

SERVICE BEHAVIORS AND TIME PREFERENCES OF RURAL AND URBAN
RESTAURANT CUSTOMERS

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(ABSTRACT)

Do customers in rural and urban markets want the same thing from a restaurant server? While researchers have stressed the importance of sub-culture and made the call for empirical research, few studies have incorporated sub-culture into their research, especially within the hospitality industry. Empirically measuring the differences in sub-culture, may be especially important for restaurant operators as they serve and employ a myriad of different customers in different markets. One under researched yet critical way is through a better understanding of the importance of customer contact employees' behavior. Understanding the importance customers place on standard restaurant wait staff behaviors and time standards may be critical to earning customers satisfaction and patronage, yet few studies have empirically examined this. Developing enhanced ways of understanding how to adapt service delivery behavior to the values of major cultural groups can be extremely beneficial to hospitality managers.

This study attempts to close these gaps by investigating the influence of sub-culture on consumer perceptions of behavioral and timing dimensions in a casual, full-service restaurant setting, through methodological sampling concentrating on two main sub-cultural groups: rural and urban restaurant patrons. Results indicated that sanitation and accommodation were the most important behavioral dimensions for both groups. The level of server responsiveness, friendliness, and knowledge were statistically different for the rural and urban samples. Results suggest that casual restaurant wait staff need to tailor service behavior by accommodating and customizing to the cultural and sub-cultural based guest needs in order to maintain a competitive advantage in satisfying customers. This study also demonstrates theoretical and managerial implications and suggests that further research is needed to investigate differences across other hospitality settings.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

International business scholars generally recognize the important role of culture in management and stress a need to develop a better understanding of cultural values, their importance, and their effects (Lenartowicz, Johnson, & White, 2003). This can be applied to a broad range of business, tourism, and hospitality contexts. Some researchers have cautioned the consequences of employing a sampling procedure that neglects the affect of sub-cultures within countries (Adler, 1984; Hofstede, 1991) however, research within the hospitality literature rarely uses sampling procedures that assess the differences between culture and/or sub-culture (Becker and Murrmann, 1999). More specifically, it is very important to examine the sub -cultural variation that exists, yet, to date; few studies have empirically examined sub-cultures (Lenartowicz et al., 2003) within the hospitality industry. The call for research that examines sub-cultures has been made, yet few studies have incorporated it into their methodology.

Restaurants encompass a multi-billion dollar industry serving and employing a myriad of individuals. According to the National Restaurant Association's 2007 Restaurant Industry Fact Sheet, the U.S's 935,000 restaurants reported \$537 billion in sales, with casual restaurant sector amassing sales in excess of \$65 billion (Murphy & Murrmann, 2009). Within today's competitive business world, successful organizations realize that people are their number one asset (Leonard, 2007). In other words, it is believed that an organization's success depends on having a stable and talented workforce who are both productive and who can deliver high quality products and/or services (O'Malley, 2000). For high contact services such as hotels and restaurants, satisfactory employee-customer interactions are crucial to successful relationship building and satisfaction. Researchers have found that relational quality is a major factor affecting customer satisfaction, especially in services with a high level of interaction between customers and employees (King & Garey, 1997) such as within the casual dining segment of the restaurant industry. Delivering satisfactory customer service skills are one of the most important aspects of managing service quality within hospitality firms. Furthermore, delivering high quality customer service plays an important part in the perceptions of the hospitality experience and satisfaction with the establishment (Butcher, Sparks, & McColl-Kennedy, 2009).

However, for the last two decades, customers have been complaining that service is poor and that service employees are too busy, underpaid, undertrained, and under motivated to provide what they constitute as good service (Kurtz & Clow, 1998). This notion has led researchers to study, in depth, the constructs of service quality and satisfaction and each constructs associated dimensions. Research has led to a conclusion that increasing customer satisfaction may be achieved by modifying both the tangible and intangible aspects of the product offering (Becker & Murrmann, 1999). One under researched yet critical way is through a better understanding of the importance of customer contact employees' behavior. Furthermore, little research attention has been given to the exploration of the service orientation, such as behaviors displayed, of frontline personnel who play a key role in creating satisfactory service encounters in the hospitality industry (Kim, McCahon, & Miller, 2003). Understanding the importance customers place on standard restaurant wait staff behaviors may be critical to earning their satisfaction and patronage.

A second way of increasing customer satisfaction may be through developing a better understanding of acceptable time standards. Waiting time is considered a key factor for customer satisfaction (Lee & Lambert, 2005) across a variety of service settings. In application to restaurants, it may be a restaurant manager's goal to gain customer satisfaction by providing customers with acceptable and preferred waiting times. Research has noted that when customers enter a service system, they have specific expectations regarding the acceptable wait time that may lead to satisfaction (Taylor, 1994). The question then arises as to what constitutes an acceptable waiting time? It has specifically been suggested that a waiter's pacing in serving a meal and attention to customer's readiness for the next steps of service should influence perceptions of service quality (Wall & Berry, 2007) and satisfaction. Other research suggests that time dimensions need to be managed carefully as some customers may place different levels of importance on their waiting experiences for each service stage including the arrival, greeting, seating, ordering, serving, receiving check, and payment processing (Hwang & Lambert, 2005). A better understanding of what different customers believe is an acceptable wait time for the various stages of the restaurant experience may be very important in attaining their satisfaction. It is therefore an area of managerial interest that has received little empirical attention.

Statement of the Problem

For high contact services such as hotels and restaurants, satisfactory employee-customer interactions are crucial to successful relationship building and satisfaction. The logic is that restaurants deliver not only food and beverages, but also provide a service. As such, customer contact employees are a potential source of competitive advantage, because they can create a more favorable image of the organization by providing better service than the competition (Fisk, Brown, & Bitner, 1993; Schneider & Bowen, 1993). Prior research has found that personal interactions between customers and employees within service encounters are critical in determining the level of a customer's satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Kim et al., 2003). More specifically, researchers have found that customer satisfaction depends directly upon particular behaviors of customer contact employees (Bitner, Booms, & Tetreault, 1990; Keaveney, 1995). Due to the unique characteristics of services, service employees have a critical effect on the formation of customer expectations and experiences (Bateson, 1992).

Previous research also indicates that enhanced ways of understanding how to adapt service delivery behavior to the values of major cultural groups would be extremely beneficial to hospitality managers (Mattila, 2000). In addition, the domestic and international markets continue to expand in both numbers of locations and with respect to customer demographics. It has been stressed that hospitality providers with multiple units across multiple markets cannot use a one-size-fits-all model. Instead, multi-unit restaurants should incorporate the needs and desires of the local market. This may be achieved by accommodating the cultural and sub-cultural based guest needs in order to maintain a competitive advantage in satisfying customers. Increasing customer satisfaction may be achieved by modifying wait staff behaviors displayed with the product or service offering (Becker & Murrmann, 1999). The best avenue may be through the customer contact employees as they have the most interaction with the customer. Understanding which customer service improvement initiatives the customer considers valuable is critical (Butcher et al., 2009) and this may be understood more thoroughly by examining the expressed customer importance of employee behaviors typically displayed during the service exchange.

Despite the growing interest with cross-cultural research in the hospitality and tourism literature, little empirical research has been conducted on the effects of culture on consumers' assessment of service (Mattila, 2000). Furthermore, while some studies do exist, even fewer

have investigated the differences perceived across different markets in behavioral and timing dimensions (Becker & Murrmann, 1999). Even fewer studies examine sub-cultures despite theoretical and empirical evidence that equating culture and country can result in erroneous non-significant findings of cross national differences and a disregard of cultural similarities across countries may be relevant to management practice and research (Lenartowicz et al., 2003). This study attempts to close these gaps by investigating the influence of sub-culture on consumer perceptions of behavioral and timing dimensions in a casual, full-service restaurant setting, through methodological sampling concentrating on two main sub-cultural groups: rural and urban restaurant patrons.

Objectives of the Study

This study is aimed at examining the importance of different behaviors typically exhibited by a server during the restaurant dining service encounter. Secondly, this study seeks to determine the acceptable waiting times for the meal duration. Third, this study seeks to examine the differences that sub-culture plays, from a rural and urban sample, on the importance that customers place on wait staff behavioral dimensions and on acceptable time standards in casual, full-service restaurants.

To do so, the following research objectives were developed for this research:

1. Identify the importance of different service behavioral dimensions.
2. Identify and analyze if these dimensions and their magnitude vary as a function of sub-culture.
3. Determine if the importance level varies as a function of other key customer characteristics.
4. Identify the appropriate time standards for the casual restaurant service encounter.
5. Identify and analyze whether the timing standards vary as a function of sub-culture.
6. Determine if the acceptable time standards vary as a function of other key customer characteristics.
7. Identify theoretical and managerial implications of this study.

Definition of the Terms

While many of the constructs used in this research are complex and lack consistent definitions across disciplines, the following definitions have been listed to aid in theoretical conceptualization.

Service Quality: The extent of differences between customer expectations of a service and their perceptions of the service delivered and is an overall attitude of customer's encounters with the service provider (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985).

Satisfaction: The result of a post-consumption or post-usage evaluation, containing both cognitive and affective elements that involve a transaction specific expectation compared with transaction specific performance (Oliver, 1997).

Service Behaviors: A wide range of behaviors with important implications for organizational functioning which share the central notion of intent to benefit others through service (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986).

Sub-culture: Also called operating culture, sub-culture is identified through a selected combination of demographic and psychographic variables that signify sub-group identity based upon a set of shared needs, experiences, and activities (Becker & Murrmann, 1999).

Wait for service: The time from which a customer is ready to receive the service until the time the service commences (Taylor, 1994).

Dining stages: Pre-arrival, the time from when the customers decide they want to come to the restaurant until they arrive; post-arrival, the time from when customers arrive to when they are seated; preprocess, the time from when customers are seated until they receive their first food order; in-process, the time from when they receive their order until they request payment; post-process, the time from when they request payment until they leave the restaurant; and table turnover, the time from when customers leave until the table is reseated (Kimes, 2008).

Justification for the Study

While in the last few years there has been a plethora of research on service quality, customer satisfaction, and the service encounter, little research has systematically explored what these components really mean to the consumer in terms of actual behaviors of the service delivery personnel (Winsted, 1997). Research for this area is crucial as the frontline personnel are instrumental in creating satisfactory service encounters within the hospitality industry (Kim et al., 2003). In addition, numerous researchers have indicated that there is a lack of research examining the effects of cross-cultural differences within hospitality (Becker & Murrmann, 1999; Becker, Murrmann, Murrmann, & Cheung, 1999; Furrer, Shaw-Ching, & Sudharshan, 2000; Mattila, 2000; Kimes, Wirtz, & Noone, 2002; Heo, Jogaratnam, & Buchanan, 2004; Kee-Fu & Ap, 2007). Specifically, one recent study noted that there is a dearth of literature examining cross-cultural differences in the service exchange relationship, especially as it pertains to the interaction between customer and provider (Kong & Jogaratnam, 2007). Another article suggested future research needs to specifically examine what about employee behavior is important to customers (Wall & Berry, 2007). This study serves as an attempt to address this call by empirically testing the importance of displayed service behaviors across two different samples.

With regard to timing standards, most studies within the hospitality and tourism literature have examined it from a revenue management perspective. Some studies in different disciplines have studied the concept of time (Mosakowski & Earley, 2000), yet few studies have explicitly examined how long customers believe is appropriate for a service encounter to last. It is further argued that research in this area would have considerable value to restaurant operators and to other service industries (Kimes et al., 2002). Therefore, this study seeks to address this need for research on the preferences of wait time during the dining process.

Summary

There is sufficient evidence that using a nation as a proxy for culture can lead to erroneous results, and there has been a call for research that examines sub-cultures (Lenartowicz et al., 2003). In addition, because the expansion of American-style casual chain restaurants represent a growing segment of hospitality sector development, this topic is extremely relevant. A standardized approach to service and wait staff behaviors may not yield the same levels of

satisfaction from different customers and across different markets. A study by Becker and Murrmann (1999) examined the effects of cross-cultures on service expectations. The authors suggested that it would be most interesting for study to examine differences between a rural US sample and an urban US sample. This research project specifically addresses these requests for further research to be conducted in the areas of behavioral dimensions and timing standards with respect to sub-cultures.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

As indicated in the previous chapter, the current research has not empirically examined the behavioral and timing preferences of customers in the restaurant sector. Specifically, this study is designed to examine the importance of server behaviors and timing preferences across the sub-culture of rural and urban customers within casual restaurants. In order to accomplish these objectives, this section reviews the relevant literature to the study of cross regional differences in restaurant service preferences for behavioral dimensions and timing perceptions. The components included in this literature review discuss service quality and satisfaction, customer contact employees, behavior dimensions, cross-culture, sub-culture, urban and rural customers, and time perceptions.

