EXAMINING BRAND ASSOCIATIONS THAT INFLUENCE CONSUMERS’ RESTAURANT PREFERENCES

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in The Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By
David Njite, M.Sc.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University

2005

Dissertation Committee:
Dr. Parsa, H. G., Adviser
Dr. George, T. 
Dr. Hong, G. S.

Approved by:

Adviser

College of Human Ecology
ABSTRACT

Extant branding literature holds that, strong brands evoke brand associations that are differentiated readily from direct competitors. Additionally, brand theory asserts that the most powerful and enduring consumer-based brand associations deal with the intangible or abstract characteristics of the product rather than its functional or tangible attributes.

To be able to understand why and how consumers evaluate brands, researchers and practitioners need a deeper understanding of the brand associations consumers develop when they use or come into contact with the brands, because brand preference is greatly influenced by the associations consumers develop.

The purpose of this research was to develop a better understanding of the meaning of restaurant brands to consumers. To achieve its purpose, a multi-method research was designed to: (1) explore and examine brand associations of restaurants as described by consumers, and (2) understand the extent to which the identified dimensions of restaurant brands are prioritized by consumers in the selection of restaurants. Building on exploratory qualitative research, results of 20 interviews were utilized in data analysis. Transcription and content analysis of the interviews enabled categorization of the associations from which a model to depict the relationship between the categories of brands, restaurant sector and brand preference was developed.
Hypotheses were developed from the existent literature and the results of the interviews. Through a self administered survey carried out in Study II, the conjoint analysis results indicated that: in the fine dining sector, employee-related brand associations play a significant role in consumer brand preference. In the quick service sector, price is a significant determinant of brand preference. Other findings indicate that consumer brand preference in both restaurant sectors is significantly influenced by employee competence and systems organization.

Besides contributing to the methodology of studying brand associations, this dissertation contributes a theoretically- and empirically-based model of restaurant brands preference to the literature; providing a framework to understand the relationship between brand association, restaurant sectors, and consumer restaurant preference. By examining these fundamental aspects of restaurant branding, the model created should also be useful in future research regarding restaurant brand preferences.
DEDICATIONS

Dedicated to all my family; through their love and patience, I got to this point of my life.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For some reason or another, I foresee this as one of the most difficult parts to write. For one, I am actually thanking those who have worked with me, given me support, patience and genuine love over the past years I have been a doctoral student; indicating, I have to exit. Secondly, it is a reminder that I can no longer walk the familiar routes. I am on my way to face another beginning. To tread a path whose bends, bumps and thorns I am unfamiliar with. It is definitely emotional to think that, if I have been an actor, the curtains are almost drawing again. That my co-actors will change so will the audience, and of course, my performance will be expected to change if I have to keep up with the trade!

Well, this performance would never have come to this point without the directors, critiques, and trainers whose input in terms of time, energy and professionalism has all been incredible. This dissertation would not have been possible without the sincere, personal and professional support of many people; some who definitely spent numerous hours worrying and reading through my work, each one of them playing their own unique roles and I wish to acknowledge them.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor Dr. Parsa. Dr. Parsa and I have climbed and ascended many hills and mountains of the academic field together since my arrival in Columbus. It has been one journey that for several reasons, if I began to document, I will never complete. Dr Parsa was not only an inspiration, but was always available when I
needed his guidance. Throughout my doctoral program, Dr. Parsa encouraged me to be an independent and analytical thinker. But what I consider most important is that, besides continually encouraging me to develop my research skills; he also taught me how to be a critique of my own work. As time went by, I realized that not only had I a teacher and advisor in Dr. Parsa, but a friend too. As an advisor, his dedication and patience was unquestionable making him my role model for the kind of researcher and student advisor I would like to become.

I am extremely indebted to Dr. George. Dr. George had a unique role in my life as a doctoral student and during the time I was writing this dissertation. He is one committee member that always provided me a lot of encouragement, support and detailed critique of my work. The speed at which Dr. George responded to my requests still amazes me to this day. Dr. George was always available when I needed some one to talk to. Many a times when I felt like I was breaking down, he was available to listen to me. Dr. George’s orderliness and attention to detail in research is a great inspiration to me today and tomorrow. I sincerely thank you.

I wish to extent my sincere appreciation to Dr. Hong for the role she played during my time as a student here at The Ohio State University. Her contribution is invaluable. As chair to the department, Dr. Hong went miles to ensure that I was comfortable. Dr. Hong not only renewed my teaching assistantship every year, but also financially supported my professional development. She encouraged me to write and present papers at professional
conferences; without which, it would not have been possible to get this stage. I do not take this for granted and I sincerely thank you. As a committee member, Dr. Hong made incredible contributions to my work. Not only did she provide me with timely and detailed feedback, she also, on many occasions, took time to discuss with me about precautions of personal wellness and mental health one should take during a dissertation writing phase. I am extremely indebted to Dr. Hong and I hope that one day I will have the opportunity to use her techniques to advise a student. I not only admire Dr. Hong’s motivation for excellence and quality research, but she also taught me the way to critique and at the same time guide without destroying an ego.

I am extremely indebted to Dr. Van Zandt. When my dissertation seemed to be wilting away, your input gave it a new life and direction of thought. Dr. Van Zandt’s critique definitely added to my dissertation the spice it desired. I not only admire her zeal for research and attention to the finer details, but I also appreciate the amount of time she spent reading through my work and providing me with detailed feedback and critique. Dr. Van Zandt’s contribution during my dissertation writing phase will live with me throughout my career and will always be a part of my research reference.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to Prof. Andrews. Meeting Dean Andrews in Kenya was the beginning of a transformation to a career that was going through doldrums. Our conversation and options that he offered were a great eye-opener. Not only did Dean Andrews encourage me to pursue my doctoral degree, but when I came to
Columbus, his family became my family away from home. Through out my stay in Columbus, I always knew I had a home to visit. I thank you very much and I sincerely wish that in my career, I will be able to shape the lives of many in a positive and memorable way.

I wish to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to several other professors: Dr. Geistfeld who met me on arrival into the program and whose contribution to my initial stage of the course is priceless. I also wish to thank Dr. Wayne Johnson, Dr. Pam Paxton (Sociology), Dr. Neal Johnson (Psychology): You all taught me how to think in a very broad way. I owe Dr. Brock a big thank you. Dr. Brock taught me how to think within a Social Psychology paradigm. I would encourage anyone to take a class with these professors. I also wish to thank Dr. Alison Morrison (The University of Strathclyde-Glasgow) for her continued guidance, support and recommendation. I also wish to thank Dr. Rahman, Mohammed for his statistical support during my studies.

My graduate studies would have been one lot of misery without the emotional support of friends and family members. Foremost I am very grateful to Tiffany King; you led me around Ohio State when I was so new and I will never forget, thank you. Morris, I am grateful that you took your time to collect so much data for me and encourage me. Michael, as a cohort, you were extremely caring and encouraging. Marsha and Sandra, your support was unending. I mention one person last because of our experience, this is Sunny. Sunny, I sincerely thank you. You encouraged me a lot during this time. We always believed in each other, and most important, we made it!
It is difficult to imagine what emotions my small family has had to go through due to my long and continued absence. But they all provided me with unending support and encouragement throughout my academic stab. It has definitely been a long time away from them. A time of separation, of emotional pain, loneliness and anxiety, but through it all, they have persevered and encouraged me. My brother Masiele never ceased to make me laugh whenever we had a phone conversation. He was always so caring and encouraging. I am definitely very proud of him. My brother patiently watched over me as I crawled through the academic ladder. Sophie, you were always incredible. Words cannot describe what I feel about your support. Indeed, I have never known a person emotionally so strong, supporting and hopeful. I sincerely admire you and thank you for everything, of which, if I began to mention will never end. To my mum Lydia, I owe you a big thank you that words can not express what I feel. This list is unending. I just wish to thank each one of you that contributed to my life and stay. To my other friends, relatives and friends: Kevin (University of Strathclyde), Kerry (Kenya), Martin (University of West Virginia) I thank you all for your love and support. Professor Sigot (WECO-University), Drs. Waudo and Mburugu (Kenyatta University) I am very grateful for your encouragement to pursue graduate studies.

Like a play, this has come to an end. The curtains have fallen, marking a new beginning. The audience has to leave and await the next show. The trainers, critiques and the directors, have to take on a new cast. As an actor, I have to move on too: to a different stage
and audience. As I begin to learn the new script, I am glad I have the experience of the one just performed. It is my strength. Thank you all for being part of my strength!
VITA

1987……………………………………………..B.Ed., Kenyatta University, Kenya

1988 – 1993 …………………………………… Instructor, Maseno University, Kenya

1995……………………………………………..MS, University of Strathclyde, UK

1996 – 2001……………………………………..Lecturer, Maseno University, Kenya

2001 – present………………………………… Graduate Teaching Assistant
The Ohio State University

PUBLICATIONS

Research Publications


FIELD OF STUDY

Field of Study: Human Ecology

Major Field: Hospitality Management
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENT</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATIONS</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VITA</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>xvi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>xvii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### CHAPTER

1. INTRODUCTION
   - Research Objectives | 7
   - Organization of the Dissertation | 7
   - Definition of Terms
     - Free Association | 11
     - Mall Intercept Technique | 12
     - Projective Techniques | 13
     - Quick Service Restaurants: Referred to as QSR henceforth | 14
     - Triangulation | 14

2. LITERATURE REVIEW
   - Brand Associations | 15
   - Branding | 18
   - Brand | 19
   - Consumer Associations | 22
   - Brand Associations: Functions
     - Processing and Retrieval | 24
     - Differentiation | 25
     - Source of Attitudes/Feelings | 25
3. METHODOLOGY ........................................................................................................... 43
   Overview ...................................................................................................................... 43
   Study I ......................................................................................................................... 46
      Study Participants .................................................................................................... 47
      Pretests ..................................................................................................................... 49
      Procedure .................................................................................................................. 50
         Interview Process .................................................................................................. 52
   Data Analysis: Study I .................................................................................................. 55
      i) Brand Signs .......................................................................................................... 64
         a) Symbols and Colors ............................................................................................ 64
      ii) Product Related Associations ............................................................................. 65
         Menu and Product Variety .................................................................................... 65
      iii) Price .................................................................................................................... 66
         Relative Price and Price/Value Ratio ...................................................................... 66
      iv) Provenance ......................................................................................................... 67
         Employee Appearance ............................................................................................ 67
      v) Service Interaction/ Service Related Brand Associations ..................................... 68
         a) Customer Relations ............................................................................................ 68
LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIGURE</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1:</td>
<td>Schematic Representation of Brand Associations Functions (Aaker, 1991)</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2:</td>
<td>Illustration of Associations</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3:</td>
<td>Illustration of the Spreading Activation Paradigm (Franzen &amp; Bouwman, 2001)</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4:</td>
<td>Illustration of the Spreading Activation Effect</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5:</td>
<td>Brand Equity Model Depicting Brand Associations (Keller, 1998)</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6:</td>
<td>Service Branding Model (Berry, 2000)</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7:</td>
<td>Categories of Brand Associations (Aaker, 1991)</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 8:</td>
<td>Categories of Consumer Brand Associations in the Restaurant Sector</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9:</td>
<td>The Relationship between Categories of Brand Association (Developed from the Qualitative Study) and Consumers’ Restaurant Brand Preference</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 10:</td>
<td>Conceptual Model: The Relationship between Restaurant Brand Associations, Restaurant Sector Difference, and Brand Preference</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 1: Demographics of Interviewees</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2: Interviewee Responses to Brand Dimensions of the Quick Service Restaurants</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3: Interviewee Responses to Brand Dimensions of the Fine Dining Restaurant</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4: Comparison of Interviewees Responses to the Dimensions of Restaurant Brand Associations</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 5: Demographics of the Sample</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 6: The Orthogonal Arrays used for Conjoint Analysis Model</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 7: Results of Conjoint Analysis: Fine Dining Restaurants</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 8: Illustration of the Utilities Derived from Fine Dining Restaurants with Differing Attributes. (Based on the attributes of the eight hypothetical Restaurant Brands of the Study)</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 9: Illustration of the Utilities Derived from Quick Service Restaurants with Differing Attributes. (Based on the attributes of the eight hypothetical Restaurant Brands of the Study)</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 10: Table of Comparison: Hypothesized versus Observed Importance (Fine Dining)</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 11: Results of Conjoint Analysis: Quick Service Restaurant</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 12: Table of Comparison: Hypothesized vs. Observed Importance (QSR)</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Whether we eat to live or live to eat, food plays an integral role in the lives of humans. The importance of food can not be overstated: from a physiological perspective food provides nourishment; while from a psychological perspective food is classified as a basic need in Maslow’s (1970) hierarchy of needs. At the extreme of Maslow’s continuum, food can also represent a product consumed to depict self-actualization. Thus, one can argue that besides providing nourishment food plays various roles both at individual and group level.

Whatever theoretical perspective one takes, eating is obviously a daily activity and necessity for human beings. Depending on one’s purpose for eating at restaurants, one consciously or unconsciously evaluates a complex set of attributes before choosing a restaurant. The importance attached to these restaurant attributes is eventually evaluated in the consumer’s mind, leading to a purchasing decision. For example, the reason for eating out affects the importance the consumer attaches to each attribute of the restaurants. Several other factors, such as age, company and even social class come into play to amplify or abridge these attributes as the consumer makes a purchase decision.
Though many thousands of restaurants exist in the United States, on the product life-cycle model (Kotler & Armstrong, 2004) the restaurant industry is approaching decline. The decline stage is characterized by: price reduction in response to competitors, reduced innovation, a decline in sales, market saturation and product augmentation. All of these characteristics are found in the contemporary restaurant business environment, which demands new strategies in order to attain profitability. One strategic option available to restaurant managers is branding orientation.

Branding and brand orientation has been woven tightly into the contemporary act of consumption. Indeed, the twentieth century will be remembered as the century of brands and branding in marketing (Caldwell, 2000). As in many other industries, building brands has become a primary focus of restaurant managers. Additionally, restaurant managers are applying brand management theories and practices, and many restaurants are reshaping their corporate missions to reflect branding orientation rather than product orientation (Muller, 1998).

Further, as the restaurant industry displays characteristics of the decline stage on the product life cycle, restaurant companies need to adopt the skills of the brand manager as one of their core competencies to remain competitive in the marketplace (Muller, 1998). Adopting a branding orientation is in line with Kapferer’s (1992) proposition that a brand is in the memory of the consumer and is the future of the product. If a brand is in the memory of the consumer and is the future of the product, then developing and maintaining high quality brands with positive associations should be of utmost importance to managers (Aaker, 1996).
Brands create a strategic position and specific associations in the mind of the consumer. Thus, for consumers a brand is a promise of a certain level of product and service execution (Muller, 1996). Also, the proposition that brands are in memory of the consumer implies that an attempt to meet consumer needs calls for an improved understanding of how consumers evaluate product brands. To understand consumers’ perceptions of restaurant brands, managers need to comprehend the role that consumers’ brand associations play in the evaluation process, that is, the way that consumers construct purchasing cues based on their experience of restaurant brands (Supphellen, 2000). An understanding of these brand associations provides managers with a basis for brand-preference formation.

Understanding brand associations provides managers with customer-based brand equity (Park & Srinivasan, 1994). The assumption underlying measurement schemes of consumer brand associations is that improvement in branding is achieved through an analysis of consumer response and measures (Krishnan, 1996).

One proposition that follows from the ideas above is that brands hold meaning to consumers and therefore the nature of brands evolves in relation to the consumer’s changing needs (de Chernatony & Dall’Olmo, 1997). The fact that brands evolve implies that brand management should also evolve. Consequently, understanding brand evolution becomes a priority for researchers, managers and marketers. As a result of the changing nature of brands, current brand-management techniques have evolved from the classic case of Proctor and Gamble (P&G). Brand managers now either employ a category or cross-functional brand management approach, reflecting a more strategic approach in response to challenges facing brands (de Chernatony & Dall’Olmo, 1997). Many believe
a brand suggests the best choice (Ginden, 1993) while others see a brand as something the customer knows and will react to with certainty (The Economist, 1988). Despite the formal definition, the purpose of branding is essentially to build a product image (Clearly, 1981). This image will influence the perceived worth of a product and will increase the brands value to the customer leading to brand loyalty (The Economist, 1988).

Previous studies, outlined in the following paragraphs, have documented the role of brands and therefore the role of brand associations to both the consumer and brand owner (producer). For the consumer, brands identify the source or maker of the product allowing consumers to assign responsibility to the manufacturer, producer or distributor (Keller, 2003; Lassar, Mittal, & Sharma, 1995). For example, the brand McDonald’s assigns responsibility to the company. Also, brands take on a special meaning for consumers. As a result of their experience with a product, over time consumers learn about brands and develop a “simplification process” for product decisions (Jacoby, Olson & Haddock, 1971).

Furthermore, if consumers recognize brands, and have some knowledge of them and have formed associations about them, then they do not have to engage in a lot of additional thought or processing of information to make a product decision. For this reason, brands allow consumers to lower search cost (Biswas, 1992) both internally (how much they have to think) and externally (looking around) (Keller, 2003). Thus, based on what consumers already know about the brand, they make decisions faster, since the brand associations provide the source of categorization. Additionally, brands offer a bond between the manufacturer and the consumer. Consumers are likely to develop
associations of faith in a brand and eventually offer their loyalty to brands. For this purpose, brand owners strive to provide utility through consistency in performance, appropriate pricing, promotion and distribution (Aaker, 1991).

From another perspective, brand functions are not just “functional.” For the consumer brands can also serve as symbolic devices, allowing them to project their self-image. In addition, brands reduce the perceived risk of purchasing, and signal the quality of the product (Shimp, 1997; Janiszewski & Van Osselaer, 2000). As a result, brands offer various advantages to the consumer in terms of economic and symbolic value.

As branding continues to gain significance in the marketing of products, marketers have spent millions of dollars to create and support brand images. Such efforts definitely pay, as evidenced by the well-defined and strong images of brands such as Coca-cola, Infiniti, Hilton Hotels, Marlboro and Pepsi. Following this kind of evidence, theorists have suggested that developing, communicating and maintaining brand image is crucial to a brand’s long-term success (Park, Jaworski, & MacInnis, 1986; Ries & Trout, 1986), since the image of a brand determines the brand’s success over the long run (Park et al., 1986).

Branding research has received renewed scholarly attention in recent years (Van Osselaer & Alba, 2000; Yoo, Donthu & Lee, 2000). However, despite the importance of branding, and consumer perception of brands, the role of brand associations in the marketing of restaurants has not been explored in detail (Krishnan & Hartline, 2001). Only recently have marketers and academics given restaurant branding and marketing considerable attention. Various scholars (e.g., O’Cass & Grace, 2004; Berry, 1999, 2000; de Chernatony & Dall’Olmo, 1999; de Chernatony, 1999b; Turley & Moore, 1995; Berry
& Parasuraman, 1991) have examined branding and its influence on consumption in relation to service-dominated products such as restaurants. These studies are important because they address the challenges of branding services-dominated products, since these are products with unique characteristics. However, these studies do not exhaust the issue of branding, particularly restaurant branding.

Specifically, there is a still much more to discover about how consumers perceive restaurant brands and the relative weight these associations receive during purchase decision. The answers to these questions have both theoretical and practical implications, which are the concern of this study. This study explores the phenomenon of restaurant branding from a consumer perspective, providing a theoretically- and empirically-based model of restaurant branding to both academic researchers and branding practitioners.

Brand associations represent what a brand means to a consumer (Berry, 2000; de Chernatony & McDonald 1998; Aaker, 1991). According to these studies, examining brand associations sheds light on how consumers determine brand meaning and eventually brand preference.

This research thus focuses on learning more about the associations that consumers attribute to restaurant brands. To do so, the following objectives have been developed:
Research Objectives

1. To explore and identify dimensions of restaurant brands as described by consumers.
2. To examine the extent to which the identified dimensions of restaurant brands are prioritized in selection of quick service restaurants and fine dining restaurants.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized as follows:

The remaining part of Chapter 1 outlines the problem statement.

Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature to provide an understanding of brand associations and how they influence restaurant preferences.

Chapter 3 addresses the methodology for data collection for Studies I and II. Study I is exploratory in nature and examines brand associations that influence consumer perceptions toward restaurant brands through qualitative data collection. Study II is quantitative and is also described in Chapter 3.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of both Studies I and II.

The dissertation concludes with Chapter 5, which discusses the findings of the research in terms of its theoretical and managerial implications.
Problem Statement

Consumers engage in consumption activities everyday, challenging marketers to determine exactly what customers’ need, and to find ways to meet these needs as efficiently as possible. To this extent, marketing is regarded as a customer-centric activity that bridges the gap between what the company has to offer and what the market or customers want (Campbell & Butaney, 1996). From a marketing point of view, studying consumer purchasing orientation and patronage behavior is beneficial to the restaurateurs.

The food service industry is highly competitive and the current operating environment is not only marked by a growing number of restaurants, but over time consumers have also become more demanding, both of which increase the importance of effective marketing. This shift has placed greater emphasis on marketing what the consumer wants (Brannon, 2000, p.16). Moreover, the foodservice industry faces competition from within and outside of the industry. An example of competition from outside the industry is ready-made foods that line the aisles of modern supermarkets. On the other hand, there is competition from within the restaurant industry, including a variety of themes and concepts from other restaurants. As a reference, the growth rate in the restaurant industry is currently 5.6% (UBS report, 2004). The National Restaurant Association (NRA) offers the following industry-wide estimates: the industry has total Sales of $476 billion per year in an estimated 900,000 locations, serving more than 70 billion meal and snack occasions. This kind of competition, coupled with ever increasing consumer demands, calls for foodservice managers to better understand what consumers’ value. The result, ideally, is a more accurate product mix and more finely
targeted promotional and advertising campaigns. It therefore becomes important to research the value consumers attach to certain attributes when making restaurant selection purchase decisions.

Given this type of operating environment, one key issue is the need to create a system that can identify what the consumer wants and a guide that can help foodservice managers create products that fulfill the consumers’ desires. Such research provides the necessary knowledge of behavioral characteristics of consumers, enabling restaurant operators and marketers to plan and implement their strategies more effectively.

