



# Effect of Korean Michelin Guide Review Features on Customer Satisfaction Using LIWC\*

Yoon Ji KIM<sup>1</sup>, Su Sie KIM<sup>2</sup>, Seong Soo CHA<sup>3</sup>

Received: November 22, 2022. Revised: January 17, 2022. Accepted: January 25, 2023.

## Abstract

**Purpose:** This study aims to analysis the difference by Michelin rating in customer satisfaction of restaurant listed in the Korea Michelin Guide. There are opinions that the Michelin Guide's rating system and evaluation criteria are somewhat ambiguous. **Research design, data, and methodology:** This study collected 145 actual online reviews published on TripAdvisor to examine how the effect of the content attributes of reviews on consumer satisfaction varies according to the Michelin grade. Based on this, two studies were conducted. Study 1 examined the effect of strong and weak positive reviews on consumer satisfaction according to the rating. Study 2 examined the effect of image information on consumer satisfaction. **Results:** The results revealed that the lower the Michelin rating, the more positive review had a significant effect on consumer satisfaction. The higher the rating, the more image information had an effect on consumer satisfaction. Expectations for Michelin three-star restaurants are higher than those of two-star restaurants, so customers are more likely to be used negatively when writing reviews. **Conclusions:** Accurate information on Michelin selection criteria should be delivered so as not to form high expectations and not to disappoint. For consumers to be satisfied with the name Michelin, the standards should be stricter.

**Keywords :** Michelin Rating, Online Review, Review Features, Image Information, Consumer Satisfaction.

**JEL Classification Code:** L66, D11, D12.

## 1. Introduction

Recently, as interest in dining out culture has increased, consumers' eyes are also improving. Customers who visit the restaurant want to enjoy the best taste, ingredients, service, and atmosphere. According to a survey by the Korea Food Industry Association (2015), when choosing a restaurant, the taste of food (83%) is more important than the price (64%), and many respondents said they would gladly visit even if it was a long distance to taste very good

food. As the expectation level of restaurant consumers increases due to the improvement of income level, a high-end restaurant service market defined as fine dining is forming. Currently, the external size of the domestic fine dining market is insignificant compared to the total industry size of the restaurant market, but it has a significant impact in terms of diversity and advancement of the restaurant market. Michelin Guide-selected restaurant is recognized as a typical fine dining restaurant, and is a luxury restaurant that gourmets worldwide want to visit (Min et al., 2019). As

\*This research was supported by 2022 Eulji University Innovation Support Project grant funded

1 First Author, Student, Department of Food Science and Service, Eulji University, Korea. E-mail: [dbsw15070@naver.com](mailto:dbsw15070@naver.com)  
 2 Second Author, Student, Department of Food Science and Service, Eulji University, Korea. E-mail: [kelly170@naver.com](mailto:kelly170@naver.com)

3 Corresponding Author, Professor, Department of Food Science and Service, Eulji University, Korea. E-mail: [sscha@eulji.ac.kr](mailto:sscha@eulji.ac.kr)

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Korean chefs with experience in Michelin restaurants overseas have rapidly increased their entry into Korea since 2015, the chefs' reputation and image of fine dining restaurants are evaluated to be quite useful in the marketing strategy of hotels with a high proportion of foreigners targeting new customers (Yang & Lim, 2021). According to the 2020 National Image Survey Report by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Korean food was the highest at 50.4% among foreigners. In addition, in the "2021 Seoul Tourism MICE Statistics Collection" conducted by the Seoul Metropolitan Government and the Seoul Tourism Foundation, it was confirmed that foreign tourists accounted for 76.8% of food and entertainment activities in 2019, up 5.5% from the previous year. However, apart from the growing domestic and international interest in Korean food along with the spread of the Korean Wave, the Korean food experienced by foreigners and satisfaction with it should be examined more carefully. Restaurants selected for the Michelin Guide are mainly associated with positive images such as "luxury," "skilled chefs," and "good reviews," but the Michelin Guide's evaluation results are not necessarily proportional to consumer satisfaction. Rather, there are cases where restaurants are viewed more negatively after receiving Michelin stars. In addition, the rating system and evaluation criteria of the Michelin Guide are somewhat ambiguous rather than accurately known to restaurant owners and consumers (Jang et al., 2022). Because of this, it is a topic to be confirmed through research whether the restaurant selected by the Michelin Guide brings positive perception to consumers. In other words, the assumption that the evaluation of Michelin Guide experts may not necessarily lead to positive perceptions of consumers and the fruits of restaurants can also be a hypothesis. In order to collect data necessary for the study, questionnaires and in-depth interviews have limitations such as securing the number of samples and costs, so we intend to conduct online data-based research. This study focused on the perception of foreigners when using Michelin restaurants using a review by TripAdvisor (tripadvisor.com), a famous website for sharing travel information online. TripAdvisor is a world-famous travel review site as well as in Korea, where travelers book accommodation facilities or share travel information easily and quickly (Kim & Park, 2018). There are also reviews of accommodations and restaurants in TripAdvisor, and among them, reviews left by foreign customers visiting Michelin restaurants were collected. Therefore, this study collects actual online reviews published on TripAdvisor, and based on this, it aims to examine how the effect of the content attributes of reviews on consumer satisfaction changes according to Michelin's rating.