Service Quality & Satisfaction

The topic of service quality has engaged many academics and led to a significant amount of debate over its conceptualization (Andaleeb & Conway, 2006). Service quality has been defined as the extent of differences between customer expectations of a service and their perceptions of the service delivered and is perceived and assessed by customers during the service delivery process (Parasuraman et al., 1985). In addition, service quality is based on the overall attitude of customer's encounters with the service provider. Satisfaction, while linked to service quality, is generally viewed as a broader concept and service quality is a component of satisfaction (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2000). The satisfaction judgment requires a transaction specific experience with the service, while quality can be perceived without a consumption experience or as an overall evaluation (Oliver, 1993). According to the expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm, a customer judges satisfaction by comparing previously held expectations with the perceived product of service performance. In addition, a positive or negative affect arises from the cognitive process of confirmation/ disconfirmation which contributes to the corresponding satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Oliver, 1993; Oliver, Rust, & Varki, 1997). Within the area of satisfaction, definitions include service-encounter satisfaction and overall satisfaction. Service-

encounter, or transaction-specific satisfaction, is a customer's evaluation of his or her experience with and reactions to a particular transaction or service encounter (Olsen and Johnson, 2003). Overall satisfaction refers to the customer's overall evaluation of a product or service provider (Johnson, Anderson, & Fornell, 1995).

As service quality and customer satisfaction have been an avidly researched topics for hospitality, tourism, and marketing researchers as well as practitioners over the past few decades, various dimensions have been identified. The work of Parasuraman et al., (1988; 1991) has led to the identification of five dimensions of service quality: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, tangibles, and empathy, which have been widely used throughout the service industry and literature. Reliability is defined as the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately. Responsiveness is the willingness to help customers and provide prompt service. Assurance is the knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence. Empathy is the caring, individualized attention provided to the customer, and tangibles are the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication materials. Different individuals evaluate components of the service independently and differently (Chang, 2008), and it is thus important to research how different groups view the different components, which, within the hospitality sector, are often delivered through customer contact employees.

Customer contact employees

Competitive advantage is critical to the economic success regardless of the operation's location. As noted by Becker et al., (1999) because the essence of service is the performance and not the facilitating product, the focus on the intangible elements provided through the service delivery are very important. Hospitality services are labor intensive, and the social nature of the face-to-face encounters between hospitality service providers and their customers is an essential feature of hospitality service (Becker et al., 1999). Customer contact employees serve as a link between the external customer and/or the environment and the internal operations of the organization (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2000). In addition, customer contact employees serve the critical function in understanding, filtering, and interpreting information and resources to and from the organization and its external constituencies (Kee-Fu & Ap, 2007), i.e. the customer.

It is believed that the success and failure of service delivery can largely depend on the attitudes and behaviors of the contact employees (Kee-Fu & Ap, 2007). In order to enhance customer satisfaction, the contact employee can play an important role in making each service encounter a memorable experience (Van Dolen, de Ruyter, & Lemmink, 2004). A recent study found that employee behavior was, by far, the most influential factor in shaping customer's perceptions of their high- and low-preferences (Berry & Lampo, 2004). Another study found that humanistic clues dominate mechanic clues in influencing service quality perceptions for the casual-dining restaurant surveyed (Wall & Berry, 2007). Similarly, other researchers agree that employee behaviors can affect customer satisfaction (Kim et al., 2009) and that employee behaviors during interactions with customers have either a positive or negative impact on customer perceptions of service quality (Bitner et al., 1990).

Satisfaction in exchanges is not a universal phenomenon and people will get different responses out of the same hospitality experience, as customers have different needs, objectives, and cultural backgrounds that usually affect their perceptions and therefore their satisfaction (Davis, Lockwood, & Stone, 1998). Communication between guests and front-line employees involves more than spoken words; it involves an understanding of deeper cultural differences as well (Heo et al., 2004). Given that American casual-full service restaurants are expanding throughout the U.S. and internationally, customer behavior must be reevaluated from a cultural perspective (Becker & Murrmann, 1999).

Behavior

Early studies in customer satisfaction focused on such dimensions as employee greeting, restaurant atmosphere, speed of service and convenience (Knutson, 1988). Later studies addressed other dimensions that influence customer satisfaction such as wait time, quality of service, responsiveness of the customer-contact employees, menu variety, food prices, food quality, ambience, and convenience (Davis & Vollmann, 1990; Dube, Renaghan, & Miller, 1994; Kivela, Inbakaran, & Reece, 2000; Iglesias & Yague, 2004; and Andaleeb & Conway, 2006). Some research has suggested that employee behavior during a service provides powerful clues that contribute to customers' perceptions of service quality (Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1993; Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry, 1985). More recent research has refined the notion

stating that behavioral responses of customer contact employees are a major factor in affecting service quality and customer satisfaction (Kee-Fu & Ap, 2007).

Employees display different affective characteristics such as friendliness, responsiveness, and enthusiasm. These can positively influence customers' overall evaluation of service consumption experiences and perceptions of service quality (Sundaram & Webster, 2000). The development of definitive and actionable standards requires the identification of those characteristics of style and substance that customers actually use when assessing service performances (Czepiel, 1990). A behaviorally based measurement instrument would minimize ambiguity inherent in the use of evaluation criteria that rely on subjectively interpreted concepts (Becker et al, 1999). As noted by Becker et al. (1999) the use of an agreement scale to assess the degree in which a behavioral measure is a characteristic of service excellence provides service managers with ambiguous information. For example, the concept of courtesy (empathy, responsiveness, personal attention, promptness) is equivocal and varies depending on the service context.

The relationship between the restaurant staff and the clientele means that there is a high potential for variability in service, given that service quality can vary from one employee to another, from one customer to another. Although this initially may be seen by managers as a problem, it is actually a business opportunity given that it is possible to provide customized service to each individual customer (Iglesias & Yague, 2004). Prior research shows that different cultures differ in their preferences for modes of communication and that the behavioral norms and attitudes that reflect the consumer's ideal of quality service might be largely dependent on cultural orientation (Winsted, 1997; Mattila, 1999). Some cultures have a preference for high-context communications (nonverbal, indirect, and implicit) while other cultures prefer low-context communication (explicit, direct, and unambiguous) (Mattila, 1999). In addition, common non-verbal behaviors used in the hospitality sector, especially restaurants, such as facial expressions, eye contact, gestures, body movement, posture, physical appearance, and touching are interpreted differently between cultures (Holtzman, Murphy, & Gordon, 1991).

It is important to note that service encounters involve not just social interaction but also sensory engagement, visually, olfactory, and aurally. One specific non-verbal behavioral dimension that has received some attention in recent literature is employee appearance and cleanliness. Attempts to determine employee appearance are regarded as legitimate managerial

interventions for companies aiming to provide the desired service encounter (Warhurst & Nickson, 2007) and the results found that appearance is an integral part of hospitality work. The practice of doing a uniform check or employee lineup is becoming increasingly more common throughout the hospitality industry. Practitioners believe that employee appearance matters and those employers are concerned with developing and maintaining the desired appearance image through the use of uniforms, dress codes, and grooming standards (Warhurst & Nickson, 2007). In this recent study, thirty-nine percent of respondents cited they received appearance-related training. The importance of employee appearance as part of employer strategy to gain customer satisfaction needs further research (Warhurst & Nickson, 2007). This study seeks to address this call by measuring the importance of this dimension.

The recent research urges that cultural customization is critical, especially in the training and behavior of customer-contact employees and today's hospitality managers need to be aware of the parts of the consumer experiences that are open to cultural influences in contrast with those that remain stable across cultures (Mattila, 2000). Some customers may perceive (an aspect) of a service as being comparatively unimportant while for others it is critical (Nasution & Movando, 2008). This notion is very important for researchers and practitioners to better understand, and to date, there have been few empirical studies that have examined it.

Cross Culture

While aspects of service quality and satisfaction have been examined, there is a lack of research on literature examining cross-cultural differences in the service exchange relationship (Kong & Jogaratnam, 2007). Furthermore, while there has been some conceptual research about whether services need to be modified for different cultures, there have been few empirical studies to help provide answers (Winsted, 1997). The hospitality sector is specifically confronted with cultural diversity and its accompanying heterogeneity. As the dominant approach for establishing service quality relies on the prior research and knowledge of customer expectations, the diversity of the hospitality sector demands that service standards be established in consideration of the varied perspectives of the guests they serve (Becker et al., 1999).

Reisinger and Turner (2002) define culture as representing both the similarities and the differences of a group of people in their values, rules of social behavior, perceptions, and social interactions. In addition, they believe that markets cannot rely on the perceptions of service

alone to generate satisfaction; specific cultural values need to be considered. According to Strauss and Mang (1999), the assumption is that customers with different cultural backgrounds may have different expectations toward service encounters and thus, may perceive service encounter situations differently. Kong & Jogaratnam (2007) state that due to cultural differences, consumers in and of different countries may experience a service encounter differently, even in the same type of restaurant. Some recent studies found that customers from different cultures formed different perceptions of service quality either because of differences in expectations or because they attached different weights to different service quality dimensions (Kee-Fu & Ap, 2007).

Research by Hofstede (1980) identifies four main cultural dimensions, power distance, individuality (collectivism), masculinity/femininity, and uncertainty avoidance. Power distance dimension refers to the extent to which a society accepts the unequal distribution of power in institutions and organizations. Low power distance cultures, including Western countries like Canada and the United States, are less likely to tolerate class distinctions, are more likely to prefer democratic participation and are not afraid to disagree with superiors (Hofstede, 1983). Cultural power distance relates to the service encounter in that high power distance would increase the social position between the customer and service provider. This, in turn, would increase the service expectation of the customer. In particular, it would increase the relational quality attributes such as respect, courtesy, warmth, empathy and helpfulness (Kee-Fu & Ap, 2007). In one recent study, the results indicated staff responding effectively to inquiries as the most important factor for Western customers and the least important factor for Eastern tourists (Kee-Fu & Ap, 2007). Recent research has found that Western society is more individualistic and focuses on the individual's rights and achievements (Reisinger & Turner, 2002) and prefer situations where there are clear rules and order and a standardized procedure can be followed (Hofstede, 1991).

Perceptions of service quality developed via consumer research in one country are not always sensitive to the normative expectations of customers with different cultural orientations (Becker & Murrmann, 1999). If the relative importance of the service quality dimensions to customers is likely to vary depending on culture, resource allocation should be contingent upon the importance attached to them by customers (Furrer et al., 2000). The intangible and inseparable characteristics of services are especially susceptible to cultural influences. In attempting to

satisfy customers, it is critical that service providers clearly comprehend those differences. An unambiguous understanding of service differences and preferences of customers from different cultural backgrounds will make it possible to provide compelling service and exceed customer expectations (Kandampully, Mok, & Sparks, 2001; Heo et al., 2004; Sizoo, Plank, Iskat & Serrie, 2005). While researchers' commentary on the importance of examining cross cultural differences is evident, research has also been called for to address differences cross regionally, with a rural and urban sample (Becker & Murrmann, 1999).

Sub-Culture

A sub-culture is identified through a selected combination of demographic and psychographic variables that signify sub-group identity based upon a set of shared needs, experiences, and activities (Becker & Murrmann, 1999). For example, McDonald's has used this concept in developing regional menu items such as Sweet tea in the South, Unsweetened tea in the North, Lobster roll in New England, and the McRib-a-q in the South. With the expansion of hospitality organizations, especially chain restaurants, it is important to note the differences across sub-cultures that are important factors in determining desirable behaviors. While this has been examined in marketing, there has been little empirical research examining behavioral dimensions within the service context.

