

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF FAMILY DINING ATTITUDES TOWARD FULL  
SERVICE RESTAURANT PRODUCT/SERVICE ATTRIBUTES

by

Theresa Castillo Logan

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the  
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
MASTER OF SCIENCE  
in  
Hotel, Restaurant, And Institutional Management

Approved:



Dr. Michael Evans, Chairman



Dr. Susan Murrmann



Dr. Pamela Weaver

May 1991

Blacksburg, Virginia

LD  
5655  
V855  
1991  
L643  
C.2

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF FAMILY DINING ATTITUDES TOWARD FULL  
SERVICE RESTAURANT PRODUCT/SERVICE ATTRIBUTES

by

Theresa Castillo Logan

Committee Chairman: Dr. Michael Evans  
Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Management  
V.P.I And S.U

(ABSTRACT)

Families dining out with children are becoming an important customer segment revealing a personal preference for convenience, timely service, menu variety, and child entertainment. According to United States industry figures, families dining out with children constitute twenty percent of estimated commercial restaurant sales. Although the restaurant industry is segmenting customer markets for the 1990's, most restaurateurs still define customer markets using instinct versus market segmentation research.

By targeting families with children, the researcher investigated family dining attitudes according to gender, income, ages of children in the family unit, and frequency of dining out. The research was an exploratory investigation, identifying family dining attitudes toward full service restaurant products and services. Survey data was collected and analyzed, using a convenience sample of families in Fairfax County, Virginia. Overall family response revealed that

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF FAMILY DINING ATTITUDES TOWARD FULL  
SERVICE RESTAURANT PRODUCT/SERVICE ATTRIBUTES

by

Theresa Castillo Logan

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the  
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
MASTER OF SCIENCE  
in  
Hotel, Restaurant, And Institutional Management

Approved:

---

Dr. Michael Evans, Chairman

---

Dr. Susan Murrmann

---

Dr. Pamela Weaver

May 1991  
Blacksburg, Virginia

families had similar attitudes towards the product/service mix of full service restaurants and therefore should be considered a fairly homogeneous market segment.

Furthermore, gender, income, and type of family did not seem to influence attitudes towards the product/service mix of full service restaurants. The respondents expressed the need for more menu variety and more nutritional menu items. Respondents expressed neutral opinions on the following product-service attributes: menu variety; service; gifts, toys, and games; decor; price/value; and, overall satisfaction of product-service mix. Most interesting was the fact there was no relationship between positive or negative attitudes toward the product/service mix and the frequency of dining out.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to express sincere appreciation for the guidance and encouragement received from Dr. Michael Evans (Chairman), Dr. Susan Murrmann, and Dr. Pamela Weaver.

Many thanks are also extended to Dan Seaton, for his professional advice, and John Charles Logan for the layout and design of all data tables.

A special thanks to my husband, John Charles Logan and my family, who continually supported my academic endeavors to complete this research.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS . . . . .	iv
C H A P T E R 1 . . . . .	
INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT OF THE PROBLEM . . . . .	1
THE FAMILY DINING OUT SEGMENT . . . . .	3
NATURE OF THE PROBLEM . . . . .	7
SUMMARY . . . . .	9
C H A P T E R 2 . . . . .	
LITERATURE REVIEW . . . . .	10
RESTAURANT MARKETING . . . . .	10
SEGMENTATION THEORY . . . . .	12
PRODUCT AND SERVICE MIX IN THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY . . . . .	14
PRODUCT-SERVICE MIX FOR FAMILIES DINING IN THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY . . . . .	15
BEHAVIORS AND ATTITUDES OF THE FAMILY DINING SEGMENT . . . . .	17
CHILD DEVELOPMENT THEORY RELATED TO THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY . . . . .	21
SUMMARY . . . . .	23
C H A P T E R 3 . . . . .	
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY . . . . .	25
PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH . . . . .	25
RESEARCH QUESTIONS . . . . .	25
METHODOLOGY . . . . .	27
SAMPLING TECHNIQUE . . . . .	28
SAMPLE POPULATION . . . . .	29
SURVEY DEVELOPMENT . . . . .	29
SURVEY INSTRUMENT . . . . .	32
DATA COLLECTION . . . . .	37
DATA ANALYSIS . . . . .	38
STUDY LIMITATIONS . . . . .	39
SUMMARY . . . . .	41
C H A P T E R 4 . . . . .	
RESULTS . . . . .	42
SECTION ONE: SURVEY RESPONSE . . . . .	42
SECTION TWO: FAMILY DINING OUT ATTITUDES TOWARD PRODUCT AND SERVICE ATTRIBUTES IN FULL SERVICE RESTAURANTS . . . . .	46
SECTION THREE: FAMILY DINING OUT ATTITUDES TOWARD RESTAURANT PRODUCT AND SERVICE MIX BASED ON GENDER . . . . .	48

SECTION FOUR: FAMILY DINING OUT ATTITUDES TOWARD RESTAURANT PRODUCT AND SERVICE MIX BASED ON INCOME . . . . .	50
SECTION FIVE: FAMILY DINING OUT ATTITUDES BASED ON CHILD AGE GROUPS . . . . .	54
SECTION SIX: FAMILY DINING OUT ATTITUDES RELATED TO THE FREQUENCY DINE OUT PER MONTH . . . . .	56
SUMMARY . . . . .	58
 C H A P T E R 5 . . . . .	 60
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS . . . . .	60
IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY . . . . .	68
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH . . . . .	70
 APPENDIX A. . . . .	 73
APPENDIX B. . . . .	74
REFERENCES . . . . .	75
VITA . . . . .	78



LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

FIGURE 1.1 FAMILY MARKET GROWTH THROUGH 1995 . . . . . 6

TABLE 3.1 FAMILY DINING SEGMENT PRODUCT AND SERVICES IDENTIFIED USING A FOCUS GROUP . . . . . 33

TABLE 3.2 RESTAURANT PRODUCT SERVICE ATTRIBUTES LISTED ACCORDING TO SURVEY QUESTION NUMBER . . . . . 34

TABLE 3.3 FAMILY SUBSEGMENTS ACCORDING TO SOCIODEMOGRAPHICS LISTED ACCORDING TO SURVEY QUESTION NUMBER . . . . . 35

TABLE 4.1 SURVEY RESPONDENT FAMILY PROFILE . . . . . 45

TABLE 4.2 FAMILY DINING OUT ATTITUDES TOWARDS FULL SERVICE RESTAURANT PRODUCT/SERVICE ATTRIBUTES . . . 47

TABLE 4.3 FAMILY DINING OUT ATTITUDES TOWARDS FULL SERVICE RESTAURANT PRODUCT/SERVICE ATTRIBUTES BASED ON GENDER . . . . . 49

TABLE 4.4 FAMILY DINING OUT ATTITUDES TOWARDS FULL SERVICE RESTAURANT PRODUCT/SERVICE ATTRIBUTES BASED ON INCOME . . . . . 53

TABLE 4.5 FAMILY DINING OUT ATTITUDES TOWARDS FULL SERVICE RESTAURANT PRODUCT/SERVICE ATTRIBUTES BASED ON AGES OF CHILDREN IN THE FAMILY UNIT . . . . 55

TABLE 4.6 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRODUCT/SERVICE ATTRIBUTE AND MONTHLY DINING OUT FREQUENCY . . . . . 57

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT OF THE PROBLEM

This chapter identifies the following areas: 1) the context of the problem, 2) the family/child dining out segment, 3) a brief synopsis on market segmentation theory and the product-service mix, and 4) the nature of the problem.

Consumer behaviors are based on personal need, characteristics, and attitudes in selecting products and services (Kotler, 1984). The hospitality industry, specifically the family restaurant, is presently moving to a market segmentation approach in the design and development of products and services. Restaurant managers are now recognizing customers needs according to age, income, dining convenience, entertainment, and menu variety. For example, targeted customers can be of specific age groups (age segmentation) such as senior citizens, young adults, single adults, middle-aged adults, families with children, or countless other segmentation strategies (Swinyard & Struman, 1986).

Market segmentation defines a customer oriented approach identifying the homogeneous customer segments, defining customer needs, and developing a plan to fulfill these needs. Although the restaurant industry started segmenting customer markets in the 1980's, many restaurateurs define their customer markets using instinct rather than tangible market research. The restaurateur identifies customer segments using traditional descriptive characteristics including: demographics, type of service, and dining occasion. The restaurateur can further define specific customer product and service dining needs by applying a targeted approach to the family dining out segment, (Engel, et al, 1972). Finally , the restaurateur designs a customized product and service mix for homogeneous customer segments.

In the restaurant industry, the customer simultaneously purchases and consumes products and services. The combination of restaurant products and services generates a product-service mix targeting customer tangible and intangible needs (Lewis, 1989; Reid, 1983). Miller and Ginter (1979) examined the relationship between situation specific customer attitudes and specific brand choice behaviors. They concluded consumer purchase levels of specific brands, product attributes, and personal

perceptions vary across the situation. The variation in product attributes across situations may have relevance for restaurant product development and promotional strategy.

### **THE FAMILY DINING OUT SEGMENT**

As we anticipate the 1990's, yesterday's working singles will become today's working parents pursuing wholesome, convenient, and affordable meals for their young families. The typical family of the 1990's will consist of dual working parents or single parent, who possess limited time to prepare home-cooked meals. Often the parent(s) must transport their children from a day-care provider or an after school program and then consider the options available to feed their family within the time constraints of the early evening (Leonard, 1987). By the time the family reaches home, there is little time for conversation and dinner. Parents are faced with the task of providing: a nutritious meal, a relaxing environment, and parental control over the family dining experience. Market research conducted by Knoch and Lax (1990) reveals that many of these dual-income family households display the highest amount of consumer spending and are convenience driven.

