

**PERCEPTIONS, MOTIVATIONS, AND PREFERENCES OF TRADITIONAL
COLLEGE STUDENTS TOWARD
CHINESE AND AMERICAN RESTAURANTS**

by

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ABSTRACT

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The Perceptions, Motivations, and Preferences of Traditional College Students

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Due to the changes that are taking place in the hospitality services such as heightened competitive pressures and increased consumer expectations, there is a growing need for better understanding of how to develop and maintain customer satisfaction and loyalty. The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions, motivations and preferences of traditional college students toward Chinese and American restaurants. A survey was conducted with 400 students attending the University of Wisconsin-Stout in the College of Human development during the spring semester 1999.

The researcher randomized two departments, the Hospitality and Tourism Department and the Psychology Department, from the College of Human Development. The subjects were sampled from different course levels ranging from level 100 to level 700 based on the *Spring 1999 Timetable* published by UW-Stout. The researcher applied systematic sampling to select four classes from level 100 to 200, four classes from level 300 to 400, four classes from level 500 to level 700 in both departments of the samples. There were 24 classes selected encompassing 12 classes from students taking courses in the Hospitality and Tourism Department and 12 classes from those in the Psychology Department.

The questionnaire contained statements, which focused on perceptions (restaurants' service, atmosphere and food product), motivations (reason for dining out) and preferences toward Chinese and American restaurants.

This study's results aim to better understand the consumers' needs and to enable restaurant operators and food service institutions to respond to consumers' need and desires.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Background

According to Glover, service organizations are dynamic operations, and quality is the most critical factor in keeping a corporation viable (as cited in Brymer, 1991). Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, note that customers' perceptions of service quality and ensuring their level of satisfaction are functions of the cumulative evaluation of the outcome of all service encounters that they experience within the business establishment (as cited in Sundaram, Jurowski & Webster, 1997). Without a quality product, a service organization has failed to reach its most basic goal.

During the past decade, service organizations around the world have been discovering the value and power of quality. Defined as understanding and meeting customer requirements, quality acts as a unifying force, driving and streamlining organizations and processes to focus on delivering consistent value to customers. It is also a powerful force that reshapes attitudes and actions toward creating customer satisfaction and loyalty and thus a lasting competitive advantage in a turbulent environment of vigorous global competition (Scheuing & Christopher, 1993).

Hospitality Industry

The hospitality industry is comprised of those businesses which practice the act of being hospitable; those business which are characterized by generosity and friendliness to the guest (Brymer, 1991). There are four businesses that comprise the major segments of the hospitality industry: food service, lodging, travel, and recreation.

The food service business is the most expansive and diverse of the hospitality industry. It is the largest single segment in the hospitality industry and one of the largest businesses, overall, in the United States (Brymer, 1991). The food service industry consists of restaurants, travel food service, vending and contract institutional food service. Local restaurants are made up of establishments that include fast -food units, coffee shops, specialty restaurants, family restaurants, and cafeterias. Full service consists of food operations in hotels and motels, roadside service to automobile travelers, all food service on airplanes, and trains (Ritchie, Goedldner & McIntosh, 1995).

Restaurant Business

The National Restaurant Association (NRA) reports that the restaurant industry is the third largest of all businesses in the United States (Cetron, Demicco & Williams, 1996). A steady growth in the number of restaurants and a less-than-anticipated increase in demand for dining services have made the restaurant industry highly competitive. Along with intensified competition, customers' demand for quality service has escalated. Because of these changes in the competitive and consumer environments, restaurateurs have to be more customer-oriented by focusing their attention on the

issues of customer satisfaction and service quality to ensure their survival. Some restaurateurs have begun to recognize that competing only on price is no longer a viable strategy (Sundaram et al., 1997). Restaurant operators must be aware of the wants and needs of customers who will be most likely to choose their establishment (Gregoire, Shanklin, Greathouse , & Tripp , 1995)

Ethnic Restaurant

During the past decade ethnic foods have become widely available and increasingly popular in western consumer food markets (Iqbal, 1996). The growing cultural diversity of the United States is certainly influencing Americans' taste for ethnic foods. Many ethnic cuisines have moved beyond the phase of being merely trendy and have made a permanent mark on the American menu. Italian, Mexican and Chinese cuisines dominate the ethnic-food market, according to the 1992 Census of Retail Trade and data from Association's *Ethnic Cuisine: A Profile*. Almost all customers have tried these aforementioned ethnic cuisines. These "traditional" ethnic cuisines enjoy the highest popularity among consumers because they have become ingrained in American culture and are served at restaurants throughout the country (Papadopoulos, 1997).

By the 1980s, ethnic restaurants constituted 10 percent of all restaurants in the United States. They were most prominent in the Northeast and West. Chinese food made up 30 percent of the total and the three cuisines of China, Italy, and Mexico represented 70 percent of all ethnic restaurants (Gabaccia, 1998).

Perception and Motivation

Perception is defined as a process through which individuals are exposed to attend to comprehend information (Mowen, 1995). According to Oxford dictionary for the business world (1993), perception is an intuitive recognition of an aesthetic quality; a way of seeing, understanding. Perception is the term used to cover those processes, which give coherence, unity and meaning to a person's sensory input. It involves all those processes we use to select, sort, organize and interpret sensory data to make a meaningful and coherent picture of "our world" (Rice, 1993).

Motivation, according to Spear (1995), is defined as what it is that makes people do things. In other words, motivation is defined as all those inner strivings described as wishes, desires, and drives. Motivation is concerned with why people behave the way they do. It is designed to achieve specific goals and objectives.

Motivation is the force or inner state of humans that arouses, channels, and sustains their behavior. Motivation is concerned with the internal or external forces that influence the individual's choice of action. The outcomes of motivation are dependent upon a variety of internal or the individual (Physiological needs which refer to the need for food, drink, sex, physical protection, safety, love and belongingness, self esteem, and self-actuation) and external or environmental factors (Zaltman & Wallendorf, 1983).

Need for the Study

Because of the changes that are taking place in the hospitality services, such as heightened competitive pressures and increased consumer expectations; there is a growing need for better understanding of how to develop and maintain customer

satisfaction and loyalty (Sundaram et al., 1997). This research aims to better understand the consumers need and enable restaurant operators and food service institutions to respond to consumers' service quality need and desires.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to identify the perceptions, motivations and preferences of traditional college students toward Chinese restaurants and American restaurants. The samples for this study were the students of The University of Wisconsin- Stout.

Objectives of the Study

In conducting this research, the researcher had the following objectives:

1. Identify the perceptions of traditional college students (ages 18-27) toward Chinese and American restaurants;
 - 1.1 determine perceptions among traditional college students at The University of Wisconsin-Stout toward Chinese and American restaurants;
 - 1.2 determine gender differences among all respondents regarding perceptions toward Chinese and American restaurants;
2. Identify traditional college students' motivations for being attracted to Chinese and American restaurants;
 - 2.1 determine motivations among traditional college students at The University of Wisconsin-Stout and their being attracted to Chinese and American restaurants;

2.2 determine gender differences among all respondents regarding motivations and their being attracted to Chinese and American restaurants;

3. Identify traditional college students' preferences between Chinese and American restaurants;

3.1 determine preferences between Chinese and American restaurants among traditional college students of The University of Wisconsin- Stout;

3.2 determine gender differences among all respondents regarding preferences between Chinese and American restaurants;

Limitations

Limitations of the research were as follows:

1. Because of unequal sample population of male and female respondents may not have equal gender representation.
2. The survey questionnaires were administered to students in a selected university. The results of the study might only be generalized to students at that university.
3. Lost number of response because of incomplete questionnaires.

Definition of Terms

- **Family restaurants** – full service, sit down, table service, wide range menu (Hugging, 1998). Family restaurants include commercial cafeterias and coffee shops. The establishments offer waiter/waitress service in a casual dining atmosphere (National Restaurant Association (NRA), 1983).

Overview of the Study

This research is a study regarding the perceptions, motivations and preferences of traditional college students toward Chinese and American restaurants, which was written in five chapters. Chapter I introduced the background, purpose, research objectives and questions, the limitations and the overview of the study. Chapter II reviews related literature on the theoretical base of problems in this study. This chapter examined the current literature pertinent on this topic and relevant issues. Chapter III was comprised of the methodology. This chapter depicted in details the method conducted to accomplish this research study. Chapter IV presented the research results. Chapter V presented the conclusions and recommendations of the research.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

Owen Meredith—English poet and diplomat—once said:

*“We may live without poetry, music and art;
We may live without conscience, and live without heart;
We may live without friends;
We may live without books;
But civilized man cannot live without cooks.”*

The saying naturally reflects the indispensable importance of food to human beings. Food satisfies physiological and also socio-psychological needs. Physiologically, it has three functions: furnish body fuel for energy, provide material to build and maintain tissue, and supply substances to regulate body processes. These needs are fulfilled by the nutrients found in food. Some foods are especially nutritious because they perform all three of these physiological roles. Others may contribute mainly to energy production (McIntosh, 1995).

Food has had special meaning and significance for humankind throughout history. Those who did not eat well tended to die. Thus, humans became aware that food is crucial for everyone for his and her survival. Food began to take on special socio-psychological significance because it fulfills basic physiological needs essential for life. Food is something with which every living person has had contact, usually on a daily basis, throughout life, or that individual would not have survived. Therefore, all of us have had an intimate familiarity with food, perhaps making us feel qualified to evaluate and discuss issues, which surround it. For all of these reasons, there are few topics, which

elicit more emotional responses and on which people have stronger opinions, than food (McIntosh, 1995).

Food Service Industry

The food service industry is a very old business. Such service evolved from early inns and monasteries. In cities, small restaurants began serving simple dishes such as soups and breads. In the United States the early ordinaries, taverns and inns typically provided food and lodging (Brymer, 1991).

The food service industry as a whole has been continually growing throughout the past decade, although some sales growth has been offset by inflation. The industry has seen one of the strongest continuous growth periods in the mid to later part of 1990's. While much of the growth has occurred in restaurant and catering, institutional food service has shown steady growth (Hurst, 1997).

The food service industry has experienced success for many reasons, one of which is the proportion of the food dollar spent away from home. In 1995, 25 percent of the food dollar was spent away from home; in 1993, a rei.9(s4 sp)-10.7(c)3.1(ce)-6.8(ent)-10 was the ood service is nt o Amerpericn lifme.Csonumpe(s)]TJT*0.0052 Tc0.1905 Tw[(sekt)10(cove

of the food service industry grew from \$260 billion to \$307 billion. This study however focused on Commercial sector in Full-service restaurants (Table 1).

Table 1: Revenues Percent Shares of Commercial Sector Food Service Providers-1995.

Segment	Revenue (billion)	Percent Share
Quick-service restaurants	\$ 96.9	43.6
Full-service restaurants	86.3	38.8
Recreation Food service	10.1	4.5
Lodging	9.1	4.1
Supermarket delis	9	4.0
Cafeterias and buffets	4.8	2.2
Other retail hosts	4.1	1.8
General merchandise and drugstore	1.9	0.9
Total	\$ 222.2	99.9

Source: Mill, 1998.

Commercial food service sales, a multi-billion dollar industry, have increased steadily for the past several years (Gregorie et al., 1995). America's food service industry has found itself in an enviable quandary: Consumer demand is growing so fast that by the year 2005, labor economists predict that dining establishments will need to add three million workers to their current nine-million-person payroll.

This is a remarkable turnaround for the food service industry, which is recovering from a debilitating slump that lasted from 1989 to 1993. In 1996, according to a forecast by the National Restaurant Association (NRA), food service sales are expected to reach \$ 312.9 billion, a five percent growth rate over the past three years. Baby boomers get the

credit for such growth, which is expected to last well into the new century. The U.S. Census Bureau projects that the population of Americans age 35 to 54 will be 66 percent larger in the year 2000 than it was in 1960—and it is this group that accounts for 60 percent of the nation's food service spending (Ron, 1996)

A NRA study (1999c) revealed that fullservice restaurants have had strong growth in 1998 and sales are expected to exceed \$117 billion in 1999--a gain of nearly \$5.5 billion, or 4.9 percent, over sales in 1998. Real growth in 1999 is expected to be approximately 2.1 percent, similar to gains experienced in 1995 and 1996 but a full percentage point below the 3.1 percent real gain in 1997. Competition remained intense, especially in the fullservice sector, in 1998 and is likely to continue to be in so 1999. Today's consumer is well aware that restaurant alternatives abound. Nearly four out of five adults report that they have a larger selection of restaurants available to them today compared with several years ago and restaurateurs feel that competitive pressure every day, according to a 1998 Consumer Survey. The NRA 1998 Tableservice Operator Survey confirms that competitive intensity is on the rise in the fullservice sector. After considerable growth in the past few years, high-end restaurants will likely feel increased pressures in addition to increased competition in 1999.

Food Service Segment

The food service industry is broadly based. It includes such restaurants as the 21 Club in New York, the thousands of McDonald's operations worldwide, college and university food services, and a variety of other types of food service operations. Each segment appeals to a different type of consumer (Reid, 1983).

Food service consumers will switch from one type of operation to another as their needs change at a particular meal or day of the week. Consumers cannot be tightly categorized as patrons for only one or two types of operations. Within a 12-month period, a single food service patron is likely to patronize many different food service market segments.

Reid (1983) has categorized food service market into five segments as follows:

1. The Continental or Gourmet Segment: Restaurants that are part of this segment feature a product-service mix emphasizing fine dining. This segment caters to the needs of a rather limited clientele, including those who not only have the financial means to patronize these operations but also appreciate the very finest preparation, presentation, and service. Guests are pampered and made to feel important, and this treatment is an extremely important element of the product-service mix.

2. The Specialty Restaurant: This segment includes a broad range of operations, including those with a definite theme, such as Early American, German, or Italian—restaurants that specialize in a particular category of menu items. This type of operation usually stresses both atmosphere and food quality equally. While the perceived value of the product-service mix of specialty restaurants is not as high as it is for the continental segment, the level of personal attention and pampering is still quite high. Restaurants that are part of this segment often satisfy consumers' needs for food and beverage items that are not readily available at home. Another common need for these patrons is to relax and unwind after a long day. Dining out as a normal part of business activities is also common within this segment.

3. The Coffee Shops: Coffee shops satisfy the important consumer needs for

convenience, low to moderate price, and a relatively high level of perceived value. Coffee shops are often open longer hours to serve consumer needs during all meal periods. Coffee shops rely on a high volume of customer traffic to produce a profit and therefore are able to maintain a lower level of profit per customer.

4. Cafeterias: They are either public or private. Public cafeterias satisfy the consumer need for a full meal at a very reasonable price. Cafeterias continue to experience steady growth. Many cafeteria operations feature an “all you can eat” special at an attractive price, thereby appealing to budget-conscious consumers. Private cafeterias are often operated on a contractual basis by very large food service organizations. These cafeterias are normally located within a larger facility, such as a college or university, and office building, a manufacturing plant, a hospital, or a nursing home. The cafeteria provides a high level of convenience and a high level price and value perception.

