

Beier, Michael

## Research Report

Evaluation of Restaurants and Restaurant Experiences - General Weightings and Individual Deviations in the Underlying Evaluation Criteria: Results of a Survey in Switzerland and Germany

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# **Evaluation of Restaurants and Restaurant Experiences - General Weightings and Individual Deviations in the Underlying Evaluation Criteria\* Results of a Survey in Switzerland and Germany**

Michael Beier

Swiss Institute for Entrepreneurship  
*University of Applied Sciences of the Grisons, Chur, Switzerland*

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**Questions, comments, and further discussion are welcome:**

**Email:** [michael.beier@fhgr.ch](mailto:michael.beier@fhgr.ch)

**LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/in/michaelbeier-org](https://www.linkedin.com/in/michaelbeier-org)

## 1. Introduction

It is especially important for restaurants to understand exactly who their potential and actual guests are and what exactly those guests expect from a restaurant or a restaurant visit. In particular, it is of interest to know which criteria potential guests use to select restaurants and under which circumstances guests are satisfied with their restaurant visit. A great deal of research has already been conducted internationally on such evaluation criteria. However, no comparative findings are yet available for Switzerland and Germany. Against this background, this research report presents answers to various questions on evaluation criteria for restaurants on the basis of newly collected data.

At the same time, diners need to know who can give them good recommendations or inspire them to try new restaurants that match their own preferences and expectations. The same applies to restaurants and industry-related online platforms, information services, and social online networks that need to understand exactly how restaurant recommendations can best be conveyed. Against this background, this research report is also interested in the question of how people differ in terms of their evaluation criteria for restaurants and how these differences might affect the fit of restaurant recommendations and satisfaction with such recommendations.

For the research described in this report, 1,004 German-speaking people in Switzerland and Germany were surveyed using an online questionnaire. Among other questions, respondents were presented with a catalogue of 33 different evaluation criteria, for each of which they were asked to indicate how important these criteria were to them in relation to restaurants and their own restaurant experiences.

For this research report, the data collected was analyzed in terms of four central research questions (RQ):

- RQ1:** *What are the criteria that people in Switzerland and Germany use to select a restaurant to visit or to evaluate their own experience in a restaurant?*
- RQ2:** *To what extent do segments of the population (by country or gender) differ in the weighting of the evaluation criteria?*
- RQ3:** *How similar are the respondents (with their personal weighting of the evaluation criteria) to each other (a) overall, (b) in their country, (c) within their gender?*
- RQ4:** *How does the individuality of people's weighting of the evaluation criteria relate to their satisfaction with the restaurant recommendations (they receive)?*

The data and considerations presented here were developed as part of a research project to support the further development of a restaurant recommendation app. The research project explored several possibilities, including how to better model users of restaurant apps and how to provide better recommendations (or better recommendation matching<sup>2</sup>) based on this model. In addition, the project was generally concerned with better understanding people in Switzerland and Germany in terms of their perception and evaluation of restaurants. The research report is intended to help those involved in the restaurant sector to better understand guests in the selection, perception and evaluation of restaurants. It also aims to support all parties involved (e.g., tourism organizations, media, digital and mobile platforms) in providing potential guests and those interested in restaurants with better recommendations for restaurants.

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<sup>2</sup> Pre-selection and sorting of suitable restaurant recommendations from the total number of relevant restaurant recommendations for a search region

## **2. Scientific Foundations**

### **2.1. Evaluation Criteria for Restaurants**

A thorough and empirically based understanding of the criteria by which potential and actual guests evaluate restaurants (hereafter referred to as “evaluation criteria”) is of great importance for restaurants and their management. Ultimately, the long-term success of restaurants depends on consistently meeting the needs and expectations of their clientele and catching the attention of appropriate guests who are attracted to what they have to offer (Fernandes et al. 2021, Lai 2015, Li et al. 2023). In this context, such evaluation criteria come into play at all stages of the customer journey of restaurant guests (Hamilton et al. 2021, Ngarmwongnoi et al. 2020, Zanetta et al. 2024): For example, guests select one restaurant from a set of restaurants based on the information they know and their individual evaluation criteria (Choi & Zhao 2010, Iofrida et al. 2022, Yilmaz & Gültekin 2016). During their visit, guests perceive and evaluate their restaurant experience based on the criteria that are important to them. On this basis, they experience their individually perceived service quality and their satisfaction with the restaurant visit (Bilgihan et al. 2018, Nam & Lee 2011, Yüksel & Yüksel 2003). After their visit, the restaurant experience and its evaluation then influence whether and with what arguments guests recommend a restaurant to others, do not mention it, or even explicitly do not recommend it (Cai & Chi 2021, Nam & Lee 2011). In this way, past experiences of guests flow back into the restaurant selection of future guests as recommendations or descriptions to others (Beier & Schillo 2025, Yilmaz & Gültekin 2016). In addition, past evaluations of restaurant experiences also influence the likelihood and frequency of revisiting the restaurant (Etemad-Sajadi & Rizzuto 2013, Nam & Lee 2011, Zhong & Moon 2020).

### **2.2. Options for Collecting Data on Evaluation Criteria for Restaurants**

A well-established method for collecting data from a target group on the evaluation criteria for restaurants and their individual weighting is the use of surveys (especially questionnaires) (see, for example, Baek et al. 2006, Choi & Zhao 2010, Jacobsen & Haukeland 2002, Witkowski & Wolfinbarger 2002). This can be done by providing specific evaluation criteria, based on previous research and focused on specific topics of a survey, and using a rating scale to ask respondents to rate the perceived importance of each criterion. On this basis, the results can then be reported descriptively in terms of the proportions of different response options (or, in simplified form, using the mean values of the rating scores) and compared across segments of respondents (e.g. Jacobsen & Haukeland 2002). Data collected in this way can also be further analyzed, for example, in factor analyses to derive groups of similar criteria (Witkowski & Wolfinbarger 2002, Yüksel & Yüksel 2003), or in structural equation models to examine the effects of perceived criteria on other variables of interest (e.g. customer satisfaction or loyalty) (Lai 2015, Zhong & Moon 2020).

The advantage of the survey approach is that a specific set of evaluation criteria can be developed for a particular survey. In general, this method of data collection offers the advantage that the survey and the sample can be specified very precisely. In some studies, it is particularly striking that the group of respondents, the type of restaurant, and in some cases the context of the restaurant visit was specifically limited (see, for example, Baek et al. 2006, Choi & Zhao 2010, Etemad-Sajadi & Rizzuto 2013, Gallarza-Granizo et al. 2020, Jacobsen & Haukeland 2002). This also explains why the numerous studies on evaluation criteria for restaurants have so far resulted in quite different criteria catalogs with different weightings. However, there are also some clear patterns in the criteria and their weighting across the studies (see Iofrida et al. 2022 for an overview).

Furthermore, the method of direct questioning also has disadvantages. On the one hand, it is very important to cover the aspects of interest sufficiently well with the catalog of evaluation criteria provided in the survey. Criteria that are not asked about will not be included in the survey. On the other hand, surveys that ask people about their own perceptions, behaviors, or decisions are particularly challenging. For example, respondents may be asked to make retrospective or generalized statements about themselves. Such information is subject to various influences that can lead to some degree of bias or

inaccuracy in the data collected (e.g., due to errors and distortions in the individual's perception and memory of situations, their own ideas and desires, or due to "social desirability") (Beier & Schillo 2025, Godovykh & Tasci 2020).

In addition to the method of direct questioning, the perception and evaluation of restaurants today is often also researched on the basis of user-generated online reviews in rating platforms and map services (in particular TripAdvisor, Yelp, Google Maps) (see, for example, Ariyasriwatana & Quiroga 2016, Ganzaroli et al. 2021, Keller & Kostromitina 2020, Mathayomchan & Taecharungroj 2020, Zhang et al. 2017). These platforms allow users to post comments, recommendations, or ratings (as text or scores on a given rating scale) for restaurants. Other users can then browse the content or view aggregated averages of rating scores in an overview of restaurants or use them as search filters (Beier & Schillo 2025, Lasmi et al. 2021). With the increasing availability of cheaper flat-rate data tariffs in mobile networks, these services are also available to many users as mobile apps on their smartphones, regardless of their location. With cheaper roaming rates abroad, this also is increasingly the case for more and more travelers in more and more countries (Beier & Aebli 2016). Many people freely share their restaurant experiences online on these platforms, so that a very large number of individual entries are available.

One advantage of such surveys of restaurant evaluation criteria is the large number of available data sets that can be collected and analyzed in the online platforms. In addition, the data provides rich textual material combined with a rating score that can be analyzed both textually and quantitatively. In particular, this allows the use of current machine learning and natural language processing methods (Bilgihan et al. 2018, Kwon et al. 2020, Zahoor et al. 2020). As a result of such analyses, researchers can obtain, for example, extensive lists of words that appear in online reviews of restaurants and quantify their statistical relationship to the reviews' rating scores (Bilgihan et al. 2018, Keller & Kostromitina 2020).

However, this method also has its drawbacks when it comes to understanding exactly how people evaluate restaurants. On the one hand, the data only contains entries from people evaluating or commenting on a specific restaurant. This means that restaurants that have not been visited (e.g. because of negative descriptions by others outside the platform) are not commented on or evaluated by the users of a platform. Even if a restaurant is visited, there are further distortions as to whether an online review will be written and how it will be formulated or given a rating. Users of rating platforms are most motivated to post a review when their restaurant experience was very extreme (positive or negative) or when it deviated very much from their previous expectations (Cai & Chi 2021, Lee & Kim 2020, Nam & Lee 2011). This tends to result in so-called "selection bias", since people have different probabilities of posting a rating or a recommendation due to different evaluations of a situation (Beier 2023). Furthermore, people also differ systematically in how they evaluate a comparable perception or assessment in an online review. For example, women tend to give higher online ratings than men (Bayerl et al. 2024). Overall, therefore, the distribution of posted rating scores or descriptive texts does not directly indicate the distribution of actual experiences. Finally, a study should be mentioned that compared restaurant reviews of the same restaurants on different platforms and observed significant differences between the platforms in some cases (Li & Hecht 2021). It can therefore be assumed that the design and functionality of online platforms also influence the entries. In this context, the method of collecting and evaluating entries from online rating platforms seems to be well suited for some research questions and practical purposes. However, the distortions in the posts make it considerably more difficult to derive valid evaluation criteria for restaurants directly from the entries in online platforms.

