Do Social Networking Websites Play a Part in Generation Y’s Dining Information Search and Sharing? An Examination of Consumer Characteristics

Thesis

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By

Cheng Peng, B.Econ

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Thesis Committee:

Jay Kandampully, Advisor

Jae-Eun Chung

R. Thomas George
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Abstract

This study investigates three questions: (1) Generation Y’s dining decision-making styles, (2) Generation Y’s use of social networking websites (SNWs) for dining information search and sharing, and (3) the factors that influence Generation Y’s dining information search and sharing on SNWs. Specifically, three factors regarding consumer characteristics were examined: consumer decision-making styles (CDMS), consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence (CSII), and consumer opinion leadership (COL). Gender difference was also examined. A pilot study was conducted using 38 undergraduate students from the Consumer Sciences Department of a Midwestern University in the United States. A final survey was conducted using 162 undergraduate students from the same program. Exploratory factor analysis and reliability analysis were performed to validate all variables. Descriptive statistics were gathered to describe the subjects’ age, gender, and their use of social networking websites. A Consumer Style Inventory was produced to profile respondents regarding their decision-making styles. A series of Mann-Whitney U tests were performed, alternately using CDMS, CSII, COL, and gender as grouping variables. Results show that Generation Y uses a variety SNWs. There is a moderate usage of SNWs for the purpose of dining information search and sharing. Five decision-making styles of Generation Y diners were identified: hedonistic/recreational style, habitual/brand-loyal style, price conscious style, confused by over-choice style, and brand conscious style. Results also indicated that CSII and COL influence Generation Y’s use of SNWs for dining information search and sharing. CDMS
has a partial influence. In particular, confused by over-choice style has an influence on dining information search and price conscious style has an influence on dining information sharing. No gender difference was detected. Limitations of this study and future research directions are also discussed.
Dedication

Dedicated to my parents who encouraged me to pursue higher education in the field of consumer sciences.
Acknowledgments

It is a pleasure to thank those who made this thesis research possible.

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Vita

September 2002 – June 2005 ......................... Wuhan Foreign Languages School


September 2009 to present......................... M.S. Hospitality Management, The Ohio State University

Conference Paper

Peng, C, & George, R.T. (2010). The Effect of Inter-functional Coordination on Organizational Commitment in the Hospitality Industry. Poster Session for the 16th Annual Graduate Education and Graduate Student Research Conference in Hospitality and Tourism, Houston, TX (peer-reviewed)

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The restaurant industry has been blooming since its advent in 1765 when a Parisian soup-vendor put up a sign outside his shop, reading, “come to me, all who labor in the stomach, and I will restore you”\(^1\). The word “restaurant” also comes from the French word “la restauration”, meaning “restoration”, the idea of which is to serve individual meals to customers who could sit down and eat them on the spot\(^2\). Having been flourishing for two and half centuries, the restaurant industry is now a huge sector in the economy. According to Stewart et al. (2006), the away-from-home market accounts for about half of total U.S. food expenditures in 2004, as shown in Figure 1. Based on a 2006 survey of 700 consumers living in New Jersey, Stewart et al. (2006) reported that almost three-quarters of people surveyed usually eat out at least once a week (See Figure 2).

According to The 2011 Restaurant Industry Forecast by National Restaurant Association, there are approximately 960,000 restaurant locations in the United States. The restaurant-industry sales are expected to reach a record high this year at $604 billion, an increase of 3.6% over 2010. The rapid growth of the restaurant industry indicates a more competitive business environment where managers seek to learn more about consumer characteristics and their dining behaviors. However, as the world is entering the era of information technology, the prevalence of the Internet has not only changed the traditional way restaurants “restore” people, but also changed the way people dine out.

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\(^1\) Source: http://wiki.answers.com/Q/Where_does_the_word_restaurant_come_from
\(^2\) Source: http://wiki.answers.com/Q/Where_does_the_word_restaurant_come_from
Figure 1 Food at home versus Away-from-home food


Figure 2 How frequently do people eat out?

According to Internet World Stats (2011), the number of worldwide Internet users has reached 2.095 billion. The advent of the Internet provides restaurants with additional
opportunities to attract customers and also enables communications among consumers. Pantelidis (2010) found that many customers now consult not only friends and relatives when they are seeking a restaurant, but also online guides and social media websites. There are two ways consumers can search and share dining information online. One is via review websites, such as Google Reviews, Zagat.com, CitySearch.com. BizGrader (2010) reports that 89 percent of consumers say they have researched a restaurant online before dining there. Of those 89 percent, 33 percent view other consumers’ reviews online prior to dining. These review websites allow consumers to provide reviews of and feedback on products and service, and to share dining experience with other consumers. Another way consumers can search and share dining information online is via social networking websites, such as Facebook.com, Twitter.com, MySpace.com, etc. Take Facebook fan page for example. Many restaurants have their own Facebook fan pages. A fan page allows consumers to post comments, exchange photos and videos, and even get promotions and coupons. For instance, one post from Applebee’s fan page wall said “I love your original honey mustard so much! I wish you could bring it back...Could you think about maybe doing like Starbucks does with pumpkin spice and make your original honey mustard seasonal?” Applebee’s responded “That sounds so good right now! It is always a possibility, however we are always innovating our menu! Thanks for the feedback!” This is an example of how consumers are being listened to by the company on social networking websites. Similarly, consumers are also communicating with other consumers on social networking websites. A good example might be a customer posting a video on Starbucks’ fan page about a 17-month-old child enjoying his first Frappuccino, commented and “liked” by many other fans (Zhang et al., 2010).
Review websites have drawn enough attentions from both managers and researchers. Social networking websites, on the other, are relatively less studied. With social media networks such (e.g. blogs) gaining more importance with consumers, both practitioners and researchers have started to look at social networking websites as a new channel to reach consumers. Social networking websites have huge potential for companies, since such websites help companies to “easily identify their target customers and to instantly distribute information to a broader scope of customers” (Zhang et al., 2010, p.1). Hence, this research study proposes the following questions: How frequently do people use social networking websites for dining information search and sharing? What types of consumers use social networking websites for such purposes? What factors influence their search and sharing activities on social networking websites?

With the above questions in mind, this study needs to look at consumers, since they are the driving force of all marketing strategies. Consumers are a large group of people with various subgroups and segmentations. This research study is focused on one particular group of consumers: the Generation Y consumers. There are two reasons why Generation Y becomes the focus of this study. First of all, Generation Y is dominantly the largest group of social networking websites users. Facebook, MySpace, etc. are mostly for the young (Ortutay, 2009). This research study is looking at consumers’ use of social networking websites. Growing up with the Internet, Generation Y consumers are heavy users of social networking websites. They interact with friends on social networking websites, such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, Flickr, etc. They also like to “showcase retail products on their Facebook page, get insider information about brands from tweets, connect and dialog with like-minded shoppers on Facebook Fan pages,
customize what they’re buying” (Palmer, 2009b). Thus, the highly sociable and technology savvy (Metcalf, 2006) Generation Y group draws the researcher’s attention. Secondly, Generation Y group is a powerful group of consumers. Today’s Gen Y teens are tomorrow’s wage earners (Gronbach, 2000a). It is important for both researchers and managers to target Generation Y consumers, since they are very likely to carry early product recognition and branding into their more lucrative years (Metcalf, 2006). To reach this powerful group of consumers, it is important for marketers to get inside their heads and understand where they spend their time and money, and what moves them (Gronbach, 2000a).

Hence, there are three main objectives of this study. First, this study is going to describe Generation Y’s use of social networking websites for dining information search and sharing. The second purpose of this study is to explore Generation Y’s dining decision-making styles. Third, this study is going to investigate whether consumer characteristics and gender difference influence Generation Y’s dining information search and sharing behavior on social networking websites. Specifically, three consumer characteristics will be examined: consumer decision-making styles, consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence, and consumer opinion leadership.

The study is organized as follows: To begin with, this study reviews literature on social networking websites, characteristics of Generation Y consumers and on concepts regarding consumer decision-making styles, consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence, and consumer opinion leadership. By reviewing previous literature, this study identifies the gap between previous research results and the current issue that needs to be answered, which leads to certain research questions. Then, there is detailed methodology
regarding data collection, survey design, measurement scale, and data analysis. Research results and findings are also discussed, as well as certain limitations of the study and recommendations for future research.
Social Networking Websites

Social networking websites have grown enormously in popularity since the first recognizable social networking website SixDegrees.com was launched in 1997 (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). According to Boyd and Ellison (2007, p.211), social networking websites are defined as “web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system”.


Figure 3 Age distribution of social networking websites users in 2008 and 2010
Social networking websites users are mostly people under the age 35. As shown in Figure 3, in 2008, 28% of social networking websites users were between 18-22, 40% were between 23 and 35, 22% were 36 and 49, 9% were between 50 and 65, and 2% were 65 plus. In 2010, 16% of social networking websites users were between 18-22, 32% were between 23 and 35, 26% were between 36 and 49, 20% were between 50 and 65, and 6% were 65 plus. Though people above 35 started to catch up in 2010, still nearly half of the social networking websites users are under 35.

Social networking websites place emphasis on building online connections among people who share interests and activities and provide ways for users to interact with each other online (Uhrig et al., 2010). By creating new channels for consumers to connect both with companies and with other consumers, social networking websites have changed the way people shop and dine. Nowadays users of social networking websites can follow companies and restaurants on social networking websites such as Twitter.com and Facebook.com, where they can post comments, initiate discussions, and expect to find great deals that are available on these company-sponsored pages. Understanding the fact that social networking websites are gaining popularity among consumers, companies have also started to notice the huge potential of these websites as an effective marketing tool (Zhang et al., 2010). Retailers and restaurants are beginning to incorporate social networking websites into their dissemination efforts, since these websites allow them to easily identify their target consumers and to efficiently distribute information to a broader scope of consumers (Zhang et al., 2010). As restaurant marketers are increasingly turning to social networking websites to compete for diners, it is important to study diners’ information search and sharing behaviors on social networking websites. Thus, one of the
main purposes of this study is to investigate diners’ use of social networking websites for
dining information search and sharing.

Having seen the large number of young people using social networking websites,
this study now reviews literature on Generation Y.

**Generation Y**

Generation Y is also know as the Millennials, Generation Next, Net Generation,
Echo Boomers, etc.\(^3\) There are no exact dates for when Generation Y starts and ends.
Different sources have different opinions. Some researchers have used birth years ranging
from 1977 to 1997 (Alch, 2000; Farris et al., 2002; Bakewell & Mitchell, 2003, etc.).
Others define Generation Y as those born between 1980 and 2000 (Apresley, 2010), or
similarly, between 1980s and late 1990s (Jang et al., 2011). Commentators tend to use
birth dates ranging somewhere from the mid-1970s to the mid 1990s\(^4\). This study uses the
birth year range of 1977-1997 as a criterion of Generation Y.