Specifically, in Study 1, the proportion of positive words used in the review was calculated using the Linguistic

Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) program, and based on its average value, it was divided into strong positive reviews and weak positive reviews. The reason why the negative reviews were not examined at this time was that the proportion of negative words (average = 0.97%) was clearly less than that of positive words (average = 7.36%), and it was determined that the number would show meaningless analysis results. Study 2 analyzed whether the image information of the online review was significant for consumer satisfaction.

## 2. Theoretical Background

### 2.1. Michelin Restaurant

The Michelin Guide is a book published by the French tire company Michelin, which publishes a separate restaurant guidebook, the Red Guide. It is collectively referred to as the Michelin Guide in French, but the Michelin Guide is the official name in Korea. The Michelin Guide began in 1900 with the distribution of free information magazines by its founder, André Michelin, and was published in Europe from 1911, beginning in France. Seoul has been designated as the fourth Michelin Guide in Asia (Kim, 2018). As the influence of restaurant guides gradually grew, an anonymous evaluation team called mystery diners or restaurant inspectors began tasting and evaluating food after visiting the restaurant. In 1926, a method of evaluating Michelin stars by selecting a good restaurant began, and in 1936, a star distinction standard was established. Professional evaluators evaluate the quality of ingredients, completeness of flavor, cooking method, chef's personality and creativity, reasonable price, uniformity of menu and consistency of food quality. As Michelin restaurants were evaluated for the first time in Korea in 2017, Gaon and Ra Yeon took the first three stars in Korea. The globalization of modern Korean food has already become a *fait accompli*, and the evidence is that restaurants selected as Michelin Guide Seoul are mostly based on Korean food. Domestic officials in the restaurant industry contributed to the discovery of new Korean food menus by Michelin guides (Kim & Cho, 2018). The Korean restaurant, which occupied the Michelin star, is evaluated as an opportunity to make a leap forward. Currently, all three-star restaurants are Korean food. Four out of seven two-star restaurants are Korean food, and two out of 24 one-star restaurants are Korean food. Therefore, 11 out of 33 Michelin restaurants are Korean food. Accordingly, historical Korean restaurants are making efforts to create a creative and luxurious atmosphere under the name of modern Korean food by combining modern elements of the West, and are expanding the scope of modern Korean restaurants not only in Seoul but also in Asia and the United

States (Ryu, 2019).

## 2.2. Online review study

Online review is an information exchange process that allows consumers to communicate their experiences of consumer satisfaction through Internet media using information on products and services, reviews, and ratings (Park & Lee, 2014). Online reviews provide convenience and immediacy to obtain desired information at any time and place, so there is a growing perception that they are a major factor affecting many consumers' purchase decisions and corporate sales growth (Sim & Kim, 2016). The study of user satisfaction is described as an expectation mismatch theory by purchasing experience or word of mouth, and the expectation mismatch model is that after users purchase a product or service, satisfaction increases when positive expectations occur and decreases when negative expectations occur (Lee & Ham, 2007). User satisfaction is very important for companies to develop because users' needs are diversified and companies and customers have relationships.