### **2.3. Examples of Previous Surveys on Evaluation Criteria for Restaurants**

Up to now, restaurant evaluation criteria for Switzerland and Germany have mainly been investigated in comparative studies with other countries. For Germany, comparative studies have been conducted with the USA (Witkowski & Wolfenbarger 2002), with Guatemala and Spain (Gallarza-Granizo et al. 2020), and with Sweden and Finland (Jacobsen & Haukeland 2002). In the most recent study from 2020, 19 evalu-

ation criteria were aggregated into 5 factors ("Service Quality", "Social Enjoyment", "Cleanness", "Aesthetics", and "Cost") and their influence on perceived customer satisfaction and resulting customer loyalty was examined (Gallarza-Granizo et al. 2020). Significant differences between the countries were found, e.g. "Social Enjoyment" has a significant impact on customer satisfaction only in Germany. Similarly, "Cleanness" has a significant impact on customer satisfaction in Guatemala and Spain, but not in Germany. However, the specific focus of this study was on fast food restaurants.

A study from Switzerland also looked at the fast food industry and made a comparison between Switzerland and China (Etemad-Sajadi & Rizzuto 2013). In order to establish an internationally comparable reference, students in Switzerland and China were asked about eight different aspects of McDonald's restaurants in both surveys (originally composed of 28 individual evaluation criteria). Significant differences in the ratings of the evaluation criteria were found in that students from China gave higher ratings to "Reliability", "Tangibles", "Product Quality", and "Image" of McDonald's restaurants. No significant differences were found for the other aspects assessed. However, it is possible that the differences in perception between the two countries are based on actual differences between the restaurants in the two countries. It was also noticeable that the influence of the differently perceived evaluation aspects did not lead to a significant difference in the associated overall customer satisfaction between Switzerland and China.

Overall, it is striking that only a few empirical findings have been published for Switzerland and Germany with regard to evaluation criteria for restaurants. In addition, the content of the studies is not directly related to the interest of this research report (in particular, they are relatively old or focus on the fast food industry). Furthermore, the individual evaluation criteria were not directly examined, but only aggregated factors derived from them were used for further investigations, e.g. with regard to the influence on customer satisfaction or customer loyalty. In addition, Switzerland and Germany have not been compared with each other, but only with various other countries. In intercultural comparisons, Germany and (German-speaking) Switzerland are very close in many metrics (Messner 2022). It may therefore have seemed unnecessary to compare the two countries until now. Ultimately, however, actual evidence of relative similarity in the weighting of evaluation criteria for restaurants by people in Switzerland and Germany would be important and relevant for research and practice.

It is generally assumed that greater (social or mental) dissimilarity between people is also reflected in greater differences in the perception and evaluation of restaurants (Hamilton et al. 2021, Lee et al. 2022, Yilmaz & Gültekin 2016). For example, it is generally assumed that such differences tend to exist between people from different countries or between women and men (Yilmaz & Gültekin 2016). This also explains why many studies on restaurant evaluation criteria are designed in a relatively narrow context (specific countries, restaurant types, and guest segments). In addition, there are many comparative studies between different countries that are more or less culturally different (e.g., Etemad-Sajadi & Rizzuto 2013, Gallarza-Granizo et al. 2020, Jacobsen & Haukeland 2002, Jia 2020, Witkowski & Wolfinger 2002). In contrast, there are relatively few studies on evaluation criteria for restaurants with comparisons between women and men (e.g., Jin et al. 2013, Zhong & Moon 2020).

In general, the question remains as to how evaluation criteria for restaurants are weighted overall and how specific guest segments differ in the weighting of the evaluation criteria. In addition, it would be interesting to track differences in weighting down to the individual level and examine possible effects. Finally, how well individuals can recommend restaurants to each other may depend on how well the individual weightings of the evaluation criteria match between them (Hamilton et al. 2021, Lee et al. 2022).

### 3. Data Collection and Methods

Based on extensive literature research and qualitative interviews with various individuals, a customized online questionnaire was developed specifically for this study. In this questionnaire, the respondents were asked to indicate how important various aspects of restaurants are to them personally when they evaluate a restaurant or a restaurant experience.

The development of the criteria catalog was based, on the one hand, on the existing literature on the topic (for overviews of evaluation criteria for restaurants, see Iofrida et al. 2022 and Yilmaz & Gültekin 2016). On the other hand, the qualitative interviews revealed whether criteria were missing in the specific context of the research project, and these were added. In addition, the resulting questionnaire was tested with different people and its language was refined. In particular, ambiguous or imprecise questions were adapted on this basis.

For each of the 33 different evaluation criteria, the respondents were asked to indicate, on the basis of a five-point rating scale, how important each criterion is to them personally when it comes to a restaurant or a restaurant visit. The scale ranged from (1) "not important at all" to (2) "rather unimportant", (3) "somewhat important", (4) "rather important" to (5) "very important". In addition to the individual weightings of the 33 evaluation criteria for restaurants and their own restaurant experiences, various demographic information (age, gender, country) was also requested. In addition, satisfaction (with the current options available for finding new restaurants) was measured using another five-point rating scale (with (1) "not at all satisfied", (2) "rather dissatisfied", (3) "just okay", (4) "rather satisfied", (5) "completely satisfied"). Finally, to gain a better understanding of the sample, the respondents were asked how often they eat out in restaurants in the evening as part of their normal daily life.

The final questionnaire was distributed via a panel provider to a representative sample of German-speaking people in Switzerland and Germany. The survey was conducted in May and June 2024. A total of 1,004 completed questionnaires were received: 500 from Switzerland (49.8%) and 504 from Germany (50.2%). Age was measured in 6 different age groups. The distribution in these groups was: 18-29 (181, 18.0%), 30-39 (203, 20.2%), 40-49 (195, 19.4%), 50-59 (230, 22.9%), 60-69 (195, 19.4%). There were 493 responses from women (49.1%), 507 responses from men (50.5%), and 4 responses from people with diverse gender identities (0.4%).<sup>3</sup> 17.9% of respondents eat out at least once a week, 30.2% go out every two months or less, and 51.9% fall in between. For a detailed overview of how often respondents eat out in their normal daily routine, see Figure A1 in the Appendix (Chapter 6) of this research report.

Due to the survey method chosen, the data on the importance ratings of the 33 evaluation criteria are only available in rank order (ordinal scale). This means that (in contrast to a "superior" interval scale) it is not possible to say exactly how distant the individual rating points are from each other, nor that they are equally distant, even if the rating scores from 1 to 5 suggest this (Backhaus et al. 2023). Furthermore, it cannot be assumed that the rating scores (between 1 and 5) represent the same actual level of perceived importance for each respondent. In practice, however, such a rating scale is the only way to obtain compact and direct ratings. Accordingly, it is quite common in survey practice. Without the properties of an interval scale, it is strictly speaking not possible to calculate statistical aggregates such as mean values from rating scores or distances between two rating profiles (combinations of several rating scores). In practice, however, it is often assumed that the properties of an interval scale can also be plausibly assumed for the data collected in a rating scale, or that the data can be approximated sufficiently well with this assumption (UZH 2023, Backhaus et al. 2023). The survey studies cited in Chapter 2.3. apply a similar approach. This research report also follows this approach.

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<sup>3</sup> Due to the very small number of respective cases, it was not possible to statistically examine persons with diverse gender in more detail in the further analyzes. When no distinction was made between genders in the sample, all respondents were included in the analyses (N=1,004). When statistical comparisons were made between genders, only 493 women and 507 men could be compared. In this case, the four cases of persons with diverse gender could not be included in the analysis in a statistically viable way.

## 4. Analysis and Discussion

### 4.1. General Importance of Different Evaluation Criteria (RQ1)

The first step is to analyze the weighting of the different evaluation criteria. For this purpose, the evaluation criteria are first grouped according to five categories (see 4.1.1.). Subsequently, an overview of all evaluation criteria is created and analyzed (see 4.1.2.).

#### 4.1.1. Analysis of evaluation criteria by category

In the following sections, the frequencies of the responses (rating scores from 1 to 5) to the survey criteria are grouped and presented in five categories based on their content. In addition, the mean values (MV) of the selected answer options (blue boxes on the right) are shown. The results in the bar graphs are sorted in descending order by these mean values. Thus, the higher a criterion appears in the rating graph, the more important it is in the overall rating of all respondents.

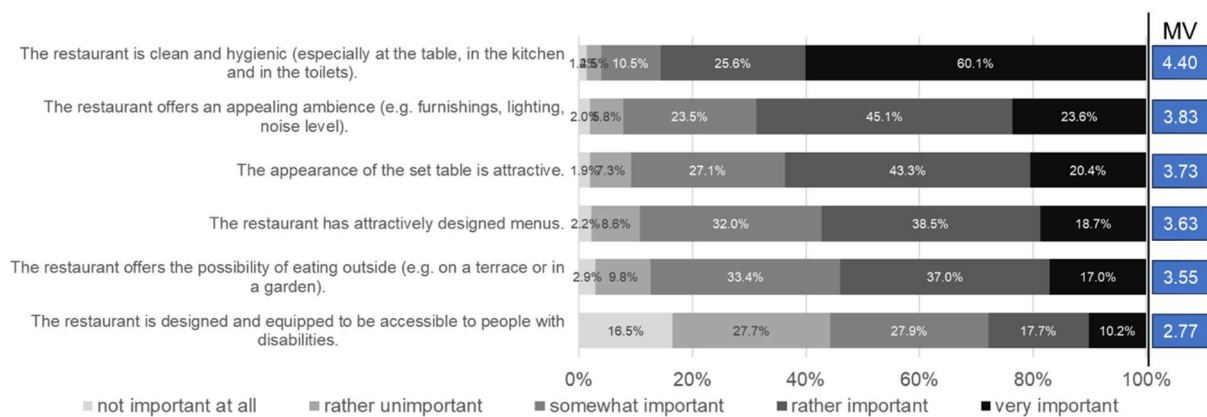
##### Category 1: "Premises"

The first category of evaluation criteria surveyed deals with various characteristics of restaurant premises (**Figure 1**). In this category, many respondents consider the cleanliness and hygiene of restaurants to be very important (MV: 4.40). 85.7% of respondents rated this aspect as "rather important" or "very important".

This is followed in this category by several criteria related to the appearance of the restaurant: the overall interior design (MV: 3.83), the appearance of the set table (MV: 3.73), and the menus (MV: 3.63).

By comparison, the possibility of eating outside was rated as less important overall (MV: 3.55) in the "Premises" category. This could be due, among other things, to the fact that this topic is generally only relevant on certain occasions (e.g. only when the weather or season is right). However, it is possible that for many people this aspect is an important criterion when the right conditions are present (e.g. in beautiful spring weather).