Comparative management studies assume that domestic populations are culturally homogenous and are often reported in the literature as if they were synonymous and that cross-cultural or single culture studies in management have not considered intra-cultural heterogeneity (Adler, 1984; Adler, Doktor, & Redding, 1986). The concept of appropriate social behavior in one country is not always transferable to another. Subjective concepts such as courtesy or empathy are not free from cultural interpretation. As a result, customers' expectations for behaviors displayed during service delivery and their subsequent assessments of service performance are inseparable from the prevailing societal norms and cultural influences that govern their social interactions in general (Becker et al, 1999; Leung & Bond, 1989; Ralston, Gustafson, Elsass, Cheung, & Terpstra, 1992). Hofstede (1983) stated that the essence of culture is a collective mental programming that conditions, constrains, and reinforces the thinking process and results in observable differences in the behavior patterns of its members. He further

asserts, however, that the same dimensions that were found to differentiate among national cultures apply to sub-cultures within countries (Hofstede, 1991).

Simply because national boundaries are easy to identify does not make them an appropriate variable for segmenting behavior and preferences (Lenartowicz et al., 2003). While there has been a considerable amount of research in the past decade surrounding cross-cultural differences, there has been little empirical research that has examined differences between sub-culture perceptions. Country and culture are not synonymous, as only a few small countries may be culturally homogenous, and different countries may share similar culture traits (Furrer et al., 2000). Criteria for dividing the main society into sub-cultures include ethnicity, religion, region, and demographic/ socioeconomic characteristics (Lenartowicz et al., 2003). As much as different cultures possess different thinking processes and conditions, different locals may also possess such differing characteristics and preferences. That is to say, behaviors and preferences perceived positively from one region may not be universal.

Rural and Urban

Research has argued that it is necessary to take into account the socio-structural factors and socialization experiences through which people form their attitudes and behaviors. It has been argued that one way to measure the potential differences in socio-structural factors and socializations experiences may be achieved through the study of rural and urban samples (Berenguer, Corraliza, Martin, 2005). The conceptual rationale is that values are, in part, sub-culturally determined and it would be of great interest to investigate differences in sub-cultures, such as a rural and urban sample (Schopphoven, 1991; Becker & Murrmann, 1999). Furthermore, it has been stated that an understanding of the differing nature of business in rural and urban areas is of crucial importance (Westhead & Wright, 1998) and that a comparison between rural and urban consumers can offer much needed insight (Sun & Wu, 2004) which can specifically be applied to the customers that engage in service exchange settings. Only a few studies have explored the regional (geographical) variations in consumer characteristics and their implications (Sun & Wu, 2004). One such study found there was a significant difference between customers satisfaction of wait times based on rural or urban location (Davis & Vollman, 1990). Based on the rural and urban sub-culture of customers, the following hypothesis was developed.

Hypothesis 1

There are significant differences in the level of importance of behaviors displayed by servers between the urban or rural customers.

Time Perceptions

The concept of time has been studied throughout a variety of disciplines including economics, psychology, sociology, economics and cultural anthropology (Mosakowski & Early, 2000). Recently, socio-cultural aspects and recent academic literature shows an increasing concern with time and time-related benefits associated with certain products and services. In the hospitality segment, the concept of time is a valued commodity, and has been a primary factor in the rapid expansion and success of quick service restaurant chains (Becker & Murrmann, 1999).

A distinguishing characteristic of service is that both the production and consumption are said to occur simultaneously. It is generally believed that the dining experience can be broken down into three stages: the pre-process stage, which extends from a customer's arrival at the restaurant until he or she orders the meal; the in-process stage, which consists of placing an order and consuming the meal; and the post-process stage, which begins with check settlement and ends when the customer leaves (Dube-Rioux, Schmitt, & Leclerc, 1989). Another study divides the customer dining experience into six main components: pre-arrival, the time from when the customers decide they want to come to the restaurant until they arrive; post-arrival, the time from when customers arrive to when they are seated; pre-process, the time from when customers are seated until they receive their first food order; in-process, the time from when they receive their order until they request payment; post-process, the time from when they request payment until they leave the restaurant; and table turnover, the time from when customers leave until the table is reseated (Kimes, 2008). Recent research related to time indicates that customers have been shown to be more upset when a delay occurred during the pre-process or post-process stage of the dining experience than when the delay occurred during the in-process stage, even though the delay was of the same length of time in each stage (Dube-Rioux et al., 1989).

For restaurant service, this simultaneous process occurs as a tightly knit sequence of events that begins when the customer enters the restaurant and does not conclude until the customer departs (Becker & Murrmann, 1999). Within operations, the meal duration is typically viewed

as a function of three elements: wait time, service time, and consumption time (Kimes et al., 2002), not just as one overall summary of total time. Many intermediate events may occur, which require a wait, which may include, but are not limited to: waiting for a table, waiting for a server to greet the table, waiting to place an order, waiting for beverages, waiting for meals, waiting for the check to be delivered, and waiting for payment to be processed.

The notion of time as a valued commodity has been well established in the US where long standing quality standards for the provision of excellence in restaurant service are often dominated by time criteria such as beverages being served within two minutes of order, lunch being served twelve minutes within order, check being dropped within three minutes of serving dessert or coffee (Becker & Murrmann, 1999). Early research states that operators should provide a consistent level of customer satisfaction, which may result in a variable waiting time (Davis & Vollmann, 1990). A major area where this might yield important insights is in determining the proper level of customer service specifically in terms of speed (Davis & Vollmann, 1990). In other words, using customer opinions about waiting time may be very important in gauging their satisfaction for the restaurant service delivered. However, there is no absolute one level of acceptable customer satisfaction (Hwang & Lambert, 2008) as preferences may vary based on a variety of individual characteristics. Therefore, the researchers of this study believe it is important to analyze whether time preferences vary based on sub-culture characteristics, such as rural and urban location.

When customers enter a service system, they have specific expectations regarding the acceptable waiting time that leads to satisfaction (Taylor, 1994). It has specifically been suggested that a server's pacing in serving a meal and attention to customer's readiness for the next steps of service should influence perceptions of service quality (Wall & Berry, 2007) and satisfaction. Research by Noone, Kimes, Mattila, & Wirtz (2007) suggested that managerial operators should focus on three main timing components. First, operators should focus duration reduction efforts on the post-process stage, such as check delivery and payment processing. The second focus should be on opportunities for reducing duration during the pre-process stage, such as prompt greeting and delivery of beverages. Lastly, the authors suggested not rushing the in-process stage, as customers are most sensitive to pacing with appetizer and entrée service.

Other research suggests that time dimensions need to be managed carefully as some customers may place different levels of importance on their waiting experiences for each

service stage including the arrival, greeting, seating, ordering, serving, receiving check, and payment processing (Hwang & Lambert, 2005). Findings suggest that customers in quick-service restaurants prefer faster service, which leads to an increase in customer satisfaction. Conversely, customers at fine dining restaurants do not like to be rushed, when they are, satisfaction decreases (Noone et al., 2007; Kimes, 2008). However, research surrounding the time preferences for casual restaurant patrons remains relatively unexplored.

While research suggests an important managerial challenge is to make sure the actual wait or the perceived wait is well managed so that any negative aspects of the service experience can be minimized (Dickson, Ford, & Laval, 2005), little research exists as to the suggested timing standards. Most studies involving time have focused on reducing either perceived waiting time by using a cognitive approach or decreasing time through revenue management.

Some research has suggested that managers must set standardized service levels to provide consistency during service, by identifying a service level that meets customers' expectation, achieving it through managing capacity, and improving customer service (Hwang & Lambert, 2005). However, this assertion does not consider that customers are not homogenous and that time perceptions will vary by culture. One of the issues pertaining to service expectations which might be particularly influenced by cultural factors involves the element of time (Becker & Murrmann, 1999). Anecdotal information suggests that time, particularly the customer's propensity to spend time waiting, may be conditioned and reinforced as a function of culture (Hofstede, 1983). The evolution of time studies suggests that different consumers do not plan, prioritize, value, maximize, minimize, estimate, or experience time in uniform ways (Guy, Rittenburg, & Hawes, 1984). Other research has expressed the belief that time perceptions are not contingent upon an individual's national culture as they are upon an individual's operating culture (Guy et al., 1984). A recent study researched a summary of time expectations (Kimes et al., 2002), but did not examine each component of the service encounter from a preferred time preference. This research was significant as it did reveal that mean expected dining time varied significantly by nationality.

If sub-culture factors play a meaningful role in the determination of how individuals assess and experience time, then this information could prove meaningful for operations which serve diversified global markets (Becker & Murrmann, 1999). Studies to date have addressed the concept of time from a number of perspectives; however few studies have explicitly examined

how long customers think a service encounter should last. Satisfaction with a service has been investigated as it varies based on a rural or urban location for such services as nursing (Elder Neal, Davis, Almes, Whitley, & Littlepage, 2004) and marketing (Davis & Vollman, 1990), where both studies found a statistically significant difference. The services marketing study found that suburban vs. city location was significant in affecting the relationship between waiting time and satisfaction (Davis & Vollmann, 1990). Researchers have expressed the need to examine this as such research would have considerable value to restaurant operators and to other services in which customers implicitly purchase time (Kimes et al., 2002). Therefore, the following hypothesis was developed.

Hypothesis 2

There are significant differences in casual restaurants customers' acceptance of satisfactory waiting times between the rural and urban sample.

Summary

This chapter summarized the literature on customer satisfaction, customer contact employees, behavior, cross and sub-culture, rural and urban customers, for a service setting. The literature review indicated that customer satisfaction is driven largely in part by the various behaviors a server displays during the service exchange. Furthermore, the literature indicates that customer preferences for certain behaviors may vary as a function of culture or sub-culture of a group. Using casual restaurants to observe this, the hypothesis indicates that customer preferences for server behaviors will significantly differ for rural and urban customers.

This chapter also reviewed the literature for time preferences in a restaurant setting. Based on the review, the research hypothesis states that urban and rural customers will have different preferences for the four stages of meal duration. The theoretical contribution of this study is to progress the hospitality literature by more specifically defining the importance level of various server behaviors and the acceptable timing standards. The second theoretical contribution would be to add to the cross culture literature and progress the cross regional literature by determining if these differ based on sub-culture.

CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The primary purpose of this study is to determine the importance of server behaviors in a casual restaurant service setting and whether the preferences for such behaviors differ significantly based on a customer's rural or urban setting. In addition, the study seeks to identify timing preferences for restaurant service duration and to determine whether the preferences also differ significantly based on a customer's rural or urban sub-culture. To achieve this, Chapter III describes the methods employed to carry out the research process. It is divided into the following sections: research design and procedure, instrumentation, sample and data selection, research hypotheses, and data analysis.

Research Design and Procedure

The study utilized self-reported surveys to collect data and to address the research objectives of this study. The survey instrument was developed by Becker et al. (1999) to measure server behavior and timing preferences. The first step in the research process required the development of behavioral characteristics that customers felt were the most important indicators of satisfactory restaurant service. One of the major challenges associated with this research was the development of a research design survey instrument that minimized the potential for subjective interpretation, was free of cultural bias, and facilitated the identification of actionable standards at the applicable level. Based on the research and development of Becker et al. (1999) that survey was used and secondary data was obtained from the researchers for use in this study.

Instrumentation

The final questionnaire (See Appendix A) was divided into three sections. The first section was comprised of behaviors that restaurant servers typically engage in as they perform their jobs and consisted of thirty-eight questions. The second section was designed to measure acceptable waiting times for four stages during the restaurant service encounter. The third

section asked respondents for demographic information and consisted of eight questions. Data were collected over the period of two years and service encounter expectations were assessed using a self-administered questionnaire with closed-ended items.

Behavioral items

In the first section, respondents were asked to refer to their dinner experiences at casual, full-service restaurants such as TGIFriday's, Chili's or Applebee's. To clarify, the survey described that such restaurants would offer table service, with a waiter or waitress taking the dinner order, delivering food and beverage selection to the table, and providing service while the customer is dining. The survey listed behaviors that restaurant servers might engage in as they perform their jobs. The respondents were to rate how important each behavior is in determining their satisfaction with the service. Responses were based on a 5-point Likert-type scale: "not at all important", "somewhat important", "important", "very important", and "extremely important".

