

Digital Reputation Formation through Customer Complaints: Evidence from Far Eastern Restaurants in an Urban Context

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Abstract

This study examines how recurring complaint patterns in user-generated reviews shape digital reputation formation for Far Eastern restaurants in Ankara. Using a purposive sample of 860 TripAdvisor reviews collected between 2015 and 2025 (117 complaint-containing reviews; 122 coded complaint instances), we integrate Social Identity Theory (SIT) and the Cultural Adaptation Model (CAM) to propose a three-step mechanism wherein perceived cultural authenticity mediates identity-congruence effects on reputational vulnerability, while adaptation strategies moderate these relations. Methodologically, the paper combines theory-informed thematic coding with quantitative content analysis (temporal comparisons, co-occurrence matrices, intra-brand dispersion; CV = 0.43) to link qualitative complaint themes to measurable reputation dynamics. Results show that service quality, food quality, and staff attitude are the principal drivers of negative evaluations; perceptions of inauthenticity amplify negative judgments and frequently co-occur with operational failures. A descriptive post-pandemic increase in hygiene complaints is observed but does not survive conservative multiple-comparison correction. Managerial implications include integrated complaint management, authenticity-sensitive marketing, and targeted staff training to mitigate user-generated reputational risk. The study contributes a socio-cultural, process-oriented account of digital reputation in ethnically framed hospitality contexts and offers a replicable mixed-methods approach for future comparative research.

Keywords: Digital reputation, Customer complaints, Online reviews, eWOM, Ethnic restaurants.

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of digital platforms has transformed reputation management into a critical strategic function for service firms, particularly in experience-based sectors such as hospitality. Online reviews, social media interactions, and real-time customer feedback increasingly shape how businesses are evaluated, trusted, and chosen (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004; Litvin *et al.*, 2008; Cheung & Thadani, 2012). While prior research has extensively examined digital reputation in general service contexts (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004; Ye *et al.*, 2011; Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Sparks & Browning, 2011), considerably less attention has been paid to how reputation is constructed and contested in culturally embedded consumption settings such as ethnic restaurants.

Ethnic restaurants offer a unique context in which digital reputation is driven not only by service quality but also by perceptions of cultural authenticity and alignment with identity. Customers often evaluate such businesses through culturally loaded expectations, where authenticity, adaptation, and symbolic meaning intersect (Liu & Jang, 2009).

However, existing studies tend to examine either digital reputation mechanisms (Litvin et al., 2008; Filieri & McLeay, 2014; Ye et al., 2011) or cultural authenticity (Liu & Jang, 2009; Wang, 1999; MacCannell, 1973) in isolation, offering limited insight into how these dimensions interact in shaping consumer evaluations in online environments. This creates a critical gap in understanding the socio-cultural dynamics underpinning digital reputation in multicultural urban markets.

To address this gap, this study integrates Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and the Cultural Adaptation Model (CAM) (Hofstede, 2001) to develop a theoretically grounded framework explaining how consumers interpret and respond to ethnic restaurant experiences in digital platforms. SIT suggests that consumers evaluate brands through group affiliation congruence and in-group/out-group dynamics, while CAM highlights the tension between maintaining cultural authenticity and adapting to local preferences. The study proposes that digital reputation emerges from the interaction of identity-based evaluations and adaptation strategies.

Empirically, the study examines online customer reviews of Far Eastern restaurants in Ankara, a multicultural urban setting where diverse cultural expectations intersect. Using qualitative content analysis, the research explores how complaints, evaluations, and interaction patterns reflect deeper tensions between authenticity and adaptation in digital environments.

Against this background, this study addresses the following research question: How do recurring customer complaint patterns shape digital reputation dynamics in ethnic restaurant contexts, and what role do perceived cultural authenticity and identity-based evaluations play in this process?

Building on this aim, this study makes three key contributions to the literature on digital reputation and hospitality management. *First, it advances existing research by demonstrating empirically that complaint-driven reputational vulnerability in ethnic restaurant contexts is shaped not merely by service failure frequency, but by identity-based evaluative processes through which cultural expectations are negotiated in digital environments. This extends prior work on cumulative digital reputation (Litvin et al., 2008; Sparks & Browning, 2011) by providing a theoretically grounded, socio-cultural explanation of complaint patterns. Second, by systematically integrating Social Identity Theory (SIT) and the Cultural Adaptation Model (CAM), the study offers a novel analytical lens through which perceived authenticity is operationalised as a mechanism linking group affiliation congruence and digital reputation outcomes. Unlike prior studies that treat authenticity as a product attribute (Liu & Jang, 2009; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010), this study conceptualises authenticity as a relational, identity-laden evaluative construct co-produced through user-generated content. Third, methodologically, the study contributes by combining theory-informed qualitative coding with quantitative content analysis techniques—including temporal comparison, co-occurrence analysis, and intra-brand variation—thereby offering a structured, empirically grounded pathway for linking complaint patterns with reputation dynamics in ethnic service contexts.*

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Digital Reputation Formation in Social Media Ecosystems

Digital reputation has evolved into a multidimensional, dynamic system that extends beyond traditional service quality metrics (Litvin et al., 2008; Filieri & McLeay, 2014; Sparks & Browning,

2011; Yu et al., 2021). In this context, consumers rely heavily on online reviews and shared experiences when forming perceptions of service quality and brand credibility, reinforcing the co-created and socially constructed nature of digital reputation.

Within this framework, social media platforms play a central role in shaping and disseminating digital reputation. Online reviews, influencer content, and peer-to-peer communication constitute the primary mechanisms through which consumers interpret service experiences and evaluate brands. Empirical evidence suggests that social media marketing elements—such as interactivity, entertainment, and customisation—positively influence trust and brand-related outcomes, which in turn shape behavioural intentions (Kim & Ko, 2012). Moreover, user-generated content and eWOM have been identified as critical drivers of consumer trust and decision-making processes in digital environments (Litvin et al., 2008; Filieri & McLeay, 2014; Tao et al., 2022).

Importantly, digital reputation formation is inherently asymmetric. Negative information tends to spread more rapidly and exert a stronger influence than positive content, thereby increasing reputational vulnerability and underscoring the importance of proactive, responsive reputation management strategies (Sparks & Browning, 2011; Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006). This asymmetry reflects the well-documented negativity bias in consumer behaviour, whereby unfavourable experiences are more likely to be shared and have a greater impact on decision-making processes (Baumeister et al., 2001; Litvin et al., 2008).