Previous studies have shown that the attributes of the review itself (e.g., scores on targets, word count of reviews, positivity or negativity of reviews, usefulness scores previously evaluated by others, extremes, etc.) and the reviewer's attributes (e.g., elite reviewers' presence, reviewer's self-picture disclosure, etc.) affect the usefulness perception of the review (Baek et al., 2012; Liu & Park, 2015; Mudambi & Schuff, 2010). Ryu (2019) studied the effect of food styling in the Michelin Guide Seoul 2019 restaurant on user satisfaction and preference. As a result of the study, it was found that the user's preference for the Michelin Guide Seoul 2019 restaurant had a positive (+) effect on the user's satisfaction. It can be seen that the higher the preference of restaurants, the higher the level of satisfaction. Therefore, this study was conducted to analyze the relationship between review characteristics and satisfaction of foreign users of Michelin Guide restaurants by referring to the research models of Beak et al. (2012), Liu and Park (2015), Mudambi and Schuff (2010).

**Table 1:** Michelin Guide Evaluation Criteria

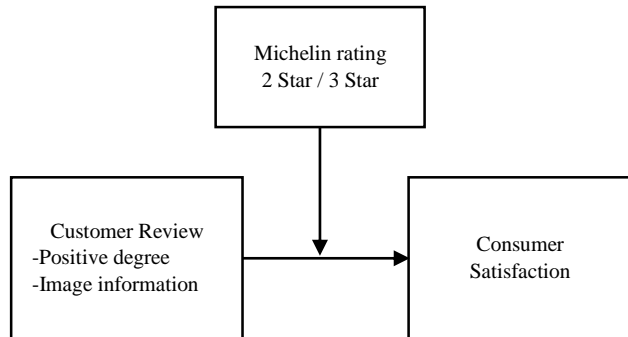
Rating	Evaluation criteria
Michelin three star	The dish is so good that I want to taste it a restaurant worth a special trip
Michelin two star	A restaurant worth visiting because of its excellent cuisine
Michelin one star	A well-cooked restaurant
Bib gourmand	To offer great food at a reasonable price a friendly restaurant

The Plate	A restaurant where you can taste good food with fresh ingredients
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## 3. Research Design

### 3.1. Research Model

As explained above, this study aims to see the effect of the characteristics of reviews on consumer satisfaction according to the Michelin rating. First, research hypothesis 1 examines the effect of positive reviews (strong positive reviews vs weak positive reviews) on consumer satisfaction according to Michelin ratings, and research hypothesis 2 examines the effect of image information on consumer satisfaction. Details on this are shown in Figure 1 below.



**Figure 1:** Research Model

### 3.2. Hypotheses Setting

The emotional response experienced in the process of purchasing a product or service has a major impact on post-purchase behavior (Bolton & Lemon, 1999). Online review contents may include positive or negative directions, and consumer responses may vary depending on the direction of online review contents (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006). Positive information includes experiences such as favorable reviews or praises for purchased products or services used, and negative information includes users' slander or complaints (Kang & Yoon, 2014). In addition, satisfaction was said to be a positive emotional state resulting from the results of most elements in a relationship with the other party (Davis & Coy, 2011), and consumers were defined as overall satisfaction experienced by customers in the process of receiving services from sellers. (Lee, 2003). Babin and Darden (1996) found that the emotions experienced by customers have a direct and large impact on customer satisfaction, and positive or negative emotions affect the overall size of customer satisfaction. It has been investigated that therefore, it can be assumed that if the positive degree

according to the Michelin rating is high, consumer satisfaction increases. At this time, based on the average value of the ratio of positive words used in the review, when the positive degree was higher than the average value, it was classified as a strong positive review, and when it was low, it was classified as a weak positive review. In addition, according to the Michelin Guide evaluation criteria, 3 Michelin stars are defined as restaurants with excellent cuisine that are worth a special trip to taste, and 2 stars with Michelin are defined as restaurants with excellent cuisine that are willing to visit. However, since the evaluation criteria are somewhat ambiguous, the following hypothesis was set up to find out whether Michelin 3-stars bring more positive value to consumers than 2-stars.

**H1:** The higher the Michelin rating, the more positive reviews will have a significant (+) effect on consumer satisfaction.

Recently, the amount of image information including pictures, photos, and videos on online review websites is rapidly increasing, and it plays a major role in consumer decision-making (Lin et al., 2012; Xu & Santhanam, 2015). Filieri (2016) asserted that image information is a factor that increases the reliability of online reviews in online reviews. Image information can be divided into photos and videos. In the last 3 to 4 years, several researchers who recognized the value of information provision formats (photos, videos, text) in online reviews have conducted studies on the main role of images and their effect on the effectiveness of reviews (Xu & anthanam, 2015; Hlee et al., 2016; Yang et al., 2017). Lin et al. (2012) investigated that online reviews with image information showed a higher level of reliability and message quality than reviews without image information. In addition, messages with pictures and texts are more memorable than messages with pictures or texts alone, and have a positive effect on online review evaluation (Yoon, 2012). In this study, whether or not an image is attached to a review is defined as image information, and based on the above studies, it can be inferred that image information in online reviews is significant to consumer satisfaction.

