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WHICH DINE OUT VARIABLES ARE IMPORTANT IN THE RESTAURANT SELECTION PROCEDURE FOR BUSINESS PURPOSES: CASE STUDY OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY MEMBERS

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The purpose of the study is to explore variables that university-associated members perceive to be important when they dine out for business purposes. The study explores whether importance of these variables are different according to demographic and dine out characteristics. Independent-sample t-test and Analysis of variance (ANOVA) are utilized for this study. The study indicates that variables that people consider more important compared to other factors are ones that directly related to peoples' dine out experiences. Items that are not directly related to actual dine out experience appear to be less important to university community members when they dine out.

Business, dine, university, characteristics, preferences, restaurant

INTRODUCTION

Dining away from homes or work places has become the norm in our society. Diners have more than enough options to choose, from menus to price, and time to dine out to cuisine type. There have been various types, sizes, and cuisines offered in food facilities in almost every university and college setting in the U.S. While colleges and universities offer a variety of managed services that cater to the needs of captive customers, local food service vendors offer various types of foods and atmospheres with various and flexible operating hours. Due to the increasing number of options that on-campus dine out facilities offer and the growing number of off-campus competitors, members in the college community is not tolerating under-valued food and services.

Unlike other typical markets in the U.S., colleges/universities markets have different characteristics because of its mixture of captive members, from traditional on campus resident students to non traditional students or staff and faculty who live off campus with family or other members. As the annual migration of new students to campuses occurs, college town populations are comprised of younger generations from different regions with different characteristics and the number of populations tends to be consistent. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, there are 4,276

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post-secondary institutions in the U.S. The study also indicates that between 1995 and 2005, the traditional college age population (18 to 24) rose 15 % while college enrollment rose 23 %. The number of female students enrolled increased 27 %, while the number of male students enrolled increased by 18 %. The college market is getting larger as college populations are growing in both students, faculty, and staff in the U.S. College enrollment grew to 18 million in fall 2007 and is expected to increase by 14 % throughout fall 2016. In the fall of 2005, degree-granting institutions employed 4.5 million faculty and staff (U.S. Department of Education).

In order to identify what target markets expect, understanding characteristics of potential diners is vital in the restaurant business. Studies (Almanza *et al*., 1994; Qu, 1997; Kievela, 1999; Pettijohn *et al*., 1997; Zopiatis & Pribic, 2007; Andaleeb & Caskey, 2007) indicate issues of dine out preferences according to demographic characteristics in general. However, importance of dine out variables and dine out characteristics of college and university members have not been well explored among researchers and practitioners.

The purpose of the study is to explore variables that college community members perceive to be important when they dine out for business purposes. Variables such as price, cuisine, atmosphere, qualities of food and service, name brand, location, convenience, architectural design, other customers, previous experience, and alcohol service are used to identify customers' business dine out preferences. Furthermore, the study also observes whether importance of these business dine out preference variables are different according to gender, age, income, job, number of residents, resident type, franchise preference, time for dine out, time spent, number in the party, and money spent.

Based on the purpose of the study, three research questions are asked as follows;

1) What factors are important to college/university members in selecting a restaurant for business purposes?
2) Is the level of the importance of dine out variables different according to demographic characteristics?
3) Is the level of the importance of dine out variables different according to dine out characteristics?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Understanding dine out preferences of the target market can be beneficial to restaurant operators to differentiate themselves from other competitors. Gabrielsen (2001) indicates that preferences are the one of the common concepts in the study of social sciences, and can be designated to individuals, diverse subgroups, or a population. People may perceive dine out variables differently based on their own characteristics, such as age, gender, time dine out, money spent, etc. Individual selection of a restaurant can be influenced by different dine out preferences (Gustafsson, 2004). Studies have segmented potential restaurant customers by demographics (Binkley, 1998; Chowa et al., 2007), and by socio economics (Nayga & Capps, 1994).

Service-based organizations need to deal with a variety of groups of customers seeking a variety of services. Customers' perceptions of service processes are a crucial element that affect the restaurant's operational success. East (1996) indicates the importance of understanding customer expectations on the service. June and Smith (1987) indicate that tailoring products to specific customer wants is a potential advantage for improving both market share and profitability. The restaurant operators need to know what drives customers' restaurant selections, and how to be better positioned in the college market as the college market in the restaurant industry is getting larger (Knutson, 2000).