Overall, digital reputation emerges as a dynamic, socially constructed, and platform-dependent phenomenon, shaped by the interplay between user-generated content, social media interaction, and algorithmic amplification mechanisms. This integrated perspective highlights the need for organisations to adopt continuous, data-driven, and engagement-oriented approaches to reputation management in digital environments.

2.2. Cultural Authenticity in Digitally Mediated Consumption

In culturally embedded service contexts such as ethnic restaurants, digital reputation is strongly influenced by perceptions of cultural authenticity. Authenticity is widely conceptualised not as an objective attribute but as a socially constructed perception shaped by symbolic cues, narratives, and consumer interpretations (Beverland, 2005; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010). In hospitality settings, authenticity has been consistently linked to customer satisfaction, trust, and behavioural intentions, particularly in experiences involving cultural consumption (Liu & Jang, 2009).

Recent research has emphasised that digital environments increasingly mediate perceptions of authenticity. Online platforms enable consumers to form expectations prior to direct experience through visual content, peer reviews, and storytelling, thereby shifting authenticity from a purely experiential construct to a pre-consumption evaluative framework (Filieri & McLeay, 2014; Jeong & Jang, 2011). In this context, authenticity is conveyed through digitally transmitted signals, such as food presentation, ambience representation, and culturally embedded narratives, rather than solely through physical interaction.

Moreover, studies indicate that user-generated content plays a critical role in shaping perceived authenticity. Online reviews often reflect not only service evaluations but also subjective interpretations of whether an experience aligns with culturally constructed expectations (Lu & Stepchenkova, 2015). This suggests that authenticity in digital environments is continuously negotiated and co-created among consumers, rather than being controlled by firms, as user-generated

narratives and peer evaluations actively shape collective meanings of authenticity (Vargo & Lusch, 2008; Rihova et al., 2018).

Cross-cultural research also shows that perceived authenticity is closely tied to cultural congruence and alignment of expectations. When there is a mismatch between the cultural signals the restaurant sends and consumers' expectations, dissatisfaction is more likely, particularly in multicultural urban settings (Kim & Lee, 2020). This issue becomes even more salient in digitally mediated contexts, where expectations are formed through indirect exposure and may be amplified by algorithmic visibility and social influence.

More recent research suggests that authenticity perceptions in online environments are closely intertwined with trust formation and reputation dynamics. Specifically, authenticity cues embedded in digital content enhance perceived credibility, which in turn strengthens digital reputation (Sparks & Browning, 2011). However, these processes are highly sensitive to inconsistencies, as discrepancies between online representations and actual experiences can lead to negative evaluations and reputational damage (Jeong & Jang, 2011; Litvin et al., 2008).

In sum, the literature suggests that cultural authenticity in digitally mediated consumption is a dynamic, interpretive, and socially constructed process. It emerges through the interaction of symbolic representation, consumer expectations, and digital communication, making it a central determinant of how ethnic restaurants are evaluated in online environments.

2.3. Social Identity Theory and Identity-Based Evaluations

Social Identity Theory (SIT) posits that individuals derive part of their self-concept from their membership in social groups, and these group affiliations shape perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In consumption contexts, this implies that evaluations are not purely based on functional attributes but are influenced by self-concept alignment, symbolic meaning, and perceived group belonging.

Recent research has significantly expanded Social Identity Theory (SIT) by examining its role in digitally mediated environments. Digital platforms are no longer passive communication channels but active spaces where identities are constructed, displayed, and negotiated through continuous interaction (Belk, 2013; Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012). In these environments, consumers actively perform and express their identities through online content, interactions, and symbolic consumption practices, thereby reinforcing the role of digital platforms in self-concept formation.

Moreover, empirical studies demonstrate that cultural belonging cues embedded in digital environments significantly influence user behaviour, opinions, and evaluative judgments. Identity markers such as names, profiles, and culturally embedded signals shape how content is perceived and trusted, indicating that evaluations are deeply rooted in identity-based processes rather than purely rational assessments (Forman et al., 2008; Stets & Burke, 2000). In digitally mediated environments, users rely on such social and identity cues to interpret information, assess credibility, and form attitudes toward brands and services.

Of particular note, identity processes in digital environments are not only individual but also collective and networked. Research indicates that social identity plays a crucial role in shaping interaction patterns, social integration, and the construction of shared meaning within online communities (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). In digitally mediated environments, individuals interpret

experiences through collective frames of reference, and meanings are co-constructed through ongoing interactions among community members (Kozinets, 2002; Schau et al., 2009).

In the context of ethnic restaurants, these dynamics become particularly salient (Liu & Jang, 2009; Mak et al., 2012; Reed et al., 2012). Consumers evaluate their experiences not only through service quality but also through group affiliation congruence—whether the experience aligns with their cultural expectations, values, and symbolic affiliations (Reed et al., 2012; Stets & Burke, 2000). Online reviews, therefore, can be understood as identity-laden narratives reflecting cultural proximity, perceived authenticity, and group-based interpretations.

Research highlights that digital environments amplify identity-based evaluations through algorithmic visibility and social validation mechanisms, as identity-consistent content attracts greater engagement and is more widely disseminated, thereby reinforcing existing reputational perceptions (DeVito, 2017; Messing & Westwood, 2014). In this digitally mediated context, algorithmic curation and user interaction patterns jointly reinforce identity-aligned interpretations and evaluations.

Building on these insights, this study conceptualises digital reputation as partially constructed through identity-based evaluations. Specifically, perceived cultural authenticity influences digital reputation by enhancing identity congruence, while misalignment between expected and perceived cultural signals may trigger negative evaluations driven by out-group perceptions.

2.4. Cultural Adaptation and the Authenticity–Adaptation Paradox

While cultural authenticity is widely recognised as a key determinant of positive consumer evaluations in ethnic service contexts (Wang, 1999; MacCannell, 1973; Morhart et al., 2015), businesses operating in cross-cultural environments face a fundamental strategic dilemma: balancing authenticity with adaptation. This tension, often conceptualised as the authenticity–adaptation paradox (Wang, 1999; Sims, 2009), reflects the challenge of preserving original cultural characteristics while simultaneously meeting the expectations of local consumers.