Families dining out with children require a

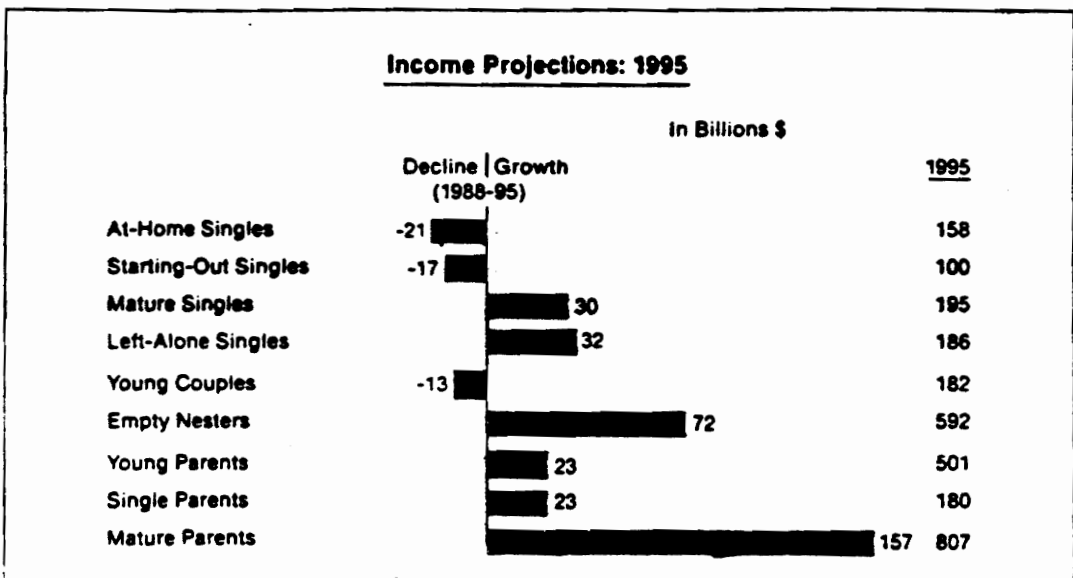
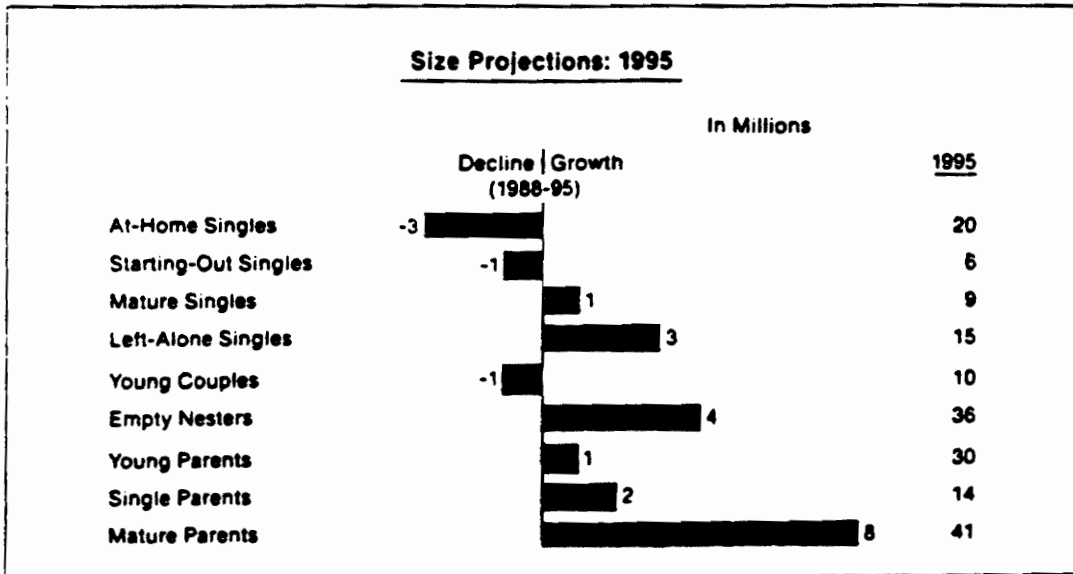
differentiated restaurant product/services mix to satisfy both parent and child consumption needs. The family dining out segment has particular dining out needs for quality restaurant products and services, which include the following attributes: menu variety, nutrition, hospitable and timely service, child entertainment, affordable prices, family atmosphere, and acceptable product-service value (Conroy, 1987).

During the 1980's the family market segment was the fastest growing customer group in the restaurant industry. Kim (1990) researched consumer market growth and concluded young families, mature families and single parents will continue to grow through 1995, see Figure 1.1. Although fast service restaurants dominated the family dining out market, families with children also dined in full service restaurants. Industry statistics in the 1980's revealed a steady growth of families dining out in full service restaurants. Consider the following data provided by Consumer Reports on Eating Share Trends (NPD CREST, Gallup & NRA, 1989) on the family dining segment:

- 1) The family segment constitutes 20% of the estimated commercial restaurant sales in the U.S.

2) On an average, families generally dined out four times a month at fast food or full service restaurants.

3) The family segment contributed an estimated sales of forty billion dollars to the restaurant industry.



**Figure 1.1**

**Family Market Growth Through 1995**

Source: Kim, P. "Lifestages: Dramatic Changes in the American Consumer Market." Retail Control 58(6), p.17

It is also known children can dominate a parent's decision regarding where and when to dine out. Market research conducted by Guber (1988) found children between the ages of 6 and 14 years of age greatly influence parent purchasing decisions and restaurant choice. This is particularly true when mother works full or part-time, and children become more involved in family decisions. We also know that fundamentally, children have similar dining out needs as their parents such as menu variety, nutritional food items, and fast service; however, a child's entertainment needs, table manners, and food selection differ according to the child's age. For these reasons, children are a unique customer segment with unique product and service needs.

#### **NATURE OF THE PROBLEM**

At the present time, there is no empirical evidence identifying family dining out attitudes towards full service restaurant products and services, nor how well the restaurant industry is meeting family dining out product and service concerns. By targeting families with children we can investigate family dining out attitudes towards full service restaurants according to the following subcategories: gender, income, ages of children in the



family unit, and frequency of dining out. Families are further divided into three groups: young families (families consisting of children between the ages of infancy and five years old), older families (families consisting of children between the ages of six and twelve years old), and mixed families (families consisting of children from infancy to twelve years of age).

This study addressed the following research questions:

1. How did surveyed families perceive the product-service mix (e.g. attitudes towards product-service attributes) in the full service restaurants they have visited?
  - A. How did families perceive restaurant food, e.g. menu, nutrition, or adequate portion size?
  - B. How did families perceive restaurant decor?
  - C. How did families perceive restaurant dining room service, e.g. friendly, hospitable, or timely?
  - D. How did families perceive a price-value relationship between the menu and total dining experience?
  - E. How did families perceive child tabletop games, e.g. gifts, novelty toys, or games?
  - F. How did families perceive overall products and services in full service family restaurants?
2. Are family dining out attitudes towards a restaurants product-service mix different based on gender?
3. Are family dining out attitudes towards a

restaurants product-service mix different based on income?

4. Are family dining out attitudes towards a restaurants product-service mix different based on the ages of children in the family unit?

A. Young families consisting of children ages infancy to five years.

B. Older families consisting of children ages 6 to 12 years.

C. Mixed families consisting of children from infancy to 12 years of age.

5. Are family dining out attitudes towards a restaurants product-service mix related to the frequency of dining out?

#### **SUMMARY**

At present, there is no published research focusing on family dining out attitudes towards full service restaurants, and family dining out needs. Families with children under 12 now constitute 20% of estimated commercial restaurant sales in the United States (NPD-CREST, 1989). The proceeding research focuses on families dining out with children from infancy to 12 years of age. Families were studied according to gender, income, age of children in the family unit, and frequency of dining out.

## **C H A P T E R 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The objective of this chapter is to review current literature that pertains to family dining out attitudes toward restaurant products and services. In order to further define this objective, the literature review consists of six subject areas: 1 ) restaurant marketing, e.g. identify customers and customer needs, 2) segmentation theory or target marketing, 3) product and service mix in the restaurant industry, 4) product and service mix for families dining in the restaurant industry, 5) current behaviors and attitudes of the family dining segment, and 6) child development theory related to the restaurant industry.

#### **RESTAURANT MARKETING**

Marketing is a human activity addressing the needs and wants of a customer in an exchange process (Kotler, 1984). According to Lewis (1989), restaurant marketing is an exchange process based on identifying customers; understanding customer wants; when, where, how, and the price customers are willing to pay for products and services. In the exchange process, marketing encompasses

all product and service activities from the point of inception through the channels of distribution and ultimately to the customer. The point of inception is the first step in the exchange process, that is when the customer enters the restaurant and is greeted by a host. The second step in the exchange process is when the customer selects a food item, communicates with dining room servers, and waits for the meal delivery. The third step in the exchange process is assessing customer perception, that is how does the customer perceive restaurant product and service.

The restaurateur creates a marketing mix to stimulate customer responses. Traditionally, the marketing mix consists of four elements: product, place, price, and promotion (Kotler 1984). In the restaurant industry, the marketing mix is a product of three submixes: product-service mix, presentation mix, and communication mix. The product-service mix is a combination of the tangible (food) and intangible (service) elements in a restaurant. The presentation mix converges on the customer's perception of product and service in the restaurant environment. The communication mix is the promotional and interpersonal communication between restaurant staff and the customer (Lewis, 1989; Reid, 1983).

