

**THESIS PROPOSAL**

**Exploring an Experiential Marketing Phenomenon:**

**The Dining Experience**

**Taha Azizi**

**MSc (Mgt) Candidate, University of Lethbridge, 2010**

**MASTER OF SCIENCE IN MANAGEMENT**

Faculty of Management  
University of Lethbridge  
LETHBRIDGE, ALBERTA, CANADA

### **Abstract**

This research focuses on dining experience as an example of experience marketing using restaurant reviews as secondary data. The study will make use of qualitative and quantitative content analysis as well as hypotheses testing methods. In this study, the qualitative research method is used to derive particular concepts involved in the dining experience from the bodies of reviews. Similarly, quantitative content analysis methods will be used to provide rich and valuable information about the concepts explored from the qualitative data. Inferential statistics will be used in the study to test hypotheses about the relationships between elements in the dining experience context. To determine the elements of the dining experience and how they interact with each other, I briefly review the literature on the experience economy and the dining experience as well as the basic theories and studies that involve the dining context. I then propose a suggested model related to the dining experience. Next, I develop the research questions and present our research methods. Finally, the results of preliminary studies are illustrated, which reveal the effectiveness and applicability of the study in bringing about new outcomes to the field of dining experience that contribute to the body of knowledge in the field of experience economy.

*Keywords:* dining experience, experience marketing, hedonism, intentional behaviour, satisfaction

## **Exploring an Experiential Marketing Phenomenon: The Dining Experience**

### **Introduction and Problem Statement**

As economies grow the nature of the interaction between customers and producers changes incrementally. In turn, this changes businesses and consumers. Holbrook (2000) thinks that many believe that we are now entering a new era called “experience marketing” in which businesses offer memorable hedonic consumption in effort to appeal to their target customers. However, experience involves an intangible phenomenon that has rarely been considered before 1990s (Holbrook, 2000).

Dining events are primary examples of an experience economy in general, and of experience marketing in particular. One notion is that, dining becomes a fantasy event; nowadays, high quality and moderate level restaurants create novel values for customers, by offering more than merely tangible elements. Another notion here is that, considering the combination of products and services along with the amount of relationships and human interactions involved in dining events inspires a topic for human experience investigation. As an experience, dining can be both hedonic and memorable located on a continuum that has both utilitarian and aesthetic elements.

Another notion is that food consumption expenditure becomes more and more every day. Food expenses (or, as we call it, dining events) accounted for 25% or more of the total expenses of tourists on some tours (Quan & Wang, 2004). According to a National Restaurant Association report (2010), the total market volume of the dining industry is approximately \$580 billion.

Despite the fact that dining is one of the most important expenditure of daily life, researchers pay little attention to the experience aspects of dining. By contrast, utilitarian aspects have been widely investigated using certain mechanistic scales, such as SERVQUAL or DINESERV, over-focusing on just service quality. More recently, researchers pay more attention to hedonic dining. Such studies focused on topics, such as: high satisfaction (Namkung & Jang, 2008), ultra-fine dining (Basil & Basil, 2009), fine cuisine and good company (Andersson & Mossberg, 2004), nutrition and weight control in dining (Glanz, Basil, Maibach, Goldberg, & Snyder, 1998), and word of mouth (Barry, Yong-Ki, Eun-Ju, & Mitch, 2005). In total, these studies seek to clarify a particular aspect of the dining experience, which contributes to the literature in the field.

In today's competitive world, consumer experience is one of the most interesting topics for marketers (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). As one of the most related elements of the consumer experience, diverse studies are conducted in the restaurant context. Restaurant businesses offer a combination of service and products. People gather in restaurants and often socialize there. Thus, restaurant operations and dining elements, in particular, are exposed to the experiences of people. These individuals are willing to pay for a good experience; on one hand, if they are highly satisfied with the experience, they may even pay a premium for it. On the other hand, this value judgment element of dining can create dissatisfaction. Thus, principal questions remain, such as: what experiences will ensure consumers are satisfied and how can restaurants managers promote desirable consumption while eliminating negative cues?

The research thus far suffers from the lack of a comprehensive model to explain consumer's behaviour in restaurant context. For example, the over-pricing issue is largely ignored in many studies, though it can create a heavy dissatisfaction effect. In this regard, one can see that the complexity of the concept may be one of the reasons for this shortage. Such complexity exists due to individual consumer differences, hedonic-related elements that are difficult to define and measure while there is a complicated interaction between these different elements. To contribute to the knowledge in this area, it may be a good idea to offer some examples in effort to identify elements of the model in specialised contexts. For example, if models are developed within the dining, entertainment and shopping context, an integrative review can contribute to a holistic model for experience economy. Based on these factors, efforts to configure a theory or model of the dining experience are necessary. Following the literature review, the primary questions for this research will arise; an appropriate research method and timeline can then be proposed.

## 2. Literature Review

### Experience Economy

For a holistic discussion of the dining experience, it is necessary to examine the origin of the term “dining experience” along with the literature involving the experience economy. An experience economy involves more than satisfaction, it changes an event or usage into a memorable and pleasant phenomenon (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). Yet it is clear that the elements that define this phenomenon comprise more than just a combination of products and services. Rather, it involves a different type of consumption, entitled hedonic consumption.

Hirschman & Holbrook (1982) argue that consumers do not use products simply for their functionality, but instead seek to benefit from the sensational-emotional aspect of their consumption(s). Accordingly, memorable consumption must create differentiated feelings inscribed in the customers’ minds. Memorable consumption must also shape a good attitude toward the experience process. If this is so, does the experience economy constitute a new era? One can answer this question if he or she recognises that today; customer needs are greatly different than in the past.

Pine and Gilmore (1998) claim that the days of the service economy are greatly diminished today, just as what happened in the industrial era. Their basic idea is that while the global economy has moved from an agrarian economy to an industrial economy and then to a service economy, it now must change to a new era, which is the experience

economy. The authors even believed that, at the time of writing their article, the economy is fast becoming a more-complicated experience economy. To support this supposition, Pine and Gilmore (1998) identify several clear differences between particular service characteristics offerings and those that create experience memories. They also claim that the relationship between customers and providers is now that of a stager–guest relationship. Two dimensions of the experience economy are identified. The first is the active-passive dimension, the second the absorption-immersion aspect. The article concludes that four different context can be suggested for consumption, which include educational, entertainment, aesthetic and escapist (Pine & Gilmore, 1998).