The Cultural Adaptation Model (CAM) suggests that firms entering foreign cultural contexts must adjust their offerings to align with local norms, preferences, and consumption habits (Hofstede, 2001). In the context of ethnic restaurants, such adaptation may include modifications in menu composition, ingredient sourcing, service style, or even the symbolic presentation of cultural elements. However, adaptation is not a neutral process; it directly influences how authenticity is perceived and evaluated by consumers.

Recent research shows that authenticity and adaptation are not mutually exclusive but rather exist in a dynamic, context-dependent relationship. Moderate levels of adaptation may enhance accessibility and reduce perceived cultural distance, thereby improving customer satisfaction (Liu & Jang, 2009). In contrast, excessive adaptation may dilute cultural signals, leading to perceptions of inauthenticity and ultimately undermining brand credibility (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Beverland, 2005; Morhart et al., 2015; Mak et al., 2012). This suggests a nonlinear relationship in which both insufficient and excessive adaptation can generate negative evaluations.

This paradox becomes particularly salient in digitally mediated environments. Online platforms expose cultural signals to diverse and global audiences, each with different expectations and interpretive frameworks. As a result, the same adaptation strategy may be perceived positively by one group while being criticized by another. Research shows that digital environments amplify this

tension by enabling consumers to publicly evaluate, contest, and reinterpret authenticity claims in real time through user-generated content and online reviews (Litvin et al., 2008; Kozinets, 2002).

In addition, algorithmic dynamics and social influence mechanisms intensify the visibility of these evaluations. Content perceived as controversial or emotionally engaging—such as accusations of inauthenticity or cultural misrepresentation—is more likely to be shared and amplified, increasing reputational risk (Lou & Yuan, 2019). This creates a feedback loop in which authenticity-related evaluations become central drivers of digital reputation formation.

Importantly, the literature emphasises that authenticity is not a fixed attribute but a negotiated, co-created construct. Consumers actively interpret cultural signals based on their own identity frameworks, prior experiences, and expectations (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Beverland, 2005; Morhart et al., 2015; Sims, 2009). In this sense, adaptation strategies do not directly determine outcomes; rather, their impact depends on how they are interpreted within specific socio-cultural contexts, as meanings are constructed through consumer perceptions and interactions rather than being inherently embedded in the offering itself (Vargo & Lusch, 2008; Cohen, 1988).

Extending this reasoning, this study conceptualizes the authenticity–adaptation paradox as a key mechanism shaping digital reputation. Adaptation strategies influence reputation indirectly by altering perceived authenticity, while the direction and magnitude of this effect depend on identity-based interpretations and digital amplification processes. Effective digital reputation management therefore requires operational improvements and a nuanced understanding of how cultural signals are interpreted and disseminated online.

2.5. Toward an Integrated Theoretical Mechanism

Building on the preceding theoretical discussions (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Hofstede, 2001; Wang, 1999; MacCannell, 1973; Vargo & Lusch, 2008), this study advances an integrated theoretical mechanism explaining how digital reputation is constructed in culturally embedded service contexts. Rather than treating reputation as a direct outcome of service performance, recent research conceptualises it as a socially constructed, interaction-driven process shaped by identity, interpretation, and dynamics of digital amplification (Litvin et al., 2008; Sparks & Browning, 2011; Forman et al., 2008).

In digitally mediated settings, evaluations increasingly reflect identity-based processes. Social Identity Theory posits that individuals interpret experiences via group membership and cultural affiliation; digital platforms amplify these processes through continuous identity construction and social feedback (Gonzales & Hancock, 2011). These processes contribute to identity-consistent evaluative patterns, whereby consumers are more likely to appraise experiences in ways that align with their existing beliefs and cultural affiliations, thereby shaping the content and tone of user-generated digital evaluations (Messing & Westwood, 2014).

At the same time, the Cultural Adaptation Model (CAM) highlights that firms operating in cross-cultural contexts must navigate the tension between maintaining authenticity and adapting to local expectations. *Recent research suggests that this tension is increasingly negotiated in digital environments, where consumers publicly evaluate authenticity claims and cultural signals* (Litvin et al., 2008; Kozinets, 2002; Mak et al., 2012). This creates a paradoxical dynamic in which authenticity and adaptation simultaneously function as complementary and conflicting forces.

Integrating these perspectives, the study proposes that digital reputation forms via three interrelated processes. Perceived cultural authenticity serves as a primary cue whose effects are mediated by

identity-congruence mechanisms. When consumers perceive alignment between the cultural signals a restaurant presents and their own identity frameworks, evaluations tend to be positive. Conversely, perceived cultural distance may trigger negative evaluations shaped by out-group perceptions.

Second, cultural adaptation strategies act as a moderating force. Adaptation can either strengthen or weaken perceptions of authenticity, depending on how consumers interpret it. Moderate adaptation may enhance accessibility and familiarity, whereas excessive adaptation may undermine perceived authenticity. This reflects the authenticity–adaptation paradox highlighted in recent cross-cultural research.

Third, digital platform dynamics amplify and reinforce these processes. Algorithmic visibility, social validation (e.g., likes, shares), and user-generated content contribute to the diffusion and reinforcement of identity-based evaluations. Research shows that digital environments strengthen feedback loops, in which identity-consistent interpretations are more likely to be selected, engaged with, and amplified, thereby shaping collective perceptions and reputational outcomes (DeVito, 2017; Messing & Westwood, 2014).

Notably, these processes are not independent but interact dynamically. Identity congruence influences how adaptation strategies are interpreted, while digital platforms reinforce or attenuate these interpretations through visibility and engagement mechanisms. As a result, digital reputation emerges as a socially constructed outcome shaped by the interaction between cultural authenticity, identity-based evaluation, and adaptation strategies within digitally mediated environments.

This integrated mechanism contributes to the literature by moving beyond linear and performance-based explanations of reputation, offering a socio-cultural and process-oriented understanding of how digital reputation is formed in ethnic service contexts.

It is important to distinguish the analytical orientation of this study from service-dominant logic (SDL; Vargo & Lusch, 2008), with which it shares some conceptual vocabulary. SDL conceptualises value as co-created through customer–firm interaction and positions the customer as an active participant in service production. While this perspective is consistent with our emphasis on the co-constructed nature of digital reputation, SDL does not theorise the identity-based mechanisms through which cultural signals are interpreted, nor does it account for the role of algorithmic amplification in selectively disseminating identity-consistent evaluations. Our framework extends beyond SDL by foregrounding the socio-psychological processes—specifically, identity congruence and out-group perceptions—that mediate the link between cultural signals and reputational outcomes in digitally mediated ethnic service contexts.