The restaurateur needs to identify the customers, and recognize customers needs and wants. The customer may choose products and services on the basis of aesthetics, customer values, and dining benefits. Aesthetics are the environmental elements such as decor, atmosphere, ambience, and architecture. Customer values can be defined as personal expectations for products, service and price. Benefits are the tangible and intangible service attributes such as timely service, comfort, relaxation, and entertainment. Restaurant marketing defines a customer oriented approach, differentiating homogeneous customer segments and product service mix (June and Smith, 1987; Lewis, 1989).

### **SEGMENTATION THEORY**

By applying market segmentation theory to the restaurant industry, the restaurateur can define homogeneous customer groups. Customers are distinguished according to personal needs, personal behaviors, and personal characteristics. In order to differentiate customer needs, behaviors, and characteristics, product and service firms identify customers according to segmentation variables: geographic regions, psychographics, sociodemographics, and customer product and service usage. From this information, product and service firms develop a customer profile for a

differentiated product and service mix (Engel, et Al, 1972 ; Kotler, 1984; Reid, 1983).

In a product and service-oriented market, specifically restaurants, customer needs differ according to various factors such as purchasing behavior (when does the customer buy), personal characteristics (why does the customer buy), and product characteristics (what does the customer buy). The restaurateur can identify customer needs according to dining frequency, benefits of dining out, and customer attitudes. Dining frequency reveals the number of times a customer purchases restaurant products and services within a set period of time. Frequency is defined as product and service usage per day, week, or month. Product and service benefits define customer needs, such as relaxation, entertainment, and menu variety. Customer attitudes are defined as personal beliefs towards products and services, and can be influenced by past dining out experience (Cadotte, et al, 1987; Lewis, 1989).

Once the restaurateur identifies the customer segments, the restaurateur can apply a target marketing approach focusing on specific subsegment customer products and services. Target marketing reveals a detailed analysis and evaluation, of customer subsegment attributes (Lewis, 1989).

The restaurant industry is an oligopoly of numerous service providers competing with each other using a customized product-service approach applied to various customer segments such as fast food, self-service, and full service. By segmenting families dining out with children, the restaurateur can focus on customer segment attributes and customer product and service needs. Essentially, the restaurateur can appeal to customer product and service satisfaction, aesthetics, and dining experience (Schmenner, 1986; June & Smith, 1987).

#### **PRODUCT AND SERVICE MIX IN THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY**

In the restaurant industry, products and services are simultaneously purchased and consumed by the customer (Lewis, 1989; Reid, 1983). The combination of restaurant products and services generate a product-service mix targeting customer tangible and intangible needs. Lewis (1989) defines three components essential to hospitality product-service mix: formal, core, and augmented components.

The formal component characterize the customer's perception of tangible and intangible products, that is, what customers think they are buying (Lewis, 1989). A customer can perceive restaurant product-service mix to

include the following attributes: good food, entertainment, relaxing atmosphere, and reasonable price and meal value.

The core component characterizes intangible products, that is, what is the customer really buying (Lewis, 1989). When the customer purchases restaurant products and services, the customer also receives personal experience, and relaxing atmosphere.

The augmented component characterizes the customer's experience of tangible and intangible restaurant products. This is the total customer experience of restaurant product-service attributes and benefits associated with dining out (Lewis, 1989). These attributes include timely service, friendly dining room staff, decor, cleanliness, entertainment, relaxing atmosphere, festivity, good food and reasonable prices.

### **PRODUCT-SERVICE MIX FOR FAMILIES DINING IN THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY**

Families dining out with young children are becoming a growing customer segment for differentiated restaurant products and services. The family segment has particular product and service needs oriented to both adults and



children. Specific family product and service needs include the following attributes: child menu variety; nutritional food items for children; adequate meal portion size for children; friendly, hospitable, and timely dining room service; tabletop games and individual entertainment appropriate for children; relaxing atmosphere and decor; reasonable prices; and enjoyable dining experience (Errant, 1988; Reid , 1983).

The combination of restaurant products and services generate a product-service mix targeting tangible and intangible family needs. A restaurateur can customize family products and services according to family changing needs by applying Lewis (1989) product-service components to families with children.

The formal component characterizes family attitudes towards full service restaurant product-service attributes, that is, what do families perceive they are buying (Lewis, 1989). A family can perceive plate sharing, child menu variety, table snacks, family seating areas, child entertainment, nutritious foods, reasonable price-value between the type meal served and the cost, and relaxing atmosphere as restaurant family product and service mix.

The core component characterizes family intangible products, that is, what the customer is really buying (Lewis, 1989). When families purchase restaurant products and services, they receive personal experience, leisure, atmosphere, food and dining room service.

The augmented component characterizes the family dining experience of tangible and intangible restaurant products. This is the total family dining experience of restaurant product-service attributes and benefits associated with the experience (Lewis, 1989). These attributes include timely service, friendly dining room staff, decor, cleanliness, entertainment, relaxing atmosphere, good food, reasonable prices, and meal value.

#### **BEHAVIORS AND ATTITUDES OF THE FAMILY DINING SEGMENT**

The concept of consumer choice behaviors can be applied to the family dining out segment. Consumer choice behaviors are based on personal need, personal characteristics, and personal attitudes in selecting products and services (Kotler, 1984).

In a study conducted by June and Smith (1987), the authors evaluated the relative importance a consumer places

on restaurant product attributes and how these attributes vary according to the context of the meal i.e. intimate dinner, birthday, business lunch, or family dinner.

Product attributes were defined as price, atmosphere, liquor license, service, and food quality. June and Smith (1987) identified the product attributes in terms of "part-worths". These "part-worths" represent restaurant product attributes in terms of the overall restaurant profile. An evaluation of "part-worths" revealed the contribution of each product attribute to the context of the meal. Attentive service was the most important for family dinners. Price was of secondary importance for family dinners. Atmosphere and food were the least important for all contexts. The authors concluded restaurants can compete for various customer markets by identifying the context of the meal.

Customer attitudes can vary with particular dining out situations. A study conducted by Miller and Ginter (1979) concluded consumer purchase levels of specific brands, product attributes, and personal perceptions vary across situations.

Belk (1974) defines situations as "all factors

particular to a time and place of observation which do not follow from a knowledge of personal (intra-individual) and stimulus attributes (choice), and have a demonstrable and systematic effect on current behavior".

Miller and Ginter (1979) tested the notion that situation-specific attributes improve the prediction of brand choice behaviors. Situations were defined as the following: lunch on a week day, snack during a shopping trip, evening meal when rushed for time, and evening meal with the family not rushed for time. The results indicated a significant difference in consumer purchase levels of specific brands across all four situations. Product attributes, cleanliness, food, and price, did not vary across all four situations. Service and menu variety were important product attributes for families dining out and not rushed for time. Product popularity with children was isolated to families, and varied significantly across all four situations. Convenience and personal perceptions of brand and product attributes varied across all four situations.

The prediction of situation-specific attributes was significant in the following situations: lunch on a weekday, evening meal when rushed for time, and evening meal with the

family not rushed for time and may have future potential for restaurant target marketing strategy.

Cadotte, Woodruff and Jenkins (1987) proposed consumers will rely on product standards to meet personal needs and wants. Product standards are defined as an "experience-based norm". Cadotte, Woodruff, and Jenkins investigated the notion that experience-based norms will improve our ability to explain consumer satisfaction beyond consumer expectations and standards.

Cadotte, Woodruff and Jenkins (1987) utilized literature reviews and focus groups to pursue their research. From these activities the following product-service attributes were developed: food quality, speed of service, employee friendliness, atmosphere and decor, cleanliness, price/value, and quality of employee service. The norm construct was studied in three different restaurants: fast-food, family, and specialty restaurant. Respondents completed pre-and post dining questionnaires prior to and after dining in a specified restaurant. This study revealed consumer product-service standards are likely to vary across restaurant situations.

**CHILD DEVELOPMENT THEORY RELATED TO THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY**

Under the present investigation, children are grouped into two age groups according to physical, social, and intellectual needs. The two age groups are children from infancy to five years of age and children from six to twelve years of age.

In the restaurant situation, children can provoke a power struggle between parent and child, where table rules at meal time become obsolete. Physically, young children are too energetic for a prolonged period of time in a booster seat or high chair and require tabletop games or finger foods to occupy their waiting time. Socially, children develop physical and intellectual skills through play and personal interaction. Intellectually, children in the age infancy to five years group are developing language skills to express individual needs.

Children between the ages of infancy to five years share similar hand manipulation skills for coloring, puppets, puzzles, and pegboards. The restaurateur should provide the appropriate tabletop activities to occupy a child's time and satisfy a child's physical and play needs.

During infancy to five years, children will verbalize common objects and favorite food items. Menu variety and attentive dining room servers can become an important product and service mix to fulfill the child's personal dining needs. It is important to note parental involvement in child food selections. In the restaurant situation, a limited menu can signify parental discretion based on a price-value relationship between the menu, dining experience, and personal food preferences. Young children also learn to choose food items, using personal experience and parental guidance.

Children ages 6 to 12 share similar refined eye hand coordination skills. Within the 6 to 12 age group, children have a prolonged attention span while confined to sitting. Children can usually read a menu and enjoy games such as crossword puzzles, video games and other interactive tabletop games. In the restaurant, child entertainment can become an important element for a pleasurable family dining experience and fulfill the child's physical needs.

Socially, children from ages 6 to 12 are developing conversational skills and will address dining room servers. In a restaurant situation, dining room servers can contribute to a child's experience external to the home by

offering, friendly, and hospitable service for a pleasurable dining experience.