Dining consumption has benefited from experience economy perspective to a great extent. The dining experience offers intangible aspects of food consumption, as well as utilitarian benefits. As customer needs change, restaurants strive to meet these new demands. Dining out experiences provide for not only nutritional needs, but also social and leisure fulfillment (Andersson & Mossberg, 2004). In this regard, while food is part of the dining experience, other elements of the dining event can create a holistic, hedonic, emotional and memorable consumption experience. Thus, identifying the roles of these elements in consumer satisfaction is beneficial to restaurant managers who seek to make the most appropriate decisions about how to best offer services to their target customers.

### **Expectation-Disconfirmation Theory**

It is important to identify how customers become satisfied from their experiences. They do not become satisfied simply based on performance; even with similar performance

perceptions, consumers maintain different expectations prior to consumption. Thus, consumer expectation is another element of the satisfaction process and behavioural intentions.

Numerous studies attempt to directly relate predictor elements to outcome results; however, expectation/disconfirmation theory stresses that confirmation or disconfirmation mediates results. In the other words, customer's expectations, such as satisfaction and behavioural intentions, play an important role in predicting consumer satisfaction outcomes. Thus, another element (confirmation / disconfirmation) may explain how the process of customer satisfaction works, particularly in the experience context.

The terms "confirmation" and "disconfirmation" are by-products of two components: customer's expectations and their perceptions of the consumption performance. Confirmation occurs when the customer's expectation is exactly equal to the perceived performance outcome; theoretically, this process results in a neutral status. Positive disconfirmation occurs when the perceived performance is greater than the consumer's expectation. On the other hand, negative disconfirmation will occur when perceived performance is less than expected. Thus, satisfaction or dissatisfaction is a product of positive disconfirmation or negative disconfirmation, respectively (Lewin, 1938). Finally, it is noteworthy that the perceived performance can directly contribute to the satisfaction of customers, without the mediation effect of disconfirmation (Namkung & Jang, 2007).

Jakia, Robert and John (1999) conduct a comprehensive study of fine dining restaurants. To do so, they test a model that includes eight independent variables and six



dependent variables, based on the expectation/disconfirmation theory. Their model is generally supported by the study. However, several counterarguments remain. For example, what are the effects of the study's pre-test on its post-test? Additionally, the nature of expectations remains vague and difficult to measure. Here, the point is that expectation is an entirely complicated and vague concept; in some cases, even customers do not know what they should expect from an event and may need preliminary information that can shape their expectations. By doing this, managers can create expectations and finally, refine consumer total experiences.

### **Emotion**

Another process that can affect the satisfaction process to a great extent is the shifting of emotional status. In this sense, changing the consumer's emotion to a positive or negative status will create satisfaction or dissatisfaction, respectively. Numerous studies find emotion to be a mediating factor between predictors and final results in the consumption context (Ladhari, Brun, & Morales, 2008; Pullman & Gross, 2004). The basic theory for this line of research is based on Mehrabian & Russell (1974) in environmental psychology, whose theory explains that there is a direct relationship between environmental stimuli, organism and response (S-O-R). So, an environmental stimulus can create emotional status for a consumer, who may then respond by being satisfied or dissatisfied.

More recently Barrena and Sánchez (2009) suggest that emotional arousal can be applied in saturated markets as an efficient strategy to increase sales. In the dining context,

Jang and Namkung (2009) support most of Barrena and Sánchez's (2009) hypotheses using an extended model based on Mehrabian & Russell's theory (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). Thus, it is clear that the mediating role of emotion is supported in several researches, which suggests that consumers unconsciously make use of shifting emotional statuses in order to determine whether they are satisfied or dissatisfied.

### **Dining Literature**

Rough categorization can divide dining events into the following two groups: fast dining and fine dining. In the present research, we focus on fine dining, as it is more of an experiential phenomenon than its counterpart. As Roberts, Deery, & Hede (2010) state, "good food," "good wine," "going out for a lot of people," are all important elements of fine-dining. On the other hand, comparing this sort of dining with utilitarian dining may be beneficial as well. Differences may offer a clear explanation as to why individuals seek memorable experiences over pure utilitarian ones. Likewise, similarities can prevent us to jump to mistaken conclusions about the characteristics of dining experiences. Researchers typically focus on fast-food type restaurants; whereas table-serviced restaurants receive less attention in the literature. In this research, we will place more emphasis on fine-dining research to fill this gap in the dining experience literature.

There are particular aspects of consumption that most researchers suggest as predictors for intentional behaviour at dining events. Customer perceptions of food quality, service quality and atmosphere quality are three main element of this cause and effect model (Jang & Namkung, 2009; Namkung & Jang, 2008; Wall & Berry, 2007). This line of

research shows that of the elements involved in the dining experience, food (or taste) is the most important to predict behaviour (Glanz, et al., 1998; Namkung & Jang, 2007).

One of the ultimate marketing goals is to create customer loyalty and ensure repeat patronage (Haeckel, Carbone, & Berry, 2003). Restaurant managers are eager for customers to return to their restaurants depends, to a large extent, on the customers prior experiences are desirable and/or memorable. Thus, providing customers with better services likely increases customer satisfaction, which leads to what is termed “return behaviour” (also known as customer patronage).

In general, satisfaction results in intentional behaviour (Dube, Renaghan, & Miller, 1994). Several studies indicate that satisfaction plays a mediating role between predictor elements and intentional behaviour in the dining context (Barry, et al., 2005; Breffni, Sheryl, Anna, & Jochen, 2009; Ladhari, et al., 2008; Namkung & Jang, 2007). Such researches argue that consumption elements create satisfaction. However, other studies do not include discussion of the role of social factors in the experience of dining out.