With over 70 million individuals, Generation Y makes up 25% of the population
(Apresley, 2010). Often the children of the Baby Boomers, Generation Y consumers have
a tremendous impact in today’s society (Farris et al., 2002). They think and shop
differently from their Baby Boomers parents. Today’s Generation Y is “undoubtedly the
wealthiest generation to have grown up in the U.S. in the history of the nation” (Farris et
al., 2002, p.98). They spend $100 weekly on disposable goods, which accounts for $150
billion dollars annually (Apresley, 2010). Stereotyping them as “just kids” without the

\(^3\) Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Y

\(^4\) Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Y
cash to spend (Gronbach, 2000a; Gronbach, 2000b), some marketers tend to have ignored Generation Y consumers. However, not paying attention to the Generation Y market is one the biggest mistakes a marketer can make. Today’s Gen Y teens are tomorrow’s wage earners” (Gronbach, 2000a). As they move into the next stage of their life cycle, they will be utilizing the same consumer habits they have developed through their teenage years (Farris et al., 2002). They will carry early product recognition and branding into their more lucrative years (Metcalf, 2006). To reach this powerful group of consumers, it is important for marketers to get inside their heads and understand where they spend their time and money, and what moves them (Gronbach, 2000a). There must be changes in the firm’s marketing strategies as this particular segment of the market makes lifestyles changes (Farris et al., 2002). Thus it is important to first see what particular traits Generation Y consumers exhibit. By reviewing previous research studies, this study summarizes characteristics of Generation Y consumers from three aspects: their awareness of technology & social media, their awareness of brand & trend, and their dining behavior.

(1) Awareness of technology & social media

Generation Y youth are techno-literate and media & advertising-savvy (Farris et al., 2002). They are highly sociable and technology-savvy (Metcalf, 2006). While people of all ages embrace technology, Generation Y grew up with it (Palmer, 2009b). Among their “must haves” are accessories such as cell phones and pagers (Gronbach, 2000a). What previously were defined as technology advancements by other generations are now considered necessities by Generation Y. According to an interview report (Palmer,
with consumer psychologist Kit Yarrow, technology was called
the “third hand and second brain” of Generation Y. They are used to getting information
from the Internet. They are not reading newspapers. Instead, they use Google or online
news portals to get their news (Sheahan, 2004). They also use the Internet to find
information about products and to make better-informed decisions about consumption
(Alch, 2000). They make purchase decisions based on different criteria from generations
before them. Social media such as Facebook.com, MySpace.com, and Twitter.com play a
huge role in how they live their lives, and how they interact with their friends and family
(Apresley, 2010). Generation Y-ers do their window-shopping online, visiting blogs and
online resources to read reviews of products written by fellow customers (Sheahan,
2005). They like to “showcase retail products on their Facebook page, get insider
information about brands from tweets, connect and dialog with like-minded shoppers on
Facebook Fan pages, customize what they’re buying” (Palmer, 2009b). They are
“notorious for publicizing every aspects of their lives” (Apresley, 2010, p.2). According
to Lyon (2010), they are the “emerging micro-blogger class”.

(2) Awareness of brand & trend

Generation Y-ers are concerned about image (Farris et al., 2002). They demand
the latest trends in record time (Morton, 2002). They put fashion first, and are often
studied by marketers as the leaders in new fashion trends (Mindcomet, 2006a;
Mindcomet, 2006c). They embrace brand names and love labels (Sheahan, 2005). For
example, many Generation Y-ers tend to turn away from department stores to high-end
brands for their clothing needs (Mindcomet, 2006c). According to Mui (2004), designer
labels account for 7% of consumer purchases in the U.S., whereas among teen purchasers, this amount doubles to 14%. No matter what they are buying, Generation Y-ers prefer brands with a core identity. They care about whether a product is “credible on the street” (Morton, 2002). They are perhaps the most brand-sensitive consumer group in history (Lukovitz, 2009). Hoey (2008) referred to Generation Y as “fashionistas”, who embrace brand names and seek out apparel that fits with their leisurely lifestyle. They are intellectually curious individuals who enthusiastically discover the latest trends (Lyon, 2010). One premise of Generation Y’s love for brand is that they have time and money. Due to the fact that usually both parents work outside the home, Generation Y-ers are self-sufficient, responsible, and mature (Gronbach, 2000a). They are raised in consumerism (Metcalf, 2006). They are not too concerned about cost and they desire choices (Farris et al., 2002). Generation Y shoppers are not as cynical about advertising as Generation X and the Baby Boomers. In contrast, they are more “brand conscious and loyal” (Gronbach, 2000a, p.45). They are fashion, trendy, and brand conscious. At the same time, they also change brand loyalties quickly, making themselves hard to reach by marketers who wish to embrace their fast change (Morton, 2002).

(3) Dining behavior

Generation Y-ers like to eat out (Sheahan, 2005). A large portion of their expenditure is on food and drinks in the restaurant industry (Apresley, 2010). The average Generation Y eats out more than three times a week, and the frequency is twice that of the rest of the population (Sheahan, 2005). According to Lukovitz (2009), Generation Y diners like to hang out at informal settings. Dining venues that offer a wide
collection of foods are particularly their favorites. According to a recent report from Center for Culinary Development (2009), this “mega-consumer group” grew up with unprecedented menu options, and will thus demand updated food and beverage choices. They are thrill-seekers who crave heightened eating experience (e.g. intense and global flavors, etc.).

Being technology-savvy also lets Generation Y diners exhibit unique dining behaviors that are less common among their previous generations. According to Lukovitz (2009), Generation Y diners use networking technologies in food-centric ways. They are getting used to downloading menus, placing orders online, subscribing to recipes, and ordering information services. As Apresley (2010) pointed out, the ability to make reservations and check out a new restaurant establishment online are nowadays of vital importance to Generation Y. This conveys special information to restaurateurs: if they do not offer this kind of online interactions, they could be losing out on a huge number of potential patrons.

Having seen the peculiar traits Generation Y consumers exhibit, it is not hard to add a “notoriously fickle consumer group” title to them (Morton, 2002). This further reinforces restaurateurs’ needs to understand how to satisfy this population, in order to successfully market to this generation (Jang et al., 2011). In the very near future, Generation Y is expected to emerge as a major group in the restaurant industry. They will have a powerful influence as its members grow through life stages (Morton, 2002). As Jang et al. (2011) noted, they are the most frequent patrons of all types of restaurants; they have enormous purchasing power; and they have serious influence on their parents’ and friends’ purchase decisions.
With the increase in advertising spending on social networking sites, advertisers have declared social networking sites an extremely viable means of reaching the valuable Generation Y demographic (Mindcomet, 2006b). Often having been accused of being “technology laggards” (Namasivayam et al., 2000), the restaurant industry this time does not want to be left behind. According to Mindcomet (2006b), categories such as food, automotive, and retail, have delved into advertising on social networking websites, in an effort to reach the Generation Y audience. Thus one of the main objectives of this study is to understand how and how often Generation Y-ers use social networking websites for dining information search and sharing. Since Generation Y covers a wide range of population from teens to people in their early 30’s, it is hard to conduct a research study that covers all subgroups of Generation Y. This study focuses on one specific subgroup of Generation Y, college students, to make inferences for Generation Y consumers.

Consumer Characteristics

Having defined the behaviors that Generation Y consumers exhibit, this study now looks inside Generation Y and study their basic consumer characteristics. In other words, this study reviews literature on some fundamental concepts of consumer characteristics. The three concepts that can be seen as the cornerstones of consumer behavior studies are consumer decision-making styles (Sproles & Kendall, 1986), consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence (Bearden et al., 1989), and consumer opinion leadership (Reynolds & Darden, 1971). This study reviews these three concepts one by one and discusses the applicability of these concepts to Generation Y’s dining behavior.
(1) Consumer decision-making styles

Consumer decision-making styles are prominent areas of interest in consumer behavior studies (Tai, 2005). A consumer decision-making style is “a mental orientation characterizing a consumer’s approach to making choices (Sproles & Kendall, 1986, p. 268). Sproles & Kendall (1986) then identified eight types of decision-making styles:

Style 1 Perfectionistic consumers: they search for the very best quality in products and are not satisfied with the “good enough” product.

Style 2 Brand conscious consumers: they tend to buy the more expensive, well-known brands and are likely to believe that a higher price means better quality. They also appear to prefer best selling, advertised brands.

Style 3 Novelty-fashion conscious consumers: they are likely to gain excitement and pleasure from seeking out new things.

Style 4 Hedonistic/recreational consumers: they find shopping pleasant. They shop just for the fun of it.

Style 5 Price conscious consumers: they look for sales prices. They are concerned with getting the best value for their money.

Style 6 Impulsive consumers: they do not plan their shopping. They shop spontaneously. They appear to be unconcerned about how much they spend.

Style 7 Confused by over-choice consumers: they have difficulty making choices from many brands and stores. They experience information overload.

Style 8 Habitual/brand loyal consumers: they have favorite brands and have formed habits in choosing brands.
These eight styles together constitute a Consumer Style Inventory (CSI). Consumer decision-making style is a basic consumer personality, analogous to the concept of personality in psychology (Sproles & Kendall, 1986). Thus, it is likely to influence a variety of shopping related behavior. This study is going to look at the influence of consumer decision-making styles on Generation Y’s use of social networking websites for dining information search and sharing. Before using the concept of decision-making styles, it is important to first learn the contexts in which it has been examined.