Children from ages six to twelve years are developing their own personalities, adult table manners, and food tastes. Menu variety and attentive dining room servers can become important product and service mix to fulfill a child's personal dining needs.

#### **SUMMARY**

In a product and service-oriented market, specifically restaurants, customer needs differ according to various factors such as purchasing behavior (when does the customer buy), personal characteristics (why does the customer buy), and product characteristics (what does the customer buy). By segmenting homogeneous customer groups, the restaurateur can further define customer needs, behaviors, and characteristics.

Families with children from ages infancy to twelve years have certain dining out needs to fulfill multiple restaurant product-service characteristics such as menu variety, service, entertainment for children, price-value relationship, and decor. Children can have similar menu and service needs as other family members; however, children



needs may differ according to child age groups. In a restaurant situation, children of various ages have personal needs specific to a particular age group, including tabletop games; timely, friendly and hospitable service; appropriate decor; and menu variety oriented to the child's palate.

Previous marketing research examined family dining out attitudes based on family choice behaviors, such dining experience, context of the meal and service, dining occasion, and dining benefits.

## **C H A P T E R 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The objective of this chapter is to define the research methodology and design employed to gather data on family dining out attitudes. The methodology used in this research was designed as an exploratory investigation of family dining out attitudes towards restaurant product and service attributes. The methodology section presents a convenience sampling technique applied to families in Fairfax County, Virginia. Also included are the following sections: survey development, data collection, data analysis, and study limitations.

#### **PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH**

The current research is an exploratory investigation, identifying family dining attitudes towards full service restaurant products and services.

#### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. How did surveyed families perceive the product-service mix (e.g. attitudes towards product-service

attributes) in the full service restaurants they have visited?

A. How did families perceive restaurant food, such as menu variety, nutrition, and adequate portion size?

B. How did families perceive restaurant decor?

C. How did families perceive restaurant dining room service, such as friendly, hospitable, and timely service?

D. How did families perceive a price-value relationship between the menu and total dining experience?

E. How did families perceive child tabletop games, such as gifts, novelty toys, or games?

F. How did families perceive overall products and services in full service family restaurants?

2. Are family dining out attitudes towards a restaurants product-service mix different based on gender?

3. Are family dining out attitudes towards a restaurants product-service mix different based on income?

4. Are family dining out attitudes towards a restaurants product-service mix different based on the ages of children in the family unit?

A. Young families consisting of children from ages infancy to five years.

B. Older families consisting of children between ages six to twelve years.

C. Mixed families consisting of children from between infancy to twelve years of age.

5. Are family dining out attitudes toward restaurant's product-service mix related to the frequency of dining out?

## **METHODOLOGY**

Methodology is an operational framework for the presentation of facts (Leedy, 1980). The research methodology must consider parameters and the nature of the data. The methodology applied to the current research was designed as an exploratory investigation of family dining out attitudes toward full service restaurants and their needs for restaurant products and services. The principal research tool was a survey.

The statistical methods applied to the survey are those techniques referred to as descriptive statistics, involving the measures of central tendency, variation, and correlation (Book, 1978; Leedy, 1980). A five point Likert scale was employed to rate family dining out attitudes. Survey data was categorized according to the following subcategories: gender, income, ages of children in the family unit, and frequency of dining out.

#### **SAMPLING TECHNIQUE**

Under the current investigation, a convenience sample was employed to ascertain family dining out attitudes towards full service restaurants. The convenience sample consisted of families with young children participating in a day care center within Fairfax County, Virginia. Although convenience sampling produces sample bias, a convenience sampling technique does produce an available sampling frame of the target population (Jaeger, 1984; Borg & Gall, 1979).

A convenience sampling technique is not a random sampling technique. Convenience sampling does violate certain rules associated with random sampling:

- 1) Convenience sampling does not yield a representative sample of the parent population (Jaeger, 1984; Leedy, 1980).

2) Convenience sampling does not involve a specified sample size (Jaeger, 1984; Leedy, 1980).

3) Convenience sampling can be isolated to a geographic region (Jaeger, 1984).

4) Convenience sampling can contribute to sample bias error, overestimating or underestimating population parameters (Jaeger, 1984; Leedy, 1980).

### **SAMPLE POPULATION**

The sample population consists of families participating in various day care center throughout Fairfax County, Virginia. A family was composed of parents and children ranging from infancy to 12 years of age. The research is not limited to single parents, dual parents, or guardian situations. Families were surveyed on previous dining out experience at a full service family restaurant, such as Red Lobster, Chi Chi's, T.G.I. Friday's, Shoney's, and Denny's.

### **SURVEY DEVELOPMENT**

Through the implementation of a focus group, seven families with children ages infancy to twelve participated in family dining out needs discussion. Family preferences and personal experiences contributed to the development of the survey instrument.

The focus group is an interactive evaluation technique involving a group of eight to ten participants under the guidance of a moderator to discuss a particular subject (O'Donnell, 1988). Although the focus group is considered a qualitative marketing research technique, the information obtained can be applied to a quantitative scale for statistical testing, e.g. questionnaires or surveys. It is important to note, that focus group information may require further quantitative research for scientific generalization (Calder, 1977; Reynolds & Johnson, 1978).

Focus group development involves three phases: (1) planning phase, (2) conducting phase, and (3) analysis phase. In the planning phase, the moderator defines the subject matter, and designs a short questionnaire or specific question to stimulate participant response on a particular subject matter. In the second phase, the moderator initiates the questions and listens to the participants response. The moderator should be involved only as a guide in participant discussion. Once participant information is gathered, the moderator analyzes the information and builds a case to resolve the situation (O'Donnell, 1988).

Under the planning phase, the moderator called church

affiliated family groups in the Northern Virginia area. Within South Alexandria, Virginia, a young couples group agreed to participate in the focus group discussion. Group participants received a brief synopsis of the current investigation, and the following question, "Based on your current restaurant experiences in full service restaurants, what products and services would you recommend?" Seven couples and their children participated in the focus group. Four of the couples had one child within the infancy to five age group, and three of the couples had two children, ranging in ages 6 to 12 years of age.

Through the implementation of a small focus group (Welch, 1985), the researcher addressed the families with one open ended question. Parents discussed their personal preferences openly. Then parents identified seventeen product-service attributes, see Table 3.1. The children identified one area of interest, the lack of toys and activities while waiting for their meal.

Family dining out product-service attributes are not listed for importance-performance analysis (Chon, Weaver, & Kim, 1991). Importance-performance analysis is a research tool used to identify product and service attributes according to the customer's perception of importance and



performance. This technique has been applied to specific customer market segments in the hospitality industry.

### **SURVEY INSTRUMENT**

A survey was used to gather data on dining out attitudes toward full service restaurants. Families participating in the study were selected by the day care instructors or voluntarily obtained a survey from the bulletin board display. The survey questions were developed from focus group information and review of the literature cited in chapter two (See Table 3.2 and Table 3.3).

TABLE 3.1  
 FAMILY DINING SEGMENT PRODUCT AND SERVICES  
 IDENTIFIED USING A FOCUS GROUP

PRODUCT NEEDS	SERVICE NEEDS
Plate Sharing	Wait staff should communicate with family members.
Unlimited child portions and selections available from adult menu.	Special Hostess to assist children
Supervised play area.	Quick service.
Nutritious table snacks.	Inform family members on food preparation time
Family seating area.	
Child toys, games, puzzles.	
Play area, children 6 to 12	
Toddler place settings (plates, utensils, cups, etc.)	
Complementary dessert.	
Game arcade.	
TV, video, film.	

Note: Table does not reflect family dining out Product Service attributes in order of importance.

TABLE 3.2  
 RESTAURANT PRODUCT SERVICE ATTRIBUTES  
 LISTED ACCORDING TO SURVEY QUESTION NUMBER

Question	Product Service Attributes	Reference
1	Menu - Adequate Variety	Miller & Ginter (1979) Lewis (1989) Reid (1983)
2	Menu - Adequate Nutrition	Leonard (1989)
3	Adequate Portion Size	Lewis (1989) Cadotte (1987) Reid (1983)
4	Servers - Friendly and Hospitable	Cadotte (1987) June & Smith (1987) Miller & Ginter (1979) Lewis (1989)
5	Servers - Timely	Cadotte (1987) June & Smith (1987) Miller & Ginter (1979)
6	Gifts toys games meet children's needs	Errant (1988) Cadotte (1987) Lewis (1989)
7	Decor elements - Adequate	Cadotte (1987) Errant (1988) Lewis (1989) Reid (1983)
8	Servers offer Gifts toys games	Lewis (1989) Cadotte (1989) Errant (1988)
9	Price-Value	Lewis (1989) Cadotte (1987) Reid (1983) June & Smith (1987) Miller & Ginter (1979)
10	Overall product service satisfaction	Lewis (1989) Leonard (1987) Cadotte (1987) Reid (1983) June & Smith (1987) Miller & Ginter (1979)

**TABLE 3.3**  
**FAMILY SUBSEGMENTS ACCORDING TO SOCIODEMOGRAPHICS**  
**LISTED ACCORDING TO SURVEY QUESTION NUMBER**

Question	Family Subsegments	Reference
13	Gender	Lewis (1989) Kotler(1984)
14	Income	Lewis (1989) Kotler(1984)
15	Child Age Group (Infant to 5 Years)	Papalia & Olds (1982) Mussen, et al (1974) VA Sec of Education & VA Dept of Education (1986)
16	Child Age Group (Infant to 5 Years)	Papalia & Olds (1982) Mussen, et al (1974) VA Sec of Education & VA Dept of Education (1986)
17	Child Age Group (Infant to 5 Years)	Papalia & Olds (1982) Mussen, et al (1974) VA Sec of Education & VA Dept of Education (1986)
19	Frequency of Dining out	Cadotte (1987) Lewis (1989) Kotler(1984)

Note: Questions 11, 12, and 18 are not addressed in the research questions. Any information reported in these sections are available for future restaurant marketing research.