To move consumer research closer to understanding consumer behavior in the marketplace, several theoretical models have been suggested to help marketers understand how consumers conceptualize and respond to brands. These models enable marketers to implement more effective consumer centered marketing activities and gain substantial differentiation from their competitors (Kapferer, 1992; de Chernatony, 1993; Keller, 1998). Regrettably, such models tend to conceptualize brands in terms of physical goods, with very minimal consideration of services dominated products (Turley & Moore, 1995). Even though the developers of some of these models argue that they can be generalized and applied to both the branding and marketing of goods and services (Keller, 1993, 1998; de Chernatony & Dall’Olmo, 1997), the applicability of these models to both services and goods is questionable, since the inherent characteristics of goods and services differ substantially (Kotler & Armstrong 2004), these differences emanate from characteristics such as intangibility, inseparability, heterogeneity and perishability, which are all associated with services (Zeithaml & Bitner, 1996).
To understand the relationship between consumers and brands in the restaurant context, there is a need to identify the dimensions that are meaningful to consumers as they conceptualize brands (O’Cass & Grace, 2003). Even though several models have been proposed (de Chernatony & Dall’Olmo, 1997; Keller, 1993, 1998), to the researcher’s knowledge, only two models (O’Cass & Grace, 2003; Berry, 2000) have addressed and established these dimensions from the consumer’s perspective.

The focus of this study is to investigate brand dimensions specifically attributed to restaurants and explore issues related to how important the dimensions are in purchase decisions and perception of the brands. To meet this objective, the following exploratory questions are examined: What dimensions of restaurant brand associations are identified by consumers? To what extent are these dimensions of branded restaurants prioritized and what are the relationships between these dimensions in decision making and purchasing?

**Summary**

The initial section of this chapter examined various perspectives of eating. The diverse reasons and circumstances under which individuals acquire food away from home affect the work of restaurant marketers. When consumers eat out, they seek more than the satisfaction of physiological need. For this reason food service operators ought to understand how to meet this aspect of the consumer’s purchasing decision. Meeting consumers’ needs and staying ahead in crowded market environments is difficult. Fortunately, marketers have devised brands as a way to help consumers meet their needs, needs which go far beyond the physiological desire for food.
Definition of Terms

Free Association

According to Keller (2003), brand associations can be defined as "the other informational nodes linked to the brand node in memory and contain the meaning of the brand for consumers" (p. 93). Further, Keller identifies three main ways in which consumers' brand associations can be formed: 1) direct experience with the brand, 2) some form of communication about the brand, and 3) some assumptions of inferences made from other brand-related information (Keller 1998).

The associative network and methodological strength of free associations can be traced to the works of Anderson (1983) and Collins & Loftus (1975) spreading-activation theory. The theory of “spreading activation” is based in cognitive psychology and provides a basis of how brand knowledge can exist in consumer memory. The spreading activation model provides the basis for measuring brand knowledge (Keller, 1998). The key idea for the spreading activation model is that memory is organized in an interrelated manner and comprises of nodes and links. The nodes consist of knowledge or stored information and the nodes that are related are connected by a link. That activation spreads from one node to another through the links. The connection of the nodes and links forms the entire associative network through which spreading activation takes place.

Studying brand associations through this method (spreading activation) can provide a critical understanding of diverse consumer-related aspects, such as inference making (Alba, Hutchinson, and Lynch 1991), categorization (Sujan 1985), product
evaluation (Broniarczyk and Alba 1994), persuasion (Greenwald and Leavitt 1984), brand equity (Keller 1993, 1998), and brand perception (Friedmann 1986).

This model is useful in measuring brand associations. According to this model, when a concept is processed, activation spreads out along all paths, the strength of activation decreasing as the number of paths increases. In the branding context, brand associations are stored as the nodes and contain meaning of the brand for the consumer (Keller, 2003). For example, brand-A could carry the various associations stored in memory (see figure 4). The activation of A will lead to the spreading and activation of the nodes connected to it.

Fine Dining Restaurants: To be referred to as FDR in the text

Mall Intercept Technique

This is classified as a personal interview technique (Bush & Parasuraman 1985). In this study, this technique was regarded as the most suitable for collecting data. A typical consumer intercept method, as the name suggests, aims to intercept consumers or potential consumers in their natural environment and deliver a short structured questionnaire on their consumer habits, preferences, perceptions or behavior. The “Mall intercept” interviews are a popular solution when funds are limited and researchers still can have person-to-person interaction and contact (Aarker et al. 1998).
Projective Techniques

Projective techniques are an example of qualitative research methods. Qualitative methods are used primarily as a prelude to quantitative research. They are used to define a problem, generate hypotheses, identify determinants, and develop quantitative research designs. Because of the low number of respondents involved, these exploratory research methods cannot be used to generalize to the whole population. They are however, very valuable for exploring an issue and are used by almost all researchers. Qualitative methods probe below the surface for affective drives and subconscious motivations.

Projective techniques are unstructured prompts or stimuli that encourage the respondent to project their underlying motivations, beliefs, attitudes, or feelings onto an ambiguous situation. They are all indirect techniques that attempt to disguise the purpose of the research.

Examples of projective techniques include:

- Word association - say the first word that comes to mind after hearing a word - only some of the words in the list are test words that the researcher is interested in, the rest are fillers - is useful in testing brand names - variants include chain word association and controlled word association
- Sentence completion - respondents are given incomplete sentences and asked to complete them
- Story completion - respondents are given part of a story and are asked to complete
- Third-person technique is a verbal or visual representation of an individual and his/her situation is presented to the respondent. The respondent is asked to relate the attitudes or feelings of that person - researchers assume that talking in the third person
will minimize the social pressure to give standard or politically correct responses. More techniques exist and have various advantages and disadvantages.

- Selection of respondents
- Social desirability: This is a concern both from the interviewer and interviewee. The respondents are likely to give socially desirable responses due to the face to face contact. Also, the interviewers can easily adjust their scripts to suit the social environment

Quick Service Restaurants: Referred to as QSR henceforth

Triangulation

*Triangulation* is defined as the use of combination of methods in the study of the same phenomenon. The term *triangulation* is taken from navigation and military strategy, where the use multiple references to locate an object’s exact position (Smith 1975, p.273). In the social science, the use of triangulation can be traced back to Campbell and Fiske (1959) who developed the idea of “multi-operationism.” Campbel and Fiske argued that more than one method should be used in validation to ensure that variance reflected that of the trait and not of the method. This kind of methodological triangulation can be referred to as between method triangulation (Denzin, 1978, p.302).
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Brand Associations

Even though Jiang, Dev and Rao (2002) have suggested that building and managing brands is the key to success in the hospitality industry, little attention has been paid to the restaurant sector. Thus, despite branding research in hospitality (hotel management, e.g., Muller, 1997; Jiang, Dev & Rao, 2002; travel and tourism, e.g., Carmen, Stuart & Brent, 2005; d'Hauteserre, 2001) and the ubiquity of restaurants in the business environment, there is still a need for studies that explain how consumers perceive restaurant brands. It is therefore no surprise that both in the general marketing and hospitality context, branding continues to attract the attention of academic researchers and practitioners.

One tenet of marketing literature is that consumers interrelate and integrate with brands and companies (de Chernatony, 1999). To exploit this interaction and integration, de Chernatony and McDonald (1998) suggest that management should focus on the creation and development of added value. This implies that in order to build and
retain customer loyalty, companies should consciously pursue distinctiveness in performing and communicating service, connect emotionally with customers, and internalize the brand for the providers (Berry, 2000).

If added value is to be created for consumers, then managers must understand what consumers value. In other words, creating added value is not possible if management does not understand how consumers perceive their firm’s products. Therefore, a study that reveals consumer perception of brands is necessary. A study of this nature should create an understanding of how consumers evaluate focal brands. This study suggests that, in order to improve both managerial and academic understanding of how consumers evaluate focal brands, there is a need to comprehend the role brand associations play in the consumers’ evaluation process (Supphellen, 2000).

Studies that focus on consumer evaluation of brands are further necessitated by various business environment realities. Like any other industry sector, branding in the restaurant industry, continues to pose a challenge to marketers and researchers. Exercabating this challehge are factors such as deregulation, technology, consolidation, technologization, proliferation, standardization, commoditization, corporatization (Dev, 2005), all which have contributed to the unprecedented competition between restaurants. The result is that restaurant companies are reevaluating their marketing strategies and reassessing their branding and delivery of products to the consumer (Muller, 1998).

In this study, an approach that provides an insight into branding questions is presented. This study, like Park and Srinivasan’s (1994), measures consumer perceptions of established brands using a consumer brand-association approach. The assumption that underlies such an approach is that brand success and any other improvement to brands
can be built through an analysis of these consumer-based measures (Krishnan, 1996). Further, like Henderson, Iacobucci and Calder (1996) suggest, in brand management, understanding consumer perceptions of brand properties and market structure is more important than a priori managerial statements of intended branding strategies.

To enable an understanding of consumer based brand association, this study operates on the premises that, the theoretical research on mental models called “associative networks” is well suited to studying these consumer networks of perceived associations. The research on associative networks was developed in cognitive psychology and can be applied to understanding consumer brand evaluation and, thus, to the study of consumer preference. In order to address the branding questions raised in Chapter 1, this study focuses on consumer brand associations, examines the associations through the associative networks paradigm, and analyzes the relative importance attributed to the identified associations using conjoint technique.

The goal of this study is to investigate consumer brand associations and demonstrate their relative importance. To provide background, this chapter presents relevant literature on brand, branding, associative networks and their utility in understanding consumer brand associations. Specifically, an understanding of the associative network model and its relationship to the collection of data in Study I is required. Study I is an elicitation study with an underlying assumption that consumers’ associations in memory are built and stored as a network that can be retrieved with the provision of cues. In sum, the literature provides the inspiration for the present study as well as a background to the research methods utilized.
Branding

In the extant marketing literature, brand research has focused on two perspectives: the financial returns as leveraged by a brand and the consumer response to the brand (Lassar, Banwari, & Arun, 1995). The first perspective, which is financial based, examines the value a brand creates for a business. This method measures the influence of the brand name on the flow of income to the company (see Farquhar, Han & Iriji, 1991; Simon and Sullivan, 1992).

The second perspective focuses on the customer-based response to the brand (Keller, 1993, Shocker, Srivastava and Ruekert, 1994). The assumptions underlying such measurement are twofold: customer-based brands drive profits, and managers, especially in the restaurant sector, need models to evaluate consumer perceptions of their firms’ brands (Lassar, Banwari, & Arun, 1995). Barwise (1993, p.100) summarizes the importance of understanding consumer response, arguing that until consumer-based brand perceptions are convincingly operationalized and measured, any attempts to measure or increase consumer brand perception resulting from a marketing action is irrelevant. Therefore the measurement of consumer brand experiences through brand associations is logical, given the definition of branding to be offered in the following discussion.

Surprisingly, most marketing literature that discusses branding does not define “branding.” Instead, the literature focuses more on defining and discussing “brand.” The definition of branding is thus left for the reader to deduce. In this study, branding is treated as a process whose outcome is the brand. Accordingly, for the purpose of this study, the definition provided by Supphellen (2000) is adopted. Supphellen argues that,
from a marketing perspective, branding is perceived as an input process into a system. Thus, branding occurs when the enterprise creates added value in the mind of the consumers. The result of the branding process is a perceived value beyond the observable physical value of the product. It is this perceived value that differentiates the product from those that are created to satisfy the same consumer need. In the branding process, the brand provider (for example, a restaurateur who packages several attributes that are supposed to meet the consumer functional and emotional needs), communicates and positions the benefits in the consumers’ minds. Adopting this definition implies that the major purpose of branding is to develop strong, unique and favorable brand associations that create a differential effect on consumer response to the marketing actions of a focal brand (Keller, 1993, 1998).

Examining the process of branding from this perspective has various implications for the definition of “brand,” or the product of branding. If branding encompasses the creation of brand associations as well as the process of creating added value in the mind of the consumer, a brand should be perceived as a function in the mind of the consumer. The following paragraphs discuss various perspectives and extant definitions of brand which help form a working definition suited for this study. The working definition of branding assumes a process of memory-based consumer response.

**Brand**

Brands have existed for centuries. Traditionally, brands existed as a means of distinguishing one product from another, but given the definition of branding as discussed in the literature of this study, brands and their meaning have not only evolved
to encompass a broader perspective in the market place, but have also adopted a more central role for the competition (Aaker, 1991) as well as the consumer-brand relationship (Fournier, 1998).

In contrast, one researcher has defined a brand as: “the name, associated with one or more items in the product line, which is used to identify the source of character of the item(s)” (Kotler 2000, p. 396). The American Marketing Association defines a brand as a “name, logo, symbol, sign, design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition” (Keller, 1993). In the same differentiating perspective, Keller defines a brand as an aspect that adds a dimension to products otherwise designed to meet the same needs. Keller, however, recognized that the role of brands goes beyond mere identification.

As the definition and role of brands and branding became more significant in the marketing process, and their function evolved, the traditional functions and definitions accorded these two concepts were criticized. Kapferer (1997, p. 28) mentioned that the brand is a sign and therefore external to the products. Its function, Kapferer argued, is to disclose the hidden qualities of the product which are inaccessible to contact. Aaker and Joachmisthaler (2000) note that through the traditional model of branding the function of brand is perceived as mere identification and that a focus on branding using this perspective only results in short-term financial results (Davis 2002). Such practices, they suggest, undermine the philosophy of branding based on consumer memory.

One common theme can be derived from these later definitions (Kapferer, 1997; Kohli & Thakor 1997; Aaker & Joachmisthaler, 2000) that challenge the identification
definition of brand. These definitions perceive brand in terms of the consumer mind. Closely related to these definitions are those provided by McNamara (2005), which defines a brand as: a sum of all feelings, thoughts and recognitions-positive or negative-that people in the target audience have about a company, a product or service. Bates (2005) defines a brand as a collection of perceptions in the mind of the consumer. Thus for the purpose of this study, the McNamara and Bates definitions that explicitly focus on brand as a function in the mind of the consumer are adopted. The definitions are congruent with the definition of branding offered in this study (see Supphellen, 2000). The definition presents the basis for investigating brand perceptions through brand associations and an associative network model. One conclusion that can be drawn from previous work on the subject is that branding is a process of creating brands, which is correspondingly a process of developing the presence of strong, unique and favorable brand associations in the mind of the consumer. In turn, such associations cause a differential response to the marketing of a focal brand.

To better understand how brands are represented in the consumer mind as well as to create the context for Study I, which utilizes the elicitation procedure, the following section describes the literature on brand associations and the theoretical work on mental models of associative networks. Examining associations for extant brands in the restaurant industry is particularly important because it provides answers to several broad questions. For established brands, consumers have previous exposure to certain products and over the time have developed a multitude of associations about the brand. Hence, the questions managers may be interested in answering by examining brand associations developed by consumers would include: Which brand associations should be emphasized
in marketing communication? Further, Krishnan (1996) proposes that the associations may be traced to various situations, some which may endure hence, another question of interest to the manager could be one related to trial and experience such as: Should the manager emphasize associations formed by trial or by indirect experience such as word of mouth? Also, some of the experiences may have been negative or positive, therefore: Should the manager heighten the positive experiences or should the manager aim at removing the negative ones? The responses to these questions are likely to be provided if there is an understanding of the associations consumers form about a brand. To gain this valuable knowledge, a process that delves into the consumer’s association structure is recommended as a way to provide information that the consumer may not reveal through behavior nor can the researcher gain through observing consumer patterns and displayed behavior. For example, consumers may patronize a restaurant not because they have developed positive associations, but because they have no alternative. Thus in this case the representation of the brand in the consumer mind is not congruent with their action.

**Consumer Associations**

Brand associations are a critical component of brand success, brand image and brand knowledge (Farquhar & Herr, 1993), since they convey the attitude developed toward a given brand by consumers (Aaker, 1990). These associations link to brand preference, choice, image and equity (Keller, 1991). It is therefore critical that marketing managers understand the structure and nature of associations for their brands. The associations consumers connect to brands can either be “hard” (specific, tangible, functional) or “soft” (emotional, based on attributes of a brand such as trustworthiness).
(Biel, 1991). Furthermore, some brand associations are strongly connected to specific brands. For example, in the hospitality industry, the following brand associations exist: McDonalds (Burgers), Starbucks (cool place), Hyatt (high-end hotels), Motel-6 (roadside resting). In addition, brand associations can vary from physical product attributes to perceptions of people, places and occasions evoked in conjunction with the brand (Henderson, Iacobucci and Calder, 1998).

**Brand Associations: Functions**

Brands serve various functions and satisfy several consumer needs. Brands sell because they possess certain characteristics that are experienced as relevant by a group of consumers. This applies clearly to the restaurant industry. People visit certain restaurants for functional purposes (for example, to have a meal because they are hungry), or emotional purposes (people will go to certain restaurants because it is “fashionable”). Hence, brands fulfill various consumer needs. These needs emanate from the characteristics that consumers associate with the brand name in their memory (Jiang, Dev & Rao, 2002; Franzen & Bouwman 2001).

The underlying value of a brand often is its set of associations, or what can be termed its meaning to people, and represent the foundation of purchase decision making (Aaker, 1991). Many associations exist and vary in the ways they provide value. Brand associations create value in the following ways: they are a source of information processing or retrieval, they create a basis of differentiation, and they generate a reason to buy. They also create positive feelings and provide a basis for brand extension. The following diagram sketches the functions of brand associations.
Figure 1: Schematic Representation of Brand Associations Functions (Aaker, 1991)

**Processing and Retrieval**

Associations summarize a set of facts and specifications that would be difficult for the customer to access and expensive for firms to communicate (Aaker, 1991; Franzen & Bouwman 2001). The association network comprises nodes that act as information chunks (Miller 1956; Anderson, 1983) or “stores” of information. For example, various facts about a brand can be summarized by a strong position relative to a competitor on a given dimension or attribute, such as product quality, service quality emotional connection, and so on. Associations can also influence the interpretation of facts and recall of information, especially during decision making (Aaker, 1991). For example, the McDonald’s arches, if seen independently, are likely to trigger the recall and interpretation of the foods and appearance of the restaurant.
Differentiation

Brand associations provide a basis for differentiation. In some classes of products such as quick-service restaurants, where the product similarity is very high, associations provide the basis for purchase. A differentiating association provides the competitive advantage for a particular brand. A well positioned brand evokes positive and strong associations that provide a reason for purchase and a barrier to competitors (Keller, 2003; Aaker 1991).

Source of Attitudes/Feelings

Some associations are linked and can transfer easily to another brand. Brands use endorsers to create associations that can be transferred to the brand. The most successful endorser-brand alliances match an endorser whose image is an organic fit with that of a brand. In the consumer's mind the two become all but interchangeable, consider, for example, the successful partnership of Michael Jordan and Nike. Some associations generally provide positive feelings during the use experience, serving to transfer and add more value than in the absence of the brand (Aaker, 1991).

Basis for Extension

Certain associations can be owned by a brand. For example, Starbucks has the consumer association of youthful, trendy coffee houses. A new product introduced by Starbucks, by extension, results in new beliefs and associations transferring from the original brand and possibly from the original product category to the new product category (Park, Milberg, & Lawson, 1991)
Reason to Buy

Many brand associations involve the product attributes or customer benefits that provide a specific reason to buy or consume the brands. Some associations provide credibility and confidence. If a famous individual visits a certain restaurant or hotel, they create confidence in the product offered.

The preceding literature provides a basis for understanding the importance of brand associations to marketers. However, it is important to discuss how the brand associations are believed to be structured in memory. The following section discusses literature on associative networks, the theoretical research into memory structure and brand representation in memory.

Associative Networks

Brand-association literature argues that marketers are interested in the associations consumers hold for their brands (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1997 & de Chernatony, 1998; etc.). Following from their work, it is important to determine what these associations are and how they are configured. In this study, a memory model is used to explain the concept of associative networks in relation to consumer brand associations. Specifically, the network approach to the representation of brand associations provides a clearer understanding of perceptions consumers have of brands.

Cognitive psychology has examined associative networks in memory. The various associative models (ACT, Anderson, 1983; HAM, Anderson & Bower, 1973; Spreading Activation, Collins & Quillian, 1968, Anderson , 1983) may differ in their assumptions but they all view memory in terms of links between various components that facilitate
encoding and retrieval. According to these models, memory is a function of the relationship that exists between the information present in the cues and the target memory. Thus, in accordance with these models, knowledge exists as a network of connections.

In the associative network models, memory is facilitated via associative links and nodes. The building blocks of the models are nodes that represent any piece of information and the links between the nodes (Anderson 1974). For example, a node can represent a brand (McDonald’s) a product (a burger) or an attribute (price). The links between any two nodes suggest an association in the consumer’s mind. Thus, Aaker (1991) defines consumer-brand association as anything “linked” in memory to a brand. The following illustration provides a representation of the associations

![Illustration of Associations](image)

Figure 2: Illustration of Associations

**Spreading Activation**

In the same vein, Collins and Loftus (1975) developed the spreading-activation concept to explain the representation of knowledge. This model is also significant and relevant in the understanding of brand structure and representation in memory. In this model, known as the spreading activation, events involved in memory begin with a cue or
cues, which are defined as whatever cognition is acting at the time an attempt to recall begins (Howes, 1990). For recall to occur, memory must be accessed in some manner and this model assumes that memory is achieved by “direct access” matching. In other words, if our senses are confronted with a stimulus, a connection can be activated with the specific links that represent this stimulus in memory. Whatever is activated first provides the cue. The activation then propagates itself along connections with other links and nodes in the network to which the stimulus representation belongs. For example, when A is activated, A is connected to B and if this connection is strong enough, B is also activated (see figure 3)

![Diagram](image_url)

Figure 3: Illustration of the Spreading Activation Paradigm (Franzen & Bouwman, 2001)

This network activation does not occur if there is no connection or the connection between two nodes is too weak. Accordingly, this is how activation spreads from an entry point or cue and then decreases exponentially with distance and time (Collins & Quillian,
The activation begins at point A, the point of entry or cue, and heads towards elements that have a connection to A and whose strength of connection exceeds a given threshold (Collins & Quillian, 1972). This model assumes that if there is only one connection from the cue or activation point, the activation chooses this route. When there are multiple connections of equal strength, the activation is divided proportionately. But, connections do not have the same strength. Hence, in real life we recall information based on the strength of connection between the cue and the other nodes. When looking for a specific relationship between an item, such as a brand, and property, Anderson’s theory seems to apply very well. To illustrate this in the case of restaurants, a cue of McDonalds is represented below in the consumer’s memory:

![Diagram of the Spreading Activation Effect](image)

**Figure 4: Illustration of the Spreading Activation Effect (Adapted, Aaker, 1996)**

In this figure, the cue node contains the word McDonald’s. This is a direct access model that involves matching in the sense that the name McDonald’s is activated to its
corresponding location in memory, in this case the food, the people, families, service meals, quality and so on. The retrieval of one item produces the spread of activation to the items that are closely related. Of course, the associative network is more complex than presented here. The network may contain more than one brand and many connections. Indeed, according to Krishnan (1996), considerable evidence suggests that the network is a fuzzy structure that can take many forms depending on the cues used to access it (Barsalou, 1983). Even though there are many associations that are evoked when a brand is presented, the current study focuses on preference and hence addresses the measurement of the set of associations activated in response to a focal brand name. This study focuses on the favorability and uniqueness of associations; other associations such as strength and directionality are not addressed.