DINE OUT VARIABLES IN THE RESTAURANT SELECTION PROCEDURE

Dine out variables are not only directly related to food quality and services but are also related to surrounding atmosphere. Kivela (1999) indicates that the total dine out experience is comprised of not only food and beverages, but also the atmosphere of the dining area and service provided. Several dine out variables are identified through many studies in different fields. In general, customers select restaurants through groups of variables (Pizam and Ellis, 1999; Gustafsson, 2004). Researchers examine various variables that are identified as important factors in selecting a restaurant.
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Kivela *et al*. (2000) reveal comfort feeling, cleanliness, freshness of the food, staff appearance and the room temperature as important factors. Knutson and Patton (1993) and Shank and Nahhas (1994) indicate food quality as main concern. Auty (1992) also indicates that food quality is the most important factor; however, image and atmosphere of the restaurant are decision-making factors in the restaurant selection procedure. Roboson & Kimes (2009) identify table spaces that diners needed from other groups. Clark and Wood (1998) state generic reasons for selecting restaurants, such as quality of food, price, atmosphere, and service speed. Mattila (2001) prioritizes three attributes; food quality, service, and atmosphere, that motivate customers to select a restaurant. Goldman (1993) indicates service systems, decor, and pricing as operational components.

Kim (1996) indicates the importance of elements of atmosphere such as furnishings, lighting, decor, color, coordination, music, and use of space. For study of matured diners, Lahue (2000) stated that physical aspects of the restaurants were important considerations for the mature segment. Tzeng, Teng, Chen, and Opricovic (2002) indicate the restaurant location as an important factor in selecting a restaurant. Mattila (2001) and Wilkie (1994) examine the importance of brand. Candel (2001) identifies the importance of convenience and price, while Verma (1999) identifies waiting time as important variables when selecting a restaurant. June & Smith (1987) test a model of customers' choice behavior for a restaurant meal, and state that people select restaurants based on their preferences of location, atmosphere, purpose, time, type and price.

RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to explore business-dine out preferences of diners who are associated with higher education in the U.S. Data for this study is collected from current staff, faculty, and students in the university in southwest region in the U.S. Faculty includes individuals who are adjunct professors, assistant professors, associate professors, or professors, regardless tenured or non-tenured. Staff includes employees who are engaged in non-teaching and ancillary support work, including part time and full time. Students include both undergraduate and graduate students, including part time and full time.

The questionnaire was initially pilot tested with 20 individuals from the university, including 15 students, 4 staff, and one faculty member for reliability and validity. After the pilot study, minor modifications were made to make the survey clearer and more understandable for potential sample subjects. The data from the pilot-test identified a wide perception of dine out variables.

The institution initially identified all subjects who had an official university email address. The combined total number of the three groups was approximately 19,700; faculty (1,084), staff (3,388), and students (15,188). A computerized number generator system was utilized in order to ensure that each member of the population had an equal chance of being selected. The total samples of 985, consisting of 55 faculty, 170 staff, and 760 current students were extracted by selecting every 20th person on its email list. Emails were sent to these selected individuals with a site that linked to the survey web. One hundred ninety-seven out of 985 questionnaires were initially returned which

yielded a 20% response rate. Among these returned 197 respondents, 8 questionnaires were eliminated for data coding due to invalid information. Therefore, 189 questionnaires (19.2%) were coded and analyzed for this study.

The questionnaire was sub-categorized into three parts. The first part was designed to measure respondents' level of importance on dine out variables: price, cuisine type, service quality, food quality, name brand, location, convenience, architectural design, other customers, and previous experience. Respondents were asked to respond to a five point Likert scale in this section. The descriptors ranged from (1) "least important" to (5) "most important."

The part two consisted of 11 questions which asked the respondents' dine out characteristics such as franchise preference, times of dine out for lunch and dinner, hours being spent for dine outs for lunch and dinner, amount spending for food, and number of people dine out with for lunch and dinner.

The part three addressed the respondents' personal characteristics, such as gender, age, annual income, types of residence (dorm, apartment, or house), the number of residents at the current residence, and current job/classification. In order to find out respondents' business dine out preferences, descriptive statistics (e.g., frequency and percentage) were initially used.

To test whether there is significant differences in the level of importance on business dine out variables according to gender and franchise preference, independent-sample t-test was used. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was utilized to examine the level of importance on business dine out preferences according to age, number of residents at the respondent's residence, type of residence, job, dine out time for lunch and dinner, hours of dine out for lunch and dinner, number of people dine out with, frequency of dine out for lunch and dinner, and amount spent for dine out for lunch and dinner.