Timing Items

The second section was designed to question acceptable waiting times for restaurant service. Respondents were asked to select the time interval that best fits the time they would find acceptable or preferred to wait for each of the four services indicated. The first service involved the time period from after arriving at the restaurant to being seated at a table, the second service measured the time period from after receiving a menu to before the server returns to take the order, the third time period measured between after placing the order to when the server brings the order to the table and the fourth time period measured the time between meal completion to when the server brings the check. Each variable was assessed by six equal time interval measures: 5 minutes or less, 6-10 minutes, 11-15 minutes, 16-20 minutes, 21-25 minutes, and 26 minutes or longer. The primary research objectives were to determine preferred wait times for each stage and to determine if any difference exists between rural and urban customer acceptable time dimension preferences. A secondary research purpose is to assess how these time standards vary as a function of consumer characteristics such as demographic factors.

Demographic Items

The third section asked respondents to provide demographic information including that would be used to classify survey questions where respondents were asked to check the appropriate response to each category. Categories included gender, age, national origin, income, dining frequency, dining companions, and restaurant experience.

Sample and Data Selection

To control for the influence of intervening sources of heterogeneity, casual, full-service restaurants were selected as the particular subset of the hospitality industry to use as the reference organization of the study. It was necessary to focus on a single, defined type of restaurant because of the varying types that exist throughout the United States. The researchers defined casual, full-service restaurants by providing specific examples atop the survey of chain operations such as T.G.I. Friday's, Chili's or Applebee's. As noted by Becker et al., (1999) these operations were generally defined to include an informal atmosphere, being greeted by a host, escorted to a table by the host, menu presented at a table by the waiter, food order taken by the waiter, food presented at the table by the waiter, bill presented at the table by the waiter, and bill collected at the table by the waiter or at the checkout counter by the cashier.

Casual full-service restaurants are often visited by local residents. Therefore, this type of hospitality provider maximized the opportunity for securing experienced customers to provide input for our research (Becker et al., 1999). All restaurants used as examples offered a similar level of service and had comparably priced menu items. In addition, prior research has shown that respondents have different pacing expectations for different restaurant types (Hwang & Lambert, 2005; Noone et al., 2007). To control for this potential difference, we chose casual-full service restaurants.

The data consists of two samples, one rural and one urban. The rural population was sampled from Southwestern Virginia and Kansas while the urban sample was taken from New York City. Following the procedural guidelines associated with cross-culture research, a narrow sample strategy was used to control for extraneous factors to the objectives of this research. The approach emphasized the selection of two groups of respondents who were well matched and similar in many aspects except for that of culture. Therefore the rural and urban samples were comprised of employed adult business graduate students in business colleges. While the sample

does represent a convenience sample, it also represents a population segment that has a high rate of restaurant usage and was thus justifiable for the context and purposes of this research. Data collected resulted in 181 completed questionnaires for the urban samples and 178 for the rural sample.

Research Hypotheses

Based on the study objectives and the literature review, the hypotheses were developed to identify the differences between rural and urban customer's server behavioral and timing preferences.

Hypothesis 1

There are significant differences in the level of importance of behaviors displayed by servers between the urban or rural customers.

Hypothesis 2

There are significant differences in casual restaurants customers' acceptance of satisfactory waiting times between the rural and urban sample.

Analysis

Version 18 of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (PASW 18) was used to code and analyze the data. Descriptive statistical procedures were conducted to determine mean and standard deviations for the demographic variables and for each of the survey behavioral and timing items. Exploratory factor analysis was used to reduce the behavioral items into distinct factors. General linear modeling was used to analyze the multivariate analysis of variance across groupings.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine the differences between rural and urban customer preferences for restaurant server behaviors and timing. This chapter presents the results of the data analysis used to achieve the research objectives and to test the research hypotheses proposed in the previous chapter. The remainder to the chapter is divided into the following sections: demographics and frequencies, behavioral item factor analysis, scale reliability, and MANOVA, timing item MANOVA, and MANOVA of other demographic items.

Demographics and Frequencies

Table 4.1 presents a demographic profile of the rural and urban participants of this study. The rural sample comprised of 181 surveys and the urban sample consisted of 178 surveys. Male respondents represented 43.6% and 40.0% of the rural and urban populations, respectively. Of the rural respondents, 26.5% were twenty-five and under, 18.7% were twenty-six to thirty-five, 33.7% were thirty-six to forty five, and 21.6% were forty-six and older. Of the urban respondents, 45.4% were twenty-five and younger, 21.9% were twenty-six to thirty-five, and 4.6% were forty-six and older. The rural sample was predominantly from the United States as their country of birth, while the urban sample was more heterogeneous with 36.5% having been born outside of the United States. Income for the rural and urban samples were 22.6% and 23.6% below \$30,000 annually, 12.2% and 16.8% between \$30,001 and \$45,000 annually, 17.1% and 15.5% between \$45,001 and \$60,000 annually, 17.1% and 9.8% between \$60,000 and \$75,000 annually, and 29.3% and 34.3% above \$75,000 annually, respectively. Both samples had a high percentage of respondents dining out frequently. The rural and urban samples had 54.6% and 33.6% of respondents dining out at least eleven times during a six month period.

Table 4.1 Demographic Profile of Rural and Urban Customers

		Rural		Urban	
		Frequency	Percent (%)	Frequency	Percent (%)
<i>Gender</i>					
	Male	79	43.6	65	40.0
	Female	102	56.4	110	60.0
<i>Age</i>					
	20 and under	2	1.1	20	11.5
	21-25	46	25.4	59	33.9
	26-30	20	11.0	29	16.7
	31-35	14	7.7	9	5.2
	36-40	20	11.0	7	4.0
	41-45	23	12.7	8	4.6
	46-50	26	14.4	8	4.6
	51-55	13	7.2	13	7.5
	56 and over	17	9.4	21	12.1
<i>Country of birth</i>					
	US	177	97.8	110	65.5
	Other	4	2.2	68	34.5
<i>Income</i>					
	\$15,000 and under	20	11.0	15	9.3
	\$15,001- \$30,000	21	11.6	23	14.3
	\$30,001-\$45,000	22	12.2	27	16.8
	\$45,001-\$60,000	31	17.1	25	15.5
	\$60,001-\$75,000	31	17.1	16	9.9
	above \$75,001	53	29.3	55	34.3
<i>Number of times dining out at a full service restaurant in the past six months</i>					
	0 to 5	35	20.1	56	34.1
	6 to 10	44	25.3	53	32.3
	11 to 15	33	18.5	19	11.6
	16 to 20	22	12.2	18	11.0
	21 to 25	16	8.8	15	9.1
	26 to 30	8	4.4	7	4.3
	31 and above	16	9.0	6	3.7

Experience as a server

Yes	62	34.3	53	30.6
No	119	65.7	120	69.4

Experience as a manager

Yes	21	11.6	23	13.3
No	160	88.4	150	86.7

Behavioral Items*Factor Analysis*

The next step in the data analysis was to factor analyzes the items separately for the two samples and to compare the emerging factor patterns. Factor analysis is the statistical technique used to confirm the existence of a specific factor structure. It is designed to test hypothesis about a factor model whose number and interpretation are given in advance (Raykov & Marcoulides, 2000). It aids in identifying the underlying structure to allow for further examination (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998). Principal components analysis with varimax rotation was used to assess the number of underlying dimensions in the data as well as to identify items associated with each factor. This method narrows down the pool of thirty-eight behaviors to allow for the simplest interpretations and to extract the most distinct set of indicators. Factor loadings have substantially larger standard errors than conventional correlations; thus, factor loadings should be evaluated at considerably stricter levels (Hair et al., 1998). With the objective of obtaining a power level of 80%, the use of a .05 significance level, and the assumption of standard errors of factor loadings being larger than typical correlation coefficients, factor loadings of .40 for the sample size were required and used (Hair et al., 1998). Table 4.2 shows the full factor analysis with all thirty-eight items with the five items highlighted representing those that did not have a high loading on factors.

Table 4.2 Thirty-eight Item Original Factor Analysis and Factor Loadings

	Component						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The server's hair is neat and well groomed	.861	.165	.135	.066	.004	.077	.074
The server's hair is clean and restrained	.849	.069	.159	-.009	.028	.073	.110
The server's nails and hands are will manicured	.768	.126	.110	.041	.041	.117	-.080
The server's clothes are well maintained	.725	.195	.168	.244	.133	.036	.095
The server avoids touching the surface of eating utensils	.485	.141	.041	.176	.161	-.148	.237
The server's manner makes the customer feel comfortable with the restaurant environment	.332	.211	.306	.140	.329	-.039	.115
The server provides for the customer's special needs when asked	.176	.743	.125	.009	.014	.065	.074
The server accommodates special requests of the customer	.227	.704	-.026	.175	-.027	.117	-.093
The server adapts the pace of service to meet the customers needs	-.004	.591	.248	-.129	.231	.161	.123
the server clarifies any uncertainty about food items listed on the menu	.161	.537	.373	.054	.173	-.225	.107
The server delivers menu items to the table in proper sequence	.170	.444	.252	.092	.170	-.159	.095
When appropriate, the server speeds up the pace of service	.087	.370	.156	-.233	.290	.147	.193
The server explains menu item ingredients	.119	.137	.705	-.066	.038	-.005	.233
The server explains how menu items are prepared or cooked	.098	.287	.634	.108	.075	.091	.166
The server suggests menu items suited to the individual customer's preferences	.144	.061	.624	.168	.215	.157	-.126
The server assists the customer in deciding what to order	.021	-.089	.623	.139	.233	.241	.026
The server thoroughly explains menu specials	.287	.356	.556	.084	-.046	-.039	-.205
The server makes direct eye contact with the customer	.211	.354	.428	.212	.037	-.058	-.266
The server stops by the table frequently to check for additional customer needs	.094	.253	.361	.223	-.141	.101	.223
The server behaves in a way that entertains the customer	.073	.069	.028	.764	.027	.183	-.139
The server behaves in a casual manner	.026	-.044	.077	.633	.046	.052	.350
The server provides friendly conversation	-.042	.000	.154	.588	-.076	.416	.180

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The server behaves in a formal manner	.304	.050	.123	.539	.132	-.094	.102
The server smiles when greeting the customer	.204	.172	.264	.437	-.015	-.047	-.104
The server knows when the customer does not want to be bothered	.038	.089	.118	-.079	.740	-.031	.182
The server doesn't interrupt if customers are conversing among themselves	.080	-.026	.074	.097	.658	.017	.069
The server adjusts the service style according to the customer's mood	-.097	.300	.092	.029	.544	.500	-.008
The server is sensitive to the customer's mood	-.012	.393	.094	-.048	.514	.440	.027
The server allows the customer opportunity for privacy	.171	.392	.086	.145	.434	-.022	-.040
When dining alone, the server spends more time conversing with the customer	.077	.010	.090	.258	.131	.599	-.025
The server entertains the customers with jokes or stories	-.104	-.069	.114	.430	.032	.574	.081
The server attends to special customer needs without being asked	.047	.403	.004	-.021	.265	.471	.274
The server looks attractive	.315	-.055	.134	-.100	-.075	.404	.244
The server engages in conversation unrelated to food and beverage needs	-.173	-.057	.008	.033	.090	-.228	.046
When customers know what they want to order, the server does not offer additional choices	.080	-.004	-.053	.051	.127	.011	.560
The server replenishes beverages frequently, without being asked	-.036	.419	.094	-.016	-.048	.288	.456
The server changes dishes when necessary	.247	.389	.228	.143	.218	.004	.452
The server is prompt in removing dishes after the customer has completed his course	.176	.143	.311	.164	.146	.037	.435

Five items were deleted as they did not load highly on any factors. After the five items were omitted, a second factor analysis was conducted. Table 4.3 shows the full rotated component matrix. A seven factor solution composed of thirty-three items was secured.