Based on a broad scope of literature review, this study finds that consumer decision-making styles have been empirically validated in a variety of studies. For example, Hafstrom et al. (1992) studied Korean college students and found that price conscious style and habitual/brand-loyal style are not reliable. They also defined a new style unique to Korean sample: time-energy conserving style. Durvasula et al. (1993) did a survey among business-major undergraduates from New Zealand. Their results provided overall support for the eight decision-making styles. Lysonski et al. (1995) analyzed cross-country validity of consumer decision-making styles and found that the eight decision-making styles appeared to be more applicable to more developed countries. Fan & Xiao (1998) studied Chinese college students. They proposed several extra styles apart from the original eight decision-making styles and found five of them valid: brand conscious style, quality conscious style, price conscious style, time conscious style, and information utilizing style. Siu & Hui (2001) examined the shopping behavior of Chinese female shoppers. Their overall results provided a general support to decision-making styles, though reliabilities are low for four styles: price conscious style,
impulsive style, confused by over-choice style, and habitual/brand-loyal style. Siu et al. (2001) used business-major undergraduates and found low reliabilities for price conscious style and habitual/brand-loyal style. Bakewell & Mitchell (2003) studied Generation Y female consumers in the United Kingdom and identified five new styles: recreational quality seeking style, recreational discount seeking style, shopping & fashion uninterested style, trend setting loyal style, and time/money conserving style. Mitchell & Walsh (2004) investigated gender difference in decision-making styles in Germany. They identified four common styles shared by both genders: brand conscious style, perfectionist style, confused by over-choice style, and impulsive style. They also identified five unique styles for each gender, respectively. Five unique male styles are satisfying style, enjoyment-variety seeking style, fashion-sale seeking style, time restricted style, and economy seeking style. Five unique female styles are novelty-fashion conscious style, recreational style, quality conscious style, time-energy conserving style, and variety seeking style. More recently, Mokhla & Salleh (2009) studied Malaysian undergraduates to investigate gender difference in decision-making styles. Six common styles were identified: brand conscious style, quality conscious style, fashion conscious style, confused by over-choice style, satisfying style, and value seeking style. Two unique male styles are brand loyal style and time-energy conserving style. Three unique female styles are price conscious style, recreational style, and shopping-avoiding style. It is not hard to see, that most of the previous studies validated consumer decision-making styles in general shopping context. Hardly any studies have applied the concept to the restaurant industry or dining context. To fill this gap, this study is making a first attempt to apply Sproles & Kendall (1986)’s eight consumer decision-making styles to casual dining.
context. Based on the original definitions of the eight decision-making styles proposed by Sprles & Kendall (1986), this study modifies the wording of each definition to match dining context.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision-making Styles</th>
<th>Definitions in casual dining context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perfectionistic, High-quality conscious</strong></td>
<td>They are quality-oriented diners. They choose a restaurant primarily because of the food quality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Price conscious</strong></td>
<td>They care more about food price. They are more likely to prefer places that will give them the best value of their money.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brand conscious</strong></td>
<td>They choose a restaurant because of its brand and reputation. They are also likely to choose relatively expensive restaurant since they believe “price equals quality”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Novelty-fashion conscious</strong></td>
<td>They look more into restaurant styles and like to try new things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recreational, hedonistic</strong></td>
<td>They simply enjoy the experience of dining out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Habitual, brand-loyal</strong></td>
<td>They frequent their favorite brands of restaurants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Impulsive, careless</strong></td>
<td>They have no specific reasons to dine out and are very random in choosing a restaurant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Confused by over-choice</strong></td>
<td>They find it hard to choose a restaurant since they experience information overload from the many options.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Consumer decision-making styles in casual dining context. Revised based on Sproles & Kendall (1986)’s construct

Table 1 presents an initial adaption of consumer decision-making styles to casual dining context made by the author. The only modifications made were wordings to each definition. Since this study is transferring the concept from general shopping context to casual dining context, the original eight decision-making styles might not be completely adequate or applicable. It is possible that some of the styles do not apply to casual dining context. To better fit the concept, it is essential to test its validity and reliability. Thus, another objective of this study is to validate consumer decision-making styles to casual dining context.
Consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence is another important concept in consumer behavior studies. “An important determinant of an individual’s behavior is others’ influence” (Bearden et al., 1989, p.473). Consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence has long been a source of interest for marketers and consumer behavior researchers (Bailey, 2005). It has been conceptualized as a general personality trait that varies across individual consumers and is related to other consumer traits or behaviors (Ulrich, 2005).

Bearden et al. (1989) defined consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence as “the need to identify or enhance one’s image with significant others through the acquisition and use of products and brands, the willingness to conform to the expectations of others regarding purchase decision, and/or the tendency to learn about products and services by observing others and/or seeking information from others” (p.474). Fundamentally, high susceptibility indicates a tendency to be influenced by others in making decisions, while low susceptibility indicates more independence in decision-making (Clark & Goldsmith, 2006).

Several studies have examined the effects of consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence on consumer behavior. In a study investigating fashion attribute preference in early adolescents, Rose et al. (1989) found that susceptibility to interpersonal influence is positively associated with the importance placed on the display aspects of clothing. Ulrich (2005) found that, when it comes to wine brand choice, a consumer’s susceptibility to interpersonal influence affects his/her desired brand benefits, and further affects his/her final brand choice. Bailey (2005) studied the determinants of
consumers’ awareness and use of product review websites and found that consumers who are more susceptible to informational influence attach more importance to product review websites than do consumers who are less susceptible to informational influence. Clark and Goldsmith (2006) investigated consumer innovativeness. The results of their study showed that consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence is negatively correlated with innate innovativeness.

This study focuses on whether consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence has an influence on Generation Y’s use of social networking websites for dining information search and sharing. Similar to the concept of consumer decision-making styles, the concept of consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence has been primarily used in the general shopping context. This study, on the other hand, is focused on applying this concept to restaurant choosing behavior in a casual dining context. Thus, it is essential to test its validity and reliability before proposing its possible influence Generation Y’s dining information search and sharing.

(3) Consumer opinion leadership

While consumers might be influenced by others in making purchase decisions, they may as well affect others’ decisions. Consumers influence other consumers in several ways: they act as role models. Others imitate their purchase and consumption behavior; they communicate message via word of mouth and give advice to consumers that have less knowledge and experience with shopping (Flynn et al., 1996). Those consumers who have greater influence on others can be viewed as opinion leaders. The concept of opinion leadership purports that “some individuals exert a disproportionate
influence on the behavior of others in some given topic area” (Summers, 1970, p.178). More specifically, opinion leadership is one’s behavioral tendency and ability to influence the purchase decisions of others (Ruvio & Shoham, 2007). In short, opinion leadership is a consumer’s ability to influence other consumers’ opinions (Bailey, 2005).

The concept of opinion leadership is central to the study of interpersonal communication (Summers, 1970). Previous studies have examined the characteristics of opinion leaders, and have addressed the influence these opinion leaders have on other consumers’ purchasing behavior in a variety of shopping contexts. In a study of opinion leaders of women’s clothing fashion, Summers (1970) suggested that substantial differences exist between fashion opinion leaders and non-leaders on demographic, sociological, attitudinal, communication, and fashion involvement measures. He concluded that fashion opinion leaders represent a significant target market with high sales potential. These fashion opinion leaders also represent important exchange agents of fashion information. They are “also important as a market segment beyond their individual purchase activity” (Summers, 1970, p. 183). Reynolds and Darden (1971) found that opinion leadership is positively associated with fashion interest and mass media exposure. The concept of opinion leadership has also been used in the tourism industry. Jamrozy et al. (1996) conducted a study investigating involvement and opinion leadership in special-interest tourism, such as nature-based tourism, science tourism, and ecotourism. The results of their study indicated that opinion leaders take more trips and use slightly more information sources than do non-leaders. Some studies applied the concept of opinion leadership to today’s wide use of technology and the Internet. Lyons and Henderson (2005) investigated opinion leadership in a computer-mediated
environment, and found that opinion leaders possess significantly higher levels of enduring involvement, innovativeness, exploratory behavior and self-perceived knowledge than non-leaders. Bailey (2005) confirmed the positive relationship between e-opinion leadership and consumer awareness and use of product review websites, suggesting companies target high e-opinion leaders for their feedback and recommendations.

Having witnessed the importance of consumer opinion leadership to consumer behavior, this study is focused on validating and applying this concept to the casual dining context. This study also investigates the influence of consumer opinion leadership on Generation Y’s use of social networking websites for dining information search and sharing.
Chapter 3: Research Questions

Based on previous literature review, this study proposes several research questions. First of all, having seen the unique behaviors Generation Y consumers exhibit and their importance as a strong consumer group, it is important to study their minds. Specifically, it is essential to see whether the traditional consumer decision-making styles apply to them, especially in the casual dining context. Thus the first purpose of this research study is to answer the following question:

**R₁**: What are Gen Y consumers’ dining decision-making styles?

Being highly sociable and technology-savvy, Generation Y consumers are increasing their use of social networking websites. They not only interact with family and friends, but also discuss products they purchase, and search for dining information on social networking websites. However, to what extent do Generation Y-ers use social networking websites for such purposes still remains less investigated. Thus, the second research questions is:

**R₂**: How frequently do Generation Y consumers use social networking websites for dining information search and sharing?

Previous literature showed that basic consumer characteristics are helpful in explaining further consumer behaviors. Consumer decision-making styles, consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence, and consumer opinion leadership are basic
consumer characteristic that might have influence on consumer behaviors. Thus the third research questions is:

**R₃**: Do consumer characteristics (such as consumer decision-making styles, consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence, and consumer opinion leadership) influence Generation Y’s dining information search and sharing behavior on social networking websites?

To further analyze Generation Y, gender difference is also an important issue. Thus, the fourth research questions is:

**R₄**: Are there differences between male and female Gen Y in their use of social networking websites for dining information search and sharing?

Answers to these questions will have implications for researchers in a variety of fields, such as Generation Y studies, consumer behavior studies, and social media marketing studies. These research questions are also what marketers and restaurateurs are eager to understand. These questions will help marketers that are interested in the use of social media in their efforts to reach consumers.
Chapter 4: Methodology

Data collection

A self-administered survey was conducted among undergraduate students from the Consumer Sciences Department of a Midwestern University in the United States. There are mainly two reasons that undergraduate students were selected as participants of the study. The first reason is that undergraduate students are mostly within the year range of Generation Y (Alch, 2000; Farris et al., 2002; Bakewell & Mitchell, 2003, Apresley, 2010; Jang et al., 2011, etc.). The second reason is that undergraduate students are relatively convenient to sample. The survey had been approved by IRB (Institutional Review Board) of the Midwestern University prior to data collection. Convenience sampling method was used.

A pilot study was conducted using 40 undergraduate students enrolled in a Hospitality Management class. The results of the pilot study were used to test the validity and reliability of the original scale and to make further modifications for measurement scale. After the pilot study, another 257 undergraduate students enrolled in four other Hospitality Management classes were chosen as participants. Data were collected in class. The researcher briefly introduced the topic and purpose of the study and disclosed information including investigator name and contact information, estimated time required to complete the survey, and contact information of ORRP (Office of Responsible
Research Practices) of the Midwestern University. Students who were enrolled in two or more classes at the same time were requested to not duplicate questionnaires. The researcher also assured students of the anonymity and confidentiality of the survey. Students were then asked to voluntarily participate in the survey. Each student who agreed to participate took a survey questionnaire from the researcher, completed it, and returned it to the researcher directly. The final sample consisted of 171 questionnaires. Two questionnaires were ineligible because of respondents’ ages. Another 7 questionnaires were discarded because they were incomplete. Thus, the final usable sample consisted of 162 usable responses, resulting in a response rate of 63.04%.