RESULTS

Table 1 indicates respondents' personal characteristics. The 189 respondents age groups consisted of 89 (47.%) of 18-25 years, 26 (13.8%) of 26-35 years old, and 74 (39.2%) of older than 35 years. About 71 (39.4%) indicated their earnings less than $10,000 per year and followed by 51 (28.3%) of $10,000-$29,999, and 22 (12.2%) of $30,000-$49,999. The sample consisted of 55 (29.3%) male and 133 (70.7%) female respondents. More than a half of respondents (110, 58.8%) were living with one or two other people while 44 (23.5%) respondents were living alone and only 27 (14.4%) respondents with more than 3 other people. In response to respondent's resident type, 130 (70.3%) identified that they lived in a house while only 14 (7.6%) respondents lived in a dorm, and 41 (22.2%) respondents lived in an apartment. One hundred twenty students (64.2%) were consisted of 103 (55.1%) undergraduate and 17 (9.1%) graduate students. There were 35 (18.7%) faculty and 32 (17.1%) staff among respondents. Respondent's franchise preferences were almost evenly distributed to 90 (47.6%) respondents who prefer franchised restaurants and 84 (44.4%) respondents who prefer non-franchised restaurants.

Table 1.
Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

		Frequency	Valid %
Age group	18-25	89	47.0
	26-35	26	13.8
	36-45	21	11.1
	46-55	30	15.9
	56 or older	23	12.2
	Total*	189	100.0
Current Gross Income (Year)	Under $10,000	71	39.4
	$10,000-$29,999	51	28.3
	$30,000-$49,999	22	12.2
	$50,000-$69,999	14	7.8
	Higher than $70,000	22	12.2
	Total*	180	100.0
Gender	Male	55	29.3
	Female	133	70.7
	Total	188	100.0
Number of Members at the Current Residence (including yourself)	Myself	44	23.5
	2-3 People	110	58.8
	4 or more	27	14.4
	Total*	187	100.0
Residence Type	Dorm	14	7.6
	Apartment	41	22.2
	House	130	70.3
	Total*	185	100.0
Job	Undergraduate Student	103	55.1
	Graduate Students	17	9.1
	Faculty	35	18.7
	Staff	32	17.1
	Total*	187	100.0
Franchise Preference	No preference	15	7.9
	Non-franchise	84	44.4
	Franchise	90	47.6
	Total	189	100.0

*Questions in this survey were optional. Thus, missing values led to the variance in respondent numbers of each group, and some categories may not equal to the total sample (189) due to missing responses

More than a half of respondents (119, 64.7%) favored the lunchtime between noon and 12:59 pm, followed by 1:00 pm or later (38, 20.7%). For preferred time for dinner, 87 respondents (47.8%) indicated 6:00-6:59, followed by 7:00 pm or later (33.5%). In the number of hours taken for dining, respondents tend to take 1 to 2 hours for both lunch (99, 54.4%) and dinner (75, 42.4%), followed by less than one hour for lunch (60, 33.0%) and 2 or more hours for dinner (70, 39.5%). In asking how many people respondents dine out with, 65 (35.7%) respondents tended to dine out alone or with one other person for lunch and 61 (34.7%) for dinner. Only 30 respondents (16.5%) for lunch and 33 respondents (18.8%) for dinner preferred to dine out with 6 or more people. In response to frequencies of dine outs, 170 respondents (92.9%) for lunch and 168 (93.3%) for dinner indicated that they dine out less than four times per month. More than half of respondents intended to spend $10 to $19.99

(104, 57.1%) for food, follows by more than $20 (41, 22.5%) and less than $10 (37, 20.3%). Both for alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, majority respondents indicated less than $10 for non-alcoholic (160, 90.4%) and for alcoholic (119, 70%).