Measuring Brand Associations

Companies work hard to build their brands, therefore it is important these companies have feedback on their efforts. Cultivating the strengths of a brand, minimizing brand weakness, and making it more valuable to the owner are the main functions of marketing. Also, the way consumers perceive brands is a key determinant of the business-consumer relationship (Fournier, 1998), hence building strong brands perceptions is a priority of many managers (Morris, 1996). To this end, marketing examines consumer-brand associations, often using a variety of measures. These measures and their findings are aimed at providing consumer-brand associations to the brand owner. Branding literature provides the following measures of brand association:
strength of association, favorability, the uniqueness of association, brand loyalty and levels of satisfaction. Some of these measures will be addressed in the following paragraphs.

Favorability of Brand Associations

Consumers store many brand associations in memory. These include both favorable and unfavorable associations (Krishnan, 1996). Favorable associations are those that are desirable to consumers and are successfully delivered by the company (Keller, 2003). It is important to assess the favorability of brand associations. Dacin and Smith (1994) argue that a favorable predisposition toward a brand is perhaps the most basic of all brand associations and is the core of many conceptualizations of brand strength. Likewise, one of the aims of brand-promotion activities is to increase the favorability of a brand to the consumer (Mitchell & Olson, 1981). Generally, a brand should aim at positioning itself positively in the consumer memory.

Measure of Uniqueness

Keller (2003) argues that brand associations may or may not be shared with other competing brands, and that the essence of brand positioning is to have a brand develop sustainable competitive advantage or unique selling propositions. It is this unique selling proposition that gives customers a reason to buy a particular brand. The uniqueness may be product related or non-product related. As a result, uniqueness can be a measure of consumer-brand association. A brand that is associated with strongly held, favorably evaluated associations that are unique, implies superiority and is more likely to be
preferred by consumers (Keller, 2003). Such sentiments can be gauged by asking consumers what they perceive to be unique to the brand.

**Source of Brand Associations**

This classification of brand associations can be equated to Berry’s (2000) question: “What is the source of brand meaning?” In Berry’s work, two sources contribute to consumer-brand associations, experience and non-experience. Non-experience includes the company’s communication, word of mouth, and advertising. However, consumers’ experience with a brand, especially the service-dominated brands, is a more important source of brand associations. Thus, the development of brand associations differs by source (Haugtvedt et al., 1993). According to Burnkrat & Unnava (1995), compared to indirect experience, associations developed as a result of experience are more relevant. Keller identifies three ways in which consumers’ brand associations can be formed: 1) direct experience with the brand, 2) some form of communication about the brand, and 3) some assumptions or inferences made from other brand-related information (Keller 1998). Aaker (1991) defines brand associations as a representation of what a brand means to a consumer. These modes of measuring brand associations are useful in eventually understanding consumer perception of a brand and in the positioning of the brand in the business environment.
Categories of Associations

Keller’s Categorization of Brand Associations

Various authors have provided the basis for categorizing brand associations. The first conceptualization to be presented is that of Keller (1993 & 1998). In an attempt to develop a better understanding of consumer-brand associations, Keller (1998) defined brand associations as "the other informational nodes linked to the brand node in memory and [they] contain the meaning of the brand for consumers" (p. 93). Others have theorized that brand meaning is a function of consumer associations; hence the true significance of brands can only be seen if it is examined from a consumer’s perspective (O’Cass & Grace 2002). From this model, Keller suggests that brands exist as consumer knowledge at two levels: brand awareness and brand as association (see Figure 5).

Keller (1993) classifies brand associations in three broad categories: attributes, benefits and attitudes. Keller defines associations categorized as attributes as those that focus on the descriptive features that characterize a product or service, in other words, what a consumer thinks the product or service is and what is involved with its purchase or consumption. Keller further distinguishes attribute associations according to how closely they relate to product or service performance. Attribute-related associations can either be product or non-product related. In this definition, Keller describes product-related attributes as the ingredients necessary for performing the product or service function sought by consumers. Hence, they relate to a product's physical composition or a service's requirements.
The four main types of non-product-related attributes are: (1) price information, (2) packaging or product appearance information, (3) user imagery (i.e., what type of person uses the product or service), and (4) usage imagery (i.e., where and in what types of situations the product or service is used).

In the same work, Keller (1993) describes brand-benefit associations as those that relate to personal values consumers attach to the product or service attributes, that is, what consumers think the product or service can do for them. Consumer-benefits associations can be further distinguished into three categories, depending on the underlying motivations to which they relate (Park, Jaworski, & MacInnis 1986): (1) functional benefits (e.g., Max and Erma’s restaurant provides me with food when I am hungry), (2) experiential benefits (e.g., Max and Erma’s restaurant provides me with very tasty food in a great atmosphere), (3) symbolic benefits (Marx and Erma’s restaurant is the place to be!). At certain times, the benefit may be more symbolic than functional and the benefit of using one given brand is more psychological than utilitarian.
Brand attitudes are the most complex of the brand associations. According to Keller (1993), brand-attitude associations can be perceived from different perspectives. Brand-attitude associations can be related to beliefs about product-related attributes and the functional and experiential benefits, consistent with work on perceived quality (Zeithaml, 1988). Keller further proposes that brand-attitude associations can also be related to beliefs about non-product related attributes and symbolic benefits (Rossiter & Percy, 1987), consistent with the functional theory of attitudes (Katz, 1960; Lutz, 1991), which maintains that attitudes can serve a "value-expressive" function by allowing individuals to express their self-concepts.

The constructs Keller (1993, 1998) presented in his model have generally been supported by empirical evidence and improve the understanding of the relationship between brands and consumer. Despite the positive contribution of this model to the
marketing and branding literature, not all of it has been empirically tested. Research within this area has included studies that examine the relationship between brand perception and purchase intention (Laroche & Brisoux, 1989; Cobb-Walgren & Mohr, 1998; Laroche & Parsa, 1999), the relationship between self-perception and brand image (Fournier, 1998), marketing activities and brand perceptions (Roth & Romeo, 1992), brand extension (Jiang, Dev & Rao, 2002), and consumer perception of brand extensions (Pitta & Katsanis, 1995). In the restaurant context, there is a need to better understand the relationship between consumers and brands by examining the various dimensions within Keller’s (1998) model. Also, as indicated earlier, the characteristics of the goods and services industries differ. Restaurants are predominantly service products. Much of Keller’s model has been tested in goods-dominated industries. It is not clear that the model could serve both goods and services management.

**Berry’s Categorization of Brand Associations**

Berry also presented a model that addresses categories of brand associations. In Berry’s (2000) model, services equity is preceded by brand-association categories. This model, developed after an analysis of 14 successful service companies, is presented below.
One conclusion that can be drawn from this model is that consumer brand associations can be categorized into: company-presented brand, external brand communications, and associations of brand experience. The presented brand is the company’s controlled communication of its identity through advertising, appearance of service employees, the company logo, and so on. This is what a company conceptualizes and disseminates (Berry, 2000). Effective presentation leads to brand awareness.

The external brand communication represents the information the consumers receive and disseminate about a company and its services. This is beyond the control of the service company. Examples include word of mouth and publicity. They result from customer awareness or contact with a given company.

Brand meaning refers to the customer perception of the brand. It is the customer’s impression of the brand and its associations. Brand meaning is what immediately comes to the consumers’ minds when one mentions a brand such as Max and Erma’s. Consumers have different perceptions of Max and Erma’s versus Hard-Rock Café restaurants.
This model takes into account the human element of services and the importance of the service experience in services-dominated brands. This aspect is not explicitly expressed in goods-based branding models like that of Keller (1993, 1998). The model depicts the relationships among the principle components of a services brand: the presented brand, brand awareness, external brand communication, brand meaning, customer experience, and brand equity. To understand the strength of these associations or antecedents of services-brand equity, the model indicates primary influences with solid lines and secondary (less powerful) influences with broken lines. Therefore, according to Berry (2000), though presented brand and external communication can lead to brand meaning, brand experience plays a greater role in the creation of brand meaning in the service context. The implication for marketers of restaurants is that there is a need to focus on the customer experience and, therefore, the way employees provide service, because in service interaction employees play an important role in determining consumer perception of brands.

Franzen and Bouwman: Categorization of Brand Associations

Franzen and Bouwman (2001) present a wide variety of brand association categories. These authors’ categories, though broad, are similar to those presented by Aaker (1991). In their categorization of brand associations, Franzen and Bouwman take a proactive position, cautioning that each category contains debatable decisions. Their categorization includes: brand signs, the category of provenance or history, product-related brand associations/meaning, situational meaning, symbolic meaning, associations
of perceived quality, perceived price, presentation and associations of advertising and other communication means. The details of this scheme are found in Appendix D.

**Aaker’s Categorization of Brand Associations**

Aaker’s (1991) categorization of brand associations suggests that only those brand associations that affect the buying behavior of the consumers will interest managers. For example, weight gain is a concern for a majority of the population. Managers, therefore, have to balance the communication between the taste of food and what is on the menu, while at the same time taking into account consumer concerns such as weight consciousness. Product attributes and customer benefits are the more important classes of brand associations, even though others are important depending on the context. For example, there are brand associations that express lifestyle, social positions and even professional roles (for details, see Aaker, 1991). These are presented in the figure below:

![Figure 7: Categories of Brand Associations (Aaker, 1991)](image-url)
Summary

The literature defines branding and brands from a memory perspective. Defining brands and branding from a memory perspective presents a picture of the role of brand associations in understanding consumer perceptions towards various brands. One of the most notable outcomes of this literature is the definition of the term “brand(s).” To many, a brand is perceived as name, logo or identifier (AMA, 1968; Keller, 1993). But, given that marketers are interested in examining brands and their associative meanings, this type of definition is quite limiting. Unless examined from a memory perspective, the definitions of the term brand do not allow an understanding of brand associations.

Furthermore, the literature reveals brand can not only be applied suitably to products and services, but also to businesses, people and even places. Describing brands in terms of mental links implies that all kinds of things are associated with brands in the consumer’s memory. Describing brand associations as mental links reveals the analogous representation and symbolic meaning in the memory of the consumer, which are made with the brands on the basis of direct or indirect experience. The representation of consumer brand associations from a “connectionists” point of view allows for sounds, images, tastes and smells to give a brand meaning, thus, what a brand means and stands for becomes clear to the consumer through interconnection (Henderson, Iacobucci, & Calder, 1998; Franzen and Bouwman, 2001).

Even though the capacity of consumers to express their brand associations is limited (Franzen & Bouwman, 2001), language is an important way of communicating brand meanings or the associations that consumers hold in memory on a visual, auditory
and symbolic basis. Delving into the consumer memory to collect this kind of information is a desirable method. One recommended (Keller, 2003) way to uncover these brand associations stored in the consumer memory is through the use of qualitative research or unstructured forms of measurement, since they allow consumers to express their perceptions. Rather than approach these types of studies and research with predetermined theories, it is recommended that consumers be allowed to express freely their perceptions and, therefore, brand associations (McDowell, 2004).

Free association is the simplest and most powerful of these qualitative methods that can be used to collect data (Keller, 2003). In free association, the consumers are presented with a cue and asked to express what comes to their mind in connection with the cue provided. For example, questions such as: “What comes to your mind when you think of McDonald’s?” or “What does the name McDonald’s mean to you?” The purpose is to identify a range of possible brand associations that the consumer has in memory. These measures are desirable in understanding the brand image, position and possible future of the brand extension (McDowell, 2004).

To be able to understand what brands mean to consumers, the following chapter discusses the methodology for the study. First, it provides an overview and justification for the use of multi-method in the study of consumer-brand associations. This is followed by a description of Study I, which is qualitative in nature and relies on the elicitation of consumer-brand associations depicted by the associative networks model. The spreading activation paradigm provides the theoretical underpinning for consumer retrieval of the information when provided with certain cues. For example, when provided with a
situation that evokes a consumer’s memory of a focal brand, the network retrieves the information in memory linked to that particular brand.

The use of association techniques to elicit consumer-brand associations is desirable because a proportion of consumer perceptions are acquired, then stored subconsciously, and cannot be truly understood by mere observation (Zaltman, 1997).
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Overview

According to Thompson, Locander & Pollio (1989), the dominant paradigm in consumer research is logical positivism (or modern empiricism). The implications of this methodology have been discussed widely (Hirschman, 1986; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1992; Peter & Olson, 1989). Positivism has an epistemological focus and therefore seeks to determine the truth value of statements (Popper, 1942 as quoted in Thompson et al., 1989). Thompson et al. (1989) further suggest that epistemology operates within the global rubrics of “Cartesianism” or “rationalism” (Giorgi et al., 1983; Pollio, 1982) which assume that reality must be deduced and then rendered in mathematical terms (Zaner, 1970). This legacy of Cartesianism affects the way consumer research is done at present.

However, over the last decade and a half there has been an increasing debate over the application of quantitative methods in the field of consumer behavior. In his essay, “Studies in the New Consumer Behavior,” Russel (1995) drew attention to the fact that alternative perspectives in consumer research have emerged since the 1980’s. It could therefore be argued that the traditional perspectives of consumer research, especially
those with an emphasis on quantitative approach, are being challenged (Goulding, 1998).
Furthermore, it is also apparent that postmodern methods are gaining popularity in
consumer research, representing a deviation from the traditional positivist paradigms that
have dominated the field since the 1950’s (Goulding, 1998). But, like any other departure
from the existent paradigm, or what Kuhn (1970) referred to as a paradigm shift, the
postmodern methodologies have been met with resistance, criticism and defense (Hunt,

Nonetheless, qualitative methodologies are definitely gaining more support.
These authors argue that objectivity, as depicted by positivists, distances itself from the
consumer. These researchers advocate introspection on the part of the researcher.
McQuarrie & McIntyre (1990) argue that researchers should adopt a phenomenological
position in consumer research. Holbrook & O’Shaughnessy (1988) and Holbrook &
Hirschman (1993) take qualitative measures a step further by illustrating the potential for
the use of hermeneutics and semiotics in consumer research. Venkatesh (1992) and
Brown (1995), who support the postmodern approach to consumer research, also support
a departure from the positivist approach to consumer research. In fact, Holbrook &
Hirshman (1993) indicate that scholars involved in humanities are human and those
involved in social sciences are social. One interpretation of this statement is that
researchers should adopt more humanistic methodologies and approaches to studying
consumers. Firat & Venkatesh’s (1995) work is a useful illustration, as they suggest that
modernism, which positivism, objectivity and scientific procedures are a part of, “……
has marginalized the life world… modernism they argue reduces the world into a simple
dichotomous categorization of producer/consumer, female/male etc….postmodernism (as does interpretivism) regards these dichotomies as unsuccessful historical attempts to legitimize partial truths.”

For the purpose of gathering data and information, this research chose not to become enmeshed in the debate about the scientific merits of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, but did what many scholars have done: Like McDowell (2004) merged the two paradigms. Gunter (2000) asserted that researchers are increasingly attempting to develop scripts that combine both the interpretive sensitivity with systematic coding (McDowell, 2004). Many studies take a “hybrid” approach, capitalizing on the advantage of both paradigms. The current study is an attempt of this kind. Satlow (1989) asserts that marketers are becoming convinced that qualitative research can contribute significantly to an optimization of their marketing efforts.

The suitability of the qualitative method in Study I is dictated by the research question: “What dimensions of restaurant brand associations are identified by consumers?” The question requires a descriptive answer rather than a quantititative study. The intention is to understand the phenomenon of brand associations from a consumer perspective, rather than attempting to control or predict what it is, or to explicate its meaning to the consumer.

To this end, this research takes a multi-method approach or triangulation (Smith, 1975) to the study of consumer behavior. To understand restaurant brands and consumer perceptions of restaurants, this study examines what the restaurant brands mean or represent to consumers. According to branding literature, brand meaning is determined by the associations that a consumer makes with the brand (Berry, 2000; de Chernatony &
McDonald, 1998; Keller, 1993; Aaker, 1991). The current research utilizes this principle to learn more about consumers’ associations of restaurant branding. Study I takes a step in qualitatively and quantitatively identifying consumer ideas through free associations and in-depth interviews about the associations consumers make with restaurant brands. The findings of Study I provide the basis for the empirical testing in the subsequent chapters.

Although there is a considerable amount of literature on brand associations for consumer products, branding in the hospitality and particularly the restaurant context has not extensively attempted to develop a two-dimensional approach to assess restaurant brands. This being an exploratory research project, pure quantitative methods are not appropriate at this stage, since they utilize inferential statistics that emphasize rigid, predetermined categories and coding techniques, as opposed to the qualitative methods that focus on inference. The advantage of a qualitative approach is that it allows new concepts to emerge from open-ended questioning (McDowell, 2004). In addition, some advocates of qualitative research argue that it provides a thicker or richer description that can seldom be achieved through quantitative means (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988; Lindlof, 1995).

**Study I**

In Study I, a phenomenological approach utilizing the free-association technique (Keller, 2003a) was selected. A phenomenological method approaches research from the perspective that human behavior is not as easily measured as phenomena in the natural sciences. It holds that human motivation is shaped by factors that are not always
observable, such as inner thought processes, so that it is not easy to generalize on, for example, the consumer motivations from the observation of behavior alone (Lester, 1999 & Moustakas, 1994). Asking and allowing consumers to express themselves provides more reliable data and information for inference. Furthermore, the meaning of events, places and things do not always have the same meaning for every individual. Some shared events mean different things to different people, and consumers interpret situations in unique ways. In the consumer literature, the use of qualitative research has been advocated by Holbrook, (1987) Holbrook & O’Shaughnessy (1988), and Ozanne & Hudson (1989).

Phenomenological approaches are particularly concerned with understanding behavior from the participants’ own subjective frames of reference (Giorgi, 1989b). Phenomenological research methods are chosen, therefore, to try and describe, translate, explain and interpret events from the perspectives of the people who are the subject of this research. Thus, the primary objective of Study I is to examine brand associations consumers develop towards brands through a free-association test that utilizes the association network theoretical paradigm. Structured and unstructured interviews are utilized in data collection.

Study Participants

A purposeful sampling process was utilized so that people who had the experience with these segments of the restaurant industry were interviewed. The respondents included 6 part time MBA students at a private university in the Midwest, 3 faculty members (2 at a large university), 4 staff members (from 2 different universities), 3
undergraduate students, 3 graduate students, and 3 people from the university neighborhood intercepted at the coffee shop. Twenty-two study participants for the in-depth interviews and free associations exercise were recruited and interviewed over four days through the “mall intercept method (Gates & Solomon, 1982; Bush & Parasuraman, 1985).” As a compensation for their time, the respondents received either a large candy or a cup of coffee (for those who were interviewed at the coffee shop). All the respondents were given the option of taking home a ticket to be entered into a draw. The lucky ones win one of the prizes on the recruitment letter (see Appendix A).

Interview results of two interview participants were regarded as unusable and discarded because the participants did not identify clearly the fine dining restaurants. The interviewees had a wide range of demographics in terms of occupation/employment status, ranging from unemployed to students, and from faculty to business owners. The interviewees whose responses were utilized consisted of 11 males and 9 females, with an age range of 20 to over 45 years old. The composition of the sample that was interviewed is presented on the Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GENDER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 – 24 years</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 – 30 years</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;31 years</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Demographics of Interviewees
Pretests

Pre-testing and expert review of the instrument was conducted to develop the interview material and questions. A pretesting sample was drawn from the universe of people that were eventually considered for the study.

The purpose of pretesting was to determine that: (1) the right questions were being asked to obtain the needed information, (2) the contents or subject matter of each question were relevant to the respondent and the respondent had the knowledge to answer the question, and (3) the wording and procedures used in conducting the interviews were adequate to ensure that valid and reliable results were obtained.

Research (Cannell et al., 1989) has shown the following to be among the types of problems that arise with survey questions:

- Difficulties in asking the question because of complex sentence structure, tongue twisters, or words that are difficult to pronounce;
- Difficulties in comprehending the question because of difficult vocabulary, complex sentence structure, or lack of specificity about information or the form of information that is needed;
- Lack of common understanding of terms or concepts in the question, because they are interpreted differently by respondents or they are interpreted differently from what the interview designer intends; and
- Difficulties in answering the question because the information is not accessible or unavailable to the respondent, to the extent that the respondent does not want to make the effort to obtain the answer.
Procedure

Study I utilized both free association and interview methods of data collection as advocated by Keller (2003a), in order to explore and identify restaurant brand associations as described by consumers. Each of the respondents in Study I was first exposed to a scenario followed by free response questions, after which they were interviewed. Each of the respondents was allocated one scenario, thus constituting a “Between groups research design” (a design that uses a separate sample of individuals for each condition). The assumption of between groups research design was met because the data come from the same sample of people and exactly the same dependent variable was being measured in each study condition.

There were four possible scenarios (quick service/fine-dining X recommend/ not recommend) and interviews (see Appendices B and C for the interview protocol). Five respondents were allocated to each scenario and interview. Using five respondents per scenario for the free-association test and interviews is acceptable (GAO/PEMD, 2001). The use of 20 interviewees follows the work of Hastings & Perry (2000) who conducted nine interviews in their study of service exporters. Twenty interviews are considered adequate to provide a convergence (O’Cass & Grace, 2003). In addition, the results of the interviews were intended as a precursor to a larger study, therefore the method of interviews and free associations was accepted as appropriate for data collection. Furthermore, the purpose of this study was to elicit information regarding dimensions of restaurant brands from consumers/respondents. The use of four scenarios and different respondents for each scenario reduces the Multiple Treatment Interference effect (when
participants receive more than one treatment, the effect of prior treatment can affect or interact with later treatments, limiting generalizability).

After reading the recruitment letter to the participants again, the respondents were informed that the interview responses would be written down for future reference. On receiving their consent, the researcher explained the process of the free-recall exercise as well as the interview process. The participants were told that they would engage in a reading and listing exercise followed by an interview. The free-recall test was administered before the interview to ensure that the consumers had an unaided brand recall. Unaided brand recall is the consumer’s ability to retrieve a brand when only given the product category (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993). The combination of methods has been previously advocated by a number of researchers (Denzin, 1978; Campbell & Fiske, 1959) and has been used successfully by McDowell (2004) to examine consumer perception toward media brand equity. In this study, a free-association test and interviews were utilized to collect data.