5. Fast Food: This segment has experienced the greatest growth in the last 10 years. Fast food operations feature a limited menu, fast service, low prices, and counter self-service using disposable serviceware. Fast food operations have two very important attributes—convenience and a high level of perceived value. Fast food stores are typically located in high-traffic, high-visibility locations where many potential consumers pass by each day. These stores provide a close-by, convenient place to dine for many individuals. Fast food restaurants also offer a relatively low price and a high-perceived value. Many consumers believe that, when the value of their time is included in the cost of preparing a meal at home, it is actually cheaper to dine out at a fast food restaurant (Reid, 1983).

Classification of Eating Place:

The NRA classifies all eating establishments into three categories: commercial food service, institutional food service, and military food service (Table 2).

Commercial food services are distinguished from the others by the fact that they strive to make a profit. Institutional food service is a broad segment of business, educational, governmental, or institutional organization that operate their own food service. As compared to commercial food service, institutional food service does not aim to make money; it simply strives to provide a service. Military food service is the smallest segment, with about 1,000 food service units (Lundberg, 1994).

Table 2: Eating Establishments

Group I- Commercial food service

Eating places

Restaurant, lunchrooms

Limited-menu restaurants, refreshment places

Commercial cafeterias

Social caterers

Ice cream, frozen-custard stands

Bars & taverns

Food contractors

Manufacturing & industrial plants

Commercial & office buildings

Hospitals & nursing homes

Colleges & universities

Primary & secondary schools

In-transit food service (airline)

Recreation & sports center

Lodging places

Hotel restaurants

Motor-hotel restaurants

Motel restaurants

Retail host restaurants
 Recreation & sports
 Mobile caterers
 Vending & nonstore retailers

Group II – Institutional food service- Business, educational, governmental, or institutional organizations that operate their own food service

Employee food service

Public & parochial elementary, secondary schools
 Colleges & universities
 Transportation
 Hospitals
 Nursing homes, homes for ages, blind, orphans, and the mentally & physically disabled
 Clubs, sporting & recreational camps
 Community centers

Group III – Military Food service

Officer's & NCO clubs (“Open Mess”)

Food service- military exchanges

Source: National Restaurant Association, 1994

Restaurant Industry

The NRA (1993) defines the restaurant industry as that which encompasses all meals and snacks prepared away from home, including all takeout meals and beverages.

Mariani (1994) defines a restaurant as a dining room or other eatery where one pays for a meal.

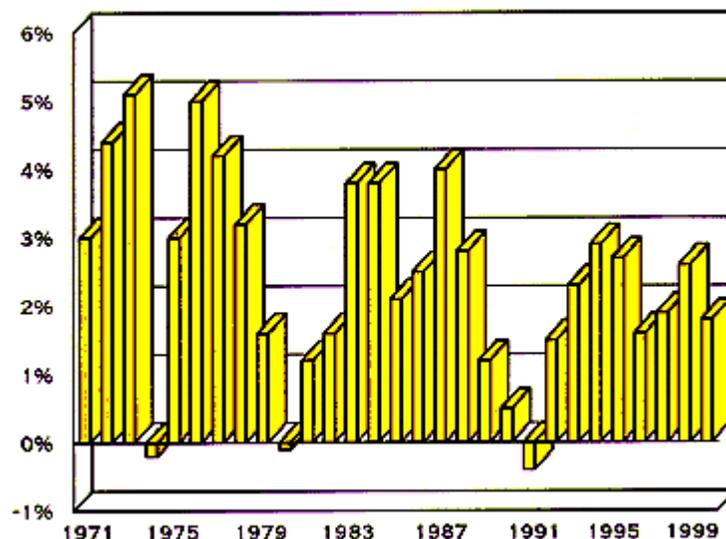
Restaurants can be classified according to prices charged, the amount of service offered, and the extent of their menus (Lundberg & Walker, 1993).

1. Well-known prestige restaurant, an image of luxury in price, in menu, and in service.
2. The high-priced restaurants with full menus and full-service.
3. The mid-priced segment (family places) with a full menu but moderate prices and moderate services.
4. Limited-menu restaurants are moderately priced with self-service.

National Restaurant Association (1999a) reports the 1999 Restaurant industry forecast highlights that restaurant industry sales are projected to increase 4.6 percent in 1999 to reach \$354.0 billion. With the national economy expected to grow at a somewhat slower pace in 1999, real sales (adjusted for inflation) should rise 1.8 percent, compared with a 2.6 percent real gain in 1998. The year 1999, moreover, should mark the eighth consecutive year of real sales growth for the restaurant industry. Menu prices are projected to advance 2.8 percent in 1999, somewhat higher than the 2.5 percent increase in 1998. Furthermore, menu-price inflation should remain above the nation's overall inflation rate.

NRA also said within the Commercial Restaurant Services Group, sales at fullservice restaurants are expected to reach \$117.3 billion-a 2.1 percent gain in real terms. Total sales at limited-service (quick-service/fast-food) restaurants are forecast to advance to \$110.4 billion, or up 1.8 percent in inflation-adjusted dollars. Consumers are expected to spend an average of \$970 million per day on food prepared away from home in 1999. Finally, the Mountain states are expected to post eating-place-sales growth of 6.0 percent in 1999-well above the second-ranked West South Central region's projected growth of 5.4 percent (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Restaurant Industry Real Sales Growth 1971-1999



According to the NRA, the restaurant business is the third largest of all businesses in the United States. One of every three meals eaten in United State is eaten away from home, constituting 42 percent of the consumer food dollar. The percentage of food dollars spent has been increasing since World War II.

From 1999 restaurant industry forecast overview by NRA revealed that restaurant-industry sales are increasing, driven by a positive economic environment and continued to grow up, which posted a 3.1 percent increase in 1998. In 1999, total restaurant-industry sales should reach a record \$354.0 billion. The restaurant industry has strongly established itself as an essential part of America's lifestyle, with more than 44 percent of the food dollar being spent away from home. Consumers continue to look for

convenience, value and an entertaining environment away from the stresses of daily life, and restaurateurs are filling those needs.

Considering these statistics from a recent National Restaurant Association research, it can be said that more than two out of five adults (42 percent) report that they are cooking fewer meals at home than they were two years ago. More than three out of every four U.S. households (78 percent) make at least one carryout or delivery purchase in a typical month. More than two out of three adults (68 percent) agree that going out to a restaurant with family and/or friends gives them an opportunity to socialize and is a better way to make use of their leisure time than cooking and cleaning up. More than one out of two consumers (56 percent) report that they are not entertaining at home as often as they were two years ago. Nearly nine out of 10 consumers (89 percent) report that the value they receive for the price they pay at moderately priced sit-down restaurants meets or exceeds their expectations, while more than three out of four consumers (76 percent) feel that the value they receive for the price they pay at fast-food restaurants meets or exceeds their expectations.

In recent years, the number of alternatives available to consumers for purchasing food prepared away from home has increased dramatically. In 1999, the restaurant industry should continue to benefit from the growing day-to-day need for its services among consumers and businesses as well as from growth in the number of higher-income households, which are prime restaurant patrons (NRA, 1999b).

By the year 2000, over three quarters of a million locations will be offering food service in the United States, with sales of over \$350 billion (about 4.5% of U.S. gross

domestic product). More than half of all consumer food dollars will be spent eating out (Cetron et al., 1996).

Table 3: Restaurant Industry Sales Projection, 1999: \$354 Billion

	1999 Sales (Billion \$)
Commercial	
Eating Places	\$ 238
Drinking Places	11
Managed Services	23
Hotel/Motel Restaurants	19
Retail, Vending, Recreation, Mobile	<u>30</u>
Total Commercial Sales Projection:	\$ 321
Other	<u>\$ 33</u>
Total 1999 Sales Projection:	\$ 354

Source: National Restaurant Association, 1999

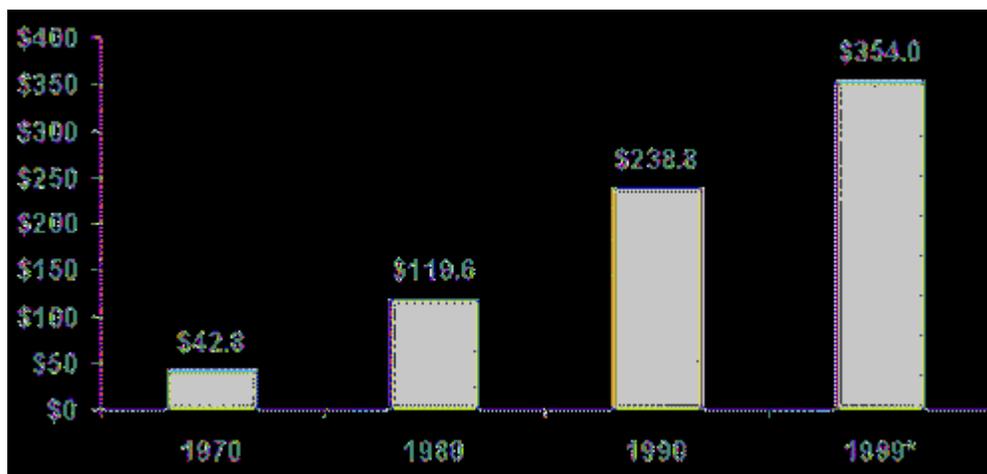
NRA (1999e) further provides some facts about the restaurant industry that almost half of all adults (46 percent) were restaurant patrons on a typical day during 1997. In an average month, 78 percent of U.S. households use some form of carryout or delivery. Almost 50 billion meals are eaten in restaurants and school and work cafeterias each year. The likelihood of patronizing restaurants is highest among younger consumers: about six out of 10 18-to-24-year-olds are restaurant patrons on a typical day, compared with 3 out of 10 adults over age 65. Men eat out more than women: 48 percent of men were restaurant patrons on a typical day during 1997 versus 44 percent of women. In 1997, restaurant traffic was roughly evenly divided between on-premises and off-premises traffic.

When viewing from the integral part of the U.S.' economy, it can be seen that the restaurant industry sales equal more than 4 percent of the U.S. Gross Domestic Product. Moreover, the industry provides work for 8 percent of those employed in the United States. Nearly 30 percent of all retail establishments are eating and drinking places.

Restaurant industry sales have grown at an average annual rate of 7.6 percent since 1970—when sales totaled \$43 billion. The industry's role in the economy where can be expected to remain significant as reflected by the growth over the last 30 years (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Restaurant Sales Have Risen Dramatically Since 1970

Food-and-Drink Sales (Billions of Current Dollars)



Restaurant and Quality Service

The restaurant industry has more experience with service strategies. Service is the industry's strength, and it along with food and atmosphere, are what guests are purchasing. Guests cannot touch the quality service experience, but they feel its result and notice its absence. Thus, restaurant service can be defined as an intangible product of useful labor, which provides a guest benefit (Smith, 1988).

The three components of quality service:

1. Service as a distribution system. Service is a technical or engineered system and style of distribution. It is based on effectively applying engineering principles that best satisfy guests' needs. It includes functions such as order taking, delivery, merchandising, billing, collecting, and so on. Service delivery systems include self-service, cafeteria service, table service, drive through, delivery, and all the various systems and styles within each of these categories. The service distribution system is the foundation upon which a restaurant builds an experience and shapes a relationship with its guests.
2. Service as a standard procedure for creating an exceeded expectation for the guest. The service experience is the advantage that results from a set of planned and manageable procedures and policies, the sum of which causes guests to perceive that the restaurateur's product offers a competitive advantage. A guest experience is the total of everything that management plans to make happen to a guest from arrival to departure. The service procedure must be managed, i.e., planned, executed,

monitored, and evaluated. When service is managed properly, the guest leaves with a feeling of added satisfaction. This feeling generates a range of guest benefits, including trust and security, social gratification, ego enhancement, and, possibly, new knowledge. In return, the guest bestows upon the organization the benefits of capital generated by repeat visits, increased frequency of visits, and word-of-mouth advertising.

3. Service as a relationship between buyer and seller. It is often described as hospitality—a set of interactive behaviors that is directed by the service employee toward the personal needs and wants of guests. The result of the relationship is to maximize the loyalty, trust, and respect of the guest for the restaurant. Hospitality, or caring service, creates a pleasant and friendly bond between guest and personal.

All three service components are very important for a restaurant to provide quality service. When these components are effectively managed, they enable an organization to use service as a differentiation strategy, enabling it to stand out from all others.

Ethnic Restaurants

During the nineteenth century, successive waves of Irish, British, German, Scandinavians, Slavs, Italians, Jews, Chinese, Japanese, and Mexicans changed the face, and the eating patterns, of American farmlands and cities. In the early decades of this century, though restrictive laws lessened immigration from Europe and Asia, internal migrations of southern white and black sharecroppers to Detroit and New York transferred eating habits from one American region to another. And in today's world, new immigrants from Asia, the Caribbean, and Latin America bring the smells and tastes of their homeland cuisine to Miami, New York, Minneapolis, and Los Angeles

(Gabaccia, 1998).

In the past decade, ethnic foods have become widely available and increasingly popular in western consumer food markets. It is known that as incomes rise, consumers increase the number and variety of goods they purchase, including food. Consumers are becoming better traveled as they become wealthier and many consumers in the developed nations are searching to satisfy their desire for alternatives to old food habits. The increase in diversity of populations within individual nations is another factor, which has fueled a consumer demand for more culturally diverse foods. An increase in the interest in ethnic foods may be a reflection of the changing cultures of consumers as a result of individuals from different cultural backgrounds being in continuous contact with one another (Iqbal, 1996).

America's interest in international cuisine should come as no surprise, since consumers have been exploring this trend since the early 1980s. Demographically, the United States is more diverse today than ever before, and minority populations are making a bigger impact on the tastes of the nation.

As American consumers continue to travel and become more exposed to the foods of different cultures and various regions of countries such as Italy, Greece, Spain and China, they will continue to crave foods discovered during those travels. Besides that, people immigrating to the United States will continue to bring the foods and flavors of their homelands with them, making the American culinary landscape even richer and more diverse (NRA, 1999d).

American diners' search for the familiar and the novel became matters of consumer choice. Today, Americans quite willingly eat the ethnic dishes. Eating habits

like these suggest tolerance and curiosity, and a willingness to incorporate, and to make part of one's individual identity, the multi-ethnic dishes, which in the past were deplored. As food consumers, Americans seem as interested in idiosyncratic and individualistic affiliations to the foodways of their neighbors as they are in their own ethnic and regional roots (Gabaccia, 1998).

American consumers of a wide variety of backgrounds crossed over culinary boundaries in large numbers in the early years of the twentieth century. This crossing over produced new, regional creole foods; it also created ethnic niches in multi-ethnic, regional food markets. Wage labor recruited from within the ethnic community created considerable competition in these niches, but it also gave businessmen the capital and make them know how they need to break out of their enclave economies and into a wider multi-ethnic market.

