Cheap vs. Expensive Restaurants in the GTA
Kevin Turingan

Abstract:
In our research analysis, we focused on understanding the difference between cheap and expensive restaurants in the Greater Toronto Area. We wanted to see if there was a specific reason for why particular restaurants reside where they are located at. This research consisted of 100 restaurants that were our primary source of information that we used for our spatial analysis. This information was gathered through the use of Yelp where we focused on the restaurant's variables such as their type of restaurant, the number of ratings they have received, what type of languages the menu offers, the number of reviews, the region the restaurant was in and whether this restaurant was cheap or expensive. As we progressed through our research and gathered more information through our background research and coding analysis, we gathered that restaurants tend to cluster depending on the location that they are residing in. This can be seen through the concept of central place theory as majority of restaurants tend to cluster in the Downtown area while cheap restaurants chose to cluster in certain neighborhoods.

Key words: Food, Restaurants, Cheap Restaurant, Expensive Restaurant, GTA, Cluster, Central Place Theory, Markham, Scarborough, Downtown

Introduction
Toronto is a city that is most known for its diversity and multiculturism. Many people across the globe travel to this city to see what it has to offer and for consumers to embrace all these different types of ethnic foods. In the Greater Toronto Area, there are 3 specific areas where many restaurants reside in: Downtown Toronto, Scarborough, and Markham. These locations consist of many different types of unique restaurants that offer different cuisines. In the downtown area, you could be in the mood for steakhouses or Italian food. In Scarborough you can have a craving for Japanese food while in Markham you could be wanting Chinese food.

For this exact reason, we as a group wanted to understand if there was a specific reason or connection between restaurants and their location and how that would affect their price level points. Our hypothesis originally was based on the spatial location of restaurants. We assumed that expensive restaurants would be in the downtown area while cheaper restaurants would be more sporadically spread across the GTA. Through the help of Yelp, we were able to gather 100 restaurants, that being 50 cheap restaurants and 50 expensive restaurants in Toronto. These restaurants were then mapped out in our spatial analysis and after looking back at the location of these restaurants we were then able to conduct more research. The mapping findings helped us with our background research. In our background research we wanted to focus more on depth as to why certain restaurants cluster? We saw in our spatial analysis that there was a common trend that restaurants would reside amongst another but what is that reason. Our background research findings helped us understand what our primary focus was on and from there it helped assist us in the development of our coding analysis. These findings will be later looked at in our background, methods, and findings component.

Background
In our research, our focus was distinguishing the boundaries of our study. Yes, we were focusing on the city of Toronto as a whole but within Toronto, has many different regions. In specific, we describe the Greater Toronto Area consisting of Peel Region, York Region, and the City of Toronto. These were our boundaries where we would be taking note of restaurants. There are many more different areas outside of Toronto, but we would not be incorporating that into our study as we wanted to be very specific in understanding as to what we believe is the core of Toronto. When looking back at

the restaurants that were chosen, you will see that 100 restaurants are spread across our map. Cheap and expensive restaurants are clustered together, and we wanted to understand what that reasoning was. Some hypotheses that came up was that restaurant clustered depending on the location of the area. This is a topic that is primarily supported by the work of (Jung & Jang 2019). We also conducted that restaurant clustered because of the ethnographic location they are in. (Zhang 2015). With another hypothesis we assumed that some restaurants clustered depending on marketability (Smith 1985). In our background research, each hypothesis was taken into consideration as there are many possibilities and reasons as to why a restaurant would reside on where they are located at.

Methods

Within our research, our data consisted of 100 different restaurants located in the Greater Toronto Area. The 100 chosen represented 50 cheap restaurants and 50 expensive restaurants that was gathered from the help of Yelp. With our spatial analysis, our way of distinguishing whether a restaurant was cheap or expensive was through Yelps option of price ranging. Depending on the number of stars that restaurant had, would indicate the price of the restaurant. This information was then used for our mapping process where it would help show us the locations of these restaurants and help us understand the connection between restaurants and them clustering. We moved on with this research and started our background research where we focused on 4 hypotheses. Our hypotheses on restaurants were that they would all restaurants cluster, certain types of restaurants cluster depending on location, certain types of restaurants would cluster depending on marketability, and that restaurants would cluster depending on ethnic landscapes. The development of these hypothesis gave us a more in-depth understanding of restaurants and when we moved into our coding analysis, we focused on why restaurants cluster depending on location. For this data input, we conducted 7 different variables: type of restaurant, rating, language, website, reviews, cheap or expensive, and region which is noted in our codebook.

Findings

Initially at the start of our research, we felt that majority of restaurants would cluster depending on location. We felt that the more expensive restaurants would automatically be located downtown Toronto as that is the hotspot for everything while the cheap restaurants would be in other neighborhoods such as Scarborough and Markham. When we mapped out the locations of our 100 chosen restaurants being 50 cheap and 50 expensive, we saw that restaurants were spread across the Greater Toronto Area evenly which can be shown through our green/ red mapping. As we conducted our research more thoroughly, in the coding analysis it was shown that our hypothesis was right and wrong. We were correct that restaurants do cluster depending on location and that majority of the expensive restaurants reside downtown. This makes sense as downtown Toronto is known as a popular location where everyone will go but also a place where people expect to find more finer cuisines and expensive locations. What we did not expect to find was that cheap restaurants also resided more downtown than in other neighborhoods. We originally assumed that cheaper restaurants would be more spread outside of downtown as that is where all the other region of restaurants reside. That was our originally hypothesis and after understanding our research more we did find that cheap restaurants were in these other locations but majority of them also resided downtown. Our research concluded our findings that restaurants do cluster depending on location and that is seen through our central place theory.

Conclusion and Recommendation

In conclusion to our findings, there is a correlation between restaurants and the location that they reside in and how they distinguish their restaurants price points. When analyzing their business decisions, restaurants will reside best to where they can meet their consumer demand point which is why location matters. When looking back at our research, I can acknowledge that there are a lot of limitations to this research. Some specific points to this are that our research was only conducted through one restaurant website being Yelp. There are more websites out there that could help enhance our understanding. Another limitation is that

we conducted reviews through public opinions which means that the results are subjective. Yes, one individual could have one bad experience but that does not influence the whole of a restaurant. Another limitation is the classifying of what distinguishes a cheap or expensive restaurant. Some restaurants could be considered as cheap, but they will have a very expensive item that they are known for vice versa. Lastly, a big limitation of this research is our sample size. We conducted research that consists of only 100 restaurants in the Greater Toronto Area, and those 100 restaurants is not sufficient to justify the understanding of restaurants for the whole city. Furthermore, restaurants are an important measure in the city of Toronto that helps express one's culture and diversity. There are over 100 restaurants in Toronto so make sure to enjoy yourself and consume these lovely tastes.

References

Jung, S. S., Jang, S. S. 2019. To cluster or not to cluster?: Understanding geographic clustering by restaurant segment. International Journal of Hospitality Management, 77, 448-457.

Smith, S. L. 1985. Location patterns of urban restaurants. Annals of Tourism Research, 12(4), 581-602.

Zhang, CZ. 2015.Construction and reconstruction of ethnicity in retail landscapes: case studies in the Toronto area. Journal of Urban Design 20(5): 677697

Zhang, H., Zhou, X., Tang, G., Xiong, L., & Dong, K. (2021). Mining spatial patterns of food culture in China using restaurant POI data. Transactions in GIS, 25(2), 579-601.