Pilot study

The purpose of the pilot study is to test the validity and reliability of the original scale of the three consumer characteristics, and to make further modifications for measurement scale. Thus, the pilot study used 40 undergraduate students enrolled in a Hospitality Management class. Two out of the 40 questionnaires were discarded because they were incomplete, resulting in a response rate of 95%.

The pilot study questionnaire includes items that measure consumer decision-making styles, consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence, and consumer opinion leadership. A copy of the questionnaire for the pilot study can be found in Appendix A.

(1) Consumer decision-making styles

The original instrument developed by Sproles and Kendall (1986) consists of 40 items, with five items measuring each of the eight factors. In consideration of the length
of the survey, the present study used a short-form measurement of consumer decision-making styles also developed by Sproles and Kendall (1986). The short-form measurement consists of 24 items, using the three items that loaded highest on each of the eight factors. These three-item subscales could be used with a modest sacrifice of reliability and validity (Sproles & Kendall, 1986, p.275; Shim & Gehrt, 1996, p.314).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perfectionist</td>
<td>Getting very good quality of food is very important to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When it comes to dining out, I try to get the very best or perfect choice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I usually try to dine at places that have the best overall food quality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price Conscious</td>
<td>I go to restaurants that have special offers as much as possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Less expensive restaurants are usually my choice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I look carefully to find the restaurants for the best value of money.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Conscious</td>
<td>Restaurants of well-known national brands are usually my choices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The more expensive restaurants are usually my choices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The higher the price of a restaurant, the better its food quality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novelty-fashion Conscious</td>
<td>I usually go to restaurants of the newest style.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I catch up with up-to-date dining trend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fashionable, attractive styling of restaurants is very important to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedonic-Recreational</td>
<td>Dining out is a pleasant activity to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dining out is one of the enjoyable activities of my life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It is worth my time to dine out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habitual/Brand-loyal</td>
<td>I have favorite restaurants I frequent over and over.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Once I find a restaurant I like, I stick with it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I go to the same restaurants each time I dine out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impulsive</td>
<td>I should plan my dining-out meals more carefully than I do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am impulsive when dining out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I often make careless decisions of restaurants that I later wish I had not.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confused By Over-choice</td>
<td>There are so many restaurants to choose from that I often feel confused.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes it’s hard to choose which restaurants to go to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The more I learn about each restaurant, the harder it seems to choose the best.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 A short-form measurement of consumer decision-making styles in casual-dining context

In the pilot study, the 24 statements were rephrased to match dining context, as
shown in Table 2. For example, the original statement “I should plan my shopping more carefully than I do” was modified to “I should plan my dining-out meals more carefully than I do”. See Table 2 for a display of the 24 items. In the pilot study, reliability analysis was performed using Cronbach’s Alpha. Table 3 provides a list of reliability coefficients compared to those of the original study done by Sproles and Kendall (1986). The results show that five out of the eight subscales have greater reliability than those found by Sproles and Kendall (1986). Namely, price conscious scale, hedonistic/recreational scale, habitual/brand-loyal scale, impulsive scale, and confused by over-choice scale. The other three subscales: perfectionistic, brand conscious, and novelty-fashion conscious have lower reliabilities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consumer Decision-making Styles</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha for Subscales</th>
<th>Current Study</th>
<th>Sproles &amp; Kendall (1986)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perfectionistic</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price Conscious</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Conscious</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novelty-Fashion Conscious</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedonistic/Recreational</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habitual/Brand-loyal</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impulsive</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confused by over-choice</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 A comparison of reliability coefficients for the eight consumer decision-making styles between current study and Sproles & Kendall (1986)’s study

Exploratory factor analysis was also performed to test the validity of the scale. Principal components method was used. Factors were extracted based on Eigen values that are greater than 1. Varimax rotation was used. While the reliability results looked

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5 Based on a three-item subscale which was reported as a reliable and valid short-form test (Sproles & Kendall, 1986, p.275; Shim & Gehrt, 1996, p.314)
reasonably well, the EFA results were quite confusing. Most of the items did not load clearly. One of the possible reasons is that the scale was transferred from general shopping context to casual dining context. It is very likely that some of the items or even dimensions were not applicable in a casual dining context. The unclear loadings of exploratory factor analysis results revealed that the measurement scale needed further modifications. Rewordings alone are insufficient. Items need to relate more to the dining context and represent dining decision-making. Hence, the researcher reviewed previous research studies on restaurant selection (Cullen, 2004), brand loyalty (Kim & Kim, 2004), and hedonic value (Babin et al., 1994; Jones et al., 2006; Ryu et al., 2010; Sakar, 2011). Several items were replaced based on further literature review. Further rewordings were made. The revised questionnaire was examined by a panel of hospitality management experts consisting of professors from the Consumer Sciences Department of a Midwestern University. Table 4 presents the revised measurement scale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Revised items after pilot study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perfectionist</td>
<td>*My standards and expectations for food are very high. (Sproles &amp; Kendall, 1986)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Everything of a restaurant has to be perfect to satisfy me. (Sproles &amp; Kendall, 1986)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I usually try to dine at places that have the best food and service. (Sproles &amp; Kendall, 1986, revised)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price Conscious</td>
<td>I go to restaurants that have special offers (e.g. happy hours, everyday specials, etc.) as much as possible. (Sproles &amp; Kendall, 1986, revised)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Price is important when selecting a restaurant. (Cullen, 2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I look carefully to find the restaurants for the best value of money.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Items that have been revised from the original Sproles & Kendall (1986)’s instrument

Table 4 Revised measurement of consumer decision-making styles
Table 4 continued

| Brand Conscious | Restaurants of well-known national brands are usually my choices.  
| The restaurant must be well-known for me to consider it. (Cullen, 2004)  
| The more expensive brands of restaurants are usually my choices.  |
| Novelty-fasion Conscious | I would try new food & cuisine out without knowing what to expect. (Cullen, 2004)  
| I catch up with up-to-date dining trend.  
| Stylish ambience and fashionable decor of a restaurant is very important to me. (Sproles & Kendall, 1986, revised)  |
| Hedonic/Recreational | Eating out is fun and pleasant. (Rye et al, 2010)  
| The time I spend in eating out is truly enjoyable to me. (Babin et al, 1994; Jones et al, 2006; Sakar, 2011)  
| I dine out not because I have to, but because I want to. (Babin et al, 1994; Jones et al, 2006; Sakar, 2011)  |
| Habitual/Brand-loyal | I have my favorite restaurants that I regularly visit. (Kim & Kim, 2004)  
| I usually use the same restaurant as my first choice. (Kim & Kim, 2004)  |
| Impulsive | I should plan my dining-out meals more carefully than I do.  
| I am impulsive when dining out.  
| I often make careless decisions of restaurants that I later wish I had not.  |
| Confused By Over-choice | There are so many restaurants to choose from that I often feel confused.  
| Sometimes it’s hard to choose which restaurants to go to.  
| The more I learn about each restaurant, the harder it seems to choose the best.  |

(2) Consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence

Bearden et al. (1989) developed a twelve-item scale measuring consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence, in which eight items measure normative influence and four items measure informational influence. In a study of consumer awareness and use of product review websites, Bailey (2005) used the four items that measure informational influence from Bearden et al. (1989). Since this study is also looking at consumer behavior on the Internet, the 4-item informational influence scale
was adopted, as it was in Bailey (2005)’s study. The Cronbach’s coefficient of the four items from the pilot study was .83, which indicated good reliability.

After discussions with the panel of experts, some rewordings were made to adapt the items to the context of dining. One item was dropped (To make sure I buy the right product or brand, I often observe what others are buying and using), because it was not applicable to dining context. This resulted in a final three-item scale, as shown in Table 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original items</th>
<th>Revised items after pilot study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I often consult other people to help choose the best alternative available from a product class.</td>
<td>I often consult other people to help choose the best restaurant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To make sure I buy the right product or brand, I often observe what others are buying and using.</td>
<td>DELETED, NOT APPLICABLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I have little experience with a product, I often ask my friends about the product.</td>
<td>If I have little experience with a restaurant, I often ask my friends about it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I frequently gather information from friends and family about a product before I buy.</td>
<td>I frequently gather information from friends and family about a restaurant before I go.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 Measurement of consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence

(3) Consumer opinion leadership

Similar to that of consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence, the reliability of consumer opinions leadership was tested using Cronbach’s Alpha. Rewordings were made after the pilot study.

The original scale of consumer opinion leadership was developed by Reynolds and Darden (1971). The original scale has five items. Bailey (2005) modified the five items to fit online shopping context. The pilot study adopted four of Reynolds and Darden (1971)’s five-item scale, because these four items are applicable in the casual dining context, as shown in the left column in Table 6. The Cronbach’s coefficient of the
four items from the pilot study was .83. After discussions with the panel of experts, some rewordings were made. Items were rephrased to represent dining decision opinion leadership, as shown in Table 6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original items</th>
<th>Revised items after pilot study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My friends and neighbors often ask my advice about buying products.</td>
<td>My friends and family often ask my advice about dining out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My friends come to me more often than I go to them for information about products.</td>
<td>My friends come to me more often than I go to them for information about restaurants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can think of at least two people whom I have told about choosing products in the last six months.</td>
<td>I can think of at least two people whom I have told about choosing restaurants in the last six months.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 Measurement of consumer opinion leadership

Measurement

The pilot study has validated the measurement scales of the three consumer characteristics. Necessary modifications were made. Then the measurement scales of the three consumer characteristics were built into the questionnaire for the final survey.

The questionnaire of the final survey consists of three parts. The first part asks participants to self-report their age and gender. The age question is also a screening question, asking participants to select the year range in which they were born, in order to screen out respondents that are not considered Generation Y. The four options include “1977-1983”, “1984-1990”, “1991-1997”, and “None of the above. Please stop here and thank you for your participation”.

The second part of the questionnaire consists of seven questions regarding participants’ use of social networking websites. The first question is an exploratory
question that asks participants what social networking websites they usually use. Based on literature review on social networking websites (Bilgihan et al., 2010; Jain, 2010; Moreau, 2011), the author included seven most popular social networking websites in the questionnaire (Facebook.com, Twitter.com, MySpace.com, LinkedIn.com, Flickr.com, Blogger.com, and Foursquare.com). For this exploratory question, respondents were asked to checkmark all the answers that apply. Respondents were also allowed to write down any other social networking websites that they use but were not among the seven most popular ones included in the questionnaire.