3. METHOD

3.1. Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design supported by quantitative content analysis to examine how digital reputation is constructed through customer complaints in ethnic restaurant contexts. Given the interpretive and socially constructed nature of online reviews, qualitative content analysis provides a suitable methodological framework for systematically identifying patterns, meanings, and themes within user-generated textual data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

To enhance analytical rigour and address potential methodological limitations, the study incorporates a complementary quantitative component. Specifically, the frequency and distribution

of themes, co-occurrence patterns, and temporal variations are analyzed to support and validate qualitative interpretations. This mixed-method approach enables a more robust and comprehensive understanding of digital reputation dynamics.

3.2. Data Source and Sampling Strategy

The empirical data were collected from Tripadvisor, one of the most widely used online review platforms in the hospitality sector. Selecting a single platform ensures consistency in review structure, rating systems, and user interaction formats, thereby enhancing internal validity and comparability. A purposive sampling strategy was employed to identify Far Eastern restaurants operating in Ankara, Türkiye. Restaurants were included based on the following criteria: (i) a minimum threshold of customer reviews (at least 20 reviews), (ii) active engagement and visibility on the platform, and (iii) representation of Far Eastern cuisine.

For the purposes of this study, 'Far Eastern cuisine' encompasses Chinese (including regional variants such as Uyghur cuisine), Japanese, and related East Asian culinary traditions, as represented by the ten restaurants in the sample. The sample comprises four Chinese chain restaurant branches (Quick China – Çayyolu, Bilkent, GOP, Ümitköy), two independent Chinese restaurants (Guangzhou Wuyang, Great Wall), one Chinese-fusion restaurant (Chinabloom Ankara), one Uyghur restaurant (Urumci Uyghur Restaurant), one Japanese restaurant (Chef Izakaya), and one Japanese-fusion restaurant (SushiCo Panora). While meaningful culinary differences exist between these traditions, all share the characteristic of being perceived as culturally 'foreign' and 'exotic' by the majority of Turkish consumers, which makes them particularly suitable for examining authenticity expectations and identity-based evaluations.

Based on these criteria, ten restaurants were selected for analysis. The dataset comprises 860 user reviews (1 January 2015–1 June 2025). For the reputational risk analysis, we extracted 117 reviews that contained at least one explicit complaint. Because a single review could address multiple topics, the total number of coded complaint instances was 122.

The selection of complaint-based reviews followed a systematic two-stage filtering process. First, reviews were screened using keyword-based criteria (e.g., 'poor,' 'terrible') to identify negative sentiment. Second, all selected reviews were manually verified to ensure they contained explicit dissatisfaction with service, food quality, authenticity, or the overall experience. This combined approach minimized selection bias and ensured the dataset's analytical relevance.

The selection of Ankara as the study context warrants brief contextualisation. As Turkey's capital and second-largest metropolitan area, Ankara is characterised by a demographically diverse population, a substantial expatriate and student community, and a growing market for international cuisine. Far Eastern restaurants have expanded significantly in Ankara over the past decade, catering to both Turkish and internationally mobile consumers. This context provides a particularly suitable empirical setting for examining how cultural authenticity expectations and identity-based evaluations interact in digitally mediated consumption, as Ankara's multicultural urban landscape generates diverse and sometimes conflicting expectations of ethnic cuisine (cf. Kim & Lee, 2020). It should be noted, however, that the Turkish cultural context may influence complaint patterns in ways that limit direct transferability to other national settings; specifically, Turkish consumers' familiarity with East Asian cultures, their distance from these cultural referents, and the institutional regulation of food labelling in Turkey may shape authenticity perceptions differently than in contexts with established East Asian diaspora communities.

3.3. Data Preparation

All reviews were anonymized prior to analysis to ensure compliance with ethical research standards. Reviews written in English were translated into Turkish to maintain linguistic consistency during coding.

Reviews written in English (n = 34) were first translated into Turkish by the lead researcher, who is bilingual in both languages. To ensure semantic accuracy and preserve the cultural specificity of complaints, a back-translation procedure was subsequently conducted: the Turkish translations were independently re-translated into English by a second bilingual researcher who had not seen the original English reviews. Discrepancies between the original and back-translated versions were identified, discussed, and resolved through iterative revision until semantic equivalence was confirmed. This procedure minimised the risk of meaning distortion, particularly for culturally loaded expressions of dissatisfaction.

Each review was segmented into meaningful analytical units, enabling fine-grained coding and thematic categorisation. This segmentation enabled the identification of multiple issues within a single review, thereby increasing analytical depth.

3.4. Data Analysis Procedure

The study employed a multi-stage qualitative content analysis process informed by the six-phase thematic analysis framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Phase 1 involved repeated reading of all selected reviews to achieve data familiarisation. Phase 2 entailed the systematic generation of initial codes by identifying meaningful textual units relevant to the research question. In Phase 3, codes were sorted and grouped into potential themes. Phase 4 involved reviewing and refining the themes to ensure coherence and analytical fit with the dataset. Phase 5 entailed clearly defining and naming each theme with precise operational definitions. Phase 6 involved producing the analytic narrative, incorporating representative quotations to illustrate the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This transparent, iterative process enhanced the credibility and transferability of the thematic analysis.

The coding process followed a hybrid approach combining deductive and inductive strategies. Initially, a preliminary coding framework was developed based on established literature on online complaints and service failure (e.g., Litvin et al., 2008; Sparks & Browning, 2011). Subsequently, new codes emerging from the data were incorporated to capture context-specific patterns.

A pilot coding phase was conducted using a subset of the data to refine the coding scheme. Based on this phase, codes were revised, merged, or expanded to improve clarity and consistency. Following calibration, the full dataset was coded using MAXQDA. The final coding structure comprised multiple themes: service quality, food presentation and taste, hygiene, price-performance ratio, staff attitude, waiting time, and ambience. Each theme was further operationalised into subcodes representing specific complaint types.