Andersson and Mossberg (2004) measure customer satisfaction using a six-factor scale: food, fine cuisine, service, restaurant interior, good company and other guests. A major advantage of their study is that it also includes social factors. For instance, the element “good company” represents the monetary value of sharing the dinner experience with a friend rather than experiencing it on one’s own. In contrast, the “other guest concept” which affects the entire dining experience, represents the presence of other people in the restaurant. It is important to recognise that this is one aspect of the dining experience that

is beyond the restaurant manager's control. The other guest concept is measured by the financial value the customer can expect if his or her attending restaurant involves with full of customers or empty. Andersson and Mossberg (2004) find that the "good company" element is the most important predictor of the dining experience (in the city of Gotenberg in Sweden). Their finding points to the importance of the social element to the scales designed to measure customer dining experiences.

In their research, Andersson and Mossberg (2004) use the financial value element in their model, which contributes to the framework of the present research. To this, one may also add the cost as another predictor of the patronage decision (Of course, this prediction is usually mediated by customer satisfaction.) In so many words, as the cost of the meal increases, so does the customer expectation rise. This is particularly true in the case of very expensive meals, in which customer expectations are extremely high and minor mistakes can rapidly result in customer dissatisfaction. For instance, if a customer finds a hair in his or her bowl of soup, which cost less than \$10, he or she might leave the restaurant without argument. However, if this same happens with a bowl of soup cost \$100; one should expect a very different outcome. Thus, cost can be considered an influential factor that affects customer patronage with regard to the dining experience.

June and Lorraine (2006) define two general aspects of dining, one is aesthetic, the other social. In the context of nursing care, these researchers conduct an intervention-survey study to determine the effects of better dining experiences on quality of life. The authors take into account for other, dark-side factors such as meal positioning, social

grouping and facilitating adequate time for meals. Their work suggests that there exist more little considered elements in the dining experience..

Adopting the Herzberg's theory in motivation (Herzberg, 1965), Crompton (2003) suggests that in event management, a reasonable threshold of performance must be provided in order to avoid dissatisfaction. Certain hygiene factors play a role in terms of minimum acceptable standards for consumers in the particular context of event management. He suggests that satisfaction is only created when visitors (consumers) interact with motivator elements. Applying this theory to the dining context, we propose that restaurant managers maintain a minimum standard for their customers in every respect, while also trying to connect their customer with satisfactory elements of the dining experience. Similar dichotomous conditions for customers can be seen in other works, such as Andersson and Mossberg (2004), who define satisfied versus delighted consumers in the dining context.

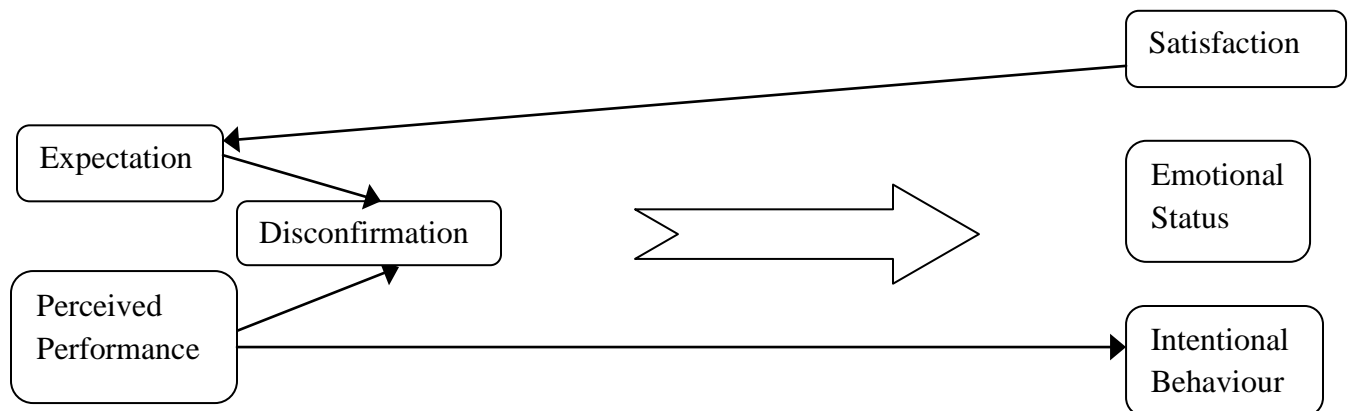
In sum, the literature suggest that customer satisfaction is affected by food, physical environment (atmosphere) and service. "Good company" is the most important element in creating "social desirability" for the dining experience. Of course, cost of the event will affect the customer perception. However, it is the combination of these elements and their interactions that impact the customer's perceived rate of return.

Against this background, the research question addressed in this paper is: How do the elements of the dining experience, such as food, service, atmosphere, social desirability and price, affect customer intention to return to a particular restaurant?

### Extended Theory

We first define several predictor factors and several outcome results. Considering expectation confirmation/disconfirmation theory, we consider the main predictor of the dining experience outcome to be disconfirmation. In terms of effect on disconfirmation, expectation has a negative effect, while perceived performance has a positive effect. Perceived performance also directly effects intentional behaviour; this is a direct effect without disconfirmation. As discussed in previous sections, disconfirmation affects consumer emotional statuses, level of satisfaction and intentional behaviours. Thus, in this study, the outcome effects include emotional statuses, satisfaction and intentional behaviours. On the other hand, satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) can generate subsequent expectations for consumers about future experiences.