Finally, aspects of a barrier-free or disability-friendly design of the premises were rated by far the lowest in this category (MV: 2.77). It seems that this criterion is often only important to people who have such requirements for themselves or people in their immediate environment.



**Figure 1:** Importance of evaluation criteria in Category 1: "Premises" (N=1,004). Source: Own survey.

##### Category 2: "Dishes & Drinks"

The second category of criteria analyzed various aspects of food and drinks in restaurants (**Figure 2**). The most important factor in this category is an appealing presentation of the dishes (MV: 3.76), closely followed by the requirement that the portions should be sufficiently large (MV: 3.75). A little less important was the availability of daily specials at restaurants (MV: 3.18).

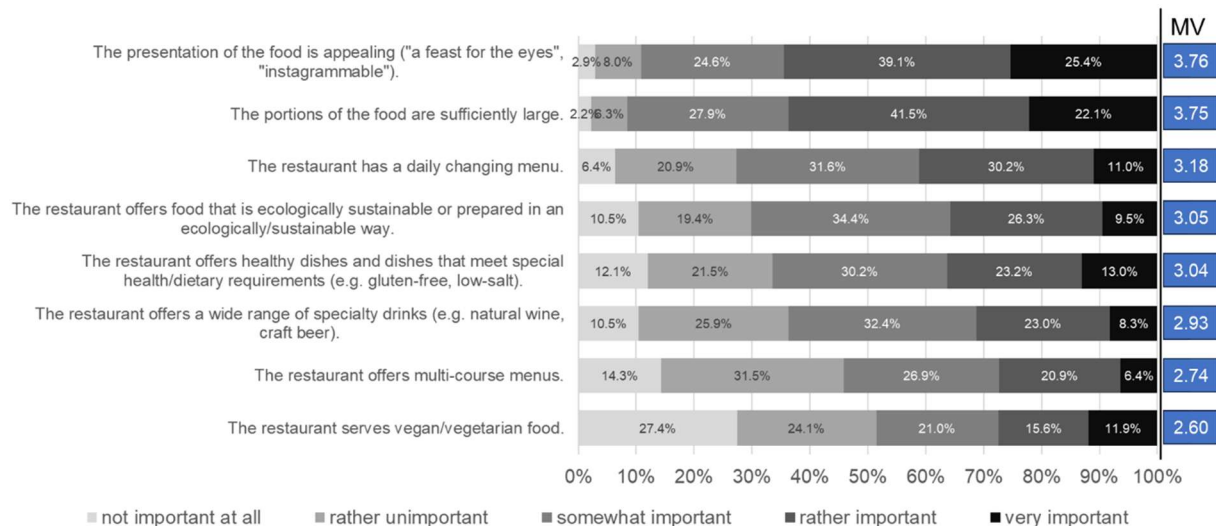
In this category, respondents consider criteria related to the sustainability of the food used and how it is prepared to be even less important (MV: 3.05). The criterion of whether restaurants offer dishes that



are generally considered healthy or dishes that take into account special health or dietary requirements (e.g. gluten-free or low salt) is given a similar weighting (MV: 3.04).

In addition, a wide selection of beverages with particular specialties (MV: 2.93) and restaurants offering menus with several courses (MV: 2.74) were rated as less important in this category of criteria.

Finally, in this category, the availability of vegan or vegetarian dishes was given the lowest importance (MV: 2.60).

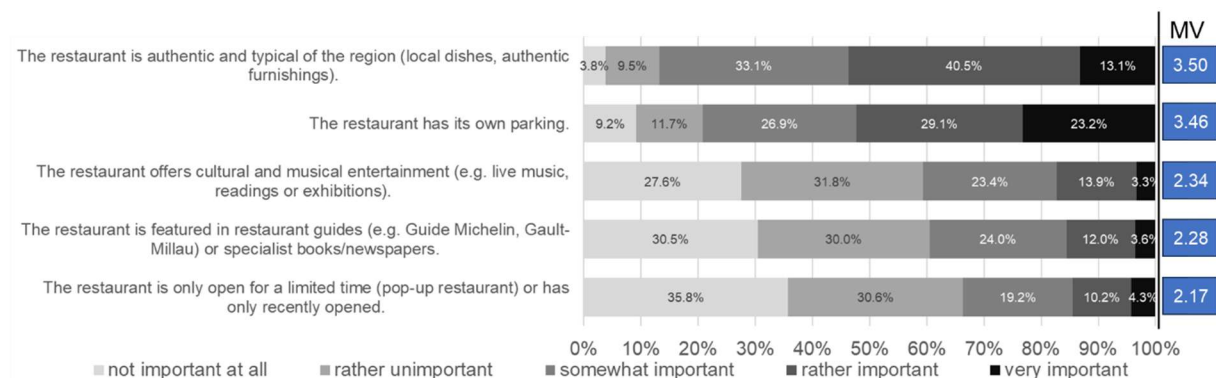


**Figure 2:** Importance of evaluation criteria in Category 2: "Dishes & Drinks" (N=1,004). Source: Own survey.

### Category 3: "Restaurant"

The third category of criteria covered characteristics that are generally applicable to restaurants (**Figure 3**). In this respect, respondents consider it particularly important for a restaurant to be authentic and typical of the region (MV: 3.50) and for a restaurant to have its own parking facilities (MV: 3.46).

On the other hand, respondents consider it rather unimportant for a restaurant to offer cultural or musical entertainment (MV: 2.34), to be discussed in restaurant guides or trade books/newspapers (MV: 2.28), and the novelty of a restaurant in the sense that it is open only for a limited time (pop-up restaurant) or has recently opened (MV: 2.17).



**Figure 3:** Importance of evaluation criteria in Category 3: "Restaurant" (N=1,004). Source: Own survey.

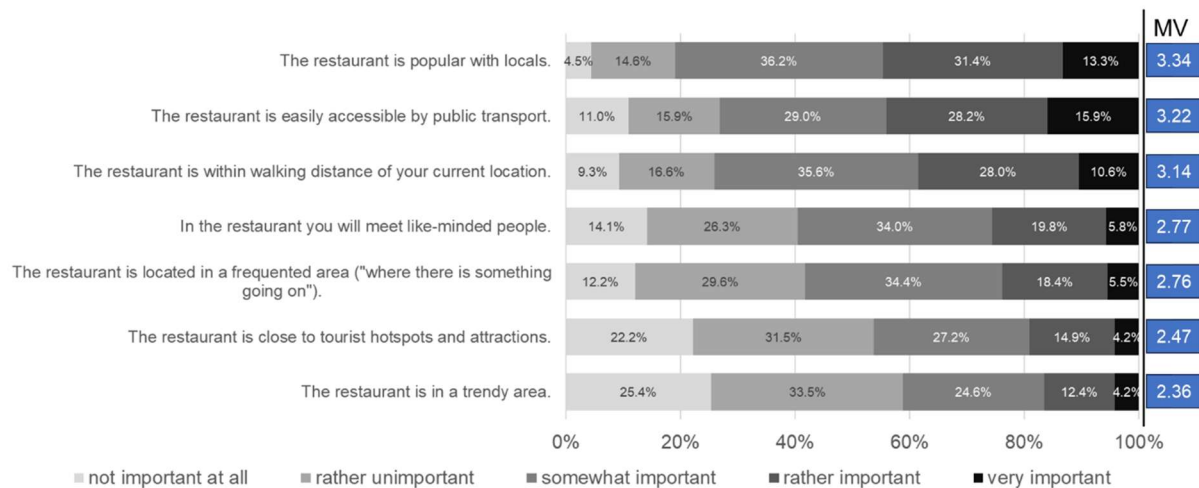
### Category 4: "Location & Guests"

The fourth category comprised, firstly, various aspects of the location of restaurants (**Figure 4**). In this context, it is particularly important to respondents that a restaurant is easily accessible by public

transport (MV: 3.22) or that a restaurant can be reached on foot from the current location (MV: 3.14). However, both factors are also strongly related to the general mobility behavior of restaurant guests.

In addition to the accessibility of a restaurant, location also plays a role in terms of the specific environment of the restaurant. Respondents tended to consider factors such as whether a restaurant is located in a frequently visited area (MV: 2.76), whether tourist hot spots or attractions are nearby (MV: 2.47), or whether a restaurant is located in a trendy neighborhood (MW: 2.36) to be rather unimportant in this regard. However, the importance of the latter may be difficult to assess without further information on the context of a restaurant visit. For example, proximity to tourist hotspots or attractions may be more important on vacation than at home. Similarly, a busy area or "trendy" neighborhood may have a different meaning depending on the specific reason for the restaurant visit (meeting with friends, romantic date, or important business meeting).

Secondly, the fourth category included the other guests in a restaurant. In this respect, it seems to be quite important for the respondents whether a restaurant is popular with local visitors (MW: 3.34). This also reflects a well-known heuristic of some vacationers, who (if they have a spontaneous choice between several restaurants in the immediate vicinity) often go to restaurants where many (local) guests can be seen. In contrast, the extent to which one would meet like-minded people in a restaurant was given a medium level of importance (MV: 2.77).



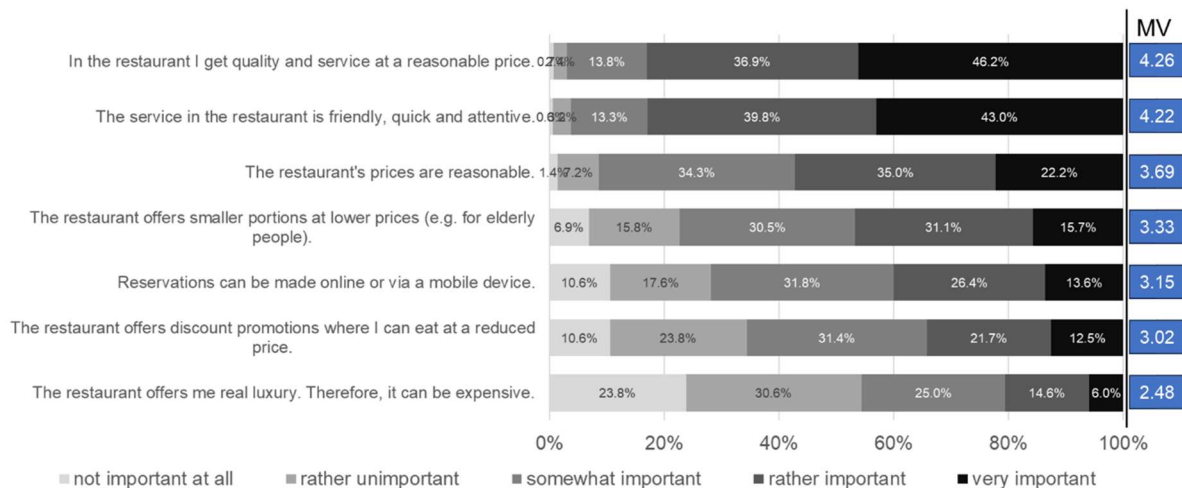
**Figure 4:** Importance of evaluation criteria in Category 4: "Location & Guests" (N=1,004). Source: Own survey.

