

NEAR EAST UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF ECONOMICS AND ADMINISTRATIVE SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION



A SEGMENT BASED-APPROACH TO UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

DINING EXPERIENCES

GRADUATION THESIS

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ABSTRACT

The majority of past satisfaction studies have explored tourist satisfaction at an aggregate market level. These studies have made a substantial contribution to the understanding of the customer satisfaction concept. However, a critical question remains: would distinct segments differ in their service evaluation? If yes, what are the implications of this? It is probable that satisfaction drivers of different segments may not be identical. Additionally, different customer segments may base their behavioural intention judgments on different service attributes.

This study has focused on the university students' population in Northern Cyprus. The students were regarded as tourists receiving restaurant services. Hence, an empirical investigation was conducted to see if the said students formed distinct customer segments according to their evaluation of restaurant services in Northern Cyprus.

The university students' evaluation of dining experiences appeared to be a complex process in which several factors are processed. Twenty-two factors were found to be significant. Product quality and hygiene had the most significant effect on dining satisfaction. Adventurous menu was followed by service quality, price of food, staff attitude, and food quality. The multidimensional nature of factors effecting student dining satisfaction is consistent with the results of other studies. Six benefit segments were identified namely: Healthy food seekers, adventurous food seekers, service quality seekers, value seekers, personal attendance seekers and taste seekers.

Key words: Market segmentation, dining experiences, benefit segments

CONTENTS	PAGE
SECTION I	1
PROBLEM FORMULATION	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Statement of topic	1
1.3 Problem situation	2
1.4 Problem statement	2
1.5 Objectives of the study	3
1.6 Conclusion	3
SECTION II	4
LITERATURE REVIEW	4
2.1 Introduction	4
2.2 Market segmentation	4
2.3 Measuring customer satisfaction	6
2.4 Conclusion	9
SECTION III	10
CONTEXTUAL FACTORS	10
3.1 Introduction	10
3.2 The Near East University	10
3.5 Conclusion	11

SECTION IV	12
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	12
4.1 Introduction	12
4.2 Dining experience	12
4.3 Conceptual framework	15
4.4 Conclusion	17
SECTION V	18
METHODOLOGY	18
5.1 Introduction	18
5.2 Secondary data	18
5.3 Primary data	18
5.3.1 Instrument selection and analysis	18
5.3.2 Instrument validity and reliability	19
5.3.2.1 Reliability	19
5.3.2.2 Validity	19
5.4 Research design	20
5.5 Sampling	21
5.6 Conclusion	21
FINDINGS	22
6.1 Introduction	22
6.1 Data analysis process	22
6.3 Realisation rate	22

6.4	Demographic findings	23
6.5	Results of restaurant selection factors measured	23
6.5.1	Factor analysis	26
6.6	Conclusion	29

SECTION VII

CONCLUSIONS		30
7.1	Introduction	30
7.2	Summary of theoretical findings	30
7.3	Summary of the empirical findings	32
7.4	Answers to questions formulated for the project	33
7.5	Main conclusions and overall implications	37
7.6	Limitations and recommendations for further research	38
7.7	Conclusion	38
REFERENCES		39

SECTION I

PROBLEM FORMULATION

1.1 Introduction

This section presents the topic area, the problem situation, the problem statement and the objectives of this study.

1.2 Statement of the topic

Several marketing studies have demonstrated that the tourist market is not homogeneous. (Pizam, A. and Milman, A.1993). Surprisingly, however, examination of segment-based satisfaction has attracted only limited attention from researchers. (Oh, H.and Jeong, M, 1996). The majority of past satisfaction studies have explored tourist satisfaction at an aggregate market level. These studies have made a substantial contribution to the understanding of the customer satisfaction concept. However, a critical question remains: would distinct segments differ in their service evaluation? If yes, what are the implications of this? It is probable that satisfaction drivers of different segments may not be identical. Additionally, different customer segments may base their behavioural intention judgments on different service attributes.

In the light of the above topic, this study has focused on the university students' population in Northern Cyprus. The students were regarded as tourists receiving restaurant services. Hence, an empirical investigation was conducted to see if the said students formed distinct customer segments according to their evaluation of restaurant services in Northern Cyprus.

1.3 Problem situation

Northern Cyprus is an island state which derives most of its income from tourism. Typically, tourism industry is cyclical. However, this may not be so in the case of Northern Cyprus. Due to it's the fast developed universities there are about 40,000 students coming to study and stay on the Island all year round. This number is about one fifth of the resident population and students are regarded as tourists seeking tourist products, mainly in the form of entertainment and restaurant services. Further more; it is commonly observed that since the development of the universities 15-20 years ago, the restaurant businesses increased both in number and variety.

It is necessary to conduct an empirical investigation to see if the university students formed distinct customer segments according to their evaluation of restaurant services in Northern Cyprus. The findings would be useful for restaurant owners in identifying customer segments and thus in designing their total market offer for increased customer satisfaction and profitability.

1.4 Problem statement

The purpose of this descriptive study was to work on conceptual frameworks revealed by the literature for understanding customer satisfaction and identifying market segments within the tourism services industry.

The main problem to be investigated was to identify the factors affecting customer satisfaction in restaurant services, in the case of students as "tourists", and through grouping such factors to identify and determine customer segments seeking restaurant services in Northern Cyprus.

1.5 Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study was to:

- 1.5.1 Classify university students in Northern Cyprus into market segments receiving restaurant services in Northern Cyprus.

In support of fulfilling the main objective, the following questions were also formulated:

- 1.5.2 What are the factors affecting customer satisfaction in the case of restaurant services?
- 1.5.3 What are the factors that affect university students' customer satisfaction on restaurant services provided in Northern Cyprus?
- 1.5.4 If university students in Northern Cyprus differ in their evaluation of restaurant services then what are the resultant benefit segments that could be useful market information for the restaurant services providers?

1.6 Conclusion

The problem statement and the objectives of this study are formulated in this section. The next section reviews the literature on customer satisfaction, market segmentation and restaurant services.

SECTION II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This section depicts the literature review carried out on market segmentation, customer satisfaction and dining experience as related to the travel and hospitality industry.