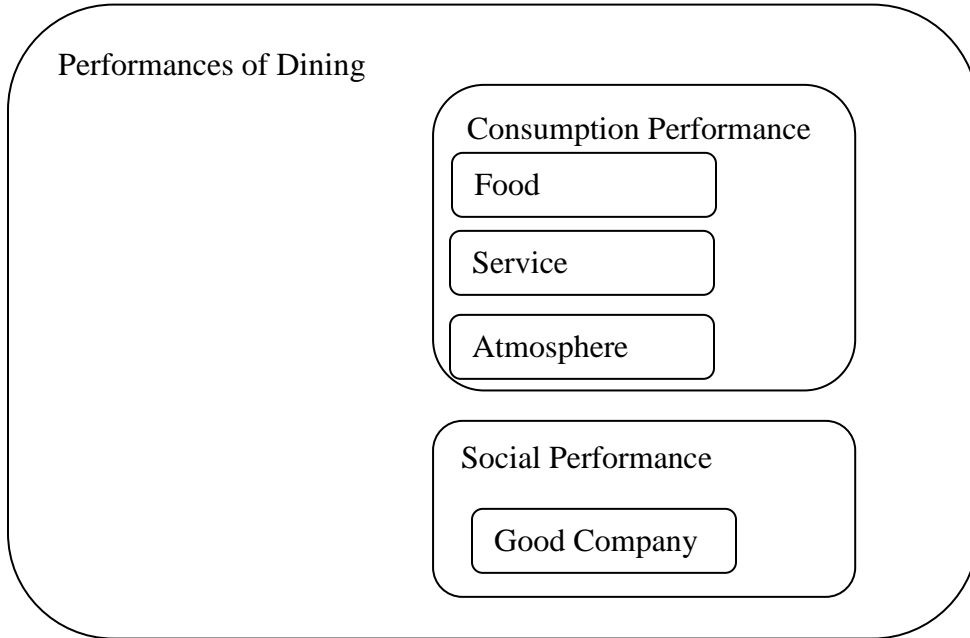
Figure 1 - Proposed Extended General Model



Note: predictors and outcomes of an experience are shown in this graph. This general model can be used for dining experience as well.

The concept of “perceived consumption performance” includes several factors, such as the perceived food quality as well as service, atmosphere or social elements. Social performance is the desirability of socializing with others during the dinner event. One of the best representations of social performance is having good company during the event. Satisfaction results in intentional behaviours, such as intention to return, expressing positive/negative opinions about the location, recommendations given to others, etc. Again, it is important to mention that, in this model, each construct may include several well-known or vague concepts that could be investigated carefully.

Figure 2 - Dining Experience Performances



Note: Elements of dining experience performance. Two major elements are consumption performance and social performance.



### General Research Questions

In general, this study addresses the following research question: What are the elements of dining experiences and how do they interact with each other? Previous researches in the dining experience context have major shortcomings in their research structure. In particular, some ignore issues such as event price, as important elements in shaping expectations and outcomes. Others use only one approach, or used pre-defined service scales to measure in this new context. Further, comprehensive qualitative investigation is largely ignored as well as mixed methods. Contradictory results obtained even by the same authors (Jang & Namkung, 2009; Namkung & Jang, 2007, 2008) are one of the consequences of these procedural shortcomings. Unlike prior examinations, the present study eliminates this contradiction, evaluating dining experience from a comprehensive view point to define and justify some unclear dining experience factors and the relationship among them.

There are general research questions for this study that require several detailed research questions for each research method. Therefore, for the qualitative content analysis, quantitative content analysis and quantitative research methods, we develop several detailed research questions.

Thus, the current study seeks to answer the following general research questions in the dining context:

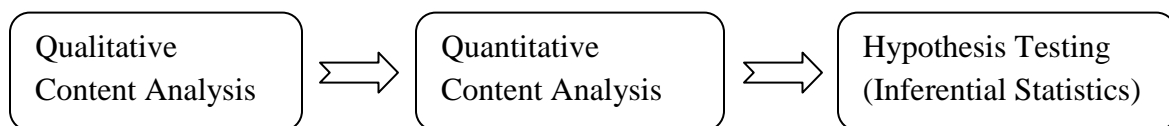
1. How do an expectations element (such as price) and perceived performance quality shape the confirmation/disconfirmation results?

2. What factors can contribute to shape expectations?
3. What are the dimensions of dining experiences?
4. What is the most important predictor of intentional behaviour?
5. What are the differences between the themes of behavioural elements of negative reviews and those of positive reviews?

### **Research Methods, Data and Preliminary Studies**

This study is going to use the secondary data of an online review website. Several research methods will be applied. First, comprehensive “qualitative content analysis will be conducted on the reviews. Second, a “quantitative content analysis” method will be utilised to determine the features of each review that are related to prior qualitative work. For example, if individuals state a desire to alter the amount of tip they leave due to the perception of good or bad performance, we code them as tipping-related reviews. Third, several relationships in the proposed model will be tested using quantitative or coded quantitative content analysis results. Before utilising each method, it is valuable to know what the data would be for this study and where the data comes from.

Figure 3 Several Research Methods in Order



Note: This research will use three research methods, as shown in Figure 3, to obtain enriched results. First, qualitative content analysis helps to identify particular elements of

the restaurants reviews. Second, quantitative content analysis will demonstrates how much strength those explored elements have in the reviews, while the provided insights help us to shape hypotheses. Finally, with the aid of inferential statistics tools, we will test those hypotheses, which offer validated results.

### **Review writings as a source of data in dining context**

Extant studies identify online customer reviews as a data source that can reflect consumer perceptions and feedbacks (Chatterjee, 2001; Hu, Liu, & Zhang, 2008; Vermeulen & Seegers, 2009) . Indeed, Basil and Basil (2009) use online restaurant reviews to explore certain aspects of the dining experience. Reviews provide personal consumer perceptions from those who experience an event. It is also noteworthy that review writers are volunteer participants who offer valuable insights about the subject of the study; they are less biased toward a research purpose. These writers also feel free to provide details about their experiences due to the anonymity or lack of identifying disclosure and also because they are not pressured to offer a review. For example, in online review writing, individuals may make comments using their personal computers in their homes, where there is no source of distraction or research interference. Moreover, use of the Internet is growing and is likely to soon become a primary source of information.