**H2:** The higher the Michelin rating, the higher the image information will have a significant positive (+) effect on consumer satisfaction

## 4. Analysis Methods and Results

### 4.1. Michelin Restaurant Selection

In order to increase the quality of data and ensure validity of the study, the comparison subjects should be selected, and the two comparison subjects must have the same or similar levels of attributes other than the attributes that are in the spotlight of the study. (Cho & Cheon, 2005; Lee & Jung, 2015). Therefore, the consideration in selecting Michelin is that 1) Korean food, which is unique to Korea, should be representative, 2) have similar geographical locations, 3) are adjacent to each other, and 4) have a similar amount of reviews. Accordingly, this study investigated the characteristics of each Michelin restaurant as shown in Table 2. Among Michelin restaurants, Mingles and La Yeon are located in Seoul, and the distance between the two restaurants is about 10 minutes by car. In addition, both restaurants represent Korean food, which is Korea's unique food, and the total number of reviews was 96 for 2 Star Mingles and 49 for 3 Star Rayon, which was not relatively large compared to other Michelin restaurants. Accordingly, in this study, Mingles was selected as a two-star Michelin restaurant, and La Yeon was selected as a three-star Michelin restaurant.

**Table 2:** Michelin 2nd and 3rd Star Restaurant List

	Name	Food	Star	Location	Number of reviews
1	Gaon	Korean food	3	Seoul Gangnam	16
2	Layeon	Korean food	3	Seoul Jung-gu	49
3	Allaprima	Western food	2	Seoul Gangnam	3
4	Kwonsook soo	Korean food	2	Seoul Gangnam	27
5	Mingles	Korean food	2	Seoul Gangnam	126
6	Kojima	Japanese food	2	Seoul Gangnam	1
7	Jungsikdang	Korean food	2	Seoul Gangnam	294
8	Mosu	Western food	2	Seoul Yongsan-gu	11
9	Juok	Korean food	2	Seoul Jung-gu	6

### 4.2. Data Collection

To minimize errors in reviews, all reviews published on TripAdvisor were collected from January 1, 2016 to February 28, 2022. At this time, only reviews written in English were extracted to prevent problems caused by language differences and to secure unity. As a result, 96 reviews published in Michelin 2 Star Mingles and 49 reviews published in Michelin 3 Star Rayon were collected, collecting a total of 145 reviews. The characteristics of the review are reviewer's self-picture disclosure, the reviewer

level, the number of reviews, the type of visit, horoscope, review contents, image information, and Information on the number of likes was also collected (Figure 2, Table 3). After, the ratio of positive words among all words used in the review was derived using the LIWC program. The LIWC program is a program that can derive the form (time, part of speech, formal style, etc.) and meaning (social, emotional, perceptual, tentative, cognitive, biological, etc.) of the words that make up a sentence (Pennebaker et al., 2007).