2.2 Market segmentation

The underlying logic and the possible rewards that market segmentation can offer are well established in the travel and hospitality industry.(Kotler, P., Bowen, J. and Makens, J, 1996) Customer needs are diverse, and it is obvious that they can no longer be satisfied through a mass marketing and management approach.(Dibb, S, 1998) The diversity in customer needs requires hospitality and tourism managers to identify groups of customers with homogeneous characteristics and behaviours, and try to adjust their product offer as much as possible to the unique needs and desires of the target market(s).(Kara, A., Kaynak, E. and Kucukemiroglu, 0, 1997) In so doing, they will be likely to reach target markets) in the most effective and efficient way, allocate resources more effectively and satisfy their customers' needs more successfully.(Diaz-Martin, M. A., Iglesias, V., Vazquez, R. and Ruiz, V. A, 2000) When carried out properly, segmentation can actually enhance sales and profits, as it will allow the organisation to target segments that are much more likely to patronise the organisation's services and facilities.(Reid, D. R, 1983).

In recent years, benefit segmentation has emerged as an effective approach to market segmentation through which it is possible to identify market segments by causal rather than descriptive factors. The belief underlying this strategy is that the benefits which people are seeking in consuming a given product are the basic reasons for the existence of true market segments, and are better determinants of behaviour than other approaches. (Loker, E. L and Perdue, R. R, 1992) One of the major benefits of this approach is to enable a service provider to implement different marketing strategies for different segments by offering the unique benefits sought by each segment (Woo, K, 1998). It is reported that benefits predict behaviour better than personality and lifestyle, volumetric, demographic or geographic measures, which merely describe behaviour without explaining it (Crawford-Welch, S, 1994).

A review of previous segmentation studies clearly demonstrates that there are distinct customer groups within the aggregate market. Managers can enhance sales volume and profits by developing market-specific strategies (Shoemaker, S, 1998). The majority of previous studies have focused on the identification of factors that may differentiate segments. The scrutiny of satisfaction and repeat business judgments of different segments, however, seems to have received inadequate attention from researchers (with a few exceptions) (Oh, H. and Jeong, M, 1996). Identification of segments and attracting them could be one thing, but to secure satisfaction and repeat business is another (Lowenstein, M. V, 1995). Hence, it is imperative to understand what brings or discourages satisfaction and repeat business in relation to specific markets.

2.3 Measuring customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is an important topic for both researchers and managers, because a high level of customer satisfaction leads to an increase in repeat patronage among current customers and aids customer recruitment by enhancing an organisation's market reputation. Successfully being able to judge customers' satisfaction levels and to apply that knowledge are critical starting points to establishing and maintaining long-term customer retention and long-term competitiveness (Henning-Thurau, T. and Klee, A., 1997). Conducting customer satisfaction research (CSR-) is imperative not only because it provides critical managerial information, but also it enables communication with customers (Pizam, A. and Ellis, T. 1999). Proper CSR is likely to produce information on service attributes that are considered important by customers, the relative importance of the attributes in customer decision making and how well an organisation is currently meeting its customer needs. It will also demonstrate an organisational interest in communication with customers, which gives a sense of importance and recognition (Ibid).

Given the vital role of customer satisfaction, one should not be surprised that a great deal of research has been devoted to investigating the process by which customers form judgments about a service experience. As a result, customer satisfaction measurement has become one of the most frequent applications of market research in the 1990s. Despite the noticeable progress achieved in the application of customer satisfaction information within service industries, this area of research is still replete with many conceptual and practical difficulties and under-examined research issues. CSR has often been either oversimplified or too complicated, and has generally lacked managerial focus. In most cases, it has not produced actionable information that identifies relative organisational strengths and weaknesses.

Researchers seem to have been largely concerned with the conceptual antecedents of customer satisfaction. In contrast, little attention has been paid to the development of informative and straightforward models that help managers understand what customers regard as the components of a satisfactory service experience. How these elements can be better managed to improve satisfaction and repeat business has received inadequate attention. There is still an absence of consensus on how best to conceptualise customer satisfaction. Satisfaction remains an elusive, indistinct and ambiguous construct (Crompton, J. L. and Love, L. L., 1995).

Another continuing debate is the question of how one can and ought to measure customer satisfaction. (Yuksel, A. and Rimmington, M, 1998) The existence of several satisfaction measurement frameworks is causing confusion among practitioners, as no consensus has been reached on which framework is best suited to assess customer satisfaction. There also remains an uncertainty as to the reliability and validity of these proposed satisfaction measurement frameworks, particularly of the expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm, in determining customer satisfaction (Yuksel, A. and Yuksel, F, 2001). The importance of the reliability and validity of the measurement frameworks can hardly be debated, as the success of satisfaction improvement programmes relies heavily on reliable and valid information.

The majority of satisfaction theories concur that satisfaction is a relative concept, always judged in relation to a standard. The selection of an appropriate standard of comparison that ought to be used in a research, however, represents a dilemma for both managers and researchers. This is partly because there is not sufficient research evidence available to answer precisely what comparison standard consumers use in different situations (R. B., Schumann, W. D. and Burns, M. J, 1994). While different forms of standards have been proposed in the marketing and consumer behaviour literature, with the exception of predictive expectations

other standards have received little empirical research in tourism and hospitality literature (Oh, H. and Parks, C. S, 1997). There is also limited understanding of whether the use of different comparison standards yields different results in terms of satisfaction.

Several marketing studies have demonstrated that the tourist market is not homogeneous (Pizam, A. and Milman, A, 1993). Surprisingly, however, examination of segment-based satisfaction has attracted only limited attention from researchers (Oh, H. and Jeong, M, 1996). The majority of past satisfaction studies have explored tourist satisfaction at an aggregate market level. The subjects are regarded in a single aggregate market. The structure of predictor variables is assumed to be generic. These studies have made a substantial contribution to the understanding of the customer satisfaction concept. However, a critical question remains - would distinct segments differ in their service evaluation? If yes, what are the implications of this? It is probable that satisfaction drivers of different segments may not be identical. Additionally, different customer segments may base their behavioural intention judgments on different service attributes.