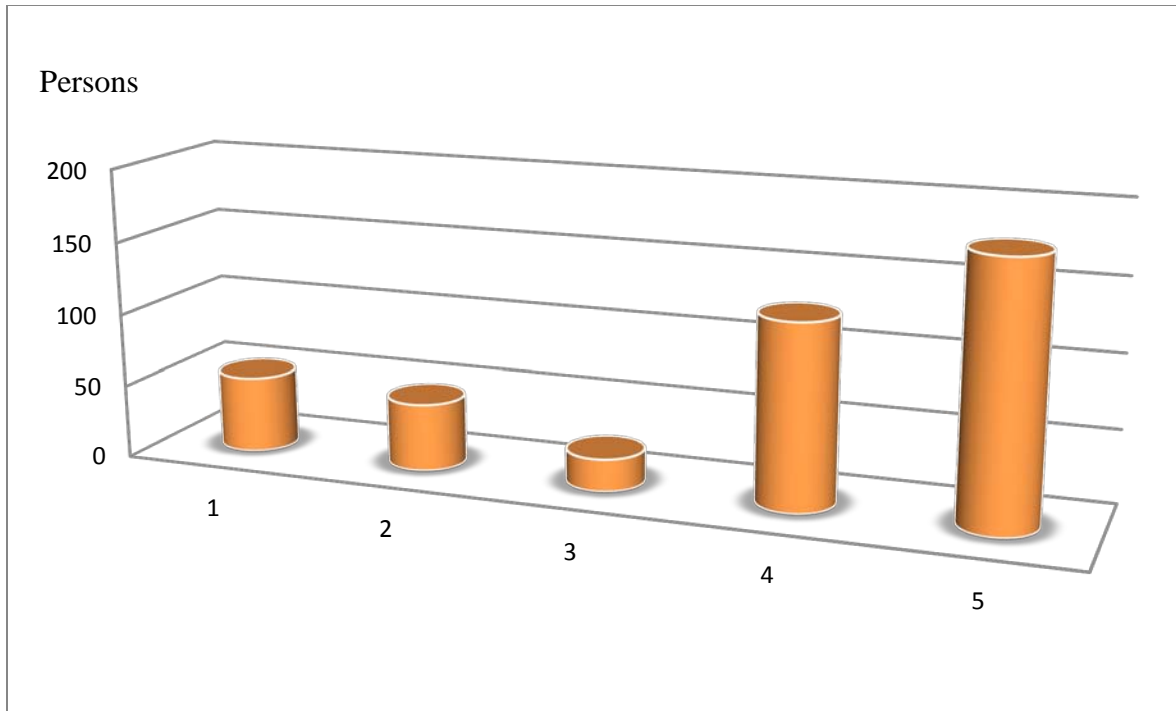
Another feature of review writing is that it offers no monetary reward, so there is no possibility that this source of information utilised is biased toward aggressive ratings. This is similar to open software packages which people contribute to them. On the other hand, one sees that even in surveys, there may be bi-modal ratings in other studies. For example,

in a survey, subjects rated dining experience satisfaction considerably high; out of a possible 7 rating, more than half of the data samples rated their satisfaction levels 6 or higher (Namkung & Jang, 2008). Another notion here is that most extant studies in the dining experience field suffer from repetitive and over-used student samples; while restaurant reviewers are better examples of typical dining consumers.

### **Data Collection**

In the preliminary study, we have used 421 reviews, which are negative or positive, or even “so-so” wherein the review writer expresses whether he or she will likely return to the restaurant. As the data’s variables are not typical, I have used Logistic Regression (LR), which does not have any normality issue problems. In Figure 4, one can see that consumption variables, such as food (in this case), have bi-modal shapes that are far from normal. In some cases, one can treat them as dichotomous variables that are not continuous and thus, having too many of them will not generate powerful results. Other descriptive graphs of the preliminary data can be found in Appendix I.

Figure 4 - Perceived Food Quality Ratings in the Preliminary Data



Note: This graph includes the frequency of the element named “perceived food quality,” which is rated by the reviewers on the website. A rating of 5 means that the food was found to be “the best ever” food quality, while a rating of 1 means it was “the worst ever.” As can be seen, the graph is not at all normal.

In order to decrease the non-normality, we are going to gather new data from “frequent review writers.” It is noteworthy in the literature to use frequent or expert reviewers. For example Watson, Morgan, and Hemmington (2008) use a blog of a frequent restaurant reviewers for their post-modern research. These “foodies” provide an enriched data source because they are knowledgeable about different restaurants and how to write reviews for others. Do-Hyung, Jumin and Ingo (2007) state that high quality reviews have positive effects on the intentional behaviours of other customers. Customers who read the online reviews before purchasing also consider the review writer’s reputation (Hu, et al.,

2008). Of course, these data sources have their strengths and weaknesses as we will briefly discuss later.

Vermeulen and Seegers (2009) argue that although hotel review writing directly affects consumer decision making, expert review writings have a weak positive influence, in this regard. Thus, at present, it is only a scientific guess as to whether or not frequent review writers provide a better dataset in terms of statistical reliability and information verifiability. One of the objectives of this study is to examine this issue to see if there is any significant difference between the general review data and the expert review data.

### **Current Research Data**

Data for the study has been gathered from the “Restaurantica” website ([www.restaurantica.com](http://www.restaurantica.com)), which has information on a number of cities in Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario, Canada. These provinces and cities are chosen given their populations; they comprise four of the most populated provinces of Canada. Unfortunately, Quebec does not have many reviews (likely because the website is written only in English). Further, we choose these provinces specifically in order to compare the differences of experiences between the “west” and the “east and central” of regions of Canada.

There are several advantages to using this kind of review website as a data source. First, participant identities are not revealed, so there is less hesitation on the part of the consumers to provide feedback. Also, the participants review their experiences several hours after the dining experience, which affords them a holistic evaluation of their experience and thus, the evaluations may be richer and more accurate. In addition,

participants must choose to write about their experiences, which allows for more reflection than simple ratings and is another contributor to the accuracy of the reviews.

Despite the above, this data gathering method has unique limitations as well. First, the sample may not be a precise representation of the entire population of diners as only participants with internet access and who are willing to share their opinions virtually offer their comments using this venue. Additionally, since sociable people tend to write reviews, the data most likely only reflect such a group and may not be reflective of less-social individuals. Second, data accuracy may be influenced by the lengthy time period between the experience and the review. Third, our data source may not provide valid sources of information because some subjects may offer fake comments. Although one can follow some of such cases and see other reviews, but this cannot always be the case. Thus, any result of this study is subject to these limitations.