Table 2.
Business Dine Out Characteristics

		Frequency			Valid %		
Time preference for LUNCH	Before Noon	27			14.7		
	Noon-12:59pm	119			64.7		
	1:00 or later	38			20.7		
	Total	184			100.0		
Time preference for DINNER	Before 5:00pm	11			6.0		
	5:00-5:59pm	23			12.6		
	6:00-6:59pm	87			47.8		
	7:00 or after	61			33.5		
	Total	182			100.0		
		L*		D**	L*		D**
Number of hours taking for LUNCH & DINNER	Less than 1 hour	60		32	33.0		18.1
	1-1.59 hours	99		75	54.4		42.4
	2 or more hours	22		70	12.1		39.5
	Total	182		177	100.0		100.0
Number of people dining out for LUNCH & DINNER	Fewer than 2	65		61	35.7		34.7
	3-5 people	87		82	47.8		46.6
	6 or more people	30		33	16.5		18.8
	Total	182		176	100.0		100.0
Dining out frequency for LUNCH & DINNER	Less than 4 times	170		168	92.9		93.3
	More than 4 times	13		12	7.1		6.7
	Total	189		180	100.0		100.0
		Food	Non-Alc.	Alc.	Food	Non-Alc.	Alc.
Amount of spending for dine out for LUNCH & DINNER	Less than $10	37	160	119	20.3	90.4	70.0
	$10.00-$19.99	104	13	36	57.1	7.3	21.2
	$20.00 or more	41	4	15	22.5	2.3	8.8
	Total	182	177	170	100.0	100.0	100.0

Questions in this survey were optional. Thus, missing values led to the variance in respondent numbers of each group, and some categories may not equal to the total samples (189) due to missing responses
*L=Lunch
**D=Dinner

The respondents were asked to mark on a scale of one to five the variables they considered to be important for business dine outs. The mean values of the variables were presented in Table 3. For dine out for business purposes, all tested variables marked higher than three (neutral), and *Food Quality* (4.34) was the most important variable for respondents. *Service Quality* (4.21), *Previous Experience* (4.05), *Atmosphere* (3.99), *Cuisine Type* (3.92), *Location* (3.80), *Convenience* (3.72), *Price* (3.60), *Other Customers* (3.37), *Name Brand* (3.3), and *Architectural Design* (3.18) were followed. *Alcohol Service* (3.11) was the least important dine out variable among these 12 variables.

No significant differences were found in business dine out variables according to respondent's number of members at the current residence and resident type. However, as table 4 indicates some business dine out variables were significantly different according to gender, age, income, and job. The result of independent-sample t-test showed that the importance of *Convenience* (*t=-2.522, p=.013*) was significantly different according to gender at the significant level of 0.05. It indicated that the average scores of convenience for female (3.83) were higher than male respondents (3.46).

The result of ANOVA showed that some significant differences in dine out preference variables according to respondent's age. Variables, *Price (F=2.905, p=.023) and Other Customers (F=3.275, p=.013) were* significant according to respondent's age at the significant level of 0.05. LSD multiple

Table 3.
Importance of Business Dine Out Attributes

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Food Quality (FQ)	184	4.34	0.736
Service Quality (SQ)	182	4.21	0.773
Previous Experience (PE)	182	4.05	0.903
Atmosphere (At)	182	3.99	0.804
Cuisine Type (CT)	182	3.92	0.761
Location (Lo)	184	3.80	0.861
Convenience (Co)	182	3.72	0.900
Price (Pr)	183	3.60	0.890
Other Customers (OC)	180	3.37	1.078
Brand Name (BN)	181	3.33	0.960
Architectural Design (AD)	182	3.18	0.959
Alcohol Service (AS)	180	3.11	1.128

Questions in this survey were optional. Thus, missing values led to the variance in respondent numbers of each group, and some categories may not equal to the total samples (189) due to missing responses.

comparison test indicated that age 26-35 (4.12) scored higher than ages 18-25 (3.48), 46-55 (3.46), and 56 or older (3.52) in analyzing the *Price*. Age 46-55 (2.82) scored smaller than ages 18-25 (3.56), 26-35 (3.56), and 36-45 (3.43) in analyzing *Other Customers* at the Restaurant.

Previous Experience (*F=2.491, p=.045*), and *Alcohol Services* (*F=6.298, p=.000*) were identified as ones that had significant differences at the significant level of 0.05 according to the respondent's income level. LSD multiple comparison tests indicated that ones earned under $10,000 (3.83) scored lower than ones earned more than $50,000-$69,999 (4.43) and ones earned higher than $70,000 (4.40) in analyzing *Previous Experience*. Ones earned under $10,000 (3.00) scored lower than ones scored $50,000-$69,999 (3.54) and ones earned more than $70,000 (4.00). Ones earned under $10,000 (3.00), $10,000-$29,999 (3.08), and more than $70,000 (4.00) scored higher than ones earned $30,000-$49,999 (2.43). A significant difference was also found between ones earned $10,000-$29,999 (3.08) and $30,000-$49,999 (2.43), and ones earned $50,000-$69,999 (3.54) in analyzing *Alcohol Services*. A significant difference was found between undergraduate students (3.56) and faculty (3.00) in analyzing *Other Customers* (F=2.893, p=.037). LSD multiple comparison tests indicated that undergraduate students (3.56) scored higher than faculty (3.00).