Segment-based satisfaction analysis may offer a number of benefits to managers. It would enable development of more focused and successful marketing efforts. It would allow managers to investigate the differential influence of specific service variables across segments. For example, while the healthy food dimension may not be found to be important in determining the satisfaction judgments for the entire sample, it is entirely possible for this dimension to be important for some untapped subset of the population. Limited studies undertaken on segment-- based satisfaction reported that the structure of predictor variables was indeed different across segments (Oh and Jeong, *ibid*; Yuksel, *ibid*). The differences will require different marketing strategies in appealing to viable market segments. Marketing efforts which are directed primarily persuading new visitors to visit a destination might be

entirely inappropriate for encouraging previous visitors to return (Gitelson, R. J. and Crompton, J. L, 1984).

Knowing what different segments consider when making selection decisions, and how the satisfaction judgments of each segment evolve during a given service experience, is the ultimate key to accessing new or growing markets and to maintaining repeat business. Segmenting fast-food customers based on their expectations, Oh and Jeong, (Oh, H. and Jeong, M, 1996), reported that segment-focused satisfaction analyses provided a clearer understanding of the market and a robust prediction of customer satisfaction. They called for future studies that use different measurement methods in different settings in order to compare their results. Building on their proposition, this study aimed to explore whether:

- tourists visiting independent restaurants could be grouped into distinct subsegments
- the structure of predictor variables differed across segments
- market segmentation strategy could contribute to more parsimonious satisfaction prediction models.

2.4 Conclusion

This section has reviewed the literature on market segmentation and customer satisfaction in relation to tourism and hospitality industries with an emphasis on benefit segmentation. In the following section, contextual factors regarding Northern Cyprus and university students are reviewed for necessary insight information.

SECTION III

CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

3.1 Introduction

The undergraduate students studying at the Near East University were selected as the target population of this descriptive, case study. This section describes the study setting and its environment.

3.2 The Near East University

Near East University (NEU) is a private international institution of higher education founded in Lefkosa, Northern Cyprus, in 1988.

The main objective of this institution is to give students a sound education and bring them up as confident and responsible individuals with creative and inquisitive minds. Today the NEU consists of a select student population from eighteen different countries; hence, it's international identity. The NEU with its ample educational facilities and academically highly qualified staff from 12 different countries is the only institution of higher education in Lefkosa, the capital city of Northern Cyprus rendering quality education.

Towards establishing close ties between the NEU and other universities primarily in Turkey, the United States, England, Australia, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan protocol agreements have been undersigned and put into effect.

The medium of instruction at the Near East is English. Students with a good background of English may directly start from the degree program while those with little or no knowledge of English at all are exposed to a highly intensive English program in the English Preparatory School for a duration of at least one academic year.

All newly enrolled students to the university have to take the English Proficiency and Placement Exam, which will help determine their English language aptitude. Currently, 28% of the students receiving education at the Near East are on scholarship, and the ratio of students on scholarship is expected to reach 50% by the year 2000. Students, upon request, can complete the Teacher Training Program offered by the Psychology Department to become teachers at secondary schools.

The University also offers graduate programs under the guidance and coordination of the Graduate School of Social and Applied Sciences. The NEU currently has 7 Faculties with 20 Departments and School of Physical Education and Sports and, School of Tourism and Hotel Management offering courses at undergraduate and graduate levels:

Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences; Faculty of Engineering; Faculty of Architecture; Faculty of Arts and Sciences; Faculty of Maritime Studies; Faculty of Law; Faculty of Communicative Arts and Sciences; School of Physical Education and Sports; School of Tourism and Hotel Management.

3.3 Conclusion

This section described the NEU as a contextual factor of this study. In the next section previous research on customer dining experiences and market segmentation is reviewed to provide a conceptual background for the paper.

SECTION IV

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR SEGMENTING RESTAURANT SERVICES

4.1 Introduction

This section reviews previous research on customer dining experiences and market segmentation to provide a conceptual background for the paper.

4.2 Dining experience

Restaurants are generally assumed to be in the business of selling food only. Restaurants are, however, primarily retailers of 'foodservice experiences'. The food plays a key but by no means the only part (Robson, A. K. S, 1999). Previous studies reported that restaurant services were a blend of tangible and intangible components. They are subjectively experienced processes where production and consumption activities take place simultaneously (Bojanic, D. and Rosen, D. L, 1995). A series of moments of truth - the time and place when and where the service provider has the opportunity to demonstrate to the customer the quality of its services - occur between the customer and the service provider. Thus, what happens in these interactions will obviously have a substantial impact on consumer evaluations of a service organisation (Gronroos, C, 1990). Not only what the consumer receives (technical outcome of the process) is important to her evaluation of the quality of service, but also the way in which the technical outcome is delivered to her functionally (Bitner, M. J, 1990).

Studies showed that expressive performance (functional quality) might be a more necessary condition for satisfaction, provided that the technical quality of the product was of acceptable standard (Gronroos, 1990). The food may be outstanding, the comfort of the restaurant is unequivocal but pleasures afforded by the event are tested when the waiter is unexpectedly insouciant or service slow (Finkelstein, J, 1988).

Service environment holds a central role in shaping the nature of customer's behaviour, their reactions to places and their social interactions. Customers are likely to spend their time and money in service environments that prompt a feeling a pleasure whereas they will avoid unpleasant environment (Wakefield, L. K. and Blodgett, G. J, 1994). The conditions in the service environment (e.g. seating arrangement, size and flexibility) are found to affect the nature of social interaction in terms of duration of interaction and the actual progression of events (Bitner, M. J, 1990). In addition to attraction and deterring entry, the service environment may also affect consumers' cognitive, emotional and physiological responses, which in turn influence their evaluations and behaviours (Ibid). The perceived service environment may prompt cognitive responses, affecting prospective customers' beliefs about the people and product found in that place, and this can be regarded as a method of non-verbal communication. (Wakefield, L. K. and Blodgett, G. J, 1994). It may also elicit an emotional response. (Mehrabian, A. and Russell, J. A, 1974).

Waiting time is another significant factor in the consumer's evaluation of restaurant services. Customer satisfaction tends to decrease as the perception of waiting time increases (Hui, K. M. and Tse, K. D, 1996). Waiting time and experience are central to the customer experience because they are an identifiable and memorable part of the total experience (Dawes, J. and Rowley, J, 1996). Waiting entails both economic and psychological costs. The consumer may experience a considerable amount of stress because of the uncertainty of how long s/he must

wait. (Hui, K. M. and Tse, K. D, 1996). Depending on the circumstances, customers would like to have faster or slower services. Therefore service time would be a prime determinant of perceived service quality in the same way as monetary cost would (Dawes, J. and Rowley, J, 1996). If a customer is given a slow service s/he will be unhappy, but the same is true if a customer is rushed through the meal (Jones, P. and Jones, A. P, 1990).