It is noteworthy to mention that most of the variables of this dataset are assumed to behave like interval variables. In these variables, a five-point Likert scale has been used to identify the perception of quality by the consumer. We assume that the distances between each consecutive two options are the same. The range changes from “the worst ever” to “the best ever.” The middle points are “below average,” “adequate” and “great overall.” The price range has five categories, which are between two values. These categories are divided by these numbers: 0-10, 11-25, 26-60, 61-100 and +100 (Appendix I).

### **Data analysis.**

Two different analyses have been conducted in the preliminary study: quantitative and qualitative. Another method that can be applied to the primary research is the mixed method. Using this method, we examine the body of the content of the comments and attempt to determine the number of desired concepts. After that, quantitative methods can help us to reach meaningful results. Thus, there is a complete content analysis in both positive and negative reviews. With these themes and concepts, a mixed or quantitative content analysis method will be applied in effort to determine the relationship between those dining experience concepts and the other elements. Based on the proposed model, a final quantitative analysis will be applied on the data.

This study will use exploratory, hypothesis proposing and testing. As is done in the negative review analysis, qualitative content analysis of the positive reviews is conducted. Researchers will compare themes and concepts found as a result of negative reviews analysis with those found in the positive reviews. Similarities and differences can generate new results. Likewise, quantitative content analysis will be conducted to determine how many times and in which ways the themes and concepts are used in the reviews. Combined with literature review, these analyses can provide insight into the structure and relationships among components proposed in this study. Several specified hypotheses are then proposed and tested, as in the preliminary quantitative study.

### **Qualitative Research Method**

The primary research question for this method is: What elements predict the outcomes of consumer viewpoints? Another question might be: What are the sources of customer



expectations? These questions form the concepts behind our dining experience model. The difference between the data of regular restaurant reviews and that derived from frequent writers may also prove interesting.

As previously mentioned, to date, there are inadequate studies of dining experience using the qualitative research method. The content of both negative and positive reviews contains valuable information from consumer viewpoints. Evaluating each review, analyzing it in detail, we seek to determine each review's characteristics. The saturation level is reached when the researcher reaches a level in which he or she has nothing more to add to the cumulative characters of all analyzed reviews. Then, we begin thematic analysis while writing our own comments about the points for every review and offering an analytical overview of each review. These themes are used to create a summary of the contents of these reviews in each context (negative/positive).

#### **Qualitative preliminary results.**

We have completed a preliminary study with a similar qualitative method as explained, for negative reviews. The table of themes, which are identified through negative review content analysis, can be found in Appendix II. One of the major findings of this research is in the categories of negative experience expectations. Sources of expectations, or the primary inherent cause of dissatisfaction, are found to be either external or internal. These expectations can be shaped before the experience begins as well as during the first stage of the experience. Again, combination is possible, while even more so, some parts of the expectations are shaped in each of these themes. Regardless of the two expectation

themes, individuals have certain expectations because they expect a minimum level of standards (for instant, the degree of cleanliness) and an intuitive or apparent comparison with similar places/experiences. These sets of elements can create a systematic approach for viewing the expectation mechanism. There are also other valuable findings about dining elements and reasons for review writing that are explained in detail in the qualitative preliminary study.

### **Quantitative Research Method**

As we argued earlier, the present study applies quantitative methods. In our quantitative content analysis, we are going to determine how many times dining elements are used in our data. After this, with the aid of the literature, enriched hypotheses will be suggested. In the hypotheses testing section, there are several questions, such as: Which elements predict the consequent behaviour and which one of those elements is the most important predictor? Another question is: What elements shape customer expectations? For this section, we will use inferential statistical tools such as logistic regression.

#### **Preliminary results of hypothesis testing.**

In the preliminary study, just the hypothesis testing method has been applied. Some primary hypotheses have been tested through the quantitative preliminary study. The hypotheses are based on the literature in the field. Through logistic regression analysis, it was found that perceived food quality is the most important predictor of customer intention to return followed by perceived atmosphere and service quality; however, this is limited to the dining events that are described as “not-fine.” In the dining events described

as “fine”, perceived service quality does not really matter. In addition, the assumption that higher prices will increase customer expectation is supported as expensive diners have less desire to return and perceive their consumption experiences as lower quality than their non-expensive diner counterparts. I offer several figures and tables in Appendix III regarding the quantitative preliminary study results.

### **Validation**

Using both qualitative and quantitative data and conducting several research methods can enhance the validity of this research. Triangulation of the results is another benefit of the kind of research methods used. The comparison processes (between qualitative and quantitative results) can allow researchers to obtain better understanding of what is really happening in the related model. A large data set affords researchers more powerful, generalisable results. Also, data-hungry techniques can be performed to test sophisticated hypotheses. For these reasons, we are going to use a relatively large sample.

There are other factors that can improve the validity of this research. One is to use frequent reviewer writings; these individuals appear to offer reviews that are more reliable (as several studies that use frequent review writers as a source of reliable information indicate). Moreover, using another data (frequent reviewer) source creates a comparison opportunity that can offer more validity for the results. Another issue is that, in preliminary studies, the researcher has used the reviews of restaurants that have high numbers of reviews, which may indicate that consumers have more concerns about the particular restaurants under study.

Nonetheless, limitations of the research will restrict the result to this sort of secondary data and the generalisability of the results should be considered carefully. However, the ease of data availability, wide variety of subjects and richness of the data is uniquely valuable. Additionally, few studies yet use such a comprehensive perspective that can account for as many factors as we propose. Reliability analysis can also be used to determine whether or not a particular factor may be reliably constructed from several variables. Finally, the results should be validated as if they are meaningful and can be justified (conclusion validity).