The respondents were assured that the researcher was interested only in their honest response, and that there was no right or wrong answer. Further, the respondents were informed that the data and information collected would remain confidential and used only for the purpose of this particular study. The researcher further told the participants that they were not required to write their names or identity anywhere on the response sheets, and that if they had any concern regarding the whole process, they were at liberty to seek clarification. The respondents were also reminded that they were under no obligation to answer all the questions, especially if they were not comfortable. At the
end of the interview process, the respondents were offered the opportunity to take a ticket whose number would be entered in a draw from which six respondents would win a prize listed on the recruitment script (see Appendix A). In addition, every participant had a chance to get a free cup of coffee or candy, depending on where the interview took place.

**Interview Process**

The questions that followed the scenarios assessed the consumers’ free association of restaurant brands. For both the quick service and fine dining scenarios, the questions asked the respondents to list a restaurant they would highly recommend. This was followed by asking the interviewees what comes to their mind when they think of this particular restaurant. The respondents were asked to use statements, words, expressions, and even diagrams to illustrate what came to their mind anytime they thought about this restaurant—virtually anything was an acceptable response (a free association exercise). The exercise also asked the respondents to list what they liked about this restaurant, as well as what they did not like. The purpose of this question was twofold: 1) to make consumers think and list more restaurant brand associations and 2) to collect the positive and negative associations from a consumer’s point of view. Asking the respondents what they do not like elicits more responses about the negative features they associate with the restaurants.

The next question concerned the source of the brand association (“How did you know so much about this restaurant?”). The aim of this question was to establish the source of consumer-brand associations. The last two questions of the scenario concerned
the patronage (for those who have not been) and re-patronage of the restaurants. Thus the respondents were asked to give the most important reason and least important reason they would consider when selecting a restaurant for this particular meal. The interviewees that responded to the “least recommended” restaurant also responded to similar questions but with an altered organization (see Appendix C). There was no time restriction in collecting information.

After completing the scenario exercise, interviews were carried out on a one-to-one basis, between the respondents and the researcher. During the interview, the respondents were instructed to think about either the highly recommended/not highly recommended restaurant. Using the projective techniques, the participants responded to various questions. Projective techniques allow researchers and decision-makers to delve beyond people's surface cognitions or rational explanations for their attitudes or behavior. This broad heading involves a wide range of tools and techniques in which respondents project their subjective or true opinions and beliefs onto other people or even objects (Day, 1989).

This technique allows the respondent to project their personality, attitude, opinions, and self-concept toward a given ambiguous and unstructured stimulus, object or situation. The projection aims at giving the situation some structure (Adams & Schvaneveldt, 1985; Webb, 1992, p.113). Projective techniques are meant to uncover the innermost thoughts and feelings of a person, those aspects that are particular to the individual and, thus, to uncover a person’s individuality (Kline, 1983, p.350). Projective techniques are also used to discover a person’s characteristic modes of perceiving his or her world and how he or she tries to behave in it (Chaplin in Sampson, 1986, p.41). In
consumer research, projective techniques involve the use of stimuli that range from structured (clear and definite) at one extreme to very ambiguous (unstructured) at the other. Some examples of projective techniques in consumer research include drawing completion, word association, and sentence completion (Janda, 1998, p. 289-301; Crumbaugh, 1990, p.5).

Using sentence completion as a technique, participants were asked leading questions and provided with sentences for completion and expression. The interview went through what was contained in the scenario. Reviewing the scenario and the questions again ensured that the respondents understood the questions as they were intended. Finally, the respondents provided answers to demographic questions (age, education levels, occupation/employment, and gender).

Despite the disadvantages associated with the use of projective techniques, it provides a richness and accuracy of information (Burns & Lennon, 1993; Wagner, 1995). These techniques can make a significant contribution to research if the research is concerned with beliefs, values, personality or other aspects related to individual, their unique cognitions, and behavior (Kassarjian, 1974, p. 3-77).

During the interview, several restaurant brand names were suggested and discussed either positively or negatively. Names like Burger King, McDonald’s, Wendy’s, Crane, The Place M, and Lindey’s came up during the interview. The results of the interviews provided data for Study I. These responses were analyzed using content-analysis techniques. The following section presents data analysis and some categorized narratives from the consumer interviews.
Data Analysis: Study I

The core of qualitative analysis are three related processes: describing phenomena, classifying it, and seeing how the concepts are interconnected. Dey (1993) draws these as a circular process to show that they interconnect each other. Because qualitative analysis is iterative, Dey also represents them by an iterative spiral.

The first step in qualitative analysis is to develop a thorough and comprehensive description of the phenomenon under study. Geertz (1973) and Denzin (1978) call this ‘thick’ description. If ‘thin’ description merely states ‘facts,’ a ‘thick’ description includes information about the context of an act, the intentions and meanings that organize action, and its subsequent evolution (Denzin, 1978). Thus description encompasses the contexts of action, the intentions of actor, and the process in which action is embedded.

Classification is the second process in qualitative data analysis. Without classifying the data, one has no way of knowing what it is that one is analyzing. One also cannot make meaningful comparisons between different bits of data. Classifying the data is an integral part of the analysis. Moreover, according to Denzin (1978), classification provides the conceptual foundations upon which interpretation and explanation are based.

Alvin Toffler (in Coveney & Highfield, 1991) noted that: “we are so good at dissecting data that we often forget how to put the pieces back together again.” This problem will not arise if description and classification are not ends in themselves but
instead serve an overriding purpose that is to produce an account for analysis. For that purpose Toffler recommends making connections among the building blocks of a given analysis.

Ratcliff (2001) summarized the following methods of qualitative analysis as presented by various researchers: Typology, Taxonomy, Content Comparison, Analysis Comparison, Logical Analysis/Matrix Analysis, Metaphoric Analysis, Domain/Hermeneutical Analysis, Discourse, Semiotics, Content Analysis, Phenomenology, Heuristic Analysis, and Narrative Analysis.

Of these options, Content Analysis was selected and is discussed below. Content analysis is a qualitative method for analyzing the communication of people and organizations. Content analysis is a procedure for the categorization of verbal or behavioral data, for the purpose of classification, summarization and tabulation. Content analysis can be either descriptive or interpretive. Further definitions of content analysis include: a systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding (Berelson, 1952; GAO, 1996; Krippendorff, 1980; Weber, 1990). Holsti (1969) offers a broad definition of content analysis as, "any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages" (p. 14). Under Holsti’s definition, the technique of content analysis is not restricted to the domain of textual analysis, but may be applied to other areas such as coding student drawings (Wheelock, Haney, & Bebell, 2000), or coding of actions observed in videotaped studies (Stigler, Gonzales, Kawanaka, Knoll, & Serrano, 1999). In order to allow for replication, however, the technique can only be applied to data that are durable.
Content analysis enables researchers to sift systematically through large volumes of data with relative ease (GAO, 1996). It can be a useful technique for allowing us to discover and describe the focus of individual, group, institutional, or social attention (Weber, 1990). It also allows inferences to be made, which can then be substantiated using other methods of data collection. Krippendorff (1980) notes that “much content analysis research is motivated by the search for techniques to infer from symbolic data what would be either too costly, no longer possible, or too obtrusive by the use of other techniques” (p. 51).

The written responses provided the necessary database for further research. During the coding process, two raters were used (the researcher and one other volunteer graduate student). In the process, the two coders independently reviewed the material and came up with words that formed the checklist. After creating a checklist, the two coders compared notes. At this point, the coders checked if there were common words on the lists. Merging of the lists followed, which formed a common list of words that were coded independently. During this time, the two coders discussed the precautions in coding. These precautions included the need to watch out for words that have multiple meanings, as well as when the multiple meanings or expressions have a common meaning/theme. For example, one respondent gave the following answer: “……[that] restaurant reminds me of greasy!” Further questioning revealed that this meant “bad food.” Also, the use of words such as waiter/server/employee needed to be addressed with caution. Coding was done using emergent coding (Haney, Russell, Gulek, & Fierros (1998) with an intercoder kappa coefficient of K= 0.62 which is considered substantial (Landis & Koch, 1977).
The first step was to classify or categorize the data collected. Associations that included related thoughts were identified. After several iterations through the data, each of the related thoughts was organized into categories of brand associations. The following is the classification of the data obtained from the question: “What dimensions of the restaurant brands are identified by consumers?”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>QS 1</th>
<th>QS 2</th>
<th>QS 3</th>
<th>QS 4</th>
<th>QS 5</th>
<th>QS 6</th>
<th>QS 7</th>
<th>QS 8</th>
<th>QS 9</th>
<th>QS 10</th>
<th>Total Mentioned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Esteem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relations</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logos/Colors</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Menu Variety</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atmosphere</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee Appearance</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Quality</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee Competence</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Interviewee Responses to Brand Dimensions of the Quick Service Restaurants
After the content analysis, a categorization of the data followed. In classifying and categorizing, extant literature was sought. Various models that have addressed brand associations were sought to provide a guideline for categorization. The Keller (1993 and 1998) models were examined for fit. Keller’s models did not provide a basis for a complete data categorization for various reasons: Keller’s models do not address two...
aspects in the data: the service interaction (the contact between service provider and consumer) expressed in the restaurant context, and the brand associations of convenience/reliability found in the data.

The next framework examined as a basis of classification was Berry’s model (2000). Berry’s model specifically examines the relationship between the principal components of branding. These components are: Presented Product/Brand, Brand Awareness, Brand Meaning, Customer Experience, Brand Equity and Brand Communication. This model does not address price. As indicated, Presented Brand and Brand Experience were useful components in categorizing the data. According to Berry (2000), the presented brand is the company’s controlled communication of its identity and purposes through its advertising, service facilities and appearance of service providers. The name, logos and visual presentation of the firm fall in this category. In other words, this is the message a company conceptualizes and disseminates. Thus, the products the company carries are found within the presented brand or product. The customer experience is what the consumer takes away from most service-based brands organizations. This includes the service provider interaction and the convenience experienced by consumers. The other aspect that the respondents perceived was the ease of flow along the total system. This was categorized as Systems Organization and included “convenience” and “efficiency.”

The other models examined to provide a basis for categorization included those of Aaker, (1991) and Franzen & Bouwman (2001). These two models conceptualize consumer brand associations quite similarly. On the other hand, the two models are elaborate and perceive brand associations from very diverse perspectives. They are more
flexible as a means of categorization. These models, however, have a shortcoming: they do not explicitly address the service interaction and systems organizations.

As can be deduced, all of these models, except Berry’s (2000), were developed on the basis of tangible goods. But a greater part of the restaurant product is comprised of service, which helps to explain the observed discrepancy in these models’ consumer-brand associations and the associations identified in Study I. Following the categorization guidelines, the following categories of consumers’ restaurant brand associations were developed.

These categories are described below and schematically presented in (Figure 8)

i)  *Brand-Signs Category*: Logos and Colors

ii)  *Product-Related Category*: Food Quality, Menu Variety, Facilities/Atmosphere

iii)  *Perceived Price*: Absolute and Relative, Price/Value Ratio

iv)  *Symbolic Associations*: Impressive Values such as Self Esteem

v)  *Provenance*: (Image of company) Employee Presentation

vi)  *Systems Organization*: Convenience, Consistency

vii)  *Service Interaction*: Employee Competence, Customer Relations
The following section presents some of the interviewee/consumer responses to the question: “What comes to your mind when you think about the restaurant……?”
i) Brand Signs

a) Symbols and Colors

Some respondents listed colors and the logos for brand associations. This group of associations also involved both negative and positive comments. The respondents who listed the symbols and logos were more negative and their comments included: “loud colors” “annoying symbols,” “environmentally hazardous advertisements,”

The following comments were classified under advertisements (logos and colors): “deceptive” and ‘glaring” are some of the negative associations listed and discussed by the respondents. The examples below show the consumer associations revealed during the interview sessions.

The positive responses included: “unique,” and “creative.”

“This restaurant has very unique and creative way of reaching its clientele.”

“I have never believed that one could lose so much weight by eating food from a particular restaurant. We are being deceived.”

b) Atmosphere

The descriptions in this category focused on the facilities. Marketing literature, especially retailing, has emphasized the significance of environment/atmospherics in consumer behavior and response (Berry, 2000; Bitner, 1992). The associations included many aspects such as lighting, the arrangement of furniture, noise levels, temperatures, and cleanliness of the restaurant. Specifically, the comments included; “the bathrooms have wet floors,” “always have loud music,” “extremely squeezed and stuffy”. The following statements were captured during the interview:
“One reason I like this restaurant is because it has a lot of space between tables and chairs. Whenever I go to this restaurant, I feel like I have some freedom. I can move freely without rubbing against other customers. I also feel like I have some breathing space. Some restaurants are so squeezed that they are stuffy.”

“This restaurant has a tendency to play very loud music. I did not understand if this was their way of inviting their clientele. If it is, I am not one of theirs. I did myself a favor and stopped patronizing this restaurant.”

### ii) Product Related Associations

**Menu and Product Variety**

The interviewees addressed issues of products and product varieties carried by the restaurants. The respondents listed and discussed the tangible (the food) as well as the intangible products (nutrition information provided). The associations ranged from extremely negative to very positive. The associations included: “…now made with real beef! What were they made of before?” “Extremely greasy and smelly” “food at this restaurant is so little, the portions are extremely inadequate” “overcooked food”.

“I have never ceased receiving surprises. Every time I visit this restaurant, there is a sweet surprise. The chef is full of new food ideas. I will never stop eating at this restaurant”

However, some comments were negative. Negative listings included comments such as: “good variety of food” “always something new and exciting on the menu” “their daily special is prepared well and the quantities are reasonable.”

“This restaurant promotes their food as 'nutritious', but the reality is that it is junk food - high in fat, sugar and salt, and low in fibre and vitamins. A diet of this type is linked with a greater risk of heart disease, cancer, diabetes and other diseases. I believe that their food also contains many chemical additives and preservatives some of which may cause ill-health, and hyperactivity in children.”

“In this restaurant, besides the long wait time, the food portions are completely inadequate. One has to get a double portion to be satisfied.”
“On our second visit to this restaurant, we found out that we had all along been duped. The food is supposed to be authentic and home made. Our discovery was nothing near these claims. Most of the food was actually purchased pre-made. I felt cheated and I will never return.”

iii) Perceived Price

Relative Price and Price/Value Ratio

Consumers usually do not know the exact cost of the brands, but have an idea whether a brand is more expensive or cheaper than its competitor (Frazen and Bouwman, 2001). The perceived relative price is important because consumers often base their perceptual structure of a category on it. Consumers classify brands into several price brackets, ranging from “very cheap” to “very expensive.” The classification of a product into one of the price brackets influences the consideration set as well as the possible inclusion of it. For example, consumers classify hotels into the following price brackets:

1. Budget: Motel 6
2. Economy: Days Inn, Comfort
3. Mid-range: Holiday Inn, Ramada
4. Luxury: Marriot, Clarion
5. Super Luxury: Hyatt Regency
6. Luxury Suites: Embassy Suites, Guest Quarters….

When consumers can not compare the brands with each other very easily maybe as a result of lack of experience, the perceived relative price of a brand functions as an indicator of quality.
With regard to this research, all the interviewees who responded to the quick service protocol mentioned price as a variable thus, 100% of the respondents to this category did agree that price was an important factor. Of the fine restaurant respondents, only three mentioned price association. Price was mentioned both positively and negatively

iv) Provenance

Employee Appearance

Many respondents addressed this restaurant brand association. Again, the associations were both negative and positive. The influence of employee appearance has featured in the retailing literature (Berry and Parasuraman, 1991). According to Berry and Parasuraman, 1991; Lampo, 2001), the service marketer has an important challenge of getting over the poor image that employee appearance can create. Service being intangible the focus is on developing and presenting tangible evidence that indicates efficiency and innovativeness. The image of efficiency is built through use of every contact point with the customer; and employee appearance and employee behavior and presentation are important aspects. The following statements represent what was captured during the interview:

“I like visiting this restaurant over the summer. I really like their uniform. The employees always look so neat and tidy in their checked shirts and shorts”

The negative comments included:
“The management should enforce their general policy concerning dress and appearance. The server had colored his hair with all the colors you could think of. He looked awful”
“In this one restaurant, I suspect that the server had just smoked a cigarette and tried to camouflage it with a deodorant. When she came to take my order the combination of the two was definitely irritating and intolerable. When I got home, I wrote a letter to management requesting that they restrict employee smoking till the end of their shift.”

v) **Service Interaction/ Service Related Brand Associations**

This group of associations addressed the service process with a focus on the relationship between employees and the consumers and the competence of employees during service provision, this category was mentioned by every interviewee to the fine dining sector. The employee associations as depicted by the respondents were both negative and positive. These findings illustrate the importance of employee related brand associations in service brands and consumer satisfaction. These findings too, support theoretical literature regarding the importance of people in service provision. One of the characteristics of services in the hospitality industry is the labor intensity. Thus, these results indicate how important employee related associations are in the consumer’s mind. The employee related associations were divided into: Customer relations and employee competence.

a) **Customer Relations**

All the respondents had something to say about customer relations. Under this group of brand associations, the respondents talked about both the negative and positive associations. In the listing and during the interview, the respondents talked about: “helpful employees”, “smiling and enthusiastic,” “respectful” “rude and crude,”
“sarcastic,” “obnoxious,” “intimidating,” “know me by name,” “always remember me”
“treat me well”. The following are expressions from the interview:

“The employees are not only rude, but are sarcastic too, how disgusting!”

“The employees at this restaurant are cool. They are my friends. We have
developed a very interesting relationship. I frequent this restaurant and every time
they see me, they not only call me by name, they are also very friendly. I have
never seen (two names of the employees) annoyed and are always very spirited”

b) Employee Competence

This group of associations described the ability of the employees to perform their
jobs well. This was expressed by both the respondents of the fine dining and quick
service scenarios. The listings and interviews had expressions such as: “the employees
know their jobs well,” “I suppose management needs to either train, retrain or hire
qualified employees.” In the interviews, the following was expressed

“I called this restaurant I frequently visit to make a reservation for an evening
meal. On this day, the person over the phone was very helpful. I received all
the details including the table that was going to be reserved. This was a good
surprise.”

“The server was either new or will never learn the menu. This particular one
could not remember a single menu item.”

vi) Systems Organization Brand Associations

Systems organization is another group of brand associations the respondents
mentioned. They were classified under convenience and consistency.

a) Convenience

On the free association listing and during the in-depth interview, the respondents
mentioned the significance of convenience. The respondents mentioned the convenience
in location (“this restaurant is right below my apartment, I see it every time I walk in and out of my apartment, it’s great too!”). Speed of service (“it always seems like I am the only one at the drive through, I get through with my order and purchase very fast.

At this particular restaurant, I have never had to wait in a long line”), time of operation (“this restaurant is open 24 hours a day”). Some of the interviewees had the following to say about convenience”

“I believe that this restaurant can not handle the demands of the quick service sector. There is no day I have not had to wait in line for more than five minutes. The credit card machines are slow and if that is not the case, then they are out of food. You are lucky if you do not hear either or both of the following- the food is cooking and will be ready in a minute or- our credit card machine is slow or down today”

b) Consistency

The interview respondents mentioned consistency in their listing and interviews. The respondents to the fine dining interview protocol mentioned the following:

“consistent,” “Service has always been to my expectation.” This aspect of service is important due to the intangible and labor intensive of the nature of services.

As mentioned in the literature review, services are characterized by heterogeneity and variability a characteristic that creates challenges to service managers in the provision of quality service.

“I do not have a problem recommending this particular restaurant to a friend who has corporate guests. All the time I have visited this restaurant, I have not only received good service, but it has also been exceptional.”
The analysis of the results in Tables 3 and 4 led to the following comparative table that examines the number of times a brand dimension was mentioned by the respondents. The comparison is between the quick service and fine dining restaurants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Encounter</th>
<th>Quick Service</th>
<th>Fine Dining</th>
<th>Combined (QSR + Fine Dining)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Relations</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Esteem</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee Competence</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Presented Product**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presented Product</th>
<th>Quick Service</th>
<th>Fine Dining</th>
<th>Combined (QSR + Fine Dining)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Quality</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Menu Variety</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logos and Color</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atmosphere/Ambience</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee Appearance</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**System Organization**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>System Organization</th>
<th>Quick Service</th>
<th>Fine Dining</th>
<th>Combined (QSR + Fine Dining)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistency</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Comparison of Interviewees Responses to the Dimensions of Restaurant Brand Associations
Figure 9: The Relationship between Categories of Brand Association (Developed from the Qualitative Study) and Consumers’ Restaurant Brand Preference
Summary

Study I addressed the first objective of the study, namely, to explore and identify dimensions of restaurant brands as described by consumers. To address this, 22 respondents completed a structured free-association listing exercise followed by interviews. Twenty interviews were considered. Two were not considered for further examination because these respondents did not identify the difference between the QSR or casual restaurants. In this exercise, the information on the types of associations consumers make with different restaurant brands was collected.

To make sense out of the interviews, transcription was carried out and analysis done using the content-analysis technique. An examination of the types of associations in the data identified several categories of brand associations. Several models were consulted to provide a basis for the categorization of the data collected. This categorization of brand associations provides the basis for the following chapters, in which conjoint studies are designed and examined to understand the importance accorded the identified brand associations during the purchase process and decision making.
Hypotheses Development and Testing

Results from Study I suggest that the importance consumers attach to different brand associations is not equal. Some brand associations are considered more important. This knowledge is important to brand management in the restaurant industry. To examine the extent to which the identified dimensions of restaurant brands are given importance in selection of restaurants, this research investigated the following questions related to Objective 2 of the research:

“To what extent are the identified restaurant dimensions prioritized in restaurant selection of QSR and fine dining restaurant?”

Examining the different unique characteristics of both QSRs and fine dining restaurants, it was predicted that these brand associations were likely to be accorded different levels of importance when considering the two types of restaurants. It is therefore important to investigate the question:

Does the relative weight accorded each of the identified brand associations depend on the restaurant type (QSR vs. Fine Dining)?

This research predicts that the unique characteristics of the different restaurant sectors (QSR vs. FDR) will influence how the associations determine brand perception. The following model, developed out of the results of the interview (see Figure 10: Categories of Brand Association Developed from the Qualitative Study) provides the associations to be included in the model of Study II. In this model, only selected non-food brand associations are included (Table 4: Comparison of Interviewees Responses to Dimensions
As a result, the following model is presented for Study II: This model provides the brand associations that are purported to have a significant influence on restaurant preference. The study attempts to measure the relative importance attributed to each one of these associations in restaurant selection.