### Category 5: "Prices & Service"

Finally, the fifth category included various evaluation criteria related to prices in restaurants and their services (**Figure 5**). Overall, it is considered very important in this category that quality and service are provided at a reasonable price (MV: 4.26). The perceived quality of service (in terms of friendly, fast and attentive service) was rated as similarly important (MV: 4.22).

When it comes to prices in restaurants, low prices tend to be considered important (MV: 3.69). However, price considerations without reference to quality and service are weighted less highly than the good price-performance ratio mentioned above. For example, opportunities to save money, e.g. through smaller portions (MV: 3.33) or discount offers (MV: 3.02), are only considered to be of medium to low importance. Nevertheless, prices in restaurants generally play an important role for respondents. The argument that extraordinary luxury can also have a high price is therefore rated as relatively unimportant by the respondents (MV: 2.48).

In terms of services, the only question asked was how important it is for respondents to be able to make reservations online or via a mobile device. This was answered with a medium to low level of importance (MV: 3.15).



**Figure 5:** Importance of evaluation criteria in Category 5: "Prices & Service" (N=1,004). Source: Own survey.

### Preliminary Conclusion

In the previous sections, the perceived importance of each evaluation criterion was presented and examined in detail. The results shown clearly indicate the average importance of various evaluation criteria for the respondents. For the sake of clarity and ease of understanding, these have been grouped into five compact categories in this chapter.

Although these comparisons have revealed clear weightings for certain criteria (shown as more or less important across all respondents, based on mean scores), it must also be noted that every single response option (rating score between 1 and 5) for the 33 evaluation criteria surveyed was selected by at least one of the 1,004 respondents. Even criteria that were rated as (5) "very important" by a large number of respondents were always also rated as (1) "not important at all" by others. For example, the criterion "In the restaurant I get quality and service at a reasonable price." in Category 5 "Prices & Service" received a very high overall rating. Nevertheless, 7 respondents rated it as (1) "not important at all". The same applies to the criterion "The service in the restaurant is friendly, quick and attentive." (also, from Category 5 "Prices & Service"), which was also rated as (1) "not important at all" by 6 respondents.

The results presented so far thus provide a compact view of the weighting of the evaluation criteria in the overall sample, grouped into five categories. However, it has also been shown that the individual results for each of the evaluation criteria vary considerably. Furthermore, an aggregated overall view of all 33 criteria for evaluating restaurants is still missing at this point. This will be presented in the following section (4.1.2.).

#### 4.1.2. Integrated comparison of all evaluation criteria

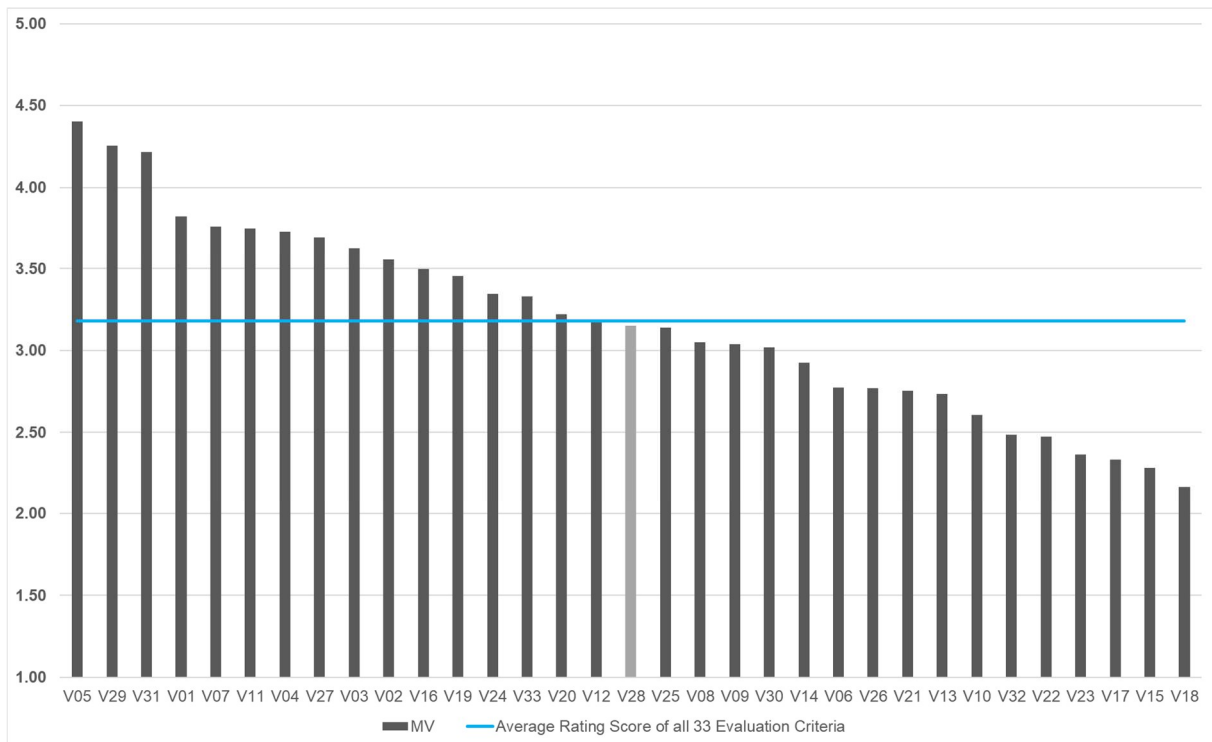
**Table 1** (on page 11) shows an aggregated overall view of all 33 criteria for the evaluation of restaurants. These are sorted in descending order according to the mean importance ratings of all respondents (N=1,004). For greater transparency, the table also shows the rank of the mean value (across all 33 evaluation criteria) for each rating criterion.

For each evaluation criterion, a variable ID (V01 to V33), the category, and the statement (with which the evaluation criterion was presented in the questionnaire) are given.

The individual importance of the evaluation criteria was assessed using a 5-point rating scale (see Chapter 3) with numerical values between 1 and 5. Accordingly, a rating of 3 represents the midpoint of the rating scale. **Figure 6** shows the distribution of mean scores across all 33 evaluation criteria. It can be seen that 21 of the mean scores of the evaluation criteria are above the numerical center of the rating scale (MV>3), 12 are below this value (MV<3).

The highest mean value of all 33 evaluation criteria is 4.40 for the criterion "The restaurant is clean and hygienic (especially at the table, in the kitchen and in the toilets)" (V05). The lowest mean score is 2.17 for the criterion "The restaurant is only open for a limited time (pop-up restaurant) or has only recently opened" (V18).

The median is derived from rank 17 (mean value: 3.15) for the evaluation criterion "Reservations can be made online or via a mobile device." (V28, highlighted in light gray in the diagram). Overall, the study shows an average rating score of 3.18 for the importance of the 33 evaluation criteria (represented by the light blue vertical line in the diagram).



**Figure 6:** Mean values of the weightings of the 33 evaluation criteria (N=1,004). Source: Own survey.

ID	Category	Statement of Evaluation Criterion	MV	Rank
V05	Premises	The restaurant is clean and hygienic (especially at the table, in the kitchen and in the toilets).	4.40	1
V29	Prices & Service	In the restaurant I get quality and service at a reasonable price.	4.26	2
V31	Prices & Service	The service in the restaurant is friendly, quick and attentive.	4.22	3
V01	Premises	The restaurant offers an appealing ambience (e.g., furnishings, lighting, noise level).	3.83	4
V07	Dishes & Drinks	The presentation of the food is appealing ("a feast for the eyes", "instagrammable").	3.76	5
V11	Dishes & Drinks	The portions of the food are sufficiently large.	3.75	6
V04	Premises	The appearance of the set table is attractive.	3.73	7
V27	Prices & Service	The restaurant's prices are reasonable.	3.69	8
V03	Premises	The restaurant has attractively designed menus.	3.63	9
V02	Premises	The restaurant offers the possibility of eating outside (e.g. on a terrace or in a garden).	3.55	10
V16	Restaurant	The restaurant is authentic and typical of the region (local dishes, authentic furnishings).	3.50	11
V19	Restaurant	The restaurant has its own parking.	3.46	12
V24	Location & Guests	The restaurant is popular with locals.	3.34	13
V33	Prices & Service	The restaurant offers smaller portions at lower prices (e.g. for elderly people).	3.33	14
V20	Location & Guests	The restaurant is easily accessible by public transport.	3.22	15
V12	Dishes & Drinks	The restaurant has a daily changing menu.	3.18	16
V28	Prices & Service	Reservations can be made online or via a mobile device.	3.15	17
V25	Location & Guests	The restaurant is within walking distance of your current location.	3.14	18
V08	Dishes & Drinks	The restaurant offers food that is ecologically sustainable or prepared in an ecologically/sustainable way.	3.05	19
V09	Dishes & Drinks	The restaurant offers healthy dishes and dishes that meet special health/dietary requirements (e.g., gluten-free, low-salt).	3.04	20
V30	Prices & Service	The restaurant offers discount promotions where I can eat at a reduced price.	3.02	21
V14	Dishes & Drinks	The restaurant offers a wide range of specialty drinks (e.g., natural wine, craft beer).	2.93	22
V06	Premises	The restaurant is designed and equipped to be accessible to people with disabilities.	2.77	23
V26	Location & Guests	In the restaurant you will meet like-minded people.	2.77	24
V21	Location & Guests	The restaurant is located in a frequented area ("where there is something going on").	2.76	25
V13	Dishes & Drinks	The restaurant offers multi-course menus.	2.74	26
V10	Dishes & Drinks	The restaurant serves vegan/vegetarian food.	2.60	27
V32	Prices & Service	The restaurant offers me real luxury. Therefore, it can be expensive.	2.48	28
V22	Location & Guests	The restaurant is close to tourist hotspots and attractions.	2.47	29
V23	Location & Guests	The restaurant is in a trendy area.	2.36	30
V17	Restaurant	The restaurant offers cultural and musical entertainment (e.g., live music, readings or exhibitions).	2.34	31
V15	Restaurant	The restaurant is featured in restaurant guides (e.g., Guide Michelin, Gault-Millau) or specialist books/newspapers.	2.28	32
V18	Restaurant	The restaurant is only open for a limited time (pop-up restaurant) or has only recently opened.	2.17	33

**Table 1:** Mean values of the weightings of the 33 evaluation criteria (N=1,004). Source: Own survey.

Also interesting in the evaluation is the distribution of the different categories over the recorded importance of the evaluation criteria: for example, among the 10 evaluation criteria that respondents ranked on average as most important, 8 are from the "Location & Guests" and "Price & Service" categories.