To adequately develop questions concerning dining information search and sharing, the author reviewed a variety of articles discussing social networking websites as sources of dining information (Bilgihan et al., 2010; Zhang et al., 2010), and interviewed Generation Y peers, friends, and colleagues. Finally six questions were developed, with three questions measuring the frequency of dining information search and the other three measuring the frequency of dining information sharing, as shown in Table 7. All of the six questions use a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very frequently).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Search</th>
<th>Do you “become a fan” of or “like” some restaurant pages on Facebook, or follow some restaurants on Twitter?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do you look for restaurant information on social networking websites?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do you click on ads of deals and coupons about dining on social networking websites?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing</td>
<td>Do you update status on Facebook about a restaurant you have been to?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do you check in locations of a restaurant on Facebook or Foursquare?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do you upload photos on Facebook, MySpace, Flickr, etc. about your dining experience?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 Measurement of dining information search and sharing behavior on SNWs
The third part of the questionnaire includes items measuring the three consumer characteristics that have been modified after the pilot study. All items use a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire displays items measuring the three consumer characteristics in a randomized order, so that participants will not see the items following specific patterns.

A copy of the final questionnaire can be found in Appendix B.

Data analysis

Data were analyzed using the SPSS 19.0 statistical package for Mac. Data analysis consists of three steps. Firstly, exploratory factor analysis and reliability analysis were performed on all the variables to test the validity and reliability of the measurement.

Secondly, descriptive statistics were gathered to describe the subjects’ age, gender, and their use of social networking websites. A diner style inventory was produced to profile respondents regarding their decision-making styles. Information on frequency, percentage, mean, median, standard deviation, etc. were obtained.

Thirdly, a series of Mann-Whitney U tests were performed, alternately using the three consumer characteristics and gender as grouping variables.
Chapter 5: Results

Demographics

As shown in Figure 4 and Table 8, over three-fourths (75.6%) of the participants reported that they were born between 1984 and 1990. Nearly 18% of the participants were born between 1991-1997. Less than 6% of the participants were born between 1977 and 1983. There were two (1.2%) participants that were not considered Generation Y and were screened out after the first question.

![Age distribution of participants](image)

**Figure 4 Age distribution of participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Were you born between?</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1977-1983</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984-1990</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>75.6%</td>
<td>81.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991-1997</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
<td>98.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the above</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 8 Age statistics of participants**
As shown in Figure 5 and Table 12, 58% of the respondents identified themselves as female and 42% as male.

![Gender distribution of participants](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Are you?</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>42.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>58.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9 Gender statistics of participants

Scale validity and reliability

(1) Dining decision-making styles

First of all, exploratory factor analysis was run to validate the revised measurement scale of dining decision-making styles. Principal components method was used. Factors were extracted based on Eigen values that are greater than 1. Varimax rotation was used. Most of the items loaded well on expected factors. Five out of the 8 decision-making styles were clearly extracted. The five styles are habitual/brand-loyal style, hedonistic/recreational style, price conscious style, confused by over-choice style,
and impulsive style. The other three styles, perfectionist style, brand conscious style, and novelty-fashion conscious style, are problematic. Items that measure these three styles have some cross-loadings.

Reliability analysis was then performed. The results are shown in Table 10. The three problematic styles also show low reliabilities: Perfectionist style has an alpha of .54, Brand conscious style has an alpha of .47, and novelty-fashion conscious style has an alpha of .41. It is noticeable that impulsive style has a low reliability of .33, though EFA results did not detect any problems with impulsive style. The EFA and reliability analysis results together implied the necessity to eliminate some of the items and even dimensions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dining Decision-making Styles</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha for Subscales</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perfectionistic</td>
<td>.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price Conscious</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Conscious</td>
<td>.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novelty-Fashion Conscious</td>
<td>.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedonistic/Recreational</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habitual/Brand-loyal</td>
<td>.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impulsive</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confused by over-choice</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10 Reliability coefficients of the eight dining decision-making styles

By first looking at the three styles (perfectionistic style, brand conscious style, and novelty-fashion conscious style) that have cross-loadings, the researcher ran EFA and reliability analysis back and forth to see whether the cross-loading problems can be solved by deleting some items or dimensions. Conceptually, perfectionist style is a strong dimension in general shopping, representing the type of shoppers that have extremely
high standards and expectations for the quality of the products. In the casual dining context, this dimension might be weaker. Dining out is an experience. Besides food quality, a lot of other factors such as service, atmosphere, location, and price might affect the overall quality of the dining experience. Thus, perfectionist style becomes abstract when describing diners’ decision-making styles. Novelty-fashion conscious style in a casual dining context also deviates from its original meaning in general shopping. While purchasing goods especially apparel goods, novelty-fashion style conscious has a more significant meaning, representing those shoppers who want the latest trend; whereas in a casual dining context, the idea of novelty-fashion conscious becomes blur. After a series of tests, the researcher found that brand conscious style became a clear dimension if items measuring perfectionist style and novelty-fashion conscious style were discarded. Also, among the three items measuring brand conscious style, one item has an extremely low corrected item-total correlation (.166) and a low factor loading (.423). Based on the above results, this study decided to eliminate two styles: perfectionist style and novelty-fashion style, and to keep brand conscious style with its two measuring items.

As for Impulsive style, which has a clear dimension by EFA results but has a low reliability (.33), this study decided to eliminate it as well for two reasons. The first reason is that its reliability coefficient (.33) is far from the acceptable value of .60, though EFA results show clear loadings of the items measuring Impulsive style. The second reason is that the concept of impulsive style conveys different meanings from its original conceptual meaning in the general shopping context. In general shopping, consumers might shop spontaneously for items they do not need, or items that are not on their shopping lists. However, in casual dining, impulsive style does not mean that diners look
for restaurants while they are not hungry for food, but rather that they need food but choose restaurants impulsively, or without specific criteria.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision-making Styles</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Loadings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Habitual/Brand-loyal</td>
<td>Once I find a restaurant I like, I stick with it.</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have my favorite restaurants that I regularly visit.</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I usually use the same restaurant as my first choice.</td>
<td>.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedonistic/Recreational</td>
<td>The time I spend in eating out is truly enjoyable to me.</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eating out is fun and pleasant.</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I dine out not because I have to, but because I want to.</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price Conscious</td>
<td>Price is important when selecting a restaurant.</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I look carefully to find the restaurants for the best value of money.</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I go to restaurants that have special offers (e.g. happy hours, everyday specials, etc.) as much as possible.</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confused by Over-choice</td>
<td>Sometimes it is hard to choose which restaurants to go to.</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The more I learn about each restaurant, the harder it seems to choose the best.</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There are so many restaurants to choose from that I often feel confused.</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Conscious</td>
<td>Restaurants of well-known national brands are usually my choices.</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The restaurant must be well-known for me to consider it.</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11 Consumer decision-making styles in casual dining context: five factor model

After reducing the original eight consumer decision-making styles to five styles, EFA was performed again. Factor loadings are shown in Table 11. Five factors were extracted as expected: habitual/brand-loyal style (3-item), hedonistic/recreational style (3-item), price conscious style (3-item), brand conscious style (2-item), and confused by over-choice style (3-item).
(2) Other variables

After validating dining decision-making styles, this study tested the validity and reliability of the rest of the variables (Information search, information sharing, consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence, and consumer opinion leadership). The results are shown in Table 12. The table shows the reproduced results of a principal component factor analysis involving the items on consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence, consumer opinion leadership, dining information search, and dining information sharing. Again, Eigen values greater than 1 and varimax rotation method were used. The results show that items loaded on the appropriate factors. Assessment of the scales’ reliabilities was conducted using Cronbach’s Alphas. The reliability coefficients are .74 for consumer opinion leadership, .68 for consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence, .75 for dining information search, and .65 for dining information sharing. All values are acceptable. Accordingly, the items on each factor were summed. Means, medians, and standard deviations (shown in parentheses) of the sums were obtained and shown at the bottom of Table 10. The mean score on consumer opinion leadership scale is 14.55 (SD=3.15), while the median score is 15. The mean score on consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence scale is 10.56 (SD=2.51), while the median score is 11. The mean score on dining information search scale is 6.16 (SD=2.98), while the median score is 5. The mean score on dining information sharing scale is 6.07 (SD=2.69), while the median score is 6. For all of the four constructs, higher scores on the scales represent higher levels of the construct.
Table 12 Exploratory factor analysis results, Cronbach’s alphas, and descriptive statistics for variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Factor 1: Opinion Leadership</th>
<th>Factor 2: Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence</th>
<th>Factor 3: Information Search</th>
<th>Factor 4: Information Sharing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COL 3</td>
<td>.833</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COL 1</td>
<td>.817</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COL 2</td>
<td>.661</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COL 4</td>
<td>.533</td>
<td>.769</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSII 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>.769</td>
<td>.857</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSII 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>.721</td>
<td>.786</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSII 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>.686</td>
<td>.701</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alpha</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>14.55 (3.15)</td>
<td>10.56 (2.51)</td>
<td>6.16 (2.98)</td>
<td>6.07 (2.69)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Use of social networking websites

(1) General use of social networking websites

The three most popular social networking websites among the Generation Y participants are Facebook.com, Twitter.com, and LinkedIn.com. As expected, Facebook gets sweeping majority of votes. As shown in Figure 6 and Table 13, 97.6% of the respondents reported that they use Facebook, followed by Twitter (40.5%) and LinkedIn (15.3%). 4.3% of the respondents use Foursquare.com, 2.5% use Blogger.com, 1.8% use
Myspace.com and 1.8% use Flickr.com. Out of the total 267 responses (because respondents were allowed to check multiple choices, the total responses they checked were 267), 59.6% were Facebook, 24.7% were Twitter, 9.4% were LinkedIn, 2.6% were Blogger, 1.1% were MySpace and 1.1% were Flickr.

Figure 6 Participants use of social networking websites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Networking Websites</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>Percent of Respondents</th>
<th>Percent of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>97.6%</td>
<td>59.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LinkedIn</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foursquare</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blogger</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MySpace</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flickr</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13 Participants’ use of social networking websites

By allowing respondents to write down other social networking websites that were not listed on the questionnaire, seven more social networking websites were identified. Three respondents said they use Tumblr.com. Two said they use
YouTube.com. Besides, Polyvore.com, Yelp.com, Hootsuite.com, Umicit.com, and 2dopeboyz.com each got one vote. The results also show that every respondent uses at least one social networking website. This is consistent with the previous studies on Generation Y saying they are sociable and technology savvy (Metcalf, 2006).

(2) Dining information search on social networking websites

The means for the three items measuring information search are 2.17 (SD=1.244), 2.02 (SD=1.218), and 1.97 (SD=1.182), respectively, as shown in Table 14. For all of the three questions, over 60% of the respondents scored less than 3 (63%, 69.2%, and 70.4%, respectively), and approximately 15% - 17% of the respondents scored more than 3 (16.7%, 15.4%, and 15.5%, respectively). These figures indicate that, in general, most of the participants do search for dining information on social networking websites, though only at a moderate frequency. While more than half of the respondents remain less active on social networking websites, there are still some respondents who search for dining information on social networking websites very frequently.