The majority of customers tend to frequent restaurants not only because of good food, quality service and a pleasant service environment, but also because they feel the price they are paying represents value for money (Zeithaml, V. A, 1988). Value paying have a different meaning to different individuals. It might be regarded as low price, or whatever the consumer wants in a product, or the quality the consumers gets for the price and/or value is what the consumer gets for what they give (Ibid).

Previous studies have contributed to understanding of customer satisfaction with restaurant services and of its measurement. They showed that customer evaluation of foodservice experiences is a complex process in which multitude of factors is processed. By identifying dimensions contributing to customer satisfaction in restaurants, and the attributes that make up these specific dimension of satisfaction, these studies have provided practical knowledge for management to take effective actions to improve service quality and customer satisfaction.

The majority of previous satisfaction studies, however, treated their subjects as if they were a single aggregate market. The assumption that variables identified in a research (e.g. food quality, cleanliness, value, price, convenience, speed of service, courtesy, menu variety and atmosphere) would have an identical influence on satisfaction judgments of all customers is debatable. No two individuals are alike. Different customers may have different perceptions about what contributes to a satisfactory experience (e.g. business traveller versus pleasure traveller). Tourists from different cultural backgrounds may perceive destination attributes

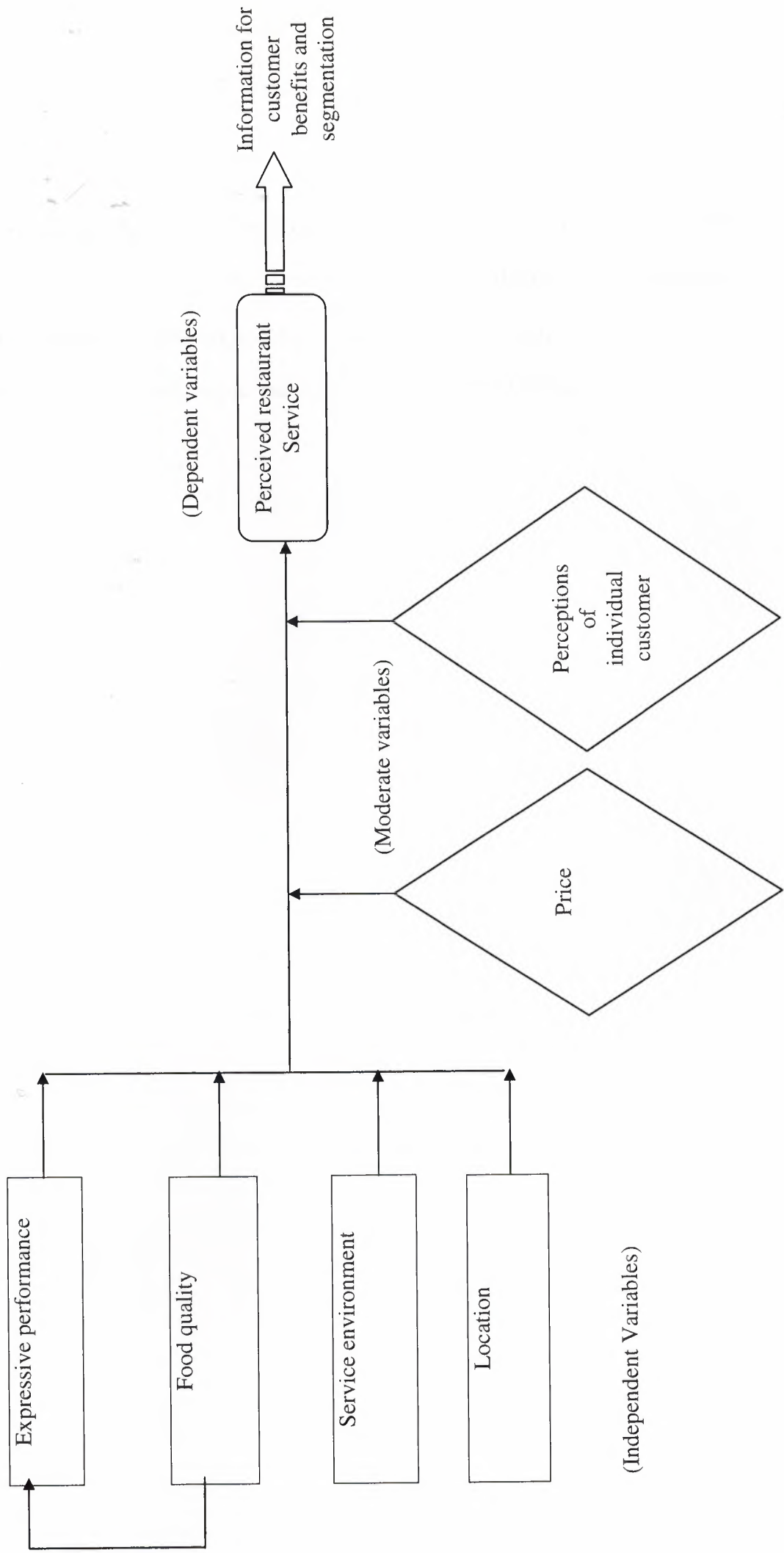
differently or base their evaluation on different aspects of the destination. In a recent study, Yuksel (Reisinger, Y. and Turner, L, 2000) reported that different segments of visitors (in this case repeat and first-time visitors) to Turkey developed their satisfaction judgments based on different aspects of the holiday destination. Oh and Mount (Oh, H. and Jeong, M, 1996) reported a similar finding in research on repeat purchase behaviour within the hospitality industry. The results of these studies suggest that transferring the focus of satisfaction research from aggregate market level to market segment level is needed. This would increase prediction power of satisfaction models and the contribution of CSR to management.

4.3 Conceptual framework

The literature review carried out in Section III and the above arguments on dining experiences have helped to construct the following conceptual model as in Figure 4.1 for the purposes of this study.