**Timeline**

This study will adhere to the following timeline:

		Timeline - Gantt Chart for Thesis																			
		August		September					October				December				January				
Task	Week:		3	4	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Proposal defense																					
Gathering data																					
Qual-Content analysis																					
Review- Theme analysis																					
Quant-Content analysis																					
Proposing hypotheses																					
Hypotheses testing																					
Draft thesis, discuss with committee, Final thesis																					
Submission																					
Defense (and revise)																					

**Budget**

- \$1000 for editing the thesis in academic writing format.

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**Appendix I**

*Descriptive statistics of the preliminary data*

Figure 5 - Perceived Service Quality

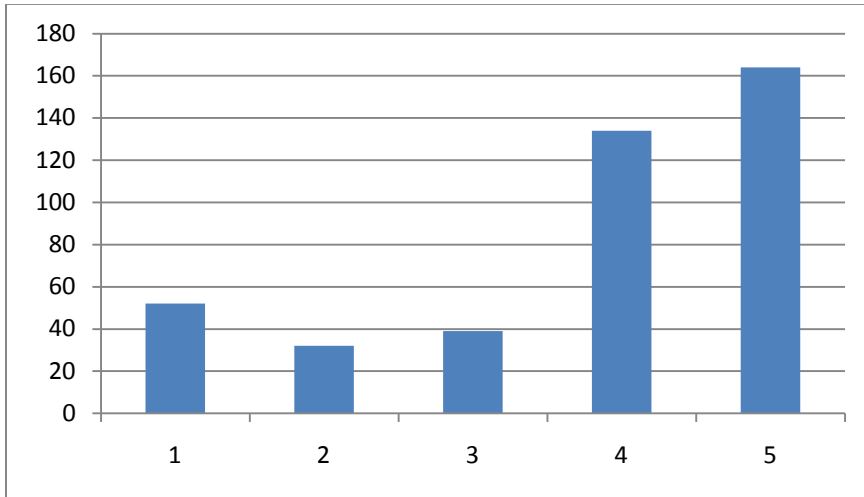


Figure 6 - Perceived Atmosphere Quality

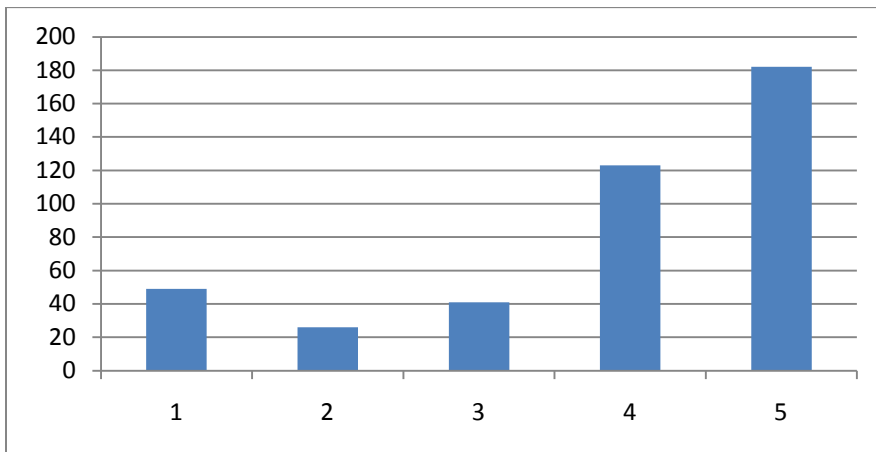


Figure 7 - Price Range

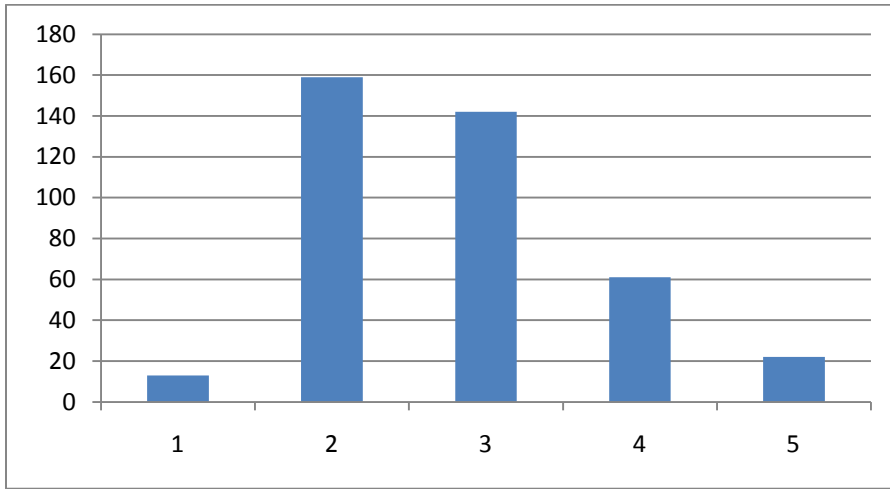


Figure 8 - Party size

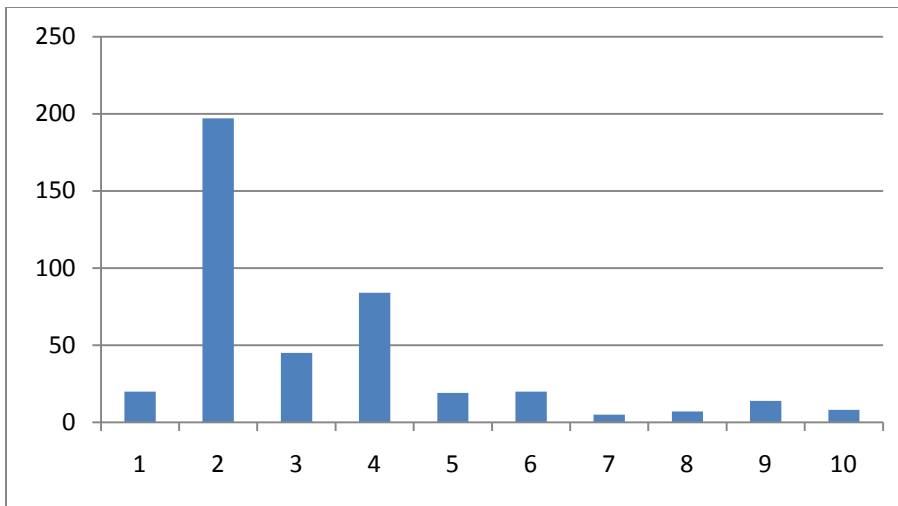
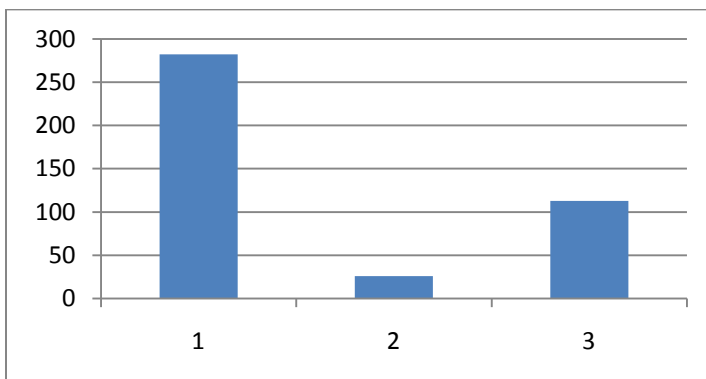