To strengthen the theory–data linkage, the coding process was explicitly informed by the two theoretical frameworks underpinning the study. SIT-derived codes were developed to capture identity congruence (e.g., alignment or misalignment between expected cultural identity and experienced service), in-group evaluations (e.g., positive expectations from culturally similar consumers), and out-group perceptions (e.g., expressions of cultural distance or disappointment). CAM-derived codes were developed to identify adaptation-related complaints (e.g., perceived over-localisation of menus or ambience), authenticity failures (e.g., taste, presentation, or cultural representation inconsistencies), and authenticity–adaptation tensions (e.g., complaints reflecting simultaneous expectations of cultural fidelity and local accessibility). A coding manual

operationalising these constructs was developed prior to analysis and applied consistently across all complaint-based reviews.

This transparent, iterative process enhanced the credibility and transferability of the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In practical terms, the thematic analysis was applied at the level of meaningful complaint units rather than entire reviews, facilitating the capture of secondary experiential cues. Following this, thematic clusters were cross-referenced against SIT and CAM frameworks to ensure that coding reflected not just descriptive categories, but conceptually grounded identity-based evaluations.

3.5. Quantitative Content Analysis

To strengthen the study's analytical robustness, qualitative findings were complemented by quantitative content analysis. First, the frequency and percentage distribution of themes and sub-themes were calculated to identify dominant patterns of customer dissatisfaction. Second, a co-occurrence analysis was conducted to examine relationships among themes, revealing how different types of complaints are interconnected.

Third, a temporal comparison was conducted to examine differences between the pre-pandemic (2015–2019) and post-pandemic (2020–2025) periods. This analysis is instrumental to the research question as it assesses whether the drivers of reputational vulnerability are persistent or context-contingent, thereby clarifying the evolving nature of digital reputation dynamics. Where appropriate, basic statistical tests (e.g., chi-square tests) were employed to assess whether observed differences between periods were statistically significant. These analyses provided additional support for interpreting qualitative findings.

3.6. Reliability and Validity

Several measures were taken to ensure the reliability and validity of the analysis.

First, to assess inter-coder reliability, a second independent coder—a researcher with expertise in qualitative hospitality research—analysed a randomly selected subset comprising 20% of the complaint-based reviews ($n = 23$). Initial coding discrepancies were identified and discussed until consensus was reached. Cohen's Kappa coefficient ($\kappa = .82$) was calculated, indicating strong inter-rater agreement according to established benchmarks in qualitative content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004; Landis & Koch, 1977). This level of agreement confirms the consistency and replicability of the coding scheme.

Second, analytical transparency was maintained through systematic documentation of analytical decisions and coding procedures. Third, methodological triangulation was achieved by integrating qualitative and quantitative analyses, enhancing the credibility and robustness of the findings (Denzin, 1978; Patton, 1999). Finally, the use of direct quotations in the findings section supports interpretive validity by grounding the analysis in the original data.

4. FINDINGS

The findings are presented in five analytical stages, each of which addresses a distinct facet of the research question concerning how complaint patterns shape digital reputation dynamics in ethnic restaurant contexts. First, the overall rating distribution (Table 1) establishes the baseline evaluative profile of the restaurants. Second, the restaurant-level rating comparison (Table 2) reveals inter-establishment variation in reputational standing. Third, the thematic and code-based complaint distribution (Table 3) identifies the core drivers of customer dissatisfaction and provides the empirical foundation for the theoretical interpretations that follow. Fourth, the temporal analysis (Tables 4–5) examines how complaint patterns have evolved over time, situating the findings within a dynamic understanding of digital reputation. Fifth, the intra-brand variation analysis

(Table 6) and co-occurrence matrix (Table 7) provide structural and relational insights into how complaint patterns interact to produce cumulative reputational disadvantages. Taken together, these analyses form a coherent, multi-dimensional portrait of complaint-driven reputational vulnerability in the studied ethnic restaurant context.

Table 1. Distribution of TripAdvisor Ratings

Category	Number of Comments	(%)
Excellent	364	42.3
Very good	289	33.6
Average	90	10.4
Poor	42	4.8
Terrible	75	8.7
Total	860	100.0

This study analysed 860 user reviews of Far Eastern restaurants on Tripadvisor.com (2025), categorised according to the platform's five-point rating system ('excellent', 'very good', 'average', 'poor', and 'terrible'). Of the 860 reviews, 117 contained at least one explicit complaint, yielding 122 coded complaint instances across all themes (see Table 3). While the majority of reviews are positive or neutral, negative reviews provide critical insight into sources of customer dissatisfaction and potential reputational risks.

As shown in Table 1, positive evaluations ('excellent' and 'very good') account for a substantial proportion of the dataset, whereas negative evaluations ('poor' and 'terrible') account for a smaller share. However, despite their lower frequency, complaint-based reviews offer disproportionately rich insights into service failures and unmet expectations. This pattern is consistent with the well-established asymmetry in online evaluations, where negative experiences tend to carry greater diagnostic value in shaping consumer perceptions.

Table 2. Customer Evaluation Distribution in Far East Restaurants

Restaurant Name	Excellent (%)	Very good (%)	Average (%)	Poor (%)	Terrible (%)
Quick China (Cayyolu)	47.5	31.2	6.2	5.0	10.0
Quick China (Bilkent)	30.3	38.4	15.2	6.0	10.1
Quick China (GOP)	34.2	41.2	8.6	4.8	11.2
Great Wall Restaurant	32.5	35.0	15.0	2.5	15.0
Guangzhou Wuyang	49.0	25.5	10.2	5.1	10.2
Chef Izakaya	54.2	4.2	8.3	16.7	16.7
SushiCo (Panora)	25.0	35.0	22.5	10.0	7.5
Quick China (Umitkoy)	51.5	29.7	9.6	5.4	3.6
Chinabloom Ankara	62.5	19.4	8.3	4.1	5.5
Urumci Uyghur Restaurant	50.0	39.3	9.1	0.0	1.5

Table 2 further demonstrates variation across restaurants in terms of rating distributions. While some establishments (e.g., Chinabloom Ankara and Urumci Uyghur Restaurant) receive a higher proportion of positive evaluations, others (e.g., Chef Izakaya and Great Wall Restaurant) exhibit relatively higher shares of negative ratings. These differences suggest that digital reputation is not

uniform across establishments but is shaped by restaurant-specific performance in service delivery and customer experience.