The Figure 4.1 depicts that information for customer benefit segmentation can be derived after understanding customers' perceived restaurant service quality which is the dependent variable affected by a series of independent and moderating variables. Food quality as an independent variable assessed by customers together with the performance of waiters, their courtesy and timing of service. The service environment and location of the restaurant are other attributes contributing to the perceived service quality of the restaurant. Price is regarded as low or high, or value for money depending on the perceived performance of the said variables. However, the overall perception depends on individual customers who may have different perceptions depending on their personality, culture and circumstances.

Figure 4.1 Conceptual framework for perceived restaurant service and relevant benefit segmentation



4.4 Conclusion

This section has discussed the variables affecting the dining experiences of restaurant users and, together with the literature review carried out in Section II, depicted a theoretical framework as the blueprint for the empirical investigations of this study. The next section reveals the methodology adopted and in particular the measuring instrument used for the empirical investigations.

SECTION V

METHODOLOGY

5.1 Introduction

This section depicts the methods adapted toward reaching the objectives of this study which were to find out the benefits sought from restaurant services by the university student population in Near East University, in Northern Cyprus and the subsequent benefit segmentation.

5.2 Secondary data

A scan of the past literature on market segmentation, customer satisfaction and benefit segmentation was carried out. The results of the literature review are reported in sections II of this paper. The major secondary data findings are listed in the final section of this study report. Preliminary investigations were also conducted into the background of Northern Cyprus and university population as depicted in Section III.

5.3 Primary data

5.3.1 Instrument selection and analysis

For the purposes of this study, an instrument was developed on the variables discussed in Section IV where the variables were treated as concepts with dimensions and elements. As a result, a construct was formulated with 28 restaurant selection factors. Respondents were asked to rank the factors on a Likert scale from 1-5, where 1 was “not at all important” and 5 was “very important”. Respondents were also asked for their personal details including their gender, whether been at restaurant whilst in Cyprus and their country of origin.

5.3.2 Instrument validity and reliability

5.3.2.1 Reliability

The reliability of a measure indicates the extent to which it is without bias (error free) and hence ensures consistent measurement across time and across the various items in the instrument (Sekaran, 2003). In other words, the reliability of a measure is an indication of the stability and consistency with which the instrument measures the concept and helps to assess the “goodness” of a measure.

SPSS software package was used to collect and analyse data. Items for each, subscale were subjected to reliability analysis. The alpha coefficient for the total scale was (0.764, 0.748, 0.791, 0.627, 0.6, 0.542) respectively for the six factors. Although a reliability coefficient above 0.70 is usually considered sufficient for exploratory studies alpha above 0.50 is also acceptable (Nunnally, 1967).

5.3.2.2 Validity

The validity of the instrument was judged on two accounts; namely, construct validity and content validity.

Construct validity testifies to how well the results obtained from the use of the measure fit the theories around which the test is designed (Sekaran, 2003). One of the ways to establish construct validity is to use factor analysis, which is a multivariate technique that would confirm the dimensions of the concept that have been operationally defined, as well as

indicate which of the items are most appropriate for each dimension thus establishing construct validity.

A factor analysis was conducted for the survey results using Varimax Rotation. On the basis of Cattell (1966) and Hair et al (1998) criterion, factors with Eigenvalues greater than 1.0 and factor loadings that are equal to or greater than 0.50 were retained. 22 Items loading under 6 dimensions were extracted from the analysis except 6 items and these items explained 59,647 percent of the overall variance.

Content validity ensures that the measure includes an adequate and representative set of items that tap the concept (Sekaran, 2003). The modified instrument was pre-tested on targeted students and opinions from lecturers in marketing were taken before finalising the instrument as valid in content.

5.4 Research design

A case study approach and a descriptive research design were used to investigate the benefits sought from restaurant services by students at the Near East University. Descriptive design is useful to describe the characteristics of relevant groups (i.e. consumer, market area, organizations), to estimate the percentage of units in a specified population that exhibit a particular behaviour, and to determine the group's characteristics (Malhotra, 1993).

Survey method was used to collect data. Survey research is descriptive research because it helps to identify characteristics of a particular group, measures attitudes, and describes behavioural patterns. Malhotra (1993) stated that the survey method is a good tool to use for

obtaining information regarding the respondent's intentions, awareness, demographics, and lifestyle characteristics, and to determine the interrelations among variables.

The researcher's interference was at a minimum since this was a case study conducted at the work/study environment of the sample population (students). The unit of measurement was the individual and finally, the time horizon of the study was "one-shot".

5.5 Sampling

The sample population included 604 students selected at random at the different departments, faculties of the Near East University. Out of the 604 interviewed 503 questionnaires were accepted as correctly completed. Although the sample size is quite large for the given population of about 12,000 students currently studying at the University the efficiency of the sampling could have been improved through stratified random sampling. A list of the students' names and numbers could have been obtained as a sampling frame. However, such information was not made available by the students' registry office.

In addition to above considerations, a pre-analysis testing for the suitability of the entire sample for factor analysis was computed as recommended by Comrey. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was 0.831 and the Bartlett tests of sphericity was significant at $p < 0.01$, thus, indicating that the sample was suitable for factor analytic procedures.

5.6 Conclusion

This section described the methods and the design of the investigations conducted for this study.

SECTION VI

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

6.1 Introduction

This section depicts the empirical results obtained from the questionnaires carried out on the foreign students currently studying at the Near East University.

6.2 Data analysis process

Data obtained from the questionnaires were analysed for feel, and goodness of data under the headings of: realisation rate; demographic findings; factor analysis; reliability tests. All results are exhibited in the Appendix as SPSS outputs. This section will depict the analysis and the interpretation of the results as exhibited in the Appendix to form major empirical findings.

6.3 Realisation rate

The sample population included 604 students selected at random at the different departments and faculties of the Near East University. Out of the 604 interviewed 503 questionnaires were accepted as correctly completed. The remaining 101 responses were disregarded either for too many blanks or for screening criterion for those who never experienced restaurant services in Northern Cyprus.

6.4 Demographic findings

Out of the 503 respondents 212 were females (42%) and 291 were males (58%). On the question of country of origin respondents revealed their places/towns of birth. When these were classified into countries the results were that 359 (71%) people were from Turkey, 130 (26%) were from Northern Cyprus and the remaining 14 (3%) were from other countries such as Jordan, Palestine, Bulgaria and United Kingdom.

Major finding: Majority of the students at the Near East University come from Turkey.