Table 4.3 Thirty-three Item Factor Analysis

	Component						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The server's hair is neat and well groomed	.876	.184	.115	.047	.044	.078	-.015
The server's hair is clean and restrained	.867	.076	.150	-.020	.047	.092	.003
The server's nails and hands are will manicured	.778	.133	.103	.051	.079	-.110	.026
The server's clothes are well maintained	.739	.243	.135	.168	.057	.146	.095
The server avoids touching the surface of eating utensils	.508	.155	.044	.060	-.049	.280	.148
The server accommodates special requests of the customer	.192	.718	-.073	.140	.218	-.003	-.050
The server provides for the customer's special needs when asked	.154	.691	.086	-.034	.275	.146	-.080
the server clarifies any uncertainty about food items listed on the menu	.172	.546	.352	-.103	.061	.186	.121
The server delivers menu items to the table in proper sequence	.169	.491	.221	-.027	.030	.200	.147
The server makes direct eye contact with the customer	.188	.486	.382	.154	-.049	-.190	.061
The server allows the customer opportunity for privacy	.151	.461	.046	.072	.165	.041	.411
The server adapts the pace of service to meet the customers needs	.020	.458	.253	-.127	.436	.141	.107
The server explains menu item ingredients	.085	.164	.695	-.045	.009	.237	.030
The server assists the customer in deciding what to order	.057	-.094	.654	.229	.181	.014	.149
The server suggests menu items suited to the individual customer's preferences	.157	.124	.623	.208	.138	-.119	.114
The server explains how menu items are prepared or cooked	.104	.319	.612	.108	.131	.230	.025
The server thoroughly explains menu specials	.275	.438	.528	.030	-.014	-.149	-.034
The server behaves in a way that entertains the customer	.071	.191	-.009	.773	-.043	-.112	.091
The server provides friendly conversation	-.013	-.040	.158	.698	.184	.155	-.125
The server entertains the customers with jokes or stories	-.056	-.166	.140	.620	.365	.020	-.098
The server behaves in a casual manner	.071	.000	.055	.580	-.061	.366	.099
When dining alone, the server spends more time conversing with the customer	.120	-.085	.099	.477	.438	-.070	-.030
The server behaves in a formal manner	.293	.176	.098	.444	-.195	.178	.252
The server smiles when greeting the customer	.161	.380	.178	.406	-.201	-.024	.064
The server adjusts the service style according to the customer's mood	-.028	.119	.138	.121	.724	-.029	.334
The server is sensitive to the customer's mood	.057	.212	.113	.015	.721	.000	.301
The server attends to special customer needs without being asked	.089	.185	.034	.076	.657	.261	.060

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When customers know what they want to order, the server does not offer additional choices	.037	-.012	-.056	.056	.023	.596	.141
The server changes dishes when necessary	.278	.311	.232	.073	.216	.501	.082
The server replenishes beverages frequently, without being asked	.025	.238	.063	.029	.425	.456	-.185
The server is prompt in removing dishes after the customer has completed his course	.212	.088	.311	.145	.094	.456	.105
The server doesn't interrupt if customers are conversing among themselves	.054	-.002	.088	.097	.123	.062	.714
The server knows when the customer does not want to be bothered	.053	.072	.141	-.131	.251	.193	.710

The factor pattern was readily interpretable and accounted for 55.3% of the total variance. Each factor was then named based on the common characteristic that each of the items included. Table 4.4 provides the list of the seven-factors, along with a breakdown of the items included in each with associated factor loadings, Eigenvalues, and reliability scores.

Reliability

Coefficient alpha was employed to judge data dimensionality and reliability of each of the separate factors. Reliability refers to the measurement that is free from error and provides consistent results (Zikmund, 1997). In order to assess overall reliability, the researchers computed Cronbach's alpha along with the correlation of each item to the construct. Research commonly suggests that Cronbach's alpha be .70 or above, and that those with correlations .3 or below should be deleted from the scale (Nunnally, 1978).

Table 4.4 Summarized Factor Loadings of Wait staff Behavior Items

	Factor Loadings	Eigenvalue	Percentage of variance explained	Cronbach's Alpha
Factor 1: Sanitation		7.56	22.9	.851
The server's hair is neat and well groomed	.876			
The server's hair is clean and restrained	.867			
The server's nails and hands are will manicured	.778			
The server's clothes are well maintained	.739			
The server avoids touching the surface of eating utensils	.508			
Factor 2: Accommodation		2.69	8.1	.749
The server accommodates special requests of the customer	.718			
The server provides for the customer's special needs when asked	.691			
The server clarifies any uncertainty about food items listed on the menu	.546			
The server delivers menu items to the table in proper sequence	.491			
The server makes direct eye contact with the customer	.486			
The server adapts the pace of service to meet the customers needs	.458			
Factor 3: Knowledge		2.43	7.4	.741
The server explains menu item ingredients	.695			
The server assists the customer in deciding what to order	.654			
The server suggests menu items suited to the individual customer's preferences	.623			
The server explains how menu items are prepared or cooked	.612			
The server thoroughly explains menu specials	.528			

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	Factor Loadings	Eigenvalue	Percentage of variance explained	Cronbach's Alpha
Factor 4: Friendliness		1.67	5.1	.716
The server behaves in a way that entertains the customer	.773			
The server provides friendly conversation	.698			
The server entertains the customers with jokes or stories	.620			
The server behaves in a casual manner	.580			
When dining alone, the server spends more time conversing with the customer	.477			
The server behaves in a formal manner	.444			
The server smiles when greeting the customer	.406			
Factor 5: Responsiveness		1.43	4.3	.757
The server adjusts the service style according to the customer's mood	.724			
The server is sensitive to the customer's mood	.721			
The server attends to special customer needs without being asked	.657			
Factor 6: Table Maintenance		1.29	3.9	.548
When customers know what they want to order, the server does not offer additional choices	.596			
The server changes dishes when necessary	.501			
The server replenishes beverages frequently, without being asked	.456			
The server is prompt in removing dishes after the customer has completed his course	.456			
Factor 7: Privacy		1.19	3.6	.58
The server allows the customer opportunity for privacy	.411			
The server doesn't interrupt if customers are conversing among themselves	.714			
The server knows when the customer does not want to be bothered	.710			
Total			55.3	

The first factor, sanitation, was composed of five items and explained 22.9% of the total variance. Items loading on this factor were developed to capture the service behaviors that were related to grooming, cleanliness, and sanitary food and beverage handling procedures exhibited by the wait staff. The sanitation factor had an Eigenvalue of 7.56 and a reliability of .851.

The accommodation factor was comprised of six items related behaviors a server makes to accommodate the guest in terms of special needs, pace, and sequencing. The accommodation factor had an Eigenvalue of 2.69 and explained 8.1% of the total variance. Using Cronbach's alpha, the reliability of the composite measure was assessed at .749.

The knowledge factor was made up of five items and explained 7.4% of the total variance. The five items possessed an Eigenvalue of 2.43 and presented a reliability of .741. The knowledge items all dealt with a server explaining or assisting with menu item selection and product knowledge.

The fourth factor, friendliness, included seven items. The items in this factor measured friendly behavior exhibited by the wait staff such as conversation, manner, and entertaining. This composite measure resulted in an Eigenvalue of 1.67, and had total variance explanation of 5.1%, with a Cronbach's alpha of .716.

The responsiveness factor dealt with a server displaying behaviors that were responsive to the customer's mood and special needs. The reliability measured .757 while the percentage of variance explained was 4.3% and the Eigenvalue of 1.43.

The sixth factor, table maintenance had an Eigenvalue of 1.29 and accounted for 3.9% in explaining the variance. The Cronbach's alpha of .548 was still deemed appropriate for the study based on the Eigenvalue over 1.0 and allowed to keep additional explanation of the variance. The table maintenance factor dealt with removing plates and replenishing beverages, behaviors that keep the customers table clean and maintained.

The seventh and final factor was labeled privacy as it dealt with behaviors that servers display in allowing for customer privacy. This factor allotted for 3.6% in explaining the total variance and had an Eigenvalue of 1.19. The reliability for the seventh factor was .58.

Validity

A scale is considered valid when it measures what it is intended to measure. More specifically, construct validity implies that the empirical evidence generated by a measure is consistent with the theoretical logic about the concepts (Zikmund, 1997). Within the constructs, there are two types that are generally evaluated: convergent validity and discriminant validity. Convergent validity refers to the ability of some measures to correlate with measures of the same construct. Discriminant validity implies that a measure has a low correlation with measures of dissimilar concepts (Zikmund, 1997). While validity is difficult to measure, the researchers sought to determine if the measures accurately measure the factors. Each factor was deemed to have appropriate content validity and discriminant validity based on the loading of the separate factors.

Rank of Importance

In order to assess the importance level for each of the seven server behavior dimensions, scores on the items included in each factor were coded into summary variables and named to provide a uni-dimensional aggregate score for each. Both the rural and the urban sample ranked the dimensions in the same order viewing sanitation as the most important, followed by accommodation, privacy, table maintenance, responsiveness, and knowledge. Interestingly, friendliness was found to be the least important behavior to display. Table 4.5 shows the within group rank-order for each of the seven service dimensions with means and standards deviations displayed.

MANOVA: Rural and Urban

The aggregate scores for each of the seven factors were used to compare the magnitude of the importance between the rural and urban groups. To test this, a multivariate analysis of variance was performed to assess the joint effects of the sub-culture differences on the importance of behaviors and timing variables associated with casual restaurant dining. In

addition, this statistical procedure was used to measure each time item in respect to other demographic information including group size, age, and gender. The General Linear Model procedure allows of the analysis of variance for multiple dependent variables (Norusis, 2005). MANOVA was employed instead of ANOVA to assess interrelationships among selection criteria factors (dependent) and the independent socio-demographic and behavior element variables (fixed factors) (Brey, Klenosky, Lehto, & Morrison, 2008) as conducting multiple ANOVA analyses will inflate the chance of having a Type I error. The results in table 4.5 display the multivariate analysis for each factor. The three dimensions of responsiveness, knowledge, and friendliness were found to be significant at the $p=.05$ level. In addition, sanitation and privacy were found to be partially significant at the $p=.10$ level.

Table 4.5 Comparison of Importance Levels for Summary Dimensions of Restaurant Service

	Rural (n=174)		Urban(n=175)		F ratio	p level
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Multivariate test					5.55	.000
Univariate tests						
Sanitation	3.9	.83	4.06	.84	2.82	.094
Accommodation	3.88	.59	3.91	.63	.176	.675
Privacy	3.69	.62	3.82	.79	3.06	.081
Table Maintenance	3.53	.65	3.45	.70	1.24	.267
Responsiveness	3.31	.86	3.12	.96	3.8	.050
Knowledge	2.79	.72	3.07	.79	12.07	.001
Friendliness	2.31	.51	2.49	.72	7.76	.006

Table 4.6 shows the multivariate analysis of the dimensions of restaurant service in analyzing the individual items that comprised each of the seven dimensions. Results showed that there were significant differences in the importance levels for multiple behaviors that wait staff typically display during the service exchange. Results are summarized in Table 4.6 and provide an in-depth look at the contribution made by each individual variable to the rating scores for each dimension.

Sanitation was ranked most important by both the rural and urban sample and the analysis of the summary variables indicated that the dimension was equally important to both of the groups, which is consistent to the findings of previous studies and literature review. Although the sanitation factor was not found to be significant overall, one significant difference existed for an individual item in the way that sanitation was assessed. The urban sample had a statistically significant difference in the means of how important it was for the server to avoid touching the surface of eating utensils. The rural sample had lower mean expectations for all five of the sanitation factors compared to their urban counterparts. While most important to both groups, the need for servers to exhibit sanitary behaviors are of greater importance to the urban sample.

The accommodation factor was not found to be statistically significant, although it ranked second among both groups in overall importance. This varies from the Becker et al. (1999) study that found their accommodation factor to be the fourth most important. Both groups rated servers providing for special needs when asked most important. However, the urban sample ranked the delivery of menu items to the table in the proper sequence as the second most important behavior while the rural sample ranked servers accommodating special requests as the second most important factor. The rural sample had higher expectations of the importance of accommodating special requests, providing for customers special needs, and adapting to the pace of service. Conversely, the urban sample had higher mean expectations for servers to clarify uncertainty about the menu, delivering menu items in the proper sequence, and making direct eye contact with the customer. Of the individual items in the accommodation scale, only delivering the menu items to the table in the proper sequence was found to have a statistical significance at .044.

Privacy was ranked the third most important factor by both samples. The urban sample had a higher means for all three of the privacy items, indicating that they valued this behavior slightly more importantly. None of the individual items were found to differ statistically significant between groups yet the overall measure of the privacy dimension can be found to be partially significant at the .08 level.