Crossover businessmen usually carried ethnicity with them, so their business niches gave regional marketplaces an ethnic flavor. Ethnicity was no longer confined to enclave economies where consumers bought from producers and retailers of the same background. Ethnicity had instead become a dimension of multi-ethnic crossover exchanges. Ethnic foods also left their enclaves, to be purchased by a wide range of American consumers. They often remain marked by an ethnic label, even as they gradually found mixture with other ingredients in multi-ethnic creoles (Gabaccia, 1998).

Consumer interest in and acceptance of ethnic foods continues to expand and reflect the increasingly pluralistic composition of contemporary American society (NRA, 1989). As both individual consumers and families have taken to eating out more often,

both for entertainment and to relieve their busy schedules, American consumers have become exposed to a greater breadth of ethnic food than ever before (Stephanie, 1997).

Almost all customers have tried ethnic cuisine. Traditional ethnic cuisine (Italian, Mexican and Chinese) enjoys the highest popularity among consumers because they have become ingrained in American culture and are served at restaurants throughout the country. Ethnic cuisine has increased in popularity; the percentage who eat Italian food (other than pizza) at least once a week has grown to 39%; Mexican, to 21%; and Chinese, to 18% (Cetron et al., 1996)

Flavor intensity is another important part of the popular ethnic trend. The greater use of spices can be traced to the growing popularity of ethnic cuisine. The Association's *Tableservice Restaurant Trends – 1995* reveals that hotter, spicier food, which is characteristic of ethnic cuisine, is growing in importance at approximately two out of five tableservice operations (Papadopoulos, 1997).

Ethnic food is all about big flavor, and big flavor is exactly what today's sophisticated restaurant patrons want. Mexican, Italian, and Chinese food may still reign, but Asian, Caribbean, and South American cuisine are coming on strong, and so is authentic regional food Tuscan, Sardinian, Sonoran, Shanghai (Anonymous, 1997).

To keep ahead of the competition, restaurant operators must keep up with the foods and flavors that are sparking customers' interests and heating up restaurant menus-and stay well away from those that are leaving customers cold (NRA, 1999d).

Chinese Food

Chinese-American food came to be a modified form of the peasant cooking of Kwangtung Province, of which Canton is the capital city, because that is where the

majority of Chinese immigrants came from. Between 1850 and 1882 (when the first Chinese Exclusion Act was passed) more than 320,000 Chinese immigrants entered the United States, 99 percent of them settling on the West Coast. Wherever they went, owing to whites' enforced exclusionism and their own reluctance to enter fully into American culture, the Chinese settled in their own Chinatowns within major United States cities, where they opened "chow chow" eateries, identified by their triangular yellow flags. At first these small, cramped eateries catered to their own people, then expanded their menus to attract curious Americans who dare cross into those mysterious cities within cities where the odors of garlic, ginger, and soy sauce mixed with thick, pungent pipe smoke (Mariani, 1991).

Most of these eateries were primitive in design and atmosphere. Although many Chinese prided themselves on their cleanliness, encouraging American patrons to walk through the kitchen on their way to the dining room, in order to assuage fears over sanitary conditions.

Before long, however, Chinese cooks learned how to modify their dishes to make them more palatable to a wider American audience. In fact, most of the Chinese restaurants outside of Chinatown proclaimed in their windows that they were Chinese-American, lest Occidental customers shy away for fear of being served duck feet and bird's nests.

By the 1920's Chinese restaurants dotted the American landscape. "Going for-Chinese" became very much an American expression, and when Americans began moving to the suburbs in the 1950s and 1960s, Chinese restaurants followed on their heels, particularly in suburban shopping malls. The opening of China to the West in the

1970s brought a whole new image of more authentic Chinese cooking, and the explosion of interest in the fiery flavors of Szechuan and Hunan dishes was enhanced by a new breed of far more elegant, considerably more expensive restaurants with modern décor, lighting, and service personnel. Then, as more Hong Kong and Taiwan money poured into American Chinatowns in the 1980s, the pendulum swung back to Cantonese cooking although of a much more authentic form.

Perhaps more important to the success of the Chinese-American restaurant was its readiness to serve food at any and all hours and to pack it up and deliver it with dispatch, all at prices no other ethnic group could match. Chinese take-outs went hand in hand with American's historic penchant for gobbling up lots of cheap food in as little time and with as little fuss as possible (Mariani, 1991).

How and Why Consumers Choose to Purchase Freshly Prepared Food?

Recent NRA research (1997) provides some key insights into how and why consumers choose to purchase freshly prepared food. This research indicates that when they want fresh food that they do not prepare themselves, consumers try to balance three different and distinct goals:

1. social pleasure or "togetherness"
2. eating pleasure
3. lifestyle support or "convenience."

Consumers will try to balance those three goals differently. Each goal has a particular consumer "need state" associated with it. The goal of social pleasure manifests itself in a need state of 1). celebration, where the focus is on getting together and

enjoying each other's company, or 2). kids, where satisfying the children is important. The need state of eating pleasure is driven by a special craving or the pursuit of a replacement for home cooking, where the decision maker is looking for a certain type of food without feeling guilty about it. In comparison, the need state of convenience occurs when the decision maker is pressed for time or is tired and does not feel like cooking.

Depending on the combination of need states, consumers select a restaurant option that they expect will satisfy their need at that particular time. With this knowledge, operators can emphasize their efforts on the particular restaurant characteristics that are important to their patrons' individual need states during their visit.

It is very important for operators to know about consumers' goals and need states regarding the purchase of freshly prepared food because the restaurant industry is a very competitive. Moreover, with the proliferation of options consumers can choose from today, if one operator does not meet their needs, diners know that another operator will (Gardner, Masur, Mills, Papadopoulos & Rienhle, 1996).

Eating-out

Consumers eat out for a variety of reasons and select different types of restaurants to meet different needs. For example, some may eat at a fast food restaurant because it is convenient. Some may choose a family restaurant because they like to eat out, and others may go to an atmosphere or upscale restaurant to celebrate a special occasion (NRA, 1982).

Consumers today have a vast array of food service wants and needs. At the same time they are more willing to spend a substantial portion of their food dollar on food

away from home (NRA, 1986). Americans continue to increase the frequency with which they eat out. In 1993, six percent of total per capita income was spent by Americans in restaurants, whereas only 7.2 percent was spent on food eaten at home. Americans had 793,000 eating places to choose from; and in them they spent 276 billion dollars (Mintz, 1996).

Why do people eat out? A variety of reasons can be found: to satisfy hunger, social needs, and ego and self-fulfillment needs. The most popular theory of motivation, that proposed by A.H. Maslow, states that human are waiting animals. As soon as one need is satisfied, another appears to take its place, moving from the need for safety or security up the scale through social, ego, and self-fulfillment. People go to restaurants to satisfy not only hunger but also self-esteem, self-respect, self-confidence, and prestige needs. They select a restaurant because of particular psychological needs at the moment, the way they are feeling about the money they have to spend, the prices of a restaurant, its service, how the restaurant is perceived in terms of its aesthetics, social status, and the kind of people that can be expected to be there (patrons, management and employees) (Lundberg, 1994).

The Internal and External Factors of Eating-out

Various internal and external factors combine to influence how customers choose where, when, how, and why to eat out. The study of the NRA classify all dinner decisions into five basic scenarios:

1. "Fun time"—This relates to an upbeat mood and a sense of anticipation of fun; the decision tends to be made well in advance. When people go out to eat for fun, it is

because they feel they deserve a treat or reward. This segment of the market makes the decision anywhere from several hours to several days ahead of time. They anticipate the fun they will have and want a place that offers unique or original food. Atmosphere and variety are also important. People out for fun are evenly distributed across all life stages.

2. "Nice meal out" -The desire is to enjoy the satisfaction or enjoyment of eating out, being served, and getting good food, lots of it, at a reasonable price. People in this group choose eating out as opposed to cooking. Often it is an impulse decision or one made only hours before the meal. The joys of good food and of being served are of prime importance, although all the basics are important: consistent food quality, variety, good portion, friendly and speedy service, no lines, and value for money.
3. "Craving"—This refers to a desire for a particular type of food; seeing or smelling this type of foods can set off the craving. This impulse decision is made on the basis of a desire for a particular type of food. Young couples comprise most of these diners.
4. "Making sure that everyone is getting something to eat"—This motivation comes from the hectic pace of everyday life, attempting to balance a variety of work and family schedules. This decision is made because of time constraints in fixing a home-prepared dinner for people who have conflicting schedule. Young and middle-aged parents are most prevalent in this group.
5. "Easiest thing available"—This is an impulse decision by someone who is tired and pushed for time. When people are pressed for time and are tired, they choose the eating option that is most convenient. Speed of service and the convenience of the location are the most important benefits sought. As might be expected, young parents

make up the largest category within this segment (Mill, 1998).

Consumer

Today's customer, being markedly different, places new demands upon the food service industry. They are often described as sophisticated, with express desires and demands for quality products and services, with quality being defined by the customer. Choices and varieties of operations become important, necessary attributes of food operations (Sutherlin & Badinelli, 1993).

Restaurant customers, on the average, thought that, in a descending order of importance, price/value, décor, atmosphere, and location were the top factors influencing their restaurant patronage. Food quality, staff attitude, and menu items were intermediate, and finally cleanliness, beverage list, and sales promotions were the bottom influences. On average, customers ranked price/value as the number one factor influencing their restaurant patronage (Farra, 1996).

A current NRA report indicates that the demographic trends that emerged in the 1970's will continue in the coming years, listed in order of importance, these include:

- more working women
- more affluent consumers
- more senior citizens
- aging baby boomers and
- more single people

The overall effects of these changes will be positive for the food industry. With more income and less leisure time, consumers will be attracted to the convenience of

eating away from home (NRA, 1990).

Consumer Food Preference

Khan, Olsen, and Var (1993) define consumer food preferences as “ the desires of people that influence their menu selections when they are eating out.” A food preference represents one’s desire when all internal factors influencing food choice are considered. These internal factors include personal interests in nutrition, health, taste, and variety, among others.

Changing Attitudes and Lifestyle

Changes in consumer attitudes and lifestyle could affect the food service industry even more dramatically. During the years to come, consumers are most likely to:

- gain a greater awareness of the dangers of drinking and driving,
- search more diligently for the best value for their money,
- seek more variety in restaurant food,
- continue to be interested in health and nutrition, and
- become more knowledgeable about food and restaurants.

Restaurant customers will upgrade their eating out habits, the more sophisticated customers of 1990 may be harder to please (NRA, 1990).

Consumer Behavior and Reason for Eating-out

Food service consumers today are demanding more sophisticated dining experiences. Consumers are better educated, earn more money, and are more confident when dining outside home. An increase in the concern about nutrition has partially

sparked the growth of natural and healthy foods (Reid, 1983).

The NRA (1993) has sponsored a number of studies of restaurant consumers and their reactions to various kinds of restaurants. According to one of these studies, the three most important considerations in the decision to eat out were:

- No one has to clean up.
- It permits a change of pace.
- It is considered a treat.

The three most annoying factors were:

- Poor quality of food
- Poor service
- Excessive cost.

When selecting a new restaurant, the person depends a great deal upon recommendations of friends. This is nearly equal in importance to the type of food the restaurant serves. Appearance and location rank third and fourth in consideration.

Quality of food is the most important factor in people's evaluation of any type of restaurant. The second most important factor varies by restaurant type. In fast food, coffee shops, and take-out restaurants, it is speed of service; in family type restaurants, cleanliness; in cafeterias, it is the selection of food; and in atmosphere/specialty restaurants, it is the atmosphere or décor.

Families with children tend to compromise on the selection of a restaurant. Parents prefer family-dining restaurants over fast service restaurants by a considerable margin. Children much prefer fast-service restaurants. When eating out, parents usually enjoy the experience and place importance on the availability of children's portions,

children's menus, and the proper treatment of their children by restaurant personnel. Of all the occasions for eating out, the wedding anniversary is the most frequently stated reason (Lundberg & Walker, 1993).

A large factor in restaurant failure is the naïve belief that if food, beverage, service, price, and atmosphere are good, patrons are certain to appear and will return in the future. An assumption is made that potential customers who want what is offered are waiting (Lundberg, 1994).

Service failure occurs when a customers' request for food or beverage is not met, when the service is unreasonably delayed, when the food quality is below a minimum acceptable level, or when the service order is mixed up by the service provider (Sundaram et al., 1997).

Consumers will continue to be more demanding in the future, especially in service. They have less time and are too rushed to prepare meals (Cetron et al., 1996). Consumers should be provided with what they really want. A successful food and beverage service operation relies on satisfied customers returning again and again (Minor, John & Charles, 1987).

An NRA's (1993) study attempted to identify segments of the population that hold similar attitudes toward eating out. The study divided the public into five groups as follows:

1. Liked fast foods—those who like to eat out often, and are extremely positive toward fast food restaurants.
2. Formal diners—those who like restaurants that serve liquor and where the atmosphere is formal tend to be selective about their restaurants and enjoy food.

3. Social/Casual—this group likes to consider eating out a social or family event, but prefers casual dining and simple food.
4. Primarily a luncheon crowd—in this group, the people eat out regularly, but are not too particular about what kind of restaurant they patronize.
5. Do not eat out—these people prefer home-prepared meals and are generally negatively disposed to eating out (Lundberg & Walker, 1993).

A correlation was made between these market segments and life styles. Those who liked fast food were concerned about price, had little interest in sports, and did not particularly like to travel. The formal diners were not disposed to do their own repairs, liked to socialize, had a high concern for fashion in clothing, and were concerned about financial comfort. They liked stylish furniture and had a high propensity for travel. The social/casual group favored traditional tastes but were interested in community / service and did not like to use charge cards. Frequent lunchers did not have too much concern about financial comfort; they were interested in sports, and they liked to use charge cards. Twenty-two percent of those who do not like to eat out had little interest in socializing. They had little concern for fashion in clothing and for financial comfort. Neither did they care much for stylish furniture, nor were they much interested in travel.

The Youth Market

Young people (13-25 years old) are an extraordinarily important consumer group both for setting trends and for influencing many of their parent's brand choices (Graham & Hamdan, 1987).

Why the youth market is important? The following are the reasons:

1. The trends and mindset of youth affect all consumers.

What's popular among young people today can often become the rage for all Americans tomorrow—from fashions to fast foods, from music to movies. Hence, the youth market affects hundreds of billions of dollars of spending each year.

2. The youth market includes fifty million consumers.

Thirteen to 25-year-old market from the U.S. Bureau of the Census show that, in 1985, this group comprised 22.5 percent of the total U.S. population. This includes 23 million teenagers, most of whom are high school students; more than seven million college students and recent graduate; and 21 million young adults, aged 18 to 25, who are not in college.

Census projections indicate that the number of young people group will move from today's 50 million to 44 million by 1990, and then rise again to 47 million by the year 2000. Thus, the size of the youth market is not destined to spiral downward; instead through the end of this century and for decades beyond, it should be steady at 45 to 55 million consumers—representing at least 20 percent of the U.S. population.