6.5 Results of restaurant selection factors measured

A total of 28 restaurant selection factors were presented to the respondents to respond on a 5-point Likert Scale where "1" was "not at all important" and "5" was "very important". The resulting data was processed through T-tests, Factor Analysis and Reliability Tests. Pre-analysis testing for the suitability of the entire sample for factor analysis was computed as recommended by Comrey. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was 0.831 and the Bartlett tests of sphericity was significant at $p < 0.01$, thus, indicating that the sample was suitable for factor analytic procedures.

The results are exhibited in the Appendix. The Table 6.1 below has been constructed in a way where all results are conveniently exhibited for analysis

Table 6.1

<u>Variables & Items</u>	<u>Eigenvalue</u>	<u>Factor</u> <u>Loadings</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Percentage</u> <u>variance</u>	<u>Cum.</u> <u>Percentage</u>	<u>Cronbach</u> <u>alpha</u>
Factor 1: Product quality & hygiene	5,555		4.6	13,207	13,207	0.764
Hygienic food preparation		0.785	4,76			
Cleanliness of restaurant staff		0.720	4,72			
Availability of healthy food		0.709	4,62			
Food tastiness		0.596	4,70			
Nutritious food		0.593	4,17			
Factor 2: Adventurous menu	2,284		3.42	12,249	25,456	0.748
Activity and entertainment		0.752	3.57			
Adventurous menu		0.696	3,87			
Availability of interesting food		0.685	3,05			
Impression from the road		0.665	3.30			
Availability of local dishes		0.649	3.31			
Factor 3 : Service quality	1,640		4.40	10,111	35,567	0.791
Attentive service		0.773	4.42			

Service standard		0.740	4.38			
Service efficiency		0.738	4.36			
Factor 4:	1,364		4.36	8,972	44,539	0.627
Price of food						
Hearty portion		0.673	4.47			
Reasonable food prices		0.661	4.32			
Food value for money		0.601	4.14			
Prices shown clearly		0.595	4.52			
Factor 5: Staff attitude	1,211		3.88	7,684	52,223	0.6
Staff appearance		0.708	4.28			
Helpful staff		0.664	3.40			
Competent staff		0.641	3.97			
Factor 6: Food quality	1,068		4.32	7,425	59,647	0.542
Food preparation consistency		0.775	4.26			
High-quality food		0.685	4.37			

Notes: KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test of sampling adequacy) – 0.831, Bartlett's test of sphericity- 3359,145 ($p < 0.01$), overall alpha coefficient = 0.832

6.5.1 Factor analysis

Factor analysis is a technique that helps to reduce a vast number of variables (for example, all the questions tapping several variables of interest in a questionnaire) to a meaningful, interpretable, and manageable set of factors. A principal-component analysis transforms all the variables into a set of composite variables that are not correlated to one another.

Respondents rating on the importance and perception items included in the research were subjected to principal factor analysis, which was conducted using varimax rotations to reduce potential multicollinearity among the items and improve reliability in market segmentation and customer satisfaction prediction. On the basis of Cattell (1966) and Hair et al (1998) criterion, factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 and factor loadings that are equal to or greater than 0.50 were retained. The 22 Items loading under 6 dimensions were extracted from the analysis except 6 items and these items explained 59,647 percent of the overall variance. The coefficient alpha of reliability was computed for each factor to see each dimension's internal consistency. Items for each subscale were subjected to reliability analysis. The alpha coefficient for the total scale was (0.764, 0.748, 0.791, 0.627, 0.6, 0.542) respectively for the six factors. Although a reliability coefficient above 0.70 is usually considered sufficient for exploratory studies alpha above 0.50 is also acceptable (Nunnally, 1967). Consistent with the suggestions, customer restaurant selection dimensions, identified by the factor analysis, provided the data for benefit segmentation.

The 28 importance items could be reduced to six factor dimensions, which explained 59.65 per cent of the overall variance. The communality of each variable was relatively high, ranking from 0.42 to 0.76. This indicates that the variance of the original values was captured fairly well by these six factors. Each factor name was based on the characteristics of its composing variables (Table 6.1). The first factor was labelled as "Product quality & hygiene" as this factor was formed by the variables of Hygienic food preparation, Cleanliness of restaurant staff, Availability of healthy food, Food tastiness, and Nutritious food. This factor explained 13.2 per cent of the total variance and had an eigenvalue of 5.55 (Table 6.1). The second factor was labelled as 'Adventurous menu' as this factor was markedly composed of Activity and entertainment, Adventurous menu, Availability of interesting food, Impression from the road, Availability of local dishes variables. This factor explained 12.249 per cent of the total variance and had an eigenvalue of 2.284. The third factor, "Service quality" as this factor's burning points had Service standard, Attentive service, and Service efficiency variables. This factor explained 10.111 per cent of the total variance and had an eigenvalue of 1.640. The fourth factor was labelled as "Price of food" as this factor formed by the variables of Hearty portion, Reasonable food prices, Food value for money, and Prices shown clearly. This factor explained 8.972 per cent of the total variance and had an eigenvalue of 1.364. The fifth factor was labelled as "Staff attitude" as this factor was markedly composed of Staff appearance, Helpful staff, and Competent staff variables. This factor explained 7.684 per cent of the total variance and had an eigenvalue of 1.211. The sixth factor, was labelled as "Food quality" as this factor was distinctively composed of Food preparation

consistency, and High-quality food. This factor explained 7,425 the total variance and had an eigenvalue of 1,068.

Major findings:

On the question of whether university students could be grouped into distinct market segments based on similarities and differences in benefits they seek from restaurant services six factor dimensions were identified for benefit segmentation including:

- **Product quality and hygiene:** People seeking hygienic food preparation, cleanliness of restaurant staff, availability of healthy food, food tastiness, and nutritious food.
- **Adventurous menu :** People seeking activity and entertainment, adventurous menu, availability of interesting food, impression from the road, availability of local dishes variables.
- **Service quality:** People seeking service standard, attentive service, and service efficiency variables.
- **Price of food:** People seeking hearty portions, reasonable food prices, food value for money, and prices shown clearly.
- **Staff attitude:** People seeking good staff appearance, helpful staff, and competent staff behaviour.
- **Food quality:** People seeking food preparation consistency, and high-quality food.