Table maintenance was the fourth most important factor. A statistically significant difference was found for both the server replenishing beverages frequently, without being asked and for the server being prompt in removing dishes after the customer has completed the course with .000 and .016, respectively. In addition, the rural customer had a higher mean of

importance for a server not offering additional choices when the customer knows what they want to order. Conversely, the urban sample ranked changing dishes when necessary and removing dishes as the more important items in relation to table maintenance.

The responsiveness dimension was found to have a significant difference when wait staff attended to customer special needs without being asked at the .01 level. All three of the factors were rated to have higher means of importance for the rural customers. In addition, the overall dimension was found to be significant at the .05 level, indicated a significant difference in importance for rural and urban customers.

Wait staff behaving and displaying product knowledge was ranked as the next most important dimension and was found to have a statistically significant difference between the two samples. Of the five items, only the server thoroughly explaining menu items was found to not be statistically significant, yet it was rated to have the most importance and had the highest mean among all five knowledge items. In addition, the urban group had higher means for all five items. Assisting the customer in deciding what to order had the lowest overall mean among both groups.

The friendliness dimension was ranked overall as the least important behavior for servers to display. The rural sample had higher means of importance only for the providing friendly conversation behavior, while the urban sample had higher means for the remaining six behavioral items. In addition to the overall dimension possessing statistical significance of variance between groups, the individual items of behaving in a way that entertains the customer, behaving in a casual manner, and behaving in a formal manner were all found to be statistically significant as individual measures. The largest difference in means was with servers behaving in a formal manner. The urban population responded to this having a much higher rating of importance than the rural counterpart.

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Table 4.6 Multivariate Analysis of the Dimensions of Restaurant Service

	Rural		Urban		F value	P level
	M	SD	M	SD		
Factor 1: Sanitation						
The server's hair is neat and well groomed	3.82	1.06	3.98	1.03	1.99	.159
The server's hair is clean and restrained	3.95	1.08	4.03	1.04	.57	.453
The server's nails and hands are will manicured	3.69	1.21	3.85	1.26	1.48	.224
The server's clothes are well maintained	3.99	.88	4.13	0.90	1.93	.165
The server avoids touching the surface of eating utensils	4.07	1.11	4.31	.96	4.75	.030
Factor 2: Accommodation						
The server accommodates special requests of the customer	4.07	.83	3.95	.93	1.74	.188
The server provides for the customer's special needs when asked	4.20	.78	4.13	.84	.73	.392
The server clarifies any uncertainty about food items listed on the menu	3.87	.82	4.02	.91	2.49	.115
The server delivers menu items to the table in proper sequence	3.82	1.02	4.03	.99	4.10	.044
The server makes direct eye contact with the customer	3.60	.99	3.63	1.04	.09	.765
The server adapts the pace of service to meet the customers needs	3.70	.89	3.67	.95	.05	.823
Factor 3: Knowledge						
The server explains menu item ingredients	2.67	1.12	2.92	1.19	4.10	.044
The server assists the customer in deciding what to order	2.27	.99	2.65	1.11	11.86	.001
The server suggests menu items suited to the individual customer's preferences	2.83	.97	3.19	1.13	10.50	.001
The server explains how menu items are prepared or cooked	2.69	1.03	2.98	1.12	6.34	.012
The server thoroughly explains menu specials	3.48	1.04	3.63	1.10	1.76	.186
Factor 4: Friendliness						
The server behaves in a way that entertains the customer	1.89	.93	2.25	1.30	9.18	.003
The server provides friendly conversation	2.20	.92	2.18	1.06	.03	.853
The server entertains the customers with jokes or stories	1.46	.80	1.50	.79	.25	.621
The server behaves in a casual manner	2.30	.95	2.54	1.27	4.22	.041
When dining alone, the server spends more time conversing with the customer	1.85	.98	2.02	1.15	2.22	.137
The server behaves in a formal manner	2.65	1.05	3.11	1.17	15.56	.000
The server smiles when greeting the customer	3.72	.93	3.82	0.95	1.08	.300

	Rural M	SD	Urban M	SD	F value	P level
Factor 5: Responsiveness						
The server adjusts the service style according to the customer's mood	3.15	1.15	3.00	1.23	1.32	.252
The server is sensitive to the customer's mood	3.36	.99	3.18	1.14	2.56	.110
The server attends to special customer needs without being asked	3.47	1.02	3.19	1.11	6.16	.013
Factor 6: Table Maintenance						
When customers know what they want to order, the server does not offer additional choices	3.02	1.11	2.86	1.22	1.66	.199
The server changes dishes when necessary	3.77	.86	3.88	1.00	1.29	.257
The server replenishes beverages frequently, without being asked	3.90	.95	3.42	1.10	19.27	.000
The server is prompt in removing dishes after the customer has completed his course	3.40	.95	3.65	0.99	5.81	.016
Factor 7: Privacy						
The server allows the customer opportunity for privacy	3.93	.80	4.05	0.93	1.65	.200
The server doesn't interrupt if customers are conversing among themselves	3.35	1.06	3.54	1.11	2.70	.101
The server knows when the customer does not want to be bothered	3.69	.90	3.87	1.02	3.22	.073

MANOVA: Demographics

Prior to the MANOVA analysis, respondent characteristics for age were regrouped into five categories, 25 and younger, 26-35, 36-45, 46-55, and 56 and older. This was done for better interpretation of the age demographic variable as it relates to the behavioral dimensions. The MANOVA results indicated that dining frequency, server experience, and management experience did not have a significant difference on ratings of importance of server behaviors. However, gender, age, and income were all shown to have a statistically significant difference for the seven behavior dimensions.

For further analysis, Table 4.7 shows the multivariate analysis of the behavioral importance by gender. Sanitation (F=11.58, p=.001) and Knowledge (F=4.66, p=.032) were found to differ significantly for males and females. Females rated the importance of the sanitation and knowledge factor with a statistically significant higher mean than males

Table 4.7 Multivariate Analysis of Behavioral Importance by Gender

	Male (N=139)		Female (N=210)		F ratio	p level
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Sanitation	3.80	.84	4.10	.811	11.58	.001
Accommodation	3.84	.60	3.92	.611	1.29	.256
Knowledge	2.82	.72	3.00	.79	4.66	.032
Friendliness	2.40	.67	2.39	.61	.057	.811
Responsiveness	3.29	.86	3.16	.95	1.77	.185
Table Maintenance	3.50	.64	3.49	.70	.041	.840
Privacy	3.79	.69	3.70	.73	.598	.440

Further analysis was conducted using MANOVA to separately analyze each of the items within the significant factors of sanitation and knowledge. Table 4.8 shows the multivariate analysis of the sanitation factor using the five items. Results show that four of the five items are statistically significant with the exception of servers avoiding touching the surface of the eating utensils. Females rated all five items to have more importance for a server to display in their behavior. The results suggest that females place a higher importance on sanitation behaviors than male customers.

Table 4.8 Multivariate Analysis of Sanitation Items by Gender

	Male		Female		F ratio	p level
	M	SD	M	SD		
Factor 1: Sanitation						
The server's hair is neat and well groomed	3.68	1.05	4.04	1.02	10.31	.001
The server's hair is clean and restrained	3.75	1.13	4.15	.98	12.38	.000
The server's nails and hands are will manicured	3.54	1.35	3.91	1.14	7.83	.005
The server's clothes are well maintained	3.92	.88	4.15	.88	5.72	.017
The server avoids touching the surface of eating utensils	4.06	1.11	4.28	.99	3.66	.057

Results from the MANOVA analysis also found a statically significant difference for the knowledge scale. For further analyses, multivariate tests were conducted on each of the five individual items that comprised of the knowledge factor and are summarized in Table 4.9. The results show that females rated all five items to have higher means than their male counterparts. In addition, the individual item of the wait staff explaining menu item ingredients ($p=.017$) and explaining how menu items are prepared or cooked ($p=.031$) were found to be individually significant. The results demonstrate that females place a higher importance on their server being knowledgeable about the menu and the food preparation.

Table 4.9 Multivariate Analysis of Knowledge Items by Gender

	Male		Female		F ratio	p level
	M	SD	M	SD		
Factor 3: Knowledge						
The server explains menu item ingredients	2.62	1.06	2.91	1.2	5.7	.017
The server assists the customer in deciding what to order	2.42	1.05	2.48	1.08	.227	.634
The server suggests menu items suited to the individual customer's preferences	2.92	.997	3.06	1.11	1.44	.230
The server explains how menu items are prepared or cooked	2.68	.987	2.93	1.14	4.7	.031
The server thoroughly explains menu specials	3.43	1.02	3.64	1.1	3.13	.078

MANOVA results for comparison of importance levels by age summarized in Table 4.9. The accommodation factor showed a difference between age groups ($p=.004$), friendliness factor ($p=.000$), and table maintenance ($p=.015$). Accommodation items included servers attending to special needs and requests. The Friendliness factor related to items involving conversation, manner, and entertaining. Table maintenance dealt with items involving manicuring a table with clean and removed dishes. Sanitation was least important to those 26 to 35 ($M=3.81$, $SD=.867$) and most important to those 56 and over ($M=4.10$, $SD=.75$). Accommodation was most important to the age group between 46 to 55 ($M=4.11$, $SD=.49$) and least important to the age range of 26 to 35 ($M=3.76$, $SD=.71$). Friendliness was most important to customers under the age of 25 ($M=2.73$, $SD=.60$) and least important to those over the age of 56 ($M=1.98$, $SD=.47$)

while table maintenance was most important by those over 46 years old and least important to those between 26 to 35 ($M=3.24$, $SD=.71$)

Table 4.10 Multivariate Analysis of Importance Levels of Dimensions by Age

	F ratio	p level
Sanitation	1.047	.383
Accommodation	3.995	.004
Knowledge	1.135	.340
Friendliness	21.186	.000
Responsiveness	1.018	.398
Table Maintenance	3.149	.015
Privacy	2.040	.088

Post-hoc Tukey's tests were performed to determine which of the age categories displayed the significant difference between age groups for the two factors and are listed in Table 4.11. The importance of accommodation differed significantly between age groups of 25 and under and 46 to 55 ($p=.008$) as well as between 26 to 35 and 46-55 ($p=.017$). The importance of Friendliness differed significantly between those 25 and under ($M=2.73$, $SD=.748$) and all other age groups ($p<.001$) and between ages 26 to 35 and ages 56 and older ($p=.003$). Based on the results, behaviors of friendliness are most important to those customers twenty-five and younger. The importance of table maintenance varied between customer 25 and under and 26 to 35 ($p=.047$) and between customers 26 to 35 and 46 to 55 ($p=.026$).

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Table 4.11 Post-Hoc test using Tukey's HSD for Comparison of Importance Levels of Dimensions by Age

			Mean Difference	Significance
Accommodation	25 and under	26 to 35	0.0126	1.000
		36 to 45	-0.1306	0.661
		46 to 55	-0.3161	0.008
		56 and over	-0.1831	0.473
	26 to 35	25 and under	-0.0126	1.000
		36 to 45	-0.1432	0.671
		46 to 55	-0.3287	0.017
		56 and over	-0.1957	0.487
	36 to 45	25 and under	0.1306	0.661
		26 to 35	0.1432	0.671
		46 to 55	-0.1855	0.463
		56 and over	-0.0525	0.994
	46 to 55	25 and under	0.3161	0.008
		26 to 35	0.3287	0.017
		36 to 45	0.1855	0.463
		56 and over	0.133	0.825
	56 and over	25 and under	0.1831	0.473
		26 to 35	0.1957	0.487
		36 to 45	0.0525	0.994
		46 to 55	-0.133	0.825
Friendliness	25 and under	26 to 35	0.3265	0.001
		36 to 45	0.5499	0.000
		46 to 55	0.59	0.000
		56 and over	0.7422	0.000
	26 to 35	25 and under	-0.3265	0.001
		36 to 45	0.2234	0.178
		46 to 55	0.2635	0.062
		56 and over	0.4156	0.003
	36 to 45	25 and under	-0.550	0.000
		26 to 35	-0.2234	0.178
		46 to 55	0.0401	0.996
		56 and over	0.1923	0.490
	46 to 55	25 and under	-0.590	0.000
		26 to 35	-0.2635	0.062
		36 to 45	-0.0401	0.996
		56 and over	0.1521	0.695
	56 and over	25 and under	-0.7422	0.000
		26 to 35	-0.4156	0.003
		36 to 45	-0.1923	0.490
		46 to 55	-0.1521	0.695

			Mean Difference	Significance
Table Maintenance	25 and under	26 to 35	0.2718	0.047
		36 to 45	-0.0228	1.000
		46 to 55	-0.074	0.954
		56 and over	0.0087	1.000
	26 to 35	25 and under	-0.2718	0.047
		36 to 45	-0.2946	0.096
		46 to 55	-0.3458	0.026
		56 and over	-0.2632	0.282
	36 to 45	25 and under	0.0228	1.000
		26 to 35	0.2946	0.096
		46 to 55	-0.0512	0.994
		56 and over	0.0315	0.999
	46 to 55	25 and under	0.074	0.954
		26 to 35	0.3458	0.026
		36 to 45	0.0512	0.994
		56 and over	0.0827	0.975
	56 and over	25 and under	-0.0087	1.000
		26 to 35	0.2632	0.282
		36 to 45	-0.0315	0.999
		46 to 55	-0.0827	0.975

MANOVA for income levels showed a statistically significant difference for the friendliness and income measures ($F=2.60$, $p=.025$), Post-hoc analysis using Tukey's found the variance existed between those with income between \$15,001-30,000 and those above \$75,000 at $p=.05$. Those in the \$15,001-\$30,000 income bracket rated friendliness at a mean of 2.55 ($SD=.68$) while those earning at least \$75,000 had a mean of 2.23 ($SD=.529$) for the friendliness factor.