The thematic analysis of complaint-based reviews (Table 3) reveals that customer dissatisfaction is primarily concentrated around service quality, food quality, and staff attitude. Service-related complaints frequently include slow service, inattentive staff, order confusion, and waiter indifference. Food-related issues primarily concern lack of expected flavour, raw or improper cooking, and deviations from anticipated taste profiles. Complaints regarding staff attitude emphasize perceived disrespectful behaviour and lack of effective communication.

Additionally, hygiene problems (e.g., dirty tables, dirty packaging) and waiting time (e.g., delayed service, table waiting time) emerge as recurrent but secondary themes. Across ten restaurants, the highest complaint volumes are observed at Quick China (GOP) with 30 complaints, predominantly driven by service (n=9) and food quality (n=8), while intra-brand variation among Quick China branches (12–30 complaints) suggests inconsistent branch-level service delivery. The thematic distribution in Table 3 was interpreted using the pre-specified SIT- and CAM-derived coding framework; representative illustrative quotations are provided below.

Table 3. Thematic and Code-Based Distribution of Customer Complaints in Restaurants

Restaurant Name	Service Quality	Food Quality	Price/Performance	Hygiene	Waiting Time	Staff Attitude	Ambience	Reservation Problem	Total Complaints
Quick China (Cayyol)	2	3	1	1	1	2	1	1	12
Quick China (Bilkent)	4	2	1	2	3	3	1	1	17
Quick China (GOP)	9	8	3	2	2	4	1	1	30
Great Wall Restaurant	1	3	1	1	0	2	0	0	8
Guangzhou Wuyang Chef	4	2	1	4	1	3	1	1	17
Izakaya SushiCo (Panora)	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	0	8
Quick China (Umitkoy)	1	1	1	1	2	1	0	0	7
Quick China (Umitkoy)	6	2	1	1	1	3	1	0	15
Chinabloom Ankara	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	7
Urumci Uyghur Restaurant	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	29	24	11	14	13	20	7	4	122

Ambience and food quality complaints (combined n = 44) were most closely associated with CAM-derived authenticity failure codes, wherein consumers explicitly articulated discrepancies between expected cultural representation and perceived delivery—a pattern particularly evident across restaurants marketing Uyghur and Japanese cuisines. Adaptation tension codes were most salient in price–performance (n = 4) and ambience-related complaints (n = 20), where consumers

simultaneously expressed expectations of cultural fidelity and dissatisfaction with perceived over-localisation of the culinary offering. These distributional patterns indicate that the theoretical constructs of SIT and CAM are differentially activated across complaint themes—not uniformly distributed—providing empirical grounding for the integrated theoretical mechanism advanced in Section 2.5 and demonstrating that authenticity-related evaluations are not reducible to operational service failure alone. To illustrate the thematic patterns identified in Table 3, the following verbatim customer quotations from the analysed TripAdvisor reviews are presented as exemplary cases.

" How disappointing! These were the worst sushis I have ever had! Even my 5-year-old nephew could cut fish better! I still keep a 2 star because Thai food seemed ok, although I didn't taste it. "

" The service quality was bad, the food was small in portions and there was almost no meat in the soups. "

" This place is a joke. Extremely slow service. We waited for 45 minutes for service. Then they cancelled all sushi orders. We were very angry. They made us pay for the drinks we had while waiting for the food. "

" Nice food, poor service. Main meal missed from our group. Waited and waited for the wine until we had finished our meal. Appetisers arrived after our main course. "

" A disgraceful experience, the worst Quick China branch in Ankara. On 11/01/2024, I made a reservation for 4 people; when we arrived at the right time, our table was not ready. "

The following additional quotations further illustrate staff attitude, hygiene, expectation–experience mismatches, and perceived value concerns:

[Staff attitude] *"But the waiters showed little interest. We constantly had to call for things. "*

[Hygiene] *"The restaurant served our meal with a broken plate. I called an authorised person to file a complaint. One waiter called another waiter and they tried to pass my complaint. I could not even find an admin to report this to. "*

[Expectation–experience mismatch] *"This is one of our favourite restaurants, and the last time we were there the service was terrible. Our main course came just after our soups were served; by the time we finished the soups, the main courses were already cold. "*

[Price–performance] *"They cancelled all sushi orders, yet they made us pay for the drinks we had while waiting for the food. This is simply unacceptable. "*

These examples illustrate that customer dissatisfaction is often multidimensional, combining issues related to service efficiency, food quality, hygiene, and perceived value.

4.1. Authenticity as an Evaluative Dimension: Identity-Based Interpretations

A distinct pattern emerging from the data concerns the role of perceived cultural authenticity as a critical evaluative lens. Consistent with SIT, complaints about taste, food presentation, and cultural representation reveal how consumers evaluate ethnic restaurant experiences through identity-laden expectations rather than purely functional criteria.

Specifically, reviews indicating dissatisfaction with the 'Chineseness' or 'Japaneseness' of the food reflect out-group perceptions triggered when the restaurant's cultural signals fail to align with the consumer's internalised cultural schema.

Representative customer statements illustrating this pattern include:

“good atmosphere, perfect service, worst chinese food at planet. Ambiance and service of restaurant is suitable for chill out, service is good. In contrast foods are not delicious and not worth for the money that you pay Normally far eastern food is light, but here i tried chinenese wall as starter, the chicken that they use at this meal was chosen from fattest part of chicken.”

“It’s not bad if you’re not looking for authenticity. One of the mixed East Asian restaurants in Ankara. In addition, it was very difficult to attract the waiters’ attention to order in the restaurant, which was empty at the time. We left the restaurant disappointed, having entered it happily.”

These statements illustrate that consumers deploy culturally embedded reference points—shaped by prior exposure, media, and social comparison—to evaluate ethnic restaurant experiences. When perceived cultural signals fail to meet these expectations, the resulting dissatisfaction extends beyond taste to encompass a sense of symbolic betrayal, consistent with the authenticity–adaptation paradox described in Section 2.4 (Wang, 1999; MacCannell, 1973; Morhart et al., 2015). In addition, these evaluations are disseminated through user-generated content on digital platforms, amplifying their reputational impact well beyond the individual encounter.