6.6 Conclusion

This section has depicted the empirical findings. The next section will include discussions and main conclusions of the study.

SECTION VII

CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Introduction

This section finalises this study report through reporting major theoretical and empirical findings. Study objectives/questions are answered with general conclusions. Study' limitations and recommendations for further research are also discussed.

7.2 Summary of theoretical findings

The theoretical findings carried out in Section II and IV of this report revealed that:

- 7.2.1 Customer needs are diverse, and it is obvious that they can no longer be satisfied through a mass marketing and management approach.(Dibb, S, 1998) The diversity in customer needs requires hospitality and tourism managers to identify groups of customers with homogeneous characteristics and behaviours, and try to adjust their product offer as much as possible to the unique needs and desires of the target market(s)
- 7.2.2 When carried out properly, segmentation can actually enhance sales and profits, as it will allow the organisation to target segments that are much more likely to patronise the organisation's services and facilities.(Reid, D. R, 1983).
- 7.2.3 In recent years, benefit segmentation has emerged as an effective approach to market segmentation through which it is possible to identify market segments by causal rather than descriptive factors. The belief underlying this strategy is that the benefits which people are seeking in consuming a given product are the basic reasons for the existence of true market segments, and are better determinants of

behaviour than other approaches

- 7.2.4 It is reported that benefits predict behaviour better than personality and lifestyle, volumetric, demographic or geographic measures, which merely describe behaviour without explaining it (Crawford-Welch, S, 1994).
- 7.2.5 A review of previous segmentation studies clearly demonstrates that there are distinct customer groups within the aggregate market. Managers can enhance sales volume and profits by developing market-specific strategies (Shoemaker, S, 1998).
- 7.2.6 Identification of segments and attracting them could be one thing, but to secure satisfaction and repeat business is another (Lowenstein, M. V, 1995). Hence, it is imperative to understand what brings or discourages satisfaction and repeat business in relation to specific markets.
- 7.2.7 Customer satisfaction is an important topic for both researchers and managers, because a high level of customer satisfaction leads to an increase in repeat patronage among current customers and aids customer recruitment by enhancing an organisation's market reputation.
- 7.2.8 Restaurants are generally assumed to be in the business of selling food only. Restaurants are, however, primarily retailers of 'foodservice experiences'.
- 7.2.9 Studies showed that expressive performance (functional quality) might be a more necessary condition for satisfaction, provided that the technical quality of the product was of acceptable standard (Gronroos, 1990).
- 7.2.10 Customers are likely to spend their time and money in service environments that prompt a feeling a pleasure whereas they will avoid unpleasant environment

(Wakefield, L. K. and Blodgett, G. J, 1994).

- 7.2.11 Waiting time is another significant factor in the consumer's evaluation of restaurant services. Customer satisfaction tends to decrease as the perception of waiting time increases (Hui, K. M. and Tse, K. D, 1996).
- 7.2.12 The majority of customers tend to frequent restaurants not only because of good food, quality service and a pleasant service environment, but also because they feel the price they are paying represents value for money (Zeithaml, V. A, 1988)
- 7.2.13 Customer evaluation of foodservice experiences is a complex process in which multitude of factors is processed.

7.3 Summary of the empirical findings

The major findings resulting from the empirical investigations of this study are given below:

- 7.3.1 Majority of the students at the Near East University come from Turkey.
- 7.3.2 Product quality and hygiene: People seeking hygienic food preparation, cleanliness of restaurant staff, availability of healthy food, food tastiness, and nutritious food.
- 7.3.3 Adventurous menu: People seeking activity and entertainment, adventurous menu, availability of interesting food, impression from the road, availability of local dishes variables.
- 7.3.4 Service quality: People seeking service standard, attentive service, and service efficiency variables.

- 7.3.5 Price of food: People seeking hearty portions, reasonable food prices, food value for money, and prices shown clearly.
- 7.3.6 Staff attitude: People seeking good staff appearance, helpful staff, and competent staff behaviour.
- 7.3.7 Food quality: People seeking food preparation consistency, and high-quality food.

7.4 Answers to questions formulated for the project

7.4.1 Classify university students in Northern Cyprus into market segments receiving restaurant services in Northern Cyprus

This study assumed university students as tourists and examined whether they could be grouped into distinct market segments based on similarities and differences in benefit that they seek from restaurants. The study findings provided a strong degree of support for the necessity and efficiency of predicting customer satisfaction at market segment level. This finding is consistent with that of Oh, H. and Jeong, M. (1996).

The results indicated that there were different segments seeking different sets of benefits. Six dining segments were identified within the aggregate market. The first segment was labelled as "Product quality & hygiene" as this segment was formed by the variables of hygienic food preparation, cleanliness of restaurant staff, availability of healthy food, food tastiness, and nutritious food. The second segment was labelled as 'Adventurous menu' as this segment was markedly composed of activity and entertainment, adventurous menu, availability of interesting food, impression from the road, availability

of local dishes variables. The third segment, "Service quality" as this segment's burning points had service standard, attentive service, and service efficiency variables. The fourth segment was labelled as "Price of food" as this segment formed by the variables of hearty portion, reasonable food prices, food value for money, and prices shown clearly. The fifth segment was labelled as "Staff attitude" as this segment was markedly composed of staff appearance, helpful staff, and competent staff variables. The sixth segment was labelled as "Food quality" as this factor was distinctively composed of food preparation consistency, and high-quality food.

7.4.2 What are the factors affecting customer satisfaction in the case of restaurant services?

Restaurants are generally assumed to be in the business of selling food only. Restaurants are, however, primarily retailers of 'foodservice experiences'. Studies have shown that expressive performance (functional quality) might be a more necessary condition for satisfaction, provided that the technical quality of the product was of acceptable standard (Gronroos, 1990). Customers are likely to spend their time and money in service environments that prompt a feeling a pleasure whereas they will avoid unpleasant environment (Wakefield, L. K. and Blodgett, G. J, 1994). Waiting time is another significant factor in the consumer's evaluation of restaurant services. Customer satisfaction tends to decrease as the perception of waiting time increases (Hui, K. M. and Tse, K. D, 1996). The majority of customers tend to frequent restaurants not only because of good food, quality service and a pleasant service environment, but also

because they feel the price they are paying represents value for money (Zeithaml, V. A,1988).