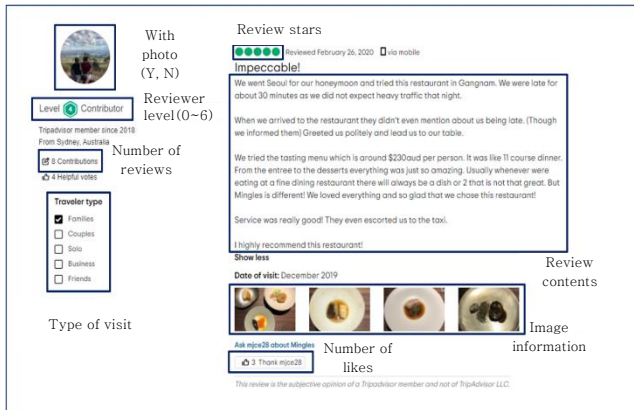


Figure 2: Trip advisor Study Target Characteristics

Table 3: Review Characteristics of Michelin Restaurants

Review Characteristics		Number/ %	Layeon (3 star)	Mingles (2 star)
With Photos	Y	# 13 % 26.50%	36	37.50%
	N	# 36 % 73.50%	60	62.50%
Reviewer level	Private	# 3 % 6.10%	6	6.30%
	1	# 2 % 4.10%	3	3.10%
	2	# 8 % 16.30%	11	11.50%
	3	# 7 % 14.30%	16	16.70%
	4	# 6 % 12.30%	13	13.50%
	5	# 8 % 16.30%	18	18.80%
	6	# 15 % 30.60%	29	30.10%
	6	# 15 % 30.60%	29	30.10%
Type of visit	Private	# 8 % 16.30%	26	27.10%
	Family	# 8 % 16.30%	9	9.40%
	Couple	# 17 % 34.70%	37	38.50%
	friend	# 9 % 18.40%	12	12.50%
	work	# 5 % 10.20%	1	1.00%
	Alone	# 2 % 4.10%	11	11.50%
	Alone	# 2 % 4.10%	11	11.50%

Image information	Y	# 16 % 32.70%	36	37.50%
	N	# 33 % 67.30%	60	62.50%
Review stars	1	# 7 % 14.30%	9	8.60%
	2	# 7 % 14.30%	0	0.00%
	3	# 4 % 8.20%	3	3.20%
	4	# 7 % 14.30%	20	21.50%
	5	# 24 % 48.90%	64	66.70%

### 4.3 STUDY 1: The Effect of Positive Reviews on Customer Satisfaction with Michelin Rating

The average value of the ratio of positive words among reviews was 7.36, and the maximum value was 21.7. Then, based on the average value, reviews with a high ratio were classified as strong positive reviews, and reviews with low ratios were classified as weak positive reviews. As a result, 38 (39.6%) and 58 (60.4%) of the total of 96 reviews for Michelin 2-star restaurants were distinguished as strong and weak positive reviews, respectively. Distinguishing between reviews and weak positive reviews, the number of weak positive reviews was higher in contrast. In the case of Michelin 3-star restaurants, out of a total of 49 reviews, 9 (18.4%) and 40 (81.6%) reviews were classified as strong and weak positive reviews, respectively, indicating that the number of weak positive reviews was relatively higher. In this study, consumer satisfaction was defined using a star rating, one of the review characteristics. As a result of the ANOVA analysis, the significance probability  $p < 0.005$  was derived according to the Michelin rating and customer satisfaction, indicating that there was a difference in usefulness. And as a result of analyzing the degree of positiveness and customer satisfaction, the significance probability  $p < 0.005$  was derived, indicating that there is a difference in usefulness. According to the results of the chart, the lower the Michelin rating, the positive degree of reviews and consumer satisfaction have a positively significant effect.

Table 4: ANOVA Results for Hypothesis 1 Verification

Description	df	Mean square	F
Michelin rating	1	3.463	15.805***
Positive degree	1	13.934	7.952***