For the first question (Do you “Become a fan” of or “like” some restaurant pages on Facebook, or follow some restaurants on Twitter?), 42% of the respondents said they do not follow restaurant pages at all, 21% of the respondents said they do such activities a little, 20.4% of the respondents remained neutral, 11.1% of the respondents said they do such activities frequently, and 5.6% of the respondents said they do such activities very frequently.

As for the second questions concerning the search of restaurant information (Do you look for restaurant information on social networking websites?), 48.8% of the
respondents said they do not search at all, 20.4% of the respondents said they search a little, 15.4% of the respondents showed neutral attitudes, 11.1% of the respondents said they search frequently, and 4.3% of the respondents said they look for restaurant information very frequently.

When asked the third questions that whether they “click on ads of deals and coupons about dining on social networking websites”, 50.6% of the respondents reported “not at all”, 19.8% of the respondents reported “a little”, 14.2% of the respondents remained neutral, 13% of the respondents said they click on deals and coupons frequently, 2.5% of the respondents said they do so very frequently.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you “Become a fan” of or “like” some restaurant pages on Facebook, or follow some restaurants on Twitter?</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>1.244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not At All</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you look for restaurant information on social networking websites?</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>1.218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not At All</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>48.8%</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you click on ads of deals and coupons about dining on social networking websites?</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>1.182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not At All</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82</td>
<td>50.6%</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.16</td>
<td>2.980</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14 Dining information search on social networking websites
(3) Dining information sharing on social networking websites

The means for the three items measuring information sharing are 2.25 (SD=1.155), 1.68 (SD=1.178), and 2.14 (SD=1.166), respectively, as shown in Table 15. For all of the three questions, over 60% of the respondents scored less than 3 (62.3%, 79.6%, and 63%, respectively), a moderate amount of respondents scored more than 3 (24.7%, 12.3%, and 15.5%, respectively), indicating that respondents do share dining information on social networking websites, though a large portion of them are still less active on such sharing activities.

On average, respondents scored highest on the question “Do you update status on Facebook about a restaurant you have been to?” (mean=2.25). 32.7% of the respondents said they do not update status about a restaurant at all, 29.6% of the respondents said they do so a little, 21% of the respondents remained neutral, 21% of the respondents said they do so frequently, and 3.7% of the respondents said they do so very frequently.

On average, respondents scored lowest on the question “Do you check in locations of a restaurant on Facebook or Foursquare?” (mean=1.68). 69.1% of the respondents said they do not check in locations at all, 10.5% of the respondents said they do so a little, 8% of the respondents remained neutral, 8% of the respondents said they check in locations frequently, and 4.3% of the respondents said they do so very frequently.

The average score is 2.14 for the question that asked about respondents whether they upload photos about dining experience on social networking websites. 41.4% of the respondents said they do not upload photos at all, 21.6% of the respondents said they do
so a little, 21.6% of the respondents remained neutral, 13% of the respondents said they upload photos frequently, and 2.5% of the respondents said they do so very frequently.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you update status on Facebook about a restaurant you have been to?</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>1.155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not At All</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.7%</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Frequently</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you check in locations of a restaurant on Facebook or Foursquare?</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>1.178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not At All</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>112</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69.1%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Frequently</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you upload photos on Facebook, MySpace, Flickr, etc. about your dining experience?</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>1.166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not At All</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41.4%</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Frequently</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>6.07</td>
<td>2.687</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15 Dining information sharing on social networking websites

Consumer decision-making styles

Table 16 presents the summary data for consumer decision-making styles in a casual dining context. These data were calculated by adding the scores of the three items for each factor. This adding yields scores ranging from 3 to 15 for each respondent on each factor. The column “three-item scale median” represents the medians of the added scores. The scores were broken down into three groups (low group of scores from 3 to 6, medium group of scores from 7 to 11, and high group of scores from 12 to 15) according

---

6 Brand Conscious style is measured by two items only, while all the other four styles are measured by three items. To make the final scores comparable, the sum of scores of the two items of Brand Conscious style was multiplied by 3/2.
to Sproles and Kendall (1986)’s classification. The percentages of respondents scoring high to low on each scale are calculated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision-making styles</th>
<th>Three-item Scale Median</th>
<th>Three-item Scale Mean</th>
<th>Percentage Scoring:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>High (12-15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habitual/Brand-loyal</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedonistic/Recreational</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price conscious</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confused by over-choice</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand conscious*3/2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 16 Diner decision-making styles inventory

Based on the three-item scale mean, it is clear to see that, on average, respondents scored highest on hedonistic/recreational style (median=13, mean=12.7), followed by habitual/brand-loyal style (median=11, mean=11.2), price conscious style (median=11, mean=10.3), confused by over-choice style (median=9, mean=9.4), and finally brand conscious style (median=6, mean=6.9). This indicates that, of the five decision-making styles, hedonistic/recreational dining style represents the most typical casual dining behavior of Generation Y respondents. This conclusion can also be obtained by looking at the percentage of respondents scoring high to low on the hedonistic/recreational scale. Over three-fourths (76%) of the respondents scored high (12-15), and only 2% of the respondents scored low (3-6). This indicates that most of the respondents find dining out enjoyable and that they dine out because they want to rather than they have to. Also notice that the median score for hedonistic/recreational scale is 13, while the maximum score is 15. Such a large median indicates that respondents exhibit extremely high hedonistic/recreational characteristic when making dining decisions. The high score on
recreational/hedonistic scale indicates that our Generation Y respondents find dining out a pleasant activity. They simply enjoy the experience of dining out.

The second popular dining style enjoyed by Generation Y respondents is habitual/brand-loyal style (median=11, mean=11.2). On average, respondents appear loyal when choosing a casual dining restaurant. In other words, they have their favorite brands of restaurants that they consider each time when dining out. The percentage scores show that, only 2% of the participants scored low (3-6) on habitual/brand-loyal style, while 48% of them scored high (12-15), and 50% of the respondents scored medium (7-11). These scores imply that nearly half (48%) of the respondents are extremely brand-loyal when making dining decisions, the other half (50%) are more or less brand-loyal, while only a marginal amount (2%) of respondents exhibit low habitual or brand-loyal behavior. Nowadays as the competition heats up in the restaurant industry, brand-loyalty becomes a hot topic. How to retain loyal customers has been one of the most important things a restaurateur has to consider. Such a trend in loyal dining among Generation Y respondents re-enforces the need to study customer loyalty.

Besides hedonistic/recreational and habitual/brand-loyal style, respondents also appear to be price conscious (median=11, mean=10.3) in casual dining decision-making. 31% of the respondents scored high (12-15) on this scale, 61% scored medium (7-11), and 8% scored low (3-6). This supposes that, while enjoying dining out and having favorite brands in mind, Generation Y respondents are also value-for-money oriented and price conscious. They care about the best value for money they can get and consider whether they can afford the food and service they desire. According to Shim (1996) and
Shim & Gehrt (1996), price conscious style represents a utilitarian orientation. In this way, Generation Y respondents are also considered utilitarian diners.

The three-scale item median and mean for confused by over-choice style are 9 and 9.4 respectively. Such moderate scores indicate that on average Generation Y respondents exhibit some sort of confusion when making casual dining decisions. 23% of the respondents scored high (12-15) on this scale, 66% scored medium (7-11), and 11% scored low (3-6). This reveals two phenomena. Firstly, Generation Y respondents are sometimes having difficulties deciding which restaurants to go to. The more they learn about each restaurant, the harder it seems to choose the best place to go to. Secondly, there is truly a huge variety of restaurants Generation Y can choose from.

It is interesting to see that respondents scored lowest on brand conscious scale (median=6, mean=6.9). Only 2% of the respondents scored high (12-15) on this scale, 57% of them scored medium (7-11), and 41% of them scored low (3-6). This indicates that, on the whole, Generation Y respondents exhibit low brand awareness and are less brand conscious in making casual dining decisions. They are likely to choose a restaurant not because of its brand or reputation. This result is contrary to previous studies saying Generation Y embraces brand names and loves labels (Mui, 2004; Sheahan, 2005). One plausible explanation might be that, Generation Y consumers love brands in general shopping context, but care less about brand names in dining situation. It is also possible that Generation Y-ers are not as brand conscious as people thought them to be.
Factors influencing dining information search and sharing

The influence of three consumer characteristics as well as gender on Generation Y’s casual dining information search and sharing behavior was also investigated. There are altogether eight factors that might have impact on dining information search and sharing: five consumer decision-making styles, consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence, consumer opinion leadership, and gender. A series of Mann-Whitney U tests were performed. The results of factors influencing dining information search are presented in Table 17. The results of factors influencing dining information sharing are presented in Table 18.

Mann-Whitney U test is an equivalent of Student’s T test for nonparametric data. The data for this study were not normally distributed. On the basis of median splits of scores (refer to Table 10 and Table 16), respondents were divided into high and low groups on each scale. For example, the median score of habitual/brand-loyal style is 11. Then the score 11 has been used as a cut-off value to distinguish high habitual/brand-loyal group and low habitual/brand-loyal group. To unify the criterion for classifying high and low group, this study has put all medians into the low groups. In the case of habitual/brand-loyal style, low group includes those respondents who scored lower than or equal to 11; high group includes those who scored higher than 11. Similarly, low hedonistic/recreational group includes those who scored lower than or equal to 13; high hedonistic/recreational group includes those who scored higher than 13, etc. Gender group is a different case. It is naturally split into two groups: male group and female group.
After splitting each scale into two independent groups, several Mann-Whitney U tests were performed. Mann-Whitney U test is a significance test that assesses whether two independent groups have equally large values. As indicated in Table 17, among the five decision-making styles, confused by over-choice style has a significant impact on dining information search ($Z = -2.319$, $p = .020$). The mean rank for high confusion group is significantly higher than that of low confusion group, indicating that respondents who exhibit high confusion in casual decision-making tend to search for more dining information on social networking websites. As for the other four consumer decision-making styles, there are no significant differences in mean ranks, indicating no significant influence on dining information search.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Z-value</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>Mean rank&lt;sub&gt;L&lt;/sub&gt;&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Mean rank&lt;sub&gt;H&lt;/sub&gt;&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Habitual/Brand-loyal</td>
<td>-.073</td>
<td>.942 (NS)</td>
<td>81.76</td>
<td>81.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedonistic/Recreational</td>
<td>-.965</td>
<td>.335 (NS)</td>
<td>78.55</td>
<td>85.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price conscious</td>
<td>-.862</td>
<td>.389 (NS)</td>
<td>79.40</td>
<td>86.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confused by over-choice</td>
<td>-2.319</td>
<td>.020*</td>
<td>72.41</td>
<td>89.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand conscious</td>
<td>-1.325</td>
<td>.185 (NS)</td>
<td>76.73</td>
<td>86.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susceptibility to influence</td>
<td>-3.313</td>
<td>.001**</td>
<td>72.49</td>
<td>97.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion Leadership</td>
<td>-2.416</td>
<td>.016*</td>
<td>74.57</td>
<td>92.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographic</td>
<td>Z-value</td>
<td>p-value</td>
<td>Mean rank&lt;sub&gt;M&lt;/sub&gt;&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Mean rank&lt;sub&gt;F&lt;/sub&gt;&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-.922</td>
<td>.357 (NS)</td>
<td>77.55</td>
<td>84.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> = Low group. <sup>b</sup> = High group. <sup>c</sup> = Male. <sup>d</sup> = Female.