In conclusion, customer evaluation of foodservice experiences is a complex process in which multitude of factors is processed.

<p>7.4.3 What are the factors that affect university students' customer satisfaction on restaurant services provided in Northern Cyprus?</p>
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The university students' evaluation of dining experiences appears to be a complex process in which several factors are processed. Twenty-two factors were found to be significant (Table 6.1). Product quality and hygiene had the most significant effect on dining satisfaction. Adventurous menu was followed by service quality, price of food, staff attitude, and food quality. The multidimensional nature of factors effecting student dining satisfaction is consistent with the results of other studies which reported that physically consumable service elements (e.g. the food), the manner in which the product is delivered to the customer (e.g. the behaviour), the service environment where material product are produced and consumed (e.g. the ambiance), the other customers simultaneously consuming the same or similar service (social temperature) and the product cost and value would determine satisfaction.

7.4.4 If university students in Northern Cyprus differ in their evaluation of restaurant services then what are the resultant benefit segments that could be useful market information for the restaurant services providers?

Considering the factor dimension identified by this study one could name benefit segments that could be useful market information for the restaurant services providers as follows:

- **Product quality and hygiene (HEALTHY FOOD SEEKERS):**

The product quality and hygiene factor dimension indicates that this group of students search for restaurants which offer healthy food choices. Product quality and hygiene are highly important requirement for this group when selecting a restaurant. Price does not appear to be an important consideration for this group in selecting a restaurant. They do not take atmosphere into consideration when making selection decisions. Adventurous food is not particularly important in their service selection.

- **Adventurous menu (ADVENTERUOUS FOOD SEEKERS):**

Students in this segment attach the highest importance to the availability of local, new and interesting food followed by the impression of the restaurant from the road. The availability of healthy and nutritious food choices is not particularly important to this segment. They do not seem to attach any importance to prices.

- **Service quality (SERVICE QUALITY SEEKERS):**

This segment attaches the highest importance to the availability of quality service when selecting a restaurant. Attentive service, service standards and service efficiency are the most important factors for this segment.

- **Price of food (VALUE SEEKERS):**

This segment of students attaches a great deal of importance to value for money food. They are not very concerned about the availability of healthy and nutritious food choices or restaurants which offer local or adventurous food.

- **Staff attitude (PERSONAL ATTENDANCE SEEKERS):**

This segment of students appears to go for the personal attentiveness of the waiters. They value the appearance, helpfulness and competence of staff.

- **Food quality (TASTE SEEKERS)**

This segment of students value consistency in food quality and the quality of food.

7.5 Main conclusions and overall implications

If university students are considered as tourists than one can say that tourists' evaluation of dining experiences appears to be a complex process in which several factors are processed.

Different segments appear to base their satisfaction judgements on different service attributes. This has management implications. Managers aiming to build a long-term relationship with customers should first identify and target their segments and then deliver the benefits most sought by the targeted customers. Therefore, different strategies might be needed to attract customers and retain the target markets. No matter how attractive their advertising might be, managers are likely to have difficulties in the area of building and maintaining relationships with customers unless they develop a sound understanding of the decision processes that each market segment uses in their service evaluations.

7.6 Limitations and recommendations for further research

Certain limitations of this study should be noted. The generalisability of the findings is limited due to sampling method. The majority of sample in this study were Turkish/Turkish Cypriot students. This study should be replicated with different nationalities of students and especially with actual tourists to Northern Cyprus. It would be useful to have a larger sample. Note that the investigation was conducted during a specific period in the autumn season. It could be argued that the study results might have been different had the survey been conducted in different seasons.

7.7 Conclusion

This final section has depicted the theoretical results, answered to study' questions and discussed the implications of the findings. Recommendations for further research were also made.

Variables & Items	Eigenvalue	Factor Loadings	Mean	Percentage variance	Cum. Percentage	Cronbach alpha
Factor 1: Product quality & hygiene	5,555		4.6	13,207	13,207	0.764
Hygienic food preparation		0.785	4,76			
Cleanliness of restaurant staff		0.720	4,72			
Availability of healthy food		0.709	4,62			
Food tastiness		0.596	4,70			
Nutritious food		0.593	4,17			
Factor 2: Adventurous menu	2,284		3.42	12,249	25,456	0.748
Activity and entertainment		0.752	3.57			
Adventurous menu		0.696	3,87			
Availability of interesting food		0.685	3,05			
Impression from the road		0.665	3.30			
Availability of local dishes		0.649	3.31			
Factor 3 : Service quality	1,640		4.40	10,111	35,567	0.791
Attentive service		0.773	4.42			
Service standard		0.740	4.38			
Service efficiency		0.738	4.36			
Factor 4: Price of food	1,364		4.36	8,972	44,539	0.627
Hearty portion		0.673	4,47			
Reasonable food prices		0.661	4.32			
Food value for money		0.601	4.14			
Prices shown clearly		0.595	4,52			
Factor 5 : Staff attitude	1,211		3.88	7,684	52,223	0.6
Staff appearance		0.708	4.28			
Helpful staff		0.664	3.40			
Competent staff		0.641	3.97			
Factor 6 : Food quality	1,068		4.32	7,425	59,647	0.542
Food preparation consistency		0.775	4.26			
High-quality food		0.685	4.37			

Notes : KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test of sampling adequacy) – 0.831, Bartlett's test of sphericity- 3359,145 ($p < 0.01$), overall alpha coefficient = 0.832

Pre-analysis testing for the suitability of the entire sample for factor analysis was computed as recommended by Comrey. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was 0.831 and the Bartlett tests of sphericity was significant at $p < 0.01$, thus, indicating that the sample was suitable for factor analytic procedures.

A factor analysis was conducted using varimax rotation. On the basis of Cattell (1966) and Hair et al (1998) criterion, factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 and factor loadings that are equal to or greater than 0.50 were retained. 22 Items loading under 6 dimensions were extracted from the analysis except 6 items and these items explained 59,647 percent of the overall variance.

Items for each, subscale were subjected to reliability analysis. The alpha coefficient for the total scale was (0.764, 0.748, 0.791, 0.627, 0.6, 0.542) respectively for the six factors. Although a reliability coefficient above 0.70 is usually considered sufficient for exploratory studies alpha above 0.50 is also acceptable (Nunnally, 1967)

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