![Conceptual Model: The Relationship between Restaurant Brand Associations, Restaurant Sector Difference, and Brand Preference]

**Fine Dining Industry**

Study I provided the motivation for Study II. According to Chase, 1981), the classification of service dominated products has been non-dynamic. This called for Bowen (1990) to undertake a study to classify services using a format that looked beyond industry boundaries (Lovelock, 1984). Even though Bowen did not specifically mention
“fine dining”, the use of “Full service” restaurant accounts for fine dining sector. Using Bowen’s (1990) classification of services, fine dining restaurants fall in “Group-1” types of services. These are services characterized by high customer contact, high customer-employee interaction, service mainly directed at people and high product customization. In services of this type, the customer and service provider interact for an extended period of time and the customer demands a high level of customization and expertise. Taking this presentation further, it can be inferred that consumers seek to satisfy various needs when using fine dining facilities. These needs go far beyond the physiological needs of hunger and thirst. Once the consumers’ needs are met, they are less likely to worry about convenience. In fact, it is not uncommon for people to drive some distance in search of a fine dining restaurant that meets their needs. It is also common for people to make reservations at a fine dining restaurant that is miles away from their place of residence. It is thus possible to argue that employee competence is the most important brand association in fine dining. This corresponds closely with what consumers seek at fine dining restaurants. At fine dining restaurants customers expect very good food, well organized service and efficiency. Thus providing excellent service should be a priority of the service provider. In the collected research, the value of good service was described by one of the respondents:

……most important is the good food that is well presented that keeps getting me back to this restaurant. When I have guests, or any one I want to wow about my taste of food, I take them to this particular restaurant. Besides, every time I am at this restaurant I feel like I am in a theatre watching a show……!
For this reason, of all the brand associations of fine dining, employee competence should be predicted as the most influential criterion of association. This is not surprising, since the results of the interviews (Study I) indicate that of the ten interviewees, nine mentioned this brand association (employee competence) either as an attracting or deterring factor. Formally, it can be stated that:

\[ H1: \text{Employee Competence is the most important brand association when determining consumer brand preference of fine dining restaurants.} \]

The employee-customer relationship is considered another important brand association in fine dining. In Study I all the interviewed respondents mentioned employee-customer relations as either an attracting or deterring association. It takes at least 1.5 hours to 3 hours for consumers to enter a fine dining restaurant, place an order, have a meal, pay their bill and leave. This is a long time, considering that during this time the consumer is constantly interacting with one or two servers. For this reason, the employees in fine dining restaurants are expected to have a pleasant demeanor, and be able to interact appropriately with the guests.

Extant literature has recognized the importance of good customer relations. As service marketing (fine dining is a service dominated product) gains increased recognition, the role of encounters between consumers and service providers to the overall success of the marketing effort is becoming better understood. The fine dining restaurant industry is characterized by person to person interaction and the recognition of this encounter and its importance is especially relevant in situations where the service
component of the total offering is a major element of the offering (Solomon, Suprenant, Czepiel, & Gutman, 1985).

Solomon et al. (1985) describe a service encounter as a face to face interaction between the buyer and the seller in a service setting. Two quotations by service marketing managers reported in Advertising Age (Knisley, 1979) highlight the managerial importance of service encounters this way:

In service business, you are dealing with something that is primarily delivered by people – to people. Your people are as much of your product in the consumers minds as many other attributes of that service. People’s performances day in day out fluctuate up and down. Therefore the level of consistency that you can count on and try to communicate to the customer is not a certain thing (Knisley 1979)

The real intangible is the human element which, with the best wills in the world most of us cannot control to anywhere the same degree that the product manager controls the formulation of beauty soap for example (Knisley, 1979 pp. 47 – 51).

The implication of these statements to the managers of service dominated products is that the dyadic interaction between consumers and service providers needs attention. The interaction occupies a central place in service provision, and affects service differentiation, quality control, delivery systems and eventually customer satisfaction (Bitner, 1990). For this reason, the service provider in the restaurant industry is expected to play the role of a marketer. To play this role effectively, these “customer contact” employees need to realize that they represent the organization, they help define the product, and they promote the product directly to the consumer (Shostack, 1977).
Extant literature in both quality service and service satisfaction affirms the importance of the quality of the customer/employee interaction in the assessment of the overall quality and/or satisfaction with services. Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, (1985) define service quality as a firm’s performance relative to the customer’s general expectations of the type of service that firms in that particular industry should perform. Through focus group interviews, they identified ten dimensions of service quality.

Several survey-based studies of consumer satisfaction also suggest that the human interaction element of service delivery is essential to the determination of customer satisfaction. A study of relationship marketing in the insurance industry found clients satisfaction with their contact person to be a significant predictor of overall satisfaction with the service and firm (Crosby & Steven, 1987). Other researchers have found the human aspect to be important in client evaluation of medical services (Brown & Schwartz, 1989) and retail outlets (Westbrook, 1981).

Despite research revealing the above findings, if the product of the fine dining restaurant does not meet the expectations of the consumer the consumer will be disappointed. Recall in the earlier discussion it was indicated that the quality of the product is dictated by the competence of the employees. Therefore, it is predicted that, even though the employee-consumer relationship is important, employee competence is more important than customer relations in fine dining. Formally, it can be hypothesized that:

*H2: Employee Competence is more important than Customer Relations in determining consumer brand preference of fine dining restaurants.*
The other association to be evaluated is “atmosphere.” Atmosphere is also referred to as “shelf-space studies,” “environmental psychology” or “servicescapes.” Kotler (1974) coined the term “atmospherics” to mean the intentional control and structuring of the environmental cues to produce specific emotional effects in the buyer that enhance his purchase probability. Atmosphere is encountered through the senses and is described in sensory terms. The main sensory channels of the atmosphere are sight, sound, accent and touch (Kotler, 1974).

Since its appearance in the marketing literature, the effect of atmospherics or physical design and décor elements on consumers has been recognized and mentioned in most marketing, retailing and organizational behavior texts (Bitner, 1992). Managers continually invest in planning, building, changing and controlling the organization’s physical surroundings, yet very few studies have compared the significance of atmospherics in relation to other variables that contribute to consumer satisfaction and brand preference. Further, managers continue to plan, build and manage an organization’s physical surrounding in an attempt to control its influence on patrons without really knowing the impact of a specific design or atmospheric changes to its users (Bitner, 1992).

According to environmental psychologists, the physical environment affects customer behavior. This affect is embodied in the S-O-R paradigm, that is, stimuli (Ss) that cause changes to people’s internal or organismic states (Os), which in turn lead to approach or avoidance responses (Rs). Environmental psychologists suggest that individuals react to places with two forms of behavior: approach and avoidance (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). Approach behaviors include all the positive behaviors that
might be directed at a particular place, such as the desire to stay, explore, work and affiliate (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). Avoidance behaviors include the opposite of approach behaviors. These can include a desire to leave, a decision not to explore, a desire not to affiliate nor work. Donovan & Rossiter (1982) found that in the retail environment approach behavior included the desire to stay longer, enjoy shopping, friendliness toward others, spending money, store exploration, and even browsing time. All these behaviors were influenced by the perception of the physical environment.

In actual service settings, the examples of environmental cues used to change behavior are numerous. It is not uncommon for bakeries in shopping malls to increase levels of fragrance in freshly-baked products to attract consumers. Research has found that fragrance has a major impact on the purchase decision and that fragrance is a ‘primary driver’ for branded items in beverages and food items (e.g., coffee) (Wolfe & Busch, 1991).

In addition to improving or deterring entry, atmospherics can also influence the consumer experience once the consumer is inside the building (Darley & Gilbert, 1985; Russell & Snodgrass, 1987). If a restaurant is built in a manner that does not allow one to find one’s way around comfortably, one is likely to be distressed because one cannot carry out the intended activities of one’s visit comfortably. Here, the atmosphere impedes the accomplishment of one’s purpose. Obviously, restaurants want to encourage the approach, not avoidance behavior. Consumers in fine dining restaurants, as indicated, spend between 1.5 to 3 hours at the restaurant, and the last thing they would ask for is an uncomfortable atmosphere.
Marketing researchers have realized that if consumers are influenced by the physical stimuli experienced at the point of purchase, then the practice of creating influential atmospheres should be important in marketing strategy for the exchange environments (Turley & Milliman, 2000). As has been noted by Bitner (1990), atmospheric planning can make the difference between a business success and failure.

The ability of the physical surrounding to influence behaviors and create an image is particularly apparent in service businesses such as restaurants, hotels, banks, retail stores, and hospitals (Baker, 1987; Bitner, 1986; Zeithaml, Parasuaraman & Berry, 1985; Booms & Bitner, 1982; Kotler, 1973). The effect of environment on the service sector is particularly strong because services are produced and consumed simultaneously. This simultaneity of the restaurant product makes atmospherics an important variable. Because of the simultaneous production and consumption, the consumer is said to be in the “factory,” and is always experiencing the total product in the firm’s physical facility (Lampo, 2001). A guest to a hotel or restaurant does not take away any service, only the experience gained while at the “production” point is taken. The place of consumption (where the service is provided) cannot be hidden and may in fact have a strong affect on the consumer’s perceptions of the service experience. Consumers look out for cues before they purchase a service and the physical environment in which services are consumed provides a rich source of such cues (Berry, Lefkowith & Clark, 1988). The physical surrounding or atmospherics can also communicate, providing cues about the image of the firm as well as acting as a moderator toward the customers’ ultimate satisfaction with the services (Bitner, 1990).
In addition to affecting individual behavior, the environment can also impact the quality of the social interaction between the customers and employees. This is ubiquitous in the restaurant industry where consumers and service providers interact in close proximity and for an extended period of time. Bennet & Bennett (1970) argue that, “all the social interaction is affected by the physical container in which it occurs.” These authors also suggest that the physical attributes of the environment affect the nature of the social interaction, both in terms of the duration of interaction and the actual progression of events. Forgas (1979) suggested that the environmental variables such as propinquity, seating arrangements, size and flexibility could define the possibilities and limits of social interaction, such as those between employees and customers.

Despite the key role played by atmospherics, it is argued that the service encounter associations (employee competence and customer relations) are more important than atmosphere.

_H 3: Customer relations association is more important than atmosphere in determining consumer brand preference of fine dining restaurants._

Convenience is not a great priority to the fine dining consumer. These consumers are willing to travel and wait in order to have a meal at their favorite restaurants. Convenience is therefore not as important an association in the fine-dining market as employee competence, customer relations and atmosphere. As one interviewee indicated:

“…..I will drive miles away to (name withheld) because I know they will have exactly what I am looking for. Good food, excellent service and incredible employees who are always happy to be with their customers…..” Therefore, formally stated:
H4: Atmosphere brand association is more important than convenience in determining consumer brand preference of fine dining restaurants.

Price was an association mentioned by only three respondents. This suggests the level of importance attached to price as an association was relatively low. For this reason, price is considered the least influential brand association in considering fine dining restaurants.

5: Price is the least important brand association when determining consumer brand preference of fine dining restaurants.

It is therefore predicted that the importance of the associations will be in the following order:

Employee Competence > Customer Relations > Atmosphere > Convenience > Price.

The hypotheses derived are all listed below:

H1: Employee competence is the most important brand association when determining consumer brand preference of fine dining restaurants.

H2: Employee Competence is more important than customer relations in determining consumer brand preference of fine dining restaurants.

H3: Customer relations association is more important than atmosphere in determining consumer brand preference of fine dining restaurants.
**H4: Atmosphere brand association is more important than convenience in determining consumer brand preference of fine dining restaurants.**

**H5: Price is the least important brand association when determining consumer brand preference of fine dining restaurants.**

**Quick Service Restaurant**

Referring to Bowen’s (1990) classification of service dominated products, quick service restaurants fall into “Group 3” of the taxonomy. Compared to Group-1 services, the Group-3 services are characterized by low customer-employee interaction, low customization of products; generally the products are standardized and produced *en-masse*. As will be presented below, these characteristics have implications to both the consumer and the marketer.

Price was the only variable that was mentioned by 100% of the interviewees that responded to the QSR interviews and free association activity. Given this type of consumer response, coupled with the prevalence of price competitions and advertisement in the media, one must infer that price is the most important brand association in QSR.

Convenience is another association in the model. Convenience is acknowledged to be increasingly important to consumers. Although most researchers and managers consider service convenience to involve more than locational proximity or hours of operation, convenience may vary with the operation.

Researchers have long noted consumers' interest in conserving time and effort (Gross & Sheth 1989; Nickols & Fox 1983; Anderson 1972). This phenomenon has encouraged the development of convenience goods and services, increased advertisers'
promotion of the time-oriented benefits of their products, and motivated consumers to use convenience as a basis for making purchase decisions (Anderson & Shugan 1991; Gross & Sheth 1989; Jacoby, Szybillo, & Berning 1976). The continuous rise in consumer demand for convenience has been attributed to socioeconomic change, technological progress, more competitive business environments, and opportunity costs that have risen with incomes (Seiders, Beny, & Gresham 2000; Berry 1979; Gross 1987; & Etgar 1978). Because the demand for convenience has become so strong, marketers must develop a more precise and complete understanding of the concept.

The QSRs have offered convenience as their competitive advantage in the food service industry. At QSRs consumers select products from a hanging menu. In the case of drive through restaurants, consumers communicate with the service providers through an intercom system and come into contact with employees only at the point of payment/product exchange (point of sale)--when the consumer receives his/her food and hands money to the cashier. This suggests intuitively that when consumers use QSR restaurants, they are seeking convenience. Convenience seems to fit the characteristics of QSR usage as well. One of the characteristics of the QSR industry is high standardization of products and processes. When products are highly standardized, consumers are likely to engage in repeated acts as they visit the restaurants frequently. For example, consumers are happy to drive to a QSR knowing exactly what they will get and how it will taste and appear in comparison with their previous experience. Thus, when using the QSR consumers are not expecting any “surprises,” instead they are seeking convenience by plying the familiar route. Convenience is therefore considered an important association, though not as important as price.
Along with convenience, employee competence is another key association. Employee competence is related to the employees’ ability to be organized, efficient and provide thorough service (Ziethaml et al. 1990). In particular, employee competency can help create positive feelings about the service encounter. Competence should be a significant factor particularly where brief, non-personal encounters predominate, because other factors such as mutual understanding, authenticity and extras, are less evident. Therefore, it is predicted that employee competence is an important association, but it is not as important as price or convenience.

Despite the minimal interaction between employees and consumers in the QSR, employees and their interaction with consumers remain a significant part of business success. Therefore this brand association needs attention in brand management. Employees, as discussed earlier, remain an integral part of marketing the organization and in the restaurant industry, form part of the “shelf” off which consumers select their product. Consumers therefore expect that the employees will offer assistance and have a positive attitude during these brief interactions. Even though employee-consumer interaction is important in the QSR, it is predicted that this brand association is not as important as the other three: price, convenience and employee competence.

One of the associations identified in Study I is atmosphere. An examination of the characteristics of the QSRs and the results of Study I suggest that atmosphere is not an important consumer brand association in the QSR. This finding is not surprising. It takes between 20 to 30 minutes for a customer to enter a QSR, place an order, eat and exit. On the extreme end, a drive-through customer may spend less than five minutes on the
premises of a restaurant. Thus, atmosphere should not be the greatest concern in the management of QSR brands.

Since consumers are purchasing a standardized product and spending the minimal time possible on the premises, it is also predicted that atmosphere is the least important brand association in the QSR (compared to price, employee competence, convenience and customer relation). Incidentally, consumers (as indicated in the interviews in Study I) are not willing to accept poorly maintained, sub-standard QSR environments. One customer, for example, described a dirty restaurant environment as a “turn off.”

It is thus suggested that the importance of the associations will be in the following order:

Price> Convenience> Employee Competence> Customer Relations> Atmosphere.

The hypotheses that follow have therefore been derived from this presentation:

\[H6: \text{Price is the most important brand association when determining consumer brand preference of quick service restaurants.}\]

\[H7: \text{Convenience is more important than employee competence in determining consumer brand preference of quick service restaurants.}\]

\[H8: \text{Employee competence is more important than customer relations in determining consumer brand preference of quick service restaurants.}\]
\textit{H9: Customer relations are more important than atmosphere in determining consumer brand preference of quick service restaurants.}

\textit{H10: Atmosphere is the least important brand association when determining consumer brand preference of quick service restaurants.}

\textbf{STUDY II}

The objective of Study II was to examine the prioritization of different brand associations identified in Study I, and to trace their influence on consumer preference for restaurant brands. To accomplish this objective, a conjoint study was designed to examine the relative weight accorded the selected brand associations found in the model of study (Figure 10). A factorial fractional design was utilized in this study. Before presenting the study, the following discussion describes the conjoint analysis technique and its applicability in consumer research. The chapter then presents the subjects of study, the stimulus material/research instrument, and the procedure of data collection.

\textbf{Conjoint Analysis}

Marketers are interested in the characteristics of products or services that are important to consumers. Conjoint analysis is a technique, originally developed in the early 60's by Luce and Tukey (1964) that helps to answer this research question. In conjoint analysis, products or services are defined on a limited number of relevant attributes or characteristics, each with a limited number of levels.
Conjoint was introduced to marketing research in the early 1970’s by Green & Rao (1971) and Johnson (1974). Since then, conjoint analysis has received a great deal of attention from both practitioners and academics. This is evident in the number of research papers using this technique that continue to get published in the journals, and its widespread usage in marketing and market research (e.g., Sawtooth). Because of this attention, conjoint analysis has grown from a single concept into a family of related techniques—many of which are referred to by several names (Malhotra, 1996). Despite the different names, all of these conjoint methods share the basic tenet of decomposing products into their component parts to analyze how decisions are made and then predict how decisions will be made in the future. That is, conjoint analysis is used to understand the importance of different product components or product features, as well as to determine how decisions are likely to be influenced by the inclusion, exclusion, or degree of that feature (Malhotra, 1996).

The following terminology is used in conjoint:

**Part-worth functions**: The *part-worth or utility* functions describe the utility the consumer/respondent attaches to a given level of each attribute.

**Relative importance weights**: The relative importance weights are estimated and indicate which attributes are important in influencing consumer choice.

**Attribute levels**: The attribute levels denote the values assumed by the attributes. For example, a service price is an attribute with many levels. Price levels could be acceptable or unacceptable, or could be described in dollar values, such as $10, $15 and $20.
**Full-profiles:** Full-profiles or complete profiles of brands are constructed in terms of all the attributes using the attribute levels specified by the design.

**Fractional factorial designs:** These are designs employed to reduce the number of stimuli to be evaluated in the full-profile approach.

**Orthogonal Arrays:** These are a special class of fractional designs that enable the efficient estimation of main effects.

This section describes briefly the general characteristics of conjoint analysis and the “classic” conjoint approaches, including the ranking and rating conjoint. For a more extensive review of these concepts see Green & Srinivasan (1978, 1990), Louviere (1988) or Carroll & Green (1995). Conjoint analysis is sometimes referred to as “trade-off” analysis because respondents in a conjoint study are forced to make trade-offs between product features. Conjoint models decompose consumer preferences. Due to their decompositional characteristic, conjoint models are able to infer the value structures that influence consumer decision making, making conjoint unique from other models, such as the Fishbein-Rosenberg class of expectancy models as well as “The new economic theory models of consumer choice” proposed by Lancaster (1971) (see Green & Srinivasan, 1978 for details).

Indeed, consumers want all of the most desirable features at the lowest price possible, whereas producers and marketers wish to maximize profits by minimizing costs. Producers and marketers thus want to provide the minimal amount of features possible or provide products that offer greater overall value than the competition. For this reason, marketers would like to examine what buyers want and assess if it can be provided in a
cost-effective manner. To understand what consumers want, marketers survey consumers.

Market researchers have the option of asking consumers direct questions such as:

“Using a scale from 1 to 7 where 1 means NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT and 7 means EXTREMELY IMPORTANT, how important is....

- service at a restaurant?
- atmosphere? pricing?” etc.

The problem with these types of surveys is that often the marketing researcher discovers that all the features have been marked as “extremely important,” with little or no discrimination among the included attributes. These type of responses do not reflect the true and typical market situation and therefore do not provide adequate answers to the marketing questions and concerns. In a true market environment, consumers do not have the option of having more of every product characteristic that is desirable, and less or none of every product characteristic that is not desirable. Rather, when purchasing products, buyers must trade-off some characteristics to get more of another. This technique, then, assumes that purchase decisions are not made based on a single factor, but on several factors considered jointly (Malhortra, 1996), thus the name Conjoint Analysis.

Conjoint technique, rather than asking directly whether a consumer prefers price to quality, presents tradeoff scenarios that infer preference from the choice of products. Such techniques are preferable because they ask consumers or respondents to make tradeoffs similar to those in the marketplace. Also, with conjoint analysis the respondent is not allowed to state that all features are equally important or desirable. When the respondents make tradeoffs among the available attributes, it is possible for a marketer to learn what the respondents truly value in making purchase decisions (Malhortra, 1996).
In conjoint, the product features (independent or predictor variables) are varied to build the product concepts.

As presented earlier, conjoint methodology uses a decompositional approach to analyze consumer preferences (Green & Srinivasan, 1978, 1990). Respondents give an overall “score” (a real score in the rating approach or an implicit score in the ranking approach) to a product profile and the researcher has to find out what the preference contributions are for each separate attribute and level. The conjoint analysis is based on the main effects analysis of variance models (Kuhfeld, 2005). Subjects provide data about the preferences for the hypothetical products defined by attribute combinations. Conjoint decomposes the data into qualitative attributes of the products. A numerical part-worth utility is computed for each level of each part-worth. Large part-worth utilities are assigned to the most preferred levels while small part-worth utilities are assigned the least preferred levels of each attribute (Malhotra, 1996).

**Input Data Set**

Conjoint requires preferences and attributes variables. According to Kuhfeld, (2005), conjoint analysis can be performed in a metric or nonmetric form. For the nonmetric data, the respondents are typically required to provide a rank-order evaluation. In a pairwise comparison, for example, the respondent ranks all the cells of each matrix in terms of their desirability. For the full-profile approach, the respondents rank all the stimuli profile. Ranking involves relative evaluation of the attribute levels. Proponents of ranking argue that such data accurately reflects the market situation and consumer behavior in the marketplace. In the metric form, the respondents provide a rating rather
than a rank. In this case the judgments are made independently. Ranking is more convenient for the respondent and easier to analyze than rating (Malhortha, 1996).