**Table 2** shows a comparison of the average rating scores and average ranks for the evaluation criteria for the five criteria categories of the study. According to this, the characteristics of the categories "Premises" and "Prices & Service" seem to be the most important factors for the respondents. On the other

hand, "Location & Guests" and general characteristics of the restaurant (category: "Restaurant") seem to be much less important to the respondents.

Category	Number of Evaluation Criteria	Average Rating Score Importance Rating	Average Rank
Premises	6	3.65	9.00
Prices & Service	7	3.45	13.29
Dishes & Drinks	8	3.13	17.63
Location & Guests	7	2.87	22.00
Restaurant	5	2.75	23.80

**Table 2:** Average rating score and average rank of the importance rating for the 5 categories of evaluation criteria (N=1,004). Source: Own survey.

## 4.2. Segment Comparisons of the Weighting of Evaluation Criteria (RQ2)

In Chapter 4.1, the perceived importance of all respondents was first shown on the basis of the mean values of the rating scores for all 33 evaluation criteria. In this subsection, the extent to which the weighting of the evaluation criteria differs between respondents in Switzerland and Germany (Section 4.2.1) and between women and men (Section 4.2.2) is examined in more detail.

### 4.2.1. Differences between respondents from Switzerland and Germany

**Table 3** shows the differences between the mean values (of the importance ratings) and their ranks between the respondents from Switzerland (N=500) and Germany (N=504). In this table, the 33 criteria have been sorted according to the size of the differences between the average rating scores of the two segments.<sup>4</sup>

At the top of the list, "The restaurant is easily accessible by public transport." (V20) is the evaluation criterion that was rated with the highest positive difference in average rating scores by the Swiss respondents (compared to the German respondents). The difference in the mean rating scores is 0.32. In addition, when all criteria are compared, the criterion for Switzerland is ranked four places higher than for Germany.

Conversely, the lowest ranking criterion in the table is "The portions of the food are sufficiently large." (V11). This is the criterion that was rated with the highest negative difference in average rating scores by the Swiss respondents (compared to the German respondents). The difference in mean ratings is -0.21. The criterion for Switzerland is ranked three places lower than the criterion for Germany in the comparison of all 33 evaluation criteria.

<sup>4</sup> The results for the mean values are rounded to two decimal digits (which may lead to rounding differences in the comparison of values and differences).

ID	Statement of Evaluation Criterion	Difference		Switzerland		Germany	
		MV	Rank	MV	Rank	MV	Rank
V20	The restaurant is easily accessible by public transport.	0.32	4	3.38	14	3.06	18
V13	The restaurant offers multi-course menus.	0.30	4	2.89	23	2.58	27
V15	The restaurant is featured in restaurant guides (e.g., Guide Michelin, Gault-Millau) or specialist books/newspapers.	0.28	1	2.42	31	2.14	32
V06	The restaurant is designed and equipped to be accessible to people with disabilities.	0.21	0	2.88	24	2.67	24
V24	The restaurant is popular with locals.	0.21	1	3.45	13	3.24	14
V12	The restaurant has a daily changing menu.	0.20	1	3.28	16	3.09	17
V18	The restaurant is only open for a limited time (pop-up restaurant) or has only recently opened.	0.19	0	2.26	33	2.07	33
V21	The restaurant is located in a frequented area ("where there is something going on").	0.19	0	2.85	25	2.66	25
V32	The restaurant offers me real luxury. Therefore, it can be expensive.	0.18	0	2.58	28	2.39	28
V22	The restaurant is close to tourist hotspots and attractions.	0.18	0	2.56	29	2.39	29
V23	The restaurant is in a trendy area.	0.17	1	2.45	30	2.28	31
V08	The restaurant offers food that is ecologically sustainable or prepared in an ecologically/sustainable way.	0.16	3	3.13	18	2.97	21
V09	The restaurant offers healthy dishes and dishes that meet special health/dietary requirements (e.g., gluten-free, low-salt).	0.12	0	3.10	20	2.98	20
V03	The restaurant has attractively designed menus.	0.12	2	3.69	7	3.57	9
V02	The restaurant offers the possibility of eating outside (e.g. on a terrace or in a garden).	0.10	0	3.60	10	3.51	10
V28	Reservations can be made online or via a mobile device.	0.07	-1	3.18	17	3.12	16
V30	The restaurant offers discount promotions where I can eat at a reduced price.	0.05	-2	3.05	21	2.99	19
V14	The restaurant offers a wide range of specialty drinks (e.g., natural wine, craft beer).	0.05	0	2.95	22	2.90	22
V16	The restaurant is authentic and typical of the region (local dishes, authentic furnishings).	0.04	0	3.52	11	3.48	11
V10	The restaurant serves vegan/vegetarian food.	0.04	-1	2.63	27	2.58	26
V31	The service in the restaurant is friendly, quick and attentive.	0.04	1	4.23	2	4.20	3
V26	In the restaurant you will meet like-minded people.	0.03	-3	2.78	26	2.75	23
V19	The restaurant has its own parking.	0.03	0	3.47	12	3.44	12
V33	The restaurant offers smaller portions at lower prices (e.g. for elderly people).	0.02	-2	3.34	15	3.32	13
V05	The restaurant is clean and hygienic (especially at the table, in the kitchen and in the toilets).	0.02	0	4.41	1	4.40	1
V17	The restaurant offers cultural and musical entertainment (e.g., live music, readings or exhibitions).	0.00	-2	2.34	32	2.34	30
V04	The appearance of the set table is attractive.	-0.01	2	3.73	6	3.73	8
V07	The presentation of the food is appealing ("a feast for the eyes", "instagrammable").	-0.06	1	3.73	5	3.79	6
V01	The restaurant offers an appealing ambience (e.g., furnishings, lighting, noise level).	-0.07	0	3.79	4	3.86	4
V25	The restaurant is within walking distance of your current location.	-0.07	-4	3.10	19	3.18	15
V29	In the restaurant I get quality and service at a reasonable price.	-0.09	-1	4.21	3	4.30	2
V27	The restaurant's prices are reasonable.	-0.11	-2	3.64	9	3.75	7
V11	The portions of the food are sufficiently large.	-0.21	-3	3.65	8	3.85	5

**Table 3:** Differences between the mean values (of the importance ratings) and their ranks between respondents from Switzerland (N=500) and from Germany (N=504). Source: Own survey.

#### 4.2.2. Differences between Women and Men surveyed

Similarly, the survey results for women and men were compared. **Table 4** shows the differences between the mean scores and their ranks for the women (N=493) and men (N=507) surveyed. Persons of diverse gender could not be meaningfully included in this analysis as a very small third group (N=4). In the table,



the 33 criteria have been sorted according to the size of the differences between the mean importance ratings of women and men.<sup>5</sup>

ID	Statement of Evaluation Criterion	Difference		Women		Men	
		MV	Rank	MV	Rank	MV	Rank
V10	The restaurant serves vegan/vegetarian food.	0.45	5	2.83	24	2.38	29
V06	The restaurant is designed and equipped to be accessible to people with disabilities.	0.26	4	2.90	22	2.64	26
V09	The restaurant offers healthy dishes and dishes that meet special health/dietary requirements (e.g., gluten-free, low-salt).	0.24	4	3.16	18	2.92	22
V08	The restaurant offers food that is ecologically sustainable or prepared in an ecologically/sustainable way.	0.23	4	3.16	17	2.93	21
V33	The restaurant offers smaller portions at lower prices (e.g. for elderly people).	0.20	3	3.43	12	3.23	15
V20	The restaurant is easily accessible by public transport.	0.13	3	3.29	14	3.15	17
V28	Reservations can be made online or via a mobile device.	0.13	2	3.21	16	3.08	18
V03	The restaurant has attractively designed menus.	0.09	3	3.68	7	3.58	10
V19	The restaurant has its own parking.	0.09	1	3.50	11	3.41	12
V04	The appearance of the set table is attractive.	0.08	2	3.77	6	3.69	8
V01	The restaurant offers an appealing ambience (e.g., furnishings, lighting, noise level).	0.08	1	3.86	4	3.79	5
V07	The presentation of the food is appealing ("a feast for the eyes", "instagrammable").	0.08	2	3.80	5	3.72	7
V30	The restaurant offers discount promotions where I can eat at a reduced price.	0.07	-1	3.05	21	2.98	20
V32	The restaurant offers me real luxury. Therefore, it can be expensive.	0.06	0	2.51	28	2.45	28
V05	The restaurant is clean and hygienic (especially at the table, in the kitchen and in the toilets).	0.06	0	4.43	1	4.37	1
V02	The restaurant offers the possibility of eating outside (e.g. on a terrace or in a garden).	0.06	1	3.59	10	3.53	11
V23	The restaurant is in a trendy area.	0.05	1	2.39	30	2.34	31
V31	The service in the restaurant is friendly, quick and attentive.	0.04	1	4.24	2	4.19	3
V22	The restaurant is close to tourist hotspots and attractions.	0.04	-2	2.50	29	2.45	27
V18	The restaurant is only open for a limited time (pop-up restaurant) or has only recently opened.	0.00	0	2.16	33	2.17	33
V21	The restaurant is located in a frequented area ("where there is something going on").	-0.02	0	2.75	25	2.76	25
V15	The restaurant is featured in restaurant guides (e.g., Guide Michelin, Gault-Millau) or specialist books/newspapers.	-0.03	0	2.27	32	2.30	32
V17	The restaurant offers cultural and musical entertainment (e.g., live music, readings or exhibitions).	-0.07	-1	2.30	31	2.37	30
V26	In the restaurant you will meet like-minded people.	-0.08	-2	2.73	26	2.81	24
V29	In the restaurant I get quality and service at a reasonable price.	-0.08	-1	4.21	3	4.29	2
V25	The restaurant is within walking distance of your current location.	-0.09	-4	3.09	20	3.18	16
V24	The restaurant is popular with locals.	-0.11	-2	3.29	15	3.39	13
V12	The restaurant has a daily changing menu.	-0.11	-5	3.13	19	3.24	14
V27	The restaurant's prices are reasonable.	-0.14	-3	3.62	9	3.77	6
V13	The restaurant offers multi-course menus.	-0.15	-4	2.66	27	2.81	23
V16	The restaurant is authentic and typical of the region (local dishes, authentic furnishings).	-0.17	-4	3.42	13	3.59	9
V14	The restaurant offers a wide range of specialty drinks (e.g., natural wine, craft beer).	-0.17	-4	2.84	23	3.01	19
V11	The portions of the food are sufficiently large.	-0.21	-4	3.64	8	3.85	4

**Table 4:** Differences between the means (of the importance ratings) and their ranks between the women (N=493) and men (N=507) surveyed. Source: Own survey.