The survey consisted of two sections: 1) family dining out attitudes toward full service restaurant product-service attributes, and 2) sociodemographic data. The first section of the survey collects data on family dining out attitudes toward 10 full service restaurant product-service attributes: 1) menu variety, 2) nutritional menu items, 3) adequate portion size, 4) servers friendly and hospitable, 5) timely service, 6) gifts, toys, and games appropriate for children's needs, 7) adequate decor elements, 8) servers provide gifts, toys, and games, 9) adequate price-value, and 10) overall product-service satisfaction, (See Survey, Appendix B).

All participants were asked to rate questions 1 through 10 indicating family dining out attitudes toward restaurant product-service attributes on a 5 point Likert scale. A 5 meant the respondent strongly agreed with the product-service attribute statement, 3 meant the respondent remarked neutral and neither agreed or disagreed with the product-service attribute statement, and 1 meant the respondent strongly disagreed with the product-service attribute statement.

**DATA COLLECTION**

A list of day care centers in Fairfax County, Virginia was compiled from The Yellow Pages of Northern Virginia. The researcher made phone contact with 60 day care center directors. The centers' policy for survey participation and distribution was left to the directors' discretion. All 60 day care directors approved the survey for family participation.

A cover letter stating the purpose of the research, the survey instrument (See Appendix A and B), and an enclosed self-addressed envelope was personally delivered to 60 day care centers. Survey distribution was conducted by day care instructor selection or survey display posted in the entrance of the day care center. The researcher requested survey completion within a two week time period. If the day care center exceeded the response period, the researcher contacted the day care center director via phone.

On the average, children attending a day care center can vary in numbers from 50 to 150 and vary in ages from infancy to early teen years. Day care directors estimate less than 50% of the children have siblings. From July to

September, 1990, a total of 1,200 surveys were distributed to the 60 day care centers.

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

All survey response data were analyzed using Number Cruncher Statistical System Software (Hintze, 1987). Family dining attitudes were analyzed using mean, and standard deviation scores per product-service attribute. The mean score reveals a central tendency measure of family dining out attitudes per survey statement. The standard deviation reveals a dispersion of scores around the mean.

Family subgroup dining attitudes were also analyzed using mean and standard deviation scores. The mean and standard deviations of family subgroup attitudes reveal data on restaurant performance, including: food, decor, service, price-value, tabletop games, and overall products and services.

Family dining out attitudes and frequency of dining out were analyzed using a correlation coefficient. The correlation coefficient reveals any relationship between family dining out attitude statements and the frequency of dining out per month.

All sociodemographic data were coded according to gender, income, and child age groups. Gender was coded into two categories, 0=male and 1=female. Income was coded on a scale five to one: 5=over \$100,000, 4=75,000-99,999, 3=50,000-74,999, 2=25,000-49,999, and 1=0-24,999. Child age groups were placed into four groups, infancy to five years, 6 to 12 years, children infancy to 12 years, and children over 12. Since the child age groups specifies infancy to 12, respondents having children over twelve were eliminated from the study. Dining out frequency was grouped according to the average number of times a family dines out per month, e.g. one to twelve times per month.

### **STUDY LIMITATIONS**

The investigation was limited to a convenience sample within Fairfax County, Virginia. Fairfax County, Virginia, was identified as one of many affluent counties in the United States. A convenience sample was employed due to budget restrictions and day care administrator discretion. The convenience sample population was defined as families with children between the ages from infancy and 12, participating in a day care center, and dining out at full service restaurants. The following attributes were identified as study limitations:



1) The convenience sample population introduces a sample bias. Specifically, the sample population is not representative of the parent population; therefore, lacks randomization.

2) The convenience sampling procedure introduces a sample procedure bias. Sixty day care centers were selected according to day care center director approval.

3) The convenience sampling design introduces a sample design bias. Families received a survey from the day care center instructors or had the opportunity to fill-out a survey posted in the entrance to the center.

4) Survey distribution introduces a collection bias. Convenience sampling isolates the sample population to participating day care centers.

Under the current investigation, no attempt will be made to generalize the results to the parent population. Data analysis will reveal dining-out attitudes of families for future exploratory research.

**SUMMARY**

A convenience sampling technique was applied to the family dining out population from 60 day care centers in Fairfax County, Virginia. Families were composed of parents and children from ages infancy to twelve years. Although a convenience sample lacks certain rules for randomization, the sampling technique does provide localized sample population characteristics for an exploratory study. Through the use of a survey, family dining out attitudes were identified according to restaurant product-service attributes on a five point Likert scale. Family dining out attitudes were identified according to the following subcategories: gender, income, ages of children in the family unit, and frequency of dining out.

All data analysis were completed using Number Cruncher Statistical System Software (Hintze, 1987). Family dining out attitudes were identified using rank, mean, and standard deviation scores. Family dining out subsegment attitudes were identified using mean and standard deviation scores according to gender, income, and ages of children in a family unit . Family dining out attitudes and the relationship between frequency of dining out were identified using a correlation coefficient.

## **C H A P T E R 4**

### **RESULTS**

The purpose of this chapter is to present survey results of family dining out attitudes according to overall perception of product-service mix, gender, income, ages of children in the family unit, and the frequency of dining out. Survey results will be presented in six sections. The first section reveals participant response rate and family profile. The second section reveals family dining out attitudes toward product and service attributes in full service restaurants. The third section reveals family dining out attitudes toward restaurants product-service mix based on gender. The fourth section reveals family dining out attitudes toward restaurants product-service mix based on income. The fifth section reveals family dining out attitudes toward a restaurant's product-service mix based on the ages of children in the family unit. The sixth section reveals family dining out attitudes toward a restaurant's product-service mix related to the frequency of dining out.

#### **SECTION ONE: SURVEY RESPONSE**

From July to September, 1990, a total of 1,200 surveys were distributed to 60 day care centers. Although 60 day

care centers were contacted, thirty-seven day care centers actually participated in the study. Survey participation was a discretionary decision upon day care director approval. A total of 285 surveys were returned by October, 1990. On the average a total of 7.7 families per day care center participated in the study.

In review of survey respondent sociodemographic characteristics, a family profile reveals the distribution of respondents according to gender, income, child groups, and frequency of dining out per month. The following results are a percent value of all respondents (See Table 4.1):

- 1) 82.2% of the respondents were females.
  
- 2) The dominate income range was \$50,000-74,999 and \$25,000-49,999. Each income range represent 30% of all survey respondents.
  
- 3) 57.7% of the children were in the infancy to five group.

4) 26.3% of the families dine out once per month and 23.4% dine out twice per month. Overall, families surveyed dined out 3 times per month.

**TABLE 4.1**  
**SURVEY RESPONDENT FAMILY PROFILE**

		<b>Gender</b>	
<b>Category Responses</b>		<b>Count</b>	<b>%</b>
A	Male	47	17.7
B	Female	218	82.2

		<b>Income</b>	
<b>Category Responses</b>		<b>Count</b>	<b>%</b>
A	\$0 - \$24,999	24	8.69
B	\$25,000 - \$49,999	83	30.07
C	\$50,000 - \$74,999	83	30.07
D	\$75,000 - \$99,999	58	21.01
E	Over \$100,000	28	10.14

		<b>Child Groups</b>	
<b>Category Responses</b>		<b>Count</b>	<b>%</b>
A	Children < 5	234	57.07
B	Children 6 - 12	146	35.60
C	Children over 12	30	7.31

<b>Category Frequency*</b> (x per month)		<b>Count</b>	<b>%</b>
A	1	71	26.39
B	2	63	23.42
C	3	35	13.01
D	4	50	18.58
E	5	16	5.94
F	6	11	4.08
G	7	8	2.97
H	8	3	1.11
I	9	3	1.11
J	10	8	2.97
K	11	0	0.00
L	12	1	.37

\* Frequency = Average Number of family dine outs per month

**SECTION TWO: FAMILY DINING OUT ATTITUDES TOWARD PRODUCT AND SERVICE ATTRIBUTES IN FULL SERVICE RESTAURANTS**

The mean and standard deviation scores for family dining out attitudes toward product and service attributes in full service restaurants are presented in Table 4.2. Product and service attributes are listed in the order of most pleased to displeased participant response.

It appears families were most pleased with meal portion size (statement 3). Families remained neutral on the following product-service attributes: menu item price-value, servers friendly and hospitable, decor elements, satisfaction of overall product and service mix, adequate gifts, toys and games, servers offer gifts, toys and games, adequate menu variety, servers timely, and adequate variety of nutritional items (statements 9, 4, 7, 10, 6, 8, 1, 5, and 2). The restaurant industry needs to improve performance in the preceding product-service attributes.

The standard deviations for statements 1 through 10 appear to be within 1 standard deviation of the mean.