4.2. Temporal Shifts in Complaint Patterns

A temporal comparison between the pre-pandemic (2015–2019) and post-pandemic (2020–2025) periods revealed a statistically significant increase in hygiene-related complaints ($\chi^2 = 4.82$, $p = 0.028$), with the proportion of hygiene complaints rising from 0.70% to 2.56% of all reviews (see Table 4).

No other complaint theme showed a significant change over time (all $p > 0.05$). Importantly, following Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons ($\alpha' = .05/8 = .00625$), the hygiene complaint increase ($p = .028$) does not exceed the corrected threshold and should therefore be interpreted as a descriptive trend requiring further investigation rather than a statistically robust difference.

Table 4. Pre- and Post-Pandemic Comparison of Hygiene-Related Complaints

Period	Total Reviews	Hygiene Complaints (n)	Hygiene Complaint Rate (%)
Pre-Pandemic (2015–2019)	430	3	0.70%
Post-Pandemic (2020–2025)	430	11	2.56%
Total	860	14	1.63%

However, complaint volume rose by 44.0% post-pandemic (50 → 72), which may reflect reduced service consistency or an increased propensity for digital complaints after 2020. These findings highlight that while hygiene has become a more salient evaluative criterion in the post-pandemic era, the core drivers of customer dissatisfaction have remained stable, underscoring the importance of continuous investment in service and food quality improvement.

Table 5. Temporal Comparison of Complaint Themes (Pre- vs. Post-Pandemic)

Complaint Theme	Pre-Pandemic (n=430)	Post-Pandemic (n=430)	Absolute Change	Relative Change (%)	χ^2	p
Service Quality	12	17	+5	+41.7%	1.02	0.312
Food Quality	10	14	+4	+40.0%	0.83	0.362
Price/Performance	5	6	+1	+20.0%	0.11	0.740
Hygiene	3	11	+8	+266.7%	4.82	0.028*
Waiting Time	6	7	+1	+16.7%	0.09	0.764
Staff Attitude	9	11	+2	+22.2%	0.26	0.610
Ambience	3	4	+1	+33.3%	0.14	0.708
Reservation Problem	2	2	0	0%	0.00	1.000
Total Complaints	50	72	+22	+44.0%	–	–

Note. Bonferroni correction applied ($\alpha' = .05/8 = .00625$). Following this correction, no complaint theme reaches the adjusted significance threshold, including hygiene complaints ($p = .028 > .00625$). *Significant at uncorrected $\alpha = .05$ only; not significant after Bonferroni correction. Cramér's V for the hygiene complaint increase = 0.075, indicating a small effect size.

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relationship between time period (pre-pandemic vs. post-pandemic) and the presence of hygiene-related complaints. The relationship was significant at the uncorrected level, $\chi^2 (1, N = 860) = 4.82$, $p = .028$, Cramér's V = .075.

To further quantify the within-brand service inconsistency observed across Quick China branches, a coefficient of variation (CV) analysis was conducted on the total complaint frequencies (see Table 6). The four branches (Cayyolu, Bilkent, GOP, Umitkoy) exhibited a mean complaint count of 18.50 (SD = 7.94), yielding a CV of 0.43. In social science research, a CV exceeding 0.30 is generally interpreted as indicating high relative dispersion (Brown, 1998).

Table 6. Intra-Brand Variation Analysis of Complaint Frequencies Across Quick China Branches

Branch Name	Total Complaints (n)	Deviation from Mean	Squared Deviation
Quick China (Cayyolu)	12	-6.5	42.25
Quick China (Bilkent)	17	-1.5	2.25
Quick China (GOP)	30	11.5	132.25
Quick China (Umitkoy)	15	-3.5	12.25
Sum / Total	74		189.00

Mean=18.50 | SD=7.94 |

CV=0.43

The calculated value of 0.43 provides strong quantitative evidence that customer dissatisfaction levels are not uniform across the same brand's outlets. This finding empirically supports the earlier qualitative observation of 'inconsistent branch-level service delivery' and suggests that brand reputation alone does not guarantee operational consistency. From a digital reputation perspective, this intra-brand variation implies that negative evaluations from a single underperforming branch (e.g., Quick China GOP) can potentially spill over and harm the digital reputation of the entire brand.

4.3. Co-occurrence Analysis of Complaint Themes

To fulfill the analytical procedure described in the Method section, a co-occurrence analysis was performed to examine how different complaint themes are interrelated within the same customer review. Using the coded complaint instances from Table 3, a co-occurrence matrix was constructed to identify which themes are most frequently expressed together in a single review. This analysis is critical for understanding the multidimensional nature of customer dissatisfaction, as service failures rarely occur in isolation.

The results presented in Table 7 reveal that the most frequent co-occurring pair is Service Quality and Staff Attitude, appearing together in 12 out of 117 complaint-based reviews. The second most common co-occurrence is Service Quality and Food Quality (n=9), suggesting that when food fails to meet expectations, customers also tend to criticise the service delivery process. Similarly, Food Quality and Price/Performance (n=7) co-occur frequently, reflecting that perceived inauthenticity or poor taste intensifies negative value judgments.

These findings empirically support the theoretical claim that digital reputation is shaped by holistic customer experiences rather than isolated failures. The tight coupling between service quality, staff attitude, and food quality suggests that operational and interactional deficiencies are mutually reinforcing.

These findings indicate that customer complaints are not limited to functional service failures but also reflect broader experiential and interactional deficiencies. From a theoretical perspective, this suggests that service encounters are evaluated not only in terms of performance outcomes but also in relation to socially embedded expectations, which aligns with identity-based interpretations of consumption experiences.

Table 7. Co-occurrence Matrix of Complaint Themes (Frequency of Pairs)

Theme Pair	Co-occurrence Frequency (n)
Service Quality – Staff Attitude	12
Service Quality – Food Quality	9
Food Quality – Price/Performance	7
Service Quality – Waiting Time	5
Hygiene – Ambience	4
Food Quality – Staff Attitude	3
Waiting Time – Staff Attitude	2
Price/Performance – Staff Attitude	2
Hygiene – Food Quality	2
All other pairs	≤1

Notably, as the co-occurrence analysis (Table 7) demonstrates, food quality and staff attitude complaints frequently co-occur, suggesting that no single improvement initiative will be sufficient in isolation.

Another notable finding relates to the perceived lack of authenticity in food and dining experiences. Complaints regarding taste, presentation, and cultural representation suggest discrepancies between expected and experienced authenticity. This indicates that authenticity serves as a key evaluative dimension in ethnic restaurant contexts, where consumers rely on culturally embedded expectations to interpret service experiences.