Timing Items

Results of the third section answered the research questions of determining the appropriate time preferences for waiting at each stage of the dining process.

MANOVA: Rural and Urban

Mean responses show that longest waiting period is preferred to be between the completion of the meal and before the server brings the check ($M=2.73$, $SD=1.23$) and the shortest time period

should be between receiving a menu and placing an order ($M=1.79$, $SD=.575$). Full results of the mean preferences for each duration stage are listed in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12 Preference for Wait Time

	N=351			
	Mean	SD	Min	Max
After arriving at this type of restaurant, I find it acceptable to wait about Before being seated	2.03	1.04	1	6
After receiving a menu, I would like to have about Before the server returns to take my order	1.79	0.575	1	4
After placing my order, I prefer to wait about Before the server brings my order to the table	2.68	0.934	1	6
After completing my meal, I would like to be able to linger at the table before the server brings my check	2.73	1.23	1	6

Scale:

1= 5 minutes or less

2= 6 to 10 minutes

3= 11 to 15 minutes

4= 16 to 20 minutes

5=21 to 25 minutes

6= 26 minutes or longer

In addition, the second hypothesis was evaluated to determine if a statistically significant difference exists between the rural and urban customers in time preferences for each of the four stages of dining process. A multivariate analysis of variance was performed to assess the joint effects of sub-culture differences on the four timing variables associated with casual restaurant dining. The MANOVA analysis revealed that the overall main effects associated with the rural and urban sub-culture differences were significant ($F= 2.98$, $p=.021$). Results of the multivariate analysis of variance for the wait time levels are summarized in Table 4.13. The individual analysis of the four items for wait time preferences indicated that the acceptable wait time prior to seating was higher for the rural sample than the urban sample and was statistically

significant ($F=5.11, p=.033$). The urban sample responded with a higher mean regarding the wait time between receiving a menu and placing an order ($F=4.6, p=.033$). There were no statistically significant differences found for the other two timing items, with the mean differences being very close together.

Table 4.13 Multivariate Analysis for Comparison of Preference Levels for Wait Time

	Rural (n=175)		Urban (n=168)		F ratio	p level
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Multivariate test					2.98	.021
Univariate tests						
After arriving at this type of restaurant, I find it acceptable to wait about Before being seated	2.14	1.08	2.02	1.03	5.11	.024
After receiving a menu, I would like to have about Before the server returns to take my order	1.73	.579	1.86	.56	4.6	.033
After placing my order, I prefer to wait about Before the server brings my order to the table	2.7	.936	2.67	.95	.089	.766
After completing my meal, I would like to be able to linger at the table before the server brings my check	2.73	1.24	2.73	1.22	.002	.969

MANOVA: Demographics

Multivariate analysis of variance was also performed to assess the effects of other demographic variables on the four timing variables associated with casual restaurant dining. No statistically significant differences were found for age, income level, dining frequency, experience as a server or experience as a manager. Of the demographic variables, only gender exhibited a statistically significant difference and the results are summarized in Table 4.14. After completing the meal, females preferred to linger longer at the table before the server brings the check ($F=9.54, p=.002$)

Table 4.14 Multivariate Analysis of Timing Preferences by Gender

	Male (N=140)		Female (N=203)		F ratio	p level
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Multivariate					2.5	.043
After arriving at this type of restaurant, I find it acceptable to wait about Before being seated	1.96	1.07	2.06	1.01	.892	.346
After receiving a menu, I would like to have about Before the server returns to take my order	1.76	.595	1.82	0.56	.724	.395
After placing my order, I prefer to wait about Before the server brings my order to the table	2.6	.958	2.75	0.923	2.09	.150
After completing my meal, I would like to be able to linger at the table before the server brings my check	2.49	1.15	2.9	1.25	9.54	.002

Summary

This chapter presented respondents' general demographics, frequency, and descriptive information. Second, it presented the seven-factor Behavioral dimensions along with the associated factor loading, percentage of variance explained, and Cronbach's alpha. The study then used multivariate analysis of variance to determine if differences existed between the rural and urban samples. The first hypothesis was tested to determine if rural and urban customers differ in the level of importance of server behaviors. Results indicated that urban and rural customers showed a statistically significant difference in their stated level of importance for server behaviors of responsiveness, knowledge, and friendliness. Therefore, hypothesis 1 was partially supported. MANOVA results also showed significant differences between gender for sanitation and knowledge and for some measures between age and income. Last, preferences for the first two timing measurements were statistically significant, partially supporting hypothesis 2. Additional MANOVA results found mean differences of gender for the last of the wait time components.

CHAPTER V: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine if a difference exists between the importance of different server behaviors and timing preferences among the sub-culture of a rural and urban sample. This was tested using factor analysis and MANOVA as discussed in the previous chapter. The fifth chapter of this study will discuss the findings, implications, limitations of the research, recommendations for future research, and conclusion.

Discussion of Findings

The following section will discuss the findings of this research according to the research objectives and hypotheses proposed in Chapter 1.

Behavioral Objectives

1. Identify the importance of different service behavioral dimensions
2. Identify and analyze if these dimensions and their magnitude vary as a function of sub-culture
3. To determine if the importance level varies as a function of other key customer characteristics

The study first used principal components factor analysis to create factors for the various behaviors servers may exhibit during the restaurant service encounter. Factor analysis showed seven dimensions, each listed in terms of their overall importance; sanitation, accommodation, privacy, table maintenance, responsiveness, knowledge, and friendliness. The results of this study found partial support for hypothesis 1; that the importance of server behaviors differs as a function of rural and urban sub-culture. The significant distinction was found for three of the seven behavior factors, responsiveness, knowledge, and friendliness. Differences among gender for sanitation and knowledge, and friendliness for age groups were also found to be significant.

Sanitation was the most important factor and therefore constituted a major area of concern and concentration for restaurant customers and was found to be most important to women. Even with such governmental regulations by the health department and adoption of SERVSAFE qualifications, customers may still rely upon their own experience to assess potential risks for casual restaurants. Observation of the server's hair being groomed, clean, and restrained are potential indicators of an establishments overall sanitation and propensity for foreign objects in food, such as hair. In addition, a customer contact employee's hands and clothes are also tell-tale signs of the level of cleanliness and sanitation for a restaurant. Results of this study continue to demonstrate the high level of importance customers place on sanitary, clean, safe, and proper food handling procedures.

Accommodation was viewed as the second most important factor among the total sample, especially for those under the age of 35 years old. Those in the United States have been shown to exhibit a very strong desire and acclamation toward individualism and self-interest (Hofstede, 1983). It can also be argued that higher levels of individualism and self interest are increasingly displayed by members of Generation X and Y. Such behaviors relate to providing for customers specific needs and desires. Restaurants should continue to cater to individual customer needs perform the necessary accommodations. The specialized treatment and accommodation of specific requests presents evidence that such treatment is the expected norm. Therefore, restaurants should strive to be as accommodating as possible to customer needs and requests. Furthermore, it has been suggested that service customization may be critical to gaining competitive advantage.

Privacy was rated as the third most important dimension among both groups. The dimension of privacy can involve a customer contact employee managing the balance of being attentive towards the customer while not bothering or interrupting the dining party. The importance of privacy may be of more importance to those groups who want a more unobtrusive, more seamless service style. While not statistically significant, the urban sample did rate the behaviors towards privacy as more important than the urban counterparts.

Table maintenance emerged as the next most important behavior for servers to engage in at casual restaurants, which was a unique dimension differing from those found in the Becker et al., (1999) study. In particular, the rural sample placed a much greater level of importance on replenishing beverages without being asked. Respondents within the age range of 26 to 35 also

placed the highest importance on table maintenance across age groupings. Both rural and urban samples also found it important to remove dishes and plates, keeping the table well maintained and manicured. For example, some restaurants employ a specific individual to attend to table maintenance, bussing, and pre-bussing. Based on the results of this study, clean, well maintained tables should be an important focus of job responsibility in order to aid in customer satisfaction.

The fifth dimension in importance was responsiveness and centered around behaviors of being sensitive to the customer's mood and adjusting service style based on the customer's mood. It may be of value for establishments to train servers on sensing and altering behavior based on customer's displayed mood and body language in order to meet their expectations.

The knowledge dimension was ranked as the next most important dimension. Much of this may relate to more specific explanations of item preparation as this then pertains to individual preferences. More specifically, such recent legislature such as the nutritional content of menu items displayed for restaurants (such as those in New York) may have led to greater awareness of caloric, fat, and sodium content of many causal restaurant menu items. Americans, in particular, tend to have diets high in fat, sodium, carbohydrates, and calories, and females were found to place a higher level of importance on knowledge than males. Results from this study show that it is increasingly more important for servers to be knowledgeable about menu items and their preparation. If a lack of service staff's knowledge is detected, it may decrease customer satisfaction (Kim, Lee & Yoo, 2006).

Friendliness was rated as the least important dimension and was even less important for the rural sample. However, friendliness was rated the highest by those 25 and under and varied significantly from all other groups. The results indicate that servers should display behaviors that exhibit a greater level of friendliness such as general entertaining, telling jokes or stories, and conversing when dealing with a younger demographic. This notion is supported by the concept of social support (Adelman, Ahuvia, & Goodwin, 1994) which posits that customers receive social support when service providers non-verbal communications reduce customer anxiety, enhance, self-esteem, or create a sense of social connection to others.

Timing Objectives

4. Identify the appropriate time standards for the casual restaurant service encounter
5. Identify and analyze whether the timing standards vary as a function of sub-culture
6. Determine if the acceptable time standards vary as a function of other key customer characteristics

The findings of this study provide support for the hypothesized relationship that timing expectations vary as a function of rural and urban sub-culture for casual restaurant service. Respondents were most apt to desire the shortest time elapsed between receiving a menu and having the server take the order and the largest amount of time to linger at the table before the server drops the check. Additionally, women were found to desire to linger longer post-meal than males. The mean times for each category were preferred to take less than fifteen minutes, which gives merit to the idea of casual restaurants tailoring their products for a more rapid cooking or preparation time.

Two of the four dimensions indicated that differences exist between rural and urban consumers. Rural consumers are more willing to wait to be seated after arriving than those in urban areas. Casual dining establishments in urban areas may want to consider implementing or modifying reservation and call ahead policies in order to minimize wait time and maximize satisfaction. Conversely, those in urban settings are more willing to wait after receiving an order before the server returns to take the order. This may indicate that they prefer a greater amount of time to select the meal and that wait staff should be cognizant of this preference.

Implications

This section presents both managerial and theoretical implications drawn from the results of this study. This study provides theoretical implications within the hospitality as well as the tourism industry specifically by increasing the current level of knowledge in existing organizational behavior, hospitality, and tourism literature. As both have become more internationalized, customer contact employees are interacting with an increasing number of customers from a wide breadth of cultures. As suggested by Kee-Fu and Ap (2007), researchers may benefit from knowing how to avoid negative perceptions for customers and tourists from different cultural and sub-cultural backgrounds. The researchers sought to address the gap in the

literature by testing the importance of server behaviors and timing preferences that to date, have received little attention.