The results indicated that there were no significant differences found in business dine out variables such as *Cuisine Type, Atmosphere, Service Quality, Food Quality, Brand Name, Location, and Architectural Design* regardless respondents' demographic characteristics.

Table 4.
Dine Out Attributes for Business Purposes According to Demographic Characteristics

		n.	PR	CT	AT	SQ	FQ	BN	LO	CO	AD	OC	PE	AS
Gender	a)Male	53	3.42	3.81	3.96	4.26	4.26	3.13	3.74	3.46	3.21	3.36	4.04	3.23
	b)Female	129	3.67	3.98	4.02	4.20	4.38	3.41	3.83	3.83	3.16	3.38	4.07	3.06
Significant Level			.074	.227	.684	.585	.345	.078	.500	.013	.783	.899	.833	.381
t-value			-1.795	-1.217	-.408	.547	-.946	-1.774	-.0675	-2.522*	.276	-.127	-.211	.879
Statistical difference										b>a				
Age	a)18-25	87	3.48	3.83	4.01	4.14	4.20	3.24	3.66	3.60	3.10	3.56	3.87	3.00
	b)26-35	26	4.12	4.08	4.23	4.27	4.46	3.40	4.04	3.96	3.48	3.56	4.19	3.16
	c)36-45	21	3.67	3.90	3.90	4.19	4.38	3.67	3.86	3.57	3.43	3.43	4.24	2.95
	d)46-55	28	3.46	4.07	3.82	4.29	4.50	3.46	3.93	3.86	2.93	2.82	4.18	3.46
	e)56 older	21	3.52	3.95	3.95	4.33	4.50	3.05	3.86	3.86	3.19	3.05	4.29	3.20
Significant Level			.023	.470	.421	.797	.165	.217	.259	.272	.175	.013	.141	.387
F-value			2.905*	.892	.978	.416	1.646	1.457	1.334	1.299	1.606	3.275*	1.752	1.042
Statistical difference			b>ade									d<abc		
Income	a)under $10,000	69	3.46	3.90	3.97	4.12	4.19	3.31	3.71	3.67	3.19	3.51	3.83	3.00
	b)$10,000-$29,999	51	3.76	3.90	4.00	4.22	4.31	3.24	3.78	3.69	2.96	3.35	4.10	3.08
	c)$30,000-$49,999	21	3.52	3.86	3.95	4.38	4.48	3.57	3.95	3.95	3.52	3.43	4.10	2.43
	d)50,000-$69,999	14	3.64	3.93	4.14	4.31	4.36	3.36	4.00	3.57	3.36	3.23	4.43	3.54
	e)Higher than $70,000	19	3.58	4.15	3.90	4.30	4.70	3.45	3.95	3.85	3.10	3.05	4.40	4.00
Significant Level			.468	.730	.938	655	.081	.736	.610	.660	.202	.525	.045	.000
F-value			.896	.507	.199	.611	2.118	.500	675	.604	1.510	.804	2.491*	6.298*
Statistical difference													a<de	a<e abe>c abc<d
Job	a)Undergraduate	100	3.52	3.83	3.97	4.10	4.22	3.36	3.72	3.71	3.20	3.56	3.91	3.01
	b)Graduate	17	3.71	4.00	4.12	4.41	4.35	3.06	3.76	3.65	3.00	3.18	4.12	3.06
	c)Faculty	33	3.53	4.12	4.09	4.31	4.52	3.36	3.94	3.64	3.15	3.00	4.33	3.44
	d)Staff	30	3.77	3.90	3.83	4.29	4.48	3.31	3.84	3.81	3.14	3.17	4.17	3.28
Significant Level			.515	.270	.536	.257	.121	.688	.632	.884	.885	.037	.100	.244
F-value			.765	1.317	.728	1.360	1.963	.492	.575	.218	.217	2.893*	2.113	1.402
Post Hoc (LSD)												a>c		

*denotes significance level <0.05
**only shows ones have significant differences
PR (Price); CT (Cuisine Type); AT (Atmosphere); SQ (Service Quality); FQ (Food Quality); BN (Brand Name); LO (Location); CO (Convenience); AD (Architectural Design); OC (Other Customers); PE (Previous Experience); AS (Alcohol Service)

As table 5 indicated, the result of ANOVA showed that some significant differences were found in business dine out variables according to the amount spent for food and alcohol, hours spent for lunch, number of people dine out with for lunch and dinner, and dine out time for dinner. However, no significant differences were found in business dine out variable according to franchise preference, amount spent for beverage, hours spent for dinner, dine out time for lunch, and out frequency for lunch and dinner.