**Table 4.2**  
**FAMILY DINING OUT ATTITUDES TOWARDS FULL SERVICE RESTAURANT**  
**PRODUCT/SERVICE ATTRIBUTES**

Rank	Product Service Attribute	Mean	SD
1	Adequate Portion Sizes	3.7	0.81
2	Adequate Price/Value	3.5	0.88
3	Servers Friendly and Hospitable	3.4	0.86
4	Adequate Decor Element	3.3	0.71
5	Overall Satisfied P/S Mix	3.3	0.88
6	Adequate Gifts, Toys, Games	3.3	0.90
7	Servers Offer Gifts, Toys, Games	3.1	0.88
8	Adequate Menu Variety	3.1	1.00
9	Servers Timely	2.8	0.91
10	Adequate Menu Nutrition	2.8	1.02

Note: Respondents used a five-point Likert-scale to indicate the level of satisfaction attached to each product/service attribute. The researcher interpreted that a selection of 5 meant the respondent strongly agreed with the product-service attribute, 3.5 - 2.5 meant the respondent remarked neutral and neither agreed or disagreed with the product-service attribute, and 1 meant the respondent strongly disagreed with the product-service attribute.



**SECTION THREE: FAMILY DINING OUT ATTITUDES TOWARD RESTAURANT PRODUCT AND SERVICE MIX BASED ON GENDER**

Section three attempts to answer the following question: Are family dining out attitudes different based on gender?

The mean and standard deviation scores for family dining out attitudes toward restaurant product and service mix based on gender are presented in Table 4.3. Product and service attributes are listed in the order of survey statements one through ten.

Both female and male respondents were most pleased with meal portion size (statement 3). Both male and female respondents remained neutral on the following product-service attributes: menu variety, adequate variety of nutritional items, servers friendly and hospitable, timely service, adequate gifts, novelty toys or games, decor elements, servers offer gifts, novelty toys or games, menu item price/value, and satisfaction of overall products and services offered by full service restaurants, (statements 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10).

Female and male responses for product-service attribute statements, 1 through 10, appear within 1 standard deviation of the mean which indicates dining out attitude homogeneity.

**TABLE 4.3**  
**FAMILY DINING ATTITUDES TOWARDS FULL SERVICE RESTAURANT**  
**PRODUCT/SERVICE ATTRIBUTES BASED ON GENDER**

Product/Service Attributes	Female (n=219)		Male (n=47)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1 Adequate Menu Variety	3.1	0.95	3.2	1.23
2 Adequate Menu Nutrition	2.8	0.99	3.0	1.14
3 Adequate Portion Sizes	3.7	0.81	3.7	0.77
4 Servers Friendly and Hospitable	3.3	0.82	3.5	0.95
5 Servers Timely	2.8	0.87	2.9	1.03
6 Adequate Gifts, Toys, Games	3.3	0.86	3.3	1.11
7 Adequate Decor Elements	3.3	0.68	3.4	0.77
8 Servers Offer Gifts, Toys, Games	3.1	0.83	3.2	1.01
9 Adequate Price/Value	3.5	0.87	3.4	0.97
10 Overall - Satisfied P/S Mix	3.3	0.83	3.4	1.10

Note: Respondents used a five-point Likert-scale to indicate the level of satisfaction attached to each product-service attribute. The researcher interpreted that a selection of 5 meant the respondent strongly agreed with the product-service attribute, 3.5 - 2.5 meant the respondent remarked neutral and neither agreed or disagreed with the product-service attribute, and 1 meant the respondent strongly disagreed with the product-service attribute.

**SECTION FOUR: FAMILY DINING OUT ATTITUDES TOWARD RESTAURANT PRODUCT AND SERVICE MIX BASED ON INCOME**

Section four attempts to answer the following question:  
Are family dining out attitudes different based on income?

The mean and standard deviation scores for family dining out attitudes toward restaurant product and service mix based on five income groups are presented in Table 4.4. Product and service attributes are listed in the order of survey statements one through ten.

Income group (1) respondents remained neutral on the following product-service attributes: menu variety, nutritional items, servers friendly and hospitable, timely service, adequate gifts, novelty toys or games, decor elements, servers offer gifts, novelty toys or games, and satisfaction of overall products and services (statements 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10). Respondents were most pleased with adequate portion size and adequate price/value of menu items, (statements 3 and 9).

Income groups (2) and (3) respondents remained neutral on the following product-service attributes: menu variety, nutritional items, servers friendly and hospitable, timely service, adequate gifts, novelty toys or games, decor

elements, servers offer gifts, novelty toys or games, menu item price/value, and satisfaction of overall products and services (statements 1, 2, 4, 5 through 10). Respondents were most pleased with meal portion size (statement 3).

Income group (4) respondents remained neutral on the following product-service attributes: menu variety, timely service, adequate gifts, novelty toys or games, decor elements, servers offer gifts, novelty toys or games, menu item price/value, and satisfaction of overall products and services (statements 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10). Respondents were most pleased with adequate portion size, and servers friendly and hospitable (statements 3 and 4). Respondents were displeased with adequate nutritional items (statement 2).

Income group (5) respondents remained neutral on the following product-service attributes: menu variety, adequate nutritional items, servers friendly and hospitable, timely service, adequate gifts, novelty toys or games, decor elements, servers offer gifts, novelty toys or games, and satisfaction of overall products and services (statements 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10). Respondents were most pleased with meal portion size, decor elements, and adequate price-value (statements 3, 7, and 9).

Within the five income groups, respondents are most pleased with adequate portion size, (statement 3).

Income group response to product-service attributes appear within one standard deviation from the mean which indicates dining out attitude homogeneity.

TABLE 4.4  
 FAMILY DINING ATTITUDES TOWARDS FULL SERVICE RESTAURANTS  
 PRODUCT-SERVICE ATTRIBUTES BASED ON INCOME

	Income 1 (n=24) Mean SD	Income 2 (n=83) Mean SD	Income 3 (n=83) Mean SD	Income 4 (n=58) Mean SD	Income 5 (n=28) Mean SD
1 Adequate Menu Variety	3.5 1.03	3.1 0.94	3.1 1.01	2.7 1.01	3.4 0.87
2 Adequate Menu Nutrition	3.4 0.97	3.0 0.99	2.9 1.03	2.4 0.94	2.7 0.97
3 Adequate Portion Sizes	3.8 0.83	3.7 0.77	3.6 0.85	3.6 0.85	3.8 0.72
4 Servers Friendly	3.4 0.93	3.2 0.80	3.3 0.92	3.6 0.73	3.3 0.87
5 Servers Timely	3.0 0.77	2.8 0.85	2.8 1.01	2.8 0.89	2.7 0.92
6 Gifts, Toys, Games	3.3 0.92	3.4 0.80	3.4 0.92	3.0 0.97	3.5 0.79
7 Adequate Decor Elements	3.5 0.77	3.4 0.70	3.2 0.78	3.4 0.65	3.6 0.56
8 Servers Offer Gifts, Toys, Games	3.4 0.82	3.2 0.80	3.1 0.93	3.0 0.93	3.2 0.89
9 Adequate Price/Value	3.6 0.49	3.4 0.90	3.5 0.76	3.3 1.15	3.7 0.76
10 Overall - Satisfied Product/Service Mix	3.5 0.77	3.4 0.76	3.4 0.87	2.9 0.98	3.5 0.80

Note: Income 1 = \$ 0 - 24,999 Income 3 = \$50,000 - 74,999 Income 5 > \$100,000  
 Income 2 = \$25,000 - 49,999 Income 4 = \$75,000 - 99,999

**SECTION FIVE: FAMILY DINING OUT ATTITUDES BASED ON CHILD AGE GROUPS**

Section five attempts to answer the following question: Are family dining out attitudes different based on child age groups?

The mean and standard deviation scores for family dining out attitudes toward restaurant product and service mix based on child age groups are presented in Table 4.5. Product and service attributes are listed in the order of survey statements one through ten.

Child group respondents (young, older, and mixed) remained neutral on the following product-service attributes: menu variety, adequate nutritional items, servers friendly and hospitable, timely service, adequate gifts, novelty toys or games, decor elements, servers offer gifts, novelty toys or games, menu item price/value and satisfaction of overall products and services (statements 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10). Respondents were most pleased with meal portion size (statement 3).

Child group response according to product-service attributes appear within one standard deviation from the mean which indicates dining out attitude homogeneity.

TABLE 4.5  
 FAMILY DINING ATTITUDES TOWARD FULL SERVICE RESTAURANT  
 PRODUCT/SERVICE ATTRIBUTES BASED ON AGES OF CHILDREN IN THE FAMILY UNIT

	Young Family (n=234)		Older Family (n=146)		Mixed Family (n=97)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1 Adequate Menu Variety	3.0	0.97	3.1	1.03	3.0	0.97
2 Adequate Menu Nutrition	2.7	1.00	2.9	1.00	2.7	0.93
3 Adequate Portion Sizes	3.7	0.83	3.7	0.78	3.7	0.82
4 Servers Friendly and Hospitable	3.3	0.87	3.3	0.88	3.2	0.90
5 Servers Timely	2.8	0.89	2.9	0.91	2.8	0.88
6 Adequate Gifts, Toys, Games	3.3	0.89	3.4	0.90	3.3	0.88
7 Adequate Decor Elements	3.3	0.71	3.4	0.69	3.3	0.68
8 Servers Offer Gifts, Toys, Games	3.1	0.88	3.2	0.89	3.1	0.89
9 Adequate Price/Value	3.4	0.89	3.5	0.85	3.4	0.86
10 Overall - Satisfied P/S Mix	3.2	0.88	3.4	0.90	3.2	0.92

Note: Young Family: Families with children infancy to 5 years  
 Older Family: Families with children 6 to 12 years  
 Mixed Family: Families with children infancy to 12 years



**SECTION SIX: FAMILY DINING OUT ATTITUDES RELATED TO THE FREQUENCY DINE OUT PER MONTH**

Section six attempts to answer the following question: Are family dining out attitudes related to the frequency of dining out per month?