Note) \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

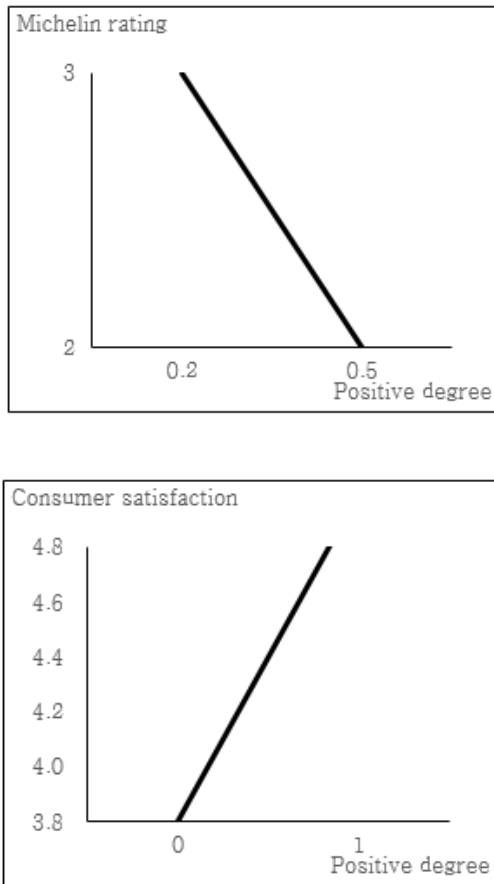


Figure 3: ANOVA Results for Hypothesis 1

**4.4 STUDY 2: The Effect of Image Information on Customer Satisfaction with Michelin Rating**

In STUDY 2, whether or not a photo was attached to the review was defined as image information and analyzed. As a result, in the case of Michelin 2-star restaurants, 35 reviews (36.5%) had image information and 61 reviews (63.5%) did not. In the case of Michelin 3-star restaurants, 16 reviews (32.7%) had image information and 33 reviews (67.3%) did not. Therefore, there were relatively more reviews without image information for both restaurants. As a result of ANOVA analysis, the significance probability  $p < 0.568$  was derived according to the Michelin rating and image information, and it was found that there was no difference in usefulness. And as a result of the analysis of image information and customer satisfaction, the significance probability  $p < 0.004$  was derived, indicating that there is a difference in usefulness. Therefore, the higher the Michelin rating, the higher the image information and consumer satisfaction

Table 5: ANOVA Results for Hypothesis 2 Validation

Description	df	Mean square	F
Michelin rating	1	0.076	0.328
Image information	1	14.759	8.450***

Note) \*\*\* $p < 0.001$



Figure 4: ANOVA Results for Hypothesis 2

**5. Results**

In this study, the effects of online review characteristics on consumer satisfaction according to Michelin ratings were examined. Foreigners' reviews posted on TripAdvisor for six years from January 1, 2016 to February 28, 2022 were conducted, and the two-star Michelin restaurant Mingles and the three-star Michelin restaurant Layeon, a Korean restaurant, were investigated as representatives. The data collected were 49 pieces of Layeon and 96 pieces of Mingles, and review characteristics such as self-photograph, reviewer level, purpose of visit, image information, and star rating were collected. It was also analyzed using the LIWC program and AMOS. This is similar to the method of collecting review characteristics in the study of Lee et al. (2016). As a result of the study, it was found that the lower the Michelin rating subject to the review, the higher the level of strong positive reviews were perceived by consumers as more satisfactory.

**6. Discussion and Implication**

Based on these findings, this study presents the following implications. First, by analyzing online reviews posted by foreigners on TripAdvisor, we not only more objectively and accurately confirmed the quality attributes and values of Michelin restaurants in Korea, but also identified the satisfaction level of foreign users. Therefore, practical data

that can be referenced in the domestic fine dining market was provided. Second, the higher the Michelin star rating, the higher the expectations for the restaurant. Since a Michelin 3-star restaurant has a higher rating than a Michelin 2-star restaurant, it is thought to be superior in many aspects, such as the quality of food ingredients, completeness of flavor and cooking method. However, when we actually face it, if it does not meet our expectations, we will be disappointed. According to a study by Kim (2006), the more information search efforts are made before purchase, the more disappointment is experienced when the actual product performance does not meet expectations after purchase. In other words, the more effort is put in, the greater the expectation and attractiveness of achieving the desired result, and consequently, the greater the disappointment experienced when the desired result is not obtained. Therefore, we have higher expectations for a Michelin 3-star restaurant than a 2-star restaurant, so there is a possibility of writing a more negative review when we write a review due to the high disappointment. Therefore, it is necessary to convey accurate information about the Michelin selection criteria so as not to form high expectations and not to be disappointed. Third, restaurants selected in the Michelin Guide are usually associated with positive images such as 'luxury', 'competent chef', and 'good reviews'. However, Michelin stars are evaluated by giving absolute standards to the taste of food. In the Michelin evaluation criteria, the 'atmosphere' or 'service' of a restaurant is not a consideration for a star rating. The review covers both the ambiance and service of the restaurant, as well as the Michelin criteria for cooking, quality of ingredients and perfection in flavor. A high Michelin rating does not necessarily mean high customer satisfaction. In order for consumers to receive satisfaction worthy of the name Michelin, Michelin's standards must be more stringent. To do so, not only the full-time Michelin employee evaluation team, but also a consumer expert panel should be formed to reflect consumers' opinions in the Michelin evaluation.

However, the number of reviews used in the study, 49 for Layeon and 96 for Mingles, is too small to generalize. Future research needs to collect more reviews and compare more Michelin restaurants. In addition, since the proportion of negative words in the review is very small, it has a limitation that only the difference in positive degree was examined. Since this study collected reviews only in English using the LIWC program, it is necessary to conduct studies that include languages such as Chinese, Japanese, German, and French in future studies. In addition, the focus was on the positive level of reviews and image information, but in addition to these factors, it is necessary to examine review content attributes such as references to time and money, and the ratio of emotional to rational language in future studies.

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