Kuhfeld argues that when all the attributes are nominal the metric conjoint analysis is a simple main-effect ANOVA with some specialized input. The attributes are the independent variables and the judgment (also known as ranking/rating or score) is the dependent variable. The *part-worth utilities* are the $\beta$’s, the parameter estimates from the ANOVA model. $\mu$ is the intercept:

$$Y_{ijk} = \mu + \beta_1 i + \beta_2 j + \beta_3 k$$

Where: $\Sigma \beta_1 = \Sigma \beta_2 = \Sigma \beta_3 = 0$: the utilities add to zero.

This model can be used to estimate the preference for restaurants that differ on several features such as price, atmosphere and even employees. The metric model is used in this research study.

This study also utilizes fractional factorial design. One concern with using the fractional factorial design is the “ecological validity” of the profile or the stimulus material. Ecological validity concerns the construction of stimulus sets when modeling choices among objects with attributes correlated in the real world (see Green, Helsen, & Shandler 1988, 1989; Steckel, DeSarbo, & Mahajan 1988; Cattin & Wittink 1982; Huber & McCann 1982; Green & Srinivisan 1978). Some of the combinations in the stimuli are completely arbitrary and not ecologically valid. The following presentation, based on the work of Moore and Holbrook (1990) regarding the issue of “ecological validity” or “environmentally correlated” attributes of the conjoint experimental stimuli, demonstrates why fractional factorial and orthogonal designs are still popular in conjoint studies.
Moore and Holbrook (1990) suggest that, in general, many product classes contain objects with environmentally-correlated attributes. For example, in the case of restaurants, food quality, service, and ambience are all positively correlated, and each is negatively related to price. Due to these real-world correlations, as presented by Moore and Holbrook, preference models based on currently available offerings (e.g., typical multi-attribute attitude or joint-space models) usually cannot disentangle the separate effects of these individual attributes. By contrast, using conjoint analysis with a set of experimental stimuli with uncorrelated attributes allows the effects of different attributes to be separated statistically depending on preference levels. However, the use of orthogonal designs in conjoint analysis does produce some implausible attribute combinations, such as high quality food, very low price and very good ambience.

For this reason, despite the nice statistical properties of orthogonal designs, Brunswik (1955) (as quoted in Moore & Holbrook (1990) argued for the use of representative stimuli. In reviewing the use of conjoint analysis by consumer researchers, Green & Srinivasan (1978) agreed with the need for stimuli representativeness. On a related theme, Huber & McCann (1982) discussed several ways that inferences among correlated attributes might affect derived importance weights. For example, consumers might simplify the decision process by disregarding some attributes and inferring their levels from those of other attributes. Further, consumers might discount or distort likely combinations. Due to the potentially harmful effects of unrepresentative stimuli, various potential solutions to this problem have been proposed. One option is to delete the implausible attribute combinations. Brunswik (1955, p. 206) (as quoted in Moore & Holbrook (1990)) considered this somewhat “artificial” and “hypocritical.” The other
alternative to taking care of these environmentally-uncorrelated stimuli is to construct a composite factor for a number of highly-correlated attributes. However, purposely confounding attributes makes it difficult to infer which of these attributes determines a person’s preferences.

As a result of this concern, several studies addressed this methodological issue. Huber & McCann (1982), DeSarbo et al. (1985), and Green et al. (1988, 1989) reported that the predictive benefits of using representative designs range from modest to non-existent. Furthermore, Levin et al. (1983) shows that using orthogonal designs is quite predictive of market behavior. Also, in a series of experiments incorporating lower environmental correlations, Moore & Holbrook (1990) show that the realism of attribute-level combinations may not be as important in practice as Brunswik (1955) feared. Thus, while respondents do notice that some profiles are less realistic than others; differences in realism do not appear to affect judgments about purchase likelihoods. Therefore, in support of Green, Helsen & Shandler (1988), Huber & McCann (1982), and Levin et al. (1983), Moore & Holbrook (1990) called for a more relaxed attitude toward this particular issue.

**Study Participants**

In this section, the subjects/participants, the stimulus material/research instrument, and the procedure/design for data collection are addressed.

The sample consisted of 402 respondents within the environment of a large Midwestern university. These participants completed a self-administered questionnaire/survey instrument. The participants were recruited through the mall...
intercept technique and through email. 386 usable surveys were collected. The number of participants was calculated using the power formula and the sample size \( n \) and margin of error \( E \) are given by the formula below where \( N = 20,000 \) or more.

\[
x = Z \left( \frac{c}{100} \right)^2 r (100-r)
\]
\[
n = \frac{N x}{(N-1)E^2 + x} \quad E = \sqrt[2]{\frac{(N-n)x}{n(N-1)}}
\]

Where \( N \) is the population size, \( r \) is the fraction of responses that one is interested in, and \( Z(c/100) \) is the critical value for the confidence level \( c \).

The sample consisted of 201 (52.1%) female respondents and 185 male respondents (47.8%). Of these respondent, 35 (6%) had at least high school education but less than college education, 54 % were enrolled in post secondary college, and the rest (37%) had at least a bachelors degree. Data on age was also collected and the ages ranged from 18 to 20 years (8 respondents or 2% of the sample), between 20 and 24 years (108 respondents (28%)), 25 to 30 years (178 respondents (46%)) and age 31 and above (93 respondents (24%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below High School</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>386</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 20</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 -24</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 and older</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>386</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Demographics of the Sample
Research Instrument

The research instrument used to collect the data analyzed in this study focused on non-food attributes of the restaurants, as shown in the model below. These attributes are thought to be significant to the consumers, since they were mentioned by over 65% of the respondents in the Study I interviews (see Table 4). This list of attributes was developed after data reduction of the responses obtained in Study I.

These five attributes are: Price, Atmosphere, Customer Relations, Employee Competence and Convenience. Brief descriptions of the attributes were provided on the survey to ensure a better understanding by the respondents of what each attribute entailed (see Appendix C). Each of the five attributes had two levels. The levels that were formed for each attribute were assigned the value of 0 or 1, to allow for the quantitative formation of restaurants with various combinations of attribute levels, as well as carrying out a quantitative analysis of the data. The choice of two levels was purely for experimental purposes and was meant to minimize the number of possible combinations, which make surveys stressful for the respondents. Also, using two levels allows for an ordinal description such as good, bad, or excellent, which is a common form of consumer communication. Previous research has indicated that consumers do not actually remember the price paid for items but will describe it as high or moderate or low (Dickson & Sawyer, 1990; Le Boutillier, Le Boutillier & Neslin, 1994).

The arrays used for conjoint analysis model are indicated below:
Table 6: The Orthogonal Arrays used for Conjoint Analysis Model

The attributes and values assigned to each level were as follows:

1. Price
   a. Excellent Price (Acceptable) = 1
   b. High Price/Poor Value (unacceptable) = 0

2. Atmosphere (Includes: lighting, organization of the interior, wall fixtures, décor and colors, ventilation)
   a. Acceptable = 1
   b. Not acceptable = 0

3. Customer relations (included: friendly employee, responsive, empathetic, can remember me, employee provides personalized service, polite employee-not rude)
   a. Good Relationship = 1
   b. Poor Relationship = 0
4. Employee Competence (employees organized, know their job well, are professional and willing to assist with menu choices,)
   a. Competent Employees = 1
   b. Not Competent Employees = 0

5. Systems Efficiency (included: reliable and consistent service, convenient to reach the services, no waiting in line to be seated and served)
   a. Efficient Systems = 1
   b. Not Efficient Systems = 0

Five attributes with two levels each result in a total of 32 observations to be made, which thus need 32 profiles \(2^5\). These profiles are too numerous for the respondents and are a hindrance to the collection of any useful data. It is relatively challenging, demanding and troublesome to collect information in this way. Ranking too many combinations could go beyond the mental ability of respondents, especially when the differences among them are not very clear. A possible resolution for this problem is to submit the most practical and comparable product combinations to the consumers’ evaluation. Assuming that any interaction effect is negligible, the main effect could be estimated with only five orthogonal arrays. The five orthogonal arrays used in this study, which were formed with the aid of the conjoint designer (Sawtooth Software, 2004), are listed in Table 6. The respondents were asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 7 each of the eight hypothetical restaurants that were represented by the arrays. A value of 1 indicated least preference while 7 represented most preference (see Appendix D).
Questionnaire Development and Pretesting

The development of the survey instrument used in the pilot and main studies was based on the extant literature and the interviews carried out in Study I. The instrument used in the pilot study was developed prior to the one used in the main study. The purpose of the pretest was to develop the stimulus material and to check for reliability of the instrument.

Procedure/Data Collection

Data was collected in the spring of 2005. The data collection took place at four different locations, and the researchers was assisted by three people. Interview locations were the classroom and the student union of a large Midwestern university, and two local coffee shops. The owners of the coffee shops were approached and the purpose of the study explained to them. They were requested to participate in the data collection. The incentive was to offer a price discount of $0.50 (fifty) cents on every cup of coffee for every participant who completed the questionnaire. This price discount was paid for by the researcher. The other data collection locations were the classroom and the student union. Data was collected over a period of five days. In the classroom, a total of 170 students were recruited for the study. These classroom respondents were tested in 6 groups consisting of 30 to 40 participants.

After the classroom participants were seated, they were provided with booklets. They were randomly assigned to either the quick-service or fine-dining scenario. The researcher informed the participants that they would receive some candy and have an
opportunity to participate in a draw in which the winners would receive one of the prizes mentioned on the recruitment letter. They were asked to take the task as an individual exercise and refrain from sharing ideas. After all, it was stressed, we were only seeking individual opinion. Due to the stressful nature of conjoint surveys (Green & Srinivasan, 1990), the participants were guided and assisted whenever they had a question (Hair et al., 1995). The respondents were instructed to read the scenario on page 1 (see Appendix C) then to proceed with the exercise that followed. For the participants who were intercepted at the restaurants (the coffee shop and the student union), the purpose of the study was explained to them and then they were requested to participate. If they agreed, they were seated and asked to complete the conjoint exercise. The process took at most twenty minutes for each participant/respondent.

**STUDY II: DATA ANALYSIS**

Data were analyzed using the conjoint technique. As discussed, conjoint is used in marketing and other fields to quantify how individuals confront trade-offs when choosing between multidimensional alternatives. Researchers ask the respondents to indicate their preferences (choices) for products described under a range of hypothetical situations in terms of the features of the product. These may include features not available in the existing products. Some of the hypothetical products may also be very arbitrary. Conjoint procedure can be help to determine the relative importance of the many attributes of a product to consumers. This capability makes conjoint analysis a very useful tool for product development and/or repositioning (Green & Wind, 1975).
Green, Carroll, and Goldberg (1981), for example, demonstrated how conjoint analysis could be used to help marketing managers determine which qualities of a product or service are most important to the consumer. Green & Srinivasan (1990) addressed the various uses and implications of conjoint analysis in marketing and demonstrated the symbiotic relationship between market segmentation and market targeting. Product development and/or product repositioning calls for two issues to be addressed: first, the nature of the product and the salient product associations linked to its attributes; second, the market segments and appropriate target market selection (Lonial, Menezes & Zaim, 2000). These questions can be answered through conjoint analysis, because conjoint analysis examines the trade-off consumers make when selecting a brand over other competing options.

In addressing consumer restaurant selection, conjoint technique assumes that a restaurant brand is a bundle of features or attributes, such as food, quality, menu, price, and employees’ behavior. Each of these attributes can consist of several levels. For example, employee behavior may be considered desirable or undesirable (description provided). Similarly, price may be acceptable or unacceptable. The attributes used in conjoint analysis must be important to purchasers (see Table 5 with results of interviews and selected variables in model) when choosing among alternative products or brands. Similarly, the levels used must describe the current or prospective products.

In conjoint analysis, purchasers are asked to evaluate several hypothetical products consisting of various combinations of product attributes and their related levels in terms of purchase preferences. When the number of attributes and the related levels are large, the numbers of all possible combinations representing the product alternatives will
be too great for purchasers to evaluate. For example, in our restaurant selection model, a scenario with three attributes, three levels and two segments would result in 18 possible combinations or product alternatives \((3 \times 3 \times 2 = 18)\). If a fourth attribute with two levels were added, 54 \((3 \times 3 \times 2 \times 2 = 36)\) combinations would be generated. When the number of combinations representing product alternatives becomes too large, the cost of conducting a conjoint analysis study would increase dramatically, and the fatigue and confusion experienced by the participants gets prohibitive. Fortunately, in such situations, the number of relevant combinations can be reduced significantly (without violating the assumptions of conjoint analysis technique) through the use of an orthogonal array experimental design (Green, 1974). This procedure selects the test combinations so that the independent contributions of the selected attributes are balanced. Using conjoint analysis, each attribute’s weight or importance is retained. This reduced set of combination—representing hypothetical product alternatives—is presented to consumers participating in the study. Typically, this is done in the form of individual cards representing each hypothetical product. Participants are then asked to rank these cards in terms of their own purchase preferences. Based on the evaluations of the hypothetical products made by the participants, conjoint analysis programs derive estimates of the utility function. In the present study, two levels of each attribute were preferred.

**Summary**

Study I qualitatively examined the consumer-brand associations of restaurants. Both positive and negative brand associations were identified. Through the qualitative
data analysis, the data was collapsed into the categories of brand associations. The brand associations were divided into three categories: the product-related brand associations, the systems organization brand associations, and service-related brand associations.

Study II is the quantitative aspect of the research. In Study II, an examination of the significance of the selected restaurant brand associations was carried out through a conjoint design. Data was collected using a survey. The following chapter (Chapter 4) discusses the findings.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This chapter presents the results of Study II. Study II, a conjoint study, utilized a self-administered questionnaire. The objective of Study II was to examine Objective 2 of the research: namely, to examine the extent to which the identified dimensions of restaurant brands are prioritized in selection of restaurant products, and to examine the relationship between associations of restaurant brand importance in decision-making. Thus, the dissertation will examine how important each association is in decision-making in relation to one another. A fractional factorial design conjoint analysis with five factors (price, atmosphere, employee relations, employee competence, and systems organization) and two levels were used.

Interpreting Utilities

One of the most important aspects of conjoint analysis is the interpretation of the outputs. The interpretation and presentation of results begins with the output of the fine dining survey. From the raw data of the scenario rating by the respondents, conjoint analysis first calculates utility scores for each attribute level. Desirable levels of attributes yield positive utilities, and undesirable levels yield negative utilities. As shown in the
tabular data for the fine dining restaurants, poor customer relations yielded an average utility of -0.80 while excellent customer relations yielded a utility of 0.80. The range of the utility score can then be calculated for each attribute. For example, the utility range for customer relations is 1.60 (2* 0.80). An attribute with a larger utility range is more important than an attribute with a smaller range. Hence, this sample sees customer relations as more important than price when considering fine restaurants. The works of Orme (2005), Malhotra (1996) and Kuhfeld (2005) provide the guideline for interpreting the outcome. See Table 7 for presentation and Appendix G for the SAS output.
Output for Fine Dining Restaurant Preference

Metric Conjoint Analysis
The TRANSREG Procedure

Dependent Variable Identity (Mean Rating)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Acceptable/Unacceptable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atmosphere</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Good/Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Relations</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Excellent/Gross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee Competence</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Experts/Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems Organization</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Well/Disorganized</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Identity (Mean Rating)
Algorithm Converged

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Root MSE</th>
<th>0.28</th>
<th>R-Square</th>
<th>0.97</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dependent Mean</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>Adj R-Sq</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coeff Var</td>
<td>12.11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Utilities Table Based on the Usual Degrees of Freedom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Utility</th>
<th>Utility Range</th>
<th>Importance (% Utility Range)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price Acceptable</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>3.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price Unacceptable</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atmosphere Good</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>8.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atmosphere Poor</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Relations Excellent</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>37.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Relations Poor</td>
<td>-0.80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee Competence High</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>25.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee Competence Low</td>
<td>-0.55</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems Organized Well</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>25.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems Disorganized</td>
<td>-0.54</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Results of Conjoint Analysis: Fine Dining Restaurants
The algorithm converged in the output indicating no problem with the iterations and that the $R^2 = 0.97$ and an adjusted $R^2$ of 0.89. The table also displays the part-worth utilities. The part-worth utilities show the most and least preferred levels of the attributes. Levels with the positive utility are preferred over those with negative utility.

Conjoint provides an approximate decomposition of the original ratings. The predicted utility for a given restaurant is the sum of the intercept and the part-worth utilities. The conjoint analysis model for the preference for restaurant with price $i$, atmosphere $j$, customer relations $r$, competence $k$ and systems $c$ is:

$$Y_{ijrk} = m + \beta_{1i} + \beta_{2j} + \beta_{3r} + \beta_{4k} + \beta_{5k} + \epsilon_{ijrk}$$

For any given restaurant: $i = 1, 0; j = 1, 0, r = 1, 0; k = 1, 2; c = 1, 0; (1 = Preferred and 0 =Less preferred)

The part-worth utilities for the attribute levels are the parameter estimates $\beta_{11}, \beta_{10}, \beta_{2I}, \beta_{20}, \beta_{3I}, \beta_{30}, \beta_{4I}, \beta_{40}, \beta_{5I}, and \beta_{50}$ from the main effect ANOVA model. The estimate of the intercept is $\mu$, and the error term is $\epsilon_{ijrk}$.

The predicted utility for the $ijrk$ combination is

$$Y_{ijrk} = m + \beta_{1i} + \beta_{2j} + \beta_{3r} + \beta_{4k} + \beta_{5k}$$

For example, for the most preferred restaurant, the predicted utility and actual preference values are:

$$3.27 + 0.07 + 0.19 + 0.80 + 0.54 + 0.55 = 5.42 \text{ utile}$$

The least preferred of the fine dining restaurant combination would have

$$3.27 + -0.07 + -0.19 + -0.80 + -0.54 + -0.55 = 1.12 \text{ utile}$$
In this study, when added up, the attributes examined in the fine dining sector give the following utility values: ideally, the restaurant that provides the highest utility should be the most preferred restaurant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Restaurant</th>
<th>Intercept</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Atmosphere</th>
<th>Customer Relations</th>
<th>Employee Competence</th>
<th>Systems Efficiency</th>
<th>Utilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>-0.54</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>3.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>-0.54</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>5.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>-0.54</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>2.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>5.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>-0.54</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>2.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>-0.54</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>2.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>5.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>2.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Illustration of the Utilities Derived from Fine Dining Restaurants with Differing Attributes. (Based on the attributes of the eight hypothetical Restaurant Brands of the Study)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Restaurant</th>
<th>Intercept</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Atmosphere</th>
<th>Customer Relations</th>
<th>Employee Competence</th>
<th>Systems Efficiency</th>
<th>Utilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>-0.34</td>
<td>-0.39</td>
<td>3.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>4.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>-0.63</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-0.45</td>
<td>-0.34</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>2.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>-0.63</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>3.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.45</td>
<td>-0.34</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>3.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>-0.63</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.45</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>-0.39</td>
<td>1.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-0.45</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>-0.39</td>
<td>3.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>-0.63</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>-0.34</td>
<td>-0.39</td>
<td>2.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Illustration of the Utilities Derived from Quick Service Restaurants with Differing Attributes. (Based on the attributes of the eight hypothetical Restaurant Brands of the Study)

From these tables it is possible to examine the difference in the two restaurant sectors. For example, Restaurant D of fine dining, with unacceptable price, good atmosphere, good customer relations, highly competent employees and efficient systems, delivers a utility value of 5.28 to the consumer, while a quick service restaurant with
similar attributes delivers a utility value of 3.26. The great difference here is caused by
the price attribute. In the quick service sector, price is given a greater relative weight as
compared to the fine dining sector. Thus, when price is unacceptable in the QSRs, the
possible utility the consumer is likely to derive from purchasing the product drops
dramatically.

The predicted utilities are the regression-predicted values; the squared correlation
between the predicted utilities for each combination and the actual preference ratings is
the $R^2$. The importance value is computed from the part-worth utility range for each
factor (attribute). Each range is divided by the sum of all the ranges and multiplied by
100. In the present study, these were obtained from the program output. The factors
(attributes) with the greatest utility ranges are the most important in determining
preference.

The importance values show that customer relations has a relative importance
value of 37.25% (most important) and price has an importance of 3.1% (least important)
Using these outcomes to examine the hypotheses:

\textit{H1: Employee competence is the most important brand association when
determining consumer brand preference of fine dining restaurants.}

This hypothesis was not supported. Employee competence was not considered the
most influential association. Instead, customer relations was considered the most
important attribute (37.25%), more important than employee competence (25.62%).

Consequently, hypothesis 2 (H2). \textit{Employee competence is more important than
customer relations in determining consumer brand preference of fine dining restaurants}
was not supported.
H3: Customer relations association is more important than atmosphere in determining consumer brand preference of fine dining restaurants.

This hypothesis was supported. Thus, customer relations brand association is considered more important (37.25%) than atmosphere (8.82%) for fine dining restaurants.

H4: Atmosphere brand association is more important than convenience in determining consumer brand preference of fine dining restaurants.

This hypothesis was not supported. Thus, among these respondents, atmosphere (8.82%) is less important than convenience (25.62%). In fact, among the respondents convenience is considered the third most important association in brand preference.

H5: Convenience brand association is more important than price in determining consumer brand preference of fine dining restaurants.

This brand association was supported. Convenience represented at 25.62% is more important than price at 3.10%. Price is therefore the least important of the brand associations in the fine dining restaurants.