<sup>5</sup> Here, too, the results for the mean values are rounded to two decimal digits (so there may be rounding differences when comparing the values and the differences).



By far the largest difference was found in the top item, "The restaurant serves vegan/vegetarian food." (V10). Women rated this criterion much higher than men. The difference in mean ratings is 0.45. In addition, this criterion is ranked five places higher for women than for men in the overall comparison of all criteria. It should be noted, however, that this criterion still ranks only 24th out of 33 criteria.

Conversely, in the last position in the table, "The portions of the food are sufficiently large." (V11) is the evaluation criterion that was rated with the highest negative difference in average rating scores by the women surveyed (compared to the men surveyed). The difference in the mean rating is -0.21. In addition, this criterion is ranked four places lower for women than for men in the comparison of all criteria.

### **4.3. Individual Deviations in the Weighting of Evaluation Criteria (RQ3)**

Up to now, the weighting of the evaluation criteria by the respondents has only been presented in the analyses in a simplified form, aggregated by average rating scores. This simply reflects the "average taste" of all respondents (or within a selected segment). However, no respondent has exactly this combination of criteria weightings. Rather, all respondents differ to a greater or lesser extent.

In this research project, it is of particular interest to investigate the extent to which people with different weightings of the evaluation criteria for restaurants and restaurant experiences can give each other well-matched restaurant recommendations. With respect to the data collected, the question arises as to how the respondents differ from each other in their weighting of the 33 evaluation criteria. Such an analysis could provide valuable insight into how large the differences between all respondents actually are. If they are very similar, one could assume that all respondents could give each other well-matched restaurant recommendations. If they are very dissimilar, it would be important to identify recommenders who are sufficiently similar to provide a good recommendation fit for restaurant seekers.

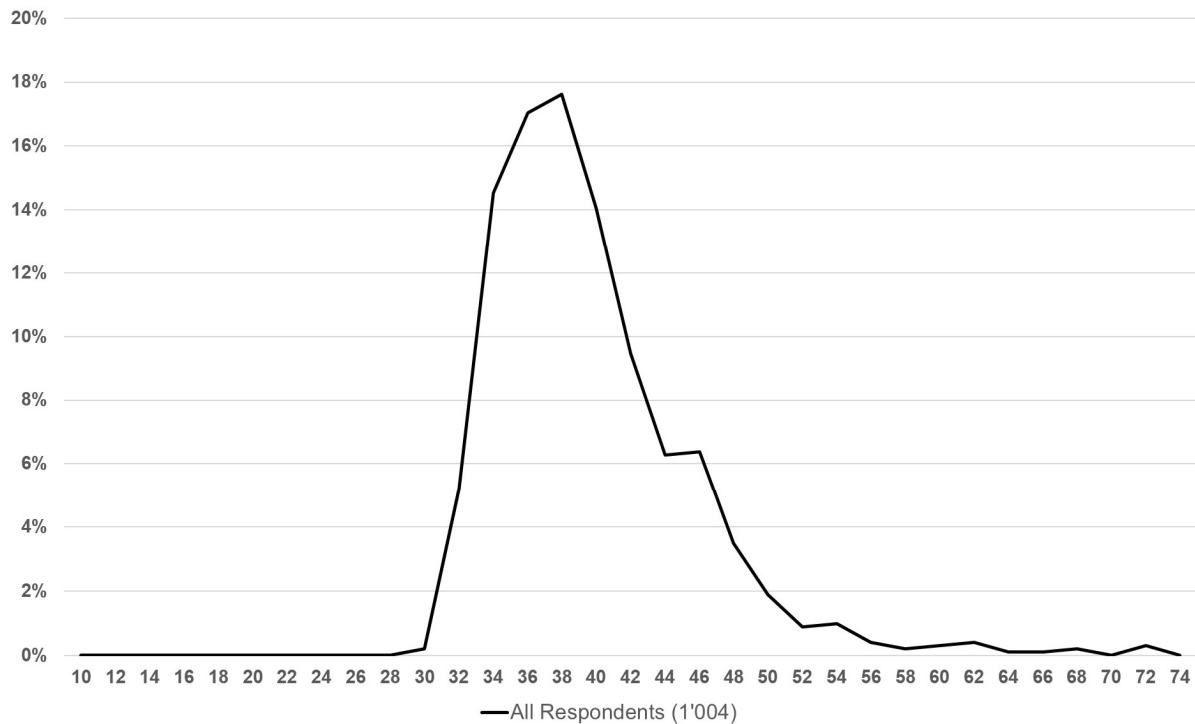
Accordingly, we examined how the rating scores for the 33 evaluation criteria of each of the 1,004 respondents differed from those of all other respondents. The differences between two individuals were calculated (following a city block metric) as the sum of the absolute values of the differences between the rating scores for the 33 evaluation criteria of Individual 1 and Individual 2 (Backhaus et al. 2023, Beier 2011).<sup>6</sup>

#### **4.3.1. Weighting differences in the evaluation criteria between all respondents**

**Figure 7** shows the distribution of mean deviations for all 1,004 respondents relative to all other 1,003 respondents. A more detailed analysis of the underlying figures shows that 95.9% of respondents are, on average, between 30 and 50 units distant from all other respondents. Across 33 evaluation criteria, this results in an average difference of 0.91 to 1.52 units per criterion. This is in line with the previous results in chapter 4.1 and represents a notable heterogeneity of the weightings among all respondents.

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<sup>6</sup> Since each criterion can differ by a maximum of 4 points on a 5-point rating scale, and 33 evaluation criteria were examined, people can differ by a maximum of 132 units (4\*33) in this distance metric. On the other hand, if two people had the same ratings on all of the criteria, their distance would be 0.

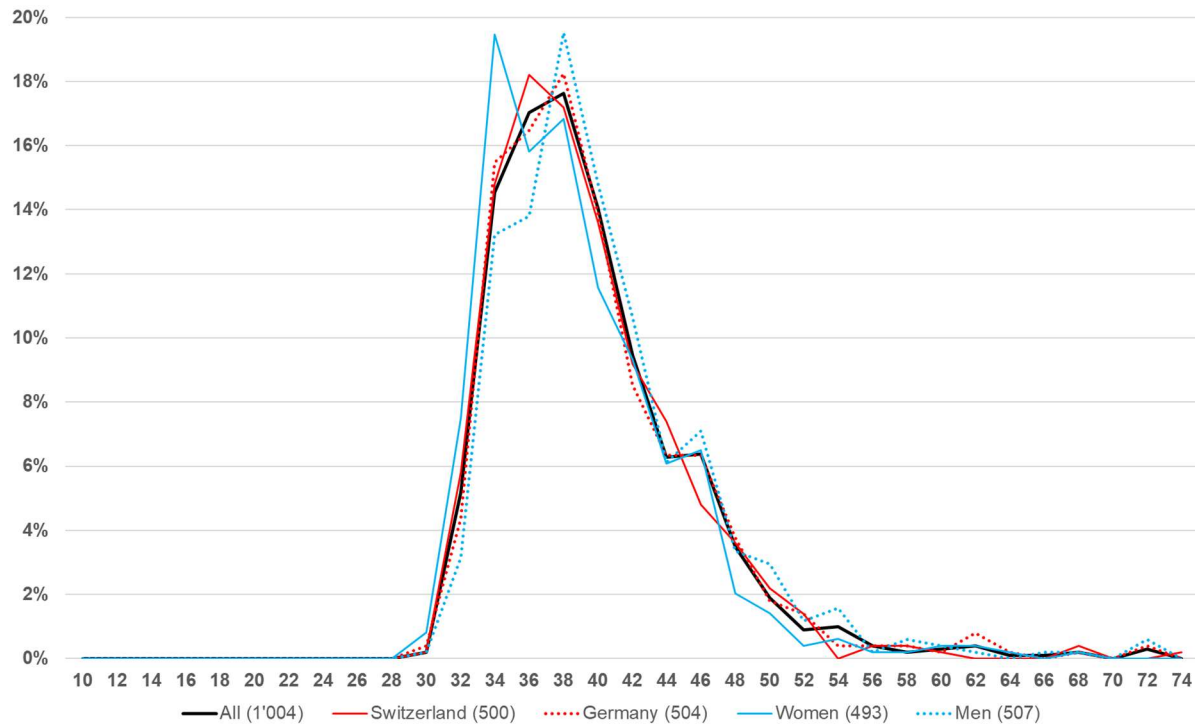


**Figure 7:** Frequency distribution of the average deviations across all 33 survey criteria for each respondent relative to all other respondents. (N=1'004). Source: Own survey.

#### 4.3.2. Distances in the weighting of evaluation criteria within segments

Given the large average deviations between respondents, the question arises as to how to better capture the similarities between people (in terms of their weighting of evaluation criteria for restaurants and restaurant experiences), and how to reduce the distance between people who give each other restaurant recommendations through simple segmentation (assuming people are similar). In addition to the general weighting of evaluation criteria, many studies have already identified corresponding differences between different segments of restaurant guests (e.g. by country or gender) (Jacobsen & Haukeland 2002, Jia 2020, Etemad-Sajadi & Rizzuto 2013, Gallarza-Granizo et al. 2020, Witkowski & Wolfenbarger 2002, Yilmaz & Gültekin 2016, Zhong & Moon 2020). Similar observations have already been described at the level of the different evaluation criteria in this research report (see Chapter 4.2.).

**Figure 8** shows the effect of segmenting the data by country or gender on the mean deviations of respondents from all other respondents within the same segment. Thus, with regard to segments by country, the distances between the weightings of the evaluation criteria for all respondents from Switzerland (N=493) were calculated only in relation to all other respondents from Switzerland (492 in each case). Similarly, the distances for respondents from Germany (N=507) were calculated in relation to all other respondents from Germany (506 each). The same procedure was used for the segments by gender for women (N=493) and men (N=507). Persons with diverse gender could not be meaningfully included in this analysis as a very small third group (N=4).