Furthermore, this study investigated two samples, one rural and one urban in order to measure the potential of sub-culture differences that exist. To date, research on sub-culture differences in service and restaurant operations is scant, despite the recommendations of researchers. As such, it progresses the hospitality literature through the empirical investigation of two sub-culture samples, and the associated significant findings of differences.

While there has been conceptual research that investigates the components of service quality, satisfaction, and the service encounter, little research has empirically explored what the components really mean to the consumer in terms of actual behaviors delivered (Winsted, 1997). Therefore, this research has added to the theoretical body of knowledge by investigating the importance of server behaviors and identified the level of importance. In addition, much of the theoretical research surrounding time has investigated it from a revenue management perspective. This research has theoretical implications in that it has empirically identified time preferences of customers, of which, there has been little research.

Operational implications may include the suggestion of cultural training programs that help guest-contact employees better understand the desires and behavioral elements that lead to greater levels of satisfaction amongst different cultures and regions. There is not a one size fits all model to service delivery, and customer preferences for behaviors are likely to vary based on sub-culture. It may behoove casual restaurant managers to limit the use of scripted menu tours, greets, and shopper report items, in favor of altering service delivery tailored to the individual. Some strict behavioral or timing components may actually be decreasing the level of customer satisfaction. These results strongly indicate that restaurant patrons desire customization, not standardization.

Another important managerial implication is that restaurant operators and employees need to ensure sanitary practices and clean appearances of customer contact employees, as sanitation was found to be the most important factor in this research. To ensure the highest level of sanitation and cleanliness, managers may need to educate the staff, conduct uniform checks, and keep a diligent watch of hand washing, and handling practices exhibited by their staff. In addition, table maintenance and pre-bussing should be viewed as increasingly important and may warrant a specific employee to maintain clean tables, such as a server assistant or busboy.

Although many casual restaurants and chains that may have set policies in place regarding substitutions or mandatory elements of service delivery, the authors of this research suggest that they should strive to accommodate the special needs and requests of the customers. The United States, in particular, is found to be a highly individualistic society and thus rates customization and personalization is highly important (Winsted, 1999). In order to be competitive in today's market, individual customization and interactively designing and evolving offerings that meet customers unique, dynamic needs may be one way to yield competitive advantage.

Another important finding of this research is that younger customers view behaviors of friendliness most important compared to other age groups. Service firms are striving to develop better relationships with their customers. This research found that customers of Generation Y, found the dimension of friendliness to be especially important. This may be theoretically supported by the concept of social support in that younger customers may want to create a greater sense of social connection to others. This may also be attributed to the egalitarian nature of the American society that has service personnel treating customers as friends (Winsted, 1999).

For casual restaurants in urban markets, implementing or adherence to reservation and call-ahead policies is of greater importance to the satisfaction of the customer. Other strategies that seek to minimize the time of waiting for a table upon arrival would provide a way of meeting guest expectations. Additionally, casual restaurants should train employees that females consider the lingering and post-meal conversation as an important part to a satisfaction dining experience. Delivering the check too quickly may be perceived to rush the customer and serve as a negative last impression for the experience. In addition, urban customers may prefer to take longer to review then menu before making a meal selection. Employees should be sensitive and cognizant of the signs that the patrons are ready to order, such as placing the menus down on the table.

The level of service staff knowledge was also deemed as an extremely important quality for a server to possess. Managers need to be cognizant of the level of server knowledge about the operation and menu items. There is widespread belief that many people possess various food allergies (Lyons & Forde, 2004) and such common food allergens include nuts, seafood, and gluten. Evidence shows that people who die from food allergies do so having eaten away from home (Gowland, 2001). From this perspective, it is increasingly more important for servers to be

knowledgeable not only to yield greater customer satisfaction, but also in order to protect the safety of guests. If a lack of service staff's knowledge is detected, managers should focus future training on teaching the fundamentals of food preparation, menu item ingredients and specific customer needs. Furthermore, a manager or chef may specifically need to give attention to guests with food allergies.

Limitations and Future Research

This research provides important insights into the different dimensions of the casual restaurant service encounter and the impact of sub-culture. However, several limitations existed in association with this study. The first involves the sampling procedure employed, as both samples were selected for convenience and were based on rural and urban areas. Future research should employ a methodology that may be able to better separate customers on the basis of rural or urban sub-culture.

In addition, this study focused on two samples specifically pertaining to the casual restaurant service setting. Server behaviors displayed as well as customer preference for such behaviors would logically vary based on the type of establishment and level of service. What is most desirable in a quick service restaurant may be speed of service, where customers at fine dining establishments may rank professionalism and attentiveness as the most important behaviors to display. The results of this study may not be generalizable across all restaurants, but do provide useful information for casual restaurant managers and employees.

Generalizations about rural and urban sub-culture and across different service settings should be made with caution. Given the differences in samples studied, the complexities of culture and sub-culture, personal interaction and service evaluation, it is evident that more research needs to be conducted regarding sub-culture preferences of displayed service behavior. The findings, however, contribute useful information to a young field of study that still provides useful managerial implications. As such, good service is indicated by different behaviors in different areas.

Another limitation involves the use of a Likert-scale when rating importance. It is possible that what customers state as important and what they have as expectations may not be the same. The use of a self-reported survey method may have the potential for biased results. Therefore, in order to minimize this bias, other methods such as experimental design and choice modeling may be useful to tease out the importance of different factors.

Future research should continue to investigate the role sub-culture plays across research settings. While academics have suggested the need for cross-culture (and sub-culture) research, few studies empirically test the differences. As such, good service is indicated by different behaviors in different areas. Valuable future research could develop new scales for sub-cultures based on a detailed understanding of the constructs of different sub-cultures, as researchers have found that scales developed for one culture's use, cannot be applied effectively to another (Winsted, 1997).

As sanitation was the most important behavior identified by both groups, future research should investigate this dimension more thoroughly. In addition, the dimension of knowledge may also provide an opportunity for future research. Health concerns and allergies are rising across the United States, and this dimension may of increased importance for satisfaction in customization and also for safety.

This research identified the potential need for wait staff to vary behaviors displayed based on customers preference and sub-culture dimensions. Customization and accommodation have been identified as potential sources of competitive advantage. A potential area for future research could also investigate the affect tailoring behaviors and customization have on employee emotional labor, specifically on job stress, job ambiguity, and role stress.

In addition, future research should test the importance of server behaviors and time preferences across different hospitality service settings such as upscale restaurants and various hotels as well as across other service settings. What matters most to consumers when evaluating a service encounter is likely to differ according to industry and sector. As such, extending this research would be important across different service contexts.

Conclusion

This research helped to close the gap in existing hospitality literature by examining the importance of behavioral and timing preferences for restaurant patrons. Sanitation, accommodation, and privacy were found to be the most important behaviors for a server to display. In addition, this research added to the theoretical body of knowledge by demonstrating that there is a difference for the behavioral dimensions of friendliness, knowledge, and responsiveness between rural and urban customers. The shortest time lapse should be between receiving a menu and placing the order and there was a statistically significant difference

between how long rural and urban customers found to be an acceptable wait time before being seated and between receiving a menu and placing their order. The findings of this research provide a foundation for future research regarding behavioral and timing preferences across one specific sub-set of culture, rural and urban location. In addition, this research provides a better understanding of how sub-cultures evaluate service differently, and provide substantial managerial relevance to domestic marketers and operators.

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APPENDIX A
SATISFACTION SURVEY

We are very interested in obtaining your opinions about service in casual, full service restaurants. This type of restaurant would offer table service, with a waiter or waitress taking your dinner order, delivering your food and beverage selections to your table, and providing service to you while you are dining. Please refer to your DINNER experiences at full service restaurants such as Friday’s, Chili’s and Applebee’s.

Listed below are behaviors that restaurant servers might engage in as they perform their jobs. How important are these in determining your satisfaction with the service? Check the appropriate response for each behavior.

Not at all Important NI	Somewhat Important SI	Important I	Very Important VI	Extremely Important EI
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	NI	SI	I	VI	EI
The server smiles when greeting the customer.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The server behaves in a way that entertains the customer.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The server accommodates special requests of the customer.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The server thoroughly explains menu specials.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The server makes direct eye contact with the customer.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The server’s nails and hands are well manicured.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

- The server provides for the customer's special needs when asked.
- The server allows the customer opportunity for privacy.
- The server suggests menu items suited to the individual customer's preferences.
- The server's manner makes the customer feel comfortable with the restaurant environment.
- The server's clothes are well maintained.
- When dining alone, the server spends more time conversing with the Customer.
- The server explains how menu items are prepared or cooked.
- The server behaves in a formal manner.
- The server delivers menu items to the table in proper sequence.
- The server entertains the customers with jokes or stories.
- The server replenishes beverages frequently, without being asked.
- The server is sensitive to the customer's mood.
- The server adjusts the service style according to the customer's mood. . . .
- The server attends to special customer needs without being asked.

Listed below are additional behaviors that restaurant servers might engage in as they perform their jobs. How important are these in determining your satisfaction with the service? Check the appropriate response for each behavior.

Not at all Important NI	Somewhat Important SI	Important I	Very Important VI	Extremely Important EI
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	NI	SI	I	VI	EI
The server adapts the pace of service to meet the customer's needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The server clarifies any uncertainty about food items listed on the menu. .	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The server changes dishes when necessary.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The server knows when the customer doesn't want to be bothered.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The server doesn't interrupt if customers are conversing among themselves	<input type="checkbox"/>				
When customers explain they have little time to eat, the server speeds up the pace of service.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The server is prompt in removing dishes after the customer has completed a course.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The server assists the customer in deciding what to order.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The server stops by the table frequently to check for additional customer needs	<input type="checkbox"/>				

The server's hair is neat and well groomed.

The server engages in conversation unrelated to food and beverage needs. .

The server provides friendly conversation.

The server avoids touching the surface of eating utensils.

The server behaves in a casual manner.

When customers know what they want to order, the server
 does not offer additional choices.

The server explains menu item ingredients.

The server's hair is clean and restrained.

The server looks attractive.

If you would like to share additional comments about server behaviors, please include them here.

Below are items related to waiting times for restaurant service. Using the time intervals provided, select the one that best fits the time you would find acceptable or prefer to wait for each service indicated.

1. After arriving at this type of restaurant, I find it acceptable to wait about _____ before being seated at a table.

- 5 minutes or less 6 to 10 minutes 11 to 15 minutes
 16 to 20 minutes 21 to 25 minutes 26 minutes or longer

2. After receiving a menu, I would like to have about _____ before the server returns to take my order.

- 5 minutes or less 6 to 10 minutes 11 to 15 minutes
 16 to 20 minutes 21 to 25 minutes 26 minutes or longer

3. After placing my order, I prefer to wait about _____ before the server brings my order to the table.

- 5 minutes or less 6 to 10 minutes 11 to 15 minutes
 16 to 20 minutes 21 to 25 minutes 26 minutes or longer

4. After completing my meal, I would like to be able to linger at the table _____ before the server brings my check.

- 5 minutes or less 6 to 10 minutes 11 to 15 minutes
 16 to 20 minutes 21 to 25 minutes 26 minutes or longer

The following demographic information will be used to classify survey questions. Please check the appropriate response in each category.

1. What is your gender? male female

2. What age group do you belong to?

- 20 and under 21 to 25 26 to 30 31 to 35 36 to 40
 41 to 45 46 to 50 51 to 55 56 to 60 61 and above

3. What is your

Country of Citizenship? _____

Country of Birth? _____

Country of Birth of your father? _____

Country of Birth of your mother? _____

4. What family income range group (before taxes) do you belong to?

\$15,000 and under \$15,001 to \$30,000 \$30,001 to \$45,000

\$45,001 to \$60,000 \$60,001 to \$75,000 above \$75,000

5. During the past six months, approximately how many time have you dined out, for dinner, at this type of restaurant? _____

6. When you dine at this type of restaurant are you usually with (Check one answer)

friends

business associates

family

by yourself

other (specify) _____

7. Have you ever worked as a server in a restaurant? yes no

8. Have you ever worked in a management position in a restaurant? yes no

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP IN COMPLETING THIS SURVEY!