Figure 9 - Intention to Return



Note: 1 means Yes – 2 means “maybe” – 3 means No

## Appendix II

### *Qualitative preliminary results*

<b>T1. The structure</b>	T1-01: Storytelling
	T1-02: Evidence-based Story
	T1-03: Letter Writing
	T1-04: Pros & Cons
	T1-05: Combined Structure
<b>T2. The tone</b>	T2-01: Fully versus Partially
	T2-02: Using Jargons, Emoticons, Capital letters and Funny words
<b>T3. The reasons</b>	T3-01: Warning others
	T3-02: Revenging
	T3-03: Expressing and sharing feelings
	T3-04: Being helpfulness-Giving improvement suggestion
	T3-05: Giving suggestions for a better place
<b>T4. The sources of the customers' expectations</b>	T4-01: External vs. internal
	T4-02: Before vs. during the event
	T4-03: the standard or comparison to another place/outlet/experience
<b>T5. The dimensions of bad experiences</b>	T5-01: Food quality
	T5-02: Service quality
	T5-03: Atmosphere quality
	T5-04: Overpricing
	T5-05: Sidelong events
	T5-06: Social/individual dining
	T5-07: Other issues

### Appendix III

#### Quantitative preliminary results

For non-fine dining:

Variables in the Equation

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1 <sup>a</sup>	PerFoodQual	1.796	.508	12.491	1	.000	6.026
	PerServQual	.817	.392	4.347	1	.037	2.264
	PerAtmosQual	1.676	.727	5.314	1	.021	5.346
	Constant	-14.487	3.326	18.973	1	.000	.000

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: PerFoodQual, PerServQual, PerAtmosQual.

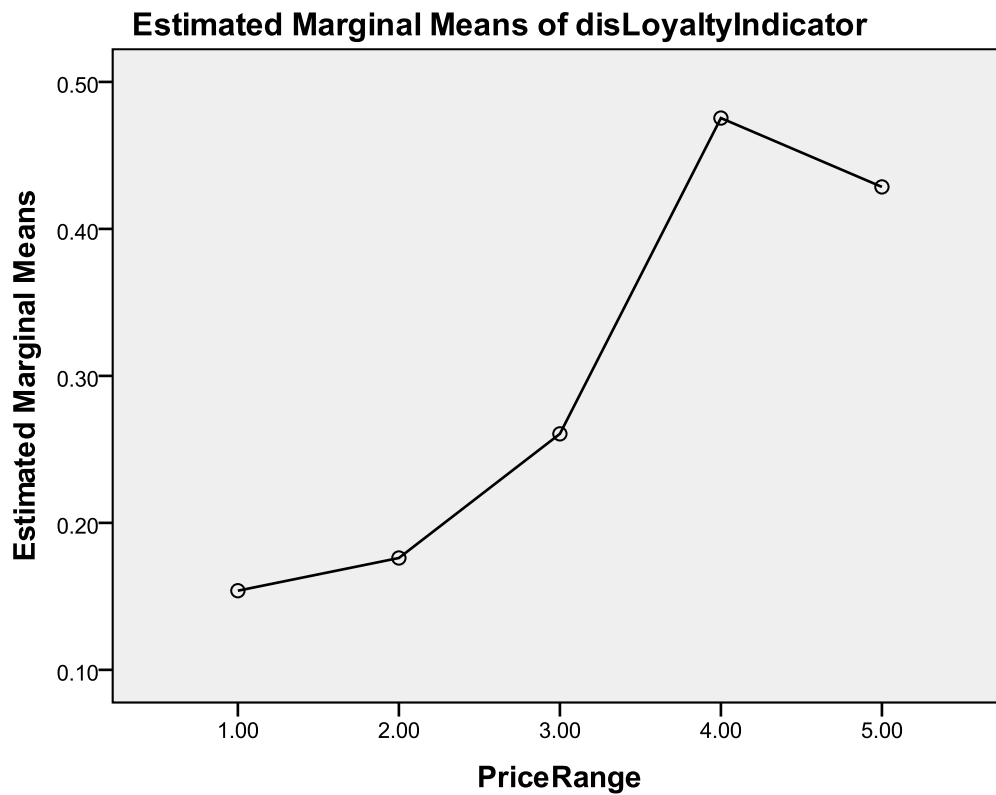
For fine dining:

Variables in the Equation

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1 <sup>a</sup>	PerFoodQual	2.355	.745	9.996	1	.002	10.535
	PerServQual	.024	.390	.004	1	.951	1.024
	PerAtmosQual	1.592	.608	6.867	1	.009	4.916
	Constant	-14.914	3.114	22.933	1	.000	.000

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: PerFoodQual, PerServQual, PerAtmosQual.

Figure 10 - Differences between the means of different price range groups for the disloyalty indicator concept



Note: The differences between group means for different price categories in terms of disloyalty indicator shows that higher price payers (groups 4 and 5) are more likely to be disloyal than lower price range payers (groups 1 and 2).