The following is the order of importance for hypothesized versus observed brand associations:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesized Order of Importance</th>
<th>Observed order of Importance</th>
<th>% Importance (Utility Range)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Employee Competence</td>
<td>1. Customer Relations</td>
<td>37.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Customer Relations</td>
<td>2. Employee Competence</td>
<td>25.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Atmosphere</td>
<td>3. Convenience</td>
<td>25.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Price</td>
<td>5. Price</td>
<td>3.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10: Table of Comparison: Hypothesized versus Observed Importance (Fine Dining)

Summarily:

Summary of Hypotheses (Fine Dining)

H1: Employee competence is the most important brand association when determining consumer brand preference of fine dining restaurants. Not Supported

H2: Employee competence is more important than customer relations in determining consumer brand preference of fine dining restaurants. Not Supported

H3: Customer relations association is more important than atmosphere in determining consumer brand preference of fine dining restaurants. Supported
H4: Atmosphere brand association is more important than convenience in determining consumer brand preference of fine dining restaurants. Not Supported

H5: Convenience brand association is more important than price in determining consumer brand preference of fine dining restaurants Supported
Output for Quick Service Restaurants

Metric Conjoint Analysis

The TRANSREG Procedure

Dependent Variable Identity (Mean Rating)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Acceptable/Unacceptable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atmosphere</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Good/Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Relations</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Excellent/Gross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee Competence</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Experts/Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems Organization</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Well/Disorganized</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Identity (Mean Rating)
Algorithm Converged

- Root MSE: 0.28
- R-Square: 0.98
- Dependent Mean: 3.07
- Adj R-Sq: 0.92
- Coeff Var: 9.23

Utilities Table Based on the Usual Degrees of Freedom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Utility</th>
<th>Utility Range</th>
<th>Importance (% Utility Range)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price Acceptable</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>34.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price Unacceptable</td>
<td>-0.63</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atmosphere Good</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.040</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atmosphere Poor</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Relations Excellent</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>18.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Relations Poor</td>
<td>-0.45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee Competence High</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>21.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee Competence Low</td>
<td>-0.34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems Organized Well</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>24.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems Disorganized</td>
<td>-0.39</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11: Results of Conjoint Analysis: Quick Service Restaurant
From the data presented above, it can be concluded that the algorithm converged in the output indicating no problem with the iterations, also, the $R^2 = 0.98$. The importance values show that price has an importance of 34.1% (most important) and atmosphere has an importance value of 1.2% (least important). Interestingly, in this sample, good atmosphere has a negative influence. Interpreting the results, one may find that:

*H6: Price is the most important brand association when determining consumer brand preference of quick service restaurants.*

This hypothesis was supported. Price was represented by 34.1% of the relative importance accorded the brand association

*H7: Convenience brand association is more important than employee competence in determining consumer brand preference of quick service restaurants.*

This hypothesis was also supported. Convenience is represented by 24.48% vs. employee competence represented by 21.65% of the total importance.

*H8: Employee competence brand association is more important than customer relations in determining consumer brand preference of quick service restaurants.*

Again, this brand association was supported. Customer relations brand association is represented by 18.58% as compared to employee competence’s 21.65%.

*H9: Customer Relations is more important than atmosphere in determining consumer brand preference of quick service restaurants.*

This hypothesis was supported.
H10: Atmosphere is the least important brand association when determining consumer brand preference of quick service restaurants.

This hypothesis was also supported. As a result, the following represents the order of importance of the brand associations in the quick service restaurants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesized Order of Importance</th>
<th>Observed order of Importance</th>
<th>% Importance (Utility Range)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Price</td>
<td>1. Price</td>
<td>34.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Convenience</td>
<td>2. Convenience</td>
<td>24.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Employee Competence</td>
<td>3. Employee Competence</td>
<td>21.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Atmosphere</td>
<td>5. Atmosphere</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12: Table of Comparison: Hypothesized vs. Observed Importance (QSR)

Summary of Hypotheses (QSR)

H6: Price is the most important brand association in determining consumer brand preference of quick service restaurants.  

H7: Convenience brand association is more important than employee competence in determining consumer brand preference of quick service restaurants.
H8: Employee competence brand association is more important than customer relations in determining consumer brand preference of quick service restaurants. Supported

H9: Customer Relations is more important than atmosphere in determining consumer brand preference of quick service restaurants. Supported

H10: Atmosphere is the least important brand association when determining consumer brand preference of quick service restaurants. Supported
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter provides a summary of findings of Studies 1 and II. It also focuses on the conclusions of the study. The discussion also provides the contributions, implications of the findings (both managerial and academic). The chapter ends the dissertation by discussing the limitations of the study and provides suggestions for future research in the area of restaurant branding.

Discussions

The two objectives of this research were:

1. To explore and identify brand associations of restaurant brands as described by consumers.

2. To examine the extent to which the identified dimensions of restaurant brands are prioritized in the selection of quick service and fine dining restaurants.

To accomplish these objectives two studies were designed. Study I, a qualitative study that aimed at accomplishing objective 1, and Study II, a quantitative study that aimed at accomplishing objectives 2.
The study began by acknowledging that developing and maintaining high quality brand associations is of utmost importance to brand managers because brand associations strategically place a product in the consumer’s mind. Furthermore, the literature observed that, for managers to improve their understanding of how and why consumers develop preference for brands, there is a need for a deeper understanding of the role associations’ consumers construct play in the brand evaluation process (Supphellen, 2001).

To develop background for the study, the terms; branding, brand and brand associations were defined in terms of consumer memory. Defining these terms in a memory context was necessary because this study was based on the premises of the theoretical research on mental models called “associative networks.”

**Discussions and Conclusions for Study 1**

To gather the data for Study I, a qualitative technique utilizing free association and interviews was employed. The use of qualitative technique is in congruence with the suggestion of various postmodern researchers (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Lincoln, & Guba, 2000) who advocate the need to incorporate humanistic methods into consumer research.

Data gathered in Study I were analyzed using Content Analysis technique. One conclusion that can be drawn from Study I is that, not all restaurant associations are equally important to the consumer. Some associations were mentioned more times than others. The cognitive association’s literature supports this conclusion through the concept of “strength of associations.” Strength of association, also referred to in psychological terms as the salience of associations, indicates among other things the speed at which an
associations is activated in one person and the total frequency with which this happens in a given check (Franzen and Bouwman, 2001). By implication, strength of association indicates among other things the ease with which a given association is evoked when a cue is provided. The stronger the association, the easier it is evoked by a given cue. Thus, when a question like; “what comes to your mind when you think of brand X?” is asked to a group of people, the frequency with which a given response is evoked could be considered an indicator of strength of association. In this study, it was concluded that the most frequently mentioned associations, were the strongest and most significant to the consumers.

Another conclusion emanates from the other question on the free association exercise. This is the question that called on respondents to list various aspects of what they liked and what they did not like about the restaurants selected. The respondents listed various associations. The associations listed ranged from location, convenience, employees, and price. These findings further enhance the proposition that consumers develop several associations for brands and that brand associations is a multidimensional concept.

To examine for future patronage, the respondents were asked (if they have been to this particular restaurant) to list reasons that would make them either return, or not return to the mentioned restaurants. The respondents provided various reasons that included: price, speed of service, courtesy of service, location, cleanliness, menu variety, food quality and good atmosphere. When asked about the source of their knowledge about the restaurants, most respondents gave experience (having patronized the restaurants); one
respondent gave ads as a source of the restaurant brand knowledge. One respondent talked about friends and relatives as a source of the restaurant brand knowledge. Information from friends and relatives represents word of mouth as a source of information.

The fact that not many respondents mentioned word of mouth as a source of information was surprising. Word of mouth is an important source of communication in the business world to the extent that, recent focus in the relationship marketing literature or relationship marketing highlights word of mouth as a desirable outcome of positive and desirable consumer relationship (Payne & Ballantyre, 1991). Further, the importance of word of mouth as a source of information has also been discussed and documented in retailing literature (Bolton, & Lemon. 1999; Bone, 1995; Bansal & Voyer, 2000). This does not seem to apply in this case. The discrepancy between these findings of Study I and the extant literature warrants more research. It is a prediction that one of the causes of the discrepancy is related to the product of research, restaurants; service dominated products.

The other question of the interview and free association exercise called for the interview respondents to write down all that came to their mind when they thought about the selected restaurant brand. The data collected in this part of the exercise was used to create brand association categories. Several brand associations were mentioned throughout the interviews and these included: price, employee courtesy, employee appearance, employee knowledge, facilities, the advertisement, colors, logos,
atmosphere, the experience, and self-esteem. The basic categories identified included: product related associations, brand signs associations, provenance associations, systems organization, perceived price and symbolic associations.

Some of these associations identified have been mentioned in the previous marketing literature; for example, Aaker, (1991), Keller (1993; 1998), and Berry (2000) models have addressed some of the associations that the respondents provided. Even then, these associations do not all appear together in these models. For example, Aaker and Keller’s models do not explicitly address the associations of employee appearance, convenience or employee courtesy. This is no surprise; these models were developed based on physical goods other than products that are predominantly service oriented such as restaurants. Berry’s model on the other hand, does not explicitly address price. Price in this model is implied as a presented brand.

The physical appearance of the environment was another brand association mentioned in the interviews. The importance of the physical environment has been addressed by various researchers in the general marketing reseach (Bitner, 1992, 2000; Berry, 2000). Environmental psychologists too, have explored the influence of physical environment (emotional responses to environments, and resulting patronage. Environmental studies conducted by Mehrabian & Russell (1974) and Donovan and Rossiter (1982) identified the emotional responses (i.e., pleasure, arousal, dominance) that individuals exhibit while in a particular environment. Furthermore, Donovan and Rossiter proposed that an individual would engage in either approach or avoidance behaviors to show preference or lack of preference for several types of retail stores. The
influence of environment is particularly important in the fine dining restaurants where consumers spent a long time, as noted, generally between 1.5 to 3 hours.

Price was raised as a restaurant brand association in the consumer memory, especially in the QSR context. The influence of perceived price in consumer choice has been discussed and presented elsewhere before (Franzen and Bouwman, 2001; Berry, 2000; Keller, 1998; and de Chernatony, 1993). Of great interest is that price was mentioned as an influential factor by all the respondents to the quick service restaurant interview scenario. Only two respondents to the fine dining restaurant scenario did mention price as an important factor in restaurant selection. The fact that it was mentioned by all the interview respondents in the QSR scenario is an indicator of its importance in the consumer decision making when purchasing QSR products.

Self esteem/image is also mentioned by two consumers. This is a brand association that is explicitly expressed by the Keller (1998) model. This association is depicted as a non-product association that has an influence on consumer brand preference. This association was mentioned positively by the respondents in the fine dining interviews. This implies that consumers of the fine dining product not only seek brands to satisfy their physiological needs, but the psychological needs too.

The other category, “Systems Organization” that encompasses convenience and consistency is neither addressed by Berry (2000), Keller (1998) nor de Chernatony and Dall’Olmo (1990) models that address the consumer brand associations. In brief, various brand associations were mentioned by the respondents during the interviews. Of the
models addressed in this study, none addresses all the consumer brand associations mentioned. Thus, all these associations were not found to exist together in the consumer behavior models presented in this dissertation.

Study I was concluded with the development of a model to depict the brand associations that influence consumers’ brand preference. This categorization provided motivation for Study II. After examining the outcomes of Study I, the next step was to provide an explanation to the questions that arose from objective 2 of the study. “To what extent are the identified restaurant dimensions prioritized in restaurant selection of QSR and fine dining restaurant?” Examining the different unique characteristics of both QSRs and fine dining restaurants, it was predicted that these brand associations were likely to be accorded different levels of importance when considering the two types of restaurants. It is therefore important to investigate the question: “Does the influence of the identified brand associations depend on the restaurant type (QSR vs. Fine Dining)?”

In Study II, the focus was on non-food related brand associations because the influence of food in the selection of restaurants has been explored before (Sweeney, Johnson & Armstrong, 1992) who concluded that food was a significant factor in restaurant selection.

**Discussion and Conclusions for Study II**

Study II consisted of a conjoint design using a self administered survey. Consistent with the findings of Study I and the hypotheses, results of both studies indicated that the importance accorded the various associations is dependent on the restaurant sector, (quick service vs. fine dining sector). For example, Price was
considered an important brand association in the quick service restaurants (accorded 34.1%) while it was considered lowly importance in the fine dining restaurant (3.2%).

With regard to the findings, it can be concluded that consumers for the fine dining restaurants are looking for something beyond just a good deal.

Regarding the hypothesis related to atmosphere, the results indicate that, compared to fine dining restaurants (8.2%), atmosphere is less important an association in the preference for the quick service restaurants (1.2%). This observation seems appropriate. Referring to the description and definition of the “atmosphere” as offered by Kotler (1974) as: “the intentional control and structuring of the environmental cues to produce specific emotional effects in the buyer that enhance his purchase probability,” it is expected that this brand association should be more significant in the preference of fine dining restaurants. The average time a consumer spends in a fine dining restaurant is approximately 1.5 to 3.0 hours. Obviously, no one wishes to be enclosed in an uncomfortable atmosphere, when their intention is to have an enjoyable evening experience.

Another conclusion concerns customer relations. Customer relation is considered more important a brand association in the fine dining restaurant than in the quick service restaurant brands. As noted in the foregone paragraphs, it takes at least a minimum of 1 to 3 hours for one to enter a fine dining restaurant, have a meal and leave. During this time, the consumer is interacting with the employee or service providers. At a theoretical level it is possible to perceive this customer-employees interaction as a joint behavior of actors. In which each one of the actors influences the other. The whole process being reciprocal other than linear, for this reason, managing employee customer relationship becomes an
association of concern for the managers of the fine dining compared to the quick service restaurants. Comparatively, a customer spends between 30 to 45 minutes at a quick service restaurant. It comes as no surprise that the expectations for positive service interaction at quick service restaurants are lower than other associations.

The hypotheses related to employee competence reveal that consumers in both sectors desire to deal with competent employees (Fine Dining: 25.62% and QSR: 21.65%). This brand association is accorded a higher percentage of importance in fine dining as compared to the quick service restaurant.

The hypotheses of systems organization predicted that; systems organization is important in consumer brand preference for the fine dining and quick service restaurant sectors. These hypotheses were both supported but with a difference in the magnitude. Systems organization brand association has a greater relative importance in the fine dining restaurant (25.2%) as compared to the quick service restaurant (24.28%).

**Theoretical Implications**

This research empirically examined restaurant branding from a consumer perspective with several theoretical implications and contributions stemming from it. One contribution of this study is the method. The research clarifies that the use of the multi-method/triangulation to study and measure associations consumers develop during their contact with brands is useful. There is little doubt about the richness of methodological and sample triangulation in the study. The study actually presents a method that has not been extensively undertaken in the study of restaurant branding. Particularly the use of
qualitative interviews and free association is important in probing into the consumer mind as this allows researchers to discover the meaning consumers construct about restaurant brands. As indicated, qualitative interviews and free association do not impose constructs on respondents the way ranking and rating scales do in perception studies. The qualitative methods allow consumers to define and construct the environments at hand and as a result, it is likely to extract the consumer images that are relevant in the determination of choice behavior. Triangulation also provides the study with enhanced validity.

Another contribution is the development of a theoretical framework for understanding how consumers perceive restaurant brands. To both the academic researcher and practitioners, understanding brand meaning is important if further research and predictions regarding consumer purchase of brands are to be made. This study achieves this by (1) identifying several brand associations that have not been previously included in branding models. These include brand associations such as convenience, (2) the study further recognizes the evolving nature of the concepts of brand and branding: that these concepts have evolved since the 1960’s. In the 1960’s, brand was defined as a source of identification (see AMA, 1960). Today, brand is defined in terms of consumer memory and the identification perspective of brand is extremely de-emphasized, (3) related closely to contributions (1) and (2) above is the contribution of a model that identifies several brand categories that make up the way consumers perceive restaurant brands. This model represents a useful research tool for the future.

Further, Study II examines and empirically provides the relationship and relative weight accorded the selected brand associations identified in Study I. These are the
associations that are considered to have greater influence on the selection of brands. The study goes further to consider the restaurant sector effect in the relative weight accorded the selected brand associations. The sector effects (QSR versus FDR) revealed that there is a difference in the relative weight accorded similar brand associations. For example, the brand association of perceived price is given different weights in the QSR compared to the FDR. For example, in the study sample, perceived price association was accorded the greatest relative importance in selection of QSR while in the preference of FDR, the same association, perceived price was accorded the least relative importance.

Managerial Implications

Several theoretical implications in this research provide useful information for managers in terms of how to build and improve restaurant brands. As noted in the preceding discussion, this research provides managers with a model of restaurant brand preference that can be used for examining, evaluating, and improving their own restaurant brands.

One explicit implication of the findings of this study, especially as depicted by the quantitative study (Study II), is that, all brand associations are not equally important to the consumers and therefore, are not equally important in the selection and preference of restaurants. Also significant is the source of information for the consumer. This study further supports the idea that experience is the best source of information for certain products. Due to the interactive nature of the restaurant product, experience provides a good source of information to the consumer. The managerial implication of this finding is that they should encourage product trial as it is important. Like the goods and
manufacturing sector, managers should strive to device techniques that allow for “tasting” of the restaurant product. Several techniques that encourage and facilitate product trial exist and are not discussed here since they are not the focus of this study, but overall, managers for both QSR and FDR should beware that experience is important.

This study empirically shows that, in the QSR sector, managers should focus on price. Managing price and being able to provide value and “deals” is important when considering a purchase in the QSR. This particular association appears to have been observed well in the QSR industry. The numerous price wars and value based advertisements and promotions related to QSR are an indicator that operators have learnt that consumers to the QSR are seeking, above everything else, the price deal that provides value. On the other end of the continuum, the study empirically illustrates that price is not a major consideration when people are dining at FDR.

Another finding that carries managerial implications is related to service interaction association. This considers the interaction between the consumer and employee during the process of service. This association considers two major aspects: employee competence and customer relations. The results suggest that, in order to create a good brand, managers should focus keenly on the associations that are related to the consumer perceptions of service interaction. Particularly in the fine dining sector, the results in this study indicate that, consumers accord this brand association a total relative weight of 63%. This is a huge percentage for an association that has influence on selection. Therefore, managers should keenly manage the interaction aspect of the service.
The interactive and simultaneous nature of the restaurant business, particularly fine dining restaurant product, does exacerbate the importance of employees and their behavior in the process of exchange within the fine dining restaurants. Results of the study indicate that employees have a vital role to play in the creation of successful brands, such that, unless consumers develop a positive attitude towards the employees, the focal brand is likely to be unsuccessful. This suggests that managers should focus on training and hiring well qualified employees that have a positive work attitude.

**Limitations and Suggestions**

One of the limitations of this study is the categorization of the brand associations. Like Franzen & Bouwman (2001), this study develops categories that are extremely flexible. According to Franzen & Bouwman (2001, p. 181): “…..each categorization contains debatable decisions. Still, an overview makes sense, if for no other reason than to remind us that research only exposes parts of these associations and is therefore possible to overlook other associations.” For this reason, the categorization of brand associations identified in this study only provides an insight and better understanding of the prominent associations’ consumers develop and hold in memory and the role these associations play in the development of the other components of the mental brand response and ultimate purchase.

Another limitation facing this research is the study sample. The use of a homogeneous sample in Study II limits the generalization of the results. The homogeneity of the sample, coupled with nested data, calls for other modes of statistical analysis that can
illuminate the effect of other consumer factors such as demographics on preference formation. It is therefore suggested that similar studies in the future should address this limitation.

Also, the service brands selected (restaurants) are high labor intensive and the product (food) sometimes receives greater focus, marring the service provision aspect. It is therefore possible that the salient associations and their relationship with the service dominated brand preference may change for certain products such as e hotel/lodging where the “tangible” product (a night in a hotel room) is more abstract than in the restaurants where the “tangible” part of the product includes food. Exploration of these unanswered questions is left to future research.

In summary, like O’Cass and Grace (2003) suggest, it is important to remember that, while brand studies provide improved understanding of brand associations, what is important in branding is how consumers formulate brand associations and the extent to which certain brand associations are important and influence their purchase patterns and behavior. Relying on the memory based definition of brand and branding, this study identified several brand associations that are important to the consumer with respect to restaurants, addressed several research limitation that need to be addressed by similar studies in the future and above all, empirically provided evidence to various brand related issues.


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

Recruitment Letter
Dear Participant,

My name is David Njite, a graduate student at The Ohio State University, Department of Consumer Sciences. I am carrying out a research under the supervision of H.G. Parsa, Associate Professor, Department of Consumer Sciences. The title of my study is: *Examining Brand Associations That Influence Consumer Restaurant Preferences: A Study of the Restaurant Industry*. I am requesting you to participate in this study as a respondent to my questionnaire.

In this study, you are given several reasons that make people select restaurants. What you have to do is to rate these reasons in your opinion, from the least to the most important reason. There is no correct or wrong answer, simply a personal opinion. You do not have to write your name or any form of identification and the information you provide will be strictly confidential and used only for the purpose of this research.

Your participation is voluntary, and you can refuse to answer questions that you do not wish to answer. You can also refuse to participate or you can withdraw at any time without penalty or repercussion. This exercise will take, at most, 20 minutes. At the end of the exercise, you will receive a ticket. Keep it safely because there will be a draw where 5 people will receive a lunch voucher worth $20, $15, and three $10. Every participant will definitely get some candy to take home for you to enjoy.

If you have any concern or question regarding this research, please do not hesitate to contact either one of us. You can reach us using the following e-mail addresses: njite.1@osu.edu or parsa.1@osu.edu.

Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

David Njite,
Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Consumer Sciences
APPENDIX B

The Free Association Exercise (Recommended Brand)
Background

Your friend is currently working for a multinational corporation as an executive. A team of her colleagues from the headquarters is visiting soon. Your friend is responsible for their dinner arrangements. Even though your friend is familiar with the restaurants in the city, she admits that she has very limited knowledge about the types of restaurants that will be fit for this kind of guests (Corporate guests from the headquarters).

Your friend knows that you have the expertise in restaurant selection. She is counting on you to provide her with the best option for this type of occasion.
1. Write down one restaurant you’d definitely recommend

2. What comes to your mind when you think about this restaurant or when this restaurant is mentioned? (Use sentences, words, pictures…..to make your descriptions)

3. What exactly do you like about this particular restaurant?

4. Is there anything you DO NOT like about this restaurant?

5. How do you know so much about this restaurant?

6. Write down one reason that you consider very important when selecting a restaurant for this meal

7. What is the LEAST important factor when selecting a restaurant for this meal?
**Background**

It is the end of the day. Your friend came over to your house. You both are frantically working on a major project to be handed the following day. You both have decided to take a break and have a quick meal at one of the fast food restaurants nearby. Your friend asked you to pick a fast food restaurant since you are more familiar with the neighborhood.
1. Write down one restaurant you’d definitely recommend
________________________________________________________________________

2. What comes to your mind when you think about this restaurant or when this restaurant is mentioned? (Use sentences, words, pictures……to make your descriptions)
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

3. What exactly do you like about this particular restaurant?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

4. Is there anything you DO NOT like about this restaurant?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

5. How do you know so much about this restaurant
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

6. Write down one reason that you consider very important when selecting a restaurant for this meal
________________________________________________________________________

7. What is the LEAST important factor when selecting a restaurant for this meal?
APPENDIX C

The Free Association Exercise (NOT Recommended Brand)
Background

It is the end of the day. Your friend came over to your house. You both are frantically working on a major project to be handed the following day. You both have decided to take a break and have a quick meal at one of the fast food restaurants nearby. Your friend asked you to pick a fast food restaurant since you are more familiar with the neighborhood.
1. Write down one restaurant you’d definitely NOT recommend
_____________________________________________________

What comes to your mind when you think about this restaurant or when this restaurant is mentioned? (Use sentences, words, pictures……to make your descriptions)
_____________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________

2. What exactly do you NOT like about this particular restaurant?
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

3. Is there anything you like about this restaurant?
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

4. What is your source of information about this restaurant?
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

5. Write down one reason that you consider very important when selecting a restaurant for this meal
________________________________________________________________

6. What is the LEAST important factor when selecting a restaurant for this meal?
________________________________________________________________
Background

Your friend is currently working for a multinational corporation as an executive. A team of her colleagues from the headquarters is visiting soon. Your friend is responsible for their dinner arrangements. Even though your friend is familiar with the restaurants in the city, she admits that she has very limited knowledge about the types of restaurants that will be fit for this kind of guests (corporate guests from the headquarters).