**Figure 8:** Frequency distribution of the average deviations across all 33 evaluation criteria for each respondent relative to all other respondents within the segments by country (Switzerland and Germany) (N=1,004) and within the segments by gender (women and men) (N=1'000). Source: Own survey.

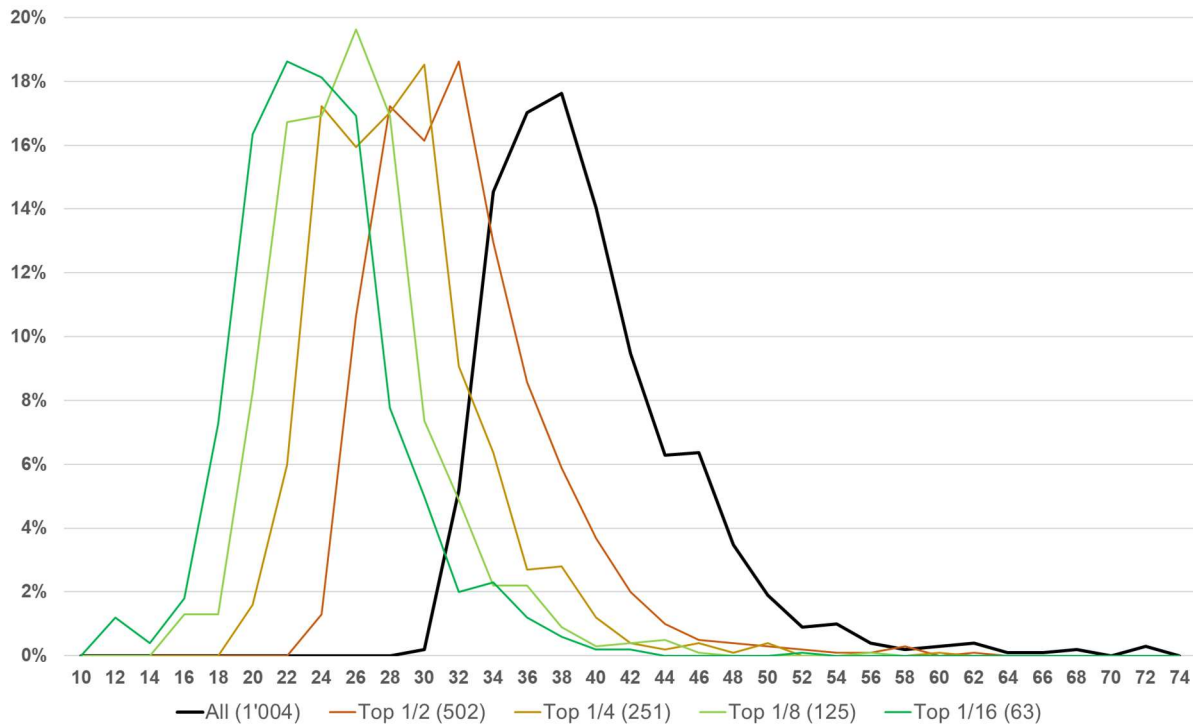
The diagram shows relatively small differences in the distributions of the mean deviations within the segments by country or by gender compared to the distribution of the mean deviations across all respondents. In general, this means that in the analyzed data, the heterogeneity of the weighting profiles (across all 33 evaluation criteria) within the four analyzed segments (Switzerland, Germany, Women, Men) remains about the same as in the overall sample of the study.

However, this result should be treated with caution in terms of practical implications. For example, it is certainly worth asking to what extent the formation of segments (e.g. by country of residence or gender) in rating platforms can actually reduce the heterogeneity of the rating criteria applied. Nevertheless, this study covers only some of the aspects relevant to the fit of restaurant recommendations. Although it asks about the weighting of the 33 evaluation criteria, it does not ask how a particular restaurant or an actual restaurant experience would actually be perceived in relation to the evaluation criteria. For example, it is possible that people might attribute a very high level of importance to the criterion "The restaurant is clean and hygienic (especially at the table, in the kitchen and in the toilets)". However, their perception of what exactly is clean or hygienic (or which aspects are important in detail) could still be very different. Thus, even with very similar ratings for the 33 evaluation criteria, the results could still be quite different in the perception (and thus the evaluation) of a real restaurant experience. In this respect, stronger segment-specific similarities (e.g. in perceptions of restaurant cleanliness or what constitutes a sufficient portion size of a dish) would be possible in reality, despite the research results shown here.

#### 4.3.3. Distances in the weighting of evaluation criteria to appropriately selected others

Due to the high level of heterogeneity in the segments by country and gender, further analysis was conducted to determine how much the differences in the weighting of the evaluation criteria among respondents could be reduced if one were able to select suitable recommenders directly based on the similarity of the weighting of the evaluation criteria (e.g. via an app that provides recommendations directly based on the similarity between users).

**Figure 9** shows the frequency distribution of average deviations across all 33 evaluation criteria for each respondent relative to all other respondents. In addition, other distributions are shown in which only one half (502 other respondents), one quarter (251), one eighth (125), and one sixteenth (63) of the best matching other respondents were selected for each respondent. Such procedures, in which the closest partners or neighboring items are selected over the shortest distances (Gower & Ross 1969), are also used in a large number of algorithms, for example for clustering or classification in machine learning and in recommender systems (Nilashi et al. 2017, Taunk et al. 2019).



**Figure 9:** Frequency distribution of average deviations across all 33 evaluation criteria for each respondent in relation to all other respondents ("All") and to the "Top 1/2", "Top 1/4", "Top 1/8" and "Top 1/16" of the best-fitting others (N=1'004). Source: Own survey.

The results show that a selection of people for restaurant recommendations directly over short ranges in the weighting of the evaluation criteria can indeed significantly reduce the average deviations in the weighting of the evaluation criteria. While the average deviations in the entire sample without such a selection are at least 30 units, a selection of the "Top 1/2" of the other respondents already results in a corresponding minimum of 24 units. By further narrowing down the best-matching individuals, the minimum can be further reduced to an average distance of 12 units for the "Top 1/16".

In this context, it seems possible (e.g. for restaurant apps) to significantly increase the perceived quality of recommendations by improving the fit between recommender and recommender-seeker (based on the general preference profiles of the participants). In addition, the results suggest that it may be more effective to directly pursue the fit between recommender and recommender-seeker, rather than creating segments (e.g. based on country of residence or gender of individuals) for which a higher fit is merely assumed.<sup>7</sup>

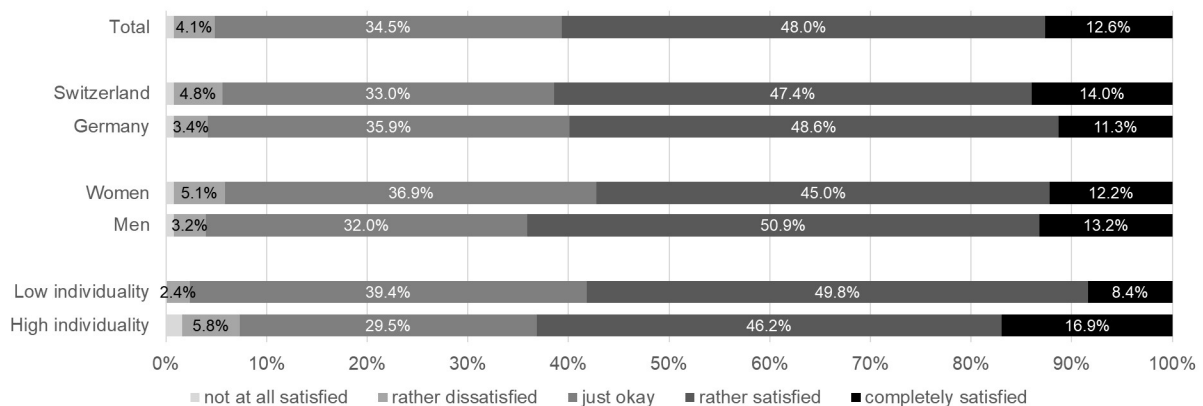
<sup>7</sup> TripAdvisor, for example, addresses this challenge by not segmenting guests for restaurant searches (e.g. by country or gender), but by narrowing the contexts of restaurant visits (e.g., "Fine dining," "Romantic dinner," "Casual dinner") to reduce heterogeneity in the weighting of the evaluation criteria used in recommendations and reviews (TripAdvisor 2024).

#### 4.4. Individuality of Evaluation Criteria Weighting and Satisfaction with Recommendations (RQ4)

If people weight the underlying criteria so differently when evaluating and recommending restaurants, the question arises as to whether this difference also has an effect on the satisfaction of individuals with the restaurant recommendations they receive. Chapter 4.3.1. showed the extent to which respondents differ in their weighting. This shows a considerable range in the extent to which people (1) tend to be in the mainstream of restaurant tastes and their evaluation criteria are quite close to those of most others, or (2) tend to be on the fringes of the spectrum of restaurant tastes and are therefore relatively far apart from most others. This may suggest that people who are more in the mainstream tend to receive more appropriate restaurant recommendations than people who are on the fringes of the spectrum shown.

In this context, the following question is examined: Do people within the mainstream ("Low individuality") report higher satisfaction with restaurant recommendations than people outside the mainstream ("High individuality")?

**Figure 10** shows various ratings of respondents' satisfaction with the resources/options currently available to them for finding new restaurants.<sup>8</sup>



**Figure10:** Frequency distribution of satisfaction with the available resources/options for finding new restaurants – overall and differentiated by dichotomous segments<sup>9</sup> (N=1'004). Source: Own survey.

Overall, a large proportion of respondents (60.6% = 48.0% + 12.6%) are fairly or very satisfied with the resources/options available to them for finding new restaurants. Conversely, however, this also means that 39.4% are not explicitly satisfied, of which only 4.9% explicitly describe themselves as "dissatisfied" (0.8% are "not at all satisfied" and 4.1% are "rather dissatisfied"). Comparisons between Switzerland and Germany, and between women and men, deviate only slightly from this overall pattern.