The relationship between family dining out attitudes toward a restaurant's product and service mix and the frequency of dining out per month are presented in Table 4.6. Product and service attributes are listed in the order of survey statements one through ten.

The data suggests there is no relationship between family dining out attitudes toward a restaurant's product and service attributes and the frequency of dining out.

TABLE 4.6  
 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRODUCT/SERVICE ATTRIBUTE  
 AND MONTHLY DINING OUT FREQUENCY

Product/Service Attribute	Correlation Coff. r
1 Adequate Menu Variety	-0.0151
2 Adequate Menu Nutrition	+0.0389
3 Adequate Portion Sizes	-0.0262
4 Servers Friendly and Hospitable	-0.0082
5 Servers Timely	-0.0895
6 Adequate Gifts, Toys, Games	+0.0154
7 Adequate Decor Elements	-0.0480
8 Servers Offer Gifts, Toys, Games	-0.0432
9 Adequate Price/Value	-0.1139
10 Overall Satisfied Product/Service Mix	-0.0129

**SUMMARY**

This chapter revealed overall survey results for family dining out attitudes according to full service restaurant product and service attributes. It also considered family dining out attitudes towards restaurant product and service attributes based on gender, income, ages of children in the family unit, and frequency dine out per month.

Overall it appears that families are a homogeneous group and remain neutral on the following product-service attributes: menu variety, adequate nutritional items, servers friendly and hospitable, timely service, adequate gifts, novelty toys or games, decor elements, servers offer gifts, novelty toys or games, menu item price/value, and overall satisfaction of products and services (statements 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10). Families were most pleased with meal portion size (statement 3).

The data also revealed a difference in family dining out attitudes according to income groups (1), (4), and (5). Income group (1) and (5) respondents were pleased with adequate portion size and price/value of menu items (statements 3 and 9). Income group (4) respondents were pleased with adequate portion size and servers friendly and hospitable

(statements 3 and 4). Income group (4) respondents were displeased with adequate nutritional items (statement 2). Income group (5) respondents were pleased with adequate portion size, decor elements, and adequate price-value of menu items (statements 3, 7, and 9).

## **C H A P T E R 5**

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

By segmenting families we can identify specific family dining out attitudes and concerns towards restaurant products and services. Families dining out with children were further grouped according to specific customer characteristics, e.g. gender, income, ages of children in the family unit, and frequency of dining out.

It is apparent fast food restaurants have responded to family and child dining out needs in terms of specialized children meals, decor, gifts, toys, games, and price/value. Family oriented fast food restaurants include: McDonalds, Burger King, and Chucky Cheese. McDonalds offers families dining out menu variety and special children meals such as "Happy Meal", catering to child size appetites, food preference, and entertainment, for example toys and games. McDonald play areas are oriented to children of various ages. Burger King offers similar family and child oriented products and play areas. Chucky Cheese offers similar family and child food products; however, differentiate entertainment products targeting children of various ages, for example video games, skee-ball, coin rides, ball-toss,

and puppets.

Family oriented full service restaurants include: Pizza Hut and Ground Round. Pizza Hut differentiates family food products by promoting special family meals, such as "Tuesday night is kids night, kids eat free". Ground Round differentiates family food products by promoting special child meals, such as "Thursday night is kids night, a penny a pound". Children meals are priced according to the child's weight.

Research question one addressed the attitudes of the family market regarding the product-service mix of full service restaurants. In general family members shared neutral attitudes on the following product-service attributes:

- 1) Adequate menu variety
- 2) Adequate variety of nutritional items
- 3) Servers-friendly and hospitable
- 4) Servers timely
- 5) Gifts, toys, games meet children's needs
- 6) Decor elements adequate
- 7) Servers offer gifts, toys, games

- 8) Restaurant offers good price-value
- 9) Overall product-service satisfaction

It is apparent family respondents were neither pleased nor displeased with the preceding product-service attributes in full service restaurants. Family respondents may not regard neutral product-service attributes as important in the full service restaurant. In general, families were only pleased with meal portion size. Family respondents may regard portion size as adequate for personal appetite. Since children can be picky eaters, children sometimes have a tendency to leave half of their meal on the plate.

For the restaurateur, a neutral response could indicate an opportunity to improve the preceding product-service attributes. The restaurateur needs to conduct in-house market research in order to target customer needs and wants, then consider a creative approach to differentiate products and services.

Research question two addressed family dining out attitudes toward restaurant product-service mix based on gender.

Both female and male respondents shared neutral attitudes on

the following product-service attributes:

- 1) Adequate menu variety
- 2) Adequate variety of nutritional items
- 3) Servers-friendly and hospitable
- 4) Servers timely
- 5) Gifts, toys, games meet children's needs
- 6) Decor elements adequate
- 7) Servers offer gifts, toys, games
- 8) Restaurant offers good price-value
- 9) Overall product-service satisfaction

Family dining out attitudes according to gender appear fairly homogeneous. The researcher did expect differences in female and male family dining out attitude responses based on personal needs or past dining experience. It is important to note 82.2% of survey participants were female. This could indicate females are heavy restaurant product-service users, and are possibly convenience driven to satisfy family dining out needs.

In reference to Table 4.3, adequate nutrition is the lowest neutral female response, and timely service is the lowest neutral male response. Female respondents may have a need for improved nutritional menu variety. Male



respondents experiencing time constraints may have a personal need for timely service. In general female and male respondents were pleased with meal portion size. Both female and male respondents may regard portion size as adequate for ones personal appetite.

Research question three addressed family dining out attitudes toward restaurant product-service mix based on income.

Family dining out attitudes according to income groups appear neutral in response to restaurant product-service attributes. However, a slight difference in specific family dining out attitude response does appear in income groups (1), (4), and (5).

In income group (1), families are pleased with adequate portion size and adequate price/value. Within this income group, families may regard adequate portion size and adequate price/value as important product-service attributes based on personal expectations or past dining experience.

In income group (4), families are pleased with adequate portion size and friendly and hospitable servers. Within

this income group, families may regard adequate portion size and friendly and hospitable servers as important product-service attributes. Families were displeased with the variety of nutritious items. Respondents in income group (4) appear nutritionally conscious. This may be attributed to personal preference or personal experience.

In income group (5), families are pleased with adequate portion size, decor elements, and adequate price/value. Within this income group, families may regard adequate portion size, decor elements, and adequate price/value as important product-service attributes. This may be attributed to personal preference or personal experience.

In general family dining out attitudes according to income groups were pleased with meal portion size. The researcher did expect differences in family dining out attitudes based on personal lifestyle, for example the amount of disposable income. Income group (1) respondents would report low product-service attribute scores and income group (5) respondents would report high product-service attribute scores or the reverse in product-service attribute scores based on personal experience.

Although the survey instrument did not address "what

percent of your total income is spent on dining out?", this question may have future potential for dining out market share research, targeting specific income groups.

Based on the research findings, a target marketing strategy can be applied to families in income group (4), \$75,000-99,999. The restaurateur can develop nutritious menu items targeted to families in income group (4).

Research question four addressed family dining out attitudes toward restaurant product-service mix based on ages of children in the family unit.

Family dining out attitudes according to ages of children in the family unit shared neutral attitudes on the following product-service attributes:

- 1) Adequate menu variety
- 2) Adequate variety of nutritional items
- 3) Servers-friendly and hospitable
- 4) Servers timely
- 5) Gifts, toys, games meet children's needs
- 6) Decor elements adequate
- 7) Servers offer gifts, toys, games

- 8) Restaurant offers good price-value
- 9) Overall product-service satisfaction

In this particular segment, family dining out responses were the least explained variance in product-service attributes. We thought children of various age groups would have distinct product-service needs.

It is apparent respondents were neither pleased nor displeased with the preceding product-service attributes in full service restaurants. In general respondents according to ages of children in the family unit were most pleased with meal portion size. Family respondents may regard portion size as adequate for personal appetite.

Research question five addressed family dining out attitudes toward restaurant product-service mix and the relationship to the frequency of dining out.

The data indicate that there was no relationship between family dining out attitudes and the frequency of dining out. It is conceivable that families have limited leisure time for dining out, too many children to dine out, or relate dining out to past experience. In comparison to NPD-CREST & Gallup organization data (1989), families

surveyed dined out less frequently than families surveyed two years ago, as cited in chapter 1 and 4.

In a product and service decision-making process, families will first consider fulfilling children needs. Dual income families are convenience driven and involved in extra-curricular activities for their children.

#### **IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Customer behaviors present complex characteristics, particularly in measuring customer attitudes toward restaurant product-service attributes. It is clear family dining out attitudes are not based on sociodemographic data or the frequency of dining out. It is important to note family dining out neutrality or no opinion towards menu variety, servers friendly and hospitable, adequate gifts, novelty toys or games, adequate decor elements, servers offer gifts, novelty toys, or games, price-value relationship of menu items, and overall satisfaction of products and services. It seems logical that family dining out attitudes can vary according to family lifestyles and family lifestages for convenience and possible satisfaction of parent and child needs.

By grouping families according to gender, income, ages of children in the family unit and frequency dine out, the present study identified current family dining out attitudes and concerns in the restaurant industry. By applying a customer segmentation approach to the full service restaurant, the restaurateur can modify products and services to meet changing family lifestyles and lifestages. Customer segmentation may have future potential for improvement in promotional strategies.