* p-value<.05
** p-value<.01

Table 17 Mann-Whitney U test results: Dining information search

Consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence has a significant impact on dining information search ($Z = -3.313$, $p = .001$). The mean rank for high susceptibility group is significantly higher than that of low susceptibility group, indicating that
respondents who are more susceptible to interpersonal influence tend to search for more dining information on social networking websites.

Consumer opinion leadership also has significant impact on dining information search ($Z = -2.146$, $p = .016$). The mean rank for high opinion leadership group is significantly higher than that of low opinion leadership group, indicating that respondents who exhibit high opinion leadership behavior tend to search for more dining information on social networking websites.

There is no significant difference between male and female groups. Gender does not influence dining information search.

The results of factors influencing dining information sharing are presented in Table 18. Among the five decision-making styles, price conscious style has a significant impact on dining information sharing ($Z = -1.945$, $p = .049$). The mean rank for high price conscious group is significantly higher than that of low price conscious group, indicating that respondents who are more price conscious in decision-making tend to share more dining information on social networking websites. As for the other four consumer decision-making styles, there are no significant differences in mean ranks, indicating no significant influence on dining information sharing.

Consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence has a significant impact on dining information sharing ($Z = -3.062$, $p = .002$). The mean rank for high susceptibility group is significantly higher than that of low susceptibility group, indicating that respondents who are more susceptible to interpersonal influence tend to share more dining information on social networking websites.
Consumer opinion leadership also has significant impact on dining information sharing \((Z = -2.852, p = .004)\). The mean rank for high opinion leadership group is significantly higher than that of low opinion leadership group, indicating that respondents who exhibit high opinion leadership behavior tend to share more dining information on social networking websites.

There is no significant difference between male and female groups. Gender does not influence dining information sharing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Z-value</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>Mean rank\textsubscript{L} \textsuperscript{a}</th>
<th>Mean rank\textsubscript{H} \textsuperscript{b}</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Habitual/Brand-loyal</td>
<td>-.472</td>
<td>.637 (NS)</td>
<td>79.84</td>
<td>83.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedonistic/Recreational</td>
<td>-1.484</td>
<td>.138 (NS)</td>
<td>76.95</td>
<td>87.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price conscious</td>
<td>-1.965</td>
<td>.049</td>
<td>76.71</td>
<td>92.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confused by over-choice</td>
<td>-1.556</td>
<td>.120 (NS)</td>
<td>75.07</td>
<td>86.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand conscious</td>
<td>-1.608</td>
<td>.108 (NS)</td>
<td>75.71</td>
<td>87.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susceptibility to influence</td>
<td>-3.062</td>
<td>.002**</td>
<td>73.16</td>
<td>96.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion Leadership</td>
<td>-2.852</td>
<td>.004**</td>
<td>73.31</td>
<td>94.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographic</td>
<td>Z-value</td>
<td>p-value</td>
<td>Mean rank\textsubscript{M} \textsuperscript{c}</td>
<td>Mean rank\textsubscript{F} \textsuperscript{d}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-.182</td>
<td>.856 (NS)</td>
<td>82.28</td>
<td>80.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{a} = Low group. \textsuperscript{b} = High group. \textsuperscript{c} = Male. \textsuperscript{d} = Female.

\* \(p\text{-value}<.05\)

\*\* \(p\text{-value}<.01\)

Table 18 Mann-Whitney U test results: Dining information sharing
Chapter 6: Conclusions

As more and more restaurant social media marketers are interested in the emerging Generation Y market, an understanding of Generation Y consumer behavior especially their use of social networking websites is crucial. The results of this study have confirmed one characteristic of Generation Y that various studies have found: highly sociable and technology savvy. Results show that Generation Y uses a wide a variety of social networking websites. The top three are Facebook.com, Twitter.com, and LinkedIn.com. A principal aim of this study is to collect information on Generation Y’s use of these social networking websites regarding dining information search and sharing. Data show that a certain number of Generation Y is very active on social networking websites for such activities, though still a large portion of them does not do such activities very frequently. On average, Generation Y diners search and share dining information on social networking websites at a moderate frequency. Even though Generation Y do not search and share dining information as frequently or substantially as expected, the results still hold managerial implications. Restaurants should start to recognize and utilize the power of social media. Bearing in mind the large number of Generation Y using social networking websites, restaurant marketers should be aware of the potential benefits they can get from social media marketing. If restaurants want to attract more eyeballs of Generation Y, they could open up new channels to reach Generation Y. For example, it is wiser to build up Facebook fan pages to connect with
diners, post commercials or promotions on social networking websites than to simply send out flyers and catalogues on the streets.

Another important aim of this study is to understand Generation Y’s dining decision-making styles in a casual dining context. Adopting the well-established Consumer Style Inventory to profile Generation Y dining orientation, this study identified five main decision-making styles of Generation Y diners: hedonistic/recreational style, habitual/brand-loyal style, price conscious style, confused by over-choice style, and brand-conscious style. Overall results have provided some support to the original consumer decision-making styles construct. It appears that three factors (perfectionist style, novelty-fashion conscious style, and impulsive style) have either unclear loadings or low reliability, and are thus excluded from the original inventory. The exclusion of these three factors indicates that, dining decision-makings are somewhat different from general shopping decision-makings. Such validity and reliability results also indicate that Generation Y diners are different from general shoppers.

Of the five dining decision-making style, hedonistic/recreational style appears to be the most popular style among Generation Y diners. This can be explained by the fact that life quality has improved over the decades and that Generation Y-ers are raised in a relatively peaceful and food-abundant time compared to their previous generations. The welfare of their life has changed their notions about food. Dining out really means enjoying oneself rather than simply getting food to most of the Generation Y diners. This is consistent with previous studies that have found Generation Y diners like to hang out at informal settings and dining venues that offer a great variety of food. This has special implications for restaurant marketers. To attract more Generation Y diners, a restaurant
could try creating a relaxing and recreational ambience, emphasizing the idea that dining is all about having fun.

The second most popular style enjoyed by Generation Y diners is habitual/brand-loyal style. Generation Y diners have their favorite brands and they like to consider them again when making restaurant decisions next time. Brand-loyalty has always been one of researchers’ and marketers’ favorite topics. As the competition becomes fiercer in the restaurant industry, restaurateurs are striving to learn about their diners. Generation Y’s high scores on habitual/brand-loyalty scale remind marketers of the profit they can get by retaining these loyal youngsters. If restaurants want to win more loyal customers, they should probably start considering Generation Y diners. Loyalty programs are no longer only for working class or parents of the families. Generation Y diners should also be their target, in the hope that these younger diners will remain loyal to their restaurants as they grow up and enter their more lucrative years.

The third most popular style is price conscious style. Generation Y diners take into consideration whether they can afford the food and service they desire. They care about the best value for money they can get from the restaurant they dine in. These results are not surprising. Most of Generation Y diners are still at all stages of school. They are less financially dependent than their elder generations. Though they like to dine out for fun and have favorite brands that they want to frequent, they are still utilitarian-oriented. This tells restaurateurs that, while creating recreational ambience and providing a variety of food options can be helpful, price should not be too fancy in order to attract Generation Y diners.
Apart from being hedonistic, brand-loyal, and price conscious, Generation Y
diners also appear to get confused sometimes when making casual dining decisions. Not
all of them, but a small portion of them, are confused by over-choice of restaurants. This
small portion of Generation Y finds it hard to choose the best place to go to when they
get overflowing information on each option. With too much information going on
everyday, even people as technology-savvy as Generation Y cannot escape from
information overload. It is normal for some of the Generation Y diners to experience
confusion by over-choice and get lost in the excessive options. This reinforces the needs
for restaurant marketers to impress their diners with all that they can do, such as using
clear and obvious facade, making impressive commercials, creating unique themes, etc.
In a word, restaurants should stand themselves out by advertising their highlights without
creating too much unnecessary information.

Surprisingly, Generation Y diners are not as brand conscious as expected. A very
possible reason is that this study is looking at the casual dining context. In the restaurant
industry, brand might not necessarily mean everything. While brand names are important,
the quality of food and service are more essential to a restaurant’s success. Also, unlike
fast food brands such as McDonald’s, which serves standardized food, casual dining
brands of restaurants are less consistent in quality, depending on services, different chefs,
locations, etc. This conclusion is encouraging for small and medium local brands of
restaurants. A restaurant does not have to be well-known national brand for Generation Y
to consider it. The results also have remarkable implications for well-know national
brands of restaurants. Brand names can bring profit to a restaurant, but it is not an all-
purpose marketing tool. After all, a restaurant has to understand its customers and provide the best overall quality of food and service.

In its influence on Generation Y’s dining information search and sharing on social networking websites, consumer decision-making style was not as overreaching as expected. Nevertheless, there is still evidence that this construct impacts dining information search and sharing in some ways. Mann-Whitney U test results show that confused by over-choice style has a significant impact on dining information search and that price conscious style has a significant impact on dining information sharing. From a theoretical point of view, this study has made a first attempt to relate online information search and sharing behavior with decision-making styles, and has confirmed that consumers of different decision-making styles do differ to some extent in online information search and sharing behavior. Managerially, a task that marketers have to undertake is catering to different styles of consumers on social networking websites. Since confused by over-choice style of diners search more information on social networking websites, restaurant marketers should target these diners by staying active on social networking websites. Take Facebook fan page for example, if a restaurant wants to attract more confused by over-choice information searchers, it can highlight important information on its fan page rather than overload all information. Also, price conscious diners are more likely to share dining information on social networking websites. This includes checking-in locations on Facebook and Foursquare. One thing a restaurant marketer can do to target these diners is to first of all review from Facebook fan page who have checked-in at their locations, and then to send out coupons and promotions to these people.
Consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence and consumer opinion leadership both have an impact on Generation Y’s use of social networking websites for dining information search and sharing. In addition, there are no gender difference in dining information search and sharing on social networking websites. Diners that are highly susceptible to interpersonal influence tend to do more information search and sharing on social networking websites than diners that are less susceptible. High opinion leadership diners also tend to do more information search and sharing on social networking websites than low opinion leadership diners. If restaurants want to attract more diners, they could target high opinion leadership and high susceptibility diners both offline and online for their feedbacks and recommendations, regardless of their gender, since these diners are more likely to generate feedback and e-WOM to others on social networking websites. Though no gender difference was found, any study that purports to explain consumer behavior needs to take into account the role of gender.
Chapter 7: Limitations and Future Research Directions

As with many research studies, this study has some limitations. A main concern is the sample this study has used. The sample for both pilot study and final survey consisted of undergraduate students from the Consumer Sciences Department of a Midwestern University in the United States. First of all, the sample size 161 for the final survey was not convincing enough. The sample size could be more convincing if more participants were recruited. Secondly, convenience sampling method was used. Hence the sample was not a probability sample. Additionally, this study used the birth year range of 1977-1997 as a criterion of Generation Y. Undergraduate students, which were mostly born between 1988 and 1993, met the requirements of Generation Y, but could not represent the whole span of Generation Y. All the issues with the survey sample limit the generalizability of this study to the whole Generation Y population. Future studies can consider involving as wide range of Generation Y as possible.