In sum, the findings demonstrate that digital reputation in ethnic restaurant contexts is shaped through a combination of operational performance, interaction quality, and perceived authenticity.

Complaint-based evaluations function as critical indicators of reputational vulnerability, revealing not only specific service failures but also deeper mismatches between customer expectations and service delivery.

Taken together, the findings reveal three interrelated patterns that shape digital reputation in ethnic restaurant contexts. First, customer complaints are predominantly concentrated around core service dimensions—namely service quality, food quality, and staff attitude—indicating that operational performance remains the primary driver of negative evaluations. Second, the findings highlight the central role of perceived authenticity as a critical evaluative lens. Third, the results demonstrate that digital reputation is cumulatively constructed through repeated patterns of complaints rather than singular negative incidents.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Conclusions and Theoretical Implications

This study reveals how the digital reputations of Far Eastern restaurants operating in Ankara are constructed through online customer reviews and identifies the key complaint themes shaping these reputational dynamics. The findings demonstrate that hygiene standards, perceived food authenticity, service quality, staff attitude, and price–performance imbalance constitute the primary determinants of digital reputation. The intra-brand variation coefficient ($CV = 0.43$) confirms that brand reputation alone does not guarantee operational consistency across branches.

Although positive reviews dominate the dataset, the analysis confirms that negative reviews exert a disproportionate influence on consumer perception, consistent with the negativity bias in eWOM literature. Prior research demonstrates that negative information is more diagnostic, persuasive, and influential in shaping consumer evaluations than positive content (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Vermeulen & Seegers, 2009; Filieri & McLeay, 2014). In this respect, complaint-based evaluations function as critical indicators of reputational vulnerability and risk amplification in digital environments.

From a theoretical standpoint, the study contributes by integrating Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and the Cultural Adaptation Model (CAM) (Hofstede, 2001) into the analysis of digital reputation. The findings indicate that customer evaluations are not limited to functional service performance but are strongly shaped by identity-based expectations and symbolic meanings attached to ethnic cuisine. Complaints about taste, authenticity, and cultural representation reflect discrepancies between expected and experienced identity signals.

Interpreting the empirical patterns through the integrated SIT–CAM lens clarifies how identity congruence and perceived authenticity mediate complaint-driven reputational vulnerability. Specifically, complaints coded under food quality and staff attitude more frequently activated identity-congruence mechanisms, suggesting that perceived cultural mismatch amplifies negative evaluations beyond functional service failure. This pattern aligns with SIT's predictions about out-group signalling (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and extends CAM by showing that adaptation strategies influence reputation indirectly through perceived authenticity. Importantly, these interpretations are grounded in the qualitative coding and supported by the co-occurrence analysis (Table 7) and intra-brand dispersion results (Table 6, $CV = 0.43$). Taken together, the evidence suggests that reputational risk in ethnic restaurant contexts is both operational and symbolic: managing service processes alone is insufficient if cultural signals are perceived as inauthentic.

Beyond this, the findings empirically support the authenticity–adaptation paradox, demonstrating that while local adaptation strategies are necessary for market alignment, deviations from perceived authenticity may negatively affect brand credibility and digital reputation (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Beverland, 2005; Cohen, 1988).

5.2. Managerial and Strategic Recommendations

Based on the findings, several strategic recommendations can be proposed. First, restaurants should implement systematic and data-driven complaint management systems. Second, maintaining a balance between cultural authenticity and local adaptation is essential. Third, staff training should be prioritized as a strategic investment (Karatepe, 2013; Babakus et al., 2003; Ladhari, 2009). Fourth, restaurants must invest in robust technological infrastructure to ensure the reliability of POS systems, mobile applications, and reservation platforms.

Fifth, because many complaints signal perceived inauthenticity (taste, presentation, cultural representation), social media strategies should foreground content that communicates cultural provenance and culinary authenticity. This may include behind-the-kitchen narratives, chef storytelling, and visual documentation of ingredient sourcing from regions of origin. Collaboration with culturally aligned micro-influencers who possess credibility within specific cultural communities (e.g., East Asian diaspora food bloggers) may also help mitigate inauthenticity perceptions, although this proposition requires independent empirical testing (Hudders et al., 2021). Given that co-occurring service quality and staff attitude complaints indicate systemic, interdependent deficiencies (Table 7), improvement efforts should adopt an integrated approach rather than targeting individual service dimensions in isolation.

Sixth, digital public relations strategies should integrate SEO-oriented content production, influencer engagement, and eWOM management. This integrated approach supports visibility, credibility, and sustained digital reputation (Chaffey, 2022).

5.3. Limitations and Future Research Directions

Despite its contributions, the study has several limitations. First, the analysis is limited to a single platform (Tripadvisor), which may restrict the generalizability of findings. Future studies should incorporate multi-platform data sources.

Second, by focusing exclusively on complaint-containing reviews, the study captures only the negative dimension of digital reputation formation. This represents a deliberate analytical choice oriented toward understanding reputational vulnerability; however, it precludes examination of how positive evaluations and overall rating patterns interact with complaint dynamics to shape collective reputation outcomes. Future research should adopt a comparative approach, integrating both positive and negative reviews to develop a more complete picture of digital reputation construction.

Third, although the study integrates qualitative and quantitative elements, future research could employ advanced analytical techniques, such as machine-learning-based sentiment analysis or network analysis, to further enhance methodological rigour.

Fourth, as the study is based on ten restaurants in a single Turkish urban context, findings should be interpreted with caution regarding cross-cultural generalisability. The Turkish cultural context, consumer familiarity with East Asian cuisines, and the specific socio-demographic profile of Ankara may shape complaint dynamics in ways that differ from contexts with established East Asian diaspora communities. Future studies

should examine ethnic restaurant reputation formation across multiple cultural settings to enable comparative insights.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that digital reputation in ethnic restaurant contexts is a complex, multi-layered construct shaped by the interplay of service quality, cultural authenticity, technological infrastructure, and digital communication practices. For Far Eastern restaurants operating in culturally diverse urban environments such as Ankara, achieving a sustainable digital reputation requires a holistic approach that integrates cultural sensitivity, technological capability, and data-driven communication strategies.

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