The importance of the *Food Quality (F=6.111, p=.003), Location (F=3.976, p=.020),* and *Previous Experience (F=3.568, p=.030)* were significantly different according to the amount of spending for foods at *p*=.05. LSD multiple comparison tests indicated ones spent less than $10 (4.00) for food had a lower score compared to ones spent $10-$20 (4.36) and ones spent more than $20 (4.56) in *Food Quality.* Ones spend less than $10 (3.49) had also a lower score compared to ones spent $10-$20 (3.83) and ones spent more than $20 (4.02) in *Location.* Ones spent less than $10 (3.77) scored lower than ones spent between more than $20 (4.32) in *Previous Experience.*

Table 5.
Dine Out Attributes for Business Purposes According to Dine Characteristics

		n	PR	CT	AT	SQ	FQ	BN	LO	CO	AD	OC	PE	AS
Expense for Food	a)< $10	37	3.70	3.78	3.75	4.00	4.00	3.03	3.49	3.51	2.83	3.29	3.77	2.83
	b)$10-$20	102	3.54	0	4.0	4.23	4.36	3.36	3.83	3.77	3.23	3.32	4.06	3.07
	c)>$20	40	3.61	4.08	4.17	4.32	4.56	3.48	4.02	3.72	3.27	3.58	4.32	3.48
Significant Level			.625	.230	.072	.164	.003	.111	.020	.320	.068	.404	.030	.054
F-value			.471	1.481	2.676	1.827	6.111*	2.229	3.976*	1.146	2.724	.911	3.568*	3.280
Post Hoc (LSD)							a<bc		a<bc,				a<c	
Expense for Alcohol	a)< $10	119	3.61	3.89	4.00	4.20	4.32	3.30	3.81	3.66	3.13	3.32	4.03	2.87
	b)$10-$20	35	3.69	3.97	4.08	4.31	4.36	3.63	3.94	3.89	3.17	3.49	4.19	3.83
	c)>$20	15	2.93	4.00	4.07	4.07	4.47	2.87	3.53	3.31	3.27	3.27	4.00	3.47
Significant Level			.015*	.780	.834	.578	.761	.030*	.307	.141	.860	.709	.633	.000*
F-value			4.301	.248	.182	.550	.273	3.581	1.191	1.985	.151	.344	.458	11.552
Post Hoc (LSD)			c<ab					a>c						a<bc
Hours Spent for Lunch	a)< 1	60	3.50	3.73	3.88	4.05.	4.13	3.29	3.60	3.49	2.95	3.27	3.83	3.05
	b)1-2	97	3.62	4.00	4.02	4.24	4.42	3.30	3.85	3.74	3.21	3.32	4.15	3.11
	c)>2	23	3.64	4.00	4.09	4.43	4.45	3.43	4.09	4.15	3.45	3.81	4.23	3.19
Significant Level			.685	.087	.469	.116	.042*	.835	.049*	.015*	.071	.126	.058	.879
F-value			.379	2.482	.760	2.179	3.218	.180	3.070	4.329	2.682	2.094	2.892	.129
Post Hoc (LSD)							a<c		a<c	a<c				
Number of People for Lunch	a) <2	65	3.51	3.88	3.86	4.13	4.09	3.25	3.66	3.63	3.11	3.37	4.19	3.06
	b) 3-5	85	3.72	3.95	4.09	4.26	4.50	3.35	3.93	3.76	3.12	3.29	4.16	3.13
	c)>6	30	3.40	3.93	4.03	4.20	4.37	3.43	3.77	3.73	3.40	3.63	3.97	3.17
Significant Level			.159	.824	.199	.607	.003*	.673	.161	.682	.327	.323	.310	.903
F-value			1.856	.194	1.627	.500	6.001	.397	1.848	.383	1.124	1.138	1.178	.102
Post Hoc (LSD)							b>a							
Number of People for Dinner	a) <2	61	3.48	3.84	3.82	4.08	4.05	3.21	3.66	3.59	3.08	3.35	3.90	2.97
	b) 3-5	80	3.70	3.94	4.09	4.27	4.48	3.35	3.90	3.79	3.10	3.29	4.14	3.06
	c) >6	33	3.48	3.97	4.25	4.30	4.52	3.52	3.91	3.73	3.45	3.64	4.12	3.42
Significant Level			.273	.643	.024*	.280	.001*	.339	.196	.440	.148	.300	.284	.165
F-value			1.310	.443	3.791	1.283	7.502	1.089	1.644	.826	1.931	1.212	1.269	1.823
Post Hoc (LSD)					a<bc		a<bc							
Dine out Time for Dinner	a)before 5pm	11	3.27	3.27	3.55	3.64	3.55	2.70	2.91	2.73	2.60	3.50	3.50	2.90
	b)5-5:59	23	3.78	3.78	3.91	4.17	4.22	3.39	3.83	3.87	3.35	3.48	4.22	2.87
	c)6-6:59	86	3.69	4.01	4.02	4.21	4.41	3.40	3.80	3.76	3.15	3.25	3.98	3.12
	d)7 or later	60	3.43	3.97	4.07	4.33	4.44	3.28	3.93	3.77	3.21	3.47	4.21	3.25
Significant Level			.153	.017*	.240	.056	.001*	.174	.004*	.002*	.216	.587	.070	.516
F-value			1.779	3.492	1.414	2.574	5.425	1.678	4.625	5.041	1.502	.645	2.392	.763
Post Hoc (LSD)				a<cd			a<bcd		a<bcd	a<bcd				