Using the Consumer Style Inventory to profile Generation Y diners is a time-consuming process. It requires repeating tests of validity and reliability and modifications of measurement scale. This study has used the three-item subscale of the original measurement scale and eliminated several dimensions after a series of validity and reliability tests. To develop a more accurate and comprehensive inventory for Generation Y diners, it is necessary to use the original full-item subscale, and if possible, to add more items into the scale that are dining specific. This way, not only some dimensions might
be eliminated, but also some new dimensions might be identified to profile Generation Y
diners. Nevertheless, given the exploratory nature of this study, it does make a first
target attempt to apply the Consumer Style Inventory to Generation Y consumers in a casual
dining context and it contributes to the appreciation of the importance of studying
Generation Y consumers.

The role of three consumer characteristics on Generation Y’s dining information
search and sharing on social networking websites was explored. It is necessary to take
into account other individual differences that might as well influence dining information
search and sharing on social networking websites, such as technology acceptance,
educational and family influence. Though Generation Y is on average technology savvy,
there is still a small portion of them that are not huge Internet fans and are not very active
on social networking websites.

Another limitation of this study comes with the measurement of dining
information search and sharing on social networking websites. Dining information search
and dining information sharing were each measured by three items. These items were
developed by the researcher through interviews with Generation Y peers. These items
might not cover every aspect of dining information search and sharing and require further
refinement in future research.

This study is centered on consumer behavior and has confirmed the importance of
social networking websites. Future studies can also examine social networking websites
from marketers’ and managers’ side, investigating ROI of social media.
References


presented at the 16th Annual Graduate Education and Graduate Student Research Conference in Hospitality and Tourism, Houston, TX


Appendix A: Sample Questionnaire of Pilot Study

Dear students,

Please complete this survey and return it to your professor. Thank you!

For the following questions, please circle the number on the rating scale that best describes your opinion. (In making your ratings, please circle ONLY ONE number on a single scale.)

Please think of your dining habit.

1. Getting very good quality of food is very important to me.
   strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5  strongly agree

2. When it comes to dining out, I try to get the very best or perfect choice.
   strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5  strongly agree

3. In general, I usually try to dine at places that have the best overall food quality.
   strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5  strongly agree

4. I go to restaurants that have special offers as much as possible.
   strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5  strongly agree

5. Less expensive restaurants are usually my choice.
   strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5  strongly agree

6. I look carefully to find the restaurants for the best value of money.
   strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5  strongly agree

7. Restaurants of well-known brands are usually my choices.
   strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5  strongly agree

8. The more expensive restaurants are usually my choices.
   strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5  strongly agree

9. The higher the price of a restaurant, the better its food quality.
   strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5  strongly agree
10. I usually go to restaurants of the newest style.  
   strongly disagree [ ] 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

11. I catch up with up-to-date dining trend.  
   strongly disagree [ ] 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

12. Fashionable, attractive styling of restaurants is very important to me.  
   strongly disagree [ ] 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

13. Dining out is a pleasant activity to me.  
   strongly disagree [ ] 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

14. Dining out is one of the enjoyable activities of my life.  
   strongly disagree [ ] 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

15. It is worth my time to dine out.  
   strongly disagree [ ] 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

16. I have favorite restaurants I frequent over and over.  
   strongly disagree [ ] 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

17. Once I find a restaurant I like, I stick with it.  
   strongly disagree [ ] 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

18. I go to the same restaurants each time I dine out.  
   strongly disagree [ ] 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

19. I should plan my dining-out meals more carefully than I do.  
   strongly disagree [ ] 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

20. I am impulsive when dining out.  
   strongly disagree [ ] 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

21. Often I make careless decisions of restaurants that I later wish I had not.  
   strongly disagree [ ] 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

22. There are so many restaurants to choose from that I often feel confused.  
   strongly disagree [ ] 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

23. Sometimes it’s hard to choose which restaurants to go to.  
   strongly disagree [ ] 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

24. The more I learn about each restaurant, the harder it seems to choose the best.  
   strongly disagree [ ] 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree
Now please consider your GENERAL shopping habit.

25. I often consult other people to help choose the best alternative available from a product class.
   
   strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

26. To make sure I buy the right product or brand, I often observe what others are buying and using.
   
   strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

27. If I have little experience with a product, I often ask my friends about the product.
   
   strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

28. I frequently gather information from friends and family about a product before I buy.
   
   strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

29. My friends and neighbors often ask my advice about buying products.
   
   strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

30. I sometimes influence the products my friends buy.
   
   strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

31. My friends come to me more often than I go to them for information about products.
   
   strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

3. I can think of at least two people whom I have told about choosing products in the last six months.
   
   Str2ongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

Thank you for your participation.

Please return the completed questionnaire to your professor.
Dear students,

Please complete this survey and return it to your professor. Thank you!

1. Were you born between?
   - ☐ 1977-1983
   - ☐ 1984-1990
   - ☐ 1991-1997
   - ☐ None of the above. Please stop here and thank you for your participation.

2. Are you?
   - ☐ male
   - ☐ female

3. What social networking website(s) do you use? (Check all that apply)
   - ☐ Facebook
   - ☐ Twitter
   - ☐ MySpace
   - ☐ LinkedIn
   - ☐ Flickr
   - ☐ Blogger
   - ☐ Foursquare
   - ☐ Others, please specify __________________________________________

For the following questions, please circle the number on the rating scale that best describes your opinion. (In making your ratings, please circle **ONLY ONE** number on each scale.)

4. Do you “become a fan” of or “like” some restaurant pages on Facebook, or follow some restaurants on Twitter?
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very frequently

5. Do you look for restaurant information on social networking websites?
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very frequently

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6. Do you click on ads of deals and coupons about dining on social networking websites?
   Not at all [1 2 3 4 5] Very frequently

7. Do you update status on Facebook about a restaurant you have been to?
   Not at all [1 2 3 4 5] Very frequently

8. Do you check in locations of a restaurant on Facebook or Foursquare?
   Not at all [1 2 3 4 5] Very frequently

9. Do you upload photos on Facebook, MySpace, Flickr, etc. about your dining experience?
   Not at all [1 2 3 4 5] Very frequently

Now think of your choice of casual-dining restaurants when you want to spend time with friends or family. Please rate the following statements:

10. I often make careless decisions of restaurants that I later wish I had not.
    Strongly disagree [1 2 3 4 5] Strongly agree

11. I usually use the same restaurant as my first choice.
    Strongly disagree [1 2 3 4 5] Strongly agree

12. There are so many restaurants to choose from that I often feel confused.
    Strongly disagree [1 2 3 4 5] Strongly agree

13. I look carefully to find the restaurants for the best value of money.
    Strongly disagree [1 2 3 4 5] Strongly agree

14. I can think of at least two people whom I have told about choosing restaurants in the last six months.
    Strongly disagree [1 2 3 4 5] Strongly agree

15. I catch up with up-to-date dining trend.
    Strongly disagree [1 2 3 4 5] Strongly agree

16. My standards and expectations for food are very high.
    Strongly disagree [1 2 3 4 5] Strongly agree

17. The more expensive brands of restaurants are usually my choices.
    Strongly disagree [1 2 3 4 5] Strongly agree

18. I dine out not because I have to, but because I want to.
    Strongly disagree [1 2 3 4 5] Strongly agree
19. I often consult other people to help choose the best restaurant.
   Strongly disagree [1 2 3 4 5] Strongly agree

20. I usually try to dine at places that have the best food and service.
   Strongly disagree [1 2 3 4 5] Strongly agree

21. I should plan my dining-out meals more carefully than I do.
   Strongly disagree [1 2 3 4 5] Strongly agree

22. Stylish ambience and fashionable décor of a restaurant is very important to me.
   Strongly disagree [1 2 3 4 5] Strongly agree

23. Restaurants of well-known national brands are usually my choices.
   Strongly disagree [1 2 3 4 5] Strongly agree

24. Eating out is fun and pleasant.
   Strongly disagree [1 2 3 4 5] Strongly agree

25. I would try new food & cuisine out without knowing what to expect.
   Strongly disagree [1 2 3 4 5] Strongly agree

26. The time I spend in eating out is truly enjoyable to me.
   Strongly disagree [1 2 3 4 5] Strongly agree

27. I sometimes influence my friends’ choices of restaurants.
   Strongly disagree [1 2 3 4 5] Strongly agree

28. I frequently gather information from friends and family about a restaurant before I go.
   Strongly disagree [1 2 3 4 5] Strongly agree

29. I am impulsive when dining out.
   Strongly disagree [1 2 3 4 5] Strongly agree

30. My friends and family often ask my advice about dining out.
   Strongly disagree [1 2 3 4 5] Strongly agree

31. Price is important when selecting a restaurant.
   Strongly disagree [1 2 3 4 5] Strongly agree

32. Sometimes it is hard to choose which restaurants to go to.
   Strongly disagree [1 2 3 4 5] Strongly agree

33. The more I learn about each restaurant, the harder it seems to choose the best.
   Strongly disagree [1 2 3 4 5] Strongly agree
34. Once I find a restaurant I like, I stick with it.
   Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5  Strongly agree

35. If I have little experience with a restaurant, I often ask my friends about it.
   Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5  Strongly agree

36. I have my favorite restaurants that I regularly visit.
   Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5  Strongly agree

37. Everything of a restaurant has to be perfect to satisfy me.
   Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5  Strongly agree

38. I go to restaurants that have special offers (e.g. Happy hours, everyday specials) as much as possible.
   Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5  Strongly agree

39. My friends come to me more often than I go to them for information about restaurants.
   Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5  Strongly agree

40. The restaurant must be well known for me to consider it.
   Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5  Strongly agree

Thank you for your participation.

Good luck with your finals!