3. Annual income of young people is currently \$200 billion.

Young people have incomes totaling nearly \$200 billion annually. Teenagers have \$50 to \$55 billion to spend; college students, \$35 to \$45 billion; and non-college young adults, \$100 to 115 billion. Hence, young people are able to purchase a wide range of products, from the inexpensive to the costly. The youth market controls billions of dollars to spend on any product it decides it wants.

4.Young people have increasing influence on \$500 billion of annual family spending.

Teenagers, college students and young adults possess significant personal income, they also wield enormous power within the larger, adult markets. These 34 million young people certainly influence, if not choose, the brands of the products purchased by their parents. These products include foods and snacks, cosmetics, household and personal care items, etc.

5. Young people head ten million households—15 percent of the U.S. total.

Census records show that there are 3.8 million households headed by 15 to 24 years olds; these households account for \$52.4 billion in annual income (or a median income of \$12,669). Young people, running more than 15 percent of the total households in the country significant market for a full range of household products and services.

6.Youth are more willing to try new products.

Young people are just beginning to develop loyalties to particular brands and products. Young people are more likely than adults to try something new. Thus advertising and promotion targeted at youth are especially effective in influencing their brand selection.

7.Teenagers are independent purchasers and the primary market for many products.

There are 23 million teenagers in the United States, representing a total income of \$50 to \$55 billion annually. Although the number of teenagers has declined over the last decade, their purchasing power has doubled. Teenagers are the primary consumers of a

wide range of products including movies, snack foods, soft drinks, record albums and cassette tapes, new fashion products, and cosmetics.

8. College students are the elite of future adult market.

College students have annually incomes of \$35 to \$45 billion. Unlike the youth market as a whole, the number of college students is continuing to grow rapidly, increasing by about 200,000 annually. According to the census, of the 12.4 million people in college today, 7.2 million are aged eighteen to 24 and 4.5 million are full-time, four year students. Nearly 60 percent of them have part time or full time jobs during the school year, while 90 percent have summer jobs.

With almost half of all young people attending college and with college graduates having higher current and future incomes than non-graduates, this group certainly represents a critical target market and one with very broad needs. Since many college students are setting up their first "households," they need to purchase many or all of the same household items as the family at home. Hence, the college market presents a significant growth area for companies selling virtually anything, both immediately and in the future.

9. The young consumers will soon be the primary customers.

Young people, as they grow older, will soon become the principal market. If a organization has any interest in medium-term marketing strategies, it should care a great deal about creating an image attractive to youthful consumers, who are just beginning to establish their buying habits and preference.

College Student Market

There are 12.4 million college students in America, representing five percent of the total population. College students are significant to marketers because of their high current, and expected future, income, their lifestyle, and their influence on attitudes in the broader culture. According to Simmons College Market Survey showed that College students have high incomes, first, because they work—90 percent of college students are employed during the summer and 60 percent during the school term (as cited in Graham & Hamdan, 1987). Secondly, and importantly, 46.9 percent of college students come from families earning \$40,000 or more, with only 19.3 percent come from families earning less than \$15,000. Thus, the upper-middle-class parents of most college students are able to ensure that, even away from home, their children maintain a high standard of living. And while students benefit from improvements in the economy, they are sheltered by their parents from any downturns in economic growth.

Moreover, when college students graduate they will command relatively high salaries, especially since the number of students majoring in lucrative field such as business and commerce is growing rapidly.

Thus, it can be extremely profitable for companies to capture the brand loyalties of college students; in the not-too-distant future, the preferences of these well-paid college graduates can be translated into repeat purchases as well as purchases of more expensive items (Graham et al., 1987).

College Students' Dining Habits

Convenience and cost are major factors that influence the dining-out habits of

students. If they lack a car, they may be limited to facilities within walking distance of - campus. Health and weight are concerns to many. Low-calorie and vegetarian foods are thus important. Breakfast is the meal they are most likely to skip (Mill, 1998).

Changes in consumer demands have also been of major importance in the development of these changes. No longer are students content with "just eating." Innovative products and services are constantly being sought. Competition for the student food service dollar is expected to become more important as the number of food service competitors increases, giving students more choices (Sutherlin & et al., 1993).

Americans have always glorified youth. Youth represent opportunity, hope and a fresh outlook. How can restaurateurs best serve those customers? By doing just that - serving them well. According to a 1996 association consumer survey, respondents aged 18 to 34 were more likely than all other age groups to cite service as being the most important attribute when dining out. This younger age group was also more likely to cite service as their biggest complaint at table-service restaurants. Feeling rushed and speed of service were also come out large in the complaints of this generation (Gardner et al., 1996).

Customer Satisfaction

The end of the 1990s, the importance of marketers is customer satisfaction,

repeat purchases (Berkman, Lindquist & Sirgy, 1996).

The restaurateurs who have acknowledged the effect of customer loyalty on the long-term survival of their businesses have chosen the path of improving customer satisfaction and service quality as a means of achieving company goals (Sundaram et al., 1997).

Customers' Expectation

According to Glover, successful delivery of a quality product or service to a customer is the primary reason for the corporation's existence. Conversely, many service businesses often fail in an open marketplace when quality is not a characteristic associated with their consumers' expectations and actual experiences with the product (as cited in Brymer, 1991).

In the '90s, consumers expect to pay reasonably for good value, especially in the upscale market, depends on a sincere greeting, comfortable surroundings, and appreciative service. They want good food at a reasonable price with perceived value in terms of quality, freshness, presentation and service (Tefft, 1994).

A frequent suggestion of business gurus is to offer products and services that exceed customers' expectations. Special services that at first exceed guest expectations eventually become the expected level of service as they are repeated (Cohen, 1997). According to Wilkie, consumers will behave according to their expectations of what will happen. Consumers may make purchases if they perceive positive outcomes, and consumers may avoid situations in which they expect negative outcomes (as cited in Logomarsino, Luckhardt, Seeley & Moon, 1994).

According to Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, customers assess service quality by comparing what they want or expect to what they actually get or perceive they are getting. Before decisions on marketing improvements are made, the first critical step in the marketing process must be taken: "gaining a clear understanding of what the customer wants." In a service organization, due to the intangible nature of the product offering, this need for a through understanding of the consumer is even more important (as cited in Edgett & Prout, 1994). Unless management develops an understanding of what the customer's expectations are, the organization lacks the prerequisite to providing a high level of service quality (Parasuraman, Berry & Zeithaml, 1991).

Meeting Customer Expectations

Increasingly, customers have higher expectations, demanding more attention and friendlier service. Most customers seem satisfied with food quality, dining area cleanliness, comfort of the atmosphere, freshness of the ingredients, and portion size. Indeed, the only area where satisfaction is less than 50 percent relates to noise level. As the customer base ages, this is expected to become of even greater concern. Rising expectations manifest themselves in a desire for a better price/value relationship (Mill, 1998).

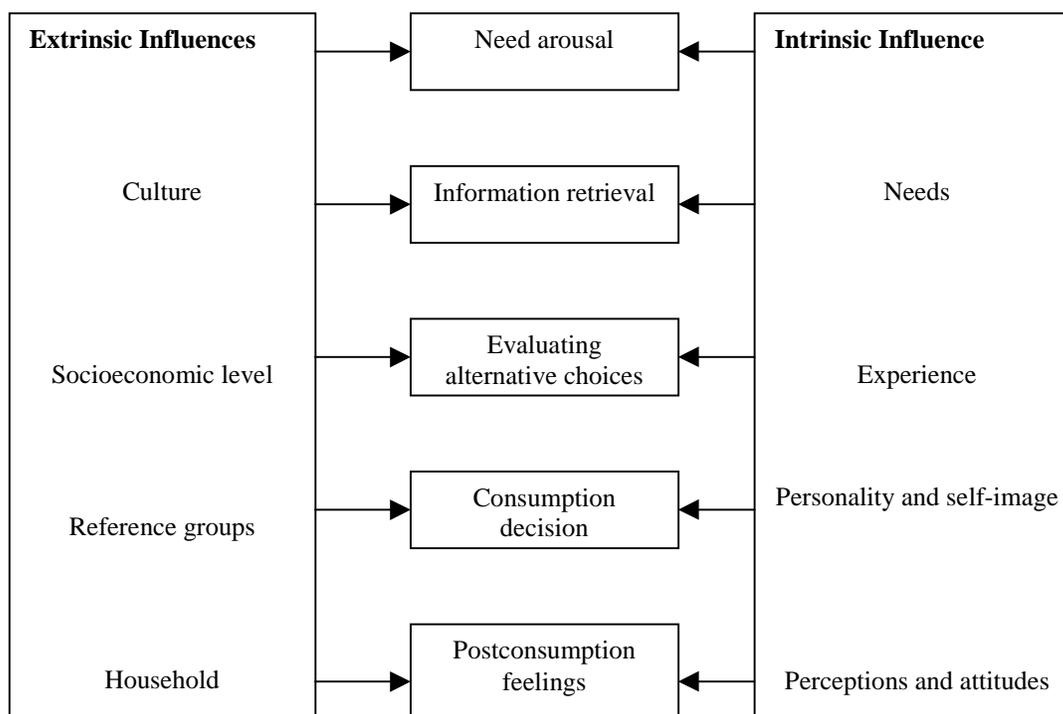
NRA (1983, 1986, and 1987) has surveyed consumer attitudes in a variety of restaurants. Consumers were asked about their expectations concerning 20 restaurant attributes (NRA, 1983). Restaurant patrons had the highest expectations regarding the cleanliness, taste and freshness of food. A survey conducted in 1987 by NRA about

consumers of fast food and moderately priced restaurants revealed that they liked the convenience and dining with family (Logomarsino et al., 1994).

Consumer Decision-Making Model

When consumers make decisions concerning the purchase of goods and services, a very complex decision-making process takes place. Numerous variables influence this decision-making process (Reid, 1983). This model illustrates the two major components of the decision-making process, extrinsic influences, or those external to or outside the individual, and intrinsic influences, or those internal to the individual (Figure 3).

Figure 3: A Contemporary Consumer Decision-Making Model.



Extrinsic Influences on Consumer Behavior:

Culture is defined as those patterns of behavior and social relations that characterize a society and separate it from others. An individual's culture serves to provide a frame of reference concerning acceptable behaviors and as such, culture is a learned set of arbitrary values. The dominant culture in the United States today stresses equality, use of resources, materialism, individualism, and youth. In addition to the general culture of the United States, marketing must also be concerned with subcultures. Subcultures might include the Black, the Jewish, the youth, and the Chicano subculture.

Socioeconomic level is a large influence in consumer decision making. Food service operators must identify the relative socioeconomic groups to which the operation appeals and must then appeal directly to those groups in menu offerings, décor, atmosphere, costuming, price, and level of service.

Reference groups exert tremendous influence on consumers' food service decisions. Every individual is influenced directly and indirectly. Marketing research has identified three types of reference groups: comparative, status, and normative. Individuals use reference groups to compare their own feelings and thoughts with others. Reference groups also serve a status function. For example, when an individual seeks to become a member of a group, his or her actions are likely to emulate the group members' behaviors. Finally, reference groups serve to establish norms and values that regulate the behavior of individual.

Household is defined as those individuals who occupy a single living unit. There are approximately 63,000,000 households in the United States, and within every

household are certain characteristics, leadership, and norms. Leadership is normally rotated among members of the household.

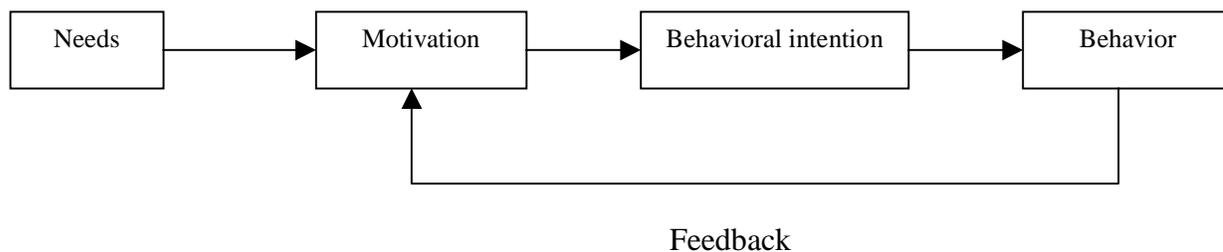
All extrinsic influences affect the decision-making process of a consumer whenever a choice among food service operations is made. The culture, socioeconomic level, reference groups, and household influence directly and indirectly, consciously and unconsciously, the dining habits of all consumers.

Intrinsic Influences on Consumer Behavior:

Consumers are also influenced by personal needs, experience, personality and self-image, and perceptions and attitudes (Figure 4).

Needs lead to motivation, which leads to behavioral intentions, which finally lead to behavior.

Figure 4: Needs Related to Consumer Behavior



Following behavior, feedback affects, and may change, a consumer's motivation. Maslow identified five needs arranged in the following hierarchy: physiological needs; safety needs; love needs; esteem needs; and self-actualization needs. Maslow's theory holds that individuals strive to satisfy unmet needs. As lower-order needs (physiological needs and safety) are satisfied, they no longer motivate, and as a result, the individual moves up the hierarchy while attempting to satisfy unmet needs at a higher level.

Experience is also a major intrinsic influence on consumer behavior. As individuals confront novel situations, such as dining in a restaurant for the first time, they integrate their perceptions into an experience framework that influences future decisions. First impressions are important, if consumers are turned off the first time that they patronize an establishment, they are not likely to return. Each new dining experience is integrated into a "frame of reference" against which novel situations are evaluated. This frame of reference includes beliefs, values, norms, and assumptions.

Personality and self-image, each individual consumer develops a unique personality and self-image over a period of time. Personality types can be grouped into various classifications: swingers, conservatives, leaders, or followers. Each operation must single out a segment of the total market and then appeal directly to these consumers who are known as targeted market segments.

Perception and attitude, each day consumers are exposed to thousands of stimuli. Some of these stimuli are consciously received, resulting in a thought process, while others are simply ignored. The process, by which stimuli are recognized, received, and thought about is termed "perception". Each individual consumer perceives the world differently. Perceptions are manifested in attitudes. Perceptions are the way an individual sees the world. In the mind of the individual consumer, the perceptions and resulting attitudes are correct and valid (Reid, 1983).

Restaurant and Institutions News consumer survey reports the important factors that patron seeks in a restaurant (Dulen, 1998).

- Cleanliness is the top priority for customers across virtually every demographic group, followed by food quality and service.

- Customers with children also are most demanding when it comes to value, menu variety and service.
- Freshness is what restaurant customers are looking for in takeout. Other important

concerns include value, family friendly menus, adequate portion sizes and parking.

According to the National restaurant association (1996)-report dinner decision making. 24 percent of on-premises dinner occasions were to socialize with family, children and friends. Socializing can mean a various things, according to the study, including celebrating a special occasion, spending quality time with family or friends, or doing something special for a friend or family member.