In a product-service industry, promotional strategies are inclusive of advertising, sales promotion, publicity, and personal sales. In the advertising phase, the restaurateur can appeal to parent and child by offering something both customers can appreciate, for example promote food, service, decor by advertising "nickel for age", "penny for height-kids two to twelve", meal delivery within fifteen minutes or your next meal free. The restaurateur can conduct sales promotions which includes free gifts, toys or games, nutritious appetizers, distinguish low calorie or seasonal items on the menu with a symbol, or display a nutritious recipe on the back of the menu, biweekly. Publicity can be conducted through customer recommendation. Personal sales can be conducted by trained dining room servers.

Customer attitudes reveal an indifference toward full service restaurant products and services. With the exception of meal portion size, the industry should consider improvements in the following product-service attributes:

- 1) Menu variety
- 2) Variety of nutritional items
- 3) Service
- 4) Child entertainment
- 5) Decor
- 6) Restaurant price-value

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

This research study found homogeneous attitudes in the family market segment. It seems evident that family groupings (e.g. gender, income, child age group, frequency of dining out) have little influence on family dining out attitudes. However, it is conceivable that this study may have different results if applied to a random family sample on a national basis.

Future research should be applied to a random family sample on a national basis. By using a random sample, future studies can investigate unbiased family dining out

attitudes toward specific restaurant product-service attributes and generalize this information to a larger population.

Future research should address family dining out product-service attributes in the order of family product-service importance and restaurant product-service performance. Importance performance analysis could further define product-service needs of the family market segment.

The restaurateur should conduct future research on female and male dining out attitudes. The researcher should employ a focus group, address female and male dining out product-service attributes, compare responses; and, target specific differences in female and male product-service attributes.

Future research should address specific family dining out product-service attributes according to child age groups, such as the menu, entertainment, decor, and service. In terms of the menu, consider nutritious and acceptable child food items and portion size. In terms of service, consider the waiting period threshold for children and wait staff service expertise. In terms of entertainment, consider appropriate gifts, toys, and games for children.



In terms of price-value, consider reasonable price-value for parents and children in comparison to competitor restaurant products and services.

Restaurants continually compete for timely service and customer market share. It is apparent fast food and take-out food service have met the basic dining needs for families of the 90's. Future research should also address where families dine out and why families dine at a particular full service restaurant.

## APPENDIX A. SURVEY INTRODUCTION LETTER

6842 Heatherway Court  
Alexandria, VA 22310  
July 1, 1990

Dear Daycare Director and Parents,

My name is Theresa Logan and I am a graduate student at Virginia Tech. Currently, I am working on a masters degree in the school of Hotel and Restaurant Management. My research is an exploratory investigation on "Family dining out attitudes towards full service restaurant product/service attributes" in Northern Virginia. In order to support the research, I am distributing surveys to families throughout Fairfax County. I am seeking your assistance by distributing surveys to some of your patrons.

At the present time, there is no empirical evidence which indicates the restaurant industry is meeting the family market segment dining needs. By investigating "Family dining out attitudes towards full service restaurant product/service attributes" the current research will address the dining out attitudes and needs of families with children. The survey concentrates on family attitudes towards restaurant food, decor, service, and price-value relationship.

I am requesting your assistance by distributing the surveys to your patrons. Enclosed you will find 20 surveys. Please distribute these to your patrons and have them fill out the surveys at their convenience. On their next visit to your center they can drop off the completed survey. Collect the completed surveys in the supplied envelope. After all surveys are returned, mail the envelope back to me within one week. Your participation will greatly contribute important data about families dining out attitudes in Northern Virginia.

If you need further information concerning the research topic please contact me at (703) 922-8595 as soon as possible. If you have any questions pertaining to the survey or Virginia Tech's sponsorship of my research, please contact my thesis chairman, Dr Michael Evans, at (703) 231-8294.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration  
Sincerely,

Theresa C. Logan

APPENDIX B.  
SURVEY INSTRUMENT

The purpose of this survey is to determine if the various full service family restaurant chains such as Red Lobster, Chi Chi's, T.G.I. Friday's, Shoney's, Denny's and others in Fairfax County are meeting the needs of families that choose to dine-out with their children. Would you please express your opinion by responding to the following questions:

Please indicate your opinion of the statement on the left by drawing a circle around the appropriate response

Children's menus offer an adequate variety of items.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Children's menus offer an adequate variety of nutritional items.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Children's meals are always of adequate portion size.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Dining room servers always provide "friendly and hospitable" service to families.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Dining room servers always provide "timely" service to families.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The "gifts, novelty toys or games" (e.g. comic books, hats, masks, coloring-books, puppets, puzzles, games) are adequate and meet my children's needs.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The decor elements are adequate and meet my children's needs.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Dining room servers offer "gifts, novelty toys, or games" appropriate for my children.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Family restaurants offer children's menu items with price/value relationship	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
In general, I am satisfied with the overall products and services offered by family restaurants.(e.g. food, service, decor, price/value, tabletop games for children)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
When dining out, which family member makes the restaurant selection? (Circle all that apply)			Parent	Child	
What specific product or service would you like full service restaurant's to offer families dining out?	_____				

**FAMILY PROFILE:**

Gender of person completing survey (please circle) Male Female      Family Income (please circle)  
 (1) \$0 - \$24,999      (2) \$25,000 - \$49,999  
 (3) \$50,000 - \$74,999      (4) \$75,000 - \$99,999  
 (5) Over \$100,000

Please state the number of children in your family, according to the following age groups:

<u>Age Group</u>	<u>Number</u>
Infants & Preschool (infant to five years)	_____
Elementary School age (six to twelve years)	_____
Over twelve years	_____
Total Number of Children	_____

How many times per month, do you dine out with your family at a full service family restaurant? \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for filling out this survey.

## REFERENCES

- Belk, R.W. An Exploratory Assessment of Situational Effects on Buyer Behavior. Journal of Marketing Research, 11, 156-163.
- Book, S.A. (1978) Essentials of Statistics. New York. McGraw-Hill.
- Borg, W.R. and Gall, M.D. (1979) Educational Research. New York: Longman.
- Cadotte, E.R.; Woodruff, R.B., and Jenkins, R.L. Expectations and Norms in Models of Consumer Satisfaction. Journal of Marketing Research, 24, 305-314.
- Calder, B.J. Focus groups and the nature of qualitative marketing research. Journal of Marketing Research, 14, 353-364.
- Chon, K.; Weaver, P.A., and Kim, C.Y. Marketing Your Community: Image Analysis in Norfolk. The Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Quaterly, February, 1991, 31-36.
- Conroy, K. Children A Growing Market. Restaurants USA, 7(7), 26-29.
- Engel, J.F.; Fiorillo, H.F., and Cayley, M.A. (1972). Market Segmentation, Concepts and Application. New York: Holt, Rinehart And Winston.
- Errant, J. Marketing for More: The Power of Positive Talking. Restaurant Management, 2(6), 30-31.
- Hintze, J.L. (1987) Number Cruncher Statistical System. Utah.
- Guber, S.S. (1988, August 29). Children's buying power hits home. Marketing News, pp.49.
- Jaeger, R.M. (1984). Sampling in Education and the Social Sciences. New York: Longman.
- June, L.P. and Smith, S.L.J. Service Attributes And Situational Effects on Customer Preferences For Restaurant Dining. Journal of Travel Research, 26(2), 20-27.
- Kim, P. Lifestages: Dramatic Changes in the American Consumer Market. Retail Control, 58(6), 12-17.

Knoch, C. and Lax, H.L. Rich Potential in Two Income Households. American Banker, 155, 7.

Kotler, P. (1984) Marketing Essentials. Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall.

Leedy, P.D. (1980). Practical Research Planning and Design. New York: Macmillan.

Leonard, C. Serving the modern family: understanding required. Restaurants USA, 7(7), 30-31.

Lewis, R.C., and Chambers, R.E. (1989) Marketing Leadership in Hospitality. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.

Miller, K.E. and Ginter, J.L. An Investigation of Situational Variation in Brand Choice Behavior And Attitude. Journal of Marketing Research, 26, 111-123.

Mussen, P.H.; Conger, J.J. and Kagan, J. (1974) Child Development And Personality. (4th ed). New York: Harper & Row.

NPD-CREST. Consumer Eating Behavior Away From the Home, 1982-1987, 1988, 1989. Park Ridge, IL.

O'Donnell, J.M. Focus Groups: A Habit-Forming Evaluation Technique. Training and Development Journal, 42(7), 71-73.

Papalia, D.E. and Olds, S.W. (1982). A Child's World, Infancy Through Adolescence. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Reid, R.D. (1983). Foodservice and Restaurant Marketing. Boston, MA: CBI.

Reynolds, F.D. and Johnson, D.K. Validity of Focus-Group Findings. Journal of Advertising Research, 18, 21-24

Schmenner, R.W. How Can Service Businesses Survive and Prosper?. Sloan Management Review, 27(3), 21-32.

Swinyard, W.R. and Struman, K.D. Market Segmentation: Finding The Heart Of Your Restaurants Market. The Cornell Hotel And Restaurant Administration Quarterly, May, 1986, 89-96.

Virginia Secretary of Education & The Virginia Department of Education. (1986). About The Preschool Years.

Welch, J. L. "Focus Groups For Restaurant Research". The Cornell Hotel And Restaurant Administration Quarterly, August, 1985, 79-85.

## VITA

Theresa Castillo Logan was born in New York City, New York in 1958. She completed a Bachelor of Science degree in Allied Health, Foods and Nutrition, from College Misericordia, Dallas, Pennsylvania, in 1982.

Professional affiliations include membership in The American Dietetic Association and The National Restaurant Association.

Theresa Castillo Logan is married to John Charles Logan and resides in Alexandria, Virginia with their two children Sean and Gillian Logan.

*Theresa Castillo Logan*

---