For the amount for alcohol, *Price (F=4.301, p=.015), Brand Name (F=3.581, p=.030), and Alcohol Service (F=11.552, p=.000)*) were significantly different. LSD multiple comparison tests indicated that ones spent less than $10 (3.61) and ones spent $10-$20 (3.69) were larger than ones spent more than $20 (2.93) in *Price*. Ones spent less than $10 (3.30) scored higher than ones spent more than $20.00 *in Brand Name.* Ones spent less than $10 (2.87) scored smaller than ones spent $10-$20 (3.83) and more than $20 (3.47) in *Alcohol Services.*

Food Quality (F=3.218, p=.042), Location (F=3.070, p=.049), and Convenience (F=4.329, p=.015) were identified as ones having significant differences at the significant level of 0.05 according to number of hours spent for lunch. LSD multiple comparison tests indicate significant difference between ones spent less than one hour (4.13) and ones spent more than 2 hours (4.45) in analyzing the importance of *Food Quality*. Significant difference was also found between ones spent less than one hour (3.29) and ones spent more than 2 hours (4.09) in analyzing *Location*. Significant difference was found between ones spent less than one hour (3.49) and more than 2 hours (4.15) in analyzing *Convenience*.

Only the variable *Food Quality (F=6.001, p=.003) was* significantly different according to the number of people respondents dine out with for lunch at *p*=.05. LSD multiple comparison tests indicated that ones dine out with 3-5 people (including oneself) (4.50) had a higher score compared to ones dine out alone or with one more person (4.09).

Atmosphere (F=3.791, p=.024) and *Food Quality* (F=7.502, p=.001) were identified as ones having significant differences according to the number of people dine out with for dinner. Ones dine out alone or one more person (3.82) had smaller mean scores than ones dine out with 3-5 people (including oneself) (4.09) and more than 6 (including oneself) (4.25) in analyzing *Atmosphere*. For *Food Quality*, ones dine out alone or with one more person (4.05) also scored smaller than ones dine out with 3-5 people (including oneself) (4.48) and more than 6 (including oneself) (4.52).

The importance of the *Cuisine Type* (F=3.492, p=.017), *Food Quality (F=5.425, p=.001), Location (F=4.625, p=.004),* and *Convenience (F=5.041, p=.002) were* significantly different according to the time for dine out for dinner. LSD multiple comparison tests indicated that ones dine out before 5 pm (3.27) had a lower score compared to ones dine out between 6 to 6:59 pm (4.01) and ones dine out after 7 pm (3.97) in analyzing *Cuisine Type*. Ones dine out after 5pm (3.55) also score smaller than ones dine out 5-5:59 (4.22), 6-6:59 (4.41), and after 7 pm (4.44) in analyzing *Food Quality*. For *Location*, ones dine out after 5pm (2.91) scored smaller than ones dine out 5-5:59 (3.83), 6-6:59 (3.80, and after 7 pm (3.93). For Convenience, ones dine out before 5pm (2.73) scored smaller than ones dine out 5-5:59 (3.87), 6-6:59 (3.76), and after 7 pm (3.77).

