therefore their communication could be redundant. However, they perceive the need to highlight innovation, which could correspond with the need of disseminating their know-how, their knowledge, their expertise; in this cuisine, the creative processes are diverse and unlimited: as stated by 70% of analysed restaurants that claim their cuisine is based on innovation. There is the paradigmatic case of Mario Sandoval, from the restaurant Coque, in Madrid, who says to

> Work gastronomically as a Renaissance man with his business and research tasks. [..] actively collaborating with the CSIC [N.T. Spanish National Research Council]- spending years taking part in healthy restaurant proposals and doing research about new gastronomical registries, techniques and technologies. (http://restaurantecoque.com/investigacion.php)

Compared to them, 50% of the product-based restaurants also claim the same; among them, the search of perfection (even in an almost obsessive way, as read in some messages) through their elaborations, turns into their creative process, the contribution of some nuance or detail that grants their proposal of singularity within the simplicity with which their dishes are presented, it represents their only route when innovating in the development of a composition. There is more cuisine than what meets the eye, subtle but quite present in the final proposal.

And that creativity would be connected to simplicity, which is barely represented in the *avant-garde* restaurants and it is considered by product-based restaurants (33%). In this case, it would be necessary

turning to the iconic component: images published on websites do show the simplicity of gastronomic elaborations, in such a way that the message is deemed conveyed.

Regarding the "research" element, it is not relevant for any of the two clusters: could be also justified because it is inherent to work in haute cuisine? If so, it should be questioned whether, except for professionals, critics or expert consumers, it would be an interesting argument for a more clueless public.

On their part, all the product-based restaurants coincide in conveying the excellence of their raw material, especially due to its value as element originated in a territory, due to its traditional character. The culinary practice of haute cuisine, through *avant-garde* or product-based cuisine, aims to insert on tradition, according to what it entails as a contribution to the gastronomic identity of the location where their task is performed:

> Nestled deep in the Atxondo valley, at the foothills of the magical Mt. Anboto, we find Etxebarri. Far from the noise, the restaurant preserves ancient techniques of grill cooking using carefully selected firewood from different trees to work in harmony with the locally cultivated, natural produce, to offer endless possibilities of truly wonderful dishes. (http://asadoretxebarri.com/es/presentacion/)

The messages are there, either implicitly or explicitly, and regions are represented through their chefs. The haute cuisine accepts, thus, the historical heritage that the product-based cuisine offers to be conveyed through their elaborations. "Tradition" is its identity hallmark, the concept where both converge.

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