Consumers' look for comfortable social environments outside of the home has helped increasing sales at fullservice restaurants (Gardner et al., 1996).

Perception

According to Forgas, perceiving may be defined as a “process of information extraction” (as cited in Britt, 1978). Perceiving is the process of the filtering physical sensations into meaningful thoughts or concepts through the audience members’ experiences; it relies heavily on past experience. An individual categorizes new stimuli in terms of his expectations, prejudices, and beliefs. If an appropriate category is not available for a new experience, an old one may be used until a new category is developed (Britt, 1978).

According to Andreasen and Graulich, management needs to learn the perception

of customers of the service. Once this feedback has been obtained, management can implement changes to the service offering (as cited in Edgett & Prout, 1994).

Motivation

Motivation is the mixture of wants, needs and drives within the individual which seek gratification through the acquisition of some experience or object (Rice, 1993).

The word motive derives its meaning from move, and a motive is that something within a person that causes him to act, move, or behave in a goal-directed manner. A motive is a reason for action. Motivation is the condition of being motivated. Motivation may be thought of as a driving force or a necessity to reduce a state of tension (Walters, 1974)

According to Bayton, motivation as a state of need arousal, “a condition exerting ‘push’ on the individual to engage in those activities which he anticipates will have the highest probability of bringing him gratification of a particular need-pattern” (as cited in Britt, 1978).

Different people have different motivations for buying different goods and services. Motives or reasons for buying can be physiological, like hunger, or psychological, like a desire for respect. Further, the personality traits of the consumer, the social environment, and various other internal and external factors also influence motives (Berkman et al., 1996).

Motivation and Eating-out

In terms of motivational theory, people eat out for a variety of reasons: to satisfy

hunger, to satisfy social needs, and to satisfy ego and self-fulfillment needs. People select a particular restaurant because of particular psychological needs at the moment and the way they are feeling about the money they have to spend, the prices of a restaurant, its service, and how it is perceived in terms of its esthetics, social status, and the kind of people that can be expected to be there- patrons, management, and employees.

Relating restaurant service, price, and menu size to physiological and psychological needs provides some insight into why people select particular restaurants. The well-known motivational theory proposed by Maslow states that humans have a hierarchy of needs (Lundberg & Walker, 1993).

Figure 5: Maslow' s Order or Priority of Human Needs Related to Eating Away from Home

5	Self actualization and fulfillment	Luxury restaurants
4	Esteem and status	Dinner houses
3	Belonging and social needs	Family restaurants, Coffee shops, cafeterias
2	Safety and security	Fast food

1

Basic physiological needs

Vending

When one's needs are satisfied, another appears to take its place, moving from basic physiological needs to safety or security needs, then up the scale through belonging and social needs to self-fulfillment. People go to restaurants to satisfy not only hunger but needs relating to self-esteem, self-respect, self-confidence, and prestige.

Table 4: Restaurant Service, Price, and Menu Related to Needs

<u>Luxury price; full menu</u>	<u>Four Seasons</u>	<u>Self-fulfillment</u>
	Le Cirque The Pump Room	
High price dinner houses	Charthouse	Esteem and status
Medium price family restaurants	Red Lobster Olive Garden	Belonging and social needs
Low price; limited service; fast food	Pizza Hut KFC Taco Bell McDonald's	Safety and security
Very low price service; Vending	Any vending service	Basic physiological needs

Source: Lundberg & Walker, 1993

This table suggests that people may eat at a stand-up snack bar to satisfy a hunger or physiological needs, but will select varying styles of restaurants to meet social needs, and will finally go to the high-priced places for self-esteem and self-fulfillment needs (Lundberg & Walker, 1993).

The foodservice operator should strive to continue to meet the expectation of consumers. Understanding consumer perception will help the foodservice operator to better respond to customers' needs. The next chapter addresses the methodology to investigate the perceptions of traditional college students towards Chinese and American restaurants.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

The author investigated the perceptions, motivations and preferences of traditional college students at the University of Wisconsin –Stout toward Chinese and American restaurants. The method and procedures used in this study are explained in this Chapter under the heading of (1) statement of purpose, (2) subjects, (3) research instruments, (4) procedure, and (5) data collection.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the study was to identify the perceptions, motivations and preferences of traditional college students toward Chinese restaurants and American restaurants.

The objective of this study were to:

4. Identify the perceptions of traditional college students toward Chinese and American restaurants;

4.1 determine perceptions among traditional college students at The University of Wisconsin-Stout toward Chinese and American restaurants;

4.2 determine gender differences among all respondents regarding perceptions toward Chinese and American restaurants;

5. Identify traditional college students' motivations in their being attracted to Chinese and American restaurants;

5.1 determine motivations among traditional college students of The

motivations in their being attracted to Chinese and American restaurants;

6. Identify traditional college students' preferences between Chinese and American restaurants;

6.1 determine preferences between Chinese and American restaurants among traditional college students of The University of Wisconsin- Stout; and

3.2 determine gender differences among all respondents regarding preferences between Chinese and American restaurants.

Subjects

Selection of subjects

The students at University of Wisconsin-Stout were the population in this study. The 1999 population of UW-Stout students was 7,067 students (Undergraduate 6,504 and Graduate 563) based on student statistics published by UW-Stout. A random and systematic sampling were used for sampling technique. The samples population totaled 400 people.

There are three Colleges in University of Wisconsin-Stout: College of Arts and Sciences, College of Human Development and College of Technology, Engineering and Management. College of Human development was select randomly. A questionnaire was conducted to approximately 400 students attending the University of Wisconsin –Stout in College of Human development during the Spring semester 1999.

The researcher selected randomly two departments, Hospitality and Tourism department and Psychology department, from College of Human Development. The subjects were sampled from different course levels ranging from level 100 to level 700 based on the Spring 1999 Timetable published by UW-Stout. The researcher applied

systematic sampling to select four classes from level 100 to level 200, four classes from level 300 to level 400, four classes from level 500 to level 700 in both departments of the samples. There were 24 classes selected encompassing 12 classes from students taking courses in the Hospitality and Tourism Department and 12 classes from those in the Psychology Department.

Four hundred and twenty nine questionnaires were returned. There were 201 responses from students taking courses in the Hospitality and Tourism Department and 228 responses from students taking courses in the Psychology Department.

Nonetheless, since this study focus on traditional college students, a total of 40 responses from the respondents whose ages ranged over 27, graduate students and incomplete questionnaires were excluded from the data analysis. Therefore, 389 useable responses in this study consisted of 171 questionnaires from students taking courses in the Hospitality and Tourism Department and 218 questionnaires from those in the Psychology Department.

Research Instruments

Descriptive design was used for this study: to describe the perceptions, motivations and preferences of traditional college students toward Chinese and American restaurants by using a questionnaire. The questionnaire was adapted from “ Consumer Expectations with Regard to Dining at Atmosphere Restaurants” published in 1983 by National Restaurant Association, “ The Market for Ethnic foods” published in 1989 by National Restaurant Association”, and “The Perceptions of Chinese Consumers of American Fast- food in Beijing” by Maria (Miao) Guo a thesis plan A in the Hospitality

and Tourism Department, conducted in 1994. To encourage students to respond without any inhibitions and to protect confidentiality of individual students, an anonymous questionnaire was developed.

This questionnaire was developed for the purpose of collecting data of perceptions, motivations and preferences of traditional college students toward Chinese and American restaurants. The questionnaire consisted of four parts. Part I (Likert scales and open-ended questions) general information regarding restaurant's service, atmosphere, food product and perceptions toward Chinese and American restaurants. Part II (Likert scale) focus on the reasons for dining out at Chinese and American restaurants. Part III (Likert scales) focus on preferences toward Chinese and American restaurants. Part IV a demographic regarding gender, age and year in college.

Part I of the questionnaire contained sixteen questions in total. The first 8 questions asked the respondents regarding the restaurants' service and atmosphere of Chinese and American restaurants by using a 5-point scale:

1=Very Poor; 2= Poor; 3= Average; 4= Good; 5= Very good.
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The respondents were asked to rate the level of quality of following items:

1. Speed of service
2. Restaurant employees who greet you with smile
3. Speed of food delivery
4. Attractiveness of room decoration
5. Cleanliness
6. Exotic quality of restaurant atmosphere

7. Relaxed atmosphere or ambience

8. Location

The latter 6 questions of Part I, the respondents were asked to rate the level of quality regarding the restaurants' food product of Chinese and American restaurants by using a 5- point scale:

1=Very Poor; 2= Poor; 3= Average; 4= Good; 5= Very good.

The respondents were asked to rate the following items:

1. Appropriate temperature of the food
2. Pleasing appearance of the food
3. Flavor of food
4. Variety of menu choices
5. Freshness of ingredients
6. Size of portion

The latter 2 question of Part I, are open-ended questions regarding the perceptions

Toward Chinese and American restaurants:

- A) What are your perceptions toward Chinese restaurants?
- B) What are your perceptions toward American restaurants?

Part II of the questionnaire asked the respondents about the reasons for dining out at Chinese and American restaurants. This part employed the 5- point scale as well, where:

1= Strong disagree; 2= Disagree; 3= Neutral; 4= Agree; 5= Strongly Agree

The respondents were asked to rate the following items:

1. Special occasion
2. Close to your residence
3. No time to cook
4. Entertainment
5. Friends' and others' suggestions
6. Like the taste of food
7. Worth for the money spent
8. Change the taste

Part III of the questionnaire asked the respondents about the preferences toward Chinese and American restaurants. The respondents were asked to make a choice:

- a. prefer American restaurant
- b. prefer Chinese restaurant
- c. prefer both

The following items were rated by respondents

- taste of food
- price
- portion of food
- variety of food
- service
- nutrition
- uniqueness of food

- appearance of food
- texture of food
- smell

Part IV of the questionnaire is Demographic Data, the respondents were asked three general demographic questions, gender, age, and year in college (Freshmen, Sophomores, Juniors, Seniors and Graduate).

Procedure

Pilot test

The researcher distributed sample questionnaires to UW-Stout students who take Food Administration course. Those students were then asked to respond to the questionnaires. This test was a sample analysis, prior to data collection, of feedback received about the clarity and understanding of the designed questionnaires. The pilot test was conducted on April 1, 1999. The questionnaires, furthermore, were distributed to the respondents in their class. When the respondents completed the questionnaires, the respondents were encouraged to offer their comments and suggestions to be used to amend some equivocal items in the questionnaire. A definition of perception was suggested to be defined for the subjects. Therefore, the researcher read the definition of perceptions to subjects before conducting survey.

Data Collection

Permission was requested for the distribution of the questionnaires to UW-Stout students taking courses in the Hospitality and Tourism Department and Psychology department.

After receiving permission, the questionnaires were distributed first to the students in the selected classes individually on April 28, 1999, next on May 6, 1999. The following instruction and definition were read to each group of subject before they began the questionnaire.

“ Please define this following concepts for the class before distributing the survey

Perception- intuitive recognition of a aesthetic quality, your instinctive feeling, attitude or reaction toward Chinese and American restaurants.

Please response according to the experiences that you have had within the last year.”

To avoid any possible duplicate data, the respondents were asked to complete the questionnaires only once. The researcher would not hand out the questionnaires to those who had already completed the questionnaire.

It was noted in the questionnaires that all the answers provided by the respondents would be kept anonymous that the respondents might leave any questions unanswered depending upon the respondents' desires.

The next chapter provides the results of this study regarding the perceptions, motivations and preferences of traditional college students. The author used the Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software to complete the results

CHAPTER IV

Results and Discussions

Introduction

Chapter Four will be devoted to the analysis of the data collected by the method described in Chapter Three. The Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS-PC) software computed these data.

With the SPSS program, the frequencies of responses to numerous questionnaire items can be tabulated for a large number of respondents. Basic descriptive statistics (Mean, Median, Mode, and Standard Deviations) and frequency distributions were computed for each variable/ so that each variable could be identified.

The purpose of this study was to identify the perceptions, motivations and preferences of traditional college students toward Chinese and American restaurants. A questionnaire was used to collect data. The questionnaires contained inquiries about perceptions toward Chinese and American restaurants, motivations for dining out at Chinese and American restaurants, preferences toward Chinese and American restaurants, and demographic data.

In this research, two-way ANOVA and Chi square were employed. Two-way ANOVA was used to determine the perceptions of traditional college students toward Chinese and American restaurants; to determine the gender difference of traditional college students toward Chinese and American restaurants; to determine motivations among traditional college students in their being attracted to Chinese and American restaurants; and to determine gender differences of traditional college students regarding motivations in their being attracted to Chinese and American restaurants.

Chi-square was used to determine preferences between Chinese and American restaurants among traditional college students of The University of Wisconsin- Stout; and to determine gender differences of college students regarding preferences between Chinese and American restaurants.

The results of the data analysis are discussed in the following order:

1. Demographic profile of the respondents;
2. The perceptions of traditional college students toward Chinese and American restaurants;
 - 2.1 the perceptions among college students toward Chinese and American restaurants;
 - 2.2 the perceptions of male and female college students toward Chinese and American restaurants;
- 3 The motivations of traditional college students in their being attracted to Chinese and American restaurants;
 - 3.1 the motivations among college students in their being attracted to Chinese and American restaurants;
 - 3.2 the motivations of male and female college students in their being attracted to Chinese and American restaurants;
- 4 The preferences of traditional college students between Chinese and American restaurants;
 - 4.1 the preferences of traditional college students between Chinese and American restaurants
 - 4.2 the preferences of male and female college students between Chinese and American restaurants.

I. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

In the fourth part of the questionnaire consisting of Gender (Question 1) and Age (Question 2), the respondents were asked about their demographic data. The data of each item was computed, tabulated, and presented as follows:

Gender

From 389 respondents, 165 were male (42.4%), and 224 were female (57.6%). The tabulation of genders is illustrated (Table 5).

Table 5: Summary of Survey Sample by Genders

Gender	Frequency No.	Percent (%)
Male	165	42
Female	224	58
Total	389	100

Age

From 389 respondents, age of respondents were presented below. (Table 6).

An average age of respondents is 21 years old.

Table 6: Summary of Survey Sample by Age Groups

Age	Frequency No.	Percent (%)
18	26	6.7
19	69	17.7
20	74	19.0
21	70	18.0
22	55	14.1
23	39	10.0
24	18	4.6
25	28	7.2
26	6	1.5
27	4	1.0
Total	389	100

II. THE PERCEPTIONS OF TRADITIONAL COLLEGE STUDENTS TOWARD CHINESE AND AMERICAN RESTUARANTS.

Objective 1: Identify the perceptions of traditional college students toward

Chinese and American restaurants;

Part I of the questionnaire contained 14 closed questions in total. The first eight questions addressed the respondents perceptions regarding Chinese and American the restaurants' service and atmosphere.

Those eight perceptions were:

9. Speed of service
10. Restaurant employees who greet you with smile
11. Speed of food delivery
12. Attractiveness of room decoration
13. Cleanliness
14. Exotic quality of restaurant atmosphere
15. Relaxed atmosphere or ambience
16. Location

The respondents were requested to rate the level of quality regarding the restaurants' service and atmosphere as 1=Very Poor; 2= Poor; 3= Average; 4= Good; 5= Very good.

Objective 1.1: To determine the perceptions among traditional college students toward Chinese and American restaurants

Objective 1.2: To determine gender differences among traditional college students regarding the perceptions toward Chinese and American restaurants.

A 2 (Restaurant type) x 2 (Gender) ANOVA was used to determine if significant differences in perception ratings were obtained between Chinese and American restaurants, or between males and females ratings. This design also allows for interactions between Restaurant type and Gender to be assessed. Restaurant type was included in the analysis, as a repeated measures variable. Gender was included as a between subjects variable.

Speed of Service:

A significant difference was obtained between overall ratings of American and Chinese restaurants. Chinese restaurants were rated as having better speed of service

($f= 53.33, p<.01$). There was no significant difference between gender indicating that males and females did not differ in their overall rating of service. Further no two-way interaction was found, indicating that both males and females rate Chinese restaurants as having better speed of service than American restaurant (Table 7).

Greet with Smile:

There was no significant difference between overall rating of American and Chinese restaurant. No significant gender difference or two- way interaction was found. Therefore, perception of traditional college students toward Chinese and American restaurants is the same regarding restaurant employees who greet you with smile

(Table 7).

Speed of food delivery:

A significant difference was obtained between overall ratings of American and Chinese restaurants. Chinese restaurants were rated as having better speed of food delivery ($f=50.11, p<.01$). There is no significant difference between males and females. No two-way interaction was found, indicating that both males and females rated Chinese restaurant as better speed of food delivery (Table 7).

Attractiveness of room decoration:

There was no significant difference between overall rating of American and Chinese restaurant. No significant difference between gender was found. No two- way interaction was found. The perceptions of traditional college students toward Chinese and American restaurants are the same regarding attractiveness of room decoration (Table 7).

Cleanliness:

A significant difference was obtained between overall rating of American and Chinese restaurants. American restaurants rated as cleaner ($f= 7.824, p<.01$). There is no gender difference. No two-way interaction was found, indicating that both males and females rated American restaurants as cleaner than Chinese restaurants (Table 7).

Exotic quality of restaurant atmosphere:

A significant difference was obtained between overall ratings of American and Chinese restaurants. Chinese restaurants were rated as having a better exotic quality of restaurant atmosphere ($f=140.79, p<.01$). There is no difference between males and females. No two-way interaction was found, indicating that both males and females rated Chinese restaurants as better exotic quality of restaurant atmosphere than American restaurants (Table 7).

Relaxed atmosphere or ambience:

There was no significant difference obtained between overall ratings of American and Chinese restaurants. No significant difference between gender was found. A two-way interaction ($f= 3.94, p<0.5$), was obtained indicating that females find Chinese restaurants more relaxed than American restaurants, this difference was not obtained for males perception of Chinese and American restaurants (Table 7).

Location:

A significant difference was obtained between overall ratings of American and Chinese restaurants. American restaurants were rated as having a better location ($f=95.16, p<0.1$). A significant gender difference was found ($f=14671.34, p<. 01$) indicating that males rated locations higher than females overall. No 2-way interaction was found, indicating that both males and females rated American restaurants as better located than Chinese restaurants (Table 7).

Summary

The study results indicate that students' perceptions of Chinese and American restaurants do differ significantly. Chinese restaurants were rated as having a better speed of service and food delivery and having a more exotic quality of atmosphere than American restaurants. American restaurants were rated as cleaner and better located than Chinese restaurants. Students' perceptions of being greeted with a smile, attractiveness of room decoration and relaxed atmosphere did not differ between the two types of restaurants.

Overall males and females rating did not differ with the exception of location of restaurants. Males tended to rate location of both Chinese and American restaurants higher than did females. These differences may indicated gender differences in accessibility to transportation or perhaps safety issues associated with locations effecting females' perception more so than males

One two-way interaction between restaurant and gender was obtained. While females rated Chinese restaurants as more relaxing than American restaurants, this same difference was not found for males' perception of Chinese and American restaurants. It is unclear why this interaction may have been obtained.

Table 7: The Level of Quality Regarding the Restaurants' Service and Atmosphere of Chinese and American Restaurants

Restaurant service & Atmosphere	American			Chinese		
	Mean (S.D.)			Mean (S.D.)		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Speed of service	3.58 (0.68)	3.62 (0.59)	3.60 (0.63)	3.88 (0.75)	3.98 (0.75)	3.94 (0.75)
Greet with Smile	3.65 (0.71)	3.66 (0.70)	3.65 (0.71)	3.75 (0.92)	3.74 (0.96)	3.74 (0.94)
Speed of food delivery	3.55 (0.77)	3.57 (0.62)	3.56 (0.68)	3.83 (0.77)	3.95 (0.74)	3.90 (0.75)
Attractiveness of room decoration	3.61 (0.76)	3.73 (0.73)	3.68 (0.75)	3.65 (0.97)	3.73 (0.90)	3.70 (0.93)
Cleanliness	3.72 (0.69)	3.69 (0.71)	3.70 (0.70)	3.50 (0.94)	3.62 (0.82)	3.57 (0.88)
Exotic quality of restaurant atmosphere	3.27 (0.81)	3.26 (0.79)	3.27 (0.80)	3.88 (0.92)	4.04 (0.82)	3.97 (0.87)
Relax atmosphere or ambience	3.72 (0.84)	3.69 (0.67)	3.70 (0.75)	3.68 (0.84)	3.96 (1.62)	3.84 (1.35)

Location	3.98 (0.79)	4.04 (0.70)	4.02 (0.74)	3.41 (0.86)	3.63 (0.80)	3.53 (0.83)
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Note: Standard deviations presented in parenthesis.

The latter six questions of Part I addressed the respondents perceptions toward Chinese and American restaurants' food product.

Those six product food perceptions were as follows:

7. Appropriate temperature of the food
8. Pleasing appearance of the food
9. Flavor of food
10. Variety of menu choices
11. Freshness of ingredients
12. Size of portion

The respondents were requested to rate the level of quality regarding the restaurants' food product as 1=Very Poor; 2= Poor; 3= Average; 4= Good; 5= Very good.

Appropriate temperature of the food:

A significant difference was obtained between overall ratings of American and Chinese restaurants. Chinese restaurants were rated as having more appropriate temperature of the food ($f=5.01, p<.05$). There was no gender difference or two-way interaction found, indicating that both males and females rated Chinese restaurants as better appropriate temperature of the food than American restaurants (Table 8).

Pleasing appearance of the food:

A significant difference was obtained between overall ratings of American and Chinese restaurants. American restaurants were rated as having more pleasing appearance of the food ($f=3.86, p<.05$). No gender difference or two-way interaction was found, indicating that both males and females rate American restaurant as better pleasing appearance of food than Chinese restaurants (Table 8).

Flavor of food:

There was no significant difference between overall rating of American and Chinese restaurants. No significant difference between gender was found. There was a two- way interaction ($f= 4.48, p<.05$), indicating females find Chinese food to have better flavor than American food. No difference between Chinese and American flavor perceptions were obtained for males (Table 8).

Variety of menu choices:

A significant difference was obtained between overall ratings of American and Chinese restaurants. Chinese restaurants were rated as having more variety of menu choices ($f=9.31, p<0.1$). There is no difference between males and females. No two-way interaction was found, indicating that males and females rated Chinese restaurants as more variety of menu choices than American restaurants (Table 8).

Freshness of ingredients:

A significant difference was obtained between overall ratings of American and Chinese restaurants. Chinese restaurants were rated as having better freshness of ingredients ($f=29.56, p<0.1$). There was no difference between males and females in their perception regarding freshness of ingredients. No two-way interaction was found, indicating that males and females rated Chinese restaurants as more freshness of ingredients than American restaurants (Table 8).

Size of portion:

A significant difference was obtained between overall ratings of American and Chinese restaurants. Chinese restaurants were rated as having larger size of portion ($f=72.812, p<0.1$). There is no difference between males and females in their perception

regarding size of portion. No two-way interaction was found, indicating that males and females rated Chinese restaurants as more size of portion than American restaurants (Table 8).

Summary

The study results indicate that students' perceptions of Chinese and American restaurants do differ significantly regarding food product. Chinese food was rated as having a better appropriate temperature, variety of menu choices, freshness of ingredients and size of portion. American food was rated as having a better appearance of food.

Overall, males and females ratings did not differ. However, one two-way interaction between restaurant and gender was obtained while females rated Chinese food as having better flavor than American food. This same difference was not found for males' perception of Chinese and American food. It is unclear why this interaction may have been obtained. A possibility may be that males might like more fat (that is seemingly more in American food) than females do.

Table 8: The Level of Quality Regarding the Restaurants' Food Product of Chinese and American Restaurants

	American	Chinese

Restaurant food product	Mean (S.D.)			Mean (S.D.)		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Appropriate temperature of the food	3.84 (0.72)	3.78 (0.64)	3.81 (0.68)	3.87 (0.80)	3.95 (0.76)	3.92 (0.78)
Pleasing appearance of the food	3.87 (0.74)	3.89 (0.63)	3.88 (0.67)	3.68 (0.91)	3.89 (0.79)	3.80 (0.85)
Flavor of food	3.95 (0.79)	3.93 (0.63)	3.94 (0.70)	3.93 (0.99)	4.13 (0.82)	4.05 (0.90)
Variety of menu choices	3.85 (0.82)	3.94 (0.75)	3.90 (0.78)	4.08 (0.87)	4.04 (0.87)	4.06 (0.87)
Freshness of ingredients	3.64 (0.76)	3.64 (0.66)	3.64 (0.71)	3.85 (0.85)	3.95 (0.77)	3.91 (0.81)
Size of portion	3.76 (0.81)	3.83 (0.73)	3.80 (0.76)	4.17 (0.90)	4.32 (0.70)	4.25 (0.80)

Note: Standard deviations presented in parenthesis.

The respondents were asked two open-ended questions which allow the respondents to express their opinion without encumbrance regarding the perceptions toward Chinese and American restaurants.

The questions were:

- A) What are your perceptions toward Chinese restaurants?
- B) What are your perceptions toward American restaurants?

Three hundred thirty nine respondents provided open-ended response to these questions are summarized below:

For Chinese restaurants, most traditional college students (40 students) feel that Chinese restaurants have more variety of menu while 10 students indicated that Chinese restaurants' menu have less variety. Fifty-four students indicated that Chinese restaurant have a good service while 11 students feel in the opposite way. Ninety- four students say Chinese restaurants have a good food quality (healthy) while

nine students feel, Chinese restaurant have a poor food quality. Moreover, 42 students indicated that Chinese restaurants have a good atmosphere (relaxed atmosphere), but four students feel the opposite.

Some of students (20 students) feel that Chinese restaurant have a good price but four students think it is expensive. Fourteen students feel that Chinese restaurant provide a large portions, 23 students like the taste, while 10 students don't like the taste. They (22 students) also feel that Chinese restaurants are not generally hygienically substandard and wonder about sanitation of food while 9 students think Chinese restaurants is clean. Thirteen students think that Chinese restaurant should train the employees regarding language, students have problems when they order food. A few of students (8 students) feel that they go to Chinese restaurant because they like the difference and like a change of flavor and atmosphere. They do not understand some items on the menu.

For American restaurants, most traditional college students (37 students) feel that American restaurants have less variety of menus while another groups of students (36 students) feel that American restaurants have variety of menu. Thirty students feel that American restaurants provide a good service while 23 feel that American restaurants did not give a good service. Sixty-two students indicated that American restaurants provide good food quality while 16 students feel that American restaurants provide poor food quality.

A few students (10 students) feel that American restaurant atmosphere is noisy. They (6 students) said that they go to American restaurant because they feel familiar and more comfortable.

Objective 2: Identify traditional college students' motivations in their being attracted to Chinese and American restaurants.

Part II of the questionnaire contained eight questions, those questions queried the respondents regarding the reasons for dining at Chinese and American restaurants.

The eight motivational factors were as follows:

9. Special occasion
10. Close to your residence
11. No time to cook
12. Entertainment
13. Friends' and others' suggestions
14. Like the taste of food
15. Worth for the money spent
16. Change the taste

The respondents were requested to rate the level of agreement regarding their reasons for dining out at Chinese and American restaurants as 1= Strong disagree; 2= Disagree; 3= Neutral; 4= Agree; 5= Strongly Agree

Objective 2.1: determine motivations among students of The University of Wisconsin- Stout in their being attracted to Chinese and American restaurants;

Objective 2.2: determine gender differences among all respondents regarding motivations in their being attracted to Chinese and American restaurants.

A 2 (Restaurant type) x 2 (Gender) ANOVA was used to determine if significant differences in perception ratings were obtained between Chinese and American restaurants, or between males and females ratings. This design also allows for interactions between Restaurant type and Gender to be assessed. Restaurant type was included in the analysis, as a repeated measures variable. Gender was included as a between subjects variable.

Special occasion:

A significant difference between overall ratings of American and Chinese restaurants was obtained. Special occasion is higher as a motivation to dine at American restaurants than at Chinese restaurants ($f=28.91, p<.01$). There was no gender difference. No two-way interaction was found, indicating that both males and females rated American restaurants as special occasion for their reason to dine out over Chinese restaurants (Table 9).

Close to your residence:

A significant difference between overall ratings of American and Chinese restaurants. American restaurants were rated as being closer to residence ($f= 68.07$, $p<.01$). A significant gender difference was found ($f= 6.22$, $p<. 05$) indicating that females rated closeness to residences higher than males overall. No two-way interaction was found, indicating that both males and females rated American restaurants as closer to residences than Chinese restaurants (Table 9).

No time to cook:

A significant difference between overall ratings of American and Chinese restaurants. Having “no time to cook was” a greater motivation to dine out at American restaurants than at Chinese restaurants ($f= 52.29$, $p<.01$). There is no gender difference. No two-way interaction was found, indicating that both males and females rated American restaurants as “no time to cook” for their reason to dine out over Chinese restaurants (Table 9).

Entertainment:

A significant difference was obtained between overall ratings of American and Chinese restaurants. Entertainment was higher as a motivator to dine at American restaurants than at Chinese restaurants. ($f=4.73$, $p<.05$). There was no gender difference. No two-way interaction was found, indicating that both males and females rated American restaurants as entertainment for their reason to dine out over Chinese restaurants (Table 9).

Friends' and others' suggestions:

A significant difference was obtained between overall ratings of American and Chinese restaurants. College students rated American restaurants as Friends' and others' suggestions for their reason to dine out ($f=5.53$, $p<.05$). A significant gender difference was found ($f= 16.36$, $p<.01$) indicating that females rated friends' and others' suggestions higher than males overall. No two-way interaction was found, indicating that both males and females rated American restaurants as Friends' and others' suggestions for their reason to dine out over Chinese restaurants (Table 9).

Like the taste of food:

There was no significant difference between overall ratings of American and Chinese restaurants obtained. A significant gender difference was found ($f= 5.34, p<.05$) indicating that females rated liking the taste of food higher than males overall. No two-way interaction was found, indicating that even though “Liking the taste of food” was rated as higher for females in general, neither males’ or females’ ratings indicated a significant preference for the taste of American or Chinese food. (Table 9).

Worth for the money spent:

A significant difference was obtained between overall ratings of American and Chinese restaurants. Chinese restaurants were rated as having greater worth for the money spent ($f= 33.09, p<.01$). There is no gender difference. No two-way interaction was found, indicating that both males and females rated Chinese restaurants worth more for the money spent than American restaurants (Table 9).

Change the taste:

A significant difference between overall ratings of American and Chinese restaurants. Chinese restaurants were rated as providing a greater Change of taste ($f= 165.293, p<.01$). A significant gender difference was found ($f= 4.47, p<.05$) indicating that females rated change of taste higher than males overall. No two-way interaction was found, indicating that both males and females rated Chinese restaurants as providing a greater change of taste than American restaurants (Table 9).

Summary

The study results indicate that students’ motivations in being attracted to Chinese and American restaurants do differ significantly. Chinese restaurants were rated higher for worth for the money spent and change of taste. American restaurants were rated higher for special occasion, close to the residence, no time to cook, entertainment, and friends’ and others’ suggestions. Overall males and females ratings do differ. Females tended to rate close to residence, friends’ and others’ suggestions, like flavor of food and change of taste higher than did males. No two-way interactions were obtained.

**Table 9: The Level of Agreement Regarding the Reason for Dining out at
Chinese and American Restaurants**

Motivations	American			Chinese		
	Mean (S.D.)			Mean (S.D.)		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Special occasion	3.76 (0.90)	3.90 (0.84)	3.84 (0.87)	3.44 (1.01)	3.52 (0.96)	3.48 (0.98)
Close to residence	3.90 (0.82)	3.97 (0.81)	3.94 (0.81)	3.31 (1.03)	3.60 (0.96)	3.48 (1.0)
No time to cook	3.79 (0.92)	3.99 (0.85)	3.90 (0.88)	3.48 (1.07)	3.61 (1.04)	3.56 (1.05)
Entertainment	3.48 (0.97)	3.61 (0.89)	3.56 (0.93)	3.33 (1.08)	3.49 (0.98)	3.42 (1.03)
Friends' & others' Suggestion	3.86 (0.76)	4.15 (0.66)	4.03 (0.72)	3.77 (0.88)	4.03 (0.85)	3.92 (0.87)
Like the taste of food	4.10 (0.78)	4.20 (0.68)	4.16 (0.73)	3.96 (1.09)	4.18 (0.99)	4.09 (1.04)
Worth for money spent	3.52 (0.79)	3.70 (0.86)	3.62 (0.83)	3.90 (1.00)	3.96 (0.99)	3.93 (0.99)
Change the taste	3.31 (0.92)	3.42 (0.93)	3.37 (0.93)	4.10 (0.95)	4.28 (0.83)	4.20 (0.89)

Note: Standard deviations presented in parenthesis.

Objective 3: Identify traditional college students' preferences between Chinese
and American restaurants;

Part III of the questionnaire- contained 10 questions in total. Those questions asked the respondents about the preferences toward Chinese and American restaurants.

The 10 preferences were as follows:

1. taste of food
2. price
3. portion of food
4. variety of food
5. service
6. nutrition
7. uniqueness of food
8. appearance of food
9. texture of food
10. smell

The respondents were asked to make a choice: prefer American restaurant, prefer Chinese restaurant, or prefer both.

Objective 3.1: determine preferences between Chinese and American restaurants among students of The University of Wisconsin- Stout;

Objective 3.2: determine gender differences among all respondents regarding preferences between Chinese and American restaurants;

Chi-square was utilized to find the results of above objectives.

Taste of food:

Overall result of preference regarding Taste of food, Most traditional college students (48.8%) preferred both. However, there is significant difference between males and females ($X^2 = 12.5$, $p < .01$) indicating that more males (43.0%) preferred American restaurants regarding taste of food while most females (55.8%) have no preference

(Table 10).

Price:

With regard to Price, most traditional college students (39.8%) preferred both restaurants. However, a gender difference was found ($X^2 = 6.21$, $p < .05$) indicating that more males (39.4%) preferred Chinese restaurant regarding price while more females (45.1%) have no preference (Table 10).

Portion of food:

With regard to Portion of food, most traditional college students (47.3%) preferred Chinese restaurants. However, there was a difference between males and females ($X^2 = 10.25$, $p < .01$). Both males and females preferred Chinese restaurants (47.9 and 46.9 respectively) more males showed a preference for American restaurants (24.8%) than did females (13.1%). Conversely, more females indicated a preference for both (39.3%) at a higher rate than did males (27.3%) (Table 10).

Variety of food:

Overall result of preference regarding Variety of food, most traditional college students (39.6%) preferred Chinese restaurants. No gender difference was found, indicating that both males and females preferred Chinese restaurants about variety of food (Table 10).

Service:

Overall result of preference regarding Service, most traditional college students (44.2%) preferred both. A gender difference was found ($X^2 = 14.73$, $p < .01$), indicating that more males (38.8%) preferred American restaurants while most females (50.9%) have no preference (Table 10).

Nutrition:

Overall result of preference regarding Nutrition, most traditional college students (42.2%) preferred Chinese restaurants and (40.1%) have no preference. No gender difference was found, indicating that both males and females preferred Chinese restaurants and both about Nutrition (Table 10).

Uniqueness of food:

Overall result of preference regarding Uniqueness of food, most traditional college students (67.6%) preferred Chinese restaurants. No gender difference was found, indicating that both males and females preferred Chinese restaurants about Uniqueness of food (Table 10).

Appearance of food:

Overall result of preference regarding Appearance of food, most traditional college students (46.3%) preferred both. A gender difference was found ($X^2 = 9.83$, $p < .01$), indicating that most males (33.9%) preferred American restaurants and (37.6%) preferred both while most females (52.7%) have no preference (Table 10).

Texture of food:

Overall result of preference regarding Texture of food, most traditional college students (47.3%) preferred both. A gender difference was found ($X^2 = 10.88$, $p < .01$), indicating that males (32.1%) preferred American restaurants, (30.3%) preferred Chinese restaurants and (37.6%) preferred both while most females (54.5%) preferred both, (23.2%) preferred American restaurants and (22.3%) preferred Chinese restaurants regarding Texture of food (Table 10).

Smell:

Overall result of preference regarding Smell, most traditional college students (42.4%) preferred both restaurants. No gender difference was found, indicating that both males and females have no preference (Table 10).

Summary

The preferences of traditional of college students toward Chinese and American restaurants are as follows: there is no preferences regarding taste of food, price, service, appearance, texture and smell of food. Students showed preferences toward Chinese restaurant regarding portion of food, variety of food, nutrition and Uniqueness of food.

Overall, males and females rating do differ. More males preferred American restaurant regarding taste of food, service, and appearance of food. Moreover, more males preferred Chinese restaurants regarding price, while females have no preference.

Furthermore, males indicated preferences at a higher rate for American restaurant regarding portion of food and texture of food.

Table 10: The Preferences of Traditional College Students between Chinese

Restaurants, American Restaurants or Both

	Male	Female	Total
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Preferences	American (%)	Chinese (%)	Both (%)	American (%)	Chinese (%)	Both (%)	American (%)	Chinese (%)	Both (%)
Taste of food	43.0	17.6	39.4	27.2	17.0	55.8	33.9	17.2	48.8
Price	27.9	39.4	32.7	24.1	30.8	45.1	25.7	34.4	39.8
Portion of food	24.8	47.9	27.3	13.8	46.9	39.3	18.5	47.3	34.2
Variety of food	31.5	39.4	29.1	23.7	39.7	36.6	27.0	39.6	33.4
Service	38.8	26.1	35.2	21.9	27.2	50.9	29.0	26.7	44.2
Nutrition	17.6	40.6	41.8	17.9	43.3	38.8	17.7	42.2	40.1
Uniqueness	7.9	64.8	27.3	5.4	69.6	25.0	6.4	67.6	26.0
Appearance of food	33.9	28.5	37.6	22.3	25.0	52.7	27.2	26.5	46.3
Texture of food	32.1	30.3	37.6	23.2	22.3	54.5	27.0	25.7	47.3
Smell	35.8	27.3	37.0	33.9	19.6	46.4	34.7	22.9	42.4

This chapter revealed the results regarding perceptions, motivations, and preferences

including gender difference of traditional college students toward Chinese and American restaurants. The final chapter provides conclusions, recommendations and major findings.

Restaurant operators will possibly be able to apply these recommendations to improve their business to better meet customer needs.

CHAPTER V

Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

Food service is a basic part of the North American way of life. Americans spend nearly half of their food budget (43.5 percent) on food away from home. Most of that amount is spent in commercial restaurants. Virtually everyone in North American has eaten in a restaurant, and approximately half the population eats in a restaurant at least once in any given month. Food service's share of the dollar has increased constantly over last 35 years (Power, 1995).

Today's customers are older, more experienced, and demanding. They expect food service that emphasizes quality food, efficient service, and comfortable surroundings. This means restaurateurs will need to plan well and work hard to rise above the competition (Smith, 1988).

Consumers in the year 2000 will be the most sophisticated that the food service industry has ever encountered. To meet their expectation, food will be artistically presented, its service will be perfect, and the dining environment will be consummately welcoming. In 2000, friendly and sincere service is what will make a difference. Consumers' concerns about cholesterol, fat, sugar, fiber, and calories will also increase tremendously (Lattin, 1989).

As a restaurateur, the primary function is the service of food and beverage to the customer. The reward for providing this service, the net profit the restaurant generates, depends on many factors, but is strongly related to your gross volume of business. The

gross volume of business is, in its turn, almost totally dependent upon the quality of service, as it is perceived by customer. The quality of service is important, but the customer's perception of the quality of service is often even greater importance (Seltz, 1983).

Because of the importance of customer's perception to the restaurant business, this research was designed to investigate the perceptions of traditional college students toward Chinese and American restaurants.

The research instrument was a questionnaire that comprised four parts.

- perceptions toward Chinese and American restaurants;
- motivations for dining out at Chinese and American restaurants;
- preferences toward Chinese and American restaurants; and
- demographic data.

The respondents were college students taking cou thepp -0310 0 12tu0y g

possible interactions between restaurant type and gender regarding Chinese and American restaurants. Specific objectives were listed in Chapter I and III.

The Major Finding

The implications and conclusion in this study may generalize only to the UW-Stout students population. The results of data analysis were presented and discussed in Chapter IV.

The major findings were discussed as follows.

Perceptions of traditional college students regarding restaurants' service and atmosphere toward Chinese and American restaurants.

It was found that most college students perceived Chinese restaurant as having a better speed of service, speed of food delivery, and exotic quality of restaurant atmosphere. It was found however that most college students perceived American restaurants to be cleaner and better located.

These results suggested that food operators of Chinese restaurant should place more focus on cleanliness and location because these factors might increase patrons' motivations to dine out at Chinese restaurants. American restaurant, on the other hand, should improve speed of service, speed of food delivery, and restaurant atmosphere. Generally, traditional college students have positive perceptions toward both restaurants. Food operators should, however, pay attention to not only food quality but also service.

A 1996 NRA consumer survey revealed that, after good food, service is the most important component of a pleasant dining experience (Gardner et al, 1996). A NRA report, Table Service Restaurant Trends (1997), shows that restaurant-goers expect and are finding quality not only in the food they served, but in the service itself. This report also revealed that the majority of consumers' complaints focused on service issues which included delays in receiving food, feeling rushed through their meal once they had received their meal, inattentive servers who have bad attitudes and were not knowledgeable about menu items or preparation techniques (Riehle, 1997).

In addition to demanding good quality food and service, consumers often desired some forms of entertainment to enhance their dining out experience (Riehle, 1997). Entertainment can add to the overall dining experience and raise social pleasure for children and adults alike. Entertainment can include anything from live music or a comedy shows to a display kitchen where meals are prepared within patrons' view. At many entertainment-based concepts, the ambience and décor of the restaurants themselves serve as the entertainment. Visual sensations of any type

ranging from fish tanks to the walls of video screens can help attract consumer searching for stimulating and lively environment (Gardner et al, 1996).

Atmosphere or ambience refers to the internal environment of a restaurant. It is a major decision factor when people go out to restaurants. The environment is a feast

(or famine) for the senses. Sight, sound, smell, and touch all combine to create the stage setting for the dining experience (Marvin, 1992).

An NRA (1983) report, consumer expectations with regard to dining at atmosphere restaurants, indicates that restaurant patrons have the highest expectations regarding the cleanliness of the restaurant. The 1990 Restaurants and Institutions Tastes of America Survey also points decisively to lack of cleanliness as the leading customer complaint. A dirty restaurant eventually will lead to an empty restaurant (Bartlett, 1993). Moreover, customers also have high expectations concerning tastiness of the food, food served at the appropriate temperature, food cooked per order and freshness of raw ingredients. In terms of service, restaurant customers want and expect to be greeted with a smile, asked if they want anything else, and have the food delivered promptly (NRA, 1983).

Moreover, the report also reveals that restaurant patrons generally feel that atmosphere restaurants should serve unique and special meals, have knowledgeable service staff to answer questions about menu items, be flexible in preparing special requests, use high quality food, and provide prompt attention to patron needs.

The current study found that females viewed Chinese restaurants as being more relaxed than American restaurants. Gender differences were found for perceptions of restaurants' location. Females rated location significantly lower than males for both Chinese and American restaurants. This indicates females perceive restaurant locations less positively than male do. One possible reason may be that female is more aware of the safety issue than males do. Females might not feel like to patronize the restaurants located in the places with which they feel unfamiliar.

Location is one of the essential qualities of a successful restaurant to which food operators should pay attention. All good food, modest prices, fabulous décor, and friendly staff are lost and useless if the customers cannot find the restaurant (Herbert, 1985). This suggests that food operators should find a location that is easy to find or easily accessible in order increase the attraction of patrons—general customers or college students alike—to their establishment.

Perceptions of traditional college students regarding restaurants' food product toward Chinese and American restaurants.

The current study found that most college students perceived Chinese restaurants as having more appropriate temperature of the food, variety of menu choices, freshness of ingredients and size of portion. This finding is consistent with NRA (1989) research regarding the market for ethnic foods, indicating that Chinese restaurant was rated very highly for portion size and menu variety. It was found that college students perceived American restaurants as having more pleasing appearance of the food.

These results suggested that Chinese restaurants should focus more on appearance of the food, and American restaurants should focus more on appropriate temperature of the food, variety of menu choices, freshness of ingredients, and size of portion. In general, traditional college students have positive perceptions toward both types of restaurants. To keep customers' satisfaction, however, food operators should improve or maintain good food quality to customers' expectations. Meeting customers' expectations will create customers' satisfaction.

Restaurants and Institutions (1999) survey findings support the idea that restaurants must be able to compete on the basis of food quality alone. The roughly 2,900 restaurant patrons surveyed have a very definite opinion about food quality. It is the most important factor they consider when choosing a restaurant, ranking above service, value and even cleanliness. Regarding the characteristics of restaurant food that contributes to their opinion of its quality, consumers agreed on the top three factors. Temperature is important. Flavor ranks near the top but overwhelmingly, Americans judge the quality of restaurant food on whether it was prepared the way they asked for it.

The R&I survey also suggested that, armed with the knowledge of what consumer wants are; restaurants can parlay their emphasis on food quality into a competitive advantage. The survey asked consumers what qualities they considered important when choosing a restaurant. It also asked about food quality and what factors were most important when judging the quality of food served. The consistently top-rated factor was food quality, followed closely by cleanliness, with service trailing third. That order of preference suggests that while qualities such as menu variety and convenience are important, a lapse in food quality will most likely send consumers elsewhere.

The survey also asked consumers what factors are most important when judging the quality of food served. Overwhelmingly, the main response was that food be “prepared the way I ordered it.” The next most important factors influencing people's perception of food quality were taste (flavor) and appropriate food temperature (hot foods hot, cold foods cold). Other criteria, ranked in order of preference, ranged from the food being prepared as described on the menu to the presence recognizable brand names (Dulled, 1999).

Portion size is an essential part of the consumer's value judgement of a restaurant. Consumers responding to the National Restaurant Association's Dinner Decision-Making study (1996) ranked portion size as one of the 10 hallmarks of a great place to eat. To meet consumers' expectations regarding portion size, many restaurant operators are offering size options to satisfy today's value-conscious diners.

Expectations regarding the size of the portions served are particularly high at dinner occasion involving celebrations or other times when adults focus on getting

together and enjoying each other's company. Similarly, adults have high expectations regarding portion size on occasions when they have a craving for a particular type of food and on occasions when they are looking for healthy or wholesome familiar-tasting food. The size of the portions was particularly important to consumers at cafeteria and buffet restaurants. The Dinner Decision Making Study further revealed that four specific attributes including portion size made a positive contribution to the consumer's value impression. The other relevant attributes were great tasting food, the hours the restaurant was open, and reasonable prices (Mills, 1998).

The current study found that female find Chinese food to have better flavor than American food. This result was consistent with the NRA 1989 research regarding the market for ethnic foods indicating that females are more likely customers for Chinese foods than males.

Open-ended question:

For Chinese restaurants, most traditional college students feel that Chinese restaurants have more variety of menus and provide good service, good food quality (healthy) and have a good atmosphere (relaxed atmosphere).

Some of students feel that Chinese restaurants have a good price. The students also feel that Chinese restaurant provide a big portion, and they like the taste. However, they also feel that Chinese restaurants are generally hygienically substandard and they wonder about sanitation of food. Furthermore, students think that Chinese restaurants should train the employees regarding the language differences. Students have problems when ordering food, and they do not understand some items on the menu.

These results suggested that Chinese restaurants should improve and take good care regarding cleanliness of restaurant. Moreover, staffs should be trained for their English knowledge. Food operators might provide English program to train their staff for better communicate with customers.

Menu is the important factor that food operator should consider because it is a merchandising tool. It determines image and defines concept of restaurant. The menu is the shopping list for guests use to spend their money. Often it is your best (or worst) sale-maker (Marvin, 1992). Therefore, food operators should pay attention to menu. Many menus are so disorganized that they create a confusing image in the minds of guests. The menu should be presented clearly to enable the guests to understand what the restaurant offers.

For ethnic restaurants, food operators should provide English translations in their menus. When a restaurant does not print the menu in the native language of their guests, it is pretentious and rude. Having a menu that English-speaking guests can easily read and understand is a common courtesy. Moreover, items on menu should be identified properly. Guests tend not to order what they cannot identify, and food operators will miss an opportunity to sell such items. Furthermore, an NRA (1989) research regarding the market for ethnic foods indicated that customers agreed very strongly that ethnic foods should be described better and more accurately on menus. This suggests that ethnic food consumption could well increase if restaurant owners provided better explanations of ethnic dishes.

As for American restaurants, most traditional college students feel that American restaurants have less varied menus whereas another group of students believe that

American restaurants have a more variety of menu. One group of students think that American restaurants provided a good service while the other group of students feel that American restaurants did not give a good service. Students indicated that American restaurants provided good food quality. These results suggested that American restaurant should improve variety of menu because it is a factor that customers look for in a restaurant. Moreover, food operators should pay attention to service because it is the most important component of a pleasant dining experience.

The motivations in being attracted to Chinese and American restaurants.

In this study, special occasion, nearness to residence, having no time to cook, entertainment, and friends' and others' suggestions, are the reasons students indicated that they dined out at American restaurants. Most of them, however, indicated that they dined at Chinese restaurants because of the value for the money spent, and for a change of taste.

An NRA (1982) report that studied how consumers make their decision to eat out reveals that quality of food and friendly service are the two most important attributes consumers considered when choosing any type of restaurant. Other important attributes considered for necessary dining out occasions include convenient location, fast service, convenient parking and the expected cost of the total meal. Other important attributes considered for discretionary dining out occasions include atmosphere, variety of menu items, nutritious food, and the availability of a special menu items.

Gender differences were found for motivation regarding the restaurants that are close to ones' residence, females rated closeness to residences significantly higher than

males for both Chinese and American restaurants. One possible interpretation is that females concern more about safety, they would feel more comfortable to go the restaurant that is close to their residence.

Gender differences were also found for motivation regarding Friends' and others' suggestions. Females rated Friends' and others' suggestions significantly higher than males for both Chinese and American restaurants.

This result suggested that suggestions are important in motivating choices regarding dining out at restaurants. This is consistent with Gallup survey (1986) which revealed that 44 percent of cases when consumers try a new restaurant, the reason given for the visit was a recommendation. Word-of-mouth is very powerful. First, it is highly persuasive, the person conveying the message to the next person has the two most important persuasion qualities trust and respect. The message carrier has little to gain from offering the recommendation. Second, it is influential. It usually comes from the first persons' experience and involves reliable information about a restaurant. It is said with conviction, which is one of the most effective tools of persuasion. Third, word-of-mouth is directed to a highly segmented audience, the friends and associates of such a current guest. Consumers usually trust the experiences of family, friends, relatives, neighbors, and others of the same social class (Smith, 1988). The basic thing for successful word-of-mouth advertising is consistency of high-quality standards. The restaurant must unfailingly live up to its reputation so as not to disappoint guests who have come to the restaurant on someone's recommendation (Smith, 1988).

Gender differences were found for motivation regarding liking the taste of food. Females rated liking the taste of food higher than males for both Chinese and American

restaurants. Gender differences were also found for motivation regarding change of taste, females rated change of taste significantly higher than males for both Chinese and American restaurants.

The preferences of traditional college students toward Chinese and American restaurants.

The current study found that regarding portion of food, variety of food, nutrition and uniqueness of food, most of students preferred Chinese restaurants.

The current study further found a gender difference regarding taste of food, appearance of food, and service. More males are satisfied with American restaurants while most females have no preferences. Concerning price, more males preferred Chinese restaurants whereas females have no preferences.

Summary

The results of the current study revealed the differences in traditional college students perceptions, motivations, and preferences for dining at Chinese and American restaurants. Chinese restaurants were perceived to have better speed of service and food delivery, exotic quality of atmosphere, more appropriate temperature of food, a higher variety of menu choices, freshness ingredients, and appropriate size of portions than did American restaurants. American restaurants were, however, perceived as having better location, cleaner and providing a more pleasing appearance of their food.

Students motivations for choosing to dine at Chinese or American restaurants also significantly differed. Participants rated value for the money spent and experiencing a change a of taste as significantly higher motivations for dining at Chinese restaurants than at American restaurants. Celebrating special occasions, closeness to their residences, having no time to cook, entertainment and friends and others' suggestions were rated significantly higher as motivations to dine at American compared to Chinese restaurants.

Participants in the current study also provided significantly higher preference ratings for the portion sizes, variety of menu offerings, nutrition and uniqueness of Chinese cuisine than they provided for American restaurants.

Recommendations for Food Operators

This study provides information, which could benefit to food operators in better understanding customer perceptions, motivations and preferences. Food operators could consider and develop the following factors to respond to the needs of their customers:

- Improve and emphasize of cleanliness of all restaurant areas (this finding holds particularly in regard to participants' perceptions of Chinese restaurants);
- Location is the very important factor. Restaurant operators should select a location that is easy to find and located in business area. Parking lots could be provided to facilitate customers' visit;
- Improved appearance of the food. If plate presentations are exciting and interesting, the diner will be more impressed (especially for Chinese restaurants);
- Staffs should be trained to deliver effective service. They should be able describe about the menu items, give prompt service, take good care, and pay attention to serve the customers. As for Chinese restaurants, language differences are the perceived problem. Food operators might provide an English program to train their staff for better communication with customers, and to provide clear menu descriptions with English translations;

- Improve restaurant atmosphere and create new themes to decorate and create ambience;
- Control food temperature and serve at appropriate temperature (especially for American restaurants);
- Add more menu items in order to provide a variety of menu choices for the customers (especially for American restaurants);
- Provide fresh ingredients;
- Give an appropriate size of portion;
- Set reasonable prices; and
- Try to create word-of-mouth by providing good food and good service.

Recommendations for Further Studies

1. This research could be replicated by other hospitality researchers using different groups of traditional college students in other universities and colleges to see if there are similarities to or differences from this study.
2. This research could be replicated among other groups (adults or teenagers) to determine if there are similarities to or differences from this study.
3. This research could also be conducted with other ethnic restaurants (Italian, Mexican, Thai restaurants).
4. It may be interesting to investigate and compare behavior regarding dining out patterns toward Chinese and American restaurants.
5. Conduct comparative studies of international and American students in regard to this research's topic. It would be interesting to examine any significant differences in perceptions, motivations, and preferences toward Chinese and American restaurants

between these groups.

6. A larger sample size is recommended for further studies to consolidate validity and accomplish the effective generalization of the results.

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APPENDIX A:
Memo to Instructors

Memo

Date: 4/19/99
To: Professor

From: Duangkamol Govitvatana (Demi)
RE: Survey Permission Request

Dear Professor

My name is Duangkamol Govitvatana, graduate student in the Department of Hospitality & Tourism. Currently, I am conducting my thesis entitled " The perceptions of college students toward Chinese restaurants and American restaurants" that requires survey administration in your class (Class, Date and Time). I thus would like to ask for your permission to allow me to distribute the survey in the above-mentioned class and time. It normally takes about 8-10 minutes for the survey administration process to be completed.

To acknowledge your permission, could you please put your note in the area below on this page and pin it on the bulletin board in front of your office? I will be picking up your answer as soon as possible. Thank you very much for your help and permission.

Sincerely,

Duangkamol Govitvatana

H&T Graduate Student

APPENDIX B:

Consent Form

Consent Form

I understand that by returning the/this questionnaire, I am giving my informed consent as a participating volunteer in this study on Perceptions, Motivations and Preferences of Traditional College Students toward Chinese restaurants and American restaurants. I understand the basic nature of the study and agree that any potential risks are exceedingly small. I also understand the potential benefits that might be realized from the successful completion of this study. I am aware that the information is being sought in a specific manner so that no identifiers are needed and so that confidentiality is guaranteed. I realize that I have the right to refuse to participate and that my right to withdraw from participation at any time during the study will be respected with no coercion or prejudice.

I understand I can return this form/study without completing it, just putting it in envelope.

NOTE: Questions or concerns about participation in the research or subsequent complaints should be addressed first to the researcher or research advisor and second to Dr. Ted Knous, Chair, UW-Stout Institution Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, 11 HH, UW-Stout, Menomonie, WI, 54751, phone (715) 232-1126

APPENDIX C:

Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE

PERCEPTIONS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS TOWARD CHINESE
RESTAURANTS AND AMERICAN RESTAURANTS

The purpose of this study is to identify the perceptions of college students toward Chinese restaurants and American restaurants. Your participation in this survey is voluntary. By completing this survey, however, you are giving your consent to participate in the study. All responses will be kept strictly anonymous.

Part I: Perceptions toward Chinese and American Restaurants

Make a circle "O" over a number corresponding to the level of quality for each item.

Rank scores: 1= Very Poor; 2= Poor; 3= Average; 4= Good; 5= Very Good

NOTE: PLEASE RATE FOR FAMILY STYLE CHINESE AND AMERICAN RESTAURANTS

RATE EACH Restaurants' service and atmosphere	CHINESE					AMERICAN				
	Level of quality					Level of quality				
	(VP)	(P)	(A)	(G)	(VG)	(VP)	(P)	(A)	(G)	(VG)
1. Speed of service	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
2. Restaurant employees greet you with smile	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
3. Speed of food delivery	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
4. Attractiveness of room decorations	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
5. Cleanliness	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
6. Exotic quality of restaurant atmosphere	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
7. Relaxed atmosphere or ambience	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
8. Location	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

RATE EACH Restaurants' food product	CHINESE					AMERICAN				
	Level of quality					Level of quality				
	(VP)	(P)	(A)	(G)	(VG)	(VP)	(P)	(A)	(G)	(VG)
1. Appropriate temperature of the food	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
2. Pleasing appearance of the food	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
3. Flavor of food	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
4. Variety of menu choices	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
5. Freshness of ingredients	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
6. Size of portion	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

A) What are your perceptions toward Chinese restaurants?

B) What are your perceptions toward American restaurants?

Part II: Please rate the reasons why you would dine at Chinese and American restaurants.

Make a circle “O” over a number corresponding to the level of agreement for each factor

Rank score: 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly Agree

RATE EACH Reasons to dine out	CHINESE					AMERICAN				
	Level of Agreement					Level of Agreement				
	(SD)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)	(SD)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
1. Special occasion	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
2. Close to your residence	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
3. No time to cook	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
4. Entertainment	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
5. Friends' and others' suggestions	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
6. Like the taste of the food	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
7. Value for money spent	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
8. Change of taste	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

Part III: If you were asked to make a choice between American and Chinese restaurants, your preferences among following would be:

Please make a circle “O” over a letter corresponding to your preference

- prefer **American** restaurants
- prefer **Chinese** restaurants
- prefer **both**

taste of food.....	a	b	c
price.....	a	b	c
portion of food.....	a	b	c
variety of food	a	b	c
service.....	a	b	c
nutrition.....	a	b	c
uniqueness of food.....	a	b	c
appearance of food.....	a	b	c
texture of food.....	a	b	c
smell.....	a	b	c

Part IV: Demographic data

- Gender:** ___ male ___ female
- Age:** ___ years
- Year in college:** ___ Freshman ___ Sophomore ___ Junior ___ Senior ___ Graduate