Your friend knows that you have the expertise in restaurant selection. She is counting on you to provide her with the best option for this type of occasion.
1. Write down one restaurant you’d definitely NOT recommend
_____________________________________________________

2. What comes to your mind when you think about this restaurant or when this restaurant is mentioned? (Use sentences, words, pictures……to make your descriptions)
_____________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________

3. What exactly do you NOT like about this particular restaurant?
_____________________________________________________

4. Is there anything you like about this restaurant?
_____________________________________________________

5. What is your source of information about this restaurant?
_____________________________________________________

6. Write down one reason that you consider very important when selecting a restaurant for this meal
_____________________________________________________

7. What is the LEAST important factor when selecting a restaurant for this meal?
APPENDIX D

The Conjoint Exercise 1 (Fine Dining Restaurant)
Background

Your friend is currently working for a multinational corporation as an executive. A team of her colleagues from the headquarters is visiting soon. Your friend is responsible for their dinner arrangements. Even though your friend is familiar with the restaurants in the city, she admits that she has very limited knowledge about the types of restaurants that will be fit for this kind of guests (corporate guests from the headquarters).

Your friend knows that you have the expertise in restaurant selection. She is counting on you to provide her with the best option for this type of occasion.

The following pages contain descriptions of various restaurant brands available in the city. Please read each description and indicate your likelihood of recommending each restaurant by responding to the questions that follow.
**Scenario 1**

**Restaurant A**

- It is a fine dining restaurant.
- The average check is generally lower than many other fine dining restaurants. It therefore offers great value for money.
- This restaurant has excellent atmosphere and very friendly employees who have excellent customer relation skills.
- Despite the positive attitude of the employees, they never seem to get the orders right. They always mess up something.
- The restaurant systems are **NOT** efficient.
- There are long wait lines and food takes so long before delivery to table. Check delivery always seems to take forever.

**Summary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Atmosphere</th>
<th>Customer Relations</th>
<th>Employee Competence</th>
<th>Systems Efficiency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Great Value</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Very Poor</td>
<td>NOT Efficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regard to this restaurant, indicate how much you agree with the statements below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree/Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Very Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- This restaurant should be close to my place
- I would recommend this restaurant
- I’d say good things about this restaurant
- This restaurant satisfies my needs
- I like this restaurant

**Overall, would you recommend this restaurant?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Definitely Recommend</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

164
Scenario 2

Restaurant B

- This is a fine dining restaurant.
- The average check is generally lower than many other fine dining restaurants. It therefore offers great value for money.
- The restaurant has a very poor atmosphere: old chairs and poor décor.
- The restaurant employees have excellent customer relation skills and keep a genuine smile. These employees are extremely competent in their work.
- The restaurant systems are also very efficient.
- There are no wait lines and the food is delivered very fast after orders are placed.

Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Atmosphere</th>
<th>Customer Relations</th>
<th>Employee Competence</th>
<th>Systems Efficiency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Great Value</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Highly Efficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regard to this restaurant, indicate how much you agree with the statements below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This restaurant should be close to my place</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would recommend this restaurant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’d say good things about this restaurant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This restaurant satisfies my needs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like this restaurant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, would you recommend this restaurant?

Not at all  | Definitely Recommend
Likely      | Recommend

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Scenario 3

Restaurant C

- This is a fine dining restaurant.
- The average check is generally higher than many other fine dining restaurants. It therefore offers poor value for money.
- However, this restaurant has excellent atmosphere.
- But be warned, if you happen to visit this restaurant, expect to meet employees that are rude, sarcastic extremely incompetent in their cash handling.
- The restaurant menu ordering system is very efficient.
- There are no wait lines.

Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Atmosphere</th>
<th>Customer Relations</th>
<th>Employee Competence</th>
<th>Systems Efficiency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor Value</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Very Poor</td>
<td>Very Poor</td>
<td>Highly Efficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regard to this restaurant, indicate how much you agree with the statements below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Very Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree/Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Very Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This restaurant should be close to my place</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would recommend this restaurant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'd say good things about this restaurant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This restaurant satisfies my needs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like this restaurant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, would you recommend this restaurant?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation Levels</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Likely</th>
<th>Definitely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Recommend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

166
Scenario 4

Restaurant D

- This is a fine dining restaurant.
- The average check is generally higher than many other fine dining restaurants. It therefore offers poor value for money.
- But this restaurant has an excellent atmosphere.
- The employees are not only very friendly, with excellent customer relations’ skills, but they are extremely competent in their work.
- The restaurant systems are very efficient.
- There are no wait lines and the food is often delivered in a very timely manner.

Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Atmosphere</th>
<th>Customer Relations</th>
<th>Employee Competence</th>
<th>Systems Efficiency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor Value</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Highly Efficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regard to this restaurant, indicate how much you agree with the statements below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Very Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree/Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Very Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This restaurant should be close to my place</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would recommend this restaurant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’d say good things about this restaurant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This restaurant satisfies my needs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like this restaurant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, would you recommend this restaurant?

Not at all
Likely
Definitely

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommend</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Scenario 5

Restaurant E

➢ This is a fine dining restaurant.
➢ The average check is generally lower than many other fine dining restaurants. It therefore offers great value for money.
➢ However, this restaurant has a poor atmosphere.
➢ Also, the employees are not only rude, but are extremely incompetent in their cash handling work.
➢ However, the restaurant systems are very efficient.
➢ There are no wait lines.

Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Atmosphere</th>
<th>Customer Relations</th>
<th>Employee Competence</th>
<th>Systems Efficiency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Great Value</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Highly Efficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regard to this restaurant, indicate how much you agree with the statements below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This restaurant should be close to my place</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would recommend this restaurant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’d say good things about this restaurant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This restaurant satisfies my needs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like this restaurant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, would you recommend this restaurant?

Not at all | Definitely Recommend
Likely      |

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 168

Scenario 6
This is a fine dining restaurant. The average check is generally higher than many other fine dining restaurants. It therefore offers poor value for money. This restaurant not only offers poor value for the money but also has a very poor atmosphere. If you visit this restaurant, expect to meet employees that are rude and not friendly. But these employees are extremely competent in their work. You will also have to put up with restaurant systems that are NOT efficient. There are long wait lines.

Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Atmosphere</th>
<th>Customer Relations</th>
<th>Employee Competence</th>
<th>Systems Efficiency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor Value</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Not Efficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regard to this restaurant, indicate how much you agree with the statements below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree/Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Very Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This restaurant should be close to my place
I would recommend this restaurant
I’d say good things about this restaurant
This restaurant satisfies my needs
I like this restaurant

Overall, would you recommend this restaurant?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Definitely Recommend</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

169
Scenario 7

Restaurant G

- This is a fine dining restaurant.
- The average check is generally lower than many other fine dining restaurants. It therefore offers great value for money.
- It also has excellent atmosphere.
- The employees rude and not very courteous.
- But the employees are extremely competent in their work.
- The restaurant menu ordering systems are NOT efficient.
- There are always long wait lines.

Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Atmosphere</th>
<th>Customer Relations</th>
<th>Employee Competence</th>
<th>Systems Efficiency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Great Value</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Very Poor</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Not Efficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regard to this restaurant, indicate how much you agree with the statements below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree/Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Very Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This restaurant should be close to my place
I would recommend this restaurant
I’d say good things about this restaurant
This restaurant satisfies my needs
I like this restaurant

Overall, would you recommend this restaurant?

Not at all
Likely
Definitely Recommend

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Scenario 8

Restaurant H

- This is a fine dining restaurant.
- The average check is generally higher than many other fine dining restaurants. It therefore offers poor value for money.
- This restaurant has also a very poor atmosphere.
- However, the employees are friendly and with excellent customer relations skills.
- Despite their positive attitude, these employees are extremely incompetent in their work.
- In addition, the restaurant systems are NOT efficient at all.
- There are always long wait lines.

Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Atmosphere</th>
<th>Customer Relations</th>
<th>Employee Competence</th>
<th>Systems Efficiency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor Value</td>
<td>Very Poor</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Very Poor</td>
<td>Not Efficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regard to this restaurant, indicate how much you agree with the statements below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree/Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Very Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This restaurant should be close to my place</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would recommend this restaurant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’d say good things about this restaurant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This restaurant satisfies my needs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like this restaurant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, would you recommend this restaurant?

Not at all  | Definitely
Likely    | Recommend

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
General Demographics

Your responses to these questions remain completely confidential.

a. My gender is:
   Male  Female  (Please circle)

b. Education Level
   High School:
   Undergraduate student:  1st  2nd  3rd  4th  5th  6th
   Graduate student  1st  2nd  3rd  4th

c. I am:
   Less than 20 years old  21 – 24 years  25-30 years  more than 31 years old

d. My monthly expenditure is
   Rent $ _____________ Food: $ _________________ Entertainment: $ _____________
APPENDIX E

The Conjoint Exercise 2 (Quick Service Restaurant)
Background

It is the end of the day. Your friend came over to your house. You both are frantically working on a major project to be handed the following day. You both have decided to take a break and have a quick meal at one of the fast food restaurants nearby. Your friend asked you to pick a fast food restaurant since you are more familiar with the neighborhood.

The following pages contain descriptions of various restaurant brands available in your neighborhood. Please read each description and indicate your likelihood of recommending each restaurant by responding to the questions that follow.
Scenario 1

Restaurant A

- This is a fast food restaurant.
- The restaurant offers great value for money.
- This restaurant has excellent atmosphere with friendly and smiling employees.
- But the employees never seem to get the orders right. They always mess up something especially at the drive thru.
- The restaurant systems are NOT efficient at all.
- There are long wait lines.

Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Atmosphere</th>
<th>Customer Relations</th>
<th>Employee Competence</th>
<th>Systems Efficiency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Great Value</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Very Poor</td>
<td>Not Efficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regard to this restaurant, indicate how much you agree with the statements below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree/Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Very Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This restaurant should be close to my place
I would recommend this restaurant
I'd say good things about this restaurant
This restaurant satisfies my needs
I like this restaurant

Would you recommend this restaurant?

Not at all | Definitely Recommend
Likely | Recommend

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

175
Scenario 2

Restaurant B

- This is a fast food restaurant.
- It offers great value for the money.
- This restaurant has poor atmosphere.
- However, this restaurant has smiling and friendly employees. In addition, they are extremely competent in their work.
- The restaurant systems are also very efficient.
- There are no wait lines.

Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Atmosphere</th>
<th>Customer Relations</th>
<th>Employee Competence</th>
<th>Systems Efficiency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Great Value</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Highly Efficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regard to this restaurant, indicate how much you agree with the statements below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This restaurant should be close to my place</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would recommend this restaurant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’d say good things about this restaurant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This restaurant satisfies my needs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like this restaurant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Would you recommend this restaurant?

Not at all                                                       | Definitely Recommend
Likely                                                        |                      

```
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
-------------------|-------------------|
|                   |                   |
```
Scenario 3

Restaurant C

- This is a fast food restaurant.
- It offers poor value for money.
- However, this restaurant has excellent atmosphere.
- The employees at this restaurant are very rude.
- They are also extremely incompetent in their cash handling.
- The restaurant menu ordering system is very efficient.
- There are no wait lines.

Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Atmosphere</th>
<th>Customer Relations</th>
<th>Employee Competence</th>
<th>Systems Efficiency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor Value</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Very Poor</td>
<td>Very Poor</td>
<td>Highly Efficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regard to this restaurant, indicate how much you agree with the statements below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This restaurant should be close to my place</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would recommend this restaurant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’d say good things about this restaurant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This restaurant satisfies my needs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like this restaurant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, would you recommend this restaurant?

Not at all
Likely
Definitely
Recommend

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

177
Scenario 4

Restaurant D

- This is a fast food restaurant.
- It offers very poor value for the money.
- However it has an excellent atmosphere.
- The employees are very friendly.
- And they are also extremely competent in their work.
- The restaurant systems are very efficient.
- There are no wait lines.

Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Atmosphere</th>
<th>Customer Relations</th>
<th>Employee Competence</th>
<th>Systems Efficiency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor Value</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Highly Efficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regard to this restaurant, indicate how much you agree with the statements below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Very Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree/Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Very Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This restaurant should be close to my place</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would recommend this restaurant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’d say good things about this restaurant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This restaurant satisfies my needs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like this restaurant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, would you recommend this restaurant?

Not at all  | Definitely Recommend
Likely      | Recommend

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Scenario 5

Restaurant E

- This is a fast food restaurant.
- It offers great value for the money.
- However the atmosphere is very poor.
- The employees are not only rude, but are extremely incompetent in their cash handling.
- But the restaurant menu ordering systems are very efficient and easy to follow.
- There are no wait lines.

Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Atmosphere</th>
<th>Customer Relations</th>
<th>Employee Competence</th>
<th>Systems Efficiency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Great Value</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Highly Efficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regard to this restaurant, indicate how much you agree with the statements below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Very Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Very Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This restaurant should be close to my place</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would recommend this restaurant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’d say good things about this restaurant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This restaurant satisfies my needs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like this restaurant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Would you recommend this restaurant?

Not at all  | Definitely Recommend
Likely     | Recommend

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Scenario 6

Restaurant F

➢ This is a fast food restaurant.
➢ This restaurant offers a poor value for the money.
➢ It also has a very poor atmosphere.
➢ The employees are rude and not friendly.
➢ But they are extremely competent in their work.
➢ This restaurant’s systems are NOT efficient at all.
➢ There are long wait lines.

Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Atmosphere</th>
<th>Customer Relations</th>
<th>Employee Competence</th>
<th>Systems Efficiency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor Value</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Not Efficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regard to this restaurant, indicate how much you agree with the statements below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree/Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Very Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Would you recommend this restaurant?

Not at all                  Definitely Recommend
Likely                     Recommend

1  2  3  4  5  6  7

[--------------------------]
Scenario 7

Restaurant G

- This is a fast food restaurant.
- It offers great value for money.
- It also has excellent atmosphere.
- The employees rude but are extremely competent in their work.
- The restaurant menu ordering systems are **NOT** efficient at all.
- There are always long wait lines

**Summary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Atmosphere</th>
<th>Customer Relations</th>
<th>Employee Competence</th>
<th>Systems Efficiency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Great Value</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Very Poor</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Not Efficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regard to this restaurant, indicate how much you agree with the statements below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Very Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree/Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Very Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This restaurant should be close to my place</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would recommend this restaurant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’d say good things about this restaurant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This restaurant satisfies my needs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like this restaurant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Would you recommend this restaurant?

Not at all  | Definitely Recommend
Likely    | Recommend

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Scenario 8

Restaurant H

- This is a fast food restaurant.
- It offers poor value for the money with
- This restaurant has a very poor atmosphere.
- The employees are friendly and smiling,
- However, they are extremely incompetent in their work.
- The restaurant systems are NOT efficient at all.
- There are always long wait lines.

### Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Price Value</th>
<th>Atmosphere</th>
<th>Customer Relations</th>
<th>Employee Competence</th>
<th>Systems Efficiency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Very Poor</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Very Poor</td>
<td>Not Efficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regard to this restaurant, indicate how much you agree with the statements below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Very Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree/Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Very Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This restaurant should be close to my place</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would recommend this restaurant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’d say good things about this restaurant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This restaurant satisfies my needs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like this restaurant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Would you recommend this restaurant?

Not at all
Likely

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definitively Recommend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

182
General Demographics

Your responses to these questions remain completely confidential.

a. My gender is:
   Male   Female   (Please circle)

b. Education Level
   High School:
   Undergraduate student: 1st  2nd  3rd  4th  5th  6th
   Graduate student  1st  2nd  3rd  4th

c. I am:
   Less than 20 years old  21 – 24 years  25-30 years  more than 31 years old

d. My monthly expenditure is
   Rent $ _____________ Food: $ _________________ Entertainment: $ _____________
APPENDIX F

The Franzen and Bouwman (2001) Brand Associations Categorization Scheme
Categories of brand meanings

(1) *Brand signs*: the visual, auditory, smell, tactile and taste traits of the brand, such as:
- Logo, brand image, spelling
- Colour
- Design, form
- Sound (music, voice)
- Smell

(2) *Sub-brands* (e.g. the influence of the sub-brand Volkswagen Golf on the brand Volkswagen, or of the sub-brand Pickwick Country Garden on the brand Pickwick).

(3) *Provenance/history*
- Country/region/place of provenance (Limburger beer, Italian cars, Swedish furniture)
- The history of the brand (age, development)
- Authenticity
- Image of the company behind the brand
  - general company traits
  - capabilities of the company
  - economic traits
  - product-related company associations
  - cultural aspects
  - brands and relationships

(4) *Product-related brand meanings*
- Products (washing machines, biscuits)
  - product categories (chips, underwear, sweets)
  - product variants (biscuits with chocolate, waterbeds)
- Product exterior
  - form
  - colour
  - material
- Product attributes, traits and performance
  - composition, ingredients (natural smell and taste substances)
  - method of use
  - usage characteristics (durability)
  - experimental attributes (taste, smell, sound, softness, firmness, flexibility)
  - usage effects (effects, advantages, disadvantages)
• Applications (microwaveable)
• Services (warranty, delivery)

(5) **Situational meanings (situations)**
• Usage moments
  – moments of the day (only in the evenings or only in the mornings)
  – day of the week (or at the weekend)
  – season
  – special days (Christmas)
• Usage situations
  – social context (alone or with others)
  – physical situation (on the terrace, at the locker room of the sports club, camping)

(6) **Symbolic meanings (symbols)**
• User types (stereotypes)
  – age
  – gender
  – appearance
  – social class, middle class
  – occupation, education (construction workers, housewives, students)
  – personality (caring, macho, dominant)
  – lifestyle (yuppie, DINK)
• Brand personality
• Value systems
  – impressive values
  – expressive values
  – personal end values
  – societal values

(7) **Perceived quality**
• Objective and relative

(8) **Perceived price**
• Absolute and relative
• Price/value ratio

(9) **Presentation**
• Shops, branches
• Package (appearance, variations, style)

(10) **Advertising ad other communication means**
• Style
• Slogan/Payoff
• Place
• Time (when was the communication observed?)
• Attitude with regard to advertising
• Persons (real or animation) who keep returning in brand advertisements
The SAS System  04:11 Wednesday, July 27, 20x

The TRANSREG Procedure

Identity(MEAN)
Algorithm converged.

Root MSE 0.282950  R-Square 0.8770
Dependent Mean 5.08988  Adj R-Sq 0.8214
Coeff Var 8.25452

Utilities Table Based on the Usual Degrees of Freedom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Utility</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>Importance (% Utility Range)</th>
<th>Variable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>0.0700</td>
<td>0.10023</td>
<td></td>
<td>Intercept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRICE Acceptab</td>
<td>0.6276</td>
<td>0.10023</td>
<td>94.070</td>
<td>Class.PRICEAceptab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRICE Unaccept</td>
<td>-0.6276</td>
<td>0.10023</td>
<td></td>
<td>Class.PRICUnaccept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATM Good</td>
<td>-0.0224</td>
<td>0.10023</td>
<td>1.218</td>
<td>Class.ATMGood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATM Poor</td>
<td>0.0224</td>
<td>0.10023</td>
<td></td>
<td>Class.ATMPoor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REL Excellen</td>
<td>0.4509</td>
<td>0.10023</td>
<td>21.650</td>
<td>Class.RELExcellen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REL Gross</td>
<td>-0.4509</td>
<td>0.10023</td>
<td></td>
<td>Class.RELGross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMP Competen</td>
<td>0.3422</td>
<td>0.10023</td>
<td>18.577</td>
<td>Class.COMPCompeten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMP Incompet</td>
<td>-0.3422</td>
<td>0.10023</td>
<td></td>
<td>Class.COMPIncompet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SYS Efficient</td>
<td>0.3988</td>
<td>0.10023</td>
<td>24.470</td>
<td>Class.SYSEfficien</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SYS Ineffici</td>
<td>-0.3988</td>
<td>0.10023</td>
<td></td>
<td>Class.SYSIneffici</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Identity(NEAN)
Algorithm converged.

Root MSE 0.39667  R-Square 0.9704
Dependent Mean 3.26762  Adj R-Sq 0.8963
Coeff Var 12.11491

Utilities Table Based on the Usual Degrees of Freedom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Utility</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>Importance (% Utility Range)</th>
<th>Variable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>3.2676</td>
<td>0.13996</td>
<td></td>
<td>Intercept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRICE Acceptable</td>
<td>0.0968</td>
<td>0.13996</td>
<td>3.102</td>
<td>Class.PRICEXCAvailable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRICE Unacceptable</td>
<td>-0.0668</td>
<td>0.13996</td>
<td></td>
<td>Class.PRICENXCAccetable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATM Good</td>
<td>0.1901</td>
<td>0.13996</td>
<td>8.829</td>
<td>Class.ATMGood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATM Poor</td>
<td>-0.1901</td>
<td>0.13996</td>
<td></td>
<td>Class.ATMPoor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REL Excellent</td>
<td>0.8023</td>
<td>0.13996</td>
<td>37.255</td>
<td>Class.RELEXcellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REL Gross</td>
<td>-0.8023</td>
<td>0.13996</td>
<td></td>
<td>Class.RELGross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COM Competent</td>
<td>0.5426</td>
<td>0.13996</td>
<td>25.198</td>
<td>Class.COMCompetent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COM Incompetent</td>
<td>-0.5426</td>
<td>0.13996</td>
<td></td>
<td>Class.COMIncompetent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SYS Convenient</td>
<td>0.5516</td>
<td>0.13996</td>
<td>25.015</td>
<td>Class.SYSConvenient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SYS Not Convenient</td>
<td>-0.5516</td>
<td>0.13996</td>
<td></td>
<td>Class.SYNSNotConvenient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>