The distinction introduced above between people with low and high individuality in their restaurant evaluation shows somewhat larger differences in the results.<sup>10</sup> The comparison of the two segments shows that people with low individuality tend to be moderately satisfied with their means of finding restaurants, with a tendency toward the middle. On the other hand, people with a high degree of individuality tend to make more extreme statements about their satisfaction than people in any of the other segments: they

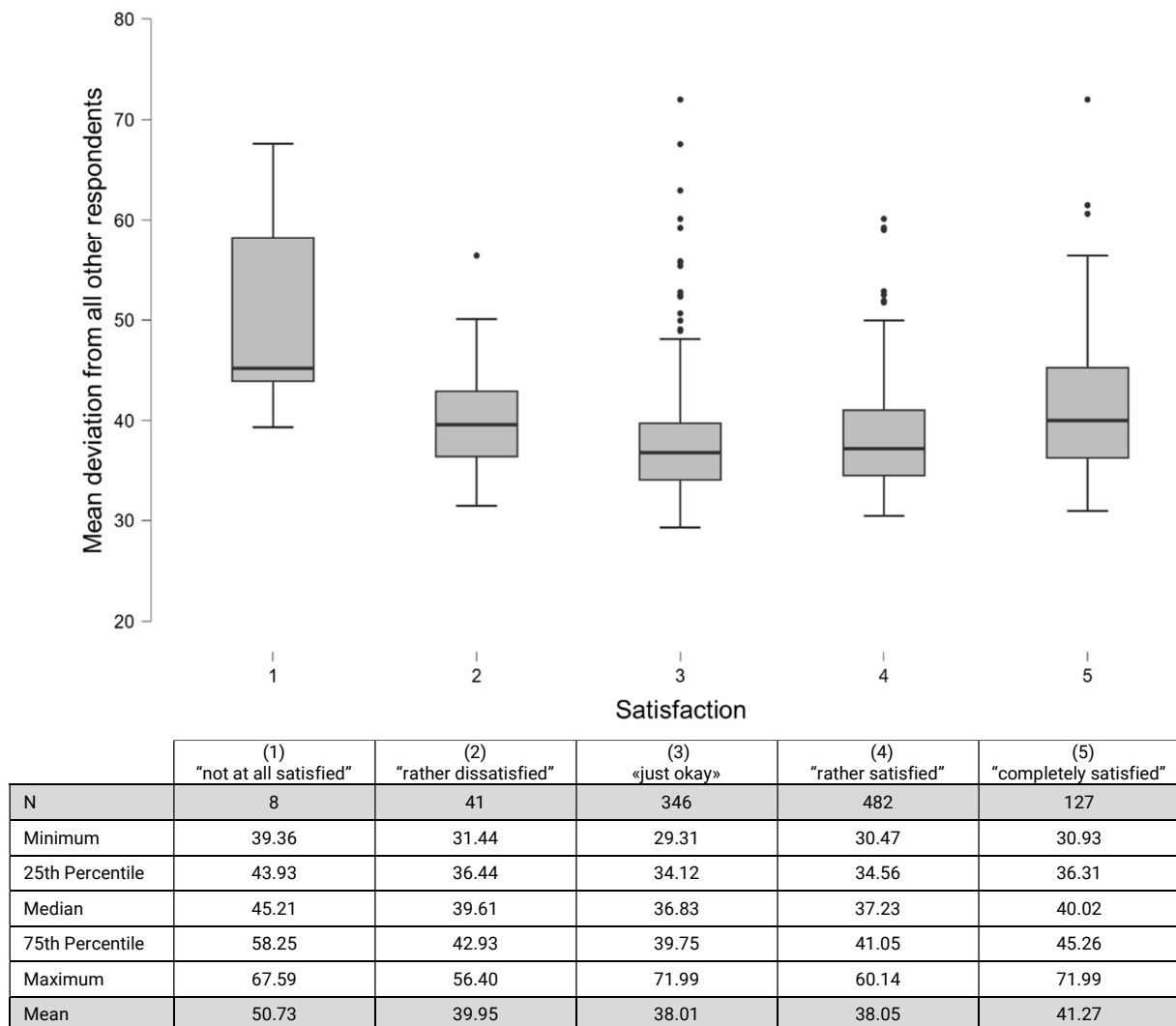
<sup>8</sup> This question covers more than just satisfaction with restaurant recommendations that respondents receive. It also includes the possibility that people do their own research (e.g. via restaurant websites) without taking into account recommendations or descriptions from others. Ultimately, however, all other forms of finding new restaurants can be traced back to (evaluative) descriptions and recommendations through various channels (e.g., private contacts, social media influencers, blogs, magazines) (Beier & Schillo 2025).

<sup>9</sup> The value labels for the lowest rating score "not at all satisfied" cannot be displayed due to the small areas in the diagram. However, the values can be deduced from the sum of 100% minus the displayed % values of the other four rating scores.

<sup>10</sup> To create these two segments, the respondents' data set was split at the median (37.41) of the mean deviations (from all other respondents), resulting in two segments of equal size. The segment with low deviations from the others was labeled "Low individuality," and the segment with high deviations was labeled "High individuality".

are more likely to be "completely at all satisfied" (16.9%), but also to explicitly state that they are "not at all satisfied" or "rather dissatisfied" (7.4% = 1.6% + 5.8%).

The results suggest that there is not a simple linear relationship between individuality and satisfaction with restaurant recommendations (e.g. the more individualized a person's tastes in restaurants, the more dissatisfied they are with the recommendations they receive). Rather, there appears to be a curvilinear relationship (with more extreme levels of satisfaction at the highly individualized end). To explore this further, **Figure 11** uses box plots to compare the statistical distributions of the mean values of the deviations, differentiated by level of satisfaction (of respondents with their available means/options for finding new restaurants). In addition, all relevant values are presented in a table for better understanding.



**Figure 11:** Boxplots of the expression of individuality in the evaluation criteria, differentiated by satisfaction with restaurant recommendations (N=1'004). Source: Own survey.

This closer examination of the data also indicates a curvilinear correlation: moderate satisfaction corresponds to low individuality in restaurant taste (or in the underlying evaluation criteria). Conversely, the high satisfaction and high dissatisfaction subsamples tend to include individuals with a high degree of individuality in their restaurant tastes. However, these results should also be treated with some caution, as the case numbers in the two subsamples "not at all satisfied" (N=8) and "rather dissatisfied" (N=41) are quite small.

The results can be interpreted to indicate that people with a rather general taste (low individuality) can find a restaurant that they like relatively well via many channels and sources. Conversely, however, there may be fewer “direct hits” that trigger excitement. In contrast, people with highly individualized tastes in restaurants tend to rely more on developing strategies to select restaurant recommendations and their sources more carefully (Beier & Schillo 2025). For example, if people have a particular taste in restaurants and receive recommendations from other people they know, they may be willing to look at the recommendations in detail according to the evaluation criteria mentioned, or to look at them in a differentiated way according to the person making the recommendation. If this works well, very good restaurant experiences are likely. If it does not work well, restaurant recommendations are more likely to be disappointing. However, this is only one plausible interpretation of the results. Overall, more research is needed to better understand the relationship between individuality in restaurant tastes and how people deal with recommendations and the resulting satisfaction.

## **5. Conclusion and Outlook**

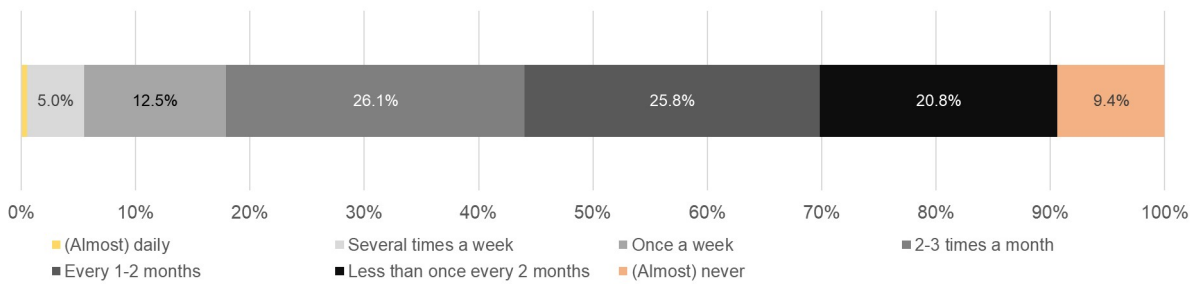
One goal of the study described in this research report was to gain a better understanding of how people in Switzerland and Germany evaluate restaurants and restaurant experiences. Of particular interest was the question of how people differ in this regard, and how these differences may affect the fit of restaurant recommendations received and satisfaction with them.

The results of the study show, on the basis of mean values, how people in Switzerland and Germany weight 33 different criteria when evaluating restaurants and restaurant experiences (RQ1). In addition, the study analyzes the extent to which the individual weightings of these evaluation criteria differ between people in Switzerland and Germany and between women and men (RQ2). Furthermore, the study shows how people differ in their weighting of all evaluation criteria. It was shown that the differences within the investigated segments (Switzerland/Germany and women/men) are hardly smaller than in the overall sample (RQ3). However, it seems possible to form more homogeneous groups for each person if further people are selected directly according to the similarity in the weighting of the evaluation criteria. Finally, the results showed initial indications that people with a high degree of individuality in their restaurant tastes tend to be more extreme in their satisfaction with the restaurant recommendations they receive (they tend to be more satisfied or more dissatisfied), while people with a low degree of individuality tend to show more moderate satisfaction in this regard (RQ4).

The results of this study provide some novel and useful insights for research and practice in the restaurant industry. However, the results should be considered and applied with the limitations of this study in mind. These are primarily due to the fact that the weightings for the 33 evaluation criteria were only queried in general terms. In addition, relevant contexts of restaurant visits (e.g., purpose of the restaurant visit, restaurant visit during vacation or at home, accompanying persons) could not be taken into account, which probably also have an influence on the evaluation of a restaurant or a restaurant visit. Ultimately, this means that it was not possible to take into account how respondents actually perceive specific restaurants and restaurant experiences. In the end, people who weigh the evaluation criteria similarly could still come up with different ratings for the same restaurant because of their different perceptions. The limitations identified lead to a possible lack of clarity in the research results, which should be supplemented by further research. This could be done, for example, by conducting surveys on restaurant visits to specific restaurants as a case study (for one or more restaurants) or based on data from online platforms with large numbers of entries on restaurant visits.

The results presented in this research report help all stakeholders in the restaurant industry in Switzerland and Germany to better understand what potential and current guests value most. This understanding can be applied to marketing and communication measures as well as to the design of restaurants and their services. The results also help to better understand how restaurant recommendations are given and how important the fit between the parties involved is. In particular, restaurant apps and other platform services can be further developed to provide their users with better matching restaurant recommendations.

## 6. Appendix: Frequency of Restaurant Visits by Respondents



**Figure A1:** Frequency with which people go out to eat in restaurants in the evening as part of their regular routine (N=1'004). Source: Own survey.

## 7. Literature

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