CONCLUSION

People expect different food services based on their own lifestyle and characteristics (Uysal and Hagan, 1993). Understanding diners' characteristics is an important to identify the right products in the targeted market. This study provides a glance of what dine out variables university/college students, staff, and faculty members consider important in selecting a restaurant for business purposes. It also observed whether importance of these variables were significantly different according to personal and dine out characteristics.

Improving what customers consider will not only attract customer loyalty, but also improve effectiveness of the operations. Restaurant operators need to understand that university community members tend to have different needs (Shoemaker, 1998) along with different service strategies in order to attract and maintain these captive customers. They also need to be ready to accommodate what customers need as customers tend to dine out certain time of day, noon for lunch and after 6 pm for dinner. Even some differences exist in the length of dine out time; people tend to spend 1 to 2 hours regardless lunch or dinner. People tend to dine out as a group of fewer than 5, and within the price range of under $20. Restaurant operators need to control item prices as well as to maintain good service and provide various types of cuisine. Based on this study, the best scenario would be that menu items are kept under $20.00 for a group of 4-5 people who preferred to dine out for 1-2 hours at noon for lunch and after 6:00pm for dinner.

Some dine out variables are more important to some groups, and some dine out variables are less important to some groups according to gender, job, number of residence, expense for food, and hours spent for lunch and dinner. The level of importance of dine out variables that university community members consider when they dine out for business purposes depend on who they are, who they live with, length of dining, and how much they spend.

As Lewis and Chambers (1998) indicated, this study affirms that the initial emphasis should be on the quality of food. Beyond providing quality food and services, business dinners tend to use their previous dine out experiences when they select a restaurant. Different dine out variables are considered to be important as diners have different characteristics in each different market. Just providing good food and service is not enough for diners to have good experience. Providing a comfortable atmosphere was another area that should not be under valued.

Restaurant operators need to train staff to follow the standardized guidelines and have the right and ability to adjust music (not repeating the same music over and over again), space, safety lighting, etc as time changes in addition to having the availability of flexible menu options and atmosphere. Just like menu changes, atmosphere may need to be regularly changed and given a fresh look. The design and decor must harmonize with the cuisine and service.

Unlike the study (Kapferer, 1997; Blank, 2006), the importance of brand was not well considered by university members. It explains that the role of a brand may differ depending on each market. People in the university community may be more attached to local brands and do not view a brand name restaurant differently. Unlike earlier studies (Beardsworth et al., 2002; Martens, 1997; Zopiatis & Pribic, 2007) have revealed, when it comes to dine out, female diners tend to consider *Convenience* not directly related to an actual eating out experience.

The study indicates that variables that people consider more important compared to other factors are ones that directly related to peoples' dine out experiences and can be modified or adjusted as needed by restaurant staff, such as quality of food and services, types of cuisine, and restaurant atmosphere. Fixed items that are not directly related to actual dine out experience, such as architectural design, location of the restaurant, and convenience, appear to be less important to university community members when they dine out.

The research findings provide needed information for restaurant operators in college towns in the U.S. People consider business dine out variables differently when they select a restaurant, and there are many factors that make people to decide which restaurant to go; however, some factors are more important than others (Kivela, 1999; Auty, 1992; Bitner, 1992). As demographic characteristics may not be enough to segment different market expectations (Crawford-Welch, 1991; Oh & Jeong, 1996), this study intended to identify dine out preference variables according to individual dine out preferences. The segmentation of potential customers into different groups according to demographic and dine out characteristics provides practical applications for restaurant operators. These findings can be used to develop a strategy for improving the competitive position. Restaurant operators will be able to identify who are in their markets and what characteristics they may posses, and it will help to identify what products and services should be offered.

There are several things that could have been done differently if the study were to be repeated. This study may not be completely generalized because of its limited samples from one university located in the southwest region in the U.S. The result may not be totally applicable to the entire higher education institution populations because of other contributing factors such as size of the area and composition of the population, all of which could also lean to different results. Other limitations are the high percentage of student respondents in the sample, which may not consider all dine outs as social dine out, not business dine outs. Future research needs to identify more personal behavioral characteristics that may influence individual decision making process as well. Cultural impact in restaurant selection also needs to be explored. Future research should include samples from a more diverse demographic mix and various locations such as urban and suburban regions. Other future

studies could include a cross sectional study to investigate how results are different from one country to another